

APEN *Voices*



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Shifting Political Landscape

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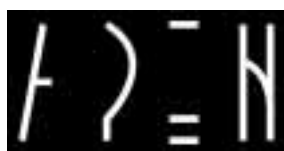
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Asian Pacific Environmental Network



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APEN STAFF

Suzanne Bourguignon

Vivian Chang

Audrey Chiang

Pamela Chiang

Manami Kano

Grace Kong

Joselito Laudencia

Ann Ninh

Torm Nompraseurt

May Phan

Sandy Saeteurn

Mari Rose Taruc

Bouapha Toommaly

Linh Stephanie Tran

Miya Yoshitani

APEN BOARD

Gina Acebo

Pratap Chatterjee

Jack Chin

David Kakishiba

Pam Tau Lee

Yin Ling Leung

Martha Matsuoka

Cover Photo: LOP member at Warning System celebration

Design and printing: Inkworks Press 

We come!

Welcome to APEN Voices!



First they came for the Chinese with the Exclusion Act of 1882. Then they came for the Japanese during the Second World War. Today they are after Arabs, Indians and Pakistanis in revenge for the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. They are the forces of racism and bigotry that we learned about in history books that we thought had been banished from America.

From the Gold Rush to the Second World War, the federal government had blatantly racist laws on its books to specifically exclude and discriminate against Asian peoples. Most of these laws have been successfully defeated in a century of progressive Asian Pacific Islander organizing, allowing millions of APIs to migrate to America and especially to California. In the last decade over a million APIs have been added to the state population, according to the new census data.

Yet a little thought reminds us that even if the overt government exclusionary policies against Asian Pacific Islanders don't exist on the books, discrimination has not ceased whether it be military racism against Okinawan women or environmental racism against Southeast Asian communities such as the Laotians.

Even with the growing API population in the San Francisco Bay Area, more numbers does not necessarily equate to more power. Indeed as Stacy Kono of Asian Immigrant Women's Advocates says in our article on the census (see page 5); "In some ways the increase in API numbers is irrelevant. The issues of racism and sexism we deal with are still prevalent."

At APEN we believe that if these new populations can be organized, they represent a major force in fighting for change. Suzanne Bourguignon, a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley is working with APEN's new Organizing Director, Vivian Chang to research the impact of this popula-

tion surge and examining the capacity and potential strategies for new environmental justice organizing in an API community in the Bay Area.

And our existing campaign at LOP is currently getting involved in creating alternatives. We are working with Richmond Vision 2000, a collaborative between labor, faith, and community groups, to develop a package of policy recommendations including rent control and re-development policies to present to the city of Richmond to address the displacement many low-income residents are facing (see page 9).

Today the need for such alternatives is unfortunately more pressing than ever before in the last few decades. The escalating call for a "campaign against terrorism" and a war in Afghanistan has resulted in the clock being rolled back decades in areas ranging from civil rights to environmental protection, under the guise of a patriotic response to the events of September 11, 2001. President Bush has changed the direction of this country to a war machine in ways that will have dramatic impacts on social service programs and environmental justice.

For me personally, as a new board member at APEN, this is a challenging, yet exciting time. I have known APEN since it was a fledgling organization in the spring of 1993, and I have known many of the staff for even longer. Peggy Saika, Torm Nompraseurt, Miya Yoshitani and Pamela Chiang have all been guests of mine at KPFA where I host and produce public affairs radio shows. I have also been a volunteer in the Richmond office, helping with the Asian Youth Advocates summer program and the Laotian Organizing Project. So I was deeply honored when Yin Ling Leung called me to say that the board wanted me to join them.

In the past six months on the board, I have learned much about APEN's latest work, through formal meetings as well as more informal gatherings, such as an outing to Angel Island and even a wedding (congratulation to the newly weds: staffer Mari Rose Taruc and Eric Saijo, a former board member!). I am looking forward to the working with APEN in 2002, and I hope this newsletter will allow you to get a glimpse into APEN's important work of this year.


Pratap Chatterjee



Changing Demographics and the Opportunities for Organizing

by Suzanne W. Bourguignon

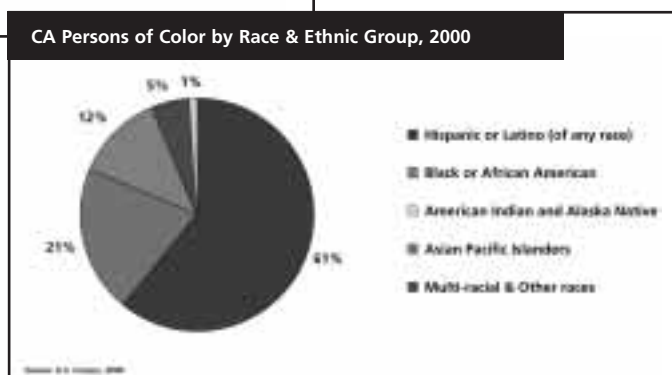
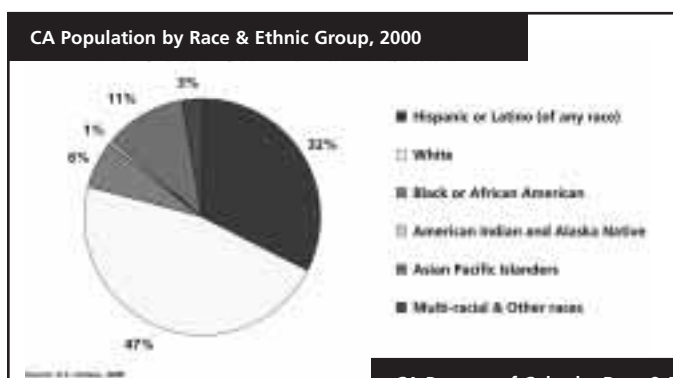
During the past year, the results of the 2000 U.S. Census have slowly been released to the public. The recent tallies have shown a strong continued growth in Asian and Pacific Islander populations across the board. API populations now total over 10.5 million people in the United States, with over 35% of the country's API population residing in California. In this state alone, the number of API's in California grew by over 1 million people (now totaling 3.7 million people) from 1990 to 2000. Regionally, the 9-County San Francisco Bay Area has the highest concentration of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the state. API's made up just under 20% of the total Bay Area population in 2000 with 1.3 million people, and API numbers continue to grow throughout the region.

Understanding the changing demographics of API's at the national, state, regional and local levels have enormous implications for API community organizing. Larger numbers could mean greater opportunity for API organizing and it also could elevate API issues to the attention of policy-makers. Stacy Kono of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates in Oakland comments, "It's a historical moment. A lot of people of color communities are currently organizing around root cause issues like environmental justice, the prison industrial complex, globalization and labor. And ordinary people you wouldn't traditionally expect and haven't been historically listened to are at the forefront of this movement. And as we grow in population it allows us to work more effectively with other people of color. We just need to ensure immigrants, low-income persons, youth, seniors among others are represented in the growing people of color voice."

