

# What's at Stake

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An Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois



Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment



 **Hamdard Center**  
For Health & Human Services



Muslim Women Resource Center



Asian American Institute

# **What's At Stake?:**

## **An Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois**

**October 2008**

Compiled by the Asian American Institute  
& Steering Committee Members

Alima Ramnarine, Chinese Mutual Aid Association  
Elizabeth Keo, Cambodian Association of Illinois  
Janis Lizmanan, Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant  
Rights & Empowerment  
Lee Krohn, Chinese Mutual Aid Association  
Ricky Lam, Chinese American Service League  
Ruby Khan, Hamdard Center  
Sharmila Kana, Apna Ghar (Our Home)  
Chirayu Patel, South Asian Progressive Action Collective  
Sima Quraishi, Muslim Women's Resource Center  
Young Sun Song, Korean American Resource and Cultural Center

# **What's At Stake? An Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois**

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## Steering Committee Members

### **Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment**

Email: [afireadmin@afirechicago.com](mailto:afireadmin@afirechicago.com)

[www.afirechicago.com](http://www.afirechicago.com)

*AFIRE's mission is to build the capacity of the Filipino American community to effect social change through popular education, service, civic engagement and research.*

### **Apna Ghar (Our Home)**

Phone: 773.334.0173

Email: [info@apnaghar.org](mailto:info@apnaghar.org)

[www.apnaghar.org](http://www.apnaghar.org)

*Apna Ghar provides comprehensive, multilingual, multicultural social services and shelter to South Asian women and their children seeking lives free from violence.*

### **Asian American Institute**

Phone: 773. 271.0899

Email: [aai@aaichicago.org](mailto:aai@aaichicago.org)

[www.aaichicago.org](http://www.aaichicago.org)

*The mission is to empower the Asian American community through advocacy, by utilizing research, education and coalition building.*

### **Cambodian Association of Illinois**

Phone: 773.878.7090

Email: [cai@cambodian-association.org](mailto:cai@cambodian-association.org)

<http://cambodian-association.org/>

*Cambodian Association of Illinois enables refugees and immigrants from Cambodia residing in Illinois, especially those in metropolitan Chicago, to become self-sufficient, productive participants in American society while preserving and enhancing their cultural heritage and community.*

### **Chinese American Service League**

Phone: 312.791.0418

Email: [develop@caslservice.org](mailto:develop@caslservice.org)

[www.caslservice.org](http://www.caslservice.org)

*Founded in 1978, the Chinese American Service League (CASL) is the largest and most comprehensive social service agency in the Midwest dedicated to serving the needs of Chinese Americans.*

**Chinese Mutual Aid Association of Illinois**

Phone: 773.784.2900

Email: [info@chinesemutualaid.org](mailto:info@chinesemutualaid.org)

[www.chinesemutualaid.org](http://www.chinesemutualaid.org)

*CMAA's mission is to serve the needs, promote the interests, and enhance the well-being of Chinese and other immigrants and refugees in Chicagoland, and to foster their participation in American society.*

**Hamdard Center**

Phone: 773.465.4600

[www.hamdardcenter.org](http://www.hamdardcenter.org)

*The Hamdard Center is a multilingual, multi-cultural social & health service agency dedicated to serving the South Asian, Middle Eastern, and the Bosnian Communities in Illinois. Our mission is to promote physical and emotional health and psychological well being of the individuals and families by offering hope, help, and healing.*

**Korean American Resource and Cultural Center**

Phone: 773.588.9158

Email: [krcc@chicagokrcc.org](mailto:krcc@chicagokrcc.org)

[www.chicagokrcc.org](http://www.chicagokrcc.org)

*KRCC's mission is to empower the Korean American community through education, social service, organizing/advocacy and culture.*

**Muslim Women's Resource Center**

Phone: 773.764.1686

Email: [info@mwrcinfo.org](mailto:info@mwrcinfo.org)

*Muslim Women Resource Center's mission is to assist immigrant and refugee Muslim women overcome cultural and language barriers, and prepare them with appropriate occupational skills to become self sufficient and ready to enter the job market.*

**ADDITIONAL ENDORSING ORGANIZATIONS**

Asian Health Coalition of Illinois

Chicago Japanese American Citizens League

Indo-American Center

Korean American Community Services

Korean American Women in Need

Lao-American Organization of Elgin

South Asian American Policy Research Institute

South Asian Progressive Action Collective

The Chicago National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum Chapter

## Preface

### Background

Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing populations in the Illinois. According to 2007 Census estimates, they number over 617,000, representing 4.8% of the state's population, an increase of 47% since 2000. In Illinois, this diverse and often over-looked community includes Americans of Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Nepali, Pakistani, Thai, Tibetan and Vietnamese descent. Nationally, the Census Bureau estimates that Asian Americans will more than double to 41 million by the year 2050, becoming nearly 10% of the U.S. population.

While Asian Americans are frequently stereotyped as "perpetual foreigners" with questionable allegiances to overseas nations, or successful "model minorities" who have achieved the American dream, in reality they are an ethnically and socio-economically diverse community. For example, 2000 Census data show that Chicago's Korean American community has a poverty rate of 30%, the highest rate of all racial and ethnic groups citywide, while 36% of Cambodian American women have not achieved an education level past the 9th grade. In addition, according to the 2000 Census, Cambodians, Pakistanis, and Vietnamese Americans had among the lowest per capita incomes in the city of Chicago. In Chicago, 35% of Asian American households are linguistically isolated, meaning that no one aged 14 or older speaks English very well.

Even with this diversity, Asian Americans share many common concerns that transcend identification to national origin, including the provision of linguistically and culturally appropriate social services to our community members. There has also been significant coalition work among Asian American groups around affirmative action, immigration, discrimination, and hate crimes. Many of the social service agencies work together to address issues regarding Asian American youth, such as gangs and bilingual education.

Mainstream media depictions of Asian Americans only serve to underline stereotypes. Stories about high test scores in Illinois are accompanied with photos of bespectacled Asian American students, and a story about domestic violence in the South Asian community still ponders whether these crimes are a reflection of Asian cultural values. However, more often the case, Asian Americans are the invisible minority, a forgotten group in Census reports, or a missing voice in the immigration debate that affects so many community members. Asian Americans are not often seen in "man on the street" news interviews, or portrayed as complex characters in television or film. These portrayals reinforce Asian American otherness and marginalize real needs in the community.

Despite the community's rapid growth and complexity of concerns, the Asian American community's civic representation and affect on policy making remains limited. Currently, with the exception of a small number of judges and village township officials, there are no Asian American elected officials at the city of Chicago, Cook County, state or federal levels. Asian

Americans are also not well represented on the boards of mainstream civic institutions (corporate, governmental, non-profit, and philanthropic organizations). This means that there are few Asian American voices participating in key policy decisions that affect the distribution of local resources, opportunities, and services.

