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National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) is the only national, multi-issue Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women's organization in the country. NAPAWF's mission is to build a movement to advance social justice and human rights for AAPI women and girls. Following the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the organization was established by 157 founding sisters in September 1996. The founding sisters identified six issues areas to serve as the platform and foundation for NAPAWF's work: civil rights; economic justice; educational access; ending violence against women; health; and immigrant and refugee rights.

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FOREWARD

Our democracy is under assault. Mainstream media outlets, political pundits, and the like are lamenting the current state of our union, pointing to a deluge of scandal, controversy, and tragedy as proof of a breakdown in our democratic institutions. It would be all too easy to accept this narrative of decline as unchangeable, to retreat into our private lives, and to do nothing.

But we categorically reject that narrative. It is in times of crisis that we are reminded not only of the fragility of our democracy, but of the responsibility we each bear to protect it. *Our contention is that America has never been stronger.* Communities across the country have shown their unwavering commitment to safeguarding this nation. Their resilience is an inspiration and a reason to remain hopeful.

The 28th Edition of the *Asian American Policy Review* is, in many ways, a testament to that steadfast resilience. Our contributors are wrestling with a host of issues - both timely and perennial - that directly impact the welfare of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. They cover a wide terrain: ranging from political power and voting participation, to mental health and reproductive justice, to a radical reimagining of the Asian American historical consciousness. Together, we *interrogate* the historical, political, and socioeconomic structures that have shaped the trajectory of the AAPI experience and propose new approaches to empowerment that amplify AAPI voices.

When we question the ability of our institutions to protect our freedom, we turn to our communities for refuge. In our shared frustration, it is crucial to build partnerships not only within the AAPI community, but across identity borders. Recognizing the lived experiences of others is essential, but it is not enough. We must also commit to advancing policies that promote collective prosperity.

We would like to conclude with a few acknowledgments. We are sincerely grateful for the guidance, patience, and support of our publisher Martha Foley and faculty advisor Richard Parker. Both have been integral in shepherding the *Review* to its 28th edition. We would also like to thank our Advisory Board for supporting the mission and vision of the *Review*, and to our writers for their thoughtful contributions. Finally, we would like to thank the editorial staff of the *Asian American Policy Review*. Their resolve to become better educators and advocates for AAPIs is truly exemplary.

We are honored to present you the 28th Edition of the *Asian American Policy Review*.

With regards,

Cassandra Agbayani and Claris Chang

Co-Editors-in-Chief

THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE 2016:

A REPORT BY THE ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

This report is adapted from "The Asian American Vote in 2016," published by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) in 2017. The full report is available on AALDEF's website.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 8 November 2016, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) conducted a nonpartisan, multilingual exit poll of Asian American voters. Over 800 attorneys, law students, and community volunteers administered the survey in 14 states—California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia—and Washington, D.C.

AALDEF's exit poll, the largest survey of its kind in the nation, surveyed 13,846 Asian American voters at 93 poll sites in 55 cities. The exit poll was conducted in English and 11 Asian languages. AALDEF has conducted exit polls in every major election since 1988.

Multilingual exit polls provide a more comprehensive portrait of Asian American voters than surveys done only in English. AALDEF's exit poll reveals details about the Asian American community, including voter preferences on candidates, political parties, issues, and language needs.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The five largest Asian ethnic groups polled in 2016 were Chinese (35 percent), South Asian (29 percent), Korean (10 percent), Southeast Asian (10 percent), and Filipino (7 percent). South Asians include Asian Indians, Bangladeshis, Indo-Caribbeans,

and Pakistanis. Southeast Asians include Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Thais. Three out of four (76 percent) of respondents were foreign-born. One-third (32 percent) described themselves as limited English proficient and 20 percent had no formal education in the US. Almost one-third (30 percent) were first-time voters in the November 2016 general election.

DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

In the presidential race, 79 percent of Asian Americans voted for Hillary Clinton and 18 percent voted for Donald Trump. The majority (59 percent) of Asian Americans were registered with the Democratic Party, 12 percent were registered with the Republican Party, and 27 percent were not registered with any political party.

Crossover voting favored Clinton over Trump. More Asian American Republicans crossed party lines to vote for Clinton compared to Asian American Democrats voting for Trump (20 percent to 5 percent). Of those not enrolled in a political party, the majority favored Clinton over Trump by more than a 3 to 1 margin (73 percent to 22 percent).

COMMON POLITICAL INTERESTS

Asian Americans are a diverse community, including many who are foreign-born and speak different Asian languages and dialects. In the political arena, however, they share common political interests, even across

ethnic lines. In the 2016 presidential election, Asian Americans voted as a bloc for the same candidates and identified common reasons for their vote.

Respondents identified Economy/Jobs (22 percent), Immigration/Refugees (16 percent), Health Care (16 percent), and Education (15 percent) as the top issues that influenced their vote for President.

Asian Americans showed broad support for stricter gun control laws across multiple categories, including party enrollment. More than three of four Asian Americans (78 percent) showed strong support for stricter gun control laws. Half of Asian Americans (50 percent) said they do not believe that the police treat racial and ethnic groups equally. Two of three Asian Americans (65 percent) showed support for comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Two of three Asian Americans (65 percent) showed support for laws to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Bilingual ballots and language assistance are necessary to preserve access to the vote. Thirty-two percent (32 percent) of Asian Americans polled were limited English proficient. Twenty-four percent (24 percent) identified English as their native language.

VOTING BARRIERS

AALDEF received 281 complaints of voting



problems. Asian American voters were unlawfully required to provide identification to vote, mistreated by hostile or poorly trained poll workers, were denied Asian-language assistance, and found that their names were missing from or misspelled in voter rolls. American Muslim voters were specifically targeted by poll workers with requests for additional identification at poll sites in Michigan and New York.