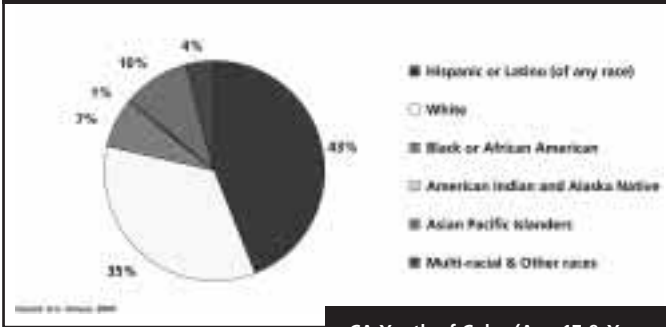
Wendall Chin, Executive Director of the San Francisco-based Chinese Progressive Association, sees the impact of these changing demographics in his everyday work. “The sharp increase in the API population has resulted in 1 of every 4 in the City and County of SF being of Chinese descent, and 3 of every 4 born outside of USA. Many in our membership are shuffled into low wage industry, non unionized jobs where exploitation is second nature. Many live in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) low income residential hotels where 3 generations are living in 10' x 10' rooms sharing a common kitchen or bathroom with 10 other families. On top of that, city services and resources are not matching the language and cultural needs of the community. Our current Housing Justice Campaign and Workers Organizing efforts have been tackling these issues by getting City agencies and exploitative bosses to become accountable. The recent 9/11 tragedy has resulted in a heightened downturn in the economy where, for example, the Lee Mah Electronics, Inc in San Francisco laid off 200 low wage, monolingual, non unionized Chinese immigrant workers, not providing them with any recourse. The expanding demographic of API communities demands that we all quickly reassess our communities and organize in broader fashion, forging new alliances and unlikely relationships.”

The increase in API numbers should not mistakenly be interpreted to mean that problems for API communities will now suddenly go away. Stacy Kono believes, “in some ways the increase in API numbers is irrelevant. The size of our population really shouldn't determine the need for our work. The issues of racism and sexism we deal with are still prevalent. Whether or not the numbers increase, we still need to do the work that we do. The growing API community won't necessarily mean that immigrants and low-income voices will be heard in the larger scheme of things. For AIWA

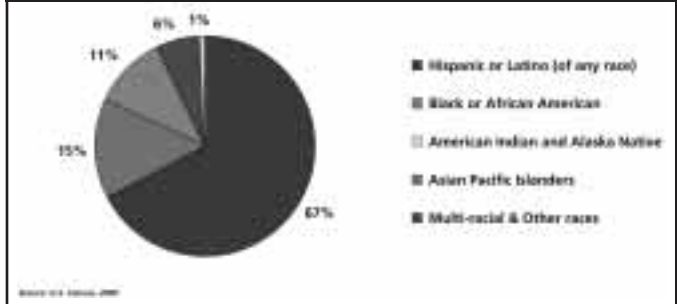
specifically, the garment workers we organize still have low wages and few benefits regardless of the surge in population. Things continue to be very challenging for low-



CA Youth Population (Age 17 & Younger) by Race & Ethnic Group, 2000



CA Youth of Color (Age 17 & Younger) Population by Race & Ethnic Group, 2000

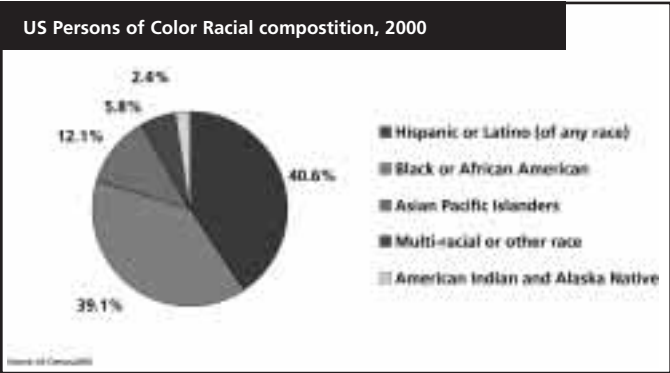
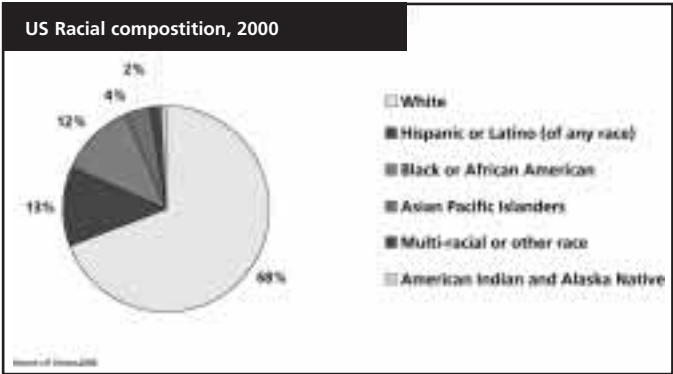


income immigrant women. AIWA's next priority will be looking at occupational health and safety as an environmental and economic justice issue. The culture that exists in the workplace for these women now is an acceptance of the unsafe conditions and a belief that work means an unhealthy and dangerous activity. What the numbers do indicate is that that these companies will continue to have new workers to exploit and AIWA will still fill a continued need to organize. The upside to that scenario is that there is the potential for a larger base to build from."

APEN has also acknowledged the need to understand how changing API demographics impact our community organizing projects. Beginning in the summer of 2001, APEN began a new research arm both to support APEN's current organizing work with the Laotian community in Richmond and to explore future opportunities for environmental justice organizing in other local API communities. Heading up this new research program is Suzanne Bourguignon, a graduate student at UC Berkeley's Department of City and Regional Planning. Funded through a work-study fellowship by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Suzanne has been working on a number of research and data-gathering projects regarding API demographic analysis.

Using data from the Census 2000 and other sources, Suzanne has portrayed a dynamic picture filled with rapidly changing API demographics, an analysis of API income, occupation and industry, poverty and household language statistics. Organizers with the Laotian Organizing Project have found this information insightful to the on-the-ground work they're moving in Richmond and West Contra Costa County.

With APEN's new Organizing Director, Vivian Chang, now on board, APEN is critically looking at Suzanne's research to move the Strategic New Organizing Project forward. "I'm working with Suzanne on a research project examining the capacity and strategies for environmental



justice organizing in an API community in the Bay Area,” states Vivian. “We’re approaching this not just by looking at where low-income API communities reside. We’re looking at all racial demographics within the Bay Area, voting trends to map out political perspectives, and community

conditions to get a sense of what communities of color can do to work together to have a progressive impact on the region. From there, we can better figure out how and where APEN’s new organizing project can fit to support this strategy.”

Suzanne will be writing a report for APEN that documents the change in API demographics and how political and economic shifts, both locally and throughout the region, have impacted specific communities in the Bay Area. As part of her research, she will explore a number of environmental justice related issues including toxic emitters, land-use patterns, transportation, and housing as they relate to the experience of API’s in these places. Be on the lookout for this APEN report due to be released in the Summer of 2002!



The Laotian Organizing Project: *Exploring New Campaign Issues in West Contra Costa County*

by LOP Staff

What problems do we see in our community? What are we concerned about? LOP asked these questions to kick off a process of issue exploration among our members and leaders, to learn more deeply about these issues, and to get a better understanding of what is already happening on the ground in West Contra Costa County. We look forward to continuing the process to engage our grassroots members and leaders to move toward identifying our next campaign.

ABOVE:

Torm Normpraseurt with LOP members and leaders at United Heckathon, an area commonly fished and polluted with high levels of DDT

What are LOP members concerned about?