## **About the Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois**

Information is an important tool in empowering communities to make change. The Asian American community is over 60% foreign-born, which means there are significant segments of the community who may not be as aware of their rights, or how public policy decisions affect their lives. Therefore, the Asian American Institute coordinated this collaborative effort to create the *Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois* as a way to present public policy in an accessible and actionable format, for organizations, community members and policy-makers alike.

The issues platform is a compilation of issues, priorities and recommendations for policies enacted on the county, state and federal levels. While the issues platform was created in preparation for a historic election year, the platform is to be used as an educational tool in ongoing Asian American advocacy efforts. The issues platform can help Asian American voters in making informed decisions in the voting booth. The issues platform can inform candidates and elected officials who seek to understand Asian American issues. The issues platform can serve as a resource for the media and the community-at-large to raise awareness of Asian American concerns.

This work was based on and done within the context of the creation of national Asian American and South Asian American platforms by the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (“Call to Action: Platform for Asian American and Pacific Islander National Policy Priorities”), and South Asian Americans Leading Together (“A National Action Agenda: Policy Recommendations to South Asian Communities in the United States—2008.”) Many of our local steering organizations are members and also contributed to the national platforms. This local set of issues would only be possible by building on their work, but also seeks to localize issues in order to better reflect Illinois priorities.

Spearheaded by AAI and a Steering Committee comprised of ethnically diverse community advocates and leaders, the issues platform was created through a participatory and community-based organizing process. It is based on the input of community members, who attended house meetings, filled out surveys, and attended small group discussions between January and October of 2008. The final document includes a list of priority issues and policy recommendations that were developed from these community meetings. This is a work in progress, and as additional priority issues are identified in the community, they will be added to future versions of the issues platform.

## Values of the Platform

The Steering Committee adopted these guidelines to create an issues platform, which:

- supports the creation of a progressive consensus and is developed from working in coalition across racial, ethnic, religious, political and other lines.
- acknowledges that Asian Americans are part of the racial legacy of this country. This legacy continues today with ongoing social, economic, and political inequities.
- prioritizes fairness, equal access to institutions, and equality before the law for all Asian American immigrants.
- defends that immigration is a core way to strengthen the social, economic and political fabric of our nation.
- firmly supports that policies and any solutions for community-based issues are not implemented at the expense of other marginalized communities.

## Acknowledgements

First, we acknowledge the funding support of the Woods Fund of Chicago for helping to make advocacy possible within and for the Asian American communities of Chicago.

Many organizations and leaders throughout the community contributed to the creation and development of the *Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois*. This document would not be possible without their participation and insight as it reflects the Asian American community's aspirations for its place in Illinois' public life. Much credit for the issues platform is owed to the efforts and dedication of the Steering Committee: Chirayu Patel, Sharmila Kana, Elizabeth Keo, Alima Ramnarine, Lee Krohn, Young Sun Song, Sima Quraishi, Janis Lizmanan, Ruby Khan, and Ricky Lam. In addition to these working group members, we are grateful to April Lewton, Joanna Su, Angus Fung and Wing Yi (Winnie) Chan for the hours of research and writing for the issues platform.

AAI would like to extend its sincere gratitude to members of the Asian American community, who filled out surveys and attended community discussions. The issues platform highlights their stories and experiences in order to improve the general understanding of the realities of the Asian American communities in Illinois.

Asian American Institute

October 2008

## Using the Local Issues Platform

The issues platform describes critical concerns affecting the lives of Asian Americans in Chicago. Included in the issues platform are recommendations – created by the community –to help solve these difficult issues. The following are suggested uses for the issues platform:

### For Policymakers and Government Agencies

- To use as a *guide* on what kind of action or stance to take on issues that are affecting the Asian American community.
- To use as *recommendations* in creating policy and laws that engage or have effect with the Asian American community.
- To use as a *resource* when determining support for organizations that serve the Asian American community.
- To use as *talking points and reference* materials when highlighting the Asian American community to the public.

### For Community – Based Organizations Serving the Asian American Community

- To use as *education* for community members, clients, and staff about issues affecting the Asian American community.
- To use as a *guide* for Asian American voters preparing for elections and researching the issues that they seek for their elected officials to take action on.
- To use as a *resource* for talking points and policy recommendations when meeting with local policymakers and elected officials, and government agencies.

### For the Media

- To use as *background information* to learn more about the issues affecting the Asian American community.
- To use as a *resource* on community based organizations serving the Asian American community throughout Chicago.

### For Community Members

- To use as a *resource* in learning more about the realities and issues within the Asian American community.
- To use as *talking points* for individuals and advocates engaging with elected officials – local, state – or national policymakers.

## Summary of Recommendations

### **Civic Participation**

#### Recommendations:

- o Ensure the full participation and right to vote for limited English-proficient citizens.
- o Combat efforts to promote voter identification measures that would further deter Asian American voters at the polls.

### **Consumer Fraud**

#### Recommendations:

- o Support funding for financial literacy programs that would educate limited English proficient communities and other vulnerable Asian Americans to prevent consumer fraud.
- o Support anti-predatory lending legislation that includes provisions that protect minority, and immigrant communities, including measures that protect those who are limited English proficient.
- o Provide more resources to the Consumer Fraud department to aggressively investigate and prosecute perpetrators.

### **Data Collection and Reporting**

#### Recommendations:

- o Collect and disseminate disaggregated data on Asian American ethnic groups.
- o Provide resources for community-based education to encourage participation in the decennial Census and annual American Community Survey.

### **Economic Development and Employment**

#### Recommendations:

- o Support the development and promotion of Asian American small businesses.
- o Support the inclusion of Asian Americans in affirmative action programs.
- o Protect the rights of immigrant workers, including undocumented workers.

### **Hate Crimes, Racial Profiling and Safety**

#### Recommendations:

- o Law enforcement should regularly receive training on the reporting of hate crimes, including a cultural competence segment on Asian Americans.
- o Develop and disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach and educational materials on hate crimes in Asian American communities so that victims know how and where to report hate incidents.
- o To prevent hate crimes, develop and support programs that enhance cross-cultural, inter-ethnic understanding, including school-based programs.
- o Eliminate profiling based on perceived or actual national origin, religion, ethnicity, and immigration status.
- o Build trust and partnerships between Asian American communities, business districts, and local police departments to ensure adequate police protection.

## **Health Care**

### Recommendations:

- o Reduce health disparities by supporting culturally and linguistically appropriate community-based programs that increase access to preventive health services.
- o Strengthen and enforce regulations requiring the provision of language assistance services to limited English proficient consumers of health care services.
- o Support measures to expand health care coverage for low- and middle-income families, including small business owners.
- o Increase funding for health research within Asian American ethnic populations.