METHODOLOGY

In the 8 November 2016 elections, AALDEF surveyed 13,846 Asian American voters at 93 poll sites in 55 cities across 14 states—California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia—and Washington, D.C.

The cities and states selected for the exit poll were among those with the largest or fastest-growing Asian American populations according to the 2010 US Census. Poll sites with large concentrations of Asian American voters were selected based on voter registration files, census data, advice from local elections officials and community leaders, and a history of voting problems. Co-sponsoring organizations—which included 17 national organizations, 49 community-based organizations, 12 law firms, 20 bar associations, and 26 Asian Pacific American Law Student Association chapters and undergraduate student associations—recruited 845 volunteers for exit polling. All volunteers were trained in conducting the exit poll. All were nonpartisan. Volunteers were instructed to approach all Asian American voters as they were leaving poll sites to ask them to complete anonymous questionnaires.

Survey questionnaires were written in English and 11 Asian languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

I. PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

ETHNICITY

Survey respondents were Chinese (35

percent), Asian Indian (13 percent), Bangladeshi (11 percent), Korean (10 percent), Vietnamese (8 percent), Filipino (7 percent), Pakistani (3 percent), Cambodian (2 percent), Indo-Caribbean (1 percent), and Arab (1 percent). The remaining respondents were of other Asian ethnicities, including Japanese, Laotian, and multiracial Asians.

LANGUAGE

A quarter of respondents (24 percent) identified English as their native language, while 28 percent identified one or more Chinese languages as their native language, 20 percent spoke one or more South Asian languages (including Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, and Punjabi), 6 percent spoke one or more Southeast Asian languages (including Vietnamese and Khmer), 9 percent spoke Korean, 6 percent spoke Tagalog, and 5 percent identified another Asian language as their native language.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

One of three (32 percent) Asian American voters surveyed said they were limited English proficient (“LEP”), which is defined as reading English less than “very well.” Of first-time voters, 33 percent were limited English proficient. Of all language groups polled, Korean-speaking voters exhibited the highest rate of limited English proficiency at 63 percent. Sixty percent (60 percent) of Khmer-speaking voters and 55 percent of Mandarin-speaking voters were also LEP. Among South Asian Americans, most voters were largely proficient in English, although 38 percent of Bengali-speaking voters were limited English proficient. Seven percent (7 percent) of voters said they had difficulty voting because no assistance was available in their native language, while 15 percent said they either used the interpreters or translated materials provided at the site or brought their own.

FIRST-TIME VOTING

Thirty percent (30 percent) of Asian Americans polled said that they voted for the first time in the November 2016 presidential election. The highest rates of first-time voters were among South Asians, with 43 percent of Bangladeshi, 40 percent of Pakistani, 27 percent of Asian Indian, and 23 percent of Indo-Caribbean Americans voting for the



first time.

FOREIGN-BORN, NATURALIZED CITIZENS

Seventy-six percent (76 percent) of all respondents were foreign-born, naturalized citizens. South Asians had among the highest rates of foreign-born, naturalized citizens (91 percent of Bangladeshis, 81 percent of Asian Indians, 80 percent of Pakistanis, and 75 percent of Indo-Caribbeans). Seventy-eight percent (78 percent) of both Vietnamese and Korean American voters were also born outside of the US. The groups with the largest proportions of native-born citizens were Arab (32 percent) and Chinese (29 percent).

AGE

Twenty-four percent (24 percent) of respondents were between the ages of 18 to 29. Twenty-one percent (21 percent) were between the ages of 30 to 39. Seventeen percent (17 percent) were between the ages of 40 to 49. Fifteen percent (15 percent) were between 50 to 59 years old. Thirteen percent (13 percent) were between 60 to 69 years old. Ten percent (10 percent) were 70 years old or older.

GENDER

Of the voters polled, 52 percent were female and 48 percent male.

EDUCATION

Twenty percent (20 percent) of all respondents had no formal education in the United States. Among those who were educated in the US, 45 percent held a college or university degree, 21 percent held an advanced degree, and 10 percent held a high school or trade school degree. The remaining 3 percent said that their highest level of education in the US was some high school or elementary school.

PARTY AFFILIATION

The majority (59 percent) of Asian American respondents were enrolled in the Democratic Party. Eleven percent (11 percent) were enrolled in the Republican Party. Three percent (3 percent) were enrolled in a party other than the Democratic or Republican parties. Twenty-seven percent (27 percent) of all Asian American respondents were not enrolled in any party.

There was some variation among ethnicities. Enrollment in the Democratic Party was highest among South Asian ethnicities; 84 percent of Indo-Caribbean, 83 percent of Bangladeshi, 79 percent of Pakistani, and 64 percent of Asian Indian American voters were enrolled as Democrats, compared to 59 percent of all Asian Americans surveyed nationally. Vietnamese and Filipino American respondents had higher rates of enrollment in the Republican Party at 27 percent and 23 percent, respectively. Thirty-eight percent (38 percent) of Cambodian Americans and 36 percent of Chinese Americans were not enrolled in any political party, the highest rates of all groups surveyed.

GENERALLY, ASIAN AMERICANS DEMONSTRATED POLITICAL UNITY, EVEN ACROSS ETHNIC LINES. ASIAN AMERICANS LARGELY VOTED AS A BLOC FOR HILLARY CLINTON.

II. THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE

Generally, Asian Americans demonstrated political unity, even across ethnic lines. Asian Americans largely voted as a bloc for Hillary Clinton. Overall, Asian Americans also showed strong support for Democratic congressional candidates, except when an Asian American candidate was in the race.

IMPORTANT FACTORS INFLUENCING THE VOTE FOR PRESIDENT

Based on all factors mentioned, the most important factors influencing the vote for president were Economy/Jobs (22 percent), Immigration/Refugees (16 percent), Health Care (16 percent), and Education (15 percent). Other important factors included

Terrorism/Security (10 percent), Women's Issues (10 percent), and the Environment (6 percent).

