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Introduction & Acknowledgements

The Asian American community in Illinois is growing dramatically. Before 1970, there were 65,000 Asian Americans in the state, and today, according to the 2010 Census, 668,694 Asian Americans reside in Illinois. In the last ten years alone, the Asian American community in Illinois has grown by over 41%. Today, we are on the Illinois map in a way that we have not been before, and as our community continues to grow, it is crucial to understand the realities of Asian Americans in Illinois – the breadth of our community’s needs and the resources that sustain us.

To map out the diversity of our community and its organizations, the Asian American Institute, member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, presents the newest edition of the *Asian American Compass: A Guide to Navigating the Community*. This edition reflects the latest changes in Asian American demographics in Illinois, along with updated contact information for community-based organizations and resources.

The Asian American Institute thanks the many organizations and leaders throughout the community who contributed to this edition of the Compass and helped to update and review the community profiles. This edition would not have been possible without their participation and insights. In addition, we are grateful to the Illinois Ethnic Coalition, who allowed us to reprint and adapt a number of community profiles from The Ethnic Handbook.

We designed the Compass as a one-stop resource for the Asian American community in Illinois. We hope that the Compass will continue to provide and improve the public’s understanding of Asian American communities, and help to plot out courses of action to meet community needs.

*Asian American Institute
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Asian American Justice Center
(AAJC)

About the Asian American Institute

Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States. While they are often seen as a homogenous group, in actuality, Asian Americans are an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse community. According to the 2010 Census, they number 668,694 in Illinois, representing 5.2% of the state's population, an increase of 41% since 2000. In Illinois, this diverse and often-overlooked community includes Americans of Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Nepali, Pakistani, Thai, Tibetan, and Vietnamese descent. However, the community continues to be stereotyped as “perpetual foreigners” and “model minorities,” causing them to be excluded from full participation in American society.

Our Mission

In response to the needs of the fast-growing population, a group of Asian American community activists, academic professionals, and business leaders established the Asian American Institute in 1992 as a pan-Asian not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The Asian American Institute was the first organization to address the policy concerns of Chicago's diverse Asian American communities. Our mission is to empower the Asian American community through advocacy, utilizing research, education, and coalition-building. Specifically, AAI works to:

- Improve cooperation and mutual understanding by bringing together Asian American communities of diverse backgrounds
- Raise the visibility of the Asian American community and effectively convey the community's concerns to elected officials, policy makers, and the general public
- Gather and disseminate data about Asian American communities

To accomplish our mission, AAI works in the following program areas:

Community Organizing and Civic Engagement

AAI strongly believes in community organizing as a core strategy for Asian American empowerment. AAI builds and strengthens relationships with leaders of Asian American service organizations and institutions so that we can engage with the community to take action and promote participation in the democratic process.

Legal and Policy Advocacy

AAI advocates with elected officials and other policymakers to enact laws and policies that promote social, economic, and political equity for the Asian American community as a whole. The program includes initiatives in the areas of affirmative action, voting rights, redistricting, hate crimes, discrimination, and language access to health care.

Leadership Development

AAI's leadership programs aim to create a pipeline of informed, aware, and strategic leaders who are passionate about both leadership and Asian American issues. AAI aims to cultivate emerging leaders and strengthen existing leaders to create a network of change; we strive to build a collective force of strong Asian American leaders to be effective agents of change in the corporate, government, nonprofit, and academic sectors.

Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Since 2005, AAI has been affiliated with the Asian American Justice Center, Asian Law Caucus, and Asian Pacific American Legal Center, providing a Midwest perspective in shaping the national Asian American public policy agenda. In June 2010, we formalized our affiliation with these outstanding organizations around a shared vision, values, and a national issues platform. As members of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, we work together to promote a fair and equitable society for all, by working for civil and human rights and empowering Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities. In formalizing these long-time relationships, we are expanding our networks, resources, and impact, and speaking with one unified and powerful voice.

- **Asian American Justice Center (AAJC)** Washington, D.C.
AAJC is a national organization dedicated to advancing the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and building a fair and equitable society for all through public education, public policy, community organizing and litigation.
 - **Asian Law Caucus (ALC)** San Francisco, CA.
ALC is the nation's oldest legal organization defending the civil rights of Asians and Pacific Islanders, particularly low-income, immigrant and underserved communities.
 - **Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC)**
Los Angeles & Orange County, CA.
APALC is the nation's largest legal organization serving Asians and Pacific Islanders, through direct legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy and leadership development.
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At this important moment in the Asian American civil and human rights movement, four leading organizations—the Asian American Institute, Asian American Justice Center, Asian Law Caucus and Asian Pacific American Legal Center—are strengthening our alliance by coming together under one name, Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

Together we will advance the goals we already work toward as individual organizations— promoting a fair and equitable society for all, strengthening civil and human rights, and empowering Asian American, Pacific Islander and other vulnerable communities. By affiliating under the same name, we will streamline and coordinate our efforts to promote our common goals while remaining equal and independent partners.

Each group boasts staff with valuable expertise and deep experience. The Asian American Institute (AAI) is the Midwest’s leading pan-Asian organization dedicated to empowering the Asian American community through advocacy, research, education and coalition building. The Asian American Justice Center (AAJC) is one of the foremost national organizations advancing civil and human rights for Asian Americans and building a fair and equitable society for all through education, public policy, community organizing and litigation. The Asian Law Caucus (ALC) is the oldest legal organization in the country defending the civil rights of Asian and Pacific Islander communities. It focuses on the needs of low-income, immigrant and under-served communities. The Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) is the nation’s largest legal organization addressing the needs of Asians and Pacific Islanders by advocating for civil rights, providing legal services, education and building coalitions.

As the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, we will expand the Asian American community’s reach and effectiveness by speaking in one unified and powerful voice.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice is to promote a fair and equitable society for all by working for civil and human rights and empowering Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision a fair and equitable society for all that ensures civil and human rights for Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and other communities. To achieve this, we will work together—as equal and independent partners under one name, speaking with one unified and powerful voice—to promote justice, empower our communities, bring local and national constituents together, and strengthen our multi-racial democracy.



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