## **Housing**

### Recommendations:

- o The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should establish an Asian American Housing Counseling Center as a resource and clearinghouse.
- o Fair housing organizations and enforcement agencies should work with ethnic community-based organizations to conduct a focused outreach campaign to community residents about housing opportunities, housing rights, and complaint procedures.
- o More funding from the public and private sectors should be made available to ethnic community-based organizations to actively educate their members regarding housing opportunities.
- o HUD should provide incentives and other measures to encourage continued landlord participation in federally subsidized housing programs.

## **Immigration and Immigrant Integration**

### Recommendations:

- o Reduce backlogs and delays related to family reunification and naturalization applications.
- o Provide a path to citizenship for undocumented workers, families, and students, through legislation such as the DREAM Act.
- o Strengthen due process protections within the U.S. immigration system, including detentions and deportation procedures.
- o Increase funding for citizenship classes, ESL classes, and other programs that facilitate immigrant integration into U.S. society.

## **Public Education (K-12)**

### Recommendations:

- o Increase Asian American studies in K-12 curriculum and higher education.
- o Increase Asian American bilingual staffing in public schools.
- o Increase Asian American parent participation in public schools.
- o Ensure that data collection and reporting on Asian American students is by ethnicity and English proficiency.
- o Ensure that school-safety and anti-harassment trainings include a component that incorporates an Asian American focus.

## **Veterans**

### Recommendation:

- o Pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Bill (S.B. 1315), which would provide U.S. veterans' benefits to Filipino World War II veterans, who were then U.S. nationals drafted into American military service.

## **Women**

### Recommendations:

- o Develop and expand appropriate outreach programs to educate Asian American communities on rights and resources for domestic violence and trafficking survivors.
- o Increase funding for domestic violence service agencies providing multilingual and multicultural services.

## Civic Participation

### Recommendations:

- Ensure the full participation and right to vote for limited English-proficient citizens.
- Combat efforts to promote voter identification measures that would further deter Asian American voters at the polls.

### Background:

Voting is fundamental right and responsibility of US citizenship. No more is that understood than amongst immigrant communities who wait, pay fees and take exams to gain that privilege. While over 60% of Asian Americans are foreign-born, about half of them become naturalized. Therefore about two-thirds of Asian Americans are eligible to vote, and the number grows as more Asian Americans become citizens. According to the Census, Illinois had 126,000 registered Asian American voters during the November 2006 elections<sup>1</sup>, which meant that less than 45% of the eligible Asian American was registered—lower than all racial or ethnic groups by 7 to 25%. However, of these registered voters, over 65% actually voted, which was similar or higher than the participation rate of other registered groups. This means that while Asian Americans seem reluctant to register to vote, once they have registered, they are reliable voters. The exceedingly low registration rates and somewhat low turnout rates may have several causes: a lack of familiarity or translated information about the registration and voting process, lack of translated information about candidates for voters to make informed decisions, and voter intimidation.

Great strides have been made since 2002, when Cook County and Chicago were first mandated to provide language assistance to Chinese American voters. Both boards of elections have built strong connections to community organizations in order to meet voters' needs. However, these efforts must continue in order to improve voter education and outreach to address language access issues for other non-English speaking voters. While official voter registration forms have recently been translated into Korean, these efforts still need to be expanded to other languages such as Vietnamese, Hindi, and Urdu to better service these growing communities.

As more Asian Americans register to vote and go to the polls on election days, the challenges that these voters face can vary from language access to the general attitudes that they can encounter. Asian American voters have been questioned about their right to vote, and poll judges have questioned why limited-English speakers should have any voting assistance if English-proficiency is a requirement of US citizenship. New voters can be stereotyped as “foreigners” and somehow “un-American.” For example, a private citizen from Washington State attempted to challenge the right to vote of more than 1,000 people with names that he believed “have no basis in the English language” and “appear to be from outside the United States” while eliminating from his challenge voters with names “that clearly sounded American-born, like John Smith, or Powell.” He therefore primarily targeted Asian and Hispanic voters.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2006*. Table 4b. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting/cps2006.html>. However, for 2004, there were 204,000 Asian American registered voters. Data collected on communities with smaller populations can often have errors of margin up to +/- 10%, which makes it difficult to identify actual trends versus statistical anomalies.

Similarly, voting rights advocates have to be vigilant to keep bad laws from being enacted. Prior to the 2004 election, advocates in Ohio were successful in fighting a new state law allowing poll workers to challenge voters by requiring proof of naturalized citizenship. It was barred by a federal court because the different requirements for naturalized and native-born citizens created the unlawful potential for disenfranchising eligible citizens for “not looking quite American.”<sup>2</sup> Similar stories across the country, as well as Illinois, so communities, poll workers, and election officials must be diligent in raising awareness about the rights of all voters including new citizens.

Furthermore, the voter identification issue is a growing concern in states across the country. Already seven states have passed laws to implement some form of photo identification for voters. Strong evidence exists that requiring a photo ID as a prerequisite to voting disproportionately disenfranchises people of color, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, rural and native American voters, the homeless and low-income people, who are far less likely to carry or own a photo ID.<sup>3</sup> With Asian Americans as one of the fastest growing minorities within Illinois, ensuring the voting rights and language access for all voters increases the opportunities for the full and active civic engagement of all Asian Americans.

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<sup>2</sup> *Voter Challenges At the Polls*: Factsheet. Asian American Justice Center. 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Hansen, John Mark. Task Force on the Federal Election System. *Verification of Identity*. In Task Force Reports to accompany the Report of the National Commission on Election Reform. July 2001. 4.

## Consumer Fraud

### Recommendations:

- Support funding for financial literacy programs that would educate limited English proficient communities and other vulnerable Asian Americans to prevent consumer fraud.
- Support anti-predatory lending legislation that includes provisions that protect minority, and immigrant communities, including measures that protect those who are limited English proficient.
- Provide more resources to the Consumer Fraud department to aggressively investigate and prosecute perpetrators.

### Background:

Asian Americans are victim to consumer fraud practices, and increasingly by members of their own ethnic group. Many factors may contribute to this: 1) new immigrants may not fully understand the scheme that is being perpetrated against them due to language or cultural barriers; 2) the schemes look too real; and/or 3) the perpetrators are people they trust. These types of crimes are also underreported by Asian Americans because they may not be familiar with their rights, do not know how to file complaints or with whom, or because of fear or shame. These reasons support the recommendations to develop community outreach and education relating to consumer fraud and financial literacy.