VOTE FOR PRESIDENT BY ETHNICITY

Nearly four of five Asian Americans (79 percent) voted for Hillary Clinton, and 18 percent voted for Donald Trump for president. Support for Clinton was particularly strong among first-time voters and South Asian voters.

Among Vietnamese American respondents, 65 percent voted for Clinton and 32 percent voted for Trump. This was a significant decrease from the 54 percent support that Mitt Romney received in the 2012 presidential election and the 67 percent support that John McCain received in the 2008 presidential election from Vietnamese American voters, according to the AALDEF 2012 and 2008 exit polls.

South Asian American voters showed the strongest support for Clinton, a trend that has been consistent over the past several presidential elections. In November 2016, 90 percent of South Asians polled voted for Clinton, 90 percent for Obama in 2012, 93 percent for Obama in 2008, and 90 percent for John Kerry in 2004. In 2016, 96 percent of Pakistani, 96 percent of Bangladeshi, 91 percent of Indo-Caribbean, and 84 percent of Asian Indian Americans voted for Clinton—a higher rate than Asian Americans nationally.

VOTE FOR PRESIDENT BY STATE

Asian American voters in Washington, DC, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts were among the strongest supporters for Clinton, whereas Asian American voters in Louisiana, who were mostly Vietnamese, were among the strongest supporters for Trump. While Asian Americans in the Northeast voted for Clinton at high rates (87 percent in Pennsylvania, 84 percent in Massachusetts, 83 percent in New Jersey, and 81 percent in New York), only 46 percent of those polled in Louisiana voted for Clinton. Asian American voters in southern states voted for Trump at a higher rate than Asian Americans nationally. In Louisiana, 50 percent of voters supported Trump, while 37 percent in Texas and 26 percent in Georgia supported Trump.

CROSSOVER VOTING AND UNENROLLED VOTERS

Crossover voting favored Clinton over Trump in the 2016 elections. A larger percentage of Asian Americans enrolled in the Republican Party crossed party lines to vote for Clinton for president (20 percent), compared to registered Democrats who crossed party lines to vote for Trump (5 percent). In 2012, 13 percent of Republicans voted for Obama and 3 percent of Democrats voted for Romney. In 2016, of those Asian Americans not enrolled in a political party, the majority favored Clinton over Trump by more than a 3 to 1 margin (73 percent to 22 percent).

GENDER

Among Asian American females, 15 percent voted for Trump, 83 percent for Clinton, and 2 percent for another candidate. Among Asian American males, 21 percent voted for Trump, 76 percent for Clinton, and 3 percent for another candidate.

The gender breakdown shows that across party lines, females voted for Clinton at higher rates than males, except for female Republicans. Ninety-six percent (96 percent) of female Democrats, 68 percent of females affiliated with another party, and 77 percent of females not enrolled in a party voted for Clinton, compared to 92 percent of male Democrats, 53 percent of males affiliated with another party, and 70 percent of males not enrolled in a party. Both female and male Republicans voted for Clinton at a rate of 20 percent. Female Republicans voted for Trump at a slightly higher rate (78 percent) than male Republicans (77 percent). Generally, a greater number of males than females voted for third party candidates, except in the Democratic Party; 1 percent of both male and female Democrats voted for a third party candidate.

AGE

There was overwhelming support for Clinton across all age levels, especially voters under 40. At 89 percent, voters between ages 18 to 29 showed the greatest support for Clinton. In that age category, only 8 percent of respondents voted for Trump, compared to 14 percent of those ages 30 to 39, 21 percent of those 40 to 49, 25 percent of those 50 to

59, and 25 percent ages 70 and above. Voters between ages 60 to 69 showed the greatest support for Trump at 28 percent.

NATIVITY

There was strong support for Clinton among both native and foreign-born Asian American voters. Eighty-eight percent (88 percent) of those born in the US, and 77 percent of naturalized citizens voted for Clinton.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Similarly, Asian Americans fluent in English and limited English proficient voters showed strong support for Clinton. Eighty-two percent (82 percent) of voters who read English "very well" and 74 percent of limited English proficient Asian Americans voted for Clinton. In contrast, 15 percent of English proficient and 26 percent of limited English proficient Asian Americans voted for Trump. Three percent (3 percent) of English proficient voters and 1 percent of limited English proficient voters voted for another candidate.

RELIGION

Across the category of religious affiliation, the majority of Asian Americans said they voted for Clinton. Of those who voted for Trump, Protestants showed the greatest support at 30 percent, followed by Catholics at 28 percent. Sixty-seven percent (67 percent) of Protestants and 70 percent of Catholics voted for Clinton. Muslims showed the strongest support for Clinton at 97 percent, while 2 percent of Muslims voted for Trump.

VOTE FOR CONGRESS

In most of the congressional races polled, the majority of Asian Americans supported Democratic candidates.

US SENATE RACES

In Florida, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, 73 percent of Asian Americans polled voted for the Democratic senatorial candidates and 21 percent voted for the Republican candidates.

In Nevada, 66 percent of Asian Americans voted for Democratic candidate Catherine Cortez Masto to replace outgoing Democratic senator Harry Reid, whereas 29 percent voted for Republican candidate Joe Heck. As in the 2012 senate race, the Nevada electorate was

closely split, with 47 percent voting for Masto and 45 percent voting for Heck.

In Florida, 69 percent of Asian Americans voted for Democratic candidate Patrick Murphy, while 25 percent voted for the incumbent Republican Senator Marco Rubio. In comparison, 44 percent of the Florida electorate voted for Murphy and 52 percent voted for Rubio.

In Pennsylvania, 79 percent of Asian Americans voted for Democratic candidate Katie McGinty, while 14 percent voted for the incumbent Republican Senator Pat Toomey. In comparison, 47 percent of the Pennsylvania electorate voted for McGinty and 49 percent for Toomey.

