



California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs

Strengthening and
Advocating for
Asian American-
Native Hawai'ian/
Pacific Islander
Communities

Annual Report 2009

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Letter from the Chair

GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER, MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE AND THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT STATE OF CALIFORNIA:



The potential is palpable. Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders are the fastest growing populations in California. We have more representation at the local, state, and federal levels than ever before. Our community-based organizations continue to serve with strength despite economic struggles. Our roots now run several generations deep. Our presence is seen, felt, and heard in the halls and chambers of all major institutions. Our contributions to the social, economic, and political fabric of California run the gamut and are undeniably needed. 2009 reflected and revealed this coming of age and the commission was honored to contribute to this broad-based effort.

This has been an extraordinary year of strategic planning, new initiatives, and tangible accomplishments for the CAPIAA that could happen only because of the collective energies of our commissioners and communities. I am proud to be serving as chair for such a dedicated and talented group of leaders.

We thank the community organizations whose vision enabled them to collaborate with the commission on a variety of projects, most notably the API Policy Summit. They include Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality, Asian American Education Institute, Asian and Pacific Islanders California Action Network, California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, and California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus Institute. Key individuals and other organizations and sponsors are noted throughout this report.

We owe much gratitude to the California Asian Pacific Islander Joint Legislative Caucus, co-chaired by Assemblymember Ted Lieu and Alan Nakanishi, and we congratulate Assemblymembers Warren Furutani and Van Tran as the new co-chairs. We also express our appreciation to each caucus member for their role in partnering with us as we conveyed our issues and recommendations to California's leadership: Vice Chair Assemblymember Mary Hayashi, Assemblymembers Mike Eng, Paul Fong, Ted Lieu, Fiona Ma, Alberto Torrico, Mariko Yamada, and Senators Carol Liu and Leland Yee.

We also thank all of the past commissioners, and one whose term expired this year, Paul Osaki. We are pleased to welcome Alice Wong to this body and look forward to her expertise as a lawyer and active community leader. Special acknowledgment goes to Andrew Medina, our "behind the scenes" consultant who played a key role in keeping our work moving along. And our gratitude goes to Bill Wong for his advice and support from day one.

This is my last term and words cannot express how much of an honor it has been to serve as chair. I will be close by, working with this outstanding group of commissioners to continue our work together.

In Unity,

Diane Ujjiye

Chair, Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs

California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs

CHARGE

The charge of the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs is to:

- ▣ Advise the Governor and Legislature on how to respond most effectively to views, needs, and concerns of the state's Asian and Pacific Islander American communities.
- ▣ Assist the state in being an effective liaison and conducting outreach with Asian and Pacific Islander American communities through information dissemination about Asian and Pacific Islander American communities concerning public and private programs beneficial to their interests.
- ▣ Examine issues of access and cultural language sensitivity by state agencies, departments, and commissions.
- ▣ Provide assistance to policymakers and state agencies in identifying Asian and Pacific Islander American communities' needs and issues and develop appropriate responses and programs.
- ▣ Educate the public about hate crimes against Asian and Pacific Islander American communities.

HISTORY

Former Assemblymember George Nakano (Torrance) authored AB 116 in 2002 to establish the commission, with members of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus co-authoring the bill. The concept for the commission originated from strong community support and advocacy. The commission's creation is an historic recognition of the accomplishments and needs of California's growing Asian American-Native Hawai'ian/Pacific Islander (AA-NH/PI) populations.

The commission consists of 13 members appointed by the Governor and the Legislature. We are a citizens board comprised of leaders from different vocations, backgrounds, and regions of the state. Individually and collectively, the commissioners give an impartial assessment of AA-NH/Pis' needs. We seek to make California's government more responsive and efficient by helping state agencies, departments, and commissions improve service delivery to our communities. We also disseminate information on state programs and services that are important to AA-NH/Pis.

The commission has been operating since January 2004. Although established by statute, we do not receive any public money. Donations and private resources fully fund our operations.

MISSION The mission of the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs is to elevate the political, economic, and social issues of Asians and Pacific Islanders by contributing to and strengthening how state government addresses the needs, issues, and concerns of the diverse and complex Asian and Pacific Islander American communities.

