

# The CAAV VOICE

Newsletter  
of the  
Committee  
Against  
Anti-Asian  
Violence

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## New York City Incidents

### COMMUNITY SEEKS JUSTICE IN YONG XIN HUANG KILLING

In May, despite compelling witness accounts and medical evidence, the Brooklyn District Attorney failed to bring an indictment against NYPD Officer Steven Mizrahi for the murder of Yong Xin Huang on March 24, 1995. The sixteen-year-old honor student was playing with his friends when Mizrahi shot him point-blank in the back of the head.

Huang family (left) leads procession through Chinatown in memory of Yong Xin on July 16, 1995.

PHOTO:WAYNE LUM



Hundreds of people petitioned for Mizrahi's immediate suspension and prosecution.

On May 23, 1995, a week after the D.A.'s announcement, over 300 people attended a demonstration organized by CAAAV outside the D.A.'s office. The Huang family and the Asian American community expressed outrage with signs that read, "Remember our brother" and "How many more children must die?" A CAAAV delegation attempted to deliver a community letter to the D.A.'s office; but the office summoned police to forcibly eject the group.

CAAAV has formed an ad hoc committee to continue the campaign for justice for Yong Xin Huang. The committee organized a

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### SOUTHEAST ASIAN YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROJECT KICKS OFF

This summer, CAAAV's Southeast Asian Organizing Collective (SEAOC) conducted its first annual Youth Leadership Project (YLP) in the Fordham area of the Bronx. SEAOC chose Fordham as the site of YLP because it has the largest concentration of working class and poor Cambodian and Vietnamese families in all of the five boroughs. SEAOC's YLP was modeled on Asian Americans United's (AAU) program in Philadelphia, which seeks to empower Southeast Asian communities by organizing youth within those communities. From its founding in 1985, AAU has always envisioned youth in Southeast Asian communities as potential leaders because of their bilingual and bicultural skills. AAU's Youth Leadership Program has worked on numerous community campaigns, such as obtaining a schoolbus for Chinatown school children, preventing a public transit fare increase for students, and demanding public assistance for high school students.

SEAOC's YLP, which was funded by the New York Community Trust and the Hazen Foundation, consisted of a six-week program in which high school and college-aged Southeast Asian youths tutored Southeast Asian elementary school children in math and English communication skills for four weeks.

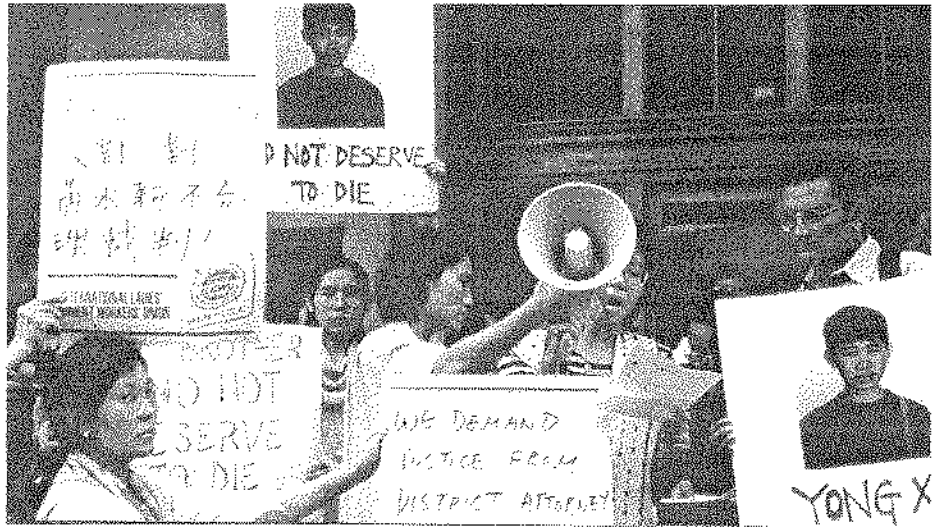
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memorial for July 16, the day before Yong Xin's seventeenth birthday. More than 300 people gathered for a service at P.S. 124 in Chinatown. Family and classmates shared their memories of Yong Xin and read poetry dedicated to him. After the service there was a procession to Columbus Park. Attendees created a community memorial to Yong Xin with his picture, white carnations and ribbons. The day ended with a speak-out at Confucius Plaza where leaders from the Asian, African American and Latino communities denounced police brutality and inaction by District Attorneys.

The justice committee has collected over 10,000 petition signatures and 40 organizational letters demanding that Zachary Carter, the U.S. Attorney of the Eastern District, conduct a federal civil rights investigation and prosecution of Officer Mizrahi for Yong Xin's death. CAAAV and concerned Asian, African American and Latino leaders will be meeting with U.S. Attorney Carter on October 10. At the same time, a vigil will be held outside.

Top Photo: May 23 rally at Brooklyn D.A.'s office, protesting exoneration of Officer Mizrahi in Yong Xin's death.

