



# ***The Fierce Advocate***

February and March 2008 Edition

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## **National Office Updates**

- **NAPAWF Launches Anti-Trafficking Action Agenda**

On March 31, NAPAWF officially released ***Rights to Survival & Mobility: An Anti-Trafficking Activist's Agenda***, a new report highlighting the disproportionate impact of human trafficking on Asian and Pacific Islander women and girls. ***Rights to Survival & Mobility*** broadens the discourse on human trafficking to include root causes, such as poverty, gender-based discrimination, globalization and militarism and links human trafficking with race, class, gender and other social justice issues. It also discusses the importance of having a national and organized voice to address the implications of human trafficking on API communities.

NAPAWF celebrated the official release of the Agenda with a [launch event](#) in Seattle featuring a community presentation by NAPAWF's Anti-Trafficking Project Director, **Liezl Tomas Rebugio**, and the important local, national and international anti-trafficking work of

our community partners, the [Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center](#) and [Pinay sa Seattle](#). Look out for Liezl as she holds more briefings around the country later in the year. Download a copy of the Agenda [here](#), or email [Liezl](#) to receive a hard copy.

- **Introducing AP(Eye) on The Hill**

In February, NAPAWF launched **AP(Eye) on The Hill**, a monthly conference call for NAPAWF members to receive information and updates on important policy issues and legislation. We kicked off the series on February 27 with a 2007 round-up highlighting some of the reproductive justice, anti-trafficking and immigrant rights bills introduced last session that are of particular importance to API women and girls. On March 26, the call featured **Eesha Pandit** from [MergerWatch](#) and **Aimee Thorne-Thomsen** from the [Pro-Choice Education Project](#) who discussed their work around diversifying the voices of women within health care reform debate.

**AP(Eye) on The Hill** is held on the last Wednesday of every month. Join us on April 30 for the next call! For more info, contact [Priscilla](#).

- **NAPAWF Enters the Blogosphere**

Last month, NAPAWF announced the launch of its blog, [Warrior Prose](#)! In just a short amount of time, the blog has been used to share personal stories from NAPAWF staff and mobilize people around the country against a deeply offensive advertising campaign. Although staff will post on the blog every week, we encourage members and allies to use the blog as a forum to share information, stories, community news, and anything else! If you're interested in contributing something or if you have general questions, please contact [Dawn](#).

- **NAPAWF Denounces "Chinese Laundry" Restaurant Ad and Spearheads Petition Drive**

On March 17, NAPAWF joined in the API community's outrage over a restaurant's marketing tactics by launching a large-scale [petition](#) campaign calling for an apology from the Chow Fun Food Group and its owner, John Elkhay. Elkhay recently stirred anger with his ad campaign for a new Asian fusion restaurant called "Chinese Laundry" in Providence, RI. The ad featured a black and white image of a faceless nude female torso with traditional Chinese characters tattooed down the side of her body, and a black banner containing the text "see what you are missing" across her breasts. Along with the petition, NAPAWF released a [statement](#) denouncing the ad campaign for its severe exoticism of Asian American and Pacific Islander women and culture.

Over 760 signatures were collected within the first five days of the petition's launch. NAPAWF is currently working with local activists and waiting for a response from the Chow Fun Food Group. If you would like to get involved in local campaign efforts in the Providence area, please contact [Bonnie](#).

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## **NAPAWF in the News**

- **Priscilla Huang**, Policy & Programs Director, wrote an article for [RH Reality Check](#), an online publication serving individuals and organizations committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights. The article, entitled "[Uncovering the](#)

[Nativism of Population Politics](#)," generated a bit of controversy in the blogosphere and was picked up by several online outlets including Alternet.

- Seattle Times staff columnist, Jerry Large, wrote a [feature](#) about **Liezi Tomas Rebugio** and NAPAWF's vision to fight human trafficking through human rights.
- **Miriam Yeung** was featured by The National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce as part of their [Women's History Month](#) project aimed to make visible the social justice work of LBT women around the country.
- On April 2, Western Organizing Director **Lisa Fu** and LA Chapter member **Preeti Sharma** were interviewed on KPFK Pacifica Radio in Los Angeles. Lisa and Preeti spoke on the show [Feminist Magazine](#) about NAPAWF and the occupational exposure to harmful cosmetic chemicals by South Asian and Vietnamese nail salon workers. Click [here](#) to listen to their interview online.