About the Commissioners



Diane Ujiye, *Chair*

A founding commissioner, Ms. Ujiye is director of Asian and Pacific Islanders California Action Network. Over the last 20 years, she has been in the forefront of addressing issues that affect API communities. Her leadership has produced innovative and significant advances throughout the state.



Nitasha Sawhney, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Sawhney is a partner in the East Bay office of GCR LLP, where she specializes in education, labor, and employment law matters. She is active with numerous organizations, including serving as a legal advisor to the Sikh Coalition, a national civil rights organization.



Catherine 'Ofa Mann, *Treasurer*

Ms. 'Ofa Mann is a leader in many organizations, including APAPA, the Council of Asian Pacific Islanders Together for Advocacy and Leadership, and To'utupu 'oe 'Otu Felenite Association of Sacramento.



Dianne Yamashiro-Omi, *Secretary*

Ms. Yamashiro-Omi is a senior program officer for The California Endowment. Her long career in community service and activism runs the breadth of staff, consultant, board member, and volunteer for numerous nonprofits and some of the largest philanthropies in the Bay Area.



Norman H. Hui, *D.D.S.*

Dr. Hui is a founding member of the commission and a strong advocate for community and civic involvement. His affiliations include the San Francisco Chinatown Lion's Club, Northeast Medical Services, Organization of Chinese Americans, and Chinese American Political Association.



Kim-Yen Huynh

Ms. Huynh is a leader in Orange County's business community, actively promoting collaboration among ethnic businesses. She works tirelessly on a number of issues related to community improvement. Since 1980 she has served as an executive manager with various financial institutions.



Mimi Song

Ms. Song serves as CEO of Mimi Song Realty Group, a commercial real estate brokerage firm in Southern California. She is involved in a variety of economic ventures and nonprofit organizations, all devoted to bridging cultures and developing leadership in a global economy.



Alice Wong

Ms. Wong is the first Asian American prosecutor assigned to the Homicide Unit of the Sacramento District Attorney's Office. She is now in private practice with law partner Jerry Chong. She is president of CAPITAL Foundation, a nonprofit committed to API education and empowerment.



Andrew Wong

A partner with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP, Mr. Wong is president of the Board of Education for the Pomona Unified School District. He is active with many groups, including the Diamond Bar Community Foundation and Sports Educators of America.



Charlie Woo

Mr. Woo is co-founder and CEO of Megatoys. He is a former chair of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, and the only Asian American to have held this position. He is regarded as the founder of the Los Angeles Toy District, a once-blighted area that is now a vibrant trade center.



Blong Xiong

Mr. Xiong serves as a council member for the City of Fresno. He is an outspoken advocate on issues ranging from education, youth, and civic participation to community and economic development. He is the first Asian American and Hmong to hold a council position in Fresno.

Highlights of 2009



Commissioners (l-r) with Assemblymember Ted Lieu (standing center): Dianne Yamashiro-Omi, Blong Xiong, Nitasha Sawhney, Kim-Yen Huynh, Diane Ujiye, Charlie Woo, Mimi Song, Andrew Wong, Dr. Norman Hui, and Catherine 'Ofa Mann. (Photo by Melissa Ramoso, courtesy Hon. Lieu's office)

If 2008 was a transition year that welcomed six new commissioners after five years of start-up activities, then 2009 was the year that our commissioners took charge to redefine and carry on our mission. We started the year with a winter retreat that established priorities and a solid work plan, a highly successful policy summit, reception, and gala banquet in the spring, and the pursuit of policy issues important to our Asian American-Native Hawai'ian/Pacific Islander (AA-NH/PI) communities. This report shares with the Governor, Legislature, and our communities the highlights of our 2009 activities. We present a summary of the policy briefs that resulted from our Asian Pacific Islander (API) Policy Summit, and end our report with extrapolations from the Planning Memo that outlines our long-term goals.

WINTER RETREAT

The commission's winter retreat in Los Angeles resulted in the development of a 2009 work plan and two-year strategic guide that set goals for our organizational development. Since the beginning of operations, the commission has done an excellent job launching a platform upon which AA-NH/PI issues can be voiced. The challenge now is growing our statewide reputation and influence and honing our relationships with our communities. The commissioners at the retreat were unanimously ready for the job ahead.

