



# FAPAC—USCG

## OUR MISSION

At FAPAC-USCG, we passionately believe in community to facilitate professional and personal development, career advancement, and educational opportunities.

## OUR VISION

To build a vibrant community of AAPI leaders who are locally engaged, regionally coordinated, and nationally connected to promote diversity and inclusion.



## Get to know our members!

Greetings! In this edition of our newsletter, we would like to invite you to get to know our members. From words of advice from our most senior enlisted members to our very own FAPAC committee member. We like to share some of our experiences while serving in one of the world's leading maritime organizations.

### Inside this issue

Q&A YNCM Moneda.....	2
Conquering Two Cultures.....	4
Advice from YNCM Collins .....	5
MKCM Michael Dioquino.....	6
LT Jiah Barnett .....	7
Farewell LT Angela Alonso.....	9



### Master Chief Yeoman Cynthia Moneda

Master Chief Cynthia Moneda was born in Olongapo City, Philippines and moved to California when she was 10 years old.

She spent the next 10 years growing up in San Diego, CA prior to joining the Coast Guard. Currently, she's assigned to Base Alameda as the Servicing Personnel Office Supervisor.

In June 2015, she became the Coast Guard's first female Asian American Master Chief. She comes from a big Coast Guard family with a sister, nephew, and cousin currently on active duty and several relatives who have retired from the Coast Guard.

Master Chief Moneda is close to earning her Bachelor of Science degree from Columbia College. Jay-Dee Samonte, her 21-year-old son, is currently a senior at Virginia Commonwealth University. They look forward to taking a "Class of 2021" mother-son photo to capture this momentous achievement.

## Q & A with Master Chief Moneda

### *What made you join the Coast Guard?*

When I first visited the recruiting office in San Diego with my sister, I had no idea what the Coast Guard was about. I was immediately shown a boot camp video and provided information about a smaller military service under the Department of Transportation (not Defense). This piqued my interest. Since I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in life, I agreed to go through basic training with my sister under the buddy program. My intention was to get out after my first enlistment with the G.I. Bill in hand. Apparently, my goals changed along the way and I'm still serving proudly after 26 years of active duty. However, it hasn't always been easy.

### *What were the most challenging times in your Coast Guard career?*

One, being stationed twice on high endurance cutters CGC MUNRO (WHEC 724) as a non-rate and CGC SHERMAN (WHEC 720) as a Chief Yeoman; and two, being assigned geographically away from my family.

As a non-rate in "Deck Force," I had to learn to do things I've never done before (stand watch, sand, paint, line-handle, strip the deck, mess cook, put on fire-fighting gear, and more). I had a difficult time transitioning and adjusting into military life, especially underway, and I was extremely homesick since it was my first time living away from home. Back in the mid-90s, we relied on "snail mail" and had limited access to payphones when the cutter pulled into port, only three to four times during three-month patrols.

As a Chief, I had to qualify as Inport Officer of the Deck (OOD) and the responsibilities, especially at foreign ports, were extremely challenging. We had better ways to connect back home during port calls, but being away from my nine-year old son was an added struggle.

Fast-forward five years, I was a Senior Chief with orders to California, but projected to make Master Chief a year later. My son was finishing his freshman year in Virginia Beach and I had to make a difficult choice of executing my next two PCS orders without my son, so he didn't have to attend three different high schools in four years. Unfortunately, I've been geographically assigned away from my son since 2014. Many of you can probably relate to the heartfelt sacrifice we must endure whenever we leave our family behind, not only to carry out our assignment, but as look out for their best interest as well.

*What helped get you through these challenging times?*

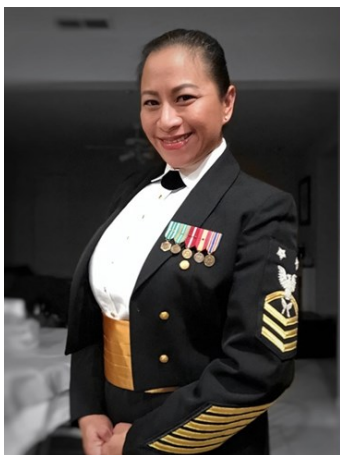
It was tough, but I had to focus on the positive things in life. I understood that we were all part of an important mission (someone had to stand the watch, man the helm, and help with cleanliness). Every assignment is a stepping stone to what's next. I wasn't going to be attached to this cutter or unit forever. As a non-rate, I was waiting for "A" School. As a Chief, it was a matter of time before I pinned on Senior Chief, then Master Chief. Why not make the best of every assignment? Throughout my career, the Coast Guard has taken me to places I never thought of visiting (Central America and half the United States, including Puerto Rico). I discovered the beauty of nature, tasted different types of food, experienced new adventures, and most importantly, I enjoyed the camaraderie. I continue to build my network of Coast Guard friends and still keep in touch with those I've met 25+ years ago. It's truly uplifting when we share our varying experiences and stories with others, while recalling the bold and risky paths taken along the way.



