

ROUNDTABLE ON RESOURCES FOR AAPI BUSINESS COMMUNITY

*Edith McCloud, Acting National Director, Minority Business Development Agency
Virtual Event – March 31, 2021*

Thank you all so much for being here, today. You know... Most of my talks begin with a big smile and me telling an audience how happy I am to be wherever it is that the event is taking place.

Today, I am **NOT** happy.

Today, there is **nothing at all** to smile about... And I would much rather be in a gathering of MBDA Staff, Partners and other Stakeholders, celebrating the achievements of AAPI entrepreneurs and planning how the next innovative endeavor will serve to further expand opportunities for minority business enterprises to more effectively compete and thrive in a global economy.

But...here we are.

Instead of strategists, policy wonks and business development professionals...today, I am flanked by representatives of the Department of Justice, HHS, SBA, and my own staff, addressing the fact that in the last year, hate-crimes against members of the AAPI community have spiked by roughly FIFTY PERCENT...and the AAPI Partners and Clients of my Agency, MBDA, are now even more concerned about their personal safety, and that of their families, than they are about how to keep a business open, or re-open after a pandemic.

It was the late British Philosopher, **Bertrand Russell** who once said...

“Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd”.

What we are experiencing today, is not the first, and won't be the last time that herd mentality has operated to direct “ferocity” and violence at a particular group of people in the United States. **African Americans** have been targeted by hate groups for over a century and the struggle continues in the streets of urban America even to this day. **Hispanic Americans** endured “the Porvenir Massacre” in 1918 and remain the object of herd violence and mistreatment from coast-to-coast. **Native Americans** remind us of the nation's earliest experiences of herd-brutality, and **Hasidic Jews**, much like our **AAPI** brothers and sisters, as well as other identifiable groups are more fearful of becoming hate-crime statistics now, than ever before.

It is for this reason that this morning, I am compelled to open my remarks by saying to the members of the AAPI Community assembled here today, and to the AAPI Members of our MBDA Family...

“I AM... YOUR HERD!”

MBDA is YOUR HERD.

We stand with you and will continue to stand with you in every way that we possibly can.

In a few moments, Tony Tang from MBDA's San Jose Business Center will offer some specific guidance as to how our Business Centers and Business Center Staff and Partners can and will take steps to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of MBDA services to our AAPI Clients during this most difficult of periods. Please know that...like the Department of Justice, SBA, HHS and countless others, MBDA is universally committed to meeting the unique needs of our AAPI Clients and the AAPI Community. And, know this...

We will NOT be deterred from our Mission.

We will NOT deviate from our Mission.

MBDA will continue to work tirelessly in support of opening more doors and breaking down barriers to success for AAPI and other minority business entrepreneurs, in the best of times, as well as during the most challenging of situations and circumstances.

Nearly one-hundred-fifty years ago...the Great Native American Leader, "**Chief Joseph,**" of the **Naz Perce Tribe** said, during another very difficult period...

"I believe much trouble and blood would be saved if we open our hearts more".

Again, in closing, I say to the AAPI Community, the Members who are here today, and our MBDA Partners and Clients...

OUR HEARTS ARE OPEN, and to any extent we are permitted by statute or regulation, we are and will be here, to help you.

Thank you, and God speed...

And with that...I would like to introduce the Director of MBDA's San Jose Business Center...Mr. Tony Tang.