



The Fierce Advocate

April and May 2008 Edition

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National Office Updates

NAPAWF wants you to stimulate us!

Last month, you probably received a check in the mail from George W. Bush as a part of his "economic stimulus" plan. While we all could use the extra cash, NAPAWF hopes that you will proudly invest 10% of your bonus check towards a real plan for economic stimulus and justice.

We all know that instead of one-time, pre-election gimmicks, economic stability and prosperity for our families requires that the nation confront racism, sexism, xenophobia, violence, the model minority myth and other injustices. NAPAWF is doing just that.

This month, we hope that you will STIMULATE us with a renewed membership or a donation to the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Please help us meet our goal of \$10,000! [Contribute now](#) or [click here](#) for more information!

Speak out. Be heard. Write for Warrior Prose.

NAPAWF's blog, [Warrior Prose](#), is off to a great start with some great blog entries on everything from the recent same-sex marriage decision in California to the need for more women of color in the blogosphere. NAPAWF launched the blog to empower our members and allies to write about issues they care about and share information and resources. We are always looking for NAPAWF women to blog so please contact [Dawn](#) if you would like to submit something.

NAPAWF Anti-Trafficking Agenda Briefings Continue

During [Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#), NAPAWF's Anti-Trafficking Project Director, **Liezl Tomas Rebugio**, traveled to Washington, D.C. to do numerous briefings on NAPAWF's anti-trafficking report, [Rights to Survival & Mobility: An Anti-Trafficking Activist's Agenda](#). The [Washington, D.C. Chapter](#) hosted an informative issue forum that brought together 30 individuals from the chapter, community and allied organizations. This particular issue forum focused on domestic workers. This event was held in collaboration with [CASA de Maryland](#) and the [Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center](#).

NAPAWF also hosted a Congressional Briefing in the U.S. Capitol Building to educate Congressional staff on the impacts of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2007 (TVPRA), [H.R. 3887](#). NAPAWF's Anti-Trafficking Project Director, [Liezl Tomas Rebugio](#), set the scene and discussed how human trafficking disproportionately impacts Asian and Pacific Islander communities, what it looks like and highlighted recommendations from *Rights to Survival & Mobility*. **Kavitha Sreeharsha** from [Legal Momentum's Immigrant Women Program](#) took special care to explain H.R. 3887's new immigration provisions and attempts to redefine "sex trafficking." **Araceli Martínez-Olguín** from [American Civil Liberties Union Women's Rights Project](#) discussed provisions in the TVPRA that address the abuse and exploitation of foreign domestic workers by the hands of diplomats. Last but not least, a former domestic worker shared her powerful personal story and the work that she is spearheading with the Committee of Women Seeking Justice, a project of [CASA de Maryland](#).

AP(Eye) on The Hill

Our monthly policy calls, AP(Eye) on The Hill, continue to be a success! In April, members called in to learn about the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2007. **Liezl Tomas Rebugio**, NAPAWF's Anti-Trafficking Project Director, shared some startling statistics about API women and the human trafficking industry and provided an in-depth analysis of the House version of the TVPRA. Last month, **Joanne Macri**, Director of the [New York State Defenders Association Immigrant Defense Project](#), explained the basics of the U.S. immigrant detention system and spoke about the differential treatment of immigrant women detainees.

Please join us on June 25 for this month's AP(Eye) on The Hill call for a discussion on API queer issues featuring our very own **Miriam Yeung**! Please email [Priscilla](#) to RSVP.

Welcome NAPAWF interns!

NAPAWF would like to welcome **Dinah Chung**, **Grace Lee**, and **Callista Bevans**, NAPAWF's fabulous summer interns! Dinah is entering her third year of law school at the University of Houston Law School and is supporting NAPAWF's emerging Immigrant Rights Program at the DC office. Grace is also working out of our DC office by assisting with our Reproductive Justice Program and will begin her second year of law school at Brooklyn Law School this fall. Callista is entering her senior year at the University of Washington as an International Studies major at the Jackson School of International Studies, with a special interest in human rights. Callista has been interning with NAPAWF's Anti-Trafficking Project since March 2008, but is now a full-time summer intern. All three of these hard-working women have already made significant contributions to NAPAWF. **Welcome aboard!**

