

Empowering a Burgeoning South Asian Legal Community

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The South Asian Bar Association of Washington (SABAW) was founded to empower our South Asian community, to build bridges with allies and our larger community, and to assure that opportunity is equally accessible to all. SABAW now seeks to reintroduce itself to the broader legal community, to share our mission and vision, and to invite you to join our cause.

WHO ARE WE?

SABAW was created in 2001 by a small group of South Asian attorneys who understood the need for an organized voice to promote community and a shared sense of purpose among South Asian attorneys and our broader community. Our membership has since expanded to more than 200 attorneys across Washington, with representation from law students to in-house counsel at Fortune 500 companies, from top law firms and respected nonprofit organizations to government offices and successful solo practices. Our strength lies in our diversity and shared commitment to serving our communities.

OUR MISSION

SABAW's mission is to provide our membership with educational opportunities; access to professional networks and resources; and, most notably, a platform for community outreach and involvement.

SABAW has grown into a collaborative effort to build bridges between the South Asian legal community and our broader community, and to expand our partnerships with community organizations and other minority bar associations. By acting as a liaison between South Asian legal professionals and the larger legal community, SABAW provides diverse perspective and representation.

SABAW is an active member of the South Asian Bar Association of North America and the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

WHAT WE DO

Community Empowerment

SABAW has become a voice for the South Asian community—engaging local officials, participating in employment diversity initiatives, and supporting important legal developments locally and nationally. For example, this year we participated in important conversations regarding modernizing jury pay and the inclusion of the citizenship question on the U.S. Census. We also participate on the Joint Asian Judicial Evaluation Committee where we are able to ensure that judicial candidates are aware of issues that are important to us.

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SABAW has also historically hosted nationally recognized legal clinics in partnership with community organizations like Indian Association of Western Washington, Gurudwara Singh Sabha of Washington, and Muslim Association of Puget Sound, where local attorneys provide pro bono services in a variety of practice areas—including immigration, family law, estate planning, and more—to members of the South Asian community.

Membership Services

SABAW supports its members and facilitates

a more interconnected community by hosting a variety of events and communications throughout the year. Last September, SABAW hosted our annual banquet supported by over two dozen local firms, businesses, and organizations, and attended by members of the South Asian community and many allies, including attorneys, judges, community leaders, and elected officials. SABAW also participated in the joint Minority Bar Association Summer Picnic, affording members the opportunity to build personal connections with the broader legal community. Our quarterly newsletter keeps members up to date with announcements, upcoming events, and member profiles that highlight professional accomplishments. SABAW also individually assists in connecting its members with employment and informal mentorship opportunities.

Mentorship and Outreach

SABAW provides critical mentorship and financial support that enable South Asian law students to build their skills, find their passion, and pursue their goals.

SABAW gives an annual, dedicated grant to students interning with API-Chaya, a nonprofit organization that empowers immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. In addition, SABAW supports individuals who are the first in their family to attend law school, who have shown a willingness to extend a ladder down, and who serve the greater South Asian community through pro bono work and public service. Just this year, SABAW

distributed over \$8,000 to help law students develop their own leadership, mentorship, and public-service goals.

SABAW has focused this year on facilitating connections between members, law students, other bar associations, and the greater community. SABAW's Mentorship Program, conducted in collaboration with the Middle Eastern Law Association of Washington (MELAW), was the perfect vehicle to accomplish these goals. In March, 35 lawyers and law students were hosted at the offices of Foster Garvey (formerly Foster

GET INVOLVED

If you are a legal professional in Washington interested in sharing your voice and joining SABAW as an ally, member, volunteer, mentor, or board member, please contact us at president@sabaw.org.

Pepper) for the Mentorship Program's inaugural event. The program was open to any law student or lawyer with a need or interest in uplifting mentees from underrepresented backgrounds. Mentors and mentees were matched according to interests, and then encouraged to make formal commitments to the program.

One particular mentor-mentee pair demonstrated this program's power to create meaningful and lasting impacts in our community: Jesmeen Virk, a 1L from the University of Washington, was matched with Dua Abudiab, MELAW president, Washington Women Lawyers Board member, tireless public defender, and active community volunteer. During an early meeting, Virk shared her desire to stay away from public service as it opened the door to painful memories of a close friend she lost who had experienced domestic violence. Abudiab responded with understanding but also said, "I think you'd be surprised with how much you could handle." According to Virk, this "provoked a lot of thought." Fast forward just a few months and SABAW awarded Virk a \$4,000 scholarship for her work representing domestic violence survivors at API-Chaya. Abudiab received SABAW's Outstanding Mentor Award. As Virk put it, her connection with Abudiab through the mentorship program "helped transform my fear into empowerment" and "helped me regain the confidence to open the doors to a path [that involves] giving back to those in my community."

SABAW now maintains a growing waiting list of mentees and plans to continue the mentorship program next year. We hope the program will continue to inspire the future generations of lawyers to challenge themselves, serve others, and pursue their passions.

OUR VISION

As Washington and its local communities continue to grow, SABAW seeks to evolve to meet those needs.

To continue to provide opportunities to marginalized individuals and communities in the coming years, SABAW seeks to (1) renew its membership platform, (2) boost its presence in the local legal community, and (3) build upon its national legal network.

In light of this vision, SABAW will host the 2020 SABA North America Leadership Retreat, bringing together leaders from across the continent to establish shared purpose and long-term goals. The retreat will also serve as an opportunity for the local legal community to network, exchange ideas, and meet other prominent South Asian legal professionals from across the United States and Canada.

SABAW also aims to increase the membership of its leadership board to reflect the growing role of SABAW in our legal communities. We are looking for board members willing to bring their diverse talents and energy to build on the accomplishments of 2019 and expand our services to members and the community. 

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E. Rania Rampersad, a long-time Bellevue resident, earned her J.D. from Georgetown Law, clerked for then-Chief Justice Madsen of the Washington Supreme Court, and practiced human rights law in Tanzania and China. In 2016, she founded Eleemosynary Legal Services, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, where she practices appellate public defense. She also serves as a judge pro tem. in Edmonds Municipal Court.



Samir Junejo works as policy counsel for the Washington State Senate Democratic Caucus where he focuses on health care issues. He previously worked as a policy analyst for an environmental justice advocacy organization and interned for the Office of Governor Jay Inslee. He also serves as President-Elect of the South Asian Bar Association of Washington. Samir is an alumni of Seattle University School of Law.