Bottom Photo: Osman's supporters, in front of Manhattan Criminal Court, send message to D.A. Morgenthau on July 7, 1995.



### VICTORY FOR SALEEM OSMAN – FALSE CHARGES DISMISSED

On May 26, 1994, Saleem Osman, coordinator of CAAAV's Lease Drivers Coalition, was brutally beaten and arrested by police officers in a racially motivated attack that occurred after he came to the aid of another cabdriver. (see CAAAV Voice, Spring '94) For over a year, Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau refused to drop the charges against Osman. Facing a possible four year prison sentence, Osman was scheduled to go to trial on July 10, 1995.

In the weeks before the court date, mounting public pressure to dismiss the

case included widespread ethnic and mainstream press coverage, a flood of phone calls and faxes to the D.A.'s office from outraged community members, and a press conference and rally attended by over 150 supporters and community leaders in front of Manhattan Criminal Court on July 7.

Buckling to this pressure, as well as support from Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger and Councilman Tom Duane, the D.A. decided not to pursue prosecution. On July 10, with community supporters packing the courtroom, Osman, who was represented by the Legal Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights Michael Deutsch, was given an Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal in return for a statement of apolo-



gy. CAAAV believes that the long delay in the case's resolution and the unprecedented demand for an apology were face-saving measures for the NYPD and were meant to discourage community organizers from opposing police brutality. These actions expose the D.A.'s complicity with the police.

On the steps of the court, Deutsch declared, "This was truly a people's victory and a tribute to the organizing success of CAAAV and its supporters." Osman has filed a civil suit against the NYPD for extreme brutality and unjustified action.

## Other Incidents

### **Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, 9/2/95**

In four separate incidents on September 2, three Chinese men and one Chinese woman were assaulted by three white teenagers. All four assaults occurred in a thirty minute period around Bensonhurst's Satellite Park. Sixty-eight-year-old SN still remains hospitalized in serious condition with fractured facial bones, skull and pelvis. FDF, 49, was hospitalized for two weeks. The same morning, the youths also attacked a Guatemalan immigrant. Paul and Joseph Tinnirello, 17- and 18-year-old brothers, and Jacob Charest, 19, have been charged with attempted murder, three counts of first-degree assault, third-degree assault, and bias crimes. The two brothers have been released on bail. Charest fled the state, but was apprehended in Pennsylvania.

CAAAV explained criminal justice procedures to the victims and persuaded them of the importance of their participation in the grand jury hearings to indict the teenagers. CAAAV also played an important role in getting media coverage for this story.

### **Chinatown, 7/7/95**

On July 7, XZ was assaulted by four plainclothes police officers in the Canal Street subway station. Wrongfully accusing XZ of not paying the fare, Officer Michael Armette and three other officers ordered XZ into a small room in the subway station where they beat him and called him "Chinese shit." Then he was taken to the 5th Precinct where he was held for several hours before being issued a summons for "resisting arrest." Unaware of the implications of the plea, XZ appeared in court and accepted an Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal, essentially an admission of guilt, and agreed to two days of community service. CAAAV is currently assisting XZ in filing for crime victims compensation to cover his medical costs.

### **Queens, July 1995**

Korean American CWO has been unjustly charged with aggravated assault. According to CWO, he was assaulted by his landlord during a dispute; but the police — without conducting a full investigation of the incident — classified it as a neighbor-to-neighbor dispute and charged both CWO and his landlord with assault. CAAAV will accompany CWO to court to ensure that his rights are not further violated.

### **Chelsea, Manhattan, 5/31/95**

After being punched repeatedly and knocked unconscious by Officer Fitzpatrick of the 6th Precinct, SC, a Pakistani cabdriver, was then falsely charged with resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. SC suffered the loss of hearing in one ear and two loose teeth. As a result of CAAAV's canvassing of witnesses and meeting with the precinct, all charges against SC were dismissed. SC has filed a civil suit against the city.

### **Queens, 10/14/94**

NS, a Pakistani yellow cabdriver, was

falsely accused of rape by a white French tourist, who alleged that she was assaulted and raped by a cabdriver on the way to the airport. She picked NS out of a police lineup in which he was the only man of color. In a second lineup she chose another South Asian man instead of NS. On the second day of the trial this summer, the woman identified a Pakistani man in the back of the audience as the perpetrator even though NS was sitting at the defense table directly in front of her. She described her assailant as having "very dark eyes." NS has hazel eyes. The woman also testified that the driver climbed over the seat from the front to the rear of the cab. The cab NS was driving at the time of the incident was equipped with a standard partition. It was shown in court that the partition's pass-through space is too small to allow a person to squeeze through.

The judge declared a mistrial after the jury was deadlocked, at ten out of twelve for acquittal. CAAAV has been working closely with NS's attorney John Yong helping with the investigation and bringing people to the trial. CAAAV is now organizing a campaign of petitions and letters from South Asian and other community leaders to pressure the Queens District Attorney to dismiss the charges instead of having a second trial.