Master Chief Moneda pictured with her son, Jay-Dee Samonte.

*What can you share about supporting the AAPI community?*

There has always been a huge AAPI community on Coast Guard Island, Alameda, CA. While assigned here for my first 15 years of service, we looked forward to Multicultural Day and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Celebrations. Planning the logistics, spending lunch breaks learning Polynesian dances prior to each event, and working together toward successful events, brought the AAPI community together. I was honored as the Coast Guard recipient of the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) Meritorious Military Service Award in May 2004. It was shortly after when I decided to reenlist indefinitely.



Knowing there's a strong AAPI support system available is important. I usually find myself approaching new members, seeing where they are from, sharing stories, providing a bit of mentorship, and informing them of the various communities and affinity groups available. That's probably how I met some of you. Feel free to reach out to me, if you ever need to "phone a friend" or want to share stories. Please take pride in everything you do, as we have huge effects on those we support, our members, their families, the organization, and the community.

FAPAC, thank you for the opportunity to share part of my story!

## Conquering Two Cultures

You've heard it before: just be yourself. People love to communicate this phrase as if it's easy for people to not worry about how they're perceived by others. For some people, it is, but for others - like so many of us in the military, it can be a little challenging.

Think about it, when we all joined the U.S. Coast Guard, we were all stripped of our identities. It didn't matter if you joined the enlisted ranks and went to boot camp at Training Center Cape May, or graduated from the Coast Guard Academy. Everyone arrived from different places deriving from diverse cultures, with dissimilar backgrounds and experiences. Then *boom*. Just like that, the Coast Guard takes away our civilian clothing and gives us uniforms. They issued us the same black boots and sneakers. The men enjoyed a haircut...down to the scalp. They made all of us look the same. Then there was rigid routine and absolute control over the majority of the aspects that make up our lives. Routines, as expected, were bound to change - and they did. From waking up, marching, training, classroom instruction, and immersion of character and attitude to a military way of thinking that included self-discipline, sacrifice, loyalty, and instant obedience to orders. This transition occurred within a matter of a few days and is reinforced throughout our Coast Guard careers. Rightfully so, these training programs are designed to disassemble the

"civilian" in us, and build from scratch a proud, physically fit, and dedicated service member. Personally, where I come from, my Asian-American Pacific Islander way of life mixed with the new experiences of the Coast Guard culture stirred a lot of thoughts on how exactly do I fit in. Growing up in Hawaii, I was ethnically a part of the majority making it so I fit in nicely. When I joined the Coast Guard, I was now an underrepresented minority, and it seemed as if my identity was lost at sea.

It was difficult coming to terms with two different cultures. The culture I grew up in is all about finding harmony through balance, so there's no point in swimming against the current. Peacefulness is reached through acceptance. There is admiration in unsaid feelings, patience, and following order. Our Service's culture seemed like the complete opposite of me. However, as my years of service added up. I found myself needing to adopt new values that contradict my cultural root to be successful. I spoke up, rocked the boat, and took risks challenging the status quo. Every time that happened, my culture would self-criticize for being so brash. As those two cultures clashed with one another, feelings of self-doubt would creep into my mind, causing me to question my identity as well as myself.



Command Master Chief  
Jason Wong

Master Chief Jason Wong serves as the Command Master Chief (CMC) for the Coast Guard 13th District located in Seattle, WA.

He has previously served as CMC for Personnel Service Center at USCG Headquarters; CMC, Sector St. Petersburg, FL; Battalion Commander, Training Center Cape May, NJ; CGC VIGILANT, Port Canaveral, FL; Integrated Support Command (ISC) Portsmouth, VA; CGC POINT EVANS, Kauai, HI; and ISC Honolulu, HI.





## Advice from Master Chief Tafaoga “Talofa Lava” Collins



Master Chief Yeoman  
Tafaoga Foaalima Collins

Master Chief Tafaoga Foaalima Collins is from the village of Pago Pago, American Samoa. She has served in the Coast Guard for over 25 years.