API POLICY SUMMIT

Connecting the Dots: The Catalyst for a Stronger Community Voice

On May 26 & 27, the commission partnered with Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality, Asian American Education Institute, Asian and Pacific Islanders California Action Network, California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, and California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus Institute to present the 2009 API Policy Summit in Sacramento.

The summit marked a paradigm

shift from viewing the event as a two-day process to an ongoing program that builds upon each year in a focused fashion. We structured the summit into four tracks: (1) civil rights, (2) education, (3) health and human services, and (4) housing and community development. Roundtable sessions strengthened and connected the discussions of these issues.

More than 300 attendees representing AA-NH/PI organizations from across the state participated.

In addition to issues advocacy around the four tracks and legislative and budget training sessions, we conducted a statewide scan of our infrastructure, resulting in a Planning Memo that serves as a roadmap to building our capacity.

San Francisco Board of Education Vice President Jane Kim emceed the first day of events. Joining AA-NH/PI leaders in the presentations were State Controller John Chiang and Assemblymembers Warren Furutani (Long Beach), Ted Lieu (Torrance), and Van Tran (Costa Mesa).

With co-conveners and community leaders working tirelessly together to plan and execute the summit, numerous dots were indeed connected.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITY IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

We continued to monitor the work begun at our inception, including issues related to the Central Valley's Southeast Asian community. Over the past five years, a services infrastructure has slowly expanded and while there is much room for growth, basic health and mental health programs are receiving support to address the resettlement needs of Southeast Asians living in this part of the state.

ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER PROBLEM GAMBLING TASK FORCE

Gambling remains a significant concern for AA-NH/PI communities. With our founding of the Asian Pacific Islander Problem Gambling Task Force in 2004, we are supporting the efforts to address this serious issue. This year, the task force worked closely with California's Office of Problem Gambling's Alcohol Drug Program in its long-awaited pilot treatment services for gamblers in need of assistance. The

task force also launched a Web site at apiproblemgambling.com where more information can be found.

HOUSING FORECLOSURE CRISIS

From the 2008 API Policy Summit, the commission took up the topic of foreclosures, joining the Asian and Pacific Islander Joint Legislative Caucus to convene a hearing on the impact of the crisis on our communities. In concert with our summit co-conveners, we are committed to ensuring that affordable housing and community development remain high priorities, not only through the dedicated summit track but by supporting groups such as the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development and the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council.

OUTREACH AND VISIBILITY

As part of the outreach efforts identified in our 2009 work plan, commissioners took as many opportu-

nities as possible to connect with our communities. In April, we embarked on a fact-finding survey to expand our knowledge of the issues faced by AA-NH/PIs. We interviewed community leaders to learn about their concerns and strengthen our ties to their organizing work. The survey was an important process for improving our understanding of which populations needed more concerted outreach for the summit and other advocacy.

Throughout the year, we used the media to introduce our activities to the public, including appearing on cable programs for the Vietnamese and Pacific Islander communities.

In October, CAPIAA participated in Strength, Connect, and Strategies for Success, the first Leadership Conference hosted by the Asian American Business Women Association in Orange County. Over 200 people attended this successful conference on the educational and business needs of Asian and Asian American women.

API POLICY SUMMIT'S GALA BANQUET

The gala event was a celebration of leaders in AA-NH/PI communities. Pamela Wu, from the dean's office at the UC Davis School of Law, emceed the evening's program. Carole Hayashino of the API Legislative Caucus Institute presented the Policy Impact Award to the members of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus. Assemblymember Warren Furutani bestowed the Community Impact Award to the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council. State Controller John Chiang recognized Gary Locke, U.S. Secretary of Commerce, as this year's special honoree. Diane Ujjiye, commission chair and APISCAN director, closed the evening by underscoring everyone's role in Connecting the Dots.

