

APEN

Asian Pacific Environmental Network
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Voices



MESSAGE FROM APEN'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR—ADA CHAN

In just three weeks, APEN has won amazing victories and suffered a devastating loss. My first day as Executive Director was spent at the California EPA hearings listening to 7 hours of testimony from people across the state speaking to what environmental justice means in their lives. Communities shared stories of families exposed to emissions from the oil refineries and diesel from trucks transporting oil, pesticide use in the Central Valley, the environmental impact of development and importance of the precautionary principle. A woman speaking to maquiladoras in Tijuana made the link to globalization, LOP members shared experiences of living in toxic neighborhoods, and a leader from our intergenerational women's program told her story of family members affected by unsafe working conditions. Members from our environmental justice allies outnumbered the "industry" representatives whose consistent message, as presented by the California Chamber of Commerce, was *"the business community should define risk when looking at potential environmental impacts"* while no one asked *"risks to what- people or profits?"* In a

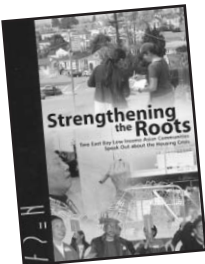
historic moment in EJ history, the California EPA's Advisory Committee voted to incorporate EJ principles into the state's environmental policies.

My second week at APEN, our Power in Asians Organizing project demonstrated the importance of trained and organized leadership, as members committed many hours to phonebanking and educating Chinese voters in Oakland and mobilizing over 1,000 voters to defeat Prop. 54. At the same time the governor-elect announced plans to institute a "pro business" agenda for California. Those of us committed to building sustainable, healthy

communities clearly have our work cut out for us. Many of our ally base-building organizations are struggling to survive, our communities are absorbing the \$87 billion dollar bill for rebuilding a country we destroyed, and locally we're waging a bigger battle with fewer resources, fewer services, and fewer jobs in our working, poor neighborhoods.

The reality of our work hit home with the loss of Chan Boonkeut, an AYA leader, niece of LOP Organizer Torm Nompraseurt, and an inspiration to all of us. Chan influenced the work of APEN board

(continued inside)



Recently published and released, APEN's community housing report, ***Strengthening the Roots: Two East Bay Low Income Communities Speak Out about the Housing Crisis***, gives a rare glimpse at how housing problems affect individuals, families, and communities among the low income Asian population in Richmond and Oakland. Despite recent reports on "housing success" in the Bay Area, housing conditions for low income Asians are still at crisis levels. Residents speak out about the conditions they face, and the need for housing stability to strengthening and preserving cultural and ethnic communities. To order your copy today for \$6 (includes shipping & handling), call APEN at (510) 834-8920.



Asian Pacific Environmental Network

310 8th Street, Suite 309

Oakland, CA 94607

Tel: (510) 834-8920 Fax: (510) 834-8926

Email: apen@apen4ej.org

www.apen4ej.org

Mission

All people have a right to a clean and healthy environment in which their communities can live, work, learn, play and thrive. Toward this vision, the Asian Pacific Environmental Network was founded to bring together a collective voice among the diverse API communities in the United States to develop an alternative agenda for environmental, social and economic justice. Through building an organized movement of grassroots people, we strive to bring fundamental changes to institutions that will prioritize public good over profit and to promote the right of every person to a decent, safe, affordable quality of life, in which we participate in collectively made decisions affecting our lives.

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DOUBLE VICTORY FOR PAO!

Power in Asians Organizing (PAO) turned up the heat and won two victories for housing justice in Oakland. After an intense 8

month battle

against the Pacific Renaissance Plaza

evictions of low-

income, elderly

Chinese residents,

the evictions have been dropped!

Negotiations are

still taking place

to ensure that all

tenants can return

to their homes

and the landlord

will not reissue the evictions while

the community and city affirmative

lawsuits are active. With support

from the community and elected

city officials, PAO continues the

fight to keep all 50 units permanent-

ly affordable and to increase the

accountability of city government

and developers to the community.

PAO's second victory was the decisive defeat of Proposition 54,

an initiative, which would have prohibited the state from the collection and use of demographic information. This information is

critical in identify-

ing racial and eth-

nic disparities in

public education,

health, environ-

mental protection,

and employment.

Working with

APA's for an

Informed

California and

SEIU 616 in a

broad community

effort, PAO mem-

bers educated more than 5200

Chinese households in the Oakland

flatlands area and successfully

brought out over 1000 "NO" votes.

PAO was the 2003 recipient of the

East Bay Asian Local Development

Corporation's Award for outstand-

ing local leadership in the commu-

nity. Along with increased visibility

and an increased membership of 68

new members, PAO is gaining

momentum and power.



PAO leader, Cang Ye, & APEN ED, Ada Chan, accept EBALDC award

APEN FAMILY TRANSITIONS

In August, we said goodbye to our outgoing Executive Director, Joselito Laudencia. With Joselito's transition, he leaves APEN as a stronger organization than it was when he came on board three years ago. Starting in 2000, Joselito set us on the right on track when he formed APEN's vision into a 5-year strategic plan. Three years later, we are well on our way to accomplishing those goals. Last year we launched our 3rd community organizing project in Oakland and membership has skyrocketed to over 200 members. In October 2002, we helped mobilize more than 70 API

delegates to the 2nd EJ Summit in Washington DC. Recently, our multi-racial alliance building in California won a major victory with the implementation of environmental justice into state environmental policies. All of these accomplishments were possible because of Joselito's leadership. We thank you, Joselito, for all of your smarts and hard work in moving APEN's mission forward. As you embark on your next journey in life- running the AIDS Marathon- we hope that all the energy you gave APEN will lift you to run lighter and faster to the finish line.