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NAPAWF in the News

- **Priscilla Huang** co-wrote the feature article for the March/April edition of The Women's Health Activist, National Women's Health Network newsletter. The article, entitled [Immigrant Women's Health a Casualty in the Immigration Policy War](#), analyzed the impact that welfare, immigration reform, and immigrant health-related policies have had on immigrant women's health. Priscilla wrote the article with **Aishia Glasford**, Senior Policy Analyst at the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health.
- NAPAWF's Anti-Trafficking Project Director, **Liezl Tomas Rebugio**, was featured on the [KBCS](#) show, [One World Report](#), shortly after the launch of our new anti-trafficking agenda, [Rights to Survival & Mobility](#). One World Report discusses social, economic and environmental justice and seeks to help listeners understand racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression. In the interview, Liezl discusses how human trafficking disproportionately impacts Asian and Pacific Islander women and girls and the dire need to create a unified API voice on this issue. Click [here](#) to listen!
- On April 10, NAPAWF along with twenty-five national API organizations announced the release of the [National Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans](#) (NCAPA) national policy platform agenda. To review a copy of the platform, click [here](#). The platform argues that progress for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in all public policy areas - including civil rights, economic justice, education, health care reform, and immigration - depends on progress in information collection and presentation, equal access to programs and services regardless of English language ability, and comprehensive immigration reform that keeps families together, creates a path towards citizenship, and is fair and humane. **Lisa Fu** and **Miriam Yeung** spoke in press conferences in [Los Angeles](#) and New York City, respectively, and NGB member **Diana Lin** represented NAPAWF at a press conference in Chicago.

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From Capitol Hill

Senate introduces TVPRA

On May 23, 2008, the U.S. Senate introduced the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2008, S. 3061. NAPAWF successfully organized a national sign on letter with 26 API advocates and allied organizations across the country to thank and congratulate Senators Joseph Biden and Sam Brownback for crafting legislation that stays true to the original intent of the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act](#), originally passed in 2000. S. 3061 is a stronger bill than its House counterpart, [H.R. 3887](#), because it does not seek to equate prostitution with human trafficking in cases where force, fraud or coercion is absent. In addition, S. 3061 offers stronger protections for foreign domestic workers by mandating employment-based visa applicants receive an information pamphlet that discusses the illegality of human trafficking and services and rights afforded to those exploited, a consulate interview before entering the U.S. and a mandatory employment contract containing key agreement terms. Stay tuned for future actions on supporting S. 3061! Please contact [Liezl](#) with any questions about the trafficking legislation.

Bill Introduced to Increase Access to Medical Care for Immigrant Detainees

Early this month, Rep. Lofgren and Senator Menendez introduced the Detainee Basic Medical Care Act (HR 5950/S. 3005). If enacted, the bill would require the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to establish procedures for the timely and effective delivery of medical and mental health care to immigration detainees in DHS custody. The Act would also ensure that all treatment decisions be made by impartial medical or mental health professionals and require DHS to respond to all requests for medical or mental health care in a timely manner. The bill was introduced after reports of medical neglect and detainee deaths gained national attention through various mainstream media outlets including the [Washington Post](#) and the [New York Times](#).

House Introduces Bipartisan Visa Recapture Bill

In late April, Reps. Lofgren and Sensenbrenner introduced [HR 5882](#), a bipartisan bill that would recapture unused permanent resident visas, otherwise known as green cards, lost through bureaucratic delay each year and help reduce the massive visa backlog. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of authorized family-based and employment-based visas remain unused due to administrative delays. Under current law, these unused green cards disappear at the end of the fiscal year. About half of the family-based immigrant population in 2006 arrived from Asian countries, while an estimated 250,000 visas have been lost to the family system over the last decade alone.

Title X Funding at Risk

NAPAWF signed-on to a letter asking the Bush administration not to take any administrative action to threaten the [Title X](#) family planning program. The Title X program is a critically important program that helps ensure that low-income Americans have access to contraceptive services and other preventive healthcare. Despite severe under-funding, Title X providers have leveraged Title X resources to make the program a success, including helping prevent one million unintended pregnancies every year.

The letter, organized by a coalition of women's and health organizations, is in response to an aggressive campaign by the [Family Research Council](#) and other extremely conservative organizations looking to undermine Title X funding. In addition to other demands, the campaign is calling for the "defunding" of Planned Parenthood and other family planning providers. Access to contraceptives and other family planning services is crucial for API women and girls to exercise full self-determination over their bodies and lives.

Congress Passes War Supplemental Spending Bill

The House and Senate overwhelmingly passed their FY'09 war supplemental spending bill, which includes two important health care provisions. Significantly, the bill includes a provision restoring affordable birth control at hundreds of family-planning clinics and university health centers nationwide. The provision seeks to [undo part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005](#) which eliminated the ability of many university clinics and other health care providers to purchase deeply discounted contraceptives. Roughly 400 college, community and Planned Parenthood clinics lost birth-control discounts under the law.