Summit attendees (l-r): Mariko Kahn, Dennis Arguelles, Jay Aromin, Mark Masaoka, Miya Iwataki, Assemblymember Warren Furutani, Jury Candelario, Wendy Wang, and Sam Joo. (Photo by Peter Vang)



Commissioners at the gala (l-r): Catherine 'Ofa Mann, Dianne Yamashiro-Omi, Blong Xiong, APISCAN Co-Chair Peter Vang, and Dr. Norman Hui. (Photo courtesy APISCAN)

The California Asian Pacific Islander Policy Summit Policy Briefs: Background, Policy Priorities, and Recommendations



Samoa disaster relief presentation at CSU Dominican Hills. (Photo courtesy APisCAN)



Youth sojourn to Manzanar. (Photo courtesy JACL-PSW)

SUMMARY OF THE JULY 2009 WORKING DRAFT

To prepare for the 2009 Asian Pacific Islander Policy Summit, the commission and our co-convening organizations asked community leaders to work with several consultants to identify key policy issues facing Asian American-Native Hawai'ian/Pacific Islanders (AA-NH/PIs). The result was a set of policy briefs identifying long-term priorities and describing strategies for strengthening our communities in the areas of civil rights, education, health and human services, and housing and community development. The briefs are working drafts, intended to stimulate discussion and help inform public policy decision-makers about AA-NH/PI priorities in California. The following is a summary of the issues and policy recommendations outlined in “The California Asian Pacific Islander Policy Summit Policy Briefs: Background, Policy Priorities, and Recommendations.”

The complete policy briefs can be found at apiscan.org. (The summaries that follow are not cited, but footnotes can be found in the full report.)

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

AA-NH/PI populations have grown rapidly across the nation in the past decade. Key demographic trends include increased ethnic diversity, limited English proficiency, high naturalization rates, economic diversity, and poverty. Contrary to the “model minority” image, AA-NH/PIs are not doing well across the board. While segments of the community have achieved socioeconomic success, others have income levels well below the state’s median, and their poverty rate is substantially higher.

Because of our community’s diversity, disaggregating data about the various ethnic groups is essential to informed policymaking. Although the groups share common characteristics, they represent a wide spectrum of socioeconomic conditions. In developing education, health, economic, and other social policies at the state and local levels, California policymakers need to carefully examine the challenges facing these rapidly growing communities. By analyzing disaggregated data, policymakers can develop public policies that increase AA-NH/PIs’ capacity to contribute to California’s future.

Civil Rights: Advancing Justice and Equality



Immigrant rights rally in San Francisco.
(Photo courtesy Asian Law Caucus)

This policy brief addresses the struggle of AA-NH/PIs to achieve justice and equality in the United States, describing the importance of increasing protections against hate crimes and racially motivated violence, reforming the U.S. immigration system, and protecting the rights of limited English proficient individuals, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

HATE CRIMES AND RACIALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes and racially motivated violence against AA-NH/PIs continue to increase in California. Contrary to the perception that neo-Nazis are the main antagonists, it is otherwise law-abiding citizens who carry out the majority of these acts, often fueled by prejudicial beliefs or stereotypes about their targeted victims. The incidence of violence against AA-NH/PIs has multiplied dramatically since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, particularly with assaults against the South Asian American community.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▣ Improve law enforcement's investigation and prosecution of hate crimes by establishing clear protocols and improving officer training

on how to respond to reported incidents of hate crimes.

- ▣ Reduce barriers for immigrants and limited English speaking victims to report hate crimes.
- ▣ Strengthen community-based networks that prevent hate violence and respond to hate incidents.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

Beginning with the arrival of Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush, Japanese farm workers in the late 19th century, and Filipinos after the Spanish-American War, the lives of AA-NH/PIs have been intertwined with U.S. laws, policies, and attitudes toward newcomers. In California today, AA-NH/PIs comprise one-third of the immigrant population and many suffer from one of the worst immigration backlogs in the world, with some families waiting more than ten years to be reunited with their relatives. The current system tears apart families, wastes resources, and maintains a permanent underclass of exploitable immigrants.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▣ Keep families together by reducing family immigration backlogs and creating a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.
- ▣ Uphold core American values of freedom and equality by restoring the civil rights and liberties of immigrants.
- ▣ Support state and local efforts to foster immigrant integration and civic participation.

LANGUAGE RIGHTS

To address language rights, California enacted the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act in 1973,

mandating that access to government services be provided for people with limited English skills. The act requires that materials be translated into the languages of individuals who make up 5% or more of the population served by the state agency. To date, few, if any, agencies have complied with the act. This fortifies hurdles for limited English proficient individuals to become more self-sufficient.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▣ Adopt policies that strengthen implementation of the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act.
- ▣ Ensure that services provided by state and local agencies are accessible to immigrants who are in the process of learning English.

