

VISIBILITY, VOICE, VISION:

ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AGENDA



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II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Narratives of resilience come hand-in-hand with the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) experience in the United States (US). Stories of us coming together to care for each other in times of crisis, to turn scarcity into abundance, and to solve the unsolvable can be a point of pride for many in our communities: show us a barrier and we will overcome it. But this is only part of our story.

Following the March 16, 2021, shootings in Atlanta that took the lives of six Asian women, AAPI women's experiences have been thrust into the spotlight. What used to be invisible to many -- the intersections of our identities, the impact of racism, sexism, and hypersexualization on our lives -- have become more visible. In response, we, as movement leaders who are and work directly with AAPI women, have been calling for long-term investment in our communities and resources for the people who need them most. The AAPI Reproductive Justice Agenda is a roadmap for leaders and decision makers on how to develop policies and make investments in ways that create the structural change needed for our communities to thrive.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, AAPI communities, especially women, are in a more vulnerable position than ever. We are seeing an increase in racially-motivated violence against us as well as facing economic insecurity and a disproportionate burden of illness and death. At the same time, AAPI communities are showing up in record numbers to make our voices heard--the 2020 elections saw a 310 percent increase in early voting from AAPI communities and an overall increase of AAPI voter turnout in key battleground states from 2016.

AAPI women are ready to move beyond being defined by the stereotypes about us and to speak out about our experiences and needs.

WE DEMAND TO BE SEEN AND TO BE HEARD.

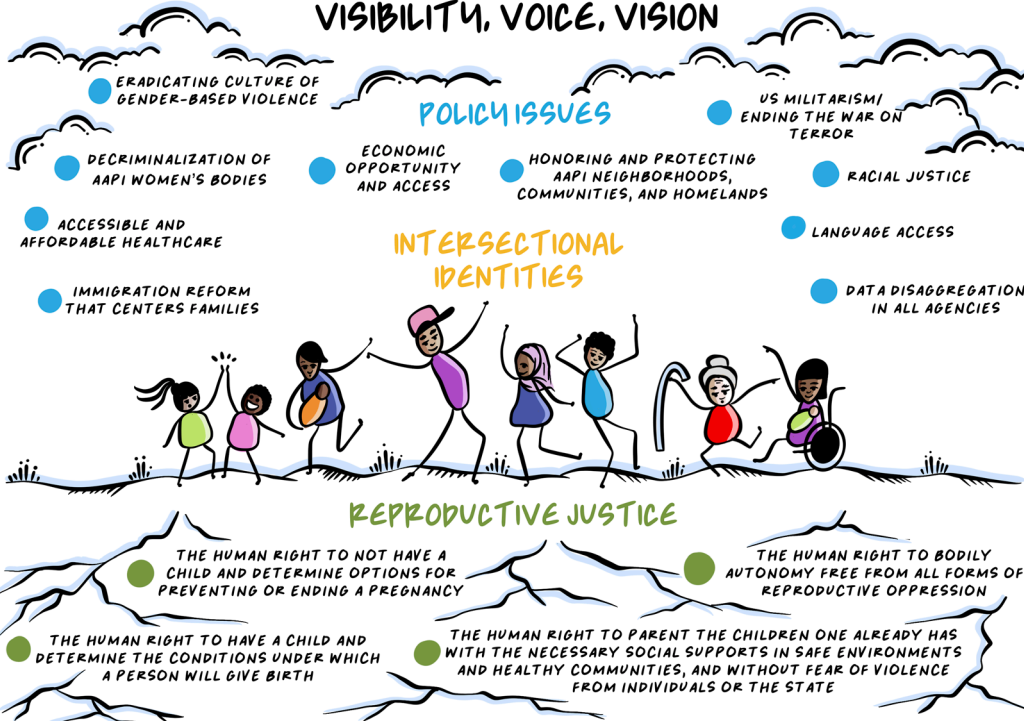
With the AAPI Reproductive Justice Agenda, we offer a bold, proactive vision to build a world in which all of our AAPI families and communities can thrive.

This agenda was designed and co-created by the following organizations:

Apna Ghar
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (API-GBV)
Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP)
Daya Houston
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
HEART Women and Girls
KAN-WIN
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
Pilipino Worker Center (PWC)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

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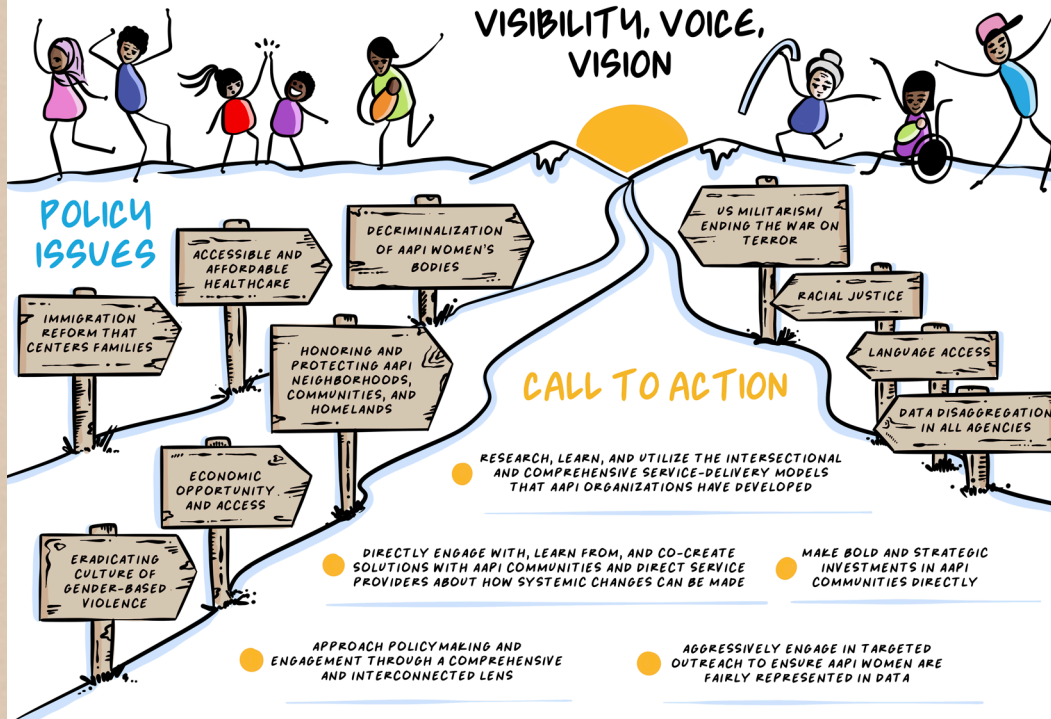


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III. CONTEXTUALIZING THE EXPERIENCES OF AAPI COMMUNITIES IN THE US

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders represent the fastest-growing immigrant group in the US, while many AAPI families have a history in the US that stretches back generations. Regardless of how long AAPIs have lived in the US, we are frequently treated as perpetual foreigners. This continued "othering" casts our identities as exotic, strange, and threatening, and has recently been exacerbated by xenophobic rhetoric from public officials.