At the end of last year, members generated seven major areas of concern (in no particular order):

1. **Schools:** Members sited a range of concerns, including poor facilities, poor quality of teaching and lack of language access.

2. Health: Many people are very concerned with the health of their families and the lack of access to health care, affordable insurance and quality of care.

3. Toxics: After working on our campaign to win a multi-lingual warning system, members are more aware of the dangers of toxic exposure in West County and noted the impacts it may have on their health.

4. Housing: Richmond was not immune to the gentrification and displacement pervasive throughout the Bay Area. Evictions, rent hikes of 300% and a shortage of housing led to the displacement of many families. Sadly, many families had to leave the area to survive, while others relied on their family and community to absorb them into already crowded homes. The need for affordable housing became an increasingly heated issue for the entire community.

5. Jobs: People in the Laotian community work predominantly in the service sector, including assembly and factory work, custodial jobs and piece-work sewing. Most jobs are low wage, with few providing health insurance or other benefits. Many people are forced to work more than one job to provide for their families to afford the rising cost of living in the area.

6. Language access: Cutting across many of the other areas of concern, lack of language access severely limits the community's ability to gain access to the few services that are available to them, including vital services like health care. With the majority of the community non-English speaking, there is a great need for interpreters in different Laotian languages.

7. Child-parent conflict: With youth straddling two cultures and parents struggling to provide for their families, generational and cultural gaps in understanding are common in many immigrant and refugee communities. Some linked this problem to the schools, noting that the lack of effective communication between parents and the school exacerbate the misunderstandings between parents and children.

All of these issues point to the overall conditions of poverty, low quality of life, and toxic exposure that this and many other communities are facing. Together, we decided to explore some of these issues in depth. As a starting point, we focused the summer on toxics and health. LOP hosted a series of toxic tours tailored to our members and initiated a community health survey. We also began to explore work that ally organizations were initiating to promote affordable housing and decent jobs.



Exploring health & toxics: Toxic tours

LOP community organizers, long-time staff member Torm Nompraseut and new Mien-speaking organizer May Sio Phan led eight tours for nearly 70 members and community people over six weeks this summer. The toxic tours highlight the widespread impact toxic industries have had on the land and the community. We toured four sites, including the United Heckathorne Superfund Site, the Drew Scrap Metals Superfund Site, General Chemical and Chevron. These sites and their legacies represent how pollution and toxic exposure happen everyday in fence-line communities, what the potential health impacts are and how communities have fought back. Although many people hear of certain industries and know that they are nearby, the physical experience of the tour—of seeing, smelling and hearing it—is a powerful one. As one LOP member said, “Everyone in the community should go on this tour to learn about what’s really happening in the Richmond area.”

Together, we discussed and developed our bigger picture analysis, which points to patterns of unregulated corporate power and lack of government accountability to the communities being impacted. This analysis reinforces the need for communities to come together, organize and influence decisions that impact our daily lives.

Exploring health & toxics: Community health symptoms survey

To go deeper in exploring the area of health, LOP designed and implemented a community health symptoms survey. The purpose was to take a snapshot of the frequency people in the community were experiencing symptoms in specific areas of their bodies. Reversing the more typical pattern of “experts” from outside the community coming in, it was essential for members to gather and analyze our own community’s data. On the tours, members completed their own survey and were trained how to give the survey to friends and family. Our young women members of AYA also gathered surveys in a collaborative effort with their elders.

Key to the survey’s success was the design. It needed to be accessible culturally, linguistically and logistically so that members could administer it themselves. Our members’ cultures are pre-literate, i.e. most do not have written languages. Lao is the predominant Laotian written language, but only about half of Lao speakers are literate. Nearly all of our members do not speak, read or write much English. We maximized the use of symbols and graphics while minimizing any elements requiring reading and writing.

LOP completed 221 surveys. With assistance from the Data Center to analyze the numbers, we presented initial results of the survey at a community gathering in September. While not surprising, the results reaffirm what we already know—that people in the Laotian community are experiencing many health symptoms that could be linked to toxic exposure.

Who we interviewed

221 Respondents

Gender: 42% male, 54% female, 4% no response

Age: 14% 0-13, 21% 14-18, 19% 19-35, 28% 36-50, 18% 50+, 1% no response

Ethnicity: 37% Mien, 33% Khmu, 24% Lao, 1% Thaidam, 4% no response

Highlights

Significant percentages of respondents reported problems always or sometimes in the following areas:

53%	head
50%	nose and throat
42%	eye
38%	nervous system
36%	chest & lung
33%	stomach
32 %	skin
11%	reproductive system

Across tribal ethnicity, gender and age, this community’s health is being impacted.

We believe our survey results bring to light the health impacts of environmental hazards in the community. Our purpose was not to conduct a scientifically rigorous survey that would prove links to toxic exposure. More important to LOP was the process to empower community members with research and data, and ultimately, to take action based on that information. “Getting the community to be involved in getting our own information is important. We are building our member’s ability to survey their own community, to be able to do it themselves. People aren’t comfortable giving information to outsiders,” said Khamphay Phonghongchanh, active LOP leader. We view this survey as a first step in building our capacity to conduct action research that’s relevant to this community and their concerns.

Exploring affordable housing & jobs

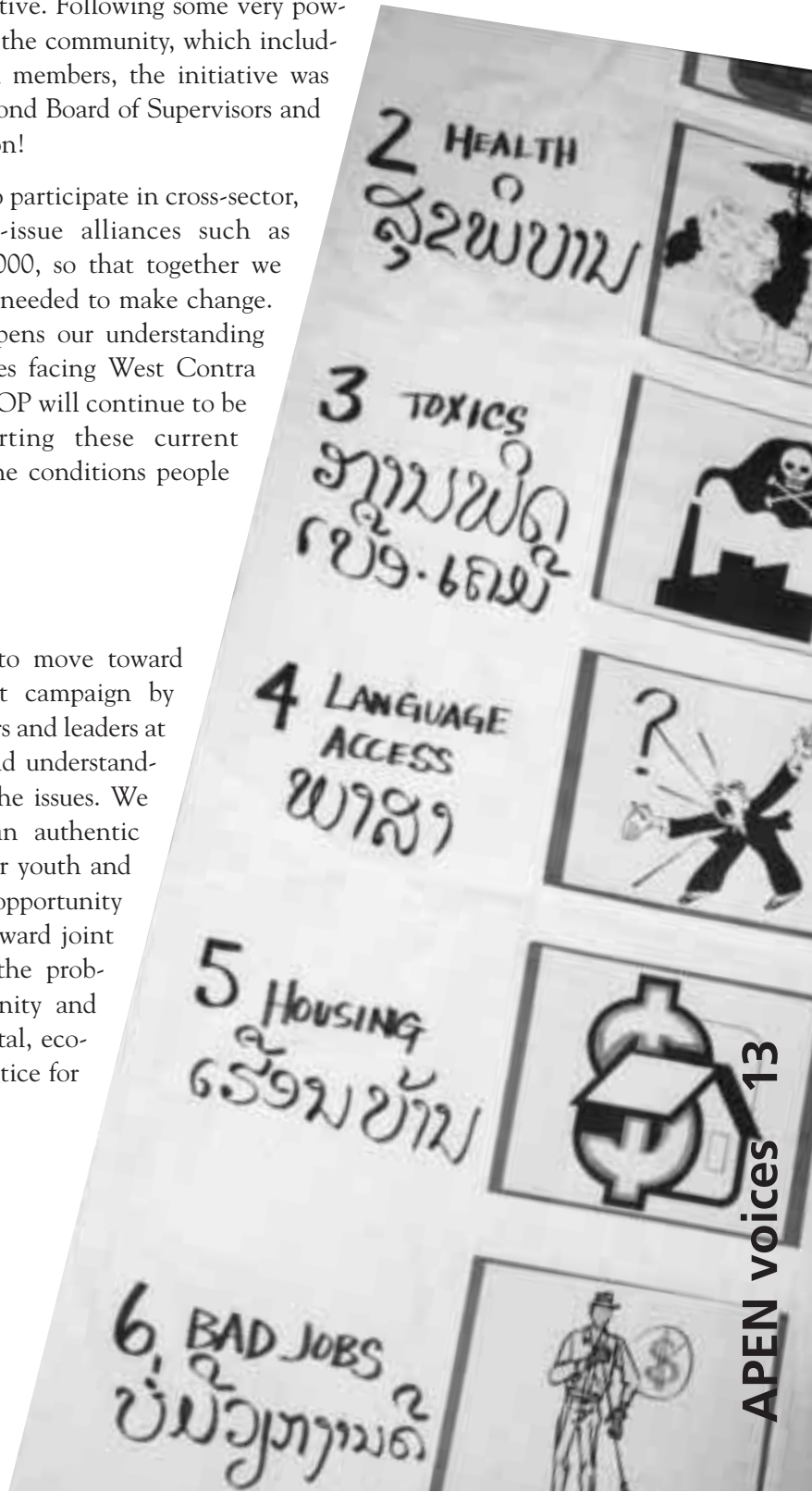
While updating our understanding of what’s currently happening in West Contra Costa County, LOP has gotten involved in some exciting work addressing the concerns around affordable housing and jobs. Richmond Vision 2000, a collaborative between labor, faith and community groups with a broad progressive agenda for Richmond, is developing a package of policy recommendations, including rent control and re-development policies, to present to the city of Richmond to address the