LGBT RIGHTS AND MARRIAGE EQUALITY

AA-NH/PIs have been in the forefront of championing LGBT rights, with many AA-NH/PI individuals and couples serving as lead plaintiffs in the 2008 case regarding the right of same-sex couples to marry in California. For many AA-NH/PIs, the denial of fundamental rights to same-sex couples is a potent reminder of California's shameful legacy of discrimination against and exclusion of AA-NH/PIs on the basis of race.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▣ Restore marriage equality for same-sex couples.
- ▣ Allow U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents who are LGBT to sponsor their permanent same-sex partners for immigration purposes.

Promoting Educational Success in the Early Childhood Education, K-12, and Adult Education Systems



Class on early childhood education advocacy at Guam Communications Network in Long Beach. (Photo courtesy APIs/CAN)

As a group, AA-NH/PIs are well educated. Nearly half who are age 25 and older graduate from a four-year college, and almost one-fifth earn a graduate degree. At first blush, it appears educational success is easily attained by AA-NH/PIs. But a closer look reveals the complexity and great disparities that exist among the different AA-NH/PI communities. Six groups—Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, Tongan, Vietnamese, and Fijian—have high school graduation rates that are significantly lower than the state average; more than half the adult population in three Southeast Asian communities do not complete high school. Others—including Samoans, Guamanians, and Native Hawaiians—have above-average high school graduation rates but a relatively low percentage complete college. A few groups—such as Chinese, Thai, and Pakistani—have above-average college graduation rates, yet they also have significant populations that do not complete high school.

This policy brief examines the main education issues faced by AA-NH/PIs and offers recommendations on how California policymakers can help improve our educational and economic success.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ACCESS

Few quality preschool programs exist in neighborhoods where poorer AA-NH/PI families reside, and poorer AA-NH/PI parents do not have the financial or transportation resources for private or out-of-neighborhood early education. The facts are daunting: nine groups—including Vietnamese, Hmong, and Cambodian—have poverty rates higher than the Los Angeles County average. AA-NH/PI parents with limited or no English proficiency and who are unfamiliar with the American education system have difficulty participating in and supporting their children's early education, especially if schools do not have interpreters for their language or dialect.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▣ Increase resources to establish more preschools in AA-NH/PI communities with the highest risk of poverty and high school dropout rates.
- ▣ Improve how AA-NH/PI cultural and linguistic issues are addressed in workforce development; data collection; assessment, curriculum, and evaluation; and access/out-reach/engagement.
- ▣ Require local bodies to adopt early childhood education as a priority and identify resources within existing funding streams to build a local infrastructure.
- ▣ Improve the transition between preschool and K-12 through comprehensive assessments, frameworks, curricula, and workforce training.

K-12 EDUCATION

The primary barriers that undermine AA-NH/PI achievement and contribute to disparities in the K-12 education system are low income and poverty that limit academic preparation for college and make it difficult to balance education, work, and family responsibilities; immigration history that varies widely among groups, with some arriving in the U.S. under challenging circumstances and others able to immigrate because of their educational background and job skills; and limited English proficiency that restricts the ability to participate in certain educational programs and adversely affects academic performance.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▣ Identify strategies for allocating sufficient and stable funding for K-12 public education in California.
- ▣ Support programs at the state level to prepare educators to work with diverse students.
- ▣ Improve data collection and analysis of AA-NH/PI ethnic groups and, based on this information, develop aggressive approaches to addressing student achievement gaps.
- ▣ Improve communications with limited English proficient parents.
- ▣ Provide sufficient resources and promote promising practices that can help English learners achieve proficiency in English.
- ▣ Ensure that the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act or other federal educational reforms address challenges faced by AA-NH/PI English learners.
- ▣ Develop policies to recruit and retain AA-NH/PI educators.

- ❑ Promote the teaching of key foreign languages and wider use of “seals of biliteracy” by school districts to recognize students who are proficient in two or more languages.
- ❑ Establish programs to facilitate collaboration between schools serving AA-NH/PI students and community-based programs that have expertise in addressing cultural and social issues that affect academic performance.
- ❑ Promote AA-NH/PI representation on the State Board of Education, Curriculum Commission, Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and State English Learner Advisory Committee.

