ON THE OCCASION OF OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY...

IN WORKING TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO CARE, TO BELIEVE, AND TO TAKE ACTION, we tend to only look and move forward. Amidst cycles of war and violence, displacement and poverty, we find refuge in future possibilities. We find refuge in our hope for better days, when one’s immigration status doesn’t determine whether he or she receives health care or an education, where violence isn’t a solution to conflict any more so than violent cops make us safer, and where people can find more comfort in creating change than in apathy.

Anniversaries are times to take careful stock of one’s past. In this special 20th Anniversary edition of the CAAAV Voice, we pause and reflect to pull lessons and inspiration from our past. We bring together two decades of our work, from our early years, through a visual timeline of our 20 years, to a photo essay on our recent participation in the historic immigration mobilizations, and finally to our current struggles for a better future in updates from the work of Chinatown tenants in Manhattan’s Chinatown, the Cambodian and Vietnamese refugee community in the Bronx, and Asian women domestic workers citywide.

Anniversaries are also times to celebrate. And, after 20 years, there is a lot to celebrate. As you read through these pages, we hope that you will celebrate what happens when people care enough to take action, when communities choose to do more than survive. We hope you will celebrate your support and involvement in CAAAV’s work over the years. Without it, none of this would be possible. We also hope that you, your friends, and your family will commemorate 20 years with us at our 20th Anniversary celebration on May 18th. “Our Roots Grow Deep”issue back cover for more information.

Rooted in our communities by a vision for change and a sense of the movement rising—and with your support—we’re ready for the next 20 years.

- THE EDITORS
IN 2006, IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES NA-
TIONWIDE rose up in opposition to proposed
measures to criminalize undocumented immigrants
and those who provide services for them. CAAAV
members joined some of the largest marches in the
history of New York City, and through our signs and
messages, highlighted the root causes of migration and
the struggles of migrant workers. As part of Immigrant
Communities in Action, a coalition of grassroots mem-
bership-based organizations, CAAAV joined the call to
end criminalization, deportation, US-Mexico border
militarization, and for the implementation of full le-
galization of undocumented immigrants. For many of
us, the marches demonstrated the potential power of
immigrant communities, in a way that we have never
experienced. They also showed us the need for long-
term strategy and organizational infrastructure that
can hold the energy that we experienced in the streets,
and move it toward building power in immigrant com-
mittees. 

Organizing should be rooted in vision and community.

The theme of our 20th anniversary celebration is “Our Roots Grow Deep.” Roots are what ground us. We have learned how important it is to be rooted in a clear vision for social change, grounded in struggles of the communities we serve so that we are always acting in their interest. Our organizational strategy is driven by the practice of building a multi-generational organization and waging campaigns that affect real change in the lives of Asian workers, youth, families and tenants who have been uprooted by the impact of US foreign policy in their home countries, and are struggling to root themselves in New York.

Analysis and reflection are critical components of organizing.

In order to ensure that what we do today builds toward a better future, we take time to reflect, evaluate and analyze current conditions. We study global, national and local conditions, reflect on our strengths and weaknesses, identify areas of change, and seek to sharpen our organizing methods in order to chart a clearer, longer-term plan for the future.

When our fights expose the roots of oppression, they lead to bigger fights.

The campaigns that expose the ways government and capital interests work together to create oppressive conditions in our communities have the greatest potential to raise consciousness, deepen our understanding of the system, and open doors to other important fights. For example, our justice campaigns for exploited domestic workers have held individual employers accountable, and exposed the urgent need for labor standards for domestic workers, and full legalization for undocumented workers in general.

However slow it is to reach, we must organize to scale.

We know how hard organizing is, but we are clearer than ever that we have no choice but to continue, and get better at it so we can take it to the next level, where it has a direct impact on the forces that create oppression in our community.

### Timeline

**June 16, 1982:** Vincent Chin at the Asian American Working Group was murdered by two white autoworkers. Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz were convicted of manslaughter and served 2-1/2 years even though they spent 2-1/2 years in prison. This murder and the cover-up by Detroit police and Mayor Coleman Young of the Chin family’s illegal murder of a period of tension and anti-Asian sentiment. Asian American activists began to see a need to challenge the structure and practice of a society that causes violence against Asian Americans.

