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2 Councilmember Mary M. Cheh

Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

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7 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau

Councilmember Elissa Silverman

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12 Councilmember Brooke Pinto

Councilmember Charles Allen

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17 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

Councilmember Christina Henderson

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21 A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

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24 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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28 To recognize the month of May as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in the
29 District of Columbia, celebrate the diversity within the Asian American and Pacific
30 Islander communities, appreciate the contributions of these communities in the District of
31 Columbia and nationally, and reflect on their unique needs.

32
33 WHEREAS, in 1978 Congress passed a joint resolution and President Jimmy Carter
34 signed the resolution proclaiming the first ten days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week and in
35 1990, Congress passed, and President George H. W. Bush signed a bill extending Asian-
36 American Heritage Week to the full month of May and the name evolved thereafter;

37 WHEREAS, May was selected to commemorate Asian American and Pacific Islanders
38 because May 7, 1843, is the anniversary of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the

39 United States, and May 10, 1869, marks the initiation of the First Transcontinental Railroad
40 project, which was completed using Chinese labor;

41 WHEREAS, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have a long, difficult history in the
42 United States, including their fight for the right to naturalization regardless of their race, which
43 intensified in 1923 through United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, in which an Asian Indian
44 immigrant and U.S. Army World War I veteran’s citizenship was rescinded pursuant to the
45 Naturalization Act of 1906, which only allowed grant of citizenship to “free white persons” or
46 “aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent”;

47 WHEREAS, in Mr. Bhagat Singh’s case, the Supreme Court’s ruling created a new racial
48 classification and finding that no person of Indian origin could become a naturalized American,
49 resulting in citizenship and land purchase revocations for residents of Indian descent, restrictions
50 on further immigration, and the Asian Indian population cut in half;

51 WHEREAS, shortly after, the 1924 Immigration Acts created the Asiatic Barred Zone,
52 deeming Asians as ‘aliens ineligible to citizenship’;

53 WHEREAS, the passage of the 1935 Alien Veteran Naturalization Act made World War
54 I veterans eligible for naturalization regardless of race, allowing naturalization for at least some
55 Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants;

56 WHEREAS, a number of eligibility expansion laws followed, including the repeal of
57 Chinese exclusion laws in 1943, the Luce-Celler Act extending naturalization privileges to
58 Indian subcontinent and Philippines natives in 1946, the McCarran-Walter Act further extending
59 naturalization to Japanese immigrants in 1952, and ultimately the 1952 Immigration Act, which
60 formally eliminated racial basis in naturalization;

61 WHEREAS, the trend toward extending eligibility for naturalization to all Asians and
62 Pacific Islanders did not eliminate the mistrust of immigrant alliances and racial bias as
63 demonstrated in the abhorrent internment of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans during
64 World War II;

65 WHEREAS, in opposition to internment, Fred Korematsu, a young American born
66 descendent of Japanese immigrants, refused relocation on the grounds that it violated the
67 Fourteenth Amendment, an argument the Supreme Court denied in a racist opinion in *Korematsu*
68 *v. United States*, only recently overturned in 2018;

69 WHEREAS, after the terrorist attacks on New York, Washington, DC, and in
70 Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans with brown skin,
71 particularly those descended from the Indian subcontinent, experienced a surge in racially
72 motivated attacks on individuals, community centers, places of worship, and small businesses;

73 WHEREAS, similarly, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States in
74 early 2020, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, particularly those perceived to be descended
75 from East Asia, have been the target of hate crimes nationwide, due to false and racist
76 associations and the spread of the pandemic;

77 WHEREAS, a lack of knowledge about these cultures and a lack of representation in
78 government and prominent positions of authority creates a breeding ground for abhorrent and
79 inexcusable hate, as the Asian American and Pacific Islander community is facing today;

80 WHEREAS, Asia and the Pacific Islands includes over 30 countries and many cultures
81 within those countries, including populations speaking over 3,000 different languages;

82 WHEREAS, the immense diversity inherent in the peoples categorized by the broad term
83 of Asian American and Pacific Islander presents difficulty for these groups to come together and

84 advocate for their diverse interests, leaving them all significantly underrepresented in
85 government, their needs overlooked, and their populations underserved;

86 WHEREAS, the Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, created in 1987, is meant to
87 advise the Mayor, the Council, and District of Columbia agencies on the views, needs, and
88 concerns of this community;

89 WHEREAS, the District of Columbia has benefited greatly from its Asian American and
90 Pacific Islander populations through their contributions to the District of Columbia, by their
91 sharing of their native cultures, traditions, religions, languages, foods, music, and art;

92 WHEREAS, the District of Columbia is home to many cultural centers and places of
93 worship, which engage with and serve the District of Columbia community, through service,
94 language classes, holiday celebrations, and festivals;

95 WHEREAS, the District of Columbia is home to embassies of Asian and Pacific Island
96 countries, providing a tie between Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the homeland of
97 their ancestral cultures;

98 WHEREAS, in the District of Columbia, Chinatown was first established in the 1880s
99 along Pennsylvania Avenue between 4 ½ Street and 7th Street NW, and as residency in
100 Chinatown expanded, so did mutual aid organizations and associations to help the community
101 flourish into a bustling economic quarter, including stores, restaurants, churches, temples and
102 residences, and was later moved due to city redevelopment, to its current location along H Street
103 NW;

104 WHEREAS, the annual Cherry Blossom festival in the District of Columbia is a
105 springtime activity that commemorates the 1912 gift of Japanese cherry trees from the Mayor of
106 Tokyo to the District of Columbia.;

107 WHEREAS, the District of Columbia is also home to Sikh Gurudwara DC, built between
108 2002 and 2005, just as the rise in inexcusable and misplaced hate against the religion’s turbaned
109 followers rose in the wake of September 11, 2001, allowing a place for adherents to gather safely
110 in the District of Columbia and begin engaging with and educating the community; and

111 WHEREAS, this May, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders celebrate Asian American
112 and Pacific Islander Heritage Month with a Vice President of Asian descent in office, a first for
113 the community and a ray of hope for further inclusion and appreciation of Asian American and
114 Pacific Islanders going forward.

115 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
116 resolution may be cited as the “Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
117 Recognition Resolution of 2021”.

118 Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia celebrates the contributions of the Asian
119 American and Pacific Islander communities in the District of Columbia, honors their history in
120 this country and city, and stands against the racially motivated crimes targeted at this
121 community, particularly over the past year after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

122 Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in
123 the District of Columbia Register.