

https://www.indiaabroad.com/indian-americans/indo-american-community-federation-makes-plea-for-vigilance-against-violence/article_1b756436-3dc6-11e8-a050-b35b89872779.html

Indo-American Community Federation makes plea for vigilance against violence

By Aziz Haniffa

Apr 11, 2018



Jeevan Zutshi of the Indo-American Community Federation with Fremont Police Chief Richard Lucero and two other members of his team at the IACF's 17th annual Unity Dinner at the India Community Center in Milpitas, March 23.

The Indian-American community must do a bigger part to keep schools and other venues safe from gun violence, hate crimes and other senseless acts, said Jeevan Zutshi, founder of the Indo-American Community Federation. Zutshi addressed more than 400 attendees March 23 at the IACF's 17th annual Unity Dinner at the India Community Center in Milpitas, California.

“It's so unfortunate that hate crimes are on the rise against minority communities and there's so much of an anti-immigrant fervor and xenophobia, and the recent spiraling gun violence has sent shockwaves of fear throughout the entire community,” he said. “What makes the

sadness of this situation grow so much more in our hearts is the recognition that despite the public uproar, nothing is being done to eradicate this.”

Addressing an audience that comprised several law enforcement officials, including Fremont Police Chief Richard Lucero and several members of his team, Zutshi said: “We cannot allow senseless violence and hate crimes to continue...We will need to play a bigger role in maintaining a vigil for peace and nonviolence in our schools, neighborhoods and communities.”

Zutshi, who has been in the U.S. more than 45 years, said he personally never experienced any hate or racism. But he said the community must stay engaged and work in concert with other ethnic community and the larger mainstream community to reject and fight the growing polarization.

“So, most important, is that we must not divide ourselves on ethnic, regional and religious lines,” he said.

He said the community has also got to make sure that it doesn’t fall prey to politicians who attempt to divide the community on these lines as has been the trend in recent years, particularly on issues of immigration, race and religion.

Zutshi created the organization in 1994 to build bridges with mainstream organizations, think tanks and public officials. Its first Unity Dinner was in 2002 following 9/11, as a way to promote unity in diversity and help the Indian-American community address issues in the larger society. He told India Abroad that “the mission was to assimilate by becoming part and parcel of the larger community and focus on alleviating issues like homelessness, hate crimes, gun violence and other concerns, by working in coalition and partnership with other organizations representing the diverse communities.”

Zutshi recalled that IACF was “the first Indo-American non-profit to participate and celebrate America’s independence on July 4th, serve on the [California] Attorney General’s Commission on Hate Crimes, support local schools and the Ohlone College Foundation,” in Fremont, California. The group also worked with the California Chamber of Commerce and citizen groups to involve the Chinese, Hispanic, Afghan, and other ethnic communities together in efforts within the Indian- American community “so that we could support of each other and be a part of the larger mainstream community.”

The event, according to Zutshi and the other organizers, was supported by dozens of public officials representing federal, state, county and by many city council members in and around Fremont. The keynote speaker was California State Controller Betty Yee. Guest speaker was State Sen. Bob Wieckowski (D-Fremont).

“It is a testament to the strength of our community that this event has become very popular in California, and our efforts are also recognized annually on either the State Assembly or Senate floor, where the concept of ‘One People’ is very clearly demonstrated.”

The master and mistress of the ceremonies were Dr. Basil R. Besh, an orthopedic surgeon and one of IACF’s advisors, and Sabina Chaudhuri, Miss Silicon Valley 2017.

The IACF also honored former Rep. Mike Honda with its Lifetime Achievement Award, while the Fremont-based Tri-City Voice was named Media of the Year, and the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs (APAPA) as the Trailblazer Organization of 2017, and the Fremont-based Tri-City Health Center was honored with the Outstanding Community Service Award.