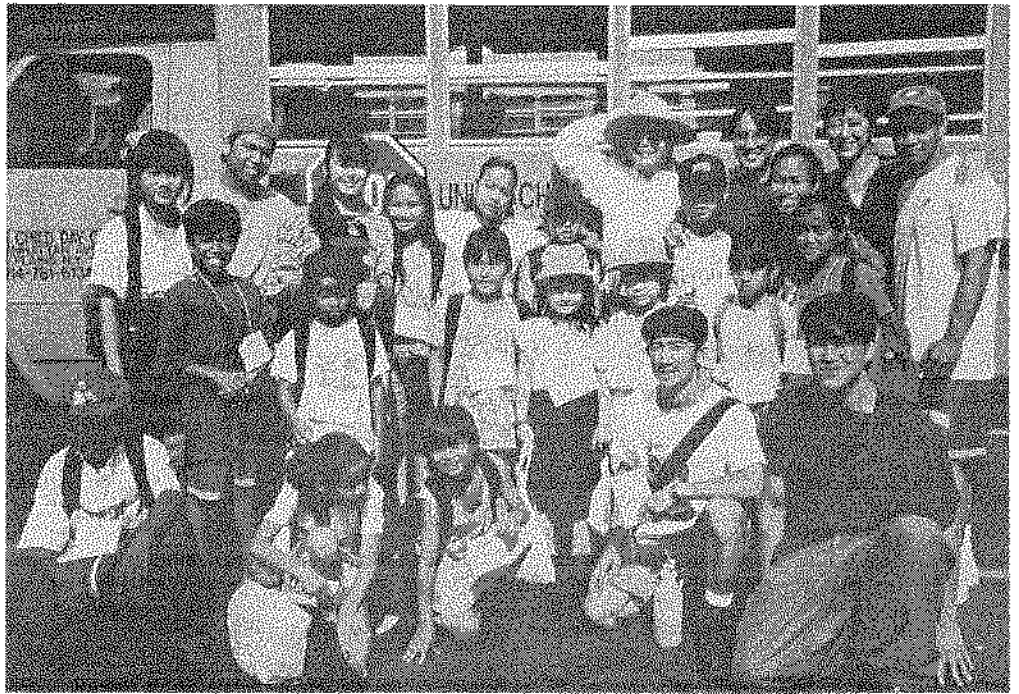
## updates

### **Greenpoint, Brooklyn, 1/17/95**

MA, a Pakistani livery driver, was the target of two racist white police officers, who verbally and physically assaulted MA and ticketed him for false violations on several occasions. (see CAAAV Voice, Spring '95) With CAAAV's help, these tickets were dismissed. CAAAV and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund are assisting MA in filing a civil suit against the officers.

SEAOC held intensive workshops for the participants on teaching and community organizing skills and Asian American history, as well as current issues.

The youth project is seen as a way to empower working class and poor Southeast Asian communities. For a community to be truly empowered, leadership must come from within that community. Through YLP, SEAOC hopes to instill a sense of community responsibility among the youth so that they, in turn, will do their own organizing to empower themselves and their communities. After this first program, SEAOC has gained the trust and respect of some of the young people and their families, begun to develop ties within the different Southeast Asian communities, and laid the groundwork for future projects.



Youth tutors, children and SEAOC organizers in first Youth Leadership Project.

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**EVERYDAY STRUGGLES FOR  
SOUTHEAST ASIANS IN  
THE BRONX**

**M**aking their way through a busy intersection, several youth tutors and organizers from SEAOC's YLP began their day of home visits to the families of children they tutored during the summer. One of the children, M, was playing in front of a brick building next to a construction site. The streets and sidewalks were littered with trash and the stench of garbage hung heavily in the August heat. This neglected section of the Bronx is Fordham, also known as the Southeast Asian enclave of New York City.

Fordham is bordered by Kingsbridge Avenue on the north, Fordham Road on the south, and University and Jerome Avenues on the east and west, respectively. Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Vietnamese, ethnic Chinese

**YOUTH REFLECT ON SUMMER**

**Chhaya Chhoum**

... Usually there aren't any programs like this in our community. . . I found this program to be very encouraging for the Southeast Asian children and the community.

**Phalla Chhoum**

When I first came to this program I was very excited. . . I felt that this program really cared for the Southeast Asian community. I decided to join this program because I wanted to work with kids and to learn more about Southeast Asians.

**Nicola Por**

... I have learned about the importance of a community and how an individual or an organized group can make a difference in the community. This program made me more aware of the situations, events, and circumstances in my neighborhood and in the U.S. surrounding Asians and Asian Americans. . . Before I got involved with this program, I never really paid much attention to what goes on around my neighborhood because,

like most other people, I felt it was none of my concern. The program has made me understand that there is an Asian community here — a community that can be improved.

