



AAIPP Bulletin

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Tribute & Remembrance: 25th Anniversary of 9/11



Tribute in Light 2026

Photo by Craig Barritt / Getty Images

Twenty-five years ago on September 11th, the whole nation was horrified and in a state of shock as a coordinated series of unimaginable terrorist attacks through hijacked airliners began to unfold early that sunny morning. Two planes deliberately flew into the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center in New York City. Another plane crashed into the Pentagon. The fourth plane heading toward Washington, D.C. crashed down in a rural field in Pennsylvania during a passenger revolt.

The images of the magnificent Twin Towers on fire and then crumbling down less than 2 hours later were profoundly heartbreaking. Nearly 3,000 lives were lost at Ground Zero, and Americans, immigrants included, from all walks of life shared a deep feeling of loss

and grief. For people who have lived through 9/11, their memories of the tragedy have not faded despite the passage of time. For family members who have lost their loved ones, their emotions are still deeply felt. Memories of the massive physical destruction at Ground Zero and of serious disruptions of businesses and daily life in the surrounding neighborhoods remain vivid. There are moving memories of the bravery and self-sacrifices of the first responders, fire fighters, police officers, rescue workers, emergency workers, as well as medical personnel. Unforgettable also was the outpouring of generosity demonstrated by countless ordinary people who responded spontaneously by donating blood, making charitable contributions, and volunteering for service. The mood of the nation then was not one of despair but of unity to act and of resolve to recover.

As the 25th anniversary of 9/11 is commemorated, it is a solemn moment to remember those whose lives perished on that tragic day and those who have passed in subsequent years due to 9/11-related illnesses. It is also a heavy-hearted moment to pay tribute to those whose selfless actions have saved lives, healed wounds, and helped the city and the nation recover. In addition, this commemoration is a poignant moment to reflect on the spirit of unity, togetherness, selflessness, and generosity that was so prevalent then but is missing in today's climate of polarization, political retribution, distrust in government, hate-motivated violence, anti-immigrants, and mean-spirited nationalism. Could the spirit of America in the aftermath of 9/11 be a reminder of who we can be as Americans and what America should stand for?

Asian Americans After 9/11

Asian Americans by and large shared similar reactions and responses to 9/11 like most ordinary Americans. However, there were some distinct challenges. First, New York's Chinatown, a low-income immigrant neighborhood, was disproportionately impacted by 9/11. Reporter Ti-Hua Chang then of WNBC-TV captured the vivid images of Chinatown in crisis in his special news report, "Tragedy in Chinatown," on February 10th, 2002. Yet, relief was slow in coming initially, and recovery was particularly difficult and much slower than in other neighborhoods such as Tribeca and the Financial District. Second, the country's moment of vulnerability gave rise to backlash against South Asian and Muslim Americans, which was not dissimilar to the spike of anti-Asian sentiment during the more recent COVID-19 pandemic.

There are many resources for learning or reminiscing about 9/11, but very few have covered Asian Americans' stories. For those interested, there are a few notable publications that are now part of the permanent collection of the [National 9/11 Memorial & Museum](#):

[Chinatown After September 11th: An Economic Impact Study - An Interim Report](#) [Asian American Federation](#) (April 2002)

The aftermath of the September 11th attack on New York City devastated the economy of Chinatown, a community less than 10 blocks from Ground Zero. Traffic restrictions, telephone and electricity outages, and downturns in the garment, retail, restaurant, and tourism industries pushed Chinatown's already-fragile economy to the point of crisis. Drawing upon more than 30 data sources, including relief agencies and several community-based surveys, this study

documented, quantified, and evaluated the severity of business and employment losses in Chinatown, beyond impression and anecdotes. Putting forward several preliminary recommendations, the report provided a sound basis for public policy discussions and community economic planning concerning relief and recovery efforts toward Chinatown and Lower Manhattan.

[Chinatown One Year After September 11th: An Economic Impact Study](#)

Asian American Federation (November 2002)

How much has Chinatown recovered economically from September 11th one year after? To tackle this frequently asked question at the time, the research team at the Asian American Federation conducted several follow-up surveys of workers and businesses, analysis of administrative data, and interviews with community leaders. This study, together with the interim report, provided a definitive and in-depth understanding of the Chinatown economy and informed long-term strategies for community economic revitalization.

