

Daphne Kwok: From quiet student to national advocate

Using her voice to empower the Asian American Pacific Islander community

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA, August 10, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As a second generation Chinese American, [Daphne Kwok](#) was taught to listen to and respect elders and teachers. "Listen to' governed my method of learning," she says.

In college, she continued doing the "listen to" component of learning, struggling through courses where class participation was critical. Outside the classroom, though, as part of the Asian/Asian American student organization, Daphne started to find her voice. What she thought of as merely socializing turned out to be organizing! And she turned out to be quite a skilled leader—a student leader of color working with others to advance the needs of students of color.



Daphne Kwok

After college, she sought out the AAPI community in Washington, D.C., resulting in an 11-year tenure as one of only two AAPI national civil rights leaders in the nation's capital. Daphne

“

Never burn your bridges because you never know who you're gonna be working with.”

Daphne Kwok

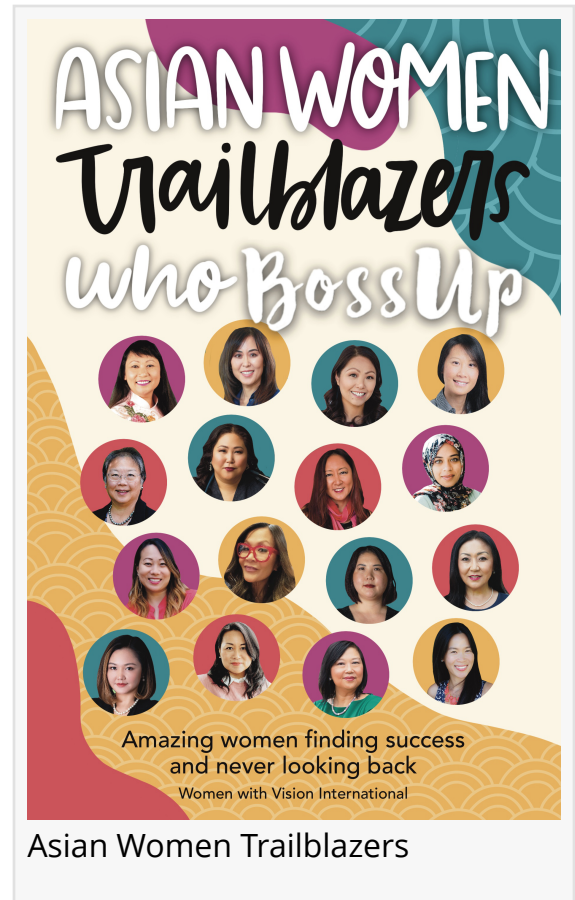
became a de facto national leader, thrown into the national media spotlight with no public speaking training. But, she thought, if she didn't speak up, who would speak up for the AAPI community? Rising to the challenge, she testified before federal agencies, addressed the national media, rallied the crowds, and appeared before the President of the United States.

Based on her experience, Daphne shares a key piece of advice: Focus on communication skills at an early age. "You really do need communication skills—written as well as verbal," she says. "For

people who are like me, shy and reserved, find your local Toastmasters group, take rhetoric classes, take debate classes. I didn't do any of that growing up, but if I could do it all over again I would."

One thing she would do the same way is cultivate a network of friends and mentors. "In times when you really need support, when the work is extremely challenging or perhaps it's your personal life or family life, open up and talk to your friends," she says. "During some of my most difficult times, my friends really were a tremendous support system, and to this day I'm so extremely grateful."

And when you rise to a leadership role, be a mentor for others. Check in with them. "Especially during this very difficult COVID time, during the current atmosphere of this nation right now, especially for people of color, we have to stick together," Daphne says. "We need to collaborate with African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indian/Alaskan Natives and the LGBTQ community. We all have to stick together."



Another reason to keep your network close and maintain your relationships is that you never know when people will resurface in your life. When Daphne was nominated to serve on President Obama's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, the person processing her paperwork was her former intern! "That appointment truly was the pinnacle of my career," Daphne says. "It was a tremendous opportunity for me to bring the challenges of our community to the president, and to have the federal government respond to the needs of our community."

Connect with Daphne Kwok on LinkedIn and read more of her story in the upcoming book Asian Women Trailblazers Who BossUp, a collection of inspiring interviews with Asian American women who have broken the mold, overcome obstacles, and have a wealth of advice to share.

About the Women Who Boss Up Book Series

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Tamira Luc
Delucslife
+1 310-710-8954

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