issues of displacement many low-income residents are facing. A major focus for Richmond 2000 has been the campaign to adopt a living wage for employees and contractors of the city of Richmond. The living wage of \$12.92 reflects how much two income-earners with two children need in order to meet the basic costs of housing, food, transportation and other necessities. In August, LOP assisted in signature gathering efforts, which resulted in over 10,000 signatures, and attended various other activities. Then, in October, a group of youth and adult members mobilized to attend the City Council meeting to demonstrate our strong support for the initiative. Following some very powerful testimony from the community, which included two of our youth members, the initiative was passed by the Richmond Board of Supervisors and the campaign was won!

LOP is excited to participate in cross-sector, multi-ethnic, multi-issue alliances such as Richmond Vision 2000, so that together we can build the power needed to make change. The experience deepens our understanding of the complex issues facing West Contra Costa County, and LOP will continue to be involved in supporting these current efforts to improve the conditions people are facing.

Next steps

LOP continues to move toward identifying our next campaign by engaging our members and leaders at various levels to build understanding and analysis of the issues. We are committed to an authentic process that gives our youth and adult members the opportunity to develop a path toward joint action to confront the problems in the community and demand environmental, economic, and social justice for everyone.



LOP NEWS

In late July, the California State Air Resources Board and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District announced their commitment to fund the project with \$140,000. LOP's successful campaign sparked by the March 1999 explosion at Chevron pressured the County to commit to a county-wide multi-lingual phone alert system to ensure that non-English speaking residents could be notified of protective procedures in the event of an industrial accident. Implementation was stalled due to lack of funding. With the commitment of these funds, the County can begin outreach efforts about the community warning system and how residents can be part of it. LOP staff and leaders are working closely with County staff to hire outreach workers and develop outreach plans. The goal is to gather language data from residents for the phone system.

The Laotian language pilot is a first step toward implementation of a multi-lingual system, with other languages to follow soon after. LOP's hope is that this project can serve as an effective model of public outreach and safety in impacted and diverse communities.

Funding for Multi-lingual Telephone System Presented at Community Event

At the Laotian Organizing Project's community gathering on September 21, 2001, Sharon Jackson of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District presented a check for \$40,000 to Michael Kent, the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials ombudsman. The funds will support the implementation of the Laotian language pilot of the multi-lingual Emergency Telephone Ring Down System (ETRDS).

LOP's community and supporters came together in full force to celebrate the occasion. Nearly one hundred people—members, leaders, allies from the Laotian community including the Lao Seniors Association, allies from the West Contra Costa County community such as Green Action, Communities for a Better Environment, West County Toxics Coalition and the Central Labor Council, agency representatives, County Supervisor John Gioia—gathered together to celebrate the long-awaited funding. We thank the support of our many allies, without whom our victories would not be possible.



“Bringing people together to fight for what is right”*

by Bouapha Toommaly

With the core belief that young women are essential to any movement with aims to achieve environmental justice, the Asian Youth Advocates (AYA) successfully launched and completed our 6th annual Summer Leadership Development Program in July of 2002, resulting in sixteen new burgeoning community organizers. The summer was short, but we learned to trust each other, to empower other young women, and to educate our community and allies. Twenty-four Laotian girls ages 13 -17 from local schools participated. Mey Liam Saechao, Khae Saeteurn and Dianna Liow, all experienced former AYA members, helped to staff the summer program. Since most of our summer participants were new to AYA, we wanted to ground our summer curriculum in APEN basics: organizing within the framework of environmental justice. Here are some of the core principles and components from our summer curriculum:

ABOVE:
Youth from AYA's
summer program
on a toxic tour
in Richmond

- **Organizing as a core strategy in achieving social change:** Only through building a community's power to resist and eradicate oppression can environmental justice be achieved.

* Quote by Nita Sisamouth (AYA member)

- **Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAAV)’s video, Eating Welfare.** To concretize the concept of organizing, we examined CAAAV’s video called Eating Welfare, documenting a campaign waged by the Southeast Asian community in the South Bronx, New York to correct the negative impact that welfare reform has had on their community. The fight was led by young organizers from the community. The girls were inspired by the young organizers and their ability to lead the fight towards justice.

- **Power Analysis.** In order to give the AYA youth an understanding of the kind of power the Cambodian community documented in the video needed to exert in order to win their campaign, we analyzed the power of the opposition. We discussed government, corporate and community power and influence using the power analysis tool that maps out political power. The ability to critically examine the power landscape is key to successful organizing.

“I learned that when we organize, we have collective power, and together we can make that big change to make this place better.”

— Jessica Ann Insisoulath

Environmental Justice is about building a movement to fight for everyone’s right to a healthy environment where we can live, work, play and learn.

Toxic tour of Richmond:

The second stream of lessons emphasized how communities in Richmond are exposed to toxins in the environment. We learned about toxic exposure through the toxic tour of Richmond. At the beginning of the summer, the new AYA participants learned about the tour and how to lead it. By the end of the summer, AYA members had given tours to two youth groups: School of Unity and Liberation (SOUL) and the Buena Vista Church youth group. It is important for us to keep making connections with other youth groups that want to make change happen, and to keep teaching what we know best: the conditions of our community.