**1983:** The Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence convenes in New York.

**1984:** The New York City Police Dept. initiates a larger national organizing in support of the UAW, which, in turn, starts a public discussion, media, and mobilizing people for this organizing. The Coalition: becomes the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, an independent organization.

**1987-1989:** In response to an anticommunist backlash of the 80’s, the neighborhood in Richmond, New York, is made into a new community and organizing space.

**1990:** CAAAV conducts campaigns against a landlord being held in the Bronx.

**1991:** In New York City, the 19th Ward is the focus of an intervention by CAAAV and the community.

**1992:** CAAAV makes an organizational decision to relocate to New York City to continue its community organizing projects in Asian American communities.

**1993:** CAAAV conducts conferences on race and class, violence and the movement for justice in New York City.
5. We must create and nurture an organizational culture that calls out oppression and reflects our vision.

We have all lived with and internalized all the forms of oppression that exist in the world, so how do we create an organizational culture which models something different, and reflects the world we are trying to create? In thinking about this, we realized that creating a climate where people feel safe and supported to openly call out and challenge abuses of power and privilege is an important first step. Ultimately, as a movement we need to create concrete mechanisms of accountability to principles of respect, justice, equity, and shared power.

6. We must be accountable and responsible to the communities we serve.

After some years of developing organizational routines and habits, we decided to have regular, deeper check-ins on the question: are we truly building the power of our communities, of all oppressed people? Our staff evaluations and program work plan evaluations provide space for staff and members to reflect on what we have built, and where we have fallen short.

7. We must shift the consciousness of the community as a whole to believe in the fight.

Living in the “belly of the beast” and in a media capital of the world, where so much of our “individual freedom-based” popular culture is generated, we have large obstacles to organizing for the collective good. It is important that we do media and cultural work that tells stories that shift our consciousness about the importance of the fight for justice and what’s worth fighting for. In this way, our video projects such as “Eating Welfare” and “Chinatown Is Not For Sale” have been important tools for community dialogue.

8. Organizing tactics should be flexible, diverse and creative.

In the interests of our communities, we must embrace—as our board member emeritus and mentor, Richie Perez, often said—any and all tactics. Those of us who focus on grassroots organizing in immigrant communities never thought we would be doing voter education, but the times have called for it. Whether it’s building our food and sewing cooperatives, targeting a domestic employer, fighting for bilingual housing inspectors in Chinatown, or fighting for language access legislation at all city agencies, openness to varied tactics, cultivating new skills, and developing relationships with organizations with a range of expertise is critical.

9. How we treat each other is a vital part of organizing.

Not only are we trying to change the system of society, we are trying to change ourselves and our relationships with each other so that we feel a greater sense of balance, connectedness and community. This requires each of us to work on our own capacity for compassion and self-awareness. Our Organizer-in-Training Program emphasizes developing relationships between people that build community and reflecting on our own practices as critical parts of organizing.

10. Everyone has a role in the movement.

There is no shortage of resources needed to strengthen CAAAV at the social justice movement as a whole. We started Asian Resistance Media as a space for Asian activists and professionals who are interested in supporting grassroots organizing to contribute their resources to help lift and support our organizing projects. Their contributions have had the greatest impact when they were part of a strategy driven by CAAAV’s community organizing programs. ARM’s work, in coordination with community-based organizing, has increased the impact of CAAAV’s campaigns through resource development, the web, publications and direct action.
11. Movement building and base-building must happen together.

While one of our toughest balancing acts, we recognize that alliance building and base-building must happen together. After all, a movement is constituted by people—so we must organize, organize, organize. And as people join the struggle, we must make sure that we see ourselves as part of building a broader movement for change. We must trace each one of every struggle to its root causes and their expressions in other communities, around the world, and connect with those who are organizing for change. CAAAV is a part of many national and local networks and alliances and has always been a central part of this work.