In Louisiana, 62 percent of Asian Americans voted for Republican candidate Joseph Cao, a Vietnamese American who formerly represented Louisiana's Second Congressional District. Republican candidate John Kennedy and Democratic candidate Foster Campbell went on to the runoff election on 10 December 2016, with Kennedy winning the race.

US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RACES

Similarly, 76 percent of Asian Americans voted for the Democratic House candidates and 16 percent voted for the Republican candidates. Two percent (2 percent) said they voted for another candidate and 7 percent said they did not vote. Results varied by congressional district.

In Georgia, as in 2012, the majority of Asian American voters supported the Democratic candidates in the Fourth and Sixth Districts, while their vote was much closer in the Seventh District. Asian Americans supported Democratic incumbent candidate Hank Johnson (63 percent), who won the seat, in the Fourth District and Democratic candidate Rodney Stooksbury (69 percent), who lost to Tom Price, in the Sixth District. They were split between Democrat Rashid Malik (49 percent) and Republican incumbent Rob Woodall (44 percent) in the Seventh District. The seat went to Woodall.

In Michigan, a plurality of voters (50 percent) in the Third District supported Republican incumbent candidate Justin Amash, who won the seat. Seventy-nine percent (79 percent) supported Democrat Anil Kumar, who lost to Republican incumbent Dave Trott in the Eleventh District. There was strong support for Democratic Representatives Debbie Dingell (78 percent) in the 12th District and Brenda Lawrence (93 percent) in the 14th District. Both candidates won their races.

In New York, Asian Americans showed overwhelming support for Democratic candidates, who won their seats. Of the districts where voters were polled, support ranged from 78 percent for Representative Grace Meng in the Sixth District to 92 percent for Representative Jerrold Nadler in the Tenth District.

In Pennsylvania, Asian Americans supported Democratic incumbent candidate Robert



Brady (78 percent) in the First District and Democrat Dwight Evans (70 percent) in the Second District. Brady and Evans were the winning candidates. In the Eight District, the only competitive US House race in the state, Asian Americans supported Democrat Steve Santarsiero (80 percent), although the seat went to Republican Brian Fitzpatrick.

In Texas, 45 percent of Asian Americans voted for Democratic incumbent candidate Al Green in the Ninth District, while 44 percent voted for his opponent, Republican Jeff Martin. The seat went to Green. The majority of Asian Americans (52 percent) in the 22nd District supported Democrat Mark Gibson, who lost to Republican Representative Pete Olson. A plurality (48 percent) in the 32nd District supported Republican Representative Pete Sessions.

III. THE ISSUES

GUN CONTROL

Support for stricter gun control laws was consistent across all categories polled, including political party, religion, English proficiency, voting experience, nativity, gender, and all education levels and age groups. The majority of Asian Americans (78 percent) showed support for stricter gun control laws, although there was some variation among ethnic groups.

Gun control is not a partisan issue for Asian Americans. Eighty-two percent (82 percent) of Asian American Democrats, 61 percent of Asian American Republicans, and 76 percent of those not enrolled in a political party supported stricter gun control.

Seventy-eight percent (78 percent) of English proficient and 77 percent of limited English proficient Asian American voters supported stricter gun control laws. Seventy-three percent (73 percent) of first-time voters and 80 percent of all other voters also supported such laws. The majority of Asian Americans from all education levels supported stricter gun control, with the highest numbers among those with a graduate degree (82 percent) and a low of 67 percent among those with some high school.

Among the ethnic groups with the highest support for stricter gun control were the Indo-Caribbean (83 percent), Korean (82 percent), Asian Indian (80 percent), and Chinese (80 percent) communities. While a low of 55 percent of Cambodian Americans supported stricter gun control laws, 26 percent said that they opposed it, and 11 percent said that they "don't know."

The strongest support for stricter gun control laws was in Washington, D.C. (88 percent), Nevada (83 percent), New York (81 percent), and California (80 percent). New York and California have among the strictest gun control laws in the country. In addition to Nevada, there was high support for stricter gun control laws in key swing states, such as Florida (76 percent), Pennsylvania (73 percent), and Michigan (72 percent).

Voters in Louisiana showed the lowest support for stricter gun control laws, although still at a majority of 63 percent, compared to nearly 20 percent who opposed it and 17 percent who said they "don't know." Voters in New Mexico and Georgia showed the strongest opposition at 23 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Of the four issue-related questions on the survey, voters were the most split on their opinions of police treatment of different racial and ethnic groups. Half of voters responded "no," they do not believe that the police treat racial and ethnic groups equally. 26 percent said "yes" and 24 percent said they "don't know."

While a majority of registered Democrats (54 percent) said they do not think that the police treat racial and ethnic groups equally, a plurality of registered Republicans (39 percent), those enrolled in other parties (49 percent), and those not enrolled in any party (47 percent) agreed. Republican voters were the most split on this issue, with 38 percent approving of police treatment of different racial and ethnic groups and 23 percent responding that they "don't know."

The greatest disagreement over police treatment of different racial and ethnic

groups came from voters in the age group 18 to 29, with 68 percent citing unequal treatment by police. This sentiment decreased steadily as age increased, to 32 percent for voters aged 70 and over.

The ethnic groups that showed the strongest disagreement that police treatment of different racial and ethnic groups is equal were Koreans (64 percent) and Indo-Caribbeans (59 percent). These groups were the only two groups to have a majority of its voters respond “no.” The ethnic groups that showed the strongest agreement that police treatment of different racial and ethnic groups is equal were Cambodians (32 percent) and Vietnamese (32 percent), who also had the highest rates of voters who said they “don’t know,” at 28 percent. A plurality among Cambodians and Vietnamese still disagreed that police treatment of different racial and ethnic groups is equal, at 40 percent and 41 percent, respectively.