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## From Capitol Hill

- **House Republicans file a discharge petition on SAVE Act**

On March 11, Republican leaders of the House filed a discharge petition on H.R. 4088, the [Secure America Through Verification and Enforcement \(SAVE\) Act of 2007](#). A discharge petition requires 218 signatures to bring a bill directly to the floor of the House without allowing any Congressional committee to consider the bill's merits or demerits. The SAVE Act currently has 185 signatures.

H.R. 4088 is an unworkable immigration deportation-only bill that would require over 7 million employers to verify the work status of more than 160 million workers within four years using a federal employment verification system that is known to have a 10 percent error rate for naturalized citizens. Because one-third of the API population is composed of naturalized citizens, advocates believe that many API workers will likely to be mistakenly identified as unauthorized for employment and could lose their jobs. The bill also increases funding for increased detention and deportation programs, including more family detention centers.

Check [here](#) to see if your Representative has signed the petition. If so, find your Rep's number [here](#) and tell him or her to withdraw as a sponsor.

- **House and Senate Pass Budget**

The House and Senate approved their own versions of the FY 2009 Budget Resolution on March 13 and 14 before leaving Washington for a two-week recess. With Congress back in session, the two bodies must work out their differences in the next few weeks and enact a final Resolution. An amendment by Rep. Barbara Lee to fully fund the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and No Child Left Behind was not included in the House passed budget resolution (H. Con. Res. 312). However, the Senate passed its budget resolution (S. Con. Res. 70) with \$50 billion in increased funding to expand SCHIP coverage

and an amendment by Senator Biden that would increase federal funding for the Violence Against Women Act by \$100 million. To learn more, click [here](#).

- **House Passes Mental Health Parity Bill**

On March 5, the House passed the [Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act](#) (H.R. 1424). The Senate passed its version, the [Mental Health Parity Act of 2007](#) (S. 558) last September. Both bills would require health insurance providers to cover treatment for mental health and substance abuse conditions at the same level they provide for physical illnesses. For a review of the major differences in the bills see this [summary](#) from the Human Needs Report.

Providing equal coverage for mental health and substance abuse services is an important step toward achieving a model of holistic care that API women and communities need. Many Southeast Asian refugees experience high levels of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and Asian American women over the age of 65 and between 15-24 have the [highest suicide rates](#) in the country.

- **U.S. Ban on HIV is Bad Policy**

NAPAWF signed-on to a letter in support of the [HIV Non-Discrimination in Travel and Immigration Act](#) which would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to remove HIV as a ground of inadmissibility from the INA. HIV is the only medical condition singled out in the INA as a ground of inadmissibility, creating unnecessary stigma and discrimination against foreign nationals who are HIV-positive. The provision to repeal the ban is included in legislation to reauthorize the [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief](#) (PEPFAR), which passed the House on April 2. If signed into law, the provision will remove the anti-HIV language from the statute and restore the determination of whether HIV is "communicable disease of public health significance," to the discretion of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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### **Fourth Annual California Policy Committee A Success!**

On March 22, thirty NAPAWF members gathered in Los Angeles for our 4th Annual **California Policy Committee** (CPC). The purpose of the CPC is to provide a safe space for NAPAWF members to learn about and participate in the California state policy process in order to become more skilled and effective advocates and organizers for the rights of API women and girls. Participants received trainings on the Legislative Process 101, Voter Mobilization, and the CA Parental Notification Initiative. In addition, participants identified eight bills for the committee to prioritize and advocate for in 2008.

Join us for our next event when a contingent of CPC members attend the [California API Policy Summit](#) in Sacramento on April 15-16th! If you'd like more information on the CPC and the priority bills for 2008, please contact [Lisa](#).

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## Staff sightings

- **SYRF Regional Training Institute**

In early March, **Bonnie Chan** conducted a workshop on "What Is Reproductive Justice?" at the two-day Chicago Regional Training Institute put on by a NAPAWF ally organization [Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom](#) (SYRF). SYRF recently rounded out their whirlwind four-city Regional Training Institute program, which provides a dynamic forum for youth leaders to make connections between their spiritual/religious faiths and reproductive justice activism.

- **Law Students for Reproductive Justice (LSRJ) National Leadership Retreat: "Justice Doesn't Just Happen!"**

**Dawn Philip**, Reproductive Justice Project Director, co-presented a workshop at the [LSRJ leadership retreat](#) in February on "Diversifying the Reproductive Justice Movement." LSRJ is a national nonprofit network of law students and lawyers committed to educating, organizing, and supporting law students to ensure that a new generation of advocates will be prepared to protect and expand reproductive rights as basic civil and human rights. The retreat brought together law school students from across the country to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective reproductive justice advocates.