12. We are here today because of a proud tradition of organizing and struggle.

Someone has already attempted to answer every major question we come across—sometimes that's apparent and sometimes we don't. We should do our best to draw lessons from past experiences, recognizing where work has been done that we can build upon, as well as appreciate that conditions are constantly changing. We are proud to be a part of a history of Asian American organizers in particular—began 20 years ago by two members of Organization of Asian Women. We proudly continue to carry forward a tradition of women's leadership.

13. Political leadership comes in many forms.

We believe in the leadership of working-class and poor people in our communities. We have programming that supports that leadership to grow in all of our program areas, in different ways. Our Summer Institute for the Bronx trains Southeast Asian youth organizers, our Asian Women's Organizing and Leadership Institutes build confidence of Asian domestic workers to organize and our Chinatown Summer Youth Program trains new youth organizers in the fight against gentrification and displacement. There are numerous expressions of leadership and we should encourage development of the entire range. Our members are great listeners, strategists, mentors, support, public speakers, mediators, facilitators, and recruiters—and they all have different styles.

14. Building a sustainable and relevant organization is critical to movement-building.

Organizations hold memories, experiences and lessons. It's important to build organizations that are sustainable so that they are around to hold that history and are relevant so we can build upon it. Sustainable organizations are supported by members and members' resources, and grow at a pace that parallels the growth and depth of the organizing.

15. Everyone needs mentorship and support.

We are always learning, and always in a process of change. Everyone in our organization carries responsibility and needs support and guidance in meeting these responsibilities with confidence. As much as possible we should have mechanisms of support and mentorship for everyone in the organization, regardless of how long they've been around or how much experience they have in a particular area.

16. Lessons should be shared to benefit the broader movement.

The more we build with other organizations, the more we realize that we share similar questions or challenges. A few years ago, we began doing exchanges with our allies where our leaders and members would share our work and struggles. These gatherings have helped us strengthen our organizing methods, broaden our perspective, and deepen our analysis. One reason why we created the CAAAV Voice years ago was to document and share our work, so that we can collectively benefit from the lessons.

17. Lessons are everywhere, in every tradition.

There is powerful learning in every struggle, every organization, every movement, and often in the most unexpected places. Openness to learning from different traditions of organizing and movement-building is critical to building to another level of power. In recent years, CAAAV has sent members to South Africa, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, Kenya, Hong Kong, and India, to learn from movements in other parts of the world, and build relationships with organizations doing parallel work.
Victories are few and far between, we should celebrate them.

Many victories are hard to see because they are the ground that we stand on, but we should take the time to acknowledge and celebrate the victories, because they provide a sense of hope, courage and inspiration in difficult times.

The Women Workers Project of CAAAV started organizing Filipina domestic workers in 1998, and since then...

- Won over $100,000 in unpaid wages for Asian domestic workers.
- Established the first Asian Women's Leadership Training Program for domestic workers.
- Became staffed by a domestic worker.
- Founded Domestic Workers United (DWU), an organization of NYC Caribbean, Latina and African domestic workers.
- Along with DWU, as part of the NY Domestic Workers Justice Coalition, helped to pass unprecedented New York City legislation promoting rights and dignity for domestic workers and is organizing for a statewide Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, including a living wage and basic health coverage.

The Youth Leadership Project, started in 1996, has...

- Established an annual Summer Institute of organizing skills and leadership development for Southeast Asian youth, which includes conducting a summer day camp for Southeast Asian children.
- Became staffed by a graduate of a pilot program conducted in 1995.
- Fought for and won the preservation of bilingual services in the local health clinic.
- Secured language access for Southeast Asians at the local welfare center.
- Established a precedent-setting for non-English speaking patients at the local school district to gain information about their children's education.
- Obtained funding from the local school district to run a Southeast Asian Achievement Program.
- Advocated for dozens of Southeast Asian youth in the criminal justice system, including preventing the deportation of those who were not citizens.

The Chinatown Justice Project, started in 1999, has...

- Organized with tenants, vendors and youth against gentrification and displacement in Chinatown which led to a quadrupling in the number of bilingual Chinese housing inspectors.
- Preserved dozens of low-income housing units from baseless evictions.
- Established the Chinatown Tenants Union, a unique voice representing 1000 low-income residents of Chinatown, to advocate and organize for the preservation of Chinatown for the working people of Chinatown.