**Thoul Tong**

Now, especially in the Southeast Asian community in the Bronx, more youth are in gangs than before. These youth disrespect their elders; and the violence against one another has escalated so much that people in the community are starting to realize these things happen everyday in this part of the Bronx. I truly think the community needs a center where troubled youth can go and enjoy themselves without facing the hatred and violence that goes on outside. I will help in creating this community center in a community that truly needs one.

**Linda Wong**

As an individual, I had never thought much about my community or any other community. But now, heading towards the end of the Summer Tutoring Program, I realize that there's a lot to do in my community. . . In my



community or any other Southeast Asian community, there are a lot of young children who hang out late at night with no adults to watch out for them. . . Before this program I thought that I couldn't make any difference for the children; but I actually have helped the children. . .

(BRONX CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

from Southeast Asia, and Cambodians live side by side here in what is considered to be one of the poorest areas of the Bronx. Between 1975 and 1982, refugee resettlement agencies in the U.S. were inundated with Southeast Asian refugees who were displaced by the disruption caused by the wars waged by the United States in Indochina. Exacerbating the problems of these poorly equipped agencies were Reagan's cutbacks of federally funded social service programs. Many Southeast Asian families were literally dumped into cheap housing projects in inner-city ghettos across the U.S.

Opening the front door of the dilapidated building, M and the YLP group walked down a narrow, poorly lit hallway to a single elevator. After a long wait, the children began to yell for the elevator. When it finally arrived, the super emerged and contemptuously told the children to shut up or he would make them walk. One of the children reported that the landlords rarely made repairs and often called her family "animals."

M's family lives in a sparsely furnished one-bedroom apartment. M is one of seven children. Some of her brothers and sisters were playing on the floor as her mother held the youngest, a one-year-old child. While the father was lighting incense to put on an altar to Buddha, the mother greeted the youth tutors and SEAOC organizers. The youth and the family stood around smiling at each other uncomfortably, unable to communicate well

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## National Incidents

### Leonia, New Jersey, 1992 to present

Since moving into a predominantly white neighborhood in Leonia, New Jersey three years ago, JOP and her family have been repeatedly harassed by their neighbor. The neighbor has made numerous complaints to the police and city courts about "foul cultural smells" emanating from JOP's house and has demanded that the Korean family redirect their fan, which faces the neighbor's house. Although none of the complaints have resulted in punitive action against the family, they have suffered prolonged emotional stress after being subjected to repeated unannounced examinations of their home and numerous court appearances. CAAAV has assisted the family in finding a lawyer and will continue to advocate in this case.

### Okinawa, 9/4/95

Three American soldiers, stationed in Okinawa, have been charged with raping a 12-year-old elementary school girl. On the evening of September 4, the soldiers snatched the girl from the street as she was walking home. They threw her in a car, bound her with adhesive tape, took her to the beach, and raped her. The three suspects are being held in a U.S. military prison in Okinawa.

Since 1972, there have been 4,500 criminal cases involving American soldiers in Okinawa and Japan. The rape has spurred on the movement to remove all American soldiers and military bases in Okinawa and Japan.

There are 29,000 American troops in Okinawa and 100,000 troops stationed throughout Asia.

### Paramus, New Jersey, 7/20/95

Higeru Ito, a 40-year-old Japanese American who has lived in the U.S. for 14 years, was slashed from chin to ear by another shopper at a Toys "R" Us store. Ito was standing in the cashier line to purchase a birthday present for his son's friend when a woman bumped his shoulder and then uttered a racial remark. When Ito objected to the comment, the woman's male companion became angry. Ito, who was with his wife and 2-year-old daughter, tried to leave in order to avoid a fight. The assailant, an African American man in his 30's, pursued Ito to the store foyer, slashed him, and threatened to get a gun. A crowd rushed to Ito's aid. The man fled on foot. Ito required 80 stitches to his cheek, ear and back.

### Jersey City, New Jersey, 5/7/95

Police Officer John Chiusolo, who terrorized an Asian couple (see below) early in his long history of brutality, was finally suspended from the Jersey City police force and arrested for murder and official misconduct in the fatal beating on May 7 of Julio Tarquino, a 22-year-old Bolivian immigrant visiting from Florida. Chiusolo beat Tarquino and arrested him after intervening in an argument which began after Tarquino objected to ethnic slurs used against him by two other men. Tarquino died from his head injuries.

On October 23, 1988, in his first year on the force, Officer Chiusolo attacked Filipinos Rudolfo and Minerva Rodriguez in their Jersey City home. After beating Mr. Rodriguez with a nightstick, Chiusolo handcuffed the half-conscious Rodriguez and carried him to the police car. Rodriguez, a former artist and professional cartoonist, was disabled by his injuries. He suffered the separation of both his shoulders and nerve damage in his wrist. Chiusolo was cleared of brutality charges. (see CAAAV Voice, Fall '91)

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

enough to discuss M's performance in the program. Finally, one of the youth tutors translated a letter of invitation to M's graduation into Khmer. The parents regretfully explained that they both worked Saturdays.