ABOVE:
AYA Summer
program
graduation

To corroborate the knowledge we gained from the toxic tour, the girls participated in an LOP wide community health symptoms survey. In a joint survey with our adult membership, we administered over 135 health surveys to the community. The survey results told us that 90% of our community members experienced some form of health impact. We are planning to use the survey to inform our next campaign issue that adults and our youth membership will jointly work on.

“AYA’s goals are to build a safer and better community...”

—Sandy Saephan

We tied the summer components together with a dynamic community presentation of our program. AYA members showcased what they had learned to family and friends. The event was planned and run by AYA members, giving them the chance to apply their skills and leadership in the context of the larger community. The presentation was also significant in underscoring that AYA is not an isolated “program” for the community, but rather a partnership with the community.

AYA would like to thank Mey Liam Saechao, Khae Saeteurn, and Dianna Liow for their hard work and commitment to AYA this summer.

“I learned how to speak out, I learned that by being a part of this program, I can help and make a change.”

—Linda Phongboupha.

The tragic events of September 11th and the war-driven aftermath have left many communities feeling shock, fear, anger and frustration. As the world searches for answers, it is important that we ask the right questions that help us to understand the causes and context of why this happened and what we can do about it. We turned to the APEN family and asked the question:

What impact has 9/11 had on our communities, and how will we respond?



Zena Sayavandee & Jennifer
Insisoulath, Asian Youth
Advocates' Members

We don't want to go to war. People of color need to be interviewed and asked what we think. Do we really want revenge? Bush only wants to fight. He's taking matters into his own hands and not listening to the people. He's risking all our lives. September 11 will make it harder for us to make changes. Because there's a lot of racism, we Asian Americans, immigrants, really need to stand up for our own rights. For the community, we'll get them more involved to build collective power to get what we want, which is a better community without violence.

For me and for our community, it brings back a lot of memories, a lot of anxiety. We thought the war was over. A lot of people are confused and don't know what is going on. There is not good access to information, especially for those who don't speak English. They hear bits on TV, here and there, but they don't understand any of the bigger picture. My mother always asks me, "What's the news? Are we going to war?" It's like we're reliving the war again.

It's very important to educate our people, to re-look at the policies that are so against people outside the US. We need to step back and ask why. The bombings, killing is not the answer. We need to find other solutions. Our work is very important now. If we don't continue to get people involved, people will become submissive and accept whatever is thrown out at them, like in a dictatorship. We need people to stand up for their rights and for justice, and to stand up for all the non-English speakers and minorities in this country.



May Sio Phan,
Laotian Organizing
Project Staff
Organizer



Diane de Lara,
APEN Supporter &
Program Coordinator,
Breast Cancer Action

In doing our organizing, we need to acknowledge the deep impact of these events while recognizing that people in our communities are already dealing with daily terror in various forms. It's important to remind ourselves that the daily impacts [of racism and poverty] on individuals and communities are equally relevant. It's really important not to lose sight of the struggle and our gains. It's all connected—all these seemingly smaller struggles are mirrored on the global scale. It would be a real shame to lose the momentum of our various campaigns. There is the threat of sliding back that we can't afford to do. We need to make sure that our struggles don't get left behind. Organized communities, what APEN is doing has power. Organizations can have a role in plugging people into their work. Then there's potential for a larger impact.



Redefining Security: Linking Local to Global

by Martha Matsuoka

In the past few weeks, two sets of events have reminded us at APEN of the importance of thinking about our local work in a global context. The first event, the UN World's Conference on Racism, was a forum of thousands, where many non-governmental organizations from all over the world gathered to dialogue, discuss, debate, and share their perspectives on the issue of racism worldwide. The other, the terrorist attacks on September 11 and the subsequent actions led by the U.S. (in contrast, an act of few and without substantial dialogue, debate, deliberation, and discussion). Both of these international events and activities that followed, raise critical challenges and questions about how we organize grassroots communities to

address issues such as inequality, racism, democratic participation, and other issues in their communities. Specifically, both events are reminders of the necessity and challenge of developing a shared understanding of the global context in which we do our work. Such a global analysis and framework is critical for us to understand events such as September 11 and the drivers directing the military and security policy unfolding in

ABOVE:
Okinawa Peace
Network &
Puerto Rican
Alliance of LA
protest at
Democratic Nat'l
Convention, 2000

the U.S. and abroad. It is also necessary for providing the basis for the connections of organizing at the local, regional, state, national and international scale.

The terrorist events of September 11th took the lives and livelihoods of many and have created a sense of national as well as economic insecurity and anxiety in the U.S. and internationally. The increased insecurity post-9-11 however, is yet an additional layer to the deep insecurities facing many poor and working class people. Even before the attacks, many communities both here in the U.S. and globally were living in high levels of insecurity in the form of: the lack of jobs and living wages, and struggling for adequate shelter, food, and clothing necessary for everyday life. Others live in constant fear of domestic violence. Still others fear the next gas leak from the oil refineries nearby.

BELOW:
International
gathering of
women in
Henoko, Okinawa
to support local
efforts to stop
construction of
a new US
military facility

Compounding this insecurity will be the lasting effects resulting from federal budgets shifts that will inevitably prioritize military defense budgets over budgets for housing, health, education, and community development, and hate crimes continue. In the new light of September 11th and its aftermath, security requires redefinition, and the term military security represents an oxymoron.

Questions on how to redefine security address issues in a newly militarized domestic context, and connect with a broader global movement of organizing, will require thoughtful and relevant analysis. Developing this analysis provides openings for linking





local work to national and international policy as well as other grassroots movements. Engaging in this process, Asian Americas have a deep history and set of experiences to draw from. Importantly, the emerging campaign against terrorism amplifies echoes of earlier acts of war and military intervention. Close to home, APEN's Laotian Organizing Project face the challenges of organizing in a refugee community that has direct experience with military violence and political upheaval in their home countries. Within the Asian American community there are those who survived the internment camps during World War II and those who served in the U.S. military while their families faced racism and discrimination. The Asian American landscape also includes those who are employed by the U.S. military and Defense Department, or industries that support them. It is a diverse and disparate range of experiences from which we will have to learn, criticize, synthesize, and come up with a focused understanding of the global structures and processes that define our communities and our work.

A global analysis must also draw on experiences of local communities outside of the U.S., particularly in Asia. To understand increased militarism and security for example, we can draw on lessons from local struggles in Okinawa, Japan, the Philippines, and Korea who are actively organizing against the presence of U.S. bases and troops in their communities. Like the struggles in Vieques, Puerto Rico and other regions, grassroots struggles in Asia have organized against the U.S. military through peace, labor, environmental, economic justice, and women's movements. In the heightened U.S. military activity post-September 11th, these struggles now face new intensified challenges.

ABOVE:
East-Asia U.S.-
Puerto Rico
Women's
Network at the
Okinawa
Memorial Day
Peace March,
2000

Women's struggles in particular are examples of organizing in the face of increased militarism and U.S. military presence, and an illustration of how anti-military organizing is framed by a concept of alternative security that addresses the needs of women, children, and the environment most heavily impacted by the presence of the U.S. military. The group Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence, the first anti-militarist women's organization in Okinawa, recently won their struggle to have the testimony of a rape victim to be heard via videotape rather than having to bear the burden of facing her accused attacker, a U.S. military serviceman, in court. Women's direct action also prevented the construction of a U.S. urban guerilla training facility in Okinawa while their network strategies helped create a publicly funded and operated Women's Center that provides services and programs to women and children in Okinawa. Women of Durebang (My Sister's Place) develop programs and services for former comfort women and women living in base towns near U.S. military facilities in Korea. In the process, Durebang has helped to develop a growing set of nongovernmental women's organizations focused on anti-militarism.