Asians have a particular contribution to make in the struggle for social change in the U.S.

While varied among different groups, each Asian community has an experience that teaches us about the history and nature of U.S. society, and the history of oppression that's based on. It's no accident that the "model minority" myth was promoted inside the U.S. while key Asian nations were developed by the U.S. as "tigers" to help facilitate U.S. economic interests in the region. Nor is it an accident that in today's "global city" Asians are tracked both into high-level services such as corporate law and investment banking, and at the same time that they are tracked into low-wage services such as nail salon work. In order to understand our contribution to building a social change movement that has the power to create "another world," we need to have an analysis of our communities, the role we play in the economy and society...as well as the role our nations of origin play in the world.

Given the role that the U.S. plays in the destruction of human dignity around the world and the earth itself, U.S.-based organizations have a critical role to play in exposing the U.S. from within its own borders. CAAAV seeks to lift the voices of tenants in Chinatown, the Southeast Asian community, and Asian domestic workers, connecting them to voices for justice around the world, to help open doors to "another world."

Ultimately, these lessons are a reflection of the hard work—a labor of love—and dedication of our members and staff, the patience and true solidarity of our allies, and the generosity of our mentors and supporters over the years.
YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROJECT

DURING THE U.S. INVASION of Vietnam in the 1970s, at the hands of the Khmer Rouge regime, and later in refugee camps in the 1980s, millions of Vietnamese and Cambodian people endured malnutrition, starvation, forced labor, torture, and loss of family and friends. Twenty years after being resettled into the Northwest Bronx, New York's largest concentration of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees continue to bear the emotional and physical scars left by their war torn past.

These past experiences and present day scars have eroded the physical health of Cambodian and Vietnamese community members. Many complain of chronic aches and pains. Diabetes and high blood pressure are commonly reported ailments.

Equally troubling are the lingering effects of the community's histories on the mental health of refugees. Images of the atrocities of war and displacement lead their memories and torment their dreams. Many war survivors have trouble sleeping, terrorized by nightmares or haunted by visions and ghosts.

The Southeast Asian community in the Bronx seek healthcare locally, at a satellite clinic governed by Montefiore Medical Center. However, language barriers and the failure of medical staff to link the community's prevailing health conditions to trauma experienced two decades ago often fail to lead to adequate health care.

The Youth Leadership Project is partnering with NYU's Vietnamese Community Health Initiative to systematically document these health conditions and identify the community's vision for comprehensive health care. Also, YLP is using a questionnaire developed by the Harvard Program For Refugee Trauma to investigate the impact of past trauma on the community's present mental health state.

This ground-breaking needs assessment will expose war and forced displacement as root causes of the community's current health crisis and demand a War Survivor's Program from Montefiore. Through conducting interviews with the adult and elderly members, YLP will record their stories as part of an oral history exhibit set to debut in May.

For this generation of American-born and raised youth organizers, the process of sharing and preserving these stories strengthens inter-generational bonds and facilitates a journey to their long forgotten past. Understanding their legacy as the aftermath of a U.S.-led military invasion will fuel YLP's demand for accountability. Channeling the necessary attention and resources into this community, which still suffering from a war that did not choose to fight, is a first step toward a path of healing and recovery.

CHINATOWN JUSTICE PROJECT

AS 2007 BEGINS, the Chinatown Justice Project (CJP) continues to grow in numbers, while CJP's campaigns for language access and against gentrification continue to gain in strength.

The Chinatown Tenant Union (CTU), a project of CJP since 2005, saw a jump in membership to 94 members and gained 1,200 supporters in 2006.

Several CTU campaigns also picked up momentum in 2006 and continue into 2007. With the help of the CTU, residents at 55 and 61 Delancey Street in Manhattan's Chinatown have organized to fight for repairs, respect, and an end to forced and baseless evictions. Their landlord had previously evicted almost half of the old tenants—mostly Chinese—what he bought the building in 2001 and has been trying to evict many of the tenants who have remained. He also has a history of ignoring tenants' requests for repairs, with the result that tenants often live with no heat, hot water, or electricity and broken ceilings and bathrooms.