Also included in the supplemental spending bill is [H.R. 5613](#), the "Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act of 2008." The bill would extend a moratorium on any action by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to restrict Medicaid payments and services. With states across the country facing budget deficits, the Bush Administration's proposal to reduce federal Medicaid payments would directly jeopardize the health of low-income people. Medicaid is a vital source of insurance for millions of low-income Americans, including over 50 million low-income parents, children, and pregnant women. Seventy percent of adults on Medicaid are women and 10 percent of nonelderly Asian Americans are on Medicaid. Click [here](#) to take action and click [here](#) to read our newly updated factsheet about API women and health care coverage.

Senate Approves Enhancement of Veterans Benefits for Filipino Vets

On April 24, the Senate passed the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act, S. 1315, an omnibus bill that includes a provision that restores eligibility for WWII Filipino Vets in the U.S. and Philippines. In 1946, the Rescission Act took away U.S. Veterans status from Filipinos who served under U.S. command. Out of the original 250,000 Filipino soldiers originally called to serve, only 18,000 veterans remain. Advocates are calling on the House to vote on this bill soon and correct this injustice. Click [here](#) to read updates from the FilVets Campaign.

AAPI Democratic Town Hall: "Working Together to Strengthen Our Economy"

On May 21, 2008, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chair of the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee, and Chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Mike Honda hosted the [Third Annual Asian American and Pacific Islander Town Hall](#) to discuss important issues facing the API community. Policymakers representing districts across the country attended the town hall and addressed an audience of API advocates and community members from around the country on a range of issues including health care, education, housing/economic development, and veterans affairs.

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In the Courts: Two Supreme Court Decisions

Thumbs Down: Court Upholds Voter I.D. Law

In a 6-3 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a challenge by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to Indiana's most-restrictive-in-the-nation voter identification law. Many API legal, community, and advocacy organizations, including NAPAWF, signed-on to

an amicus brief in support of the plaintiffs. The case, [Crawford v. Marion County Election Board](#), upheld an Indiana state law requiring voters to present government-issued photo IDs in order to vote. The plaintiffs argued that the Indiana law creates an unconstitutional burden on voting rights.

While some claim that voter identification laws prevent voter fraud, these requirements are often misapplied by election officials and are selectively enforced against minority voters. Indiana's law will disproportionately affect voters who are poor, elderly, belong to racial minorities or foreign-born. The Supreme Court's decision is particularly significant in light of the upcoming 2008 election.

Thumbs Up: Same-Sex Marriage Legal in California!

Sixty years after California made it legal for interracial couples to marry, the CA Supreme Court extended legal marriage rights to same-sex couples on May 15, 2008 in [In re Marriage Cases](#). In a 4-3 ruling, the justices wrote that "responsibly to care for and raise children does not depend upon the individual's sexual orientation." We agree!

Last September, a broad coalition of over 60 API organizations, including NAPAWF, filed a groundbreaking *amicus* brief in support of the plaintiffs in this case. The coalition, spearheaded by [API Equality](#) supported full and equal rights for same-sex couples particularly in light of the API community's own struggles with marriage discrimination. Although this is a major victory, many conservative groups have vowed to overturn the recent Supreme Court decision through a [referendum](#) vote on a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in November. Stay tuned for updates on this effort.

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On the Ground

International Workers' Day

On May 1st, NAPAWF celebrated International Workers' Day, also known as "May Day." May Day commemorates and honors the struggles and gains of workers and the labor movement. Because immigrant women are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and human rights abuses, it is critical that API women and girls fully and forcefully raise our voices and mobilize against policies that exploit the labor of low-wage and undocumented immigrants while taking away their basic human rights. NAPAWF members participated in activities around the country, including the NAPAWF - Los Angeles Chapter, which proudly co-sponsored and marched in the annual International Workers' Day March and Rally along with dozens of local social justice and organizing groups, and thousands of community members. This march was coordinated by the [Multi-Ethnic Immigrant Worker Organizing Network](#) (MIWON).