ADULT EDUCATION

California’s adult education system of community colleges and adult schools plays a critical role in training AA-NH/Pis, immigrants, and others who do not have a college degree for a job market that relies increasingly on skilled workers. The barriers to the success of AA-NH/Pis in adult education include overcrowded English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, scarcity of vocational training programs for adults who are not fluent in English, and the lack of a clear educational pathway for limited English proficient individuals to pursue education or training beyond entry-level classes.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ Promote integrated instructional programs that offer a range of ESL courses to address various language skill levels and learning goals.
- ❑ Support the professional development of adult educators who interact with immigrant populations.
- ❑ Encourage and support collaboration with organizations that provide adult learners with guidance to meet their educational goals.
- ❑ Support the implementation and evaluation of innovative, cost-effective approaches to address the needs of AA-NH/PI adult learners.

Promoting the Health and Well-being of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders



Asian American Donor Program at a bone marrow donor drive in Oakland Chinatown. (Photo by Elaine Joe)

While Asian and Pacific Islander Americans as a group are above average in income and education, disaggregated data reveal great variations in health and well-being. Such variations between and within AA-NH/PI groups serve as a reminder of our unique health and welfare needs. Common barriers include poverty, low educational attainment, lack of health care coverage with the high rates of uninsured leading to poor access to care, limited English proficiency, and citizenship status. This section delineates policy recommendations for overcoming

these barriers and promoting the health and well-being of AA-NH/Pis.

SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS AND BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING HEALTHY OUTCOMES

The health and well-being of AA-NH/Pis, like most others, are inextricably linked to socioeconomic status and the physical environment. Neighborhoods determine access to healthy food, air and water quality, proximity to health care services, and physical exercise. Policymakers must develop a deeper understanding of the demographic profile of specific AA-NH/PI groups and the barriers to achieving healthy outcomes and economic security.

Income & Poverty Rates

Studies have established a strong correlation between income and health. Not surprisingly, people who are low income tend to suffer from a higher incidence of death and disease, whereas people who are high income enjoy better well-being. Census data

show that many AA-NH/PI groups have lower per capita income than the state average and higher poverty rates. A third or more of the populations of 13 AA-NH/PI groups live below 200% of the federal poverty level. Additionally, a disproportionate number of AA-NH/PI seniors live below the poverty level, exacerbating their access to health care in the period of their lives when they are most in need.

Educational Attainment

Along with income level and poverty rates, education is a key indicator of socioeconomic status. Studies have shown that a lower level of educational attainment is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of poor health. The educational success of certain ethnic groups obfuscates the challenges experienced by others.

Health Coverage

For the uninsured, the absence of preventive care and early intervention can result in serious illnesses and more costly treatments. Approximately 12%

of AA-NH/PIs in the state are uninsured, higher than the uninsured rates for whites (7%) and African Americans (11%). AA-NH/PI immigrants in low-wage jobs tend to have the least access to health care due in part to the lack of employment-based insurance and the inability to cover the high costs of health care. The significant number of AA-NH/PI-owned small businesses, which often cannot afford insurance for their workforce, also accounts for the high rate of uninsured.

Even among those who have insurance, access to mental health services is often restricted. In California, 20% of insured adults do not have coverage for mental health care. Among AA-NH/PIs, 28% of insured Chinese and 34% of insured Vietnamese do not have mental health coverage. The highest proportion of insured Californians without coverage are Vietnamese, which is troubling given this community's mental health needs.

English Proficiency

Limited English proficient individuals experience tremendous barriers in communicating with public agencies, accessing health care and social

services, and achieving economic self-sufficiency. Immigrants who are not fluent in English are less likely to have health insurance and to obtain preventive care through public health programs. AA-NH/PIs experience the highest levels of linguistic isolation compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Complicating their condition is that families are often not aware of their language rights, using their children as translators during medical visits when access to a trained health interpreter is a civil right and the responsibility of the medical provider.