Access to formal financial services can increase the ability of people to save and invest, and foster economic growth in distress neighborhoods. Unfortunately, many Asian American and newer immigrant neighborhoods still have few or no banks or bank branches. In addition, the percentage of immigrants who do not have a savings or checking account varies considerably, from 44% (Vietnamese immigrants) to 22% (Chinese immigrants), compared with 10–20% of people born in the US. When accessing financial services, Asian American also face language barriers, restrictive identification requirements, and unfamiliarity or distrust in these systems. Because of these barriers, many Asian American households operate primarily in cash or utilize fringe services (e.g. check cashers and money transmitters) that have spread rapidly in low-income and minority neighborhoods. Unfortunately, alternative service providers offer few opportunities to save or build credit, their services can be limited and expensive, and their presence often corresponds with an increase in predatory lending. This stands in stark contrast to the community wealth and investment that could be created by mainstream financial institutions.

Predatory mortgage lending is an exploding problem in communities across American and has a disproportionate impact on the elderly and minority communities. Without access to conventional lenders and reliable information in different languages, Asian Americans, especially for those that are newer immigrants, are vulnerable to predatory lending. Predatory lenders often target vulnerable communities, steering borrowers to abusive loans when they could have qualified for prime mortgages. As a result, many homeowners have not only lost their homes to foreclosures, but they have also lost their primary sources of savings – their home equity – to unethical mortgage lenders.

## Data Collection and Reporting

### Recommendations:

- Collect and disseminate disaggregated data on Asian American ethnic groups.
- Provide resources for community-based education to encourage participation in the decennial Census and annual American Community Survey.

### Background:

Asian Americans are an extremely diverse population, comprising more than 59 ethnic groups that speak over 100 languages and dialects. Because of this diversity, it is extremely important for state data on employment, public benefits, public health, and other areas to differentiate between Asian American ethnic groups. However, for decades, most state data collection systems have used a catch-all “Asian/Pacific Islander” category, or have lumped Asian Americans together with Native Americans and smaller groups in an “Other” label that makes it impossible to accurately assess the community’s needs and assets. When data is provided only for overarching groups, important differences between the communities become invisible, reinforcing the tendency to stereotype Asian Americans as “model minorities.” However, a closer look reveals a community of contrasts. The Taiwanese community has the highest percent of college graduates (81%), while 42% of Cambodians do not have a high school degree. Also, Chicago’s Korean community has the highest poverty rate of any race or ethnic group at 30%.

Census data has been at the center of critical turning points for the community. However, Asian Americans, as with other minority and immigrant groups have been historically undercounted. The 1990 Census marked the first time that a count was less accurate than the decade previous. For example, while the Census that year reported that there were 3,000 Cambodian Americans in Chicago, the staff of a local Cambodian organization claimed that its mailing list had nearly 5,000 members. The 2000 Census was successful in addressing some of these shortfalls through great efforts in community partnerships. Using Census data, the federal government mandated that language assistance be provided to Chinese American voters, fueling increased civic engagement. Conversely, there was not enough data to be considered statistically significant to prove discrimination against Asian Americans in Chicago’s construction industry, resulting in APIs no longer being considered a minority in its affirmative action program.

This problem has been acknowledged at the federal level; the 2001 Interim Report from the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders included a recommendation to improve Asian American data collection, analysis, and dissemination. The design, operation, and evaluation of programs and policies by local governments, schools, hospitals, and other organizations all depend on the availability of data focused on specific communities. As this population continues to grow, accurate and detailed data collection will be critical in telling the true story of this diverse and vital community.

## Economic Development and Employment

### Recommendations:

- Support the development and promotion of Asian American small businesses.
- Support the inclusion of Asian Americans in affirmative action programs.
- Protect the rights of immigrant workers, including undocumented workers.

### Background:

From the very beginning of Asians in America, there has been a history of workplace and economic discrimination. Early Chinese immigrants were shut out of most jobs and took the only opportunities available to them as laundrymen. Chinese railway workers were often given the most dangerous and often fatal jobs because they were seen as expendable. However more subtle and despite stereotypes of economic success, the workplace discrimination continues to this day. As recently as 1994, the United States Commission on Civil Rights found that being of “Asian descent” had a “negative effect” on an employee’s chance to move upward into management.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, one recent study stated that Asian Americans “face the worst chance [among all racial groups] of being advanced into management positions.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a study of senior executives of Fortune 500 industrial corporations and Fortune 500 service firms conducted in 1989 found that only 0.3% of survey respondents reported having “Oriental” ethnic origins.<sup>6</sup>

Asian Americans are often touted for their entrepreneurial spirit in creating new small businesses. However, this is often a result of the limited opportunities Asian Americans had in traditional corporate settings because of issues of hitting the “glass ceiling”. Asian Americans also experience a lower return on their education than other groups—Asian Americans have an “inability to find job opportunities commensurate with [their] education and training”.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as business owners today, Asian Americans experience great disparities in their revenues compared to white-owned businesses. In 1987, Asian Americans owned 2.6 % of all U.S. businesses, but revenues from Asian-American-owned businesses accounted for only 1.7 % of total revenues from all businesses.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, 1987 annual receipts for Asian-American-owned businesses averaged \$107,000, well below the \$189,000 average for businesses owned by white men.<sup>9</sup> In fact, over one-third of Asian-American owned businesses had receipts of less than \$10,000.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, programs and policies to assist small businesses such as affirmative action are still necessary to level the playing field.

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4 Woo, Deborah. *The Glass Ceiling and Asian Americans: A Research Monograph 42* (unpublished manuscript).1994. Citing the U.S. Committee on Civil Rights, Economic Status of Americans of Asian Descent: An Exploratory Investigation. *Glass Ceiling and Asian Americans*. 1988..

5 Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics. *The State of Asian Pacific America*. Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute & UCLA Asian American Studies Center. 1993. 215-216.

6 Korn/Ferry International. *Executive Profile: A Decade of Change in Corporate Leadership*. 1990. 23.

7 Woo, Deborah. *The Glass Ceiling and Asian Americans: A Research Monograph 42* (unpublished manuscript).1994. 44.

8 National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium. “Public Contracting,” in *Asian Pacific Americans and Public Contracting*. 1997. 4.

9 Ibid. 4-5.

10 Ibid. 6. See also *Demonstration of Minority Disadvantage*. 11-13.

The “model minority” stereotype also causes the under-resourcing of Asian American-serving organizations. Many of community-based organizations struggle with funding programs to assist newer immigrants and refugees in gaining job skills and seeking employment. With limited English skills and often limited education, their opportunities are often restricted to those in low-wage service industries. These workers are also vulnerable to workplace abuses from unpaid wages or overtime, to sweatshop working conditions as they have limited resources to challenge discrimination.

## Hate Crimes, Racial Profiling and Safety

### Recommendations:

- Law enforcement should regularly receive training on the reporting of hate crimes, including a cultural competence segment on Asian Americans.
- Develop and disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach and educational materials on hate crimes in Asian American communities so that victims know how and where to report hate incidents.
- To prevent hate crimes, develop and support programs that enhance cross-cultural, inter-ethnic understanding, including school-based programs.
- Eliminate profiling based on perceived or actual national origin, religion, ethnicity, and immigration status.
- Build trust and partnerships between Asian American communities, business districts, and local police departments to ensure adequate police protection.