Before the CTU began organizing the two buildings on Delancey Street, tenants were often afraid to challenge their landlord. With the help of CTU, however, tenants have organized meetings with him and have forced him to agree to make all repairs and to end baseless evictions. In a neighborhood that is rapidly gentrifying, the campaign at 55 and 61 Delancey has shown that tenants, if united, can fight displacement and better their living conditions.

The CTU is also working with tenants living at 81 Bowery, one of the last single resident occupancy buildings in Chinatown and one of the few truly affordable housing options in the neighborhood, to fight forced
Tenants of 59 and 61 Delancey Street, CTU members, allies and youth protest landlord for not providing services like heat and hot water and for baseless evictions of Chinese tenants.

Fights for healthy living conditions. The tenants, mostly low-wage workers, pay an average $400 per month to live in single rooms, often two-to-a-room.

CJP is also a member of a coalition that fights for housing justice. As part of the city-wide Communities for Housing Equality Coalition that includes the Urban Justice Center, Make the Road by Walking, and the New York Immigration Coalition among others, CJP has been working hard to ensure that residents who do not speak English have access to city services. CJP found that Chinese tenants often don't report housing violations to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) - many are not even aware that a city agency exists to help them with their housing needs and concerns. Currently, CJP continues to work with the coalition on introducing and passing city legislation that would require HPD to provide services, from translation of documents to hiring inspectors, in multiple languages.

WOMEN WORKERS PROJECT

Recently, our work has won us some exciting victories. The Women Workers Project Justice Clinic brings forward cases of exploited Filipino domestic workers and has shown what is possible when workers unite and organize. Nancy, one of our members, worked as a domestic worker for three years for fourteen hours a day, six days a week, and earned $2 an hour without overtime pay. After more than a year of advocacy, Nancy won a $35,000 settlement. Another member, Windy, recently received more than $35,000 in back wages after winning a case against her employers who paid her a mere $240 a week for working over 180 hours.

On September 30, 2006, the Women Workers Project held our annual Asian Woman's Organizing and Cultural Night, attended by members of the domestic worker community, and our allies, friends and family who support the struggle. The event, Miss. Nita Asuncion gave a compelling speech about her experience working for 3 years, 8 months on Park Avenue. Ms. Asuncion suffered verbal abuse on a daily basis, the constant yelling and being the target of newspapers, a vase, and a bottle of mustard thrown at her. She even pointed a pen in Ms. Asuncion's eye and pushed her. On August 8, 2004 her employer

CAAAV: ORGANIZING ASIAN COMMUNITIES

Founded in 1986, CAAAV (also known as Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence) organizes across diverse poor and working-class Asian immigrant communities in New York City to build community power and strengthen the broader movement for racial, economic and global justice. CAAAV is a volunteer-driven organization led by members of our program areas.

CAAAV'S PROGRAM AREAS INCLUDE:

- CHINATOWN JUSTICE PROJECT
  Uniting low-income residents and youth for affordable housing, preservation of public space, and an end to displacement caused by gentrification.

- YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROJECT
  Organizing young people and adults in the Vietnamese and Cambodian refugee community of the Bronx for immigrant rights and racial justice, while creating alternatives to poverty.

- WOMEN WORKERS PROJECT
  Building power among Asian immigrant women working in low-wage service industries, particularly domestic workers who work long hours, low wages and little protection in the workplace.

- ASIAN RESISTANCE MEDIA
  Increasing the visibility of Asian working-class struggles so that a broader segment of the community can begin to identify with, support them, through new media, political education and cultural events.

VISIT THE CAAAV WEBSITE: www.caaav.org
COMMUNITY ORGANIZING


Pushed her with greater force and she realized that she must leave because the abuse would only escalate. Ms. Asuncion courageously spoke out about her experience at the WWP Organizing and Cultural Night and exposed the exploitation endured by domestic workers globally, pointing out the dire need to organize for just laws.