Since the beginning of the pandemic and the references by former President Donald Trump to the COVID-19 virus as the "China flu," there has been a massive uptick in racially-motivated attacks against AAPI people, in particular elders and women, who have experienced heightened targeting for racist and sexist violence. "Go back to where you come from!" and "You don't belong here!" have become refrains targeted at AAPIs across the US, often intertwined with sexist refrains or more overt forms of sexual violence when aimed at AAPI women.

In addition to being considered perpetual foreigners, AAPI communities' struggles are often overlooked due to the "model minority" myth. This false notion that virtually all AAPIs are self-sufficient, well-educated, and upwardly mobile is untrue and problematic. While AAPI women in the US who work full-time earn, on average, 85 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, data disaggregated by ethnicity reveals that many Asian women in certain subgroups earn well below that: **Vietnamese, Samoan, and Nepalese women earn 63 cents, 60 cents, and 54 cents for every white male dollar, respectively.** Not only does a lack of disaggregated data invisibilize Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander communities that often face greater socioeconomic disparities, but it also perpetuates the myth that AAPIs fare almost or just as well as our white counterparts. In reality, AAPI women are overrepresented in the most poorly paid jobs.

During the pandemic, these invisibilized disparities have deepened, as many in our communities struggle with lack of or overcrowded housing, food insecurity, unemployment, higher risk of contracting COVID-19 as health care workers, caretakers, workers in meatpacking facilities, and essential manufacturing workers, among others, and the staggeringly disproportionate rate of COVID-19 infections among Pacific Islanders.

It is important to acknowledge that the impact of colonization of Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian indigenous communities continue to devastate and threaten the culture and existence of those communities. Through military bases, large corporate industry, tourism, and missionaries, colonial powers forced many of these communities to assimilate and forego their sovereignty. The loss of land and how that leads to food and economic insecurity, health disparities, and environmental injustice, were some of the most harmful impacts of colonization.

III. CONTEXTUALIZING THE EXPERIENCES OF AAPI COMMUNITIES IN THE US (CONTINUED)

AAPI women feel the impact of these misconceptions, in addition to stereotypes particular to AAPI women. Damaging stereotypes that cast AAPI women as submissive and hypersexual today find their roots in centuries-old propaganda to dehumanize women of Asian and Pacific Islander descent, erase their experiences of sexual violence in the context of US militarism, and deny them citizenship. Many are familiar with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as the earliest piece of racist legislation to block AAPI immigration, but the earlier and lesser known Page Act of 1875 explicitly discriminated against Asian women believed to be sex workers and by effect excluded all Asian women from immigrating to the US because of hypersexualization stereotypes. In the context of sexual and interpersonal violence, language access, documentation status, health care trauma, isolation, and fear of reinforcing negative stereotypes about their communities become huge barriers to AAPI survivors accessing support services and reproductive health care.

Yet beyond these layers of systemic oppression and myths that invisibilize the real experiences of AAPI women and our communities, we continue to fight to build political power.

Despite barriers to voting, suppression tactics that disproportionately impact AAPI communities, and sentiment in both parties that AAPIs are not an important voting bloc, the AAPI community flexed our voting power by showing up in record numbers in the 2020 election. Notably, because of strategic and targeted organizing by AAPI-led organizations in Georgia (including NAPAWF's Atlanta chapter), AAPIs tripled our turnout from 2016 to 2020, which undoubtedly influenced President Joseph Biden's narrow victory, as well as the election of two Democratic Senators.

IV. USING THE TERM AAPI: ACKNOWLEDGING THE IMPACT, INVOKING THE ROLE OF COLONIALISM, AND NAMING THE SHIFT THAT IS NEEDED

Since conception, the work leading up to this Agenda has used the term AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) to describe what communities are being centered. The 11 organizations that helped create this policy agenda included one Pacific Islander organization - Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC). We recognize that AAPI has been a historical and often continued site of erasure for many marginalized groups under the broader umbrella, especially for the Pacific Islander, Southeast Asian, and South Asian communities. Though the intention of AAPI has been inclusion, that is not always the impact. AAPI is also the mechanism through which power and resources are accessed and disseminated.

Prior to the 1960s, the only term used to refer to Americans with ancestry in Asia was orientals. Emboldened, in part, by the Black Civil Rights Movement, groups of Asian American college students in the West (mostly California) began to demand that the pan-racial identity **Asian American** be created. Today, Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) refers to a "person with origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, or the Pacific Islands living in the US." This area includes, for example, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Samoa; and in South Asia, includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Singapore, and Bhutan.

There are so many regions, communities, and cultural and religious experiences that exist within the broad AAPI term -- so much so that the grouping of them together often invisibilizes distinct experiences, voice, and representation. This holds true especially for Pacific Islander communities, who face a different set of struggles than Asian Americans when it comes to land sovereignty and colonization.

It is important to name the role of colonization and how it shapes everything about the struggles and inability to experience true liberation for Pacific Islander communities. Since the first contact with Westerners for most PI communities, whether it be Portuguese and Spanish explorers to the various European and Asian countries, the unifying experience for most PI communities is the traumatic and invisibilizing nature of outsiders taking over the homelands, trying to erase the culture, and injecting capitalizing and Westernized practices of we live in community with other human beings. While there has been, through mighty struggle and sacrifice of some, a few examples of PI communities successfully reclaiming their autonomy and independence, it is not widespread. It was as recent as 1970 when Tonga and Fiji successfully became independent after long and oppressive power under British influence.