Under intense pressure from the 1980's cutbacks, many resettlement agencies began to cut aid to refugee families after several years, believing the "model minority myth" that hardworking and smart Asians would easily find a way out of the impoverished conditions in which they were placed. Today, 15 years later, there are still hundreds of Vietnamese and Cambodian families living in these struggling communities. Belying the conservative rhetoric that immigrants are robbing "real" Americans of jobs, Southeast Asians have been unable to gain decent working class jobs that could be

the first step out of poverty. In reality, the parents of the Cambodian and Vietnamese students enrolled in YLP work 12-hour days in factories and sweatshops at less than minimum wage in order to support their large families. Some work at home doing piece work for as little as one dollar per hour. Given the long hours that many are forced to work, there is little time left to study English or a marketable skill that would help them improve their current situations. Like many of the Southeast Asians stuck in poverty across the U.S., the Cambodian and Vietnamese families in Fordham represent the Asian American "underclass." With the current onslaught of anti-immigrant legislation and attacks on civil rights, they are not likely to be upwardly mobile. The children, who make up of over 60% of the community, will continue to face the same grinding poverty unless they gain the organizing skills and education to confront the community's problems.

(NATIONAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

Chiusolo was also cleared of murder charges from a July 1991 incident when he fatally shot Maximino Cintron, who had objected to a traffic summons by ripping it up.

**Nationwide, 4/95**

The Council on American-Islamic Relations reported that 222 bias attacks against Muslims occurred in the three days following the bombing of the Federal building in Oklahoma. The attacks included spitting on women wearing shawls, death threats, shots fired at mosques, and a fake bomb thrown at a Muslim day care center.

During the past year, five American mosques have been reported to be burned down or seriously vandalized.

her and forced her to move out. He had filed for the annulment, while she had filed for a divorce with a \$350, six-month alimony.

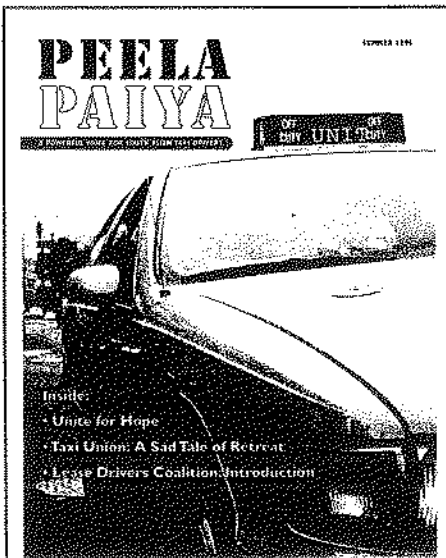
**Hells Canyon, Oregon, 1887**

Recently discovered files found hidden in a safe in a museum in Wallowa County, Oregon revealed details of the worst incident of anti-Chinese violence in American history. The files described the massacre of 31 Chinese gold miners at the hands of six white men. According to historians who have dug up the original depositions and grand jury testimony, the massacre occurred on May 27, 1887 in Hells Canyon in northeast Oregon. The band of white men, who were known horse and cattle thieves, stood on the rim of Hells Canyon, where the Chinese gold miners were working, and opened fire with high-powered rifles, killing 10 men. The carnage continued the following day when the men returned to kill 21 more Chinese miners.

When the six killers went to trial, three of them were acquitted of murder charges. The three other men fled the country and were never caught.

**Seattle, Washington, 3/95**

Timothy Blackwell shot and killed his pregnant wife and two of her friends as they waited to testify against him in a marriage annulment hearing. Susana Remerata Blackwell was a mail order bride from the Philippines. The two other murder victims were also Filipino women. Mrs. Blackwell's seven-month-old fetus also died in the shooting. The Blackwells were married in the Philippines in 1993. Mrs. Blackwell joined her husband in the United States in February 1994. She separated from her husband two weeks after arriving here. Mrs. Blackwell contended that her husband regularly beat



**Hot off the Press!**

The Lease Drivers Coalition's new magazine for South Asian cab drivers in English, Urdu and Bengali.

Copies available at the CAAAV office.

## THE SPECTRE OF PROP. 187

Although we are all descendants of immigrants in this country, with the sole exception of the Indigenous Peoples, the pattern of scapegoating newer waves of immigrants, particularly people of color, and blaming them for the nation's economic ills recurs with sickening frequency throughout American history.

During this current wave of anti-immigrant hysteria, legislation has been adopted by anti-immigrant forces as the weapon of choice. Beginning with California's infamous Proposition 187, there has been a ground swell on the state, local and federal levels to institute legislation that ultimately attacks and punishes those most vulnerable — children, the poor, women, the sick and the aged.