### Background:

In the post-September 11, 2001 environment and the current growing wave of anti-immigrant sentiment, the effects of profiling and discrimination are readily felt throughout the Asian American community. Since the September 11 attacks, racial profiling has become an increasing reality in the Asian American community, with a particular impact on South Asians and Muslims. At the same time, Asian American communities are not always comfortable in reporting crimes or safety issues of any type to law enforcement.

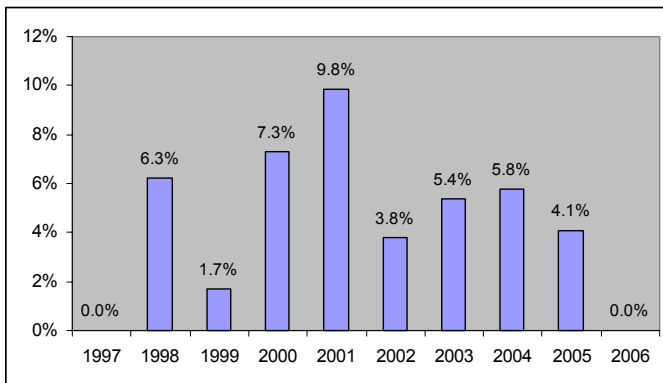


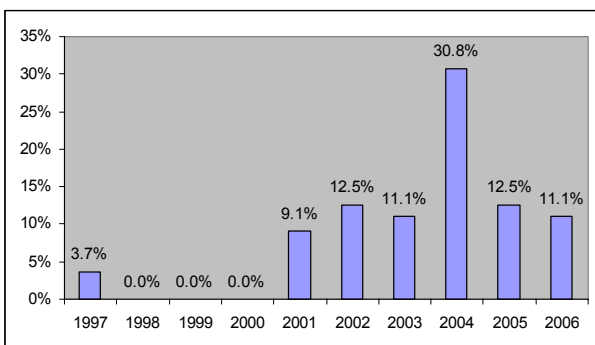
Fig 1: Reported Anti-Asian Hate Crimes as a Percentage of Racially Motivated Hate Crimes, Chicago 1997-2006<sup>11</sup>

As defined by the FBI, hate crimes are "criminal offenses against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnic origin or sexual orientation." In 2006, 9,652 hate crimes were reported nationwide to the FBI<sup>12</sup>. Nearly 5% of these crimes involved anti-Asian/Pacific bias, and 12% involved anti-Muslim bias. In the city of Chicago, from 1997 to 2006, there were 1,563 reported hate crimes. Over this period, 4% of the total racially-motivated hate crimes involved anti-Asian/Pacific Islander bias, and 7% of the total religion-motivated hate crimes involved anti-Muslim bias. Detailed data are shown in Figures 1 and 2 below, indicating a sharp increase in reported anti-Asian hate crimes in 2001, and a steady level of anti-Muslim hate crimes post-2001.

<sup>11</sup> Chicago Police Department. *Hate Crimes Reports*. 1997-2006.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Uniform Crime Reporting*. <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2006/victims.html>.

At the local level, Asian American advocates are concerned that anti-Asian hate crime incidents may actually be underreported, either because victims are unaware about hate crime laws or



because law enforcement agencies are not properly trained to recognize and report bias-motivated crimes affecting Asian Americans. Nationally, Asian Americans are the least likely of all groups to report violent crimes, including rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.<sup>13</sup>

Fig 2: Reported Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes as a Percentage of Religion-Motivated Hate Crimes, Chicago 1997-2006<sup>14</sup>

For Asian American refugees in particular, direct experiences with violently oppressive governmental regimes in their homelands contribute to a hesitancy to contact law enforcement authorities. Lack of English proficiency and unfamiliarity with basic rights and law enforcement also present a barrier for many immigrants and refugees. As reported in the Chicago Police Department’s 2007 Annual Report, only 1% (143) of 13,616 Chicago Police Officers speaks or understands an Asian language<sup>15</sup>, and these officers are not necessarily stationed in districts with large Asian American populations. The Chicago Police Department’s personnel reports currently do not record Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders as a racial group, and only 2.7% (363) of their officers are classified in the “Other Race” category (i.e. not Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, or Native American). However, according to the 2000 Census, Asian Americans comprise nearly 5% of the city’s population. The limited availability of bicultural and bilingual Asian American officers relative to the size of the population may contribute to a distant relationship between Asian American communities and law enforcement.

Chicago’s Chinatown and Devon Avenue neighborhoods have uncovered numerous anecdotal incidents of crime, many of which seem to have gone unreported to police. In Chinatown, there are multiple reports of muggings and beatings. In one instance, an elderly woman was robbed of her purse and was beaten by three individuals. Other senior citizens complained that when they reported similar robberies to the police, officers advised them to not carry a purse or to not go outside alone. The victims were left with the impression that officers were more focused on the victims’ behavior rather than on arresting the offenders. Youth have reported that their family members have been crime victims and have not reported these incidents because they cannot communicate well in English. Even when crimes are reported, often the responding officers are not able to communicate in Chinese. Similar issues of underreporting because of language barriers were reported in the Devon area. In these and other neighborhoods, working relationships between residents, business owners, and police must be improved in order to improve community safety.

<sup>13</sup> Hart, Timothy C. and Rennison, Callie. *Reporting Crime to the Police 1992-2000*. U.S. Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Chicago Police Department. *Annual Report 2007*. Exhibit 23b. [http://egov.cityofchicago.org/webportal/COCWebPortal/COC\\_EDITORIAL/07ARComplete\\_1.pdf](http://egov.cityofchicago.org/webportal/COCWebPortal/COC_EDITORIAL/07ARComplete_1.pdf). 64.

## Health Care

### Recommendations:

- Reduce health disparities by supporting culturally and linguistically appropriate community-based programs that increase access to preventive health services.
- Strengthen and enforce regulations requiring the provision of language assistance services to limited English proficient consumers of health care services.
- Support measures to expand health care coverage for low- and middle- income families, including small business owners.
- Increase funding for health research within Asian American ethnic populations.

### Background:

Asian Americans face a number of health and mental health disparities, with regard to the prevalence of certain illnesses and conditions, as well as regarding access to care. First, in terms of disease prevalence, Asian Americans have disproportionately higher prevalence of hepatitis B, tobacco use, and tuberculosis,<sup>16</sup> among other conditions.

Of the 1.25 million Americans living with chronic hepatitis B, approximately half are Asian American. In 2002, the hepatitis B-related death rate among Asian Americans was 6 times higher than the rate among whites.<sup>17</sup> A recent unpublished study by the Asian Health Coalition of Illinois (AHCI) and the Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) study found that in Chicago 29% of Cambodians and 8% of Vietnamese surveyed were diagnosed with hepatitis B.