St. Cloud Chapter Hosts API Teen Retreat

The St. Cloud, MN Chapter held a teen retreat over Memorial Day Weekend, which successfully brought together twenty-two Asian and Pacific Islander young women ranging in age from 14 to 19 years old. Participants were recruited through two community organizations, Lao Assistance Center and Asian Media Access. The retreat was guided by **Anjali Dreyer**, **Tahira Narooh** and **Azania Tripp**, youth members of the chapter. There

were three presenters who gave their time and skills for the retreat - **Miriam Yeung**, NAPAWF Executive Director; **Ilean Her**, Executive Director of the State Council of Asian Pacific Minnesotans; and **Dr. Kyoko Kishimoto**, Associate Director and Professor, Multicultural Resource Center and Ethnic Studies at St. Cloud State University. They were all adept at engaging the teens (from silly songs to serious discussions!). The teens learned about NAPAWF and talked about what they wanted to change and the challenges they faced encountering racism in the schools and the community. There were also discussions about positive Asian American women role models and what the teens wanted to do in ten years time (where their space would be in 10 years). The St. Cloud chapter is committed to continue working with teens and helping them to develop as leaders. Members are currently working on developing some next steps in building this relationship. **Well done St. Cloud!** Check out the writings below from two of the teen participants!

Pledge of Allegiance by Helemina

We pledge allegiance to the school of napawf
unification that we will learn and step up to our
full potential of education.

That we will stay informed and stay in school at all times.

And we will not let the barrier of ignorance by others halt our success in our lives.

With liberty and justice for all.

Keep Learning Song

Just keep learning...just keep-keep learning now.

Just don't care what those other teachers say.

I'm here for you now...

We need a better education, so you teachers better step-it up now...

We need positive empowerment
and more diversity in our school.

So keep learning, just
keep-keep learning now.

Cause one day they'll care
but we'll be better off now...

So, keep learning...just
keep-keep learning now.

Correction

We reported in the last newsletter that Western Organizing Director **Lisa Fu** and LA Chapter member **Preeti Sharma** were interviewed on KPFK Pacifica Radio on April 2 for the show [Feminist Magazine](#). Please note that in addition to speaking about environmental and reproductive justice issues facing Vietnamese nail salon workers, Preeti also spoke about the successful South Asian salon workers rights campaign in Southern California, and Lisa. Click [here](#) to listen to their interview online.

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Chapter highlight: Seattle Chapter Receives 2008 Ron Chisom Anti-Racism Award

Congratulations NAPAWF-Seattle! The amazing women of NAPAWF-Seattle received the 2008 Ron Chisom Anti Racism Award at the [16th Annual Seattle Human Services Coalition Awards Reception](#). The Seattle Human Services Coalition is a multi-racial, multi-cultural group of human service providers and concerned community members committed to helping

Seattle-King County residents meet their basic human needs. This award acknowledges the chapter's advocacy, dedication, and effort to make a difference in human services through Anti-Racism work. Ron Chisom, whom the award is named after, is one of the founders of The [People's Institute for Survival and Beyond](#) (PISAB), is a national and international collective of anti-racist, multicultural community organizers and educators dedicated to building an effective movement for social transformation. ***Congratulations Seattle chapter on an award so well deserved!!!***

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Staff sightings

- **Miriam Yeung** and **Priscilla Huang** trekked out to Hampshire College for the [2008 Civil Liberties & Public Policy Reproductive Justice Conference](#). Miriam spoke at the opening speak out about reproductive justice through an API women's lens, and Priscilla spoke at a workshop called "Organizing for RJ in Immigrant Communities."
- **Dawn Philip**, Reproductive Justice Project Director, co-presented a workshop on health disparities and health care access among Asian and Pacific Islander women at the University of Georgia School of Law, Public Interest Law Conference. The conference entitled, "Challenging Poverty Through Law," brought together lawyers, students, and law faculty to discuss practical approaches to lawyering that best serve the poor.
- [Raising Women's Voices](#), a national initiative to support quality, affordable health care for all, hosted its first conference in Boston. The conference attracted over 250 women from 23 states to talk about integrating the needs of women in health care reform. **Miriam Yeung** gave a rousing keynote address and **Priscilla Huang** was on hand as an RWV Advisory Board member.
- Policy & Programs Director, **Priscilla Huang**, attended the [US Human Rights Network Conference](#) in Chicago where she spoke about building a people-centered human rights movement as a plenary speaker and co-presented a workshop on advancing reproductive justice for immigrant women using a human rights framework.