The length of my service (over 25 years) has also been the length of my marriage, so this journey wasn't successfully done alone as it was in partnership with my husband. I speak of this because I want our service men and women to know the importance of family. Our culture values family, and while service needs and demands require us to move every four to five years, the constant is family. Going to unfamiliar places, not knowing anyone but there was always that warm feeling that you have your family with you.

Additionally, our four children became very resilient through their military lifestyle. Although they had to move and leave their friends every tour, they always knew that mom, dad, and family was a constant in their lives, which made the transition easier on our kids.

Use your earned leave! No one is so important at work that they can't take a family vacation. Make your family the most important and most valued place to be. Take vacations with your kids, they will remember those for the rest of their lives.

Working as a Yeoman, I have always been focused on customer service. And my advice to our fellow customer service workers is to make what's important to others, important to you. Whatever their immediate or momentary needs, imagine yourself in their situation. The demands administrative work is a lot, so don't forget to have fun! Our crew are our most important resources, build on those relationships. Sit, chat, and get to know your fellow Coasties as we are all one Coast Guard.

Semper Paratus!

## A Piece of Coast Guard History through Master Chief Michael Dioquino



Greetings fellow CG FAPAC members,

Thank you for your dedicated service to the United States Coast Guard and our great Nation. My name is Michael Cerame Dioquino and I am a Master Chief Machinery Technician with over 25 years of service. I am married to my wonderful wife Vanessa and we have an awesome 21-year-old daughter, Kaila. My current assignment is at Coast Guard Recruiting Command where I am the Regional Supervisor of the West Coast. This region is comprised of 13 recruiting offices from Albuquerque to Anchorage out to Honolulu. With the majority of my previous assignments on the West Coast, I'm excited to oversee the recruitment of the next generation from around the Pacific Ocean.

I am the first native-born American in my family. My father (pictured right) enlisted in the United States Navy from the Philippines in 1968. Both of my parents are from the same province (Pangasinan) and township (Mapandan). I was born in Balboa Hospital in San Diego, CA, and am the oldest of four sons. Growing up we moved quite often, and whether it was Hawaii or Philadelphia or Great Lakes, IL; it always seemed we had an uncle and auntie or a cousin that was in the Navy stationed there as well. My father retired from the US Navy after 20 years of service as a Senior Chief Electrician's Mate. I was unaware that when my father enlisted, Filipinos could enlist into the US Navy to gain US citizenship, but could only serve as a Steward. Fortunately, my dad was able to petition and test to be accepted into training as an Electrician's Mate. He finished his career as an instructor at the same school he fought to attend. I also realized that all my Navy uncles and aunties were not related to me, but they were my family as Filipinos in the US Navy during that time shared a common bond all working as Stewards. I am proud to be an American and also equally proud of my Filipino heritage. My brothers also served in the military and I have many cousins who serve and are veterans. Although, I am the only one who joined the best of all five branches of the military.



Many AAPIs currently serve in the United States Coast Guard. We each have our own stories—of our upbringing and why we choose to serve. We may not have as common a bond as the Filipino Steward's did, but we do share the same pride in our heritage. I am excited to be a part of FAPAC and this new extended family.

Kind regards,  
Michael Dioquino, MKCM



*"Joining the Coast Guard changed my perspective regarding self-identity."*

LT Jiah Barnett is currently stationed at USCG Pacific Area. In this article, she shares some of her experiences as an active duty Asian-American female.



On several occasions, I have been asked "So, what is it like to be an Asian female in the Coast Guard?" Depending on the tone of the inquirer, there has often been an implication that there is a significant difference, possibly an unfair one to either us or to others.

The following is a glimpse of my experience, and it neither negates nor invalidates anybody else's experiences.

I was born in South Korea, adopted into a multi-racial family, and grew up mostly in Western Washington, a culturally diverse region. From family, school, and community activities, I was always taught that "what" you are is not as important as "who" you are. Despite this, I have come to learn that although "what" you are does not necessarily define who you are, it does play a role, even if it is not your, but others', perception/treatment of you.

Joining the Coast Guard changed my perspective regarding self-identity.