Within a shared analysis that examines the negative impact of globalization and militarism on women, children, and the environment, that has the concept of redefining security at its core, the local women's struggles in Asia are linked together (and to U.S. women's groups) through the East Asia-U.S. – Puerto Rico Women's Network Against Militarism. With their common analysis and network, coalitions and projects across national borders begin to emerge. For example, Korean, Filipina and Okinawan women work together to address the issues and needs of Filipina women who work in base towns in Korea as well as Okinawa. Through the Network, these issues intersect with women in the U.S. who do local work focused on issues of contaminated military bases in the U.S. and efforts to shift public spending from the military to other areas such as health, education, job training and employment and housing.

Though the opening to think critically about our work in a global context seems particularly relevant in the aftermath of September 11th and the immediacy of war and militarization, the UN Conference on Racism reminds us that such global analysis is necessary with or without the justification of war. Underlying issues of economic inequality and unequal distributions of power defined by race, class, gender and nation will have to be addressed in a global analysis. Throughout all parts of APEN's organization—members, leaders, staff, board, network allies—our ability to develop this analysis will help us to define useful and politically relevant organizing strategies and political education tools. Through this work our local organizing will reflect lived experiences in a collective framework that will enable local communities to connect with each other at all levels, including the international level. In the aftermath of September 11th, beginning this discussion seems like a daunting task but one that is necessary to sufficiently organize communities into a collective voice with the power to build genuine security for all.



South Africa Journal

by Joselito Laudencia

From August 31 to September 7, 2001, the United Nations convened the World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Other Related Intolerances in Durban, South Africa. In the days prior to the conference, individuals from organizations all over the world participated in the Non-Governmental Organization Forum in order to develop a carefully-crafted and collectively-developed document that would serve two main purposes. One was to urge governments to advance meaningful declarations and plans of action to address global racism; the other was to act as a call to action for NGOs around the world. APEN sent Joselito Laudencia and Pamela Chiang to participate in the World Conference as part of an environmental justice delegation funded by the Ford Foundation. The following are excerpts from Joselito's journal entries that give a personal perspective to his experiences in South Africa and connects those to APEN's work in this post-9/11 context.

August 24, 2001

ABOVE:

Children of South
Durban give
Pamela and
Joselito a warm
welcome

Yesterday, Pamela Chiang and I arrived in South Africa. This is my first time traveling to South Africa and I feel very grateful for this experience. Not only do I have the opportunity to connect with environmental and racial justice activists throughout the world, but I

also get the physical experience of being in a country that dismantled a major system of institutionalized oppression within the last decade!

In the many months before the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, we at APEN debated whether to participate in the conference. Although we recognize our work as anti-racist, we questioned: What direct impact will the conference have to advancing anti-racist policies that fundamentally change the rules of the game and not just mitigate the problems? How will this conference lend to a strategy that allows people of color and indigenous peoples to ultimately change power-relations so that we have a direct say in decisions affecting our communities? How do we directly connect the conference to our grassroots organizing among Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States?

In the end, APEN decided to participate and sent Pamela and I to achieve a set of goals: 1) To impact the environmental justice and environmental racism dialogue to be inclusive of the experiences of Asians and Pacific Islanders; 2) To build and deepen relationships with EJ groups from all over the world, and; 3) To deepen our understanding of race and racism with the goal of expanding APEN's political framework back home.

BELOW:
Children play in a
park alongside a
decommissioned
chemical plant

Tonight we held our first briefing on what our role could be at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (UNWCAR). After doing introductions, we heard about how we got here in the first place, and that ten years ago our sister Dana Alston urged folks at the 1991 People of Color Environmental





ABOVE:
Press conference on
global environmental
racism at the NGO
Forum

Leadership Summit to attend the United Nations Earth Summit held in 1992. Though she pushed everyone to make the global connections, many didn't see the direct connection between the local work and the global struggle. However, some folks participated. There were other international convenings since then where our EJ brothers and sisters started making those connections, all of which led us to this conference.

From the start of the conference planning, it has been a struggle to get environmental justice issues to the forefront. Despite continuous work during the official preparatory process of the last year to include "environmental racism" in the document, it's mentioning was watered-down and not adequately described and incorporated. The task at hand over the next couple of weeks is to push for stronger language in the document. By lobbying, educating key NGOs about environmental racism, and creating media-generating activities, we're aiming to turn the tide to have environmental racism on the radar screen, and hopefully one of the conference's top agenda items.

One of the challenges we've noted is that there are over 6000 NGO participants registered, and 25% of them are from the United States. We need to be mindful not to dominate discussions from a U.S. perspective. It's equally important, though, to share that we experience structural and blatant racism in the US as well, and that third world conditions exist in our country, primarily for people of color. The other challenge is that some outside the US are not familiar with the people of color concept and framework, considering that profit-motivated, individualism-minded folks who are people of color as well run their countries. Class is the defining structure in these regions.



From what I know so far, reparations for the African slave trade and equating Zionism with racism still remain the contentious topics for this conference. Migrant issues are also getting much exposure. It's up to us to put environmental racism and environmental justice on the map as well.

05 September 2001 - Reflections

The first weekend was the EJ weekend. The first day was full of speakers on various environmental justice and racism issues around the world. Nnimmo Bassey of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria spoke of the resistance to oil companies, such as Shell, and how those who protested and organized against them in the Ogoniland were killed at the orders of Shell. As he put it, "When you buy a litre of petrol, you buy a litre of blood." Teresa Leal of the Southwest Network on Environmental and Economic Justice highlighted issues of globalisation experienced in the maquiladoras, assembly plants located on the U.S.-Mexico border that pollute, extort workers with low-wages and destroy the spirit and lives of women. Heeten Kalan related his growing up in South Africa and seeing black Africans, who made up 87% of the country's population, crowded onto 13% of the land while not providing any service infrastructure. The South Africa system was set up to provide cheap migrant labor for mining capital, and in these black townships, people were downstream from pollution sources and got no electricity, though they lived in the shadow of power plants. Modesto Segura of Accion Ecologica in Ecuador shared their fight against shrimp companies who are devastating one of the largest wetland systems in the world and destroying people's livelihoods in the process.

ABOVE:
March against
privatization led
by COSATU
(Confederation of
South African
Trade Unions) as
part of a two day
stay away strike
throughout the
country

The next day we went on a toxic tour of South Durban, where about 150 of us saw firsthand how pollution invades the lives of the poor residents, mostly black, coloured, Indian and mixed communities. In one small region, we witnessed oil refineries, sugar processing plants, the airport, polluted canals, contaminated playgrounds next to abandoned chemical plants, industrial waste zones, endangered mangroves, all of which left a population with significant health problems. The air smelled and tasted awful, my eyes stung, and I coughed throughout the tour. What was for me a few hours were daily realities for the people of South Durban. It also amazed me how similar South Durban looked and felt compared to places in the Bay Area, especially San Francisco's Bay View Hunters Point and the polluting area circling Richmond, California.