The percentages of AA males and females using cigarettes in the past year are 30% and 14% respectively,<sup>18</sup> and local studies report that over 70% of Laotian and Cambodian males, 43% of Vietnamese American males, and 39% of Korean American males are smokers, compared to 24% of the total U.S. population.<sup>19</sup> The AHCI-SUHI Chicago study found that 31% of Chinese males, 26% of Cambodian males smoked compared to 20% of white males surveyed in selected Chicago neighborhoods.

In 2004, Asian Americans were 5.6 times more likely to have tuberculosis than the total U.S. population. Tuberculosis is 13 times more common among Cambodians, Chinese, Laotians, Koreans, Indians, Vietnamese, and Filipinos than among the total U.S. population<sup>20 21</sup>. The AHCI-SUHI Chicago study found that 48% of Cambodians, 6% of Vietnamese, and 5% of Chinese respondents had been diagnosed with TB.

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<sup>16</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Asian American Populations*. Office of Minority Health & Health Disparities.

<sup>17</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Hepatitis B: Asian Americans Fact Sheet*. National Center for Infectious Disease (NCID).

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information. *Asian/Pacific Islanders*.

<sup>19</sup> Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations. <http://www.aapcho.com/links/AAmen.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Reported Tuberculosis in the United States*. National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHSTP). Table 16. 2004.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). *Asian American/Pacific Islander Profile*. Office of Minority Health (OMH).

In addition, type 2 diabetes is a growing problem among several Asian American groups.<sup>22</sup> The AHCI-SUHI Chicago study found that 14% of Vietnamese, 10% of Cambodians, and 9% of Chinese respondents were diagnosed with diabetes, compared with 5% of whites, 10% of African Americans, and 3% of Latinos in selected neighborhoods.

Asian Americans also face disparities in terms of access to care. The majority of Asian Americans are immigrants and refugees, and in many Asian countries, people are accustomed to seeking health care only after symptoms appear, rather than utilizing preventive screening measures. As the traditional caregivers of the family, many Asian American women in particular tend to forego their own health care, putting the health and welfare of their other family members before their own. For example, in 2003, Asian American women who are ages 18 and older were least likely of all racial and ethnic groups to have had a Pap smear (68.3%).<sup>23</sup> Locally, the AHCI-SUHI study found that just 52% of Cambodian, 36% of Chinese, and 68% of Vietnamese women respondents aged 18 and older had a Pap smear, compared to 88% of the general U.S. population. In the same Chicago study, only 47% of Cambodian, 39% of Chinese and 61% of Vietnamese women who are ages 39 and older reported having a mammogram in the last 2 years in comparison to 83% of the overall U.S. population.

In addition to barriers to preventive care, additional factors contributing to health disparities include lack of health insurance, language and cultural barriers, and stigma associated with certain conditions.<sup>24</sup> A national study by the Commonwealth Fund found that 52% of Korean Americans and 32% of Vietnamese Americans were uninsured, compared to just 15% of the overall U.S. population. Locally, 31% of Cambodians and Vietnamese, and 44% of Chinese American respondents in the AHCI-SUHI study did not have health insurance.

In the AHCI-SUHI study, 36% of Cambodians, 33% of Chinese, and 16% of Vietnamese participants who did not speak English well reported rarely or never having interpreters in health care settings. In collaboration with the Lao American Organization of Elgin, the Asian American recently conducted a survey of 50 Laotian seniors in the Elgin area, and found that while none of them spoke English fluently, 90% of them were not offered interpretation services during their health care visits. These local findings are supported by national data; the Commonwealth Fund found that Asian Americans were more likely than other groups to report communication problems with their physicians, and they were less likely to report positive patient-physician interactions.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC). *Diabetes and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*.

<sup>23</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Health US 2005*. National Center for Health Statistics. Table 87.

<sup>24</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Asian American Populations*. Office of Minority Health & Health Disparities.

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, Dora. *Quality of Health Care for Asian Americans* (factsheet). Commonwealth Fund publication #525. March 2002.

## Housing

### Recommendations:

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should establish an Asian American Housing Counseling Center as a resource and clearinghouse.
- Fair housing organizations and enforcement agencies should work with ethnic community-based organizations to conduct a focused outreach campaign to community residents about housing opportunities, housing rights, and complaint procedures.
- More funding from the public and private sectors should be made available to ethnic community-based organizations to actively educate their members regarding housing opportunities.
- HUD should provide incentives and other measures to encourage continued landlord participation in federally subsidized housing programs.

### Background:

In 2002, the Asian American Institute completed a study on housing in the Asian American community, which included analysis of Census data, focus group discussions, and surveys of community-based organizations.<sup>26</sup>

The study indicated that low-income Asian American Chicago residents were extremely burdened by rising housing costs. Most (83.3%) of homeowners in the sample experienced property tax increases. Two-thirds had experienced one to two increases during the time they lived at their current residence. The average number of property tax increases was three.

Through focus group discussions, AAI gathered data on important factors for Asian Americans in looking for housing; their experience during their housing search; barriers that they may have encountered while searching for housing; and identifying resources to assist in accessing affordable housing. During these discussions, participants mostly shared bad experiences regarding their housing search process. Some of the most compelling stories reflected themes of language barriers, lack of returned calls from potential landlords, problems dealing with realtors, and being denied housing on the basis of familial status. The resources that the participants used were realtors, rental agencies, and by “word of mouth” from family and friends. They identified some of the following housing resources that they would like to see available to assist future Asian American home-seekers: workshops for first-time buyers, housing information provided by community-based organizations, and workshops on tenant rights and landlord responsibilities.

The study also gathered information about housing-related services provided by community-based organizations. Of the responding organizations, only 40% of the organizations reported providing housing services, though 86% of organizations responded that they knew about one or more barriers that their clients had experienced regarding obtaining housing. A majority of the organizations reported that language, affordability, access to information, and lack of knowledge of housing rights were issues that concerned the community. Additionally, organizations noted that there is a lack of housing options available to their clients. Unaffordable rent was viewed as the most frequent issue that arose during the housing search, followed by high increases in rent,

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<sup>26</sup> Asian American Institute. *Housing Needs of Asian Pacific Americans in Chicago*. 2002.

and lack of information on how to file complaints. Eighty percent of community-based organizations felt that denial of housing because of children occurred sometimes (60%) or most of the time (20%).

Many of the surveyed Asian American residents and Asian American community organizations have insufficient information about the resources and services provided by housing-related non-profit organizations and government agencies. The majority of the focus group participants did not have appropriate housing-related information, were not able to obtain information when they needed it, or did not know where to turn for information. Language barriers were frequently mentioned as a challenge for residents to overcome to receive this information. Focus group members specifically suggested having housing workshops and information available through community-based organizations.