NAPAWF at the AAPI Presidential Town Hall

On May 17, NAPAWF-LA chapter and national staff participated at the first ever National AAPI Presidential Town Hall hosted by [APIA Vote](#) in Irvine, CA. Over 2000 attendees from all over the country listened to then-Democratic presidential candidate Senator Hilary Clinton, engaged with Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, and heard from a representative to Republican presidential candidate John McCain. The day-long celebration also included several key API elected officials, [talented artists](#) and [performers](#). NAPAWF was excited to be a part of this [historic Town Hall](#), representing the growing power, presence and participation of the API women and girls in an organized and collective voice to create change. Check out [Warrior Prose](#) for excerpts of API ally **Tanzila Ahmed's** live blog coverage of the Town Hall!

NAPAWF Meets With Special Rapporteur on Racism

On May 27, NAPAWF co-hosted a visit by the [United Nations Special Rapporteur on Racism](#) in Los Angeles. The Special Rapporteur, Doudou Diene, heard from our organizations and community members about issues of reproductive justice impacting women of color. The participants powerfully and passionately spoke about reproductive justice and racism and their intersections with issues such as trafficking, sexually transmitted infections, infant mortality, immigration, and language access. His findings will be reported to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The meeting was fabulously co-hosted with [Black Women for Wellness](#), [California Latinas for Reproductive Justice](#) and the [Reproductive Justice Coalition of Los Angeles](#).

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News from the Progressive API community

Update on Indian guest workers hunger strike

In 2006, over 500 [Indian guestworkers](#) paid up to \$20,000 each to U.S. and Indian recruiters who promised them green cards and visas for their families. However, once they arrived in the U.S., they only received temporary H-2B visas. In addition, their employer, Signal International, held the workers in forced labor camps and engaged in various human rights violations including physical abuse, racial slurs, and threats of deportation. In March 2008, over 100 workers broke the trafficking chain by walking off their jobs, reporting Signal to the Department of Justice, and filing a class action lawsuit.

On May 14th, the workers began a hunger strike to draw attention to their demands including the right to stay in the U.S. to participate as witnesses in the trafficking investigation of their case and action from the Indian government to protect their families and future guestworkers. Much support is needed for these brave workers! Here's how you can help:

- Donate - the workers need financial support to continue their struggle for justice. Please consider donating by sending a check to National Immigration Law Center (3435 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2850, Los Angeles, CA 90010) with NOWCRJ/IWC on the subject line; or contributing [online](#) to the campaign.
- Ask Congress to Take Action - Rep. Kucinich (D-OH) is sponsoring a letter among members of the House of Representatives asking the Department of Justice to protect these workers as they participate in the investigation against their employer. Call your member of Congress through the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask them to sign onto the letter.

Join NAPAWF for Night of 1000 Conversations

On Thursday, June 19, thousands of people from across the country will gather in homes, offices, coffee shops and places of worship to discuss how the overreach of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is undermining the civil liberties and human rights of people living in America. Please join the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) and [South Asian Americans Leading Together](#) (SAALT) on June 19, 4-6 pm at The Savory Cafe (7071 Carroll Ave, in Takoma Park, MD) as we participate in the [Night of 1,000 Conversations](#), a campaign organized by [Rights Working Group](#), and host our own conversation.

Education Grant for Low-income Mothers

The Patsy Takemoto Mink Education Foundation for Low Income Women and Children is now accepting applications for 2008 Education Support Awards. Grants of \$2000 each will be awarded to five low income mothers who are pursuing education or training. For more information about eligible education and training activities and for instructions on how to apply, see <http://patsyminkfoundation.org>.

Applications are due by July 1, 2008.

Earth Passages: Journeys Through Childhood By Lora Jo Foo, NAPAWF Founding Sister

Consisting of 28 vignettes and 53 color nature photographs, Earth Passages tells the story of the author growing up in the inner city ghetto of San Francisco's Chinatown- in poverty, in a housing project, sewing in a garment sweatshop. In the girl's rare escapes into the woods she discovers a magical world so unlike the ghetto in which she lives. The stories from childhood are paired with color nature photographs taken by the author as an adult. The stories are terse, pithy and powerful. They transform and imbue the very beautiful nature photographs with a much more complicated, almost bittersweet meaning.

On sale July 1, 2008 at www.asiabookcenter.com for \$32.95 + \$2.50 S&H.

Pre-order copies by June 30th and receive an exclusive NAPAWF discount (\$30.00 + S&H)! To order contact:

Lora Jo Foo
PO Box 20758
Castro Valley, CA 94546
earthpassages@yahoo.com
510.537.3400

Be sure to indicate that you are a NAPAWF member! Email the author for combined shipping rates. Publication date is subject to change.

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