JOBS TO MOVE AMERICA

PUBLIC GOODS FOR THE MOST PUBLIC GOOD



Hi Maria,

As we uplift Asian American and Pacific Islander voices and stories this month, I am reflecting on my own family's journey and how it shaped my understanding of work, sacrifice, and how it led me to my position as Director of Human Resources at Jobs To Move America. I was almost five years old when my family immigrated from the Philippines to the United States in search of better opportunities.

Like so many immigrant families, my parents came here carrying hope and the belief that hard work could create a better future for their children. My mom took a minimum-wage factory job. My dad worked dangerous jobs operating heavy machinery on offshore oil rigs, often going wherever work was available.

As the oldest of four children, I became the person helping my family understand official documents and fill out paperwork. Back then, I didn't realize how much those experiences were shaping me. I just knew I wanted to help.

Like many immigrant families, there was this quiet belief that you should just be grateful to have a job. Don't complain. Don't ask questions. Don't expect too much. Just work hard and accept things the way they are.

In college and graduate school, I learned how structural barriers and systemic inequities impact working families every day. That understanding helped me realize that what my family experienced was not unique.That is why my work with Jobs to Move America is so meaningful to me.

At JMA, I get to help staff navigate those same systems as HR director while supporting efforts to advance policies and standards that improve workers' lives. From safer workplaces and equitable hiring practices to paid sick leave, fair wages, and stronger labor protections, our work helps create better opportunities and working conditions for people across the country.

One of the ways we do that is through Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs), which help ensure that when public money is invested into major projects and industries, workers and communities benefit too. CBAs can help create pathways to good jobs, improve workplace standards, expand local hiring opportunities, and hold companies accountable to the communities they move into.

Many of the workplace protections people benefit from today, whether it's paid leave, anti-discrimination protections, workplace safety standards, or fair labor practices, did not happen by accident.

They exist because workers organized, advocated, and fought for them. Today, those fights continue. Across the country, that push is still happening to expand labor protections, including paid sick leave policies that better support immigrant families.

During AAPI Heritage Month, I think about the challenges immigrant families overcome and the strength they carry with them. I think about parents who worked exhausting and demanding jobs so their children could have opportunities they never had.

For me, honoring my heritage also means honoring the workers, families, and the contributions that made my own journey possible and continuing to advocate for systems that treat all workers with dignity and humanity.

In Solidarity,



Malou Robas
Human Resources Director

Join us in the fight for good jobs and healthy communities.

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