At the federal level, the Republican-sponsored "Contract with America" (or, more appropriately, "Contract *on* America") includes the Welfare Reform Bill, which would deny permanent legal immigrant residents access to almost all federal programs, including Medicaid, free immunizations and subsidized school lunches for their children, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps and housing assistance. This bill would exclude 1.5 million legal immigrants from receiving services. Nearly one million would lose Medicaid coverage.

Immigrants are not the only victims of the "Contract," which proposes to cut 30-50% of social programs over the next 5 to 7 years and would severely impact education at all levels; job training programs; women and children (including \$68 billion cut from programs serving children); HIV/AIDS patients (with drastic cuts in preventive programs, Medicaid and substance abuse treatments); seniors (deep cuts in Social Security and Medicare); gays and lesbians (Newt Gingrich pledged to ban gays and lesbians from any federally funded programs, schools, institu-

tions or organizations); the arts; and programs to aid small businesses. Except for the wealthy and large corporations, who would benefit from huge tax cuts, we would all be adversely affected in some way.

The New York State Senate has already passed a bill excluding undocumented immigrants from public colleges and requiring post-secondary institutions to verify the status of each enrollee and report the findings to the INS. A pending bill excludes undocumented immigrants from public elementary and secondary schools and requires school districts to report the status of all students and their parents or guardians to the INS. The Finance Committee has submitted a bill for Senate approval which would require state and local police agencies to notify the attorney general and INS of the immigration status of persons arrested under state law. Other pending legislation would exclude undocumented immigrants from receiving public health care — other than emergency medical care — and public assistance.

A Long Island Congressman has proposed a bill that would make English the official language, which would also repeal the Bilingual Education Act and eliminate the Office of Bilingual Education and special English classes for immigrant children.

The horrendous scenario described above only superficially describes the devastating changes that will be brought about by the anti-immigrant legislation booked for passage. Flying in the face of the myth of Asians as the "model minority", Asian Americans are actually the fastest growing segment of those on welfare and particular Asian groups (for example, as a legacy of the Vietnam War, Southeast Asians) have the highest welfare dependency rate of any ethnic or racial group. Asian/Pacific Islander communities face an overwhelmingly bleak future unless we are effectively mobilized to struggle against these unconscionable political realities.

PROPOSED  
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NOW

187

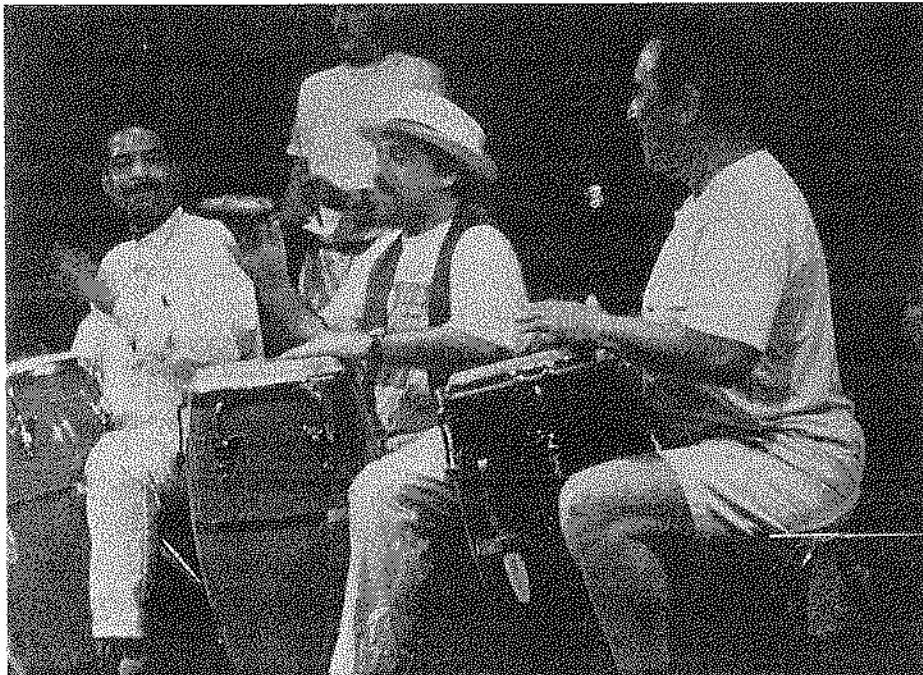


PHOTOS: WAYNE LUM

Soh Daika brings down the house.

# The Rhythm Is Ours

M.A.D. Rumberos, performance group for the Williamsburg area organization Musica Against Drugs, gets the crowd in a dancing mood.



CAAHV's fundraiser, *The Rhythm Is Ours!* held on June 16 at the Public Theater, was a resounding success. The sold-out concert, featuring drumming groups representing the broad spectrum of New York's ethnic communities, was truly a celebration of the strength and solidarity of people of color in New York City. The breath-taking performances by the groups — Soh Daika (Japanese), Djembe Ensemble (West African), Umuncha (Korean), Kinding Sindaw (Filipina), MAD Rumberos (Latino), La Troupe Makandal (Haitian), and Silver Cloud Singers (Native American) — made the evening an outstanding one.