This policy agenda aims at speaking to and redistributing power to those most impacted by harmful policies, yet often the most overlooked. Organizations included in this effort were invited with the intention of attempting to get as close to representing the full breadth and depth of the diversity of the AAPI community, and to openly acknowledge the ways we may still have fallen short of that intention -- for example, native Hawaiian voices are not included in this piece. AAPI is invoked here in the spirit of solidarity and shared liberation, while also addressing the specific ways racism and sexism manifest themselves in each of our communities.

V. CENTERING AAPI WOMEN'S LIVES THROUGH HISTORIC COLLABORATION

In 2020, amidst the backdrop of a global pandemic and a social uprising around racial injustice, the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) had a bold and intersectional vision to improve the lives of AAPI women and girls. To do so, they would need to bring together organizations working on gender-based violence, housing and economic development, and immigration, among a variety of other issues. They began to reach out to leaders across multiple sectors to build trust and strengthen relationships in order to create the first-ever Agenda that outlined Reproductive Justice in policy and practice for AAPI women and girls.

THIS IS THE PRODUCT OF THAT VISION.

When representatives from 11 organizations met for the first time for a virtual convening in November 2020, Sung Yeon Choimorrow, NAPAWF's Executive Director, acknowledged that the group was breaking new ground: "We've never done this before. This is the first time we've brought outside folks together to put out a policy agenda for AAPI communities; what we dream of, what we would like to see for our communities. What does the AAPI community want to see in terms of gender and racial justice under the new administration?" One after another, colleagues shared that this was a unique space for them because they were often "the only ones." In AAPI spaces, they were the only ones applying a gender justice lens to the issues and advocating for AAPI women and girls. At other policy and organizing tables, they were the only ones advocating for AAPI communities using a racial justice lens. Encountering this dynamic over and over again left many of them exhausted and isolated.

In coming together with other AAPI women leaders, however, there was an opportunity to lift up and center the lived experiences of AAPI women and girls, who are often erased from conversations about immigration, education, criminalization, and other issues impacting AAPI communities. By using an intersectional approach like the Reproductive Justice framework, they would be able to build broader, long-lasting solutions that would benefit not just AAPI women and girls, but also AAPI families and communities across the country.

VI. REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AND INTERSECTIONALITY

The Reproductive Justice framework was created by Black women in the US. From its name to its most foundational tenets, Black women laid the groundwork for the movement that women of color have embraced and propelled forward in its 27-year history. The term Reproductive Justice was coined by twelve Black women, all of them activists, advocates and scholars working on behalf of the well-being of women and girls, who recognized the need for an analysis that linked race/ethnicity, gender, class, and other identities and did not rely on an individualistic understanding of freedom or choice. An integrated framework grounded in both Black Feminist Thought and the Human Rights Framework, Reproductive Justice provides tools and language to identify systemic problems that impact women of color, including AAPI women and girls, and other marginalized communities in the US.

At its core, Reproductive Justice is defined as:

The human right to have a child and determine the conditions under which a person will give birth; the human right to not have a child and determine options for preventing or ending a pregnancy; the human right to parent the children one already has with the necessary social supports in safe environments and healthy communities, and without fear of violence from individuals or the state; and the human right to bodily autonomy free from all forms of reproductive oppression.

What also sets the Reproductive Justice framework apart from others is that it is inherently intersectional. Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, a lawyer, legal scholar, and founder of Critical Race Theory, developed the theory of intersectionality as a tool to analyze how multiple systems of oppression (xenophobia, classism, racism, and misogyny, for example) interact and reinforce each other. She expanded this theory in a powerful essay by looking at the shortcomings of feminist and antiracist analyses of battery and rape when it comes to the experiences of women of color.

Like Reproductive Justice, Gender Justice is an intersectional framework that looks at the entire person. Third Wave Fund defines gender justice “as a movement to end patriarchy, transphobia, and homophobia and to create a world free from misogyny. As gender justice activists, we recognize that gender oppression is tied to classism, racism, ageism, xenophobia/anti-immigrant bias, and ableism, so gender justice can only truly be achieved when all forms of oppression cease to exist.” In practice, Reproductive Justice and Gender Justice work alongside each other and reinforce each other. Both frameworks take into account someone’s various identities (woman, AAPI, immigrant, Muslim, for example) and how those identities are impacted by oppressive systems like economic injustice or criminalization.

AAPI organizations have been critical to the growth and development of the Reproductive Justice movement. In 2005, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (now Forward Together) published the seminal paper, A New Vision For Advancing Our Movement for Reproductive Health, Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice that helped launch Reproductive Justice language and tools into the national conversation. In 2014 and 2015, NAPAWF led a national campaign against racist and sexist attacks on reproductive health and abortion access. Using an intersectional lens means that we see the whole person with all the complexities they hold, and it requires us to develop solutions that address the whole person. By centering the lived experiences of those most impacted by reproductive oppression, Reproductive Justice gives us tools to address the barriers that AAPI women and girls must contend with every day.

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

Approximately 16.6 million AAPIs reside in the US (approximately 5.4 percent of the US population). By 2050, AAPIs will make up 9.7 percent of the total US population -- over 40 million people. We make up one of the fastest-growing racial groups in the US, constituting about one-third of the one million legal immigrants who enter the US annually. AAPIs represent over 30 countries and ethnic groups that speak more than 100 different languages.

The resourcefulness and resilience of AAPI communities is impressive. Because the AAPI community is one of the most overlooked racially ethnic communities, the reliance on one another within their communities has been critical in their survival. **Due to language barriers, cultural misalignment, and religious discrimination, AAPI communities have excelled at developing their own structures, services, and networks to ensure that individuals have full access to all opportunities.** The innovation and sustainability of AAPI communities to take care of themselves is a source of pride and respect.

In developing customized and extremely targeted interventions within our own communities, the AAPI community at large is clear about what it takes for our families to thrive. We know that impactful policy cannot stem from working on singular issues in isolation from one another. As architects of this Agenda, and through an intersectional and Reproductive Justice lens, we have identified the following policy issues that must be addressed to allow AAPI communities to build, resource, and live our lives free and in full color.

