

Candidate's Diversity Statement. Please describe how you will bring diversity to the position for which you are applying.

“Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinangalingan ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan.”

Roughly translated, Jose Rizal's words mean, "No history, no self; know history, know self." For a large portion of my early life, I struggled to come to terms with my Asian Pacific American (APA) identity. As a Vietnamese-American, APA was an identity I felt I had to accept, yet one I was only able to bridge with a hyphen. By the time I left for college, I craved an escape, for an entirely new experience without those microaggressions that I felt powerless to change.

My undergraduate experience at the University of Southern California exposed me to different perspectives, teaching me how to engage in thoughtful dialogue without compromising my own values. I took a course that exposed me to facets of diversity and how they color one's experiences, forcing me to confront my APA identity once again. Inspired to continue learning about inclusion and social justice—and to *do something about it*—I served as a residential advisor for 2 years, planning educational programs for first year college students, and volunteering with meal distribution on Skid Row. Listening to those unhoused as they share their life stories taught me to not only confront my privileges as a college-educated student, but to also question media portrayals and stereotypes often associated with poverty and anti-blackness.

These experiences, along with burgeoning national social movements, allowed me to develop the maturity to stop running from my APA identity. I sought to learn more about my heritage, and upon reflection and dialogue, I realized being APA is not something one just has to accept; it is something one dares to embrace. Claiming the APA identity takes courage in a world where people constantly want to define us, where our presence is exploited in national conversations without our voice.

I have since learned to apply these experiences to better serve and advocate for others. As a medical student, I mentored trans-racially adopted Asian American youth; advocated for health issues such as cost transparency, health equity, and disparities affecting migrants and asylum seekers; and co-facilitated an Introduction to Refugee Health selective with the Refugee Health Partnership. Social activism not only taught me to embrace my APA identity, but to also embrace differences. I developed a cultural literacy and passion for social justice that would help me practice compassionate medicine and legislative advocacy in an increasingly multicultural world.

I sincerely believe that my experiences that have allowed me to advocate and serve our patients and colleagues will empower me to do the same for our Section and AMA on our Board of Trustees. My journey towards embracing my APA identity has taught me the power of advocating for others, of representing our voices authentically, of engaging in thoughtful—and sometimes uncomfortable—conversations with the purpose of enacting change. Furthermore, from my experiences in leadership and service, I have learned to listen to diverse perspectives without judgment and to respect another's truth, regardless of my personal views.