I was commissioned 15 years ago on May 18th, 2005, and the Coast Guard's general attitude towards diversity was akin to "I don't see color; I only see blue." Coupled with the fact that there were not many senior Asian officers (men or women), I went about business as usual, looking for strengths in people, regardless of their physical/internal demographics/characteristics. Perhaps because of this "colorblind" stance or maybe because it just was not exactly there, it was not until

2018 that I really had a desire to see my visible demographics represented in both my organization's senior leadership as well as in incoming accessions.

In July 2007, I transferred to my third unit, the District Eight command center in New Orleans, LA. A stark contrast to my previous unit in Port Angeles, WA, I encountered a very strong emphasis on race. Even personal ads often listed racial preferences or the statement "race is not an issue" (something that I had never seen elsewhere). I was advised "Don't go to \_\_\_\_ parade if you're not <race>; they won't throw anything to you." I went to a store and an unknown lady was having an argument with an unknown man. Out of nowhere, she turned around and told me, "Go back to your country! Go back to China!" While casually chatting with one of my neighbors, he told me "Oh! But you're not like the other minorities. You're different. You're smart and you contribute to society and you pay taxes. And you're in the military!" To avoid future incidents, I often wore my uniform to/from work and also did errands at the same time; being in the Coast Guard was a shield, for which I am grateful.

Throughout my three years in New Orleans from 2007-2010, I found an overwhelming racial tension between the White and Black citizens. It was so present that I occasionally found myself in the middle of rants about the other race; bringing me in simply because I was not a member of the "offending" race. I distinctly remember two incidents:

The morning after the Saints won the Super Bowl in 2010, I was in a taxi to the airport, and a White driver was listening to the radio. In response to a news clip, he said, "Daaamn, Black women sure can get hysterical!" This remark immediately made me feel uncomfortable, but at the same time, it was 3 A.M. on a backroad. I took a chance and responded, "Well...Sir... uh, if someone randomly drove their car through the side of my house and I was in the living room, um, yeah, I would probably flip a sh\*t, too. Anyway, how about (those) Saints?" Fortunately, this was enough to get him off topic and I got to the airport without incident.

Another time, I was at a community center and a young Black girl walked up to me and exclaimed, "I hate White girls!" I did not know this girl, and had no idea why she told me this, except that I was not White, so in her mind it was okay. While I wondered where her parents were, I asked "Why?"

"Because they're fake!" she responded.

*Phew.* Easy redirect.

"Well, I really do not like anybody who is fake," I replied.

She looked at me and said, "I hate fake people!" and proceeded to wander off.

I will never forget those two interactions.

My most recent racially-based encounters were in California in February and March of 2020, during the recent rising heat of the COVID pandemic. One day I missed the work shuttle and tried to hail a ride share. I was declined multiple times by two companies; it may have been a coincidence or system glitches, but I had *never* had any issues getting a ride before COVID, including the month during the 2019 government shut down. The next (and more obvious) incident was at the grocery store. I was waiting in line when a man backed into *me*, threw a package of toilet paper at me and yelled, "Get away from me you f\*cking f\*cking chink, you probably have Corona."

It saddens me that it is 2020 and there are still hate-based incidents in our country.

With regards to being a woman, I have had a few experiences that mirror those frequently voiced by other women in different forums. I do not feel too unique in that regard. It is sad that these issues are commonplace. However, as both an Asian and a woman, I have been asked, "So are you bad at math because you are female or good at math because you are Asian?" Also if my car insurance is higher as both an Asian and a woman.

In 2018, when Vice Admiral Fagan (pictured right) visited Coast Guard Island, I realized that although I was not actively looking, I had not seen a female admiral, even from a distance or on TV/internet, since 2010 (Rear Admiral Landry, D8 Commander).



I then realized that I had only once briefly met an Asian woman, the rank of O5 (Commander), or senior (two ranks above me), and it was only circumstance. This was in 2016; she was an O5 serving the dual role of diversity and inclusion officer and sexual assault coordinator, and she retired a few months later, recreating a voice for me.

It was around then that I also realized my error of embracing the "I only see blue" approach. While our profession is based on merit and standardized qualifications, we also need to understand our employees. By not "seeing" any color, I was denying myself the opportunity to fully understand a person. In addition, one who does not see color also does not see patterns.

I thank the Coast Guard for not only requiring but actively promoting fair treatment of all, as well as for the opportunity to have lived throughout the country. I hope that I keep an open mind, recognize differences in backgrounds and experiences, and always treat people equally.

