

## **'UNITY DINNER' , a sellout event**

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Members from the Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Caucasian communities exchanged views and ideas at the fifth annual 'Unity Dinner' hosted on March 24 by the Indo-American Community Federation at the Newark-Fremont Hilton in Fremont, CA. United States Representative Mike Honda, California Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi, Assembly Members Alberto Torrico and Johan Klehs, County Supervisors, Mayors, and City Managers of Fremont, Newark, Union City, and Hayward were among the closest 80 public officials at the event.

The evening was meant as an occasion to bring together various ethnic communities in California to celebrate the amalgamation of diverse cultures that has become a unique symbol of the region. The sell-out event was originally set for January to coincide with the birthday celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. but was postponed to March to coincide with the 50th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the City of Fremont.

"After 9/11, I saw a need for an event like this which can bring diverse public officials together with diverse community leadership. It gives the community an opportunity to understand different cultures come closer and also meet their elected representatives in a social setting." Jeevan Zutshi, founder of the IACF.

"We need to look at things that are happening in our backyard," Zutshi pointed out. He stressed the need for Indians to be more involved in issues like homelessness, hospitals and schools that need community cooperation. "Holding Unity dinners is a way of reminding us that we need to be involved in this community."

"The Unity Dinner was a demonstration of unity of the human spirit in coming together and sharing histories and experiences," Insurance Commissioner Garamendi said. Representative Mike Honda, (Democrat- California), a third generation Japanese spoke about historical facts of human existence and the ultimate need for understanding one another.

The first Unity Dinner was held in January 2002 and has since attracted several public officials each year. Rep. Honda was honored at the event by IACF and also by the Indian American Friendship Council founded by Dr. Krishna Reddy.

The other two honorees were two organizations: the Celebrate Fremont Committee, for a successful program on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Fremont; and Fremont Chamber of Commerce, for their efforts in promoting harmony and cultural awareness.

The cultural program involved Chinese and Japanese dances followed by Hispanic folklore and an exotic Bhangra by Matters of Community.