While several focus group participants mentioned experiencing past housing discrimination, many Asian Americans are unaware of their housing rights and are not knowledgeable about fair housing enforcement agencies. In addition, many may be reluctant to file complaints because of cultural characteristics or the fear of retaliation. Indeed, discussions with several housing organizations revealed that complaints are rarely received from Asian Americans. Without coordinated efforts to combat housing discrimination against Asian American home-seekers, discrimination against them will persist.

In addition to fair housing, affordable housing is a growing concern in Chicago. For example, long-term Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contracts for federally subsidized low-income senior housing are currently expiring, at the same time that local property values are increasing dramatically. As a result, thousands of seniors, including several hundreds of Korean American seniors, are at risk to become displaced. After living in these senior buildings for several decades, displacement from their homes will create an extreme amount of confusion and stress for seniors, especially those with limited English proficiency. Several community organizations, such as the Organization of the North East (ONE) and the Jane Addams Senior Caucus, have been working to preserve affordable senior housing by organizing and educating tenants on their rights, and putting pressure on owners to renew the contracts. The Korean American Resource and Cultural Center (KRCC) is working on solidarity with these housing advocates and is providing language assistance to reach out to diverse tenant groups in at-risk buildings.

## Immigration and Immigrant Integration

### Recommendations:

- Reduce backlogs and delays related to family reunification and naturalization applications.
- Provide a path to citizenship for undocumented workers, families, and students, through legislation such as the DREAM Act.
- Strengthen due process protections within the U.S. immigration system, including detentions and deportation procedures.
- Increase funding for citizenship classes, ESL classes, and other programs that facilitate immigrant integration into U.S. society.

### Background:

Asian immigration to the United States dates back to the 17th century. However, due to U.S. immigration laws, Asians were systematically prevented from immigrating in significant numbers until 1965. According to the 2006 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, there are over 14.6 million Asian Americans living in the U.S., and 61 percent (over 8.9 million) of them are immigrants. Asian Americans have arrived as refugees, asylum seekers, through employment-based programs, as students, as visitors, and as survivors of human trafficking. Most Asian American immigrants though arrive through the family visa system. In 2006, for example, 63% of immigrants from Asian came through family-based immigration.<sup>27</sup>

Family-based immigration is a cornerstone of the American immigration system and most Asian Americans can trace their roots to this immigration system. Yet community members waiting for their relatives to join them in this country face some of the worst backlogs of any ethnic or racial group. Asian American citizens must wait between 6 and 22 years to be reunited with adult children and siblings after petitioning for them, and spouses and children of lawful permanent residents must wait between 5 and 11 years to be eligible for immigrant visas.<sup>28</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* reported one case of a Filipina American who has been waiting for her sister for over 24 years. These situations of family separation have caused tremendous psychological, emotional, and financial distress among Asian American communities and families.

While immigration is often seen as a Latino issue, in particular when it comes to undocumented immigration, the Pew Hispanic Center estimated there were 1.5 million unauthorized migrants from the Asian continent in 2005, representing about 13% of the total.<sup>29</sup> Of those, the largest groups of undocumented Asians were Chinese (23%), followed by Koreans (20%), Filipinos (17%), and Indians (14 %), according to a study by the former Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Within the immigration system, Asian immigrants are also being affected by deportation proceedings and detention. The Korean American Resource and Cultural Center (KRCC)

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<sup>27</sup> United States Office of Immigration Statistics. *Yearbook 2006*.

[http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2006/OIS\\_2006\\_Yearbook.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2006/OIS_2006_Yearbook.pdf). 27.

<sup>28</sup> National Council of Asian Pacific Americans. *Call to Action: A Platform for Asian American and Pacific Islander National Policy Priorities*. 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Passel, Jeffrey S. *The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.* Pew Hispanic Center. 2006.

recently assisted in the case of a Korean American detainee held in McHenry County jail for an immigration related issue. The detainee had not been provided a translator, nor understood the charges against her. KRCC was greatly concerned that the detainee could not defend herself nor assist in her own defense because of the lack of language translation. This incident raises real questions of civil rights violations, and the need to ensure due process throughout the immigration system. Given the high number of limited English proficient immigrants who are detained, language access is a prevailing need.

For community-based organizations working with new immigrant and refugee populations, there is an important need for funding and increased support for immigrant integration programs. Many of the community-based organizations utilize volunteers as ESL teachers and tutors for citizenship. The Chinese Mutual Aid Association, which provides services and assistance to a variety of Asian ethnic communities, often reports how their instructional classes are full and could benefit from more paid teachers and tutors. With the implementation of new naturalization tests (as of October 1, 2008), already organizations, such as the Cambodian Association of Illinois, are reporting that students are finding the test harder and in need of more instruction and preparation. Increased funding and support of these programs would benefit and strengthen the opportunities for immigrant integration into the U.S.

## Public Education

### Recommendations:

- Increase Asian American studies in K-12 curriculum and higher education.
- Increase Asian American bilingual staffing in public schools.
- Increase Asian American parent participation in public schools.
- Ensure that data collection and reporting on Asian American students is by ethnicity and English proficiency.
- Ensure that school-safety and anti-harassment trainings include a component that incorporates an Asian American focus.

### Background:

Popular misperceptions and stereotypes about Asian Americans have historically led to discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes. The public education system can play a critical role in preventing discrimination and hate activity by creating a greater understanding of Asian Pacific Americans and our history. Illinois statutes and the Illinois Learning Standards omit mention of the need for public elementary schools and high schools to teach Asian American history. The Illinois statutes currently provide for a unit of instruction each on Black History, Holocaust Study, History of Women and the Irish Famine.

Similar to curriculum gaps in secondary education, there is not a single university or college in Illinois that offers a major or has a department in Asian American Studies. Only in Fall 2002 was the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign able to offer a minor in Asian American Studies. At the University of Illinois at Chicago, Asian Pacific Americans comprise 25% of undergraduates, 20% of graduate students, and 34% of professional students, but UIC has yet to offer even a minor in Asian American Studies. Faculty diversity is another issue that needs to be addressed, as well as the severe under-representation of Asian American administrators and policymakers in higher education.

Since 1970, the number of Asian American students has increased every year in higher education. Asian American students and faculty frequently are not included in affirmative action programs, such as student recruitment programs, minority scholarships, and hiring and other minority incentive programs. As a result, most of the students come from a few ethnic groups that do not reflect the full diversity of the Asian American community. For example, 53% of Cambodian Americans in Chicago over 25 have not received a high school diploma, while 60% of Filipino Americans have received a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Chicago Public School website, Asian Americans make up 3.3% of 400,000 students enrolled in a Chicago school, 3.1% of the teachers, and 1.0% of CPS principals.<sup>31</sup> Data regarding Asian American students has been difficult to find, especially in disaggregated form. According to the Chicago Tribune, a study by the 2002 U.S. Department of Education produced a rare look into the experiences of Asian American students according to ethnicity. The study “found that Southeast Asians, including Cambodians, Laotians and Hmong have reading and

<sup>30</sup> Lau, Yvonne, PhD. Conference Presentation. Association for Asian American Studies. 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Chicago Public Schools. [www.cps.k12.il.us/ataglance.html](http://www.cps.k12.il.us/ataglance.html). 2008.

math scores comparable with Latino and African-American students.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, in 2000, 13% of CPS elementary schools have Asian American students. Of those 68 schools, 8 of them had a student population that were over 40% limited English-proficient.<sup>33</sup> In general 2000 Census data show that 35% of Asian American households in Chicago are linguistically isolated, meaning that no one aged 14 or older speaks English very well. Improved data collection would allow for better analysis of problems and developing more effective solutions.