LOP GROWS FROM THE INSIDE AND OUT

"If we are going to live in this country, we need to work with other communities for the long fight and struggle," voiced one LOP member. For the Laotian Organizing Project (LOP), the key to sustainable and healthy communities is building collective power with allies and empowering our leaders and members. Ask LOP leaders and members about building alliances with African-Americans or local churches in Richmond and they will voice the importance of working with their other brothers and sisters. LOP continued to build bridges with the Richmond Vision 2000, a coalition of

faith-based, labor, and community groups. LOP and Richmond Vision 2000 are working to pass a "Just Cause" initiative to protect tenants rights and end unfair evictions in Richmond. Together with the Greater Richmond Interfaith Project, both groups led the coalition's work and provided the much needed motivation and enthusiasm for the campaign. Over the summer, LOP also added 80 new members, 8 of whom were from the intergenerational Women's Leadership program, a pilot which connected LOP women with their youth counterpart, the Asian

Youth Advocates, to build women's leadership within the community. LOP's leaders continued to show their strength and commitment to the social and environmental justice movement at the September CalEPA action in Oakland. Ten LOP leaders joined over 200 allies from across the state and successfully called for the state to incorporate EJ principles into its environmental policies. LOP's growth- deepening the leadership its members and partnering with allies- is sure to contribute to our campaign as we move our work forward!

AYA AND LOP UNITE TO BUILD WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

In the Laotian community, women are not traditionally thought of as leaders. This summer, the Asian Youth Advocates (AYA) and LOP challenged that notion and began the Intergenerational Women's Leadership program pilot to empower women and girls by building their leaderships skills together. The two generations were excited to have the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. Activities included a cooking and fruit-picking at a local farm where women and girls discussed and expanded their views on women's leadership. The women learned about the leadership skills and values the youth had developed through their AYA



AYA and LOP Women Unite

activities and shaped their own beliefs and ideas on women's leadership. The girls also strengthened their Laotian cultural roots through activities like embroidering, a Laotian form of storytelling. AYA member, Jackie, commented, *"My mom is going to be so happy that we're learning all these skills. She'd love to teach them to me but she doesn't have the time to do it."* The women were really proud of the girls and said they *"loved teaching the youth these kind of things [because] we think it's very valuable that these young women learn and have these skills."* Both AYA and the LOP women look forward to their next opportunity to unite as one and continue building their leadership within the community.

Message from E.D.

(continued from front page)

and staff by sharing her struggles and in spite of them, or because of them, chose to be the leader that she was. Her candlelight vigil and memorial were a testimony the many lives she touched as a leader in her school, spiritual community, and her own Khmu/Laotian community. She was clear that AYA was a way to build her strength within community and to grow her skills to create change in her community, and the world.

The last three weeks have been emotionally, physically and spiritually demanding, but in the changing political and economic climate of the Bay area, the state, and the nation, there is no where else I'd rather be. It is an exciting time- our work in building a progressive movement within the API community is now more important than ever. We at APEN invite you to join us in the struggles to come.

Thank you for supporting our 2003 Spring Fundraising Drive!

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Many thanks to APEN's 2003 Volunteers!

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Special thanks to the following organizations for their support of our October elections campaign:

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates
Asian Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health
National Network for Immigrant Refugee Rights
SEIU 616



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What better way to stay up to date and involved with APEN and the API community! Visit our website at <http://www.apen4ej.org> and enter your email address to subscribe to APEN News. While you're at our website, take the time to read more about our programs, make an on-line donations, learn about volunteer opportunities or give us your feedback.



In Memory of Chan Boonkeut

We at APEN grieve the loss of Chan Boonkeut, one of our youth leaders. Her senseless death on October 13, 2003 is a terrible tragedy. Those of you who work with youth programs can directly understand that these are the young people we cultivate to be promoters of peace and justice and leaders of our causes, and how deeply upsetting it is to lose any one of them. Chan was brave and articulate in her aspirations to create positive change in the world and to improve her community. Her culture and family were her roots, and she continued to blossom as a youth leader in our program, the Asian Youth Advocates (AYA).

On a recent AYA project on traditional Laotian embroidery, Chan was so excited to sew an image of a flowering vine. She said that's how she wanted to grow as a leader in her community, despite poor housing conditions and degraded environments. She was an important part of APEN, LOP and AYA in identifying and working toward solutions. We are deeply hurt by the loss of her brightness and courage that inspired us all.

Chan's family is now considering many issues of safety and relocation. If you'd like to assist the family in this time of crisis, consider making a contribution. Please write checks to the "Chan Boonkeut Donation Fund". APEN can receive the checks and will deposit them for you. Send contributions to APEN 310 – 8th St #309, Oakland, CA 94607. Thank you for your generosity.

