



California Commission on  
Asian & Pacific Islander  
American Affairs



**To:** California Racial Equity Commissioners

**From:** Racial Equity Commission & California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs Staff

**Re:** Joint Listening Session with CAPIAA in Yuba City

**Date:** October 22, 2024



*Figure 1 Group Photo of the Racial Equity Commission and the CA Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs staff with Yuba City residents on October 22, 2024*

On October 22, 2024, the Racial Equity Commission (Commission), in partnership with the California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs ([CAPIAA](#)), visited Yuba City to host a joint Listening Session.

CAPIAA assists the state in maintaining effective liaison and outreach with California's Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIAs) communities by examining issues of access, cultural and language sensitivity among state agencies, departments, and commissions. CAPIAA is dedicated to advancing the political, economic, and social issues of APIAs in California and represents over 6 million APIAs statewide.

In attendance were CAPIAA Commissioners Rajan Gill and David Yee, Executive Director of CAPIAA Khydeejia Alam, Executive Director of the Commission, Dr. Larissa Estes, Sutter County Supervisor Karm Bains and former Mayor of Yuba City and current Sutter County School Board Trustee, Kash Gill.

Community partners included the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund ([SALDEF](#)) and the [Punjabi American Heritage Society](#).



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The purpose of visiting Yuba City was to engage with and learn from the experiences of the Sikh Punjabi community. Before the start of the listening session, members of the Commission and CAPIAA visited the [Gurdwara Sikh Temple](#) of Yuba City. The tour was led by Supervisor Bains and CAPIAA Commissioner Gill. They explained the purpose of [Guru Granth Sahib](#) and the celebration that will take place in early November. Guru Granth Sahib is a collection of [prayers, songs, and hymns](#) from Sikh Gurus. The temple was beautifully decorated with paintings that reflect Sikh history and values, and it is open to all members of the public. Upon entry, removing shoes and wearing a head covering is required for respect to the culture. There is an open space to pray and listen to elders read out prayers that echo throughout different spaces of the temple. When praying, it's customary to walk to the altar, and bow down in respect to the Guru Granth Sahib. The dining hall was filled with the aroma of Indian spices and food, inviting guests in. Supervisor Bains shared his family's legacy and their connection to the temple, and the stories of Sikh procession [Nagar Kirtan](#). Outside the dining hall, women prepped food for service and are gathered in a circle to share conversations and greet one another. Supervisor Bains and CAPIAA Commissioner Gill concluded the tour with a group photo and final messages about Nagar Kirtan.



Figure 2 Group Photo at the Gurdwara, the Sikh temple

and Sikh contributions to Yuba City and in California through education, representation, and combatting issues of discrimination. He said, "this is a moment of great opportunity. Racial equity is not just a goal, but a mission for the next generation."

### Community Building Exercises or Breakout discussions

The attendees answered questions reflective of the challenges and opportunities faced by the Sikh and Punjabi communities in Yuba City. When asked, "**What are you proud of in your community?**" One attendee responded by describing how their children can see themselves in their own community and how the village provides them with more culture. Another attendee stated how they were "proud of their resilient community, but not proud of how [1 in 4 Sikh women](#) experience domestic violence." A different attendee mentioned the negative impact of trauma from the [1984 migration of the Sikh community](#) seeking asylum and the "translation of generational traumas within families." The next

### Opening Remarks

Supervisor Bains provided opening remarks discussing [contributions from the Punjabi and Sikh community](#) such as agriculture, business, healthcare, and transportation. Supervisor Bains highlighted the case of [restricted landownership](#) towards Punjabi and Sikh farmers, cultural misrepresentation, stereotyping, and religious discrimination. Supervisor Bains echoed a call to action to meet demands of an accurate history reflecting Punjabi



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Asian & Pacific Islander  
American Affairs



attendee's response was about how they are proud of the Gurdwara and the community presence. They love the closeness of community and are proud of the resources they make, the land, and access to travel.

Another question asked to the audience was, "***If you could improve one thing of your community to make it stronger, what would it be?***" In response, an attendee raised the issue of accessibility to more culturally relevant resources available in Punjabi and the establishment of a Sikh community center.

### **Considerations for Change**

The final question centered on changes for the community, "***What are the top three (3) pressing priorities for the Punjabi community region and what {State} policies could better serve the needs of the Punjabi community?***" Different attendees highlighted several issues that connect back to the need for more resources and having a community center to organize and address the needs of the community. Some of these issues included: senior care, inclusive education, drug dependency and domestic violence support, women's health, financial grant support, the need for formal recognition of representation and economic acknowledgment in education.

### **Considerations for the Commission**

The listening session in Yuba City was both the Commission and CAPIAA's first visit north of Sacramento. Lessons shared between the Sikh and Punjabi communities with the Commission will inform best practices of support and establish community relations through community engagement. The Commission learned of the strong presence of the Sikh and Punjabi community in Yuba City, highlighting their cultural presence, land and agricultural production, business involvement, and economic contributions. The stories shared from the Yuba City Listening session from the Sikh and Punjabi communities will be considered to inform the Commission of their continued work and efforts on building structural racial equity and community engagement.

CAPIAA plays an essential role in highlighting the diverse needs and voices of APIA communities statewide, ensuring APIA voices are integrated into broader racial equity frameworks and advocacy efforts. Strengthening the Commission's partnership with CAPIAA offers a vital opportunity to deepen its understanding and expand support for California's diverse populations. This ongoing collaboration will help establish culturally responsive practices by integrating insights from these listening sessions into statewide equity strategies and policies.

*Prepared by Dilyn Turner-Keener, Senior Program Analyst, Racial Equity Commission & Yee Xiong, Manager of Communications & External Affairs, California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs*

Welcome!

RAYAN GILL } Commissioners  
DAVID YEE }  
DR. LARISSA ESTES Executive Director, California Racial Equity Commission  
KHYD BEISA ALAM - Executive Director, CAPRA

This is Significant!  
FIRST SESSION EVER FOR NORTH - CALIFORNIA

COMMISSION on  
ASIAN &  
PACIFIC  
ISLANDER  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
RACIAL EQUITY  
COMMISSION  
OCTOBER 22, 2024  
YUBA CITY, CA

& SALDEF  
Punjabi American  
Heritage Society

EQUITY

Looks like  
Cultural Misrepresentation  
Excluded from Political Representation  
Religious Discrimination

Strength  
Resilience  
Our Culture  
Resources  
Location  
Bring Business to our Community  
Community Ctr.  
Local Temple  
Free Kitchen  
Close Knit Community!

PROUD

Loving & giving community

Dealing with TRAUMA

IMPROVE?

ACCESS to  
More Resources (Campaign?)  
Funding  
Domestic Violence  
EDUCATION women's health  
youth-injured  
Senior Citizens  
Help with FOOD & COOKING  
GUIDANCE on how to access supports  
CENSUS!



PRIORITIES

Domestic Violence  
Places for People to Go  
Seniors Homeless

GRANTS & RESOURCES

EDUCATION

World Religions...  
"Don't know who we ARE!"

Bullying is a PROBLEM  
damages the kids

Tell the stories of contributions  
SHIFT the Narrative

Financial

Roles History

agriculture  
- medicine

start with younger children

VOTING PROTECTIONS TRAINING

ASK!

get CLEAR on Legislation

toot your own horn!

COMMUNITY LIASON

Legislators  
Governor  
POLICY  
Awareness: Economic Impact of Sikh community

CAPITOL AWARENESS

Raven Tahara  
COMMUNITY RESEARCHER