In every state included in this survey, a majority or plurality of voters did not think the police treat racial and ethnic groups equally. Among the states with the highest disagreement that police treatment of different racial and ethnic groups is equal are Washington, D.C. (79 percent), Virginia (55 percent), New Jersey (54 percent), Maryland (51 percent), and Florida (51 percent). The state with the highest agreement that police treatment of different racial and ethnic groups is equal is Texas, at 40 percent, with 34 percent of voters who disagreed and 27 percent who said they “don’t know.”

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION

REFORM

As in 2012, support for comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, was consistent across all categories polled. Sixty-five percent (65 percent) of Asian Americans, the same percentage as in 2012, showed support for comprehensive immigration reform.

In the category of party enrollment, Democrats showed the greatest support for comprehensive immigration reform, at 72 percent. Republicans showed the least support, at 50 percent, compared to 58 percent of those not enrolled in a party. These figures are consistent with the data from 2012, when 73 percent of Democrats, 53 percent of Republicans, and 57 percent of those not enrolled in a party said they supported comprehensive immigration reform.

As age increased, support for this issue decreased steadily while opposition increased. Seventy-seven percent (77 percent) of voters in the 18-29 age group supported comprehensive immigration reform and 6 percent opposed it, whereas 57 percent of voters 70 and over supported it and 22 percent opposed it. For all age groups, those who responded that they “don’t know” remained between 18-22 percent.

A majority of Asian American voters from every state supported comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship. The states or jurisdictions with the strongest support are Washington, D.C. (85 percent), Florida (76 percent), Maryland (70 percent), New Jersey (68 percent), and



New York (67 percent). Texas had the weakest support, at 55 percent.

LGBTQ PROTECTION

As with comprehensive immigration reform, 65 percent of Asian American voters expressed support for laws to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Sixteen percent (16 percent) of voters said they opposed it and 20 percent said that they “don’t know.” There was some variation across categories, such as party enrollment, age, religion, and ethnicity.

Just under half of Republican voters (49 percent) said they supported laws to protect LGBTQ people, while 28 percent said they opposed them. Sixty-nine percent (69 percent) of Democratic voters supported them and 13 percent opposed them.

Unlike the levels of support for stricter gun control laws, support for laws to protect LGBTQ people decreased among older voters. For example, the number of voters aged 18-29 who supported laws to protect LGBTQ people (85 percent) was more than twice the number of voters aged 70 and over in the same category (42 percent).

Across ethnic groups, the greatest support came from the Filipino (80 percent), Indo-Caribbean (80 percent), Asian Indian (71 percent), Cambodian (66 percent), and Chinese (65 percent) communities. The lowest support came from Arab Americans (47 percent) and Korean Americans (51 percent).

Support among religious affiliations varied the most widely for this issue as compared to the other three issues in the survey. Nearly four of five Asian American voters with no religious affiliation (78 percent) supported laws to protect LGBTQ people. The least support came from Protestants, at 47 percent. This group was the most split on this issue with their opposition at 34 percent and those who responded that they “don’t know” at 19 percent.

The vast majority of voters in Washington, D.C. (90 percent) supported laws to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination

in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Florida followed at 77 percent, California at 76 percent, Nevada at 73 percent, and Maryland at 71 percent. The states with the weakest support, although still the majority, were Louisiana (53 percent), New Mexico (55 percent), and Texas (56 percent).

In Texas, 56 percent of voters said they supported such laws, 20 percent opposed them, and 24 percent said they “don’t know.” Texas Bill SB6 is a 2017 proposal that would require transgender individuals to use bathrooms in public schools, government buildings, and public university campuses according to their biological sex, regardless of their gender identity.

The “Physical Privacy Act,” introduced in 2016, is a Virginia bill that requires all individuals in government, school, and public university buildings to use the bathroom consistent with the sex listed on the individual’s birth certificate. In Virginia, 66 percent of Asian American voters supported laws to protect LGBTQ people, 16 percent opposed them, and 19 percent said they “don’t know.”

IV. ACCESS TO THE VOTE

The federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 ensures that all American citizens can fully exercise their right to vote. It protects racial, ethnic, and language minorities from voter discrimination and ensures equal access to the vote. Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, also known as the Language Assistance Provisions, covers a jurisdiction or political subdivision when the Census Bureau certifies that voting age citizens of the same language minority group—Alaskan Native, Asian, Spanish, or Native American—who are limited English proficient (LEP) or have an illiteracy rate higher than the national average either number more than 10,000 individuals, or represent greater than 5 percent of all voting age citizens in that jurisdiction.

Section 203 covers 12 states, and 28 cities and counties, for eight Asian language groups: Bengali, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, “Asian Indian”

(which has been designated as Bengali in Queens County, New York and as Hindi in Cook County, Illinois), and "Other" (which has been designated as Thai in Los Angeles County, California).

Section 208 of the federal Voting Rights Act gives voters the right to an assistor of choice, who can be a family member or friend, a minor, a non-citizen, or someone who is not a registered voter. The only exception is that the assistor cannot be the voter's employer or union representative. If a voter needs assistance to cast a ballot, the assistor can accompany the voter inside the voting booth.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

AALDEF's exit poll showed that nearly one in four (24 percent) Asian Americans identified English as their native language.

Under Section 203, certain jurisdictions in which the AALDEF exit poll was conducted were required to provide Asian language assistance, such as translated ballots, instructions, sample ballots, and interpreters. For example, in New York City, in Kings County (Brooklyn) and New York County (Manhattan), Chinese language assistance is required.

VOTING BARRIERS

Asian Americans were also asked about voting problems they encountered on Election Day. Of responses to this question, improper requests for identification, missing or misspelled names in voter rolls, and lack of language access were among the most common problems. Similar to other voters, Asian Americans also faced misdirection to poll sites, machine breakdowns, long lines, and inadequate notification of site assignments or changes.