[Tribute & Remembrance: Asian Americans After 9/11](#)

Asian American Federation (March 2003)

Directed by Renata Huang and narrated by playwright David Henry Hwang, this hour-long documentary film provides a straightforward account of the impact of 9/11 on Asian New Yorkers. Weaving five main stories together, the film begins with the economic devastation of New York's Chinatown. The second segment follows a taxicab driver who has watched his weekly earnings fall by 75% to illustrate the plight of hundreds of economically stranded cab drivers in the city, and many of whom were of South Asian descent. Part three touches upon the controversial issue of selective detention without cause and summarily deportation of Muslim and South Asian immigrants through the story of the break-up of a Pakistani immigrant family, after the main breadwinner is detained by the INS. The much-stigmatized subject of mental health is discussed in the fourth segment. It covers the emotional toll that the World Trade Center disaster took on children at a school in Chinatown. In the fifth segment, family members of three Asian 9/11 victims share the fond memories of their loved ones lost in the tragedy. The documentary ends on an upbeat note by highlighting the many philanthropic efforts of everyday Asian Americans in the midst of their hardships.

[Asian American Mental Health: A Post September 11th Needs Assessment](#)

Asian American Federation (September 2003)

This research study examined the extent and nature of emotional trauma among Asian Americans directly affected by the September 11th tragedy and how these individuals have coped with psychological repercussions. In-depth interviews were conducted with family members of World Trade Center victims as well as with vulnerable residents of Chinatown, specifically children, the elderly, and unemployed workers. The research findings were accompanied by a set of recommendations concerning access to culturally appropriate mental health care for sustaining emotional and psychological healings of community members affected by 9/11.

Voices of Healing: Spirit and Unity After 9/11 in the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community

[Organization of Chinese Americans](#) and [East West Discovery Press](#) (2004)

Voices of Healing is a testament to the strength of the human spirit after 9/11 and a call to the nation for healing and unity. This commemoration of the Asian American & Pacific Islander heroes and victims of the September 11 attacks is a collection of moving stories of loss, survival and bravery; of poignant photographs and artworks and uplifting letters and poems.

Recent Releases

State of Chinese Americans Survey:

[Beyond the Party Line: Chinese American Partisanship and Vote Choice](#)

Committee of 100 & NORC at the University of Chicago (September 10, 2026)

This new report uncovers how Chinese Americans' party affiliation is shaped by gender, birthplace, and how long they've lived in the United States. It also examines how Chinese American voters, and Asian Americans more broadly, supported—and rejected—their party's candidates in the 2024 presidential election. What do these patterns reveal about where the electorate may be headed next?

[2026 AAPI Voter Survey](#)

APIAVote & AAPI Data (August 26, 2026)

Conducted June 3 - July 27, 2026, this survey finds that 90% of AAPI registered voters plan to vote in the 2026 midterm elections and that Democratic candidates currently lead in congressional vote choice, 63% for Democrats to 24% for Republicans. Cost of living and inflation is the top issue for AAPI voters, followed by healthcare, jobs and unemployment, education, crime and public safety, war and foreign policy.

[State of AAPIs National Report](#)

The Asian American Foundation (July 2026)

Conducted between April 17 and May 11, 2026, this survey explores the overall trends of how Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are experiencing life through both national and regional lenses to gain insights on how their safety, belonging, and prosperity can be improved.

[State of AAPIs New York City Report](#)

The Asian American Foundation (July 2026)

Based on a representative survey of AAPI adults in New York City conducted between February 12 and March 11, 2026, secondary data analysis, and interviews with trusted stakeholders across the city, this report examines AAPI experiences across three interconnected pillars: safety, belonging, and prosperity.

ABOUT AAIPP

The Asian American Institute for Public Policy (AAIPP) is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing equality and full participation for Asian Americans. It works to amplify Asian American voice and thought leadership to address community concerns and to contribute pragmatic solutions to vital social, economic, and political issues in America. Through an inclusive perspective and a politically balanced approach, AAIPP seeks to promote reasoned dialogue and informed policy discourse that is guided by empirical research and critical analysis. www.aaipp.org

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