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

1. IMMIGRATION REFORM THAT CENTERS FAMILIES

Unsurprisingly, immigration reform is a key issue for AAPI communities. However, the narratives surrounding immigration reform often leave out how AAPI women and girls are impacted by the inequities of the immigration system, as do many of the proposed solutions.

AAPI women and their families want an accessible pathway to immigration for all without fear or intimidation. Immigrant women are often dependent on a spouse's immigration status to remain in the country, and are more vulnerable as a result. For survivors of gender-based violence, they should not have to compromise their safety and well-being or that of their family because they rely on their abuser's immigration status. Immigration reform should be viewed through a gender lens, in which the well-being of women and their families is paramount. The current system is biased toward men in such a way that it harms women and girls. In the US, the journey from being legally excluded to moving through the immigration system as refugees, asylees, first-generation AAPI people, or undocumented immigrants has marginalized and deeply impacted AAPI communities. Nearly two-thirds of AAPIs are foreign-born and many have had significant interaction with the immigration system. National origin quotas that discriminated against Asians were not fully eliminated until 1965 with the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

The immigration system needs deep reform that centers families by understanding and respecting how different cultures define, value, and honor family structures. Experiencing the immigration system should not be terrorizing, dangerous, or life-threatening. Nor should it leave people in limbo for years on end. Immigrant AAPI women and girls deserve an immigration system that is equitable, humane, and moves swiftly.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **A roadmap to citizenship**
- **Family unity, while also disconnecting reliance on family sponsors where the family itself is a source of harm**
- **Support for survivor self-sufficiency**
- **Strengthened survivor-based immigration protections**
- **Protections for abused dependent spouses and children in all immigration programs**
- **An end to mandatory detention and deportation and the repeal of the laws that enable immigrants to be deported based on old criminal records**
- **Reducing immigration backlogs**
- **An end to community policing**

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

2. ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

Ensuring that all AAPI families and communities have affordable, culturally competent, linguistically-accessible health care is paramount to the ability of AAPI women to effectively care for themselves and their families. This is especially true for immigrants, many of whom are barred from accessing publicly-funded health care coverage because of current US policy. Because of the complexity of navigating the US healthcare system, the vast language barriers, cultural or faith-based taboos, and fear of negative consequences on immigration status, many AAPI women and girls are hesitant to seek health care even if they do have access.

We reject the positioning of religion and faith as incompatible with reproductive rights. We know that there is a nuanced way to understand how faith values inform sexual and reproductive health decision making for our communities. And religion and faith plays such an anchoring source to how many AAPI families and communities live their lives. Additionally, AAPI women and girls face additional barriers in accessing reproductive health care services like abortion, from funding barriers like the Hyde Amendment, which denies federal Medicaid coverage of abortion services, to sex-selective abortion legislation, which uses racist stereotypes targeting Asian women and girls to deny their access to abortion care. Fetal homicide laws criminalize people experiencing miscarriages, as seen in the Bei Bei Shuai and Purvi Patel cases in Indiana; these cases not only disproportionately criminalize women of color, but also can discourage those experiencing miscarriages from receiving life-saving health care. To avoid medical trauma, misdiagnosis, or lack of care generally, health care providers, practitioners, researchers, educators, and systems need to prioritize the needs of AAPI communities. AAPI women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health should be provided in a way that centers the social and religious culture of each woman.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **Privacy protections in federal benefit programs, including in health care**
- **Linguistically accessible health care (medical translators, materials available in-language)**
- **Removal of policy barriers to federally-funded health care on the basis of immigration status**
- **Implementation and enforcement of already existing legal and regulatory frameworks that promote culturally competent health care, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1997**
- **Consumer Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, among others**

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

3. DECRIMINALIZATION OF AAPI WOMEN'S BODIES

In AAPI communities across the country, so many activities of everyday life continue to be treated as illegal, including the very existence of some of our community members. Racial profiling, surveillance, gender-based violence, violence in the workplace, criminalization of pregnancy outcomes and decisions, and religious persecution are just a few of the many ways in which AAPI communities continue to be policed and criminalized. The criminal justice system is anchored in its power and authority to determine what is illegal and what is not, who needs to be punished, and what forms punishment should take.

We advocate for:

- Shifting the approach and narrative away from criminalization and towards supporting communities in defining safety for themselves
- Decriminalizing and normalizing all pregnancy outcomes and decisions

4. ERADICATING A CULTURE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The fourth tenet of Reproductive Justice is bodily autonomy and freedom from all reproductive oppression. Unfortunately for many AAPI women and girls, gender-based violence is an all-too-common reality and is reinforced by both cultural and religious traditions and patriarchy. In addition, the criminal justice system, which many AAPI women and girls rely on, is in itself a form of violence, and AAPI communities are forced to work within this system. To provide safety for AAPI women and girls, we must address the elevated and favored status enjoyed by men and boys at the expense of AAPI women and girls. We must also address that the lack of cultural humility and competency in the criminal justice system, which is based on a model of punishment and retribution, not justice and healing, further harms survivors of gender-based violence. For AAPI women and girls who choose to engage with law enforcement and the criminal justice system, the lack of meaningful language access and gender bias often results in negative outcomes for survivors. These harmful interactions with the criminal justice system can also create barriers to accessing necessary social and health services for fear of being forced to interact with the system; this is particularly dangerous for survivors of domestic, sexual, and interpersonal violence.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- Alleviating gender-based violence through culturally sensitive approaches
- Funding for AAPI communities working on gender-based violence response/support not dependent on working with criminal justice system

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

5. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND ACCESS

AAPI individuals, families, and communities play an important economic role, having started businesses and generated jobs that pay billions of dollars in wages and taxes, including founding some of our nation's most successful and innovative enterprises. AAPI communities drive entrepreneurial activity across the country. The number of AAPI businesses grew by 24 percent from 2007 to 2012, compared to only 2 percent for all firms nationwide. In particular, the number of Samoan-owned and Guamanian/Chamorro-owned businesses nearly doubled in that time period. While we celebrate the many contributions of the AAPI communities in the US, we also recognize that AAPI communities and enterprises encounter challenges accessing economic resources and opportunities. These challenges are often masked by the successes of some AAPI communities.