These statistics describe the youth that many Asian American organizations assist—those from low-income new immigrant communities. Based on their experiences, 8 of these organizations offered anecdotal testimonies before the Illinois State Board of Education in January 2008. They highlighted the concerns of Asian American student and parents, including the lack of Asian American studies reflected in the school curriculum, educational achievement disparities of Southeast Asian and Filipino students, the need for increased bilingual staffing and culturally and linguistically competent counseling, the need for increased outreach and involvement of Asian American parents, and the need for ethnic-specific data from public school systems. Many of these issues have also been identified as unmet needs at the national level in recent reports from the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center (*A Dream Denied*, 2003), and the Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (*An Invisible Crisis*, 1997).

Similar to data on students, information about bilingual staff at CPS schools has also been difficult to gather, however, anecdotal stories from students and youth workers lead many to believe that there is a shortage of teachers, and particularly counselors. Additionally, while there is ample research showing the positive effects of parental involvement in student achievement, this is not a strong component in many Asian American students’ lives. Whether because of language or cultural barriers, the difficulties that students face in the classroom are compounded by a breakdown in communication between teachers and parents.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, with the rash of gun violence against CPS students, more Asian American students are coming forward to share their stories of school bullying, harassment and violence. A student at a northside high school reported the commonplace racial epithets and physical assault. Chinatown youth also report being targets for violence in their high schools, which has led some to drop out of school altogether.

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<sup>32</sup> Ahmed, Azam, and Little, Darnell. *Struggling Asians Go Unnoticed*. Chicago Tribune. March 30, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> 2000 data from CPS and Census, analyzed by Heather Smith, DePaul University, 2005

<sup>34</sup> *Teachers Supply and Demand in the U.S.* American Association for Employment in Education. 1998.

## Veterans

### Recommendation:

- Pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Bill (S.B. 1315), which would provide U.S. veterans' benefits to Filipino World War II veterans, who were then U.S. nationals drafted into American military service.

### Background:

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Philippine government, in 2007, there were an estimated 6,000 Filipino World War II veterans living in the United States and 12,000 in the Philippines. The Illinois Veterans' Equity Center estimates there are 100-150 Filipino World War II veterans currently residing in Illinois.

In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt drafted soldiers of the Philippine Commonwealth Army -- into American military service during WWII. During that time, the Philippines were a territory of the US, and these soldiers were then considered U.S. veterans with active service by the U.S. Veterans' Administration -- until the Rescission Act in 1946, stripping them of their benefits. Since then, they have been slowly receiving their rightly earned benefits piecemeal, much of them near the end of their lives. Under the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act, 24,000 Filipino veterans were naturalized as U.S. citizens based on their past military service. They later became eligible for burial benefits with military honors in national cemeteries as U.S. veterans, and were allowed to be patients in VA hospitals, clinics and nursing homes, though they are not eligible for certain pensions that their American counterparts receive in the U.S.<sup>35</sup>

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 (SB 1315) would restore U.S. veterans' benefits to those who served before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts as active military service.<sup>36</sup> Senate Bill 1315 passed the Senate in September 2008, but this provision was removed from the House version of the bill. An alternate version of the bill passed in the House (HB6897), but this version would provide only limited benefits. As of October 2008, advocates are urging the Conference Committee to re-include Filipino veterans' benefits provisions in the final joint House-Senate version of the bill.

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<sup>35</sup> American Coalition for Filipino Veterans Inc. *Factsheet*. 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. GovTrack.us. H.R. 760.

## Women

### Recommendations:

- Develop and expand appropriate outreach programs to educate Asian American communities on rights and resources for domestic violence and trafficking survivors.
- Increase funding for domestic violence service agencies providing multilingual and multicultural services.

### Background:

Various community-based studies compiled by the Asian Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence indicate that between 41-60% of Asian American women experience sexual or domestic violence during their lifetimes.<sup>37</sup> A 1986 study of Korean American women in Chicago found that 60% had experienced physical abuse by an intimate partner, and 37% had experienced sexual abuse by an intimate partner.

Domestic abuse in the Asian American community may also include any of the following:<sup>38</sup>

- Battering or emotional abuse by in-laws and/or members of the survivor's family;
- Pressure from the survivor's own family to stay in the relationship and tolerate the abuse;
- Blaming the survivor for bringing dishonor to the family;
- Threats of deportation and withholding of the survivor's immigration documents.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the largest number of human trafficking survivors currently originates from Asian countries, with 23% of cases from Korean and 11% from Thailand.<sup>39</sup> Recent high-profile Asian women trafficking survivors noted by the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NASIAN AMERICANWF) were exposed to sexual abuse<sup>40</sup> and were exploited as sweatshop workers<sup>41</sup> and domestic workers<sup>42</sup>. The State of Illinois is part of a national Rescue and Restore coalition comprised of governmental agencies, community organizations, and advocates that has made anti-trafficking a priority.

Too frequently, survivors of domestic violence and trafficking do not report the abuse to law enforcement. Many of these survivors have limited English proficiency, limited incomes, and are unfamiliar and unaware of their legal rights and existing community resources. Often, their immigration status is dependent on their abusers. Extensive community outreach and education is needed to reach survivors as well as their friends, co-workers, and relatives, who can potentially support them in seeking services and options. Funding for such programs should be equitable, and provide for the increased costs in delivering comprehensive multi-lingual and multicultural services.

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<sup>37</sup> Dabby, Firoza Chic. *Gender Violence in Asian and Pacific Islander Communities*. Publication of the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence. Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum. 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. *Assessment of U.S. Government Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Fiscal Year 2005*. [http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/annualreports/tr2006/assessment\\_of\\_efforts\\_to\\_combat\\_tip.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/annualreports/tr2006/assessment_of_efforts_to_combat_tip.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Yi, Matthew. *Berkeley Landlord Jailed for 8 Years*. San Francisco Chronicle. June 20, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. *Anti-Trafficking News Bulletin, Volume 2, Issue 2*. August 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Sengupta, Somini. *Settlement Reached in Maid's Suit Against Diplomat*. New York Times. July 15, 2000.