Citizenship and Immigration Status

Immigrants are far less likely to be enrolled in and utilize public health and social service programs due to restrictions in eligibility, access barriers, confusion over complex eligibility requirements, and fears surrounding family immigration status. Moreover, rates of health insurance coverage vary by citizenship. Among AA-NH/PIs, only 7% of U.S.-born residents lack health insurance compared to 24% of non-citizens. This disparity is due in part to the ability of native-born citizens to obtain jobs that provide

health coverage (65%) compared with immigrants (33-44%).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▣ Increase data collection and dissemination of information about AA-NH/PIs, disaggregated by ethnic group.
- ▣ Preserve safety net programs that protect the health and safety of the most vulnerable and that promote the economic self-sufficiency of the working poor.
- ▣ Expand health care coverage to all California residents and ensure that coverage includes mental health benefits.
- ▣ Ensure meaningful access to health and human services programs for limited English proficient individuals.
- ▣ Maintain immigrant eligibility for and access to public benefits.

A vast array of human services programs must strengthen their ability to serve our diverse AA-NH/PI communities. We are committed to supporting the development of recommendations by leaders and stakeholders in future policy gatherings, including the annual API Policy Summit.

Housing and Community Development: Promoting Equitable and Sustainable Development and Preservation in Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities



Little Tokyo, Los Angeles.
(Photo by Elaine Joe)

In the face of often indifferent or even hostile public policies, AA-NH/PI neighborhoods struggle to maintain and grow cultural and community serving institutions. A few of these neighborhoods have prospered, but many are struggling to survive because of policies and market forces that favor large-scale, environmentally costly development. Yet, these neighborhoods

play an important role in integrating immigrants into local economies and providing a cultural connection to a global economy. Together with African American, Latino, and other communities, AA-NH/PI neighborhoods make vital social and cultural contributions to California's cities.

California faces great challenges in recovering from the aftermath of past

unsustainable and poorly regulated forms of development. As it seeks a more sustainable path, the state should strengthen the viability of existing communities and advance equity and sustainability by adopting smart preservation policies alongside smart growth policies.

The health of communities depends in large part on the economic well-being of their residents. For AA-NH/PIs who live in ethnic neighborhoods, many are struggling to find better jobs and increase their earnings. To help these residents become more self-sufficient, the local workforce development system should, at a minimum, provide unemployed or low income AA-NH/PIs with services in a culturally and linguistically competent manner, offer training programs that help AA-NH/PIs become competitive in the job market, and provide assistance in finding better paying jobs.

A significant population of AA-NH/PIs are small business owners, and their collective enterprises fuel the economy, providing entry level jobs and training for AA-NH/PI immigrants who face language barriers. The importance of their role in creating vital communities should not be lost to policymakers.

A DETERIORATING ENVIRONMENT FOR PRODUCING COMMUNITY-SERVING, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

AA-NH/PI communities have a particular need for housing that is accessible to language appropriate services, housing for larger and extended families and for seniors, and housing that is located in urban areas. The rehabilitation of existing structures is particularly important in older neighborhoods where immigrants tend to concentrate. However, the combination of the budget crisis at the state level and ongoing reliance on bond funding is jeopardizing California's ability to create new affordable housing.

Specific steps to address the short-term crisis and to improve the long-term outlook for affordable housing must include mobilizing state agencies to develop a coordinated plan to restore investor and bank confidence in the state's affordable housing market, leveraging Community Reinvestment Act requirements to encourage banks to lend to riskier but neighborhood-serving projects, leveraging community-based relationships to find investors willing to finance affordable housing, reforming tax credit regulations to encourage investment and prioritize such investment in community-based projects, and reforming state funding regulations to ensure that community-serving projects are prioritized for affordable housing.

CONFRONTING THE FORECLOSURE CRISIS

AA-NH/PI communities have been affected severely by the ongoing foreclosure crisis. Brokers and real estate agents selling hazardous mortgages targeted immigrants, and with the failure of these products, immigrant communities are challenged in finding reliable and linguistically accessible foreclosure counseling. A number of AA-NH/PI advocates have responded by setting up counseling and referral networks to help victims deal with lenders or refer them to appropriate sources. But the need for such services far exceeds available resources and financial institutions have been unwilling to modify loans or accommodate the hardships imposed by the present recession. The results are ever increasing foreclosures that displace homeowners and tenants alike.