- **National Council for Women's Organizations (NCWO): Women's Equality Summit**

**Priscilla Huang**, Policy and Programs Director, moderated the morning plenary "Strengthening Women's Leadership Across the Generations" at the Women's Equality Summit and Congressional Action Day. This [annual conference](#) brings together hundreds of women leaders and their allies in D.C. for two days of briefings, training sessions and face-to-face meetings with Members of Congress and national women leaders. The Summit is a project of the National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO), and the Younger Women's Task Force (YWTF). Priscilla also presented a workshop on Immigrant Women's Rights. In addition, **Dawn Philip** presented a workshop at the conference on health disparities among women of color.

- **Creating Change**

[Creating Change](#) is the annual conference of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and is the largest gathering of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender activists in the country. This February, **Dawn Phillip** and **Miriam Yeung** were on hand in chilly Detroit, MI to present two workshops and facilitate caucuses on the API LGBT community.

- **Association of Asian Pacific American Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO): "Cultivating Traditions of Wellness"**

**Priscilla Huang** spoke on a panel entitled "Community Driven National Asian American, Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Health Agenda" at AAPCHO's [20th Anniversary Conference](#). The two day conference in Washington, DC featured technical assistance and trainings for health care providers and other community health center staff who work with Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

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### **Chapter Highlight: DC Chapter Gets Some Wii Action**

On March 29th, 2008 NAPAWF-DC held a Wii Tennis Tournament Fundraiser. The event provided 25 participants with a fun environment to learn more about NAPAWF and show off their skills at the popular Wii tennis game. Each participant was asked to raise pledges to support the work of the DC chapter, which amounted to \$2300 by the end of the evening.

This event also marked the first time that a chapter utilized our new Democracy in Action online tool for event registration and fundraising. To learn more about the event and to see what Democracy in Action can offer your chapter, visit the [DC Wii Tennis Tournament Registration Page](#). If you are interested in using this tool for your chapter, contact [Tracy](#) for more information.

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### **Other News from the Progressive API Community**

- **Another Ugly Side of Human Trafficking**

On March 31, nearly 100 South Asian immigrant workers marched to the White House protesting inhumane living and working conditions and publicizing the dark underbelly of the U.S. [guest worker program](#). Chanting "All the way to the White House!" and "We want justice!" the workers, along with their supporters, gathered in front of the White House and demanded a Congressional investigation of their former employer [Signal International](#), a marine construction company that held them in forced labor. The workers arrived in D.C. after a nine-day [satyagraha](#) or 'journey for justice' from New Orleans that drew wide support from clergy, organized labor and African American and Asian-American community leaders.

The workers are part of a group of over 500 South Asian welders and pipe fitters who paid approximately \$25,000 each to recruiters in Indian and the United Arab Emirates after being assured that the company would help them become permanent residents of the United States. To pay these hefty fees, many of the workers sold their homes, took out large loans, and sold family jewelry. Upon arriving in the U.S., however, the workers discovered Signal International's true motivations. Far from being on a path to permanent citizenship, they found themselves at Signal International on ten-month temporary H2B "guest worker" visas working in Gulf Coast shipyards under deplorable conditions. According to the lawsuit filed on behalf of the workers by the Southern Poverty Law Center and other groups, the workers were forced to live in overcrowded guarded "bunkhouses" at Signal International, with inadequate toilets and unhygienic kitchens that frequently made them ill.

The Department of Justice has opened a human trafficking investigation into the case. In addition, U.S. Congressman George Miller is demanding detailed documentation about the case from Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao. Read NAPAWF's statement of support [here](#).

- **Kush D.C. Celebrates Queer South Asians**

In celebration of Women's History Month, [Khush D.C.](#) hosted an event that explored gender, gender identity, and gender expression. The event, "Dancing at the Intersections: Understanding Gender Variance in S. Asian LGBTQ Communities," brought together South Asian performers, poets, activists, and scholars for a night of open conversation, sharing of stories, and community empowerment. The sold out event reflected the gender and sexuality diversity of the API community and inspired participants to think outside traditional gender norms. Khush D.C. is a social support and political group for LGBTQ South Asians in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.

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