Clearly, the links are there between what our communities face in the United States and others throughout the world. This experience made me think that at APEN, we need to be more explicit in our language about these global connections, and to name neoliberalism and imperialism as the main forces pushing these inequities. We need to connect with our brothers and sisters throughout the world, meaning more than just a couple of us, so that we can strengthen the connections at all levels of the organization. We also need to have our hand in these international arenas, but know that it all must be rooted in our local organizing work.

16 October 2001

In the larger scheme of things, we learned much more than we anticipated. And in light of the September 11th tragic events and the war-driven aftermath, we affirmed that our work at APEN is more important now than ever. The recent racial profiling and attacks against South Asians and West Asians in the United States show that racism is still alive and well, and the call for non-violence in these times is portrayed as a fringe movement amidst a sea of American flags. As the political climate shifts dramatically to the right and as multinational corporations and global financial institutions reinforce their stronghold, we must push to build a mass-based organized movement that challenges racism, sexism, classism, caste-ism, neoliberalism, environmental injustices and the many inter-linked oppressions that harm and kill our communities.

Two key lessons emerge for me in these times:

Because we are all different, whether it's by racial group, by country or by movement, we need to share our particular experiences and issues; at the same time, we each must work collaboratively to advance a comprehensive agenda for systemic change that elevates and embraces all our diverse experiences. With approximately 25% of the NGO participants from the U.S., many of the conversations in Durban displayed a disgusting arrogance to frame issues from a strictly U.S. perspective that downplayed and disregarded the experiences of other countries. For EJ, the conference was a

milestone in bringing EJ groups together to craft strong declarations and plans of action from a global perspective. However, when approaching other conference groups (such as the migrant rights group or the Asians & Asian descendants group), it was a struggle to have them include specific EJ language as their concerns. Clearly, we need to intersect more explicitly with other movements and other countries, and expand our notion of what are “our” issues so that we all carry each other’s agendas in our different arenas.

As the corporate globalization (and supportive military) movement grows, the ability of countering forces to come together, share and strategize worldwide becomes more important. For many groups in South Africa and throughout the world, the UNWCAR represented one of the rare moments they were able to share their experiences and connect with others engaged in similar struggles. Especially in this post-9/11 context, we are experiencing a unique moment where masses of people are being forced to look at their communities and countries from a global perspective. A collective response to racism, neoliberalism and militarism needs to be global in nature, which heightens the need to come together in these international settings.

Ultimately, the questions we asked ourselves at APEN to determine our involvement with the UNWCAR are still the right questions. In the end, our work is about building grassroots power among those most impacted by these issues. It’s about connecting these communities and forging strategic alliances to build the power necessary to advance systemic change on a global level. The UNWCAR helped us at APEN to move a step closer to these goals, by sharpening our framework to intersect and “own” each other’s issues and by providing an opportunity to build relationships that hopefully become long-term alliances against global racism and neoliberalism.



Forging Strategic Alliances, Building a Movement

by APEN Staff

We at APEN believe that forging strategic alliances and movement building are key components to creating the critical mass and power necessary to reach our goals for systemic change. The following is a brief description of some of our alliance and movement building activities and updates on where that work is going.

Environmental Justice Fund: APEN helped to start the Environmental Justice Fund in 1995 with other environmental justice networks across the country in order to create alternative funding mechanisms and streams for our networks and for the EJ movement. The other networks involved include the Farmworker Network for Economic and Environmental Justice, the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Northeast Environmental Justice Network, the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice, and the Southwest Network for Environmental and

Economic Justice. Over the past two years, each of the networks have engaged in a self-assessment process to evaluate and celebrate our work since our founding, and to refine our strategic directions in the coming years. That process culminated in a National Networks meeting held September 2001 in San Diego, California, where members of each network shared their findings.

ABOVE:
EJ Networks
strategize at the
Nat'l Networks
Meeting in San
Diego

Summit II: Ten years after the first People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, over 40 individuals and organizations working to advance environmental justice have come together to plan the second Summit. Summit II will be held in Washington, D.C. in October 23-26, 2002, and the summit aims to assess the work of the environmental justice movement over the last 10 years as well as to strategize on what the work can look like over the next 10 years. APEN's youth organizer Bouapha Toommaly and board member Pam Tau Lee have been playing leadership roles in the planning process. As part of APEN's goal to increase the Asian Pacific Islander presence and perspectives at the Summit, APEN plans to bring together groups organizing in API communities from across the country to share what it means to do our work and look at building the work from an environmental justice perspective.

Just Transition Alliance: Looking to debunk the argument that our communities have to make a choice between jobs versus a clean environment, the Just Transition Alliance was formed to strengthen the relationships between rank-and-file workers and community residents in the hopes of creating overall healthy communities. At the fenceline and the frontline, workers and community residents can work together to push for clean, non-polluting facilities that are safe for everyone. Pam Tau Lee has been involved in developing the political education curriculum for this project and LOP organizer Torm Nompraseurt has been involved in developing methods to bring this curriculum and process to the work in Richmond, CA.

On October 24, 2001, environmental justice activists and organizations commemorated the 10th anniversary of the first People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit with a press conference and symposium in Washington D.C.. This event celebrated ten years of environmental justice organizing in communities across the nation and announced the planning of a Second Summit to be held October 23-26, 2002. "The commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the first EJ summit was very moving, especially for those of us in the generation that never heard of EJ until after 1991," said Penn Loh, Executive Director of Alternatives for Community & Environment based in Boston, Massachusetts. "It was an incredible opportunity to connect with the roots of our movement and celebrate our predecessors, as well as encourage our next generation of leadership. I look forward to an even more inspiring event next October at Summit II."

Strategic Trainings for Education and Power (STEP): APEN board members (Martha Matsuoka, David Kakishiba and Pam Tau Lee) and staff (Pamela Chiang, Grace Kong, Bouapha Toommaly, Torm Nompraseurt, May Phan and Joselito Laudencia) engaged in a year-long political education process. Organized by the Los Angeles-based Environmental and Economic Justice Project, the French American Charitable Trust and Grassroots Policy Project, STEP brought together various organizing groups throughout California in five training sessions to hone how we approach systemic social change in our daily work. Sharing campaign stories,

struggling over political definitions and concepts, and learning about broader strategic frameworks, STEP participants engaged in the beginning steps of developing a common language, framework and analysis to make our movement stronger.

California Alliance Exploration Process: A number of movement organizations throughout California have met semi-regularly over the last year and a half to begin developing a common progressive analysis for our work in California and to explore whether a common strategy and agenda is viable in this political moment that would add to our local organizing work. The group is looking at particular issue areas, including environmental justice, in order to gain a picture of opportunities and trends at the state level. APEN's executive director Joselito Laudencia has been engaging in this process alongside groups based in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Los Angeles metropolitan area and the San Diego region.

National Environmental Policy Commission: Last Fall 2000, the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) convened the National Environmental Policy Commission with the charge of developing a set of policy recommendations on the issues of environmental justice, human health and economic development. Joselito Laudencia joined the Commission, which organized 5 listening sessions to gather input on the recommendations. From Jackson, Mississippi to Newark, New Jersey, to San Francisco and Oakland, to Chicago, the Commission met to hear testimonies from various groups and finalized the report, which was delivered to the CBC meeting held in September 2001.

BELOW:
APEN, Indigenous
Environmental
Network & Just
Transition Alliance
participate on San
Diego-Tijuana
border tour.