Policies are needed to assure that state agencies will allocate future funding for housing counseling that addresses the language needs of each city and county in California, increased protections for tenants of foreclosed

properties to remain in their units and receive basic services if they continue to pay rent, and regulations to prevent a new generation of scams and abuse of homeowners. In the long term, sustainable land use, tax, and housing policies would help prevent future speculative real estate bubbles.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive community development should integrate physical and economic development with social development. The following are key principles that should guide future AA-NH/PI policy advocacy:

▣ *Social and Economic Justice*

Framework. AA-NH/PI communities can thrive only in the context of a just and economically inclusive society and should thus support inclusionary housing programs, fair housing practices, and equitable planning policies.

▣ *Community Based Approach.*

Communities sustain our histories, cultures, and shared needs and values, establishing the conditions for children, families, and seniors to develop healthy and socially engaged lives. AA-NH/PIs should support community-based planning that is inclusive, participatory, and democratic.

▣ *Comprehensive Community*

Building. Community development must engage in community building from a comprehensive perspective that recognizes the interdependence of resources. At the core of a comprehensive approach is a detailed understanding of how a community works and how each of the pieces impact and support each other.

Summit Acknowledgments

Two program directors assisted the summit conveners with guidance for the four track committees chaired by able leaders. It was truly a collective effort in our first effort to organize the summit into these tracks.

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Policy Summit Planning Memo

A statewide scan of our infrastructure resulted in the development of a Policy Summit Planning Memo that outlines CAPIAA's longer-term goal of building our capacity. The memo is meant to stimulate discussion among summit conveners and to provide options for building on the annual summit. The following provides a summary of the interview findings and recommendations initiated by the summit consultants. To read the full planning memorandum, please find it at apiscan.org.

Consultants Rini Chakraborty and Ted Wang interviewed a cross section of AA-NH/PI leaders to solicit their recommendations for strengthening the API Policy Summit and AA-NH/PI communities' influence on California policymaking. They asked interviewees to identify the policy strengths of AA-NH/PI communities, opportunities for expanded collaboration, successful models for increasing ethnic communities' political influence in California and other states, and the challenges facing AA-NH/PI advocates.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The interviews of 16 AA-NH/PI community leaders, elected officials, state policy advocates, policy experts, and directors of national organizations reveal the following findings for increasing AA-NH/PI engagement in state policymaking:

Strengths and opportunities

- ▣ Rapid population growth in AA-NH/PI communities.
- ▣ Emerging infrastructure in AA-NH/PI communities.
- ▣ Rising number of AA-NH/PIs elected to the California Legislature and statewide offices.

Challenges

- ▣ Lack of sustained engagement with AA-NH/PI groups on statewide policy issues.
- ▣ Absence of cohesive AA-NH/PI policy agenda at the state level.
- ▣ Lack of voter registration and civic participation within the AA-NH/PI community.
- ▣ Need for more presence and visibility of AA-NH/PIs in Sacramento.
- ▣ Limited efforts to build coalitions beyond the AA-NH/PI community.
- ▣ Underutilization of old and new media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-term Recommendations

The short-term recommendations encourage creating mechanisms to strengthen and sustain collaboration among AA-NH/PI community groups, advocates, and elected officials:

- ▣ Create a listserv.
- ▣ Convene regional meetings and trainings.
- ▣ Build a process for developing a shared policy agenda.
- ▣ Reshape the summit to encourage more grassroots participation.
- ▣ Compile a database of AA-NH/PI "experts."

Long-term Recommendations

In addition to expanding the summit project, the long-term recommendations include expanding the capacity of existing organizations or networks, improving coordination among advocates, and engaging more effectively in communications and mobilization activities.

- ▣ Map AA-NH/PI organizations, networks, and other resources to inform planning and coordination.
- ▣ Create more presence and visibility in Sacramento.
- ▣ Expand AA-NH/PIs' communications and media capacity, and develop a network of spokespersons who can address policy issues in a coordinated manner.
- ▣ Increase grassroots civic engagement.
- ▣ Secure resources that enable the planning and advocacy process to occur year-round with the objectives of (a) expanding our advocacy operative base, (b) building upon each year's accomplishments, and (c) revising our strategies and tactics based on "lessons learned."



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