American Muslim voters were specifically targeted by poll workers with requests for additional identification at poll sites in Michigan and New York. In Michigan, some poll workers required American Muslim women to remove their niqabs and fully reveal their faces in order to vote. In Brooklyn, NY, American Muslim voters were improperly told they had to show voter ID. In Queens, NY, a poll worker instructed a

voter to "vote down the line." The Board of Elections removed the poll worker in response to AALDEF's complaint.

CONCLUSION

The Asian American community is the fastest growing racial group in the country, increasing at over four times the rate of the total US population. Despite this immense growth, mainstream media polls and politicians still ignore Asian American voters. More outreach and education are needed concerning language assistance, voting requirements, and voters' rights, especially with older and limited English proficient Asian Americans.

As in past years, Asian Americans encountered many voting barriers. While Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires language assistance in certain jurisdictions, mitigating some barriers, there are still shortcomings in local compliance. Aggressive enforcement, thorough training of poll workers, and better recruitment of interpreters and bilingual poll workers are necessary to ensure that all Americans can fully exercise their right to vote.

Many congressional representatives received strong support from their Asian American constituents. These elected representatives should address the needs and concerns of the Asian American community in their districts. AALDEF will conduct the Asian American Exit Poll again in New York City in 2017 and in multiple states for the 2018 midterm elections.



EXTENDING THE KIM METHOD: USING THE PROMINENT ETHNIC SURNAME METHODOLOGY TO EXAMINE ASIAN AMERICAN ETHNIC GROUPS

C. AUJEAN LEE AND PAUL ONG

ABSTRACT

Ethnic identity helps understand group characteristics and opinions, yet many data do not include information on ethnicity. This study assesses the Prominent Ethnic Surname Methodology (PESM) to identify how representative it is of the ethnic group. We examined whether "Chen," "Nguyen," "Kim," and "Patel" are representative of Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Indians, respectively. We found Kim and Nguyen to be the most representative in Los Angeles County because they are unique and prevalent among their group in this geography. PESM is useful for policymakers and survey developers, particularly as efforts to develop the 2020 Census are under threat and may lead to undercounting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity plays an important role in shaping group characteristics, outcomes, and opinions. Portes and Zhou described how ethnicity impacts one's ability to access material resources and opportunities over a lifetime.¹ For example, ethnic group stratification affects residential segregation patterns,^{2, 3} political views,⁴ health outcomes,^{5, 6} educational disparities,⁷ and economic opportunities.^{8, 9} It is critical for researchers to understand the nuances of how to measure and examine ethnic

population trends to identify what groups experience social inequalities, which affects public resources. At times, minorities and immigrants require more assistance from their local government because they may need in-language materials, translators, and greater outreach efforts.^{10, 11, 12}

In particular, data collected by the Census Bureau have also been important for allocating public funds, or more than \$675 billion.¹³ An accurate census count is particularly critical for immigrants and minorities because these data are used for health care, education, transportation, housing assistance, and other social and economic programs. For example, the California Department of Finance estimated that the 2010 Census failed to include 1.5 million residents.¹⁴ Asian American and Pacific Islander groups have historically been undercounted because of factors including language barriers, immigration status, residence in a hard-to-count tract, or housing tenure.¹⁵

The Census Bureau has already faced a number of challenges in preparing for the 2020 Census. The nonpartisan U.S. Government Accountability Office¹⁶ has ranked the 2020 Census as a federal program that has a high risk of failure due to several issues, including increasing implementation costs, the introduction of new online and telephone responses, issues with testing,

the cancellation of field tests last year, and risks to information security. Concurrently, Congress has severely limited funds to pay for the Census, forcing the Census Bureau to cut costs.¹⁷ There have also been issues with leadership and management of the Census Bureau. John Thompson, the director of the 2000 Census, unexpectedly resigned in June 2017.¹⁸ He is likely to be succeeded by Thomas Brunell, who has provided expert testimony to support gerrymandering.¹⁹

IT IS CRITICAL FOR RESEARCHERS TO UNDERSTAND THE NUANCES OF HOW TO MEASURE AND EXAMINE ETHNIC POPULATION TRENDS TO IDENTIFY WHAT GROUPS EXPERIENCE SOCIAL INEQUALITIES, WHICH AFFECTS PUBLIC RESOURCES.

In addition to these political challenges, there are also methodological challenges in identifying ethnic groups in government data. First, a number of public data sets include racial categories but not ethnic groups, such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation and Home Mortgage Disclosure Act. The second challenge for researchers is then to distinguish ethnic group information among racial groups, particularly among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.²⁰ Third, some government data suppress data on smaller ethnic groups based on population thresholds or to protect individual privacy.

Asian Americans demonstrate the importance of differentiating between ethnic groups. Asian Americans include more than 40 ethnic groups with important distinctions in immigration patterns, socioeconomic status, health outcomes, and civic engagement, which require data disaggregation.²¹ In response to these disparities, California Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 1726 in June 2016, which requires the Department of Public Health to collect detailed data on Asian American and Pacific Island groups, such as Bangladeshis, Hmong, Fijians, and Tongans.²²

Consequently, researchers have used micro-individual data and Big Data to examine ethnicity. While these data are becoming

more readily available in voter records, house transaction data, or health records, these data often do not include self-reported race/ethnicity. Researchers are then using surnames to impute or estimate ethnic group identification. These techniques include using a surname dictionary, thresholds in probability, or adjusting for local geographic racial/ethnic composition. This technique has been widely applied to public health^{23, 24, 25, 26} and political science studies on voting.²⁷

We test and evaluate a surname method that uses the most predominant surname to estimate ethnic group characteristics—or what we call the Prominent Ethnic Surname Methodology (PESM). We use Los Angeles County voter registration data and place of birth to assess PESM. Our study tests the representativeness of the most prominent surname on naturalized foreign-born voters from the same country of origin.

