

# Celebrating Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month



First of all, I am honored to be asked to post today as part of Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month (AAPIHM)!

Given the spirit of this month, and so you know my perspective, I think it is important to share that I am a Jersey-born, Texas-raised, Pakistani Muslim who works for the best airline and Company in the world.

The challenges and circumstances the world is facing right now are unlike any other in our lifetime. As I contemplate what I want to write about and what angle to come at with this post, I think the two words that keep coming to mind are love (or LUV!) and appreciation.

## Love

In today's society, it has become easier to take a side and be divisive and hateful, irrespective of the topic, than to just simply love and respect one another. The irony of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it sees no such divisions. It doesn't care where you're from, what your financial status is, what title you carry, and so forth. When any hardship hits my family (this one being no exception), everything we do instinctively is based on love and staying together and getting through it together.

In our culture as well as other cultures, having multiple family units/generations either living in the same house or in close proximity is very normal. Families are very tight-knit. That is why when the quarantine hit us, it was very hard initially for us and I'm sure many other families. Having to explain to our parents and loved ones that weekly visits needed to be put on hold and that they also could

not leave their homes to stay safe was very hard. But we have persevered by having daily video chats and visiting them outside the house at a safe distance to at least say “hello” whenever possible.

## Appreciation



The second word I mentioned was appreciation. It is very easy to focus on all the negative in our lives just based on how much we are bombarded by it in the news, social media, etc., that we tend to forget to appreciate all the good. The best example I can give for appreciation is another silent killer that impacts across the human spectrum regardless of race or status: cancer. My wife, Ramika, was diagnosed and successfully fought breast cancer a couple of years ago and went through the wringer in terms of treatment. Since she was immunocompromised due to the treatments, we were quarantining well before COVID-19. That is why when the orders were given to stay home, for us it was coming back to a familiar routine only this time, we were so thankful and appreciative to have our health while we do it.

The timing of AAPIHM also comes when my fellow Muslims and I started on April 24, our physical and spiritual journey of the month of Ramadan which is highlighted by showing as much love and appreciation to one another as possible through acts of kindness, charity, and prayer.

I leave you all with a message to know that I am thinking of each of you during this time. I hope and pray for all of you to stay safe and stay healthy.