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# CAAAV In Coalition

## AIDS EDUCATION FOR SOUTH ASIAN DRIVERS

Over the summer months, LDC collaborated with members of South Asian AIDS Action, Sakhi for South Asian Women, and the Asian Pacific Islanders Coalition against HIV/AIDS to develop AIDS education workshops for South Asian cab drivers. After initial meetings in which representatives from each group met to discuss plans and strategies and get feedback from some of LDC's driver members, a working committee created an outline for a two hour workshop which will address HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention, sexuality, and negotiating safer sex. The committee will be meeting with larger groups of drivers over the coming months to get more feedback and to organize a test run for the workshop.

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## COALITION AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY

At the beginning of the summer, CAAAV initiated the Coalition Against Police Brutality. At this time when police corruption and brutality are at a peak throughout the country, CAAAV envisions the coalition as a working, activist group focusing on New York Police Department accountability. The organizations joining with CAAAV are the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, Streetwatch, which works with the homeless, and Harlem Defenders. Each of these groups has had extensive experience and success in holding the criminal justice system accountable to their constituent communities. Currently, we are working on two projects — a campaign to hold a congressional hearing on police corruption and brutality and a research project on the NYPD.

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## BUSY SUMMER FOR SUMMER INTERNS

Summer interns brought fresh energy, remarkable adaptability, and a sense of fun into the CAAAV office.

■ **Eric Tang**, a long-time CAAAV member and our full time intern, demonstrated enormous dedication and discipline as he juggled all the projects that the staff threw at him—including buying an air conditioner (yeah!), developing a summer lecture series, organizing volunteer orientations, writing City Council members about the conditions of taxi drivers, and helping with the youth leadership project.

■ **Susan Kim**, a student in Wellesley College and our part-time intern, slid comfortably into CAAAV's mad routine as she helped with the Yong Xin Huang campaign.

■ **Sharon Chang**, a student in Mount Holyoke College and another part-time intern, did a marvelous job of arranging CAAAV's historic photographs, conducting church outreach, and helping with the Women Workers Project.

■ **Lisa Chan**, who also interned part-time, showed amazing commitment as she coordinated the intensive petition signing campaign for Yong Xin Huang's case.

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# C A M P A I G N S FOR

# J U S T I C E

## Asians For Mumia

Three Asian groups, CAAAV and the Support Committees for David Wong and Yu Kikumura, organized a Walk-a-thon for Mumia Abu-Jamal to raise consciousness and funds for the New York Free Mumia Coalition on August 5, twelve days before the scheduled execution date.

A former member of the Black Panther Party of Philadelphia, Mumia is the highly acclaimed political activist/journalist who was accused of killing a policeman on December 9, 1981. Denied adequate counsel, Mumia was convicted of first-degree murder despite the lack of evidence. He was sentenced to death by Judge Sabo, who has put more people on death row than any sitting judge in the U.S.

Beginning at City Hall Park, 150 enthusiastic marchers from all backgrounds and age groups chanted and passed leaflets to on-lookers in a 3-hour walk. They were led by the Red, Black and Green Banner, carried by Herman and Iyaluwa Ferguson, and the "Asians for Mumia" banner. In the otherwise exuberant march, the only moment of quiet was when the marchers passed the African Burial Grounds in silent tribute.

Two days later, due to grassroots efforts such as the Walk-a-

thon and international pressure, a stay of execution was announced. Although a great victory, this decision can be rescinded at any time and Mumia remains on death row. In September, Mumia was denied a new trial despite the presentation of new evidence. This decision will be appealed.

Asian Americans will be continuing their organizing through the newly-formed Asian Adhoc Committee for Mumia Abu-Jamal. For more information call the David Wong Support Committee Hotline, 212-875-4823.



## South Asian Domestic Worker Defeats Bosses

Despite the overpowering forces seeking to silence the plight of domestic workers employed in the homes of the economically privileged, the Domestic Workers' Committee of Sakhi for South Asian Women recently celebrated its first victory. With Sakhi's help, a domestic worker filed a lawsuit against her abusive and exploitative ex-employers in Manhattan's federal court. She was paid a pitiful sum of \$200 per month for working from 6 AM to 9:30 PM, seven days a week. Her employers belittled and harassed her, provided little food, threatened her with deportation, and confiscated her passport. Distraught, the worker ran away and subsequently contacted Sakhi. In early 1995, she won an out-of-court settlement. Her ex-employers apparently felt it was preferable to settle the action rather than allow their conduct to be made public.