PESM has been used for Koreans, and we extend it to Chinese, Indians, and Vietnamese using the most prevalent surnames in Los Angeles County—Chen, Patel, and Nguyen—because these are the largest Asian groups in the United States.²⁸ These surnames may not be the most prominent in other geographies, but we provide a template for how others can apply PESM. Other studies have examined surname sampling techniques for Chinese,^{29, 30} Indians,^{31, 32} and Vietnamese.^{33, 34} These studies assumed individuals with the prominent surnames are similar in characteristics with the ethnic group. However, this is the first study to test if registered voters with the prominent surname for each group are similar to registered voters from the same place of birth.

This study also extends previous research by testing several group characteristics. While other studies focus on demographics, we test the method for other variables important for social science researchers—political party, behavior, and neighborhood ethnic context. By understanding the prevalence and uniqueness of a surname, researchers can determine whether PESM is effective.

The following describes other surname

methods and PESM. After, we detail our findings and analysis of PESM. We conclude with implications for researchers in multiple disciplines.

SURNAME METHODOLOGIES

There are several techniques that examine ethnic identity using surnames. The following three methods vary in effectiveness and demonstrate the importance of considering the benefits and consequences of each, based on data quality and available resources. The first approach utilizes a dichotomous surname dictionary that provides a list of surnames to impute an ethnic identity. The second strategy builds on the first approach and limits surnames to those that meet high probabilities to determine which surnames represent a specific ethnic group. The third method is the focus of this study and utilizes PESM to understand ethnic group patterns. We focus on PESM because of its practical expediency and value for researchers with limited resources.

DICHOTOMOUS SURNAME DICTIONARY

Previous studies have developed or used an established surname dictionary that matches a surname with a racial/ethnic group. These dictionaries may or may not include the probability that a surname is of a specified racial/ethnic group. For example, the 1990 Census Spanish surname list includes surnames that are presumed to belong to individuals who are Latino without probabilities.³⁵ Studies that have created dictionaries used health administrative data³⁶ or business directories.^{37, 38} These studies rely on self-reported racial/ethnic identity and need large sample sizes.

Depending on how these dictionaries are applied, they can introduce type I errors (e.g., classifying a non-Latino person incorrectly as Latino) or type II errors (such as not classifying a Latino person as Latino). For example, the Census Bureau surname list leads to higher false positives when used to identify racial groups because the list was designed to pre-identify racial groups.³⁹ These surname dictionaries are not as effective for some segments of the population. For example, Eschbach, Kuo, and

Goodwin noted that foreign-born Latinos were more accurately identified than native-born Latinos in California death records.⁴⁰ Wong, Palaniappan, and Lauderdale used medical records and the Spanish surname list of the 1990 Census; they discovered the surname list worked better for men and older individuals (65 years of age or older).⁴¹

THRESHOLDS IN PROBABILITY

To minimize such errors, a second method develops probabilities that a surname represents a racial/ethnic group. This approach uses probabilities in two ways. The first weighs groups by the local geographic racial/ethnic composition to develop probabilities that an individual belongs to a racial/ethnic group based on the surname. For example, Elliott et al. (2009) created the Bayesian Improved Surname Geocoding (BISG) method, which calculates the probability of a race/ethnicity using the Census Bureau surname probabilities and an individual's address to ascertain the race/ethnicity. BISG calculates the updated probability of a person's race/ethnicity (i) with surname (j) given the census block residence (k) for the 6 major racial groups—Hispanic, White, Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Multiracial—using the following equation, where $q(i|j, k)$ is the updated probability:

$$q(i|j,k) = \frac{u(i,j,k)}{u(1,j,k) + u(2,j,k) + (3,j,k) + (4,j,k) + u(5,j,k) + u(6,j,k)}$$

BISG can be tedious and resource-intensive, as the user would need to calculate these probabilities for all target surnames per ethnic group.

The second technique prioritizes surnames that meet or exceed a predetermined probability level to ensure the accuracy of the racial/ethnic group match using a surname dictionary. Grofman and Garcia categorized any individual as Latino if they have a surname that has at least a 50 percent likelihood of being Latino according to the 2010 Census Bureau list of common U.S. surnames.⁴² There is no consistent threshold used. For example, while Lauderdale and Kestenbaum also used 50 percent to develop their Asian surname list,⁴³ Ong, Pech, and

Pfeiffer used the stricter criterion of a 70 percent threshold to impute racial/ethnic groups.⁴⁴

The first and second methods require resources and time to develop a dictionary and test the representativeness of the larger group. Dictionaries also introduce type I and type II errors, depending on the dictionary or threshold used. Researchers who use a dichotomous surname dictionary do not know the accompanying false positive or false negative rates of each surname. If the dictionary includes probabilities, each surname has different probabilities that introduce error. For example, according to the 2010 Census Bureau surname dictionary, “Kim” has a 95 percent probability of belonging to an Asian or Pacific Islander.⁴⁵ Alternatively, “Park” has a 73 percent probability of belonging to an Asian or Pacific Islander. Thus, by including both surnames based on a threshold, Park introduces more error than Kim. If using BISG, surnames would have different error probabilities based on the local geographic context.

PROMINENT ETHNIC SURNAME METHODOLOGY (PESM)

PESM focuses on the most frequent last name for an ethnic group as a subsample to represent the overall ethnic group. Shin and Yu developed the “Kim” method, which presumes that, given the prevalence of “Kim” among Korean surnames, individuals with the last name “Kim” are representative of other Koreans. Shin and Yu first found that Kim can be used to estimate the total Korean population in a given area.⁴⁶ More recently, Kim et al. extended this method to the other four most prevalent Korean surnames—Lee, Park, Choi, and Chung—to test how representative they are of Koreans in Korea and in the US for demographic characteristics and health outcomes, including marital status, religion, homeownership, and self-rated physical and mental health.⁴⁷ They found that the other four Korean surnames were also highly representative in Korea and U.S., demonstrating additional benefits of using prominent surnames in research.