Many of the more than 1.9 million AAPI-owned enterprises are small sole-proprietorships that need assistance to access available resources such as business development counseling, small-business loans, and government procurement opportunities. Labor force participation remains low for Asian Americans. Currently, 63 percent of Asian Americans are in the labor force. Poverty rates vary widely and are higher for AAPI seniors. Senior poverty among both Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders (NHPIs) sits at 12.9 percent and 14.6 percent, respectively, which is greater than the national average of 9.2 percent. For older Southeast Asian Americans, the percentage of those living in poverty is even higher. Asian Americans are generally insured at higher rates, but disparities persist. Nearly 7 percent of Asian Americans are uninsured, slightly below the national average but still above the average for white, non-Hispanic Americans. About half of AAPI subgroups have uninsured rates above the national average. Asian Americans are generally insured at higher rates, but disparities persist.

Businesses owned by Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander women employ more than 1 million people, many of them in female-dominated industries like health care, social services and beauty, such as hair and nail salons. More AAPI women business owners would mean greater participation in the labor market for AAPI women and girls, as well as greater economic independence for women and their families, especially for survivors of gender-based violence and immigrants, who may depend on spouses for economic stability, housing, health care access, and legal immigration status. Equal opportunity and access to economic tools and resources in the form of business loans, infrastructure, training and development, are critical for the health and well-being of all AAPIs, but especially women and girls.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **Increased economic opportunity for AAPI families and communities with low incomes, especially those that target women**
- **Support for AAPI small businesses, especially those that serve the AAPI community**
- **Increased learning and training that is targeted towards understanding pathways to build economic empowerment**
- **Closing the gender and racial wage gap**

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

6. HONORING AND PROTECTING AAPI NEIGHBORHOODS, COMMUNITIES, AND HOMELANDS

AAPI neighborhoods have been vital to the survival of many immigrant communities in the US. On these sites, generations of Asian Americans have come together to survive and thrive by providing housing, employment, and a sense of belonging, as well as building networks and political power for their communities. These historical and cultural neighborhoods all depend on community networks to connect each other to resources, provide safety, stay connected to their cultures of origin, and welcome newly arrived members of their communities. Additionally, many Pacific Islanders face losing access to their indigenous homelands in Hawaii and US territories and rely on informal networks that are even less visible and resourced than their Asian American counterparts. While these issues impact all AAPI's, much of the formal and informal work around housing, community-building, and land stewardship is held by AAPI women.

Gentrification and escalating economic inequalities perpetuated through community development efforts all converge to allow for the dissolution of ethnic enclaves and communities that are so critical to AAPI women and their families surviving.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **Affordable and equitable housing for AAPI families and individuals**
- **Protection for historical Asian American neighborhoods**
- **Protection from displacement by new infrastructure developments in AAPI communities**
- **The New Green Deal and other environmental policies to limit the impact of climate change on Pacific Islander indigenous homelands and Asian American communities**
- **Funding for AAPI community networks and AAPI-led service providers**
- **Discrete funding for Pacific Islander-led initiatives to support native populations on their homelands and support displaced PI's on the mainland**

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

7. US MILITARISM AND ENDING THE WAR ON TERROR

Much of the AAPI experience in the US is connected to the relationship between our families' country of origin and the US military. Muslim AAPI communities suffer over-surveillance, criminalization, and acts of white supremacist violence against their communities under the so-called War on Terror. Pacific Islanders have experienced the colonization, occupation, and environmental destruction of their lands by the US military, and like other communities of color, over-representation serving in the armed forces. All AAPI communities have been impacted by US militarism and the War on Terror in some way, whether as refugees, recent immigrants from a former US colony, residents in the US for generations, or residents of an currently occupied US territory. It is the responsibility of the US government to acknowledge the devastating impact that militarism has historically had and continues to have on AAPI communities, and make reparations.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **Defund the War on Terror apparatus including counter-terrorism programs that co-opt gender justice language to justify US militarism**
- **Funding for AAPI service organizations that is not tied to the Department of Homeland Security or Department of Justice**
- **Ensuring access to residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to the full range of public support and services**
- **Equitable distribution of federal resources for the Pacific Territories**
- **Access to the full range of services and supports for all veterans.**

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

8. RACIAL JUSTICE

AAPI women and girls, in particular, have experienced racism, stereotypes, and rampant discrimination often based on assumptions, myths, and misconceptions perpetuated in the US. Racial justice and immigrant rights are inextricably linked for many AAPI women and their families. The perpetual foreigner myth runs deep in the psyche of many Americans; the notion that AAPI families do not belong in the US feeds a great deal of unconscious bias towards AAPI communities. The constant grappling with the “model minority” myth also contributes to lack of understanding of the diversity of AAPI communities. Overlooking the diversity of cultures, languages, and experiences of AAPI communities means that many racial injustices are not made visible. Disparate impacts from the criminal justice system, surveillance, and police relations vary across the AAPI community.

What does exist as a support and active counterpoint to the realities of racial injustice for AAPI communities is the deep level of solidarity with Black communities. AAPI and Black communities continue to strengthen and leverage the power of togetherness.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **Ending the Patriot Act**
- **Creating a pathway to ending the criminal justice system**
- **Alternatives to state- and government-based solutions to racism**
- **Funding for development of community safety models for AAPI communities**
- **Investing in prevention support and services**

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

9. LANGUAGE ACCESS

AAPIs come from more than 30 nations and speak more than 100 languages and dialects. Yet, they often face barriers in accessing not only services, but also availing themselves of their basic constitutional rights because of lack of language access. Language access is a huge barrier to health care among AAPI women and girls. Left with no option, many choose to engage a “family interpreter.” In addition, community-based organizations that have language translation capacity are frequently placed in the role of interpreter without any compensation. This enables an environment where there is an erosion of doctor-patient privilege, a lack of impartiality, and extreme discomfort talking honestly about personal issues. There are real distinctions between bilingual staff and professional interpreters. Being able to communicate in and be understood in one’s own language is a basic right, and social services, government agencies must make a priority of providing translation and other tools necessary for AAPI communities.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **All federal agencies are mandated to partner with AAPI communities directly to ensure that language access, interpreters and translation is available and accessible**
- **Funding for state and federal agencies to translate all materials and communications**
- **Funding for staff, caregivers, and mental health professionals to deepen knowledge and build a level of cultural competency**