Gamsahamnida,  
Jiah



## Farewell from LT Angela Alonso

For the past two years, LT Angela Alonso has served as FAPAC-USCG’s treasurer. Not only has her involvement been integral to the success of FAPAC-USCG, but her enthusiasm, passion, and positive attitude have left a lasting influence. This summer, she will be transferring from Coast Guard Headquarters to Alameda, CA.



LT Angela Alonso, left, pictured with LT John Santorum.

To my FAPAC-USCG family and friends,

Initially, I volunteered to take on the treasurer position on a temporary basis and eventually accepted the position to full-term after our President, LT John Santorum, offered it to me. These past two years have been a delight as I have worked with a wonderful team and made lasting friendships among colleagues I now consider *Ohana*, Hawaiian for the word family.

As FAPAC-USCG’s treasurer, I thought all I had to do was ensure our organization’s funds were balanced and audited correctly. This was the easy part. But, little did I know about reporting to the Internal Revenue Service and Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. FAPAC-USCG was considered an official non-profit and being in this organization has been an incredible learning experience. Additionally, the best times were spending time with everybody during our FAPAC community service events, brown bag events, potluck luncheons, and mentoring sessions.



LT Angela Alonso, left, pictured with RADM Joseph Vojvodich at a PPALM event.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for the friendships made, every experience shared, and the good times we had together. It has been a great pleasure to serve and be part of the Executive Team! We made great strides and moved our organization forward. Some memorable goals include awarding the first-ever FAPAC-USCG scholarship, reorganizing under the umbrella of FAPAC National, and collaborating with FAPAC National, as well as with the Pan Pacific American Leaders & Mentors (PPALM), and Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS). These were truly gratifying times!

With FAPAC-USCG elections coming up, I encourage members to run for these positions and continue to move our organization forward in service to the Asian and Pacific Islander community within the Coast Guard’s greater diversity and inclusion goals. I look forward to helping the new Executive Team at my capacity and provide continued participation.

Best Regards,  
Angela Alonso



# CAMPAIGN TO RETAIN

Given the challenges posed by COVID-19, preserving the Coast Guard's mission ready total workforce has never been more important, nor more challenging. Especially for those in critical enlisted ratings and officers in critical specialties, there are opportunities to continue service and carry out our Coast Guard missions. If you're planning to leave the Service, we understand your situation may be different today than when you decided to separate. If you are rethinking your decision, please contact your Assignment Officer soon to maximize your options. You might be surprised at what your Assignment Officer can make happen for you.



## Critical Ratings and Specialties:

- **Officers:** Aviators, Engineers, Inspectors, C51, and Cyber Officers
- **Enlisted:** BMs, CSs, MEs, MKs, OSs, and YNs, as well as ETs with weapons systems qualifications.
- **Reserve:** The Reserve Component is actively looking for junior officers of all specialties and junior enlisted members of all ratings.



## Enlisted members and officers in the critical ratings and specialties:

- If you intend to RELAD or TEMPSEP this year from the Coast Guard, contact your Assignment Officer to discuss opportunities for continued employment with the Coast Guard. Let us discuss with you if there is a need and how we can help to retain your service.
- If you are retiring in the summer of 2020 and would like to consider canceling your voluntary retirement, the service may have a need for your continued service also. Do not hesitate to initiate this discussion with your Assignment Officer.



## Enlisted members and officers, NOT in a critical rating, yet desiring flexibility:

- If your plans have changed but you still desire to separate, we are ready to discuss flexible career opportunities and options—from pushing back your separation dates to extending Service contracts. Any members willing to consider a change in rating, either in the active duty or reserve components, should reach out immediately to Personnel Service Center.
- For more information, please contact your Assignment Officer soon to maximize your options.



STAY INFORMED DURING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):  
<https://www.uscg.mil/coronavirus>

# FAPACUSCG



## Vision

To build a vibrant community of AAPI leaders who are locally engaged, regionally coordinated, and nationally connected to promote diversity and inclusion.



## Mission

We passionately believe in community to facilitate professional and personal development, career advancement, and educational opportunities.



## Pillars

Professional/Personal Development    Career Advancement  
Community Outreach                              Cultural Awareness



## Value Proposition

Committed to *recruiting, retaining, and honoring* the AAPI heritage.

## What We Offer



Community



Cultural Exploration



Networking



Volunteering



Career Planning



Mentoring



Opportunities



Scholarships

For more information, please visit [www.fapacuscg.org](http://www.fapacuscg.org). You can also follow us on Facebook and Instagram.