WWP and Ms. Asuncion met with Urban Justice Center (UJC) and New York University's Immigrant Rights Clinic (NYUIRC) to assess her options and she decided to go forward and seek justice so that "what happened to me should not happen again!" Nin's case was filed in federal court Friday, November 17, 2006. Nin is currently fighting for justice and back wages totaling nearly $300,000. She hopes that by pursuing the case, she will encourage other domestic workers who are being abused and working under exploitative conditions to also speak out for justice.

Women Workers Project continues the tireless fight to improve the working conditions of Asian women to collectively create alternatives to sweatshop conditions and assert our basic right to live and work in peace, with dignity and respect wherever we are.

FAIR LABOR STANDARDS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

In the fight for domestic worker justice, Women Workers Project works in coalition with Domestic Workers United (DWU) and the other members of the New York Domestic Workers Justice Coalition, which is engaged in a statewide campaign to pass a Bill of Rights for domestic workers in New York State, to win respect and fair labor standards. If passed into law, all domestic workers will be officially included in the definition of "employees," and will have protections from unjust firing, access to health care, paid vacation, paid legal holidays, sick days, and notice of termination. Last year we won the support of the Black, Latino and Asian Legislative Caucus and passed the "Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights" in the Assembly Labor Committee. With renewed determination on the part of our members and coalition partners, and the change in the administration, we look forward to full movement this session. In the meantime we are planning a series of events and actions to organize and build the movement for dignity and respect, and to end slavery once and for all!

REAL LEGALIZATION PROGRAM

In the broader fight for justice for our communities, Women Workers Project works as part of Immigrant Communities in Action (ICA), a coalition which has successfully united communities in Queens to have a voice in the immigration debate. As part of ICA, WWP is organizing the Asian community for a real legalization program and to contest dangerous measures that criminalize immigrants and militarize the border. ICA's demands include:

1. Broad legalization and no guest worker programs
2. Improved family reunification opportunities for all
3. Reduced detention, deportation, and militarization at the border
4. Equal rights for all workers and communities, including access to driver's licenses
5. No compliance to the REAL ID Act

VOICING IMMIGRATION POLICY DEMANDS TO THE UNITED NATIONS

The fight for true justice happens on many levels and in many places, including our streets, in the courts, in Albany, on Capitol Hill and at the United Nations. The United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Managed Migration & Development (UNHDL) that took place last September 13-15, 2006, examined "the multi-dimensional aspects of international migration and development," in order bring together governments and NGOs to strategize on how to "maximize benefits" and mitigate "negative impacts on immigrant workers globally. The UNHDL utilizes a framework of "managed migration" and "co-development," which translates to guest worker programs and stronger immigration law enforcement. In line with what the US Congress is trying to do with recent proposals for comprehensive immigration reform.

Because the HLD was limited only to international NGOs, grassroots organizations within the US who are part of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights collaborated to hold our own "Community Dialogue" to highlight the voices and perspectives of the communities directly impacted by the policies and outcomes of the HLD. The grassroots press conference and rally in front of the UN called on the UNHDL to create a policy that addresses the neo-liberal economic and military policies that are at the root of migration globally.

Women Workers Project member, Ingrid, prepares for a 2007 workshop discussion.
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Asian Women Organizing and Cultural Night
Youth Leadership Project Spring Fundraiser

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We also want to thank the staff, members and volunteers of CAAR who make our work possible.
CAAAS: Organizing Asian Communities

20th Anniversary Celebration

May 18, 2007 at 6:30pm

A vibrant program looking back and celebrating twenty years of building movement.

LOCATION:
In the Home of the National Black Institute of Action Arts
2031-33 National Black Theatre Way
At Fifth Avenue (Between 126th & 127th Streets)
Harlem, NY 10035

PERFORMANCES BY:
- Singer and songwriter, Vienna Teng
- Star of musical theater, Aileen Payumo
- Gamelan Dharma Swara Bailinese Dance Troupe
- Praying Mantis Martial Arts Institute Lion Dancers

HOSTED BY DEEPA FERNANDES

$50 TICKET INCLUDES DINNER

Come help us envision the next twenty years.

For tickets and more information:
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