VII. DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGE

10. DATA DISAGGREGATION IN ALL AGENCIES

Despite tremendous growth, AAPIs are one of the most understudied racial groups in the country. AAPIs are falling through the cracks in data representation and, as a result, social services. It is critical to collect, analyze, and disseminate data on AAPIs to address masked needs within AAPI subgroups. Lack of data, including granular data on specific AAPI subgroups, contributes to the “model minority” myth. Disaggregated data will support better policies that reflect AAPI community realities and needs, particularly for Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians. The AAPI community seeks to advance data collection, disaggregation, and dissemination among federal agencies, state and local partners, researchers, and policy advocates, and promote best practices to generate more granular data on AAPI communities.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- **The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to require all federal agencies to expand the racial and ethnic AANHPI groups, oversample in the collection of and disaggregate data by race and ethnicity, and be able to cross tabulate that data by gender**
- **Funding for major systems to disaggregate data and share in a way that is accessible to the public**

VIII. CALL TO ACTION

AAPI women and girls sit at the nexus of the complexities of intersectionality and Reproductive Justice that show up in their daily lives. These critical policy issues represent the most urgent issues that sit at those intersections. In order to advance the policies and practices that are needed, we offer a call to action.

WE DEMAND THE FOLLOWING FROM POLICYMAKERS, LEGISLATORS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND OTHER INFLUENCERS WHO AIM TO SUPPORT AND PARTNER WITH AAPI WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES:

Convene and engage AAPI leaders to share the unique ways that their communities are impacted and challenged in order to authentically center their lives and incorporate their religious, cultural, and communal traditions that define them as a people;

Research, learn, and utilize the intersectional and comprehensive service-delivery models that AAPI organizations have developed to truly serve their clients and their families

Directly engage with, learn from, and co-create solutions with AAPI communities and direct service providers about how systemic changes can be made in each of the policy areas;

Make bold and strategic investments in AAPI communities directly and as outlined in the policy areas;

Approach policymaking and engagement through a comprehensive and interconnected lens and not in silos;

and

Aggressively engage in targeted outreach to ensure AAPI women are fairly represented in data.

APPENDIX

AAPI RJ BLUEPRINT ARCHITECTS

Neha Gill, Executive Director, Apna Ghar

Meher Rehman, formerly Former Programs Manager, Apna Ghar

Grace Huang, J.D., Director of Policy, API-GBV

Sarah Khan, Director of Programs, API-GBV

Krittika Ghosh, Executive Director, DVRP

Yumna Ansari, Outreach and Training Program Manager, DVRP

Nusrat Ameen, PhD, Senior Director of Legal Services and Education, Daya Houston

Tavae Samuelu, Executive Director, EPIC

Nadiyah Mohajir, MPH, Executive Director, HEART

Sahar Pirzada, MSW, Advocacy & West Coast Programming Manager, HEART

Ji Hye Kim, JD, Executive Director, KAN-WIN

Seema Agnani, Executive Director, National CAPACD

Naomi You, Policy Manager, National CAPACD

Sung Yeon Choimorrow, Executive Director, NAPAWF

Jennifer Wang, Deputy Director, NAPAWF

Jaclyn Dean, Policy and Government Affairs Director, NAPAWF

Nikki Metzgar, Communications Director, NAPAWF

Lolita Lledo, Associate Director, PWC

Katrina Dizon Mariategue, Deputy Director of Policy and Field (Acting Executive Director), SEARAC

This Agenda was developed by Forward Movement Consulting.

AAPI RJ BLUEPRINT ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTIONS

APNA GHAR

WWW.APNAGHAR.ORG

Apna Ghar provides critical, comprehensive, culturally competent services, and conducts outreach and advocacy across communities to end gender violence. Based in Chicago, this local organization was officially founded in 1990 as a broad coalition of women who had been working to support one another since the late 1970's. Before the Violence Against Women Act or the Illinois Domestic Violence Act, women had been organizing to support the community because the mainstream movement and organizations was not accessible to their communities. They started a volunteer hotline in the mid 1980's and after incorporating they opened a shelter with supporting services. While their geographic focus is Chicago, they consistently partner with organizations across the country and some international groups that focus on gender-based persecution.

With a comprehensive approach and wrap-around services, Apna Ghar often asks clients: "What else is going on in your life?" They focus on building trust and maintaining connections over time with families and community partners. Direct services provided by Apna Ghar include: 24-hour crisis hotline, safe home/emergency housing, transitional/second stage housing, case management/social services advocacy, counseling, legal advocacy, and supervised visitation and safe exchange services. In addition to these services, the organization focuses on outreach and advocacy.

Apna Ghar has been involved in public policy advocacy since its inception. This work includes advocacy around VAWA reauthorization, Gender Violence act, and funding for services. Other areas of critical importance are working to make Chicago more welcoming to immigrants, hate crime ordinances in the city of Chicago, and post-9/11 an increase in work around civil rights and surveillance.

ASIAN PACIFIC INSTITUTE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (API-GBV)
WWW.API-GBV.ORG

The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence is a national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian/Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. We envision a world free of gender-based violence for communities with equal opportunities for all to thrive. API-GBV's mission is to disrupt gender-based violence, which causes physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual and economic harm within AAPI communities throughout the U.S. and its territories. Based in Oakland, this national organization was initially conceptualized in the late 1980's as a project of a larger national health organization before beginning its operations in 1999.

The vision of gender democracy for Asians and Pacific Islanders is foundational to the mission as the organization aims to strengthen culturally-specific advocacy, influence systems change, impact public policy and engage in movement building and community transformation to prevent gender violence.

They do this through these core programs:

Resource Center on Gender-Based Violence in Asian & Pacific Islander Communities

Advocacy for Immigrant Survivors

Language Access: Interpretation Technical Assistance & Resource Center

Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention

Movement | Network Building Initiatives

Public policy issues that are critical to API GBV include funding for AAPI serving victim advocacy, expanding mainstream immigration conversations about domestic violence to include the impact on Southeast Asian communities, advocating for economic support around employment, public assistance programs, housing, and health, and language access.

As the Institute began hosting convenings a few years ago, their role of uplifting the work on the ground has been elevated in a way that compels them to expand their strategies on how best to do this and support the work on the ground. The organization also routinely joins mainstream organizations to engage in some policy work and raise awareness and issues around immigration and culture of AAPI communities to those tables. Currently, as APIGBV has been in the midst of organizational development that includes hiring a new Executive Director, shifting its structure so that policy, research, and programming are done in a less siloed way, and expanding into sexual violence and reproductive rights.

ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCE PROJECT (DVRP)
WWW.DVRP.ORG

DVRP's mission is to address, prevent and end domestic violence and sexual assault in Asian/Pacific Islander communities while empowering survivors to rebuild their lives after abuse. Based in Washington, DC, this regional organization was founded in 1995 by a group of AAPI women who came together to discuss issues of violence against women in their community. After surveying service providers in the DMV area, the founders of DVRP learned that there were over 500 abused AAPI women that were unable to access culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

DVRP currently aligns their survivor services program with its community outreach program and training and technical assistance program. Through the survivor services programs, the organization provides free and confidential services in over 20 AAPI languages. The community outreach program includes community education initiatives where DVRP holds spaces and facilitates dialogue around gender and domestic violence. The peer champion program is a leadership and mentorship program where they work with a cohort of local leaders to do work around gender-based and power-based violence in their local communities. Additionally, DVRP aims to deepen its outreach in the community through graphic and visual art. They completed a photo book a few years ago that featured three community stories. They are currently working on a graphic novel to discuss issues around gender-based violence while simultaneously uplifting joy, resilience and cultural wealth. This work especially connects to younger audiences as well as healing spaces they create to support and deepen dialogue.

Most of the public policy and advocacy work of DVRP has been on local and regional task forces and coalitions. DVRP has also been involved in some of the Defund the Police efforts locally.

DAYA HOUSTON
WWW.DAYAHOUSTON.ORG

Daya's mission is to empower South Asian survivors of domestic and sexual violence through culturally specific services and to educate the community in an effort to end the cycle of abuse. Based in Houston, the organization was founded in 1996 after the tragic murder of an AAPI woman and her three children after their house was set on fire. At the time there were no South Asian domestic violence organizations in the area. Daya was an all-volunteer until 2004 when they hired their first licensed counselor. The organization's core programs include case management, mental health treatment, safety planning, legal consultation and representation, financial assistance and language access. Through their preventative programs, Daya is expanding its training and outreach to include the whole family as it looks to open a children's program in the coming year.

Daya's policy work is grounded locally and has evolved to include a growing national policy advocacy agenda on issues of child marriage, forced marriage, H4 visas, language accessibility, and driver's license for undocumented immigrants. As the only South Asian domestic violence organization in Houston, they partner with the Harris County District Attorney's office, Houston Immigration Legal Services, and are a member of the 87th legislative table of Texas Council on Family Violence. On the state level, Daya has been a critical voice in helping to pass legislation on raising the child marriage age in Texas and making forced marriage an legal offense under the family code.

Nationally, Daya is a member of NCSO (National Coalition of South Asian Org), SAALT (South Asian American Leading Together), and partners with the Tahirih Justice Center based in Washington, DC.

EMPOWERING PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES (EPIC)
WWW.EMPOWEREDPI.ORG

EPIC's mission is to promote social justice by engaging Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities through culturally relevant advocacy, research, and leadership development. Based in Los Angeles, this national organization was founded in 2009 by a group of young Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander leaders who were focused on the dearth of programming for their communities. From the beginning its mission was to advance social justice with a clear goal of influencing the narrative and understanding that culture is an asset and helps communities thrive.

The core programs of EPIC are centered around building power, building leaders, and building knowledge. The policy advocacy work is a response to policy making efforts that often ignore Pacific Islanders. Leadership development is seen as the only way of sustaining the work; building a pipeline for young people to take on more leadership roles in their communities. EPIC's research work attempts to center Pacific Islanders and their expertise and experience in the research. Oftentimes, research that is disseminated about Pacific Islanders did not come from the community; EPIC hopes to change that over time.

HEART WOMEN AND GIRLS
WWW.HEARTTOGROW.ORG

HEART Women and Girls aims to ensure that all Muslims have the resources, language, and choice to nurture sexual health and confront sexual violence. This virtual organization is national in scope and was founded in 2010 as a result of a small campaign developed to reach Muslim women and girls in Chicago sponsored by the Health and Human Services in Chicago. The campaign identified an unmet need and revelation that traditional sex education was not meeting the need of Muslim young people. The organization is national in scope and operates as a virtual organization with targeted work in several states across the country, primarily anchored where they have staff located.

The current programmatic work of HEART really aligns with the acronym of their name: health education, advocacy, research, and training. HEART educates folks about sexual and reproductive health, advocates for clients on an individual level, conducts research in partnership with other organizations and education institutions, and conducts training with professionals, communities, and organizations to become more culturally competent and not perpetuate harm. HEART has designed the RAHMA framework that is based on the core Islamic value of compassion.

HEART's public policy work has been growing and is at a point of real development and integration in a bolder way in the organization's work. Thus far, HEART has been an ally and supporter in coalitions and collaborative local and regional efforts like a bill around wearing religious garb in the Los Angeles area while in custody. They also participate in the LA area reproductive justice coalition and have signed onto a few amicus briefs. Most recently, HEART led an effort to develop a voter guide for the first time for its constituents. HEART co-created and released the "Abolishing the War on Terror, Building Communities of Care" policy agenda in early 2021.

KAN-WIN
WWW.KANWIN.ORG

KAN-WIN'S mission is to eradicate gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault, especially for women and children across Asian American communities and beyond through culturally competent services, community engagement, and advocacy. Based in Chicago, this statewide organization was founded in 1990 by a group of immigrant Korean women who were already doing social justice work in Chicago. They founded the organization, originally referred to as Korean American Women in Need.

Kan-Win's current programmatic work includes a 24-hour hotline, crisis prevention, training, leadership development, community engagement, and building out programs for youth in the community. Through Kan-Win's direct service work, the focus is continually on how to provide comprehensive services to women and families in need in a culturally specific manner. Though there is a defined community of service for Kan-Win, the organization is still doing a lot of trust-building through its multi-cultural and outreach and training programs.

Kan-Win has begun to develop its public policy experience primarily through partnerships and leveraging of mainstream organizations. Kan-Win has signed on to policy advocacy petitions, legislation, and worked preliminary on developing policy around language access to service agencies. Though Kan-Win's work has been viewed as more passive, the organization still deserves to have its community speak for itself.