APEN Happenings

This past year has been filled with many transitions, proud moments and joyful occasions in the APEN family. Here are just a few that we would like to mention:

Congratulations to all our staff and board members who welcomed new arrivals into their own families this year! Staff member Audrey Chiang and partner Tim Beloney welcomed baby Tao into the world at the very end of 2000. Board member Yin Ling Leung, partner Shoibal Roy and their daughter Maya celebrated the arrival of Aman. APEN board chair Jack Chin and partner Hedy Chang became proud parents to their second son, Nevin, new baby brother of Neil. And staff member Miya Yoshitani and Danny Kennedy just surprised us with the early arrival of second daughter Ena Jun. All are happy and well.

In more happy news of milestones and expanding families, staff member Mari Rose Taruc and former APEN board member Eric Saijo celebrated their marriage in October of this year with a beautiful ceremony next to a waterfall and a festive party at the CTWO mansion. Our first APEN match made in heaven, we wish you both all the world's happiness!

To add to the celebratory feeling of October, staff member Grace Kong and partner Abdi Soltani, Executive Director of our friend and ally organization, Californians for Justice, announced their engagement. Congratulations on another amazing movement alliance!

Two APEN staff were able to take advantage of the Windcall sabbatical program sponsored by Common Counsel this year. Pamela Chiang and Torm Nompraseurt both experienced some well-deserved time out and solitude on the Windcall ranch in Montana. Thanks to the both of you for all of the amazing and hard work that you have done on APEN's behalf.

APEN is proud to report that Torm was also the honored recipient of a Public Advocate award for outstanding community leadership.

Bouapha Toommaly and Grace Kong were also able to take a well-deserved break to participate in silent retreat sponsored by Vallecitos in New Mexico.

We have so many friends, volunteers and supporters to thank for their help this past year, but we wanted to especially thank Gopal Dayaneni, Martha Hoppe, and Fran Holland and Mary Stewart for their volunteer time providing outstanding childcare at our LOP events. And we are forever grateful to Innosanto Nagara for providing volunteer design work for this newsletter and other APEN publications.

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE ORDERING INFO

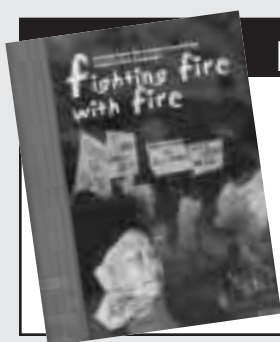
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New Faces

APEN has been very lucky to add the following incredible people to our staff this year. Welcome to APEN and thank you so much for the many talents and years of experience that you bring the APEN family!

Vivian Chang

Organizing Director

Vivian has an extensive background in organizing within low income, people of color communities on environmental and economic justice issues. Most recently, she worked with the Environmental and Economic Justice Project to provide strategic facilitation and training support to community-based organizations on needs ranging from staff development and training to campaign and organizing strategies and tactics.



Sandy Saeteurn

General Support Associate

No stranger to APEN and the Laotian Organizing Project, Sandy has been an active youth organizer with LOP's Asian Youth Advocates since she joined the group in 1997. She is also a volunteer at the English Action Center. Sandy went to De Anza High School.



Manami Kano

Development Associate

Manami has an extensive background in the non-profit field, most recently as the Cultural Affairs Coordinator of the Consulate General of Japan. Her work experience ranges from fund development to cultural programming to television production, and focuses on social change through the arts. An active member of the local progressive Asian Pacific Islander community, she is on the board of the Kearny Street Workshop and involved with the Nosei Network and other local API groups.



May Phan

Community Organizer

May comes to APEN with extensive experience as a Community Counselor and Outreach Worker in different public health and social service organizations such as the Asian Community Mental Health Services, Contra Costa County Health Department, and the Bay Area Addiction and Research Treatment Center. She is also a fluent interpreter and is an active member of the Mien community in Richmond.

Ann Ninh

Administrative Assistant

Ann is in the process of obtaining her BA at UC Berkeley, where she is focusing her major on City Planning and Ethnic Studies. In her time there she has volunteered for and helped organize various conferences on campus, including Critical Resistance's Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex.



Suzanne Bourguignon

Research Intern

Suzanne is a graduate student in the Department of City and Regional Planning at UC Berkeley where she is concentrating her studies in land use planning and community development. Funded by a community development work-study fellowship, Suzanne has been working for APEN on a number of research and data-analysis projects regarding API demographics and community organizing. She has a background in non-profit youth development and community-based conservation work.



New ways to support APEN

Join our new Monthly Donor Program. Join a growing group of people who have pledged to support APEN through monthly credit card donations. The reasons for joining this program are many. (1) You can spread out your contributions in small amounts monthly which is easier on the bank account than one large contribution. (2) Our paperwork and administrative costs will be reduced, putting your gift to work immediately to supporting APEN's programs. (3) You can get mileage points! (4) You get to see your donations directly on your credit card bill. (5) We have regular ongoing expenses, and need our supporters' regular predictable contributions.

Make an online donation through our Website (www.apen4ej.org). Just click the "DONATE NOW" button on our website. Thanks to egrants.org, you can now make a donation to APEN through this secure site.

Host a House Party. This year we held our very first house party to raise funds for APEN's Asian Youth Advocates. Jay Conui and Mari Rose Taruc hosted the party and raised over \$2,000! A house party is a fun way to share APEN's work with your family and friends, and raise money while you're at it. You supply the guest list, house and snacks. We bring materials and people to speak about the work. "My family & friends were amazingly generous at the APEN house party when we gave them some food for thought & music to dance to," said Mari Rose.

Tried and true ways to support APEN

Donate stock. Stock not doing so well? Want to get rid of it, support APEN, and get a big tax break at the same time? Call our office and find out how to donate your stock.

Volunteer. We are always looking for volunteers to help with many ongoing and one-time projects from office tasks, to doing childcare at events, to putting together bulk mailings, to raising funds. We need your help!

Give at the office. If your workplace is part of a campaign like the United Way or the California State Employees Campaign, you can write APEN, tax i.d. #94-3261846 in the "Donor Option" section of the card, or ask your office administrator for the "Option Card."

APEN is also part of a consortium of national environmental justice networks, the Environmental Justice Fund, which was created to develop resources to further the work of the environmental justice movement. The Environmental Justice Fund is part of the Combined Federal Campaign. If you are a federal employee, you can designate the Environmental Justice Fund on your pledge card with the code number 0925.

Have your office give. Check to see if your organization or corporation has a matching gifts program. Your gift to APEN could be doubled or tripled this way. If your workplace does not have this type of philanthropic program, encourage them to start one!

Thank you for your support this past year!

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 Pam Tau Lee
 Miya Yoshitani



Asian Pacific
Environmental
Network

310 8th street, suite
309
Oakland,
CA 94607

Mission Statement

All people have a right to a clean and healthy environment in which their communities can live, work, learn, play and thrive. Towards this vision, the Asian Pacific Environmental Network was founded in 1993 to bring together a collective voice among the diverse and unique histories and cultures of native-born, immigrant, and refugee Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the United States. Through a strategy which combines grassroots community organizing, building a network among our communities and collaborating with other environmental justice networks, APEN works to strengthen the capacity of our communities to protect and shape our environments through democratic participation. APEN is part of a broad, multi-racial movement for environmental, social and economic justice.