Many workers come to this country in the hopes of making a decent living and sending wages to their families back home, but

most domestic workers are paid less than minimum wage and work long hours six to seven days a week. They receive no vacation or sick leave and do not have access to medical care. Many are undocumented and some do not speak English. A few are virtually confined to the households in which they work.

Sakhi works with South Asian domestic workers, who are usually employed by wealthy South Asian professionals. The Domestic Workers' Committee was formed in 1994 to confront and change the imbalance of power between the domestic worker and employer. The employers intimidate the workers into silent submission by, for example, threatening to report them to the INS. Sakhi has worked to break this silence in a variety of ways: by speaking and writing in different public forums; by developing a brochure on the legal rights of documented and undocumented domestic workers; by creating a flyer explaining the obligations of domestic employers; and by conducting training sessions for workers in confidence-building,

interviewing skills, and legal rights. Most domestic workers are unaware that they have a right to be paid minimum and overtime wages even if they are undocumented.

Domestic workers have been ignored by protective government regulatory legislation. For example, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), a groundbreaking law passed in 1947, specifically excluded domestic workers from its protection. The NLRA created the right for workers to self-organize, form or join labor organizations and to bargain collectively with their employer. At the same

time, the NLRA made it illegal for an employer to interfere with, restrain workers from, or fire them as a result of organizing.

In today's era of immigrant bashing, growing poverty, and the undermining of organized labor, it is necessary now more than ever to organize domestic workers, who are among the most exploited and least valued of the labor force. Sakhi is in the process of developing a reference library on domestic workers, labor law, and other related materials. If you would like to volunteer your time or resources, call 212-714-9153.

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### **Rainbow Center For Korean Women**

The Rainbow Center, founded in 1993, is a Flushing-based center for Korean women, especially immigrant women who are married or formerly married to U.S. servicemen. These sisters suffer a high rate of violence, abuse, and abandonment in their marriages. They have met with ostracism from the Korean community and racism, poverty, homelessness, and cultural and language-based discrimination within the wider U.S. society.

The Rainbow Center provides services including temporary shelter for women who are homeless and/or facing domestic violence,

housing advocacy and referral, an open lunch program where women gather daily for Korean food and mutual support, a culturally sensitive bilingual hotline, individual and group counseling, psychological referrals, legal advocacy and referrals, job training and placement, and English classes. Beyond services, the Center publishes a bilingual newsletter and organizes and participates in advocacy campaigns, coalitions, educational forums, and conferences. The Rainbow Center works toward long-term, systemic solutions. For more information, call 718-539-6546 or write to P.O. Box 540929, Flushing, NY, 11354-0929.

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### **Chinatown Workers Expose Illegal Labor Practices**

Almost 300 Chinese workers attended a town hall meeting on July 30 to speak out against illegal working conditions. The meeting was the culmination of months of organizing for stronger enforcement of labor regulations led by the Chinese Staff & Workers Association and Students for Workers' Rights. Workers spoke in defiance of Chinatown's repressive alliance among bosses, tongs, and the police, who try to intimidate workers with threats of violence, blacklisting and business closures. Garment workers spoke of non-payment of wages, runaway bosses, and 80-hour work weeks. A Jing Fong worker talked about management's illegal appropriation of tips and sub-minimum wages at the largest restaurant in Chinatown. Students spoke about their hunger strike against the inhumane working conditions which they and their parents have endured.

The meeting proved to be very effective. Two weeks later, Congressperson Nydia Velazquez and Maria Echaveste, the U.S. Department of Labor representative at the meeting, announced the creation of The Apparel/Restaurant Guidance and Enforcement Team (TARGET) task force to address the "exploitation of Chinese restaurant and garment workers." The State Attorney General's office recently ruled that Jing Fong had broken the law, offering them an out-of-court settlement if they paid back \$1.1 million of the money owed workers. As yet, the restaurant has not agreed to the settlement and continues its illegal practices.

CSWA is continuing its outreach to build on these victories. The contacts made with thousands of Chinese workers are the basis of a drive to organize workers to present evidence to government agencies needed to prosecute scofflaw employers. For more information call CSWA 212-619-7979.

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### **Asian Americans Salute William Kunstler**

William Kunstler, one of the great civil rights lawyers of this century, passed away suddenly on September 4, 1995. His death leaves a difficult-to-fill gap in the legal community and the "movement world." Kunstler was a charismatic bundle of energy, who showed preferential treatment to clients of color, defending notable names in the African American, Native American, Latino and Arab

struggles. He briefly defended Japanese national Yu Kikumura and had committed himself to the case of David Wong, who was falsely convicted of murder in a racist frame-up.

An anathema to those in power, but loved by the disenfranchised, Kunstler used the court as a battleground to defend the oppressed or marginalized. What he has accomplished should be a challenge to young, aspiring lawyers to follow suit. His legacy of love for people and justice will be remembered.

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**Empowering Asian immigrant women  
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**Developing youth leadership in low-income  
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**Publishing the CAAAV Voice, a unique voice  
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