**NATIONAL COALITION FOR ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT (NATIONAL CAPACD)
WWW.NATIONALCAPACD.ORG**

National CAPACD is a progressive coalition of local organizations that advocate for and organize in low-income AAPI communities and neighborhoods. They strengthen and mobilize their members to build power nationally and further our vision of economic and social justice for all. With a bi-coastal presence in Oakland and Washington, DC, the organization was founded in 1998 by a group of leaders of the community development organizations that did work primarily in Chinatowns and other AAPI communities in the country. Over the last few decades, the organization has grown from the initial 16 organizations to over 100 member organizations.

Their programs focus on housing and economic justice for the AAPI community by driving resources to local communities and building a voice to advocate for those communities at the national level. National CAPACD regrants funds to direct services to support financial counseling, housing counseling, and small business ownership. Their strategy also includes convening their members to build networks around specific issues: housing, small business, and neighborhood community organizing.

Central to their policy strategy is working with members to document community needs. Because data collected on AAPI communities is usually aggregated, the wealth that some communities have can erase the nuances and experiences of low-income AAPI folks. In order to shift the narrative, National CAPACD collects stories and data around who their community is and what they represent, in order to make the case for resources. As part of their broader strategy to preserve historic neighborhoods where many of our most marginalized members live, they engage in coalition-building with other communities of color to combat gentrification.

NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN WOMEN'S FORUM (NAPAWF)
WWW.NAPAWF.ORG

NAPAWF's mission is to build collective power with AAPI women and girls to gain full agency over their lives, families, and communities. After attending the Beijing World Conference on Women, NAPAWF was founded by 100 founding sisters who recognized that AAPI women's uniquely isolated experience in the US needed a political home. They founded NAPAWF on 6 original pillars: civil rights, economic justice, educational access, end violence against women, immigration and refugee rights, health. NAPAWF was an all-volunteer for 10 years and in 2006 hired their first full-time Executive Director. By then, there were already chapters around the country.

Their current programmatic work focuses on Reproductive Health and Rights, Immigrant rights, and Economic Justice. They approach all of these issues through the reproductive justice framework, even though they don't necessarily call themselves "RJ." NAPAWF prioritizes organizing at the center, which keeps them poised to influence all the other work (innermost circle), legal and policy (next circle), strategic partnerships and communications (tactics for accomplishing their mission). They have 7 volunteer-run chapters, some staffed with organizers with their own members with some support from national organizers, that engage in national and regional campaigns.

Since taking the leadership on The HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act, NAPAWF transformed the campaign as one of the 2 organizations that has a field presence. Their strategy has been to agitate on the ground in home districts of Congress and then having meetings with Members back in DC. They were finally able to get a Senate companion bill introduced last year and many more co-sponsors for the House bill. It's been a stunning comeback from how this group had been operating before and where this bill had been in its legislative trajectory before.

PILIPINO WORKER CENTER (PWC)
WWW.PWCSC.ORG

Pilipino Workers Center aims to secure the dignity and safety of the Pilipino community in Southern California and build labor leaders in the domestic worker industry. Based in Los Angeles, this local organization was founded in 1997 by a group of Filipino American UCLA students. PWC started organizing by doing outreach in the communities and engaging Filipinos in the LA area. They laid a foundation of trust by getting a food truck and doing food distribution for Filipinos and surveying Filipinos on their wants and needs. Through this work they gained an understanding and found that many of them were working as caregivers: undocumented and mostly women and mothers. This was the pathway to their work in immigration reform and organizing domestic workers. Starting as a team of 3, PWC has grown to a team of 15 and 1000 dues-paying members.

PWC is a founding member of the California Domestic Workers Coalition and then later helped found the National Domestic Workers Association. Because of the role of the Philippines as a hub of trafficking, they work to support survivors' access services. Victories include gaining domestic workers the right to be paid a minimum wage. PWC constructed their own building in a historic Filipino town in 2013, with two floors providing rooms and resources for organizing and community-building, and the other floors providing housing to members. They currently have 46 units.

During COVID, they are focusing on supporting domestic workers' and caregivers' work conditions, PPE, safe housing, and food security. PWC's current policy work includes work on minimum wage, overtime for domestic workers, and helping middle-class seniors to get subsidies for home care. On the national level, as part of NDWA, they are working on the National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.

SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOURCE ACTION CENTER (SEARAC)
WWW.SEARAC.ORG

SEARAC is a national civil rights organization that empowers Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese American communities to create a socially just and equitable society. As representatives of the largest refugee community ever resettled in the United States, SEARAC stands together with other refugee communities, communities of color, and social justice movements in pursuit of social equity. Based in Washington, DC, this national organization was founded in 1979 by a group of humanitarians and helped create the 1980 Refugee Resettlement Act, which made it possible for Southeast Asians to resettle in the US, including hubs for refugee resettlement in Minnesota, Massachusetts, California, and Texas.

Starting with a focus on economic justice and long-term stability for their communities, SEARAC began to focus on the lack of culturally competent services available and other failures in resettlement policies, particularly in schools, and the school-to-prison pipeline for young AAPIs. Because of this, one of our strategies is building and empowering leaders and creating pipelines of leadership in the Southeast Asian community. They have 40+ partners around the country. Whether it's through convenings to identify advocacy they are committed to doing the work together: sub-granting to support campaigns, providing training, and opportunities to build skills. Every year, they train a cohort of 40-50 people; over more than 20 years, they have trained over 1,000.

The pillars of their policy agenda are education, health, immigration. SEARAC's work around health advocates for access to quality health care that is culturally and linguistically competent. In education, SEARAC advocates for culturally responsive support services for Southeast Asian students K-12 so that they can also thrive and access higher education; these student's struggles are often invisible by data that is not disaggregated that can suggest these students are thriving when they are not. In immigration, SEARAC focuses on all around deportations of individuals with a conviction that make it challenging for immigrants to remain in the country due to the 1996 immigration laws. Their work focuses on shifting the narrative with friends and opponents so that there is more nuance and understanding and sympathy for these communities. Their successes include a key win in a House bill on education as well as multiple state wins around data disaggregation, and if passed, the New Way Forward Act would set a statute of limitations for deportation, making the restrictions much stricter for deportation.