

Kiran Ahuja

Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Biography



Kiran Ahuja was appointed on December 14, 2009 to the position of Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), housed in the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, DC. In this capacity, she is responsible for directing the efforts of the White House Initiative and the Presidential Advisory Commission on AAPIs to advise federal agency leadership on the implementation and coordination of federal programs as they relate to AAPIs across executive departments and agencies. The White House Initiative on AAPIs works with these entities to improve the quality of life and opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through increased access to, and participation in, federal programs in which they may be underserved.

For almost twenty years, Ms. Ahuja has dedicated herself to improving the lives of women of color in the U.S. Well-known as a leader among national and grassroots AAPI and women's rights organizations, Ms. Ahuja served as the founding Executive Director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) from 2003-2008. Through her leadership, Ms. Ahuja built NAPAWF from an all-volunteer organization to one with a paid professional staff who continue to spearhead successful policy and education initiatives, expanded NAPAWF's volunteer chapters and membership, and organized a strong and vibrant network of AAPI women community leaders across the country.

Ms. Ahuja grew up in Savannah, Georgia, where her understanding of race, gender and ethnicity was formed as a young Indian immigrant. She attended Spelman College, an historically black college, and the University of Georgia School of Law. Following law school, she was chosen as one of five Honors Program trial attorneys for the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, where she litigated education-related discrimination cases and filed the Department's first peer-on-peer student racial harassment lawsuit. In addition, she participated in the Division's National Origin Working Group as part of a core group of attorneys who organized response efforts for the Division after the September 11 terrorist attacks.