PESM is beneficial for several reasons. First, it reduces the cost of surveys. If a

prominent surname adequately represents an ethnic group, survey administrators can target individuals of a surname to understand the broader group with lower administrative costs and fewer imputing errors. Researchers can also use one surname to understand ethnic groups in large administrative records. By focusing on one surname subgroup, researchers can spend fewer resources in time and cost to extract ethnic group information and reduce the problem of false positives from other less representative surnames.

Second, this method enhances studies that use the Census Bureau surname dictionary, the most common dictionary for racial imputation. Using 2000 or 2010 Decennial Census self-reported individual data, the Bureau counts the surnames for each major racial group and calculates the proportion that a surname is linked to a person who is White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Hispanic origin.^{48, 49} Consequently, researchers can impute race using the Census surname list first, and then use PESH for that racial group to understand ethnic group characteristics. This two-step process can decrease false positive errors. For example, the Census dictionary can be used to first identify individuals who are most likely of Asian descent. Then, researchers can identify the most prominent surname for individuals from a specific country to identify group characteristics. Then, non-Asians from an Asian country would be excluded in the analysis.

Third, PESH allows flexibility in geographic adjustments. Surname dictionaries use a specific geography to estimate surname probabilities, which can introduce errors when applied if the target geography differs in racial/ethnic composition. For example, the Census Bureau is based on the national Decennial Census racial probabilities. However, national demographics differ from most local geographic contexts. Thus, the surname dictionary probabilities will produce more errors the greater the differences there are between the local geography and the US racial/ethnic composition.

The surname, “Hahn,” provides an illustrative

example. According to the 2010 Census surname dictionary, Hahn is 92 percent likely to be a person who is White and is 5 percent likely to belong to a person who is Asian or Pacific Islander. Hahn is also a common Korean surname. If a surname dictionary is developed for Koreatown Los Angeles, the probability of Hahn being White will drop and the probability that Hahn is an Asian person will increase. PESM addresses these errors because it does not have any predetermined surname probabilities and allows the user to determine the geographic target. As long as micro-level data include surnames, researchers can assess the uniqueness and prevalence of the most common surnames for any geography to determine if the surname represents the ethnic group.

There are some limitations to note for using PESM. First, it has not extensively been applied to other ethnic groups, particularly those with a greater number of surnames. Shah et al. found that South Asian last names were more varied than Chinese surnames, which made using South Asian surnames less accurate than Chinese surnames.⁵⁰ For ethnic groups with more numerous surnames, PESM will not be as effective because one surname will not be as representative of the population. Also, some ethnic groups have overlapping surnames. For instance, Spanish surnames are common with Filipinos, some Pacific Islander populations, and numerous Latino groups because of a history of colonization. It will then be challenging to

distinguish which prevalent surname can be used to understand group characteristics. The following provides a template for how others can use PESM for different target geographies and ethnic groups that have more representative and unique surnames.

METHODOLOGY

DATA SOURCE AND VARIABLES

We used Los Angeles County voter registration data, which include individuals who were registered as of October 2014. Data were purchased from the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. It includes a number of variables, including full name, place of birth, gender, birth date, political party, voter turnout in the most recent election, and registration date.

Among those registered to vote, about 20 percent were born outside of the U.S. Of foreign-born registered voters, 45 percent had an identified place of birth. We focused on these voters with a known country to identify the most prominent surname for our target countries: Chen for China, Patel for India, Kim for Korea, and Nguyen for Vietnam. These last names are consistently the top surnames for Asian or Pacific Islanders in the 2010 Census surname dictionary⁵¹ and 2000 Census surname dictionary.^{52, 53} Then, we created three comparison groups per target country of origin: A) all foreign-born registered voters with each surname, regardless of the place of

TABLE 1. FREQUENCY BY SURNAME, COUNTRY, AND COMPARISON GROUP

Surname	Target Country	All with Surname Regardless of Country	Surname for Target Country	All Voters from Target Country Regardless of Surname
		A	B	C
Kim	Korea	7,030	6,743	34,623
Chen	China	2,731	2,545	49,435
Patel	India	519	418	7,270
Nguyen	Vietnam	3,075	2,931	18,977

Source: 2014 Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Calculated by authors.

birth; B) foreign-born registered voters with the surname and from the target country; and C) foreign-born registered voters from the respective country with any surname. Table 1 lists the total populations by target country and surname for each group that are used for the remainder of the study.

Voter registration data do not have self-reported race/ethnicity. Thus, we used place of birth as a proxy for ethnic group because the overwhelming majority of people from these countries identify as the target ethnic group.⁵⁴ We categorized individuals who arrived from China (includes Hong Kong and Taiwan), Korea, India, or Vietnam as being Chinese, Korean, Indian, or Vietnamese, respectively. These groups include individuals who were born to American citizen parents or naturalized as U.S. citizens. (Hereafter country of origin and ethnic group are used interchangeably for simplification.)

For the three comparison groups (see Table 1), we focused on characteristics related to demographics, political party, behavior, and neighborhood ethnic context:

- Demographics:
 - Gender
 - Age
- Political Party:
 - Party affiliation: Democratic, Republican, Declined to State (includes no party preference), and minor parties
- Behavior:
 - Years registered to vote
 - Voted in last election
- Neighborhood Ethnic Context (Spatial Assimilation)
 - Percentage of a comparison group that resides in highly concentrated ethnic zip codes to test spatial assimilation.⁵⁵

To understand neighborhood ethnic context, we rely on the theory of spatial assimilation.⁵⁶ They hypothesized that racial/ethnic groups will transition from enclaves to more diverse neighborhoods once they obtain the economic means to gain access to improved public resources. We first used 2014 American Community Survey

(ACS) 5-year estimates to identify which zip codes in Los Angeles County had the top 5-percentile concentration of Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese residents.⁵⁷ We then calculated the percentage of each comparison group in these high-ethnic zip codes. A higher proportion of residence in high-ethnic zip codes signifies less spatial assimilation. We repeated these calculations for the other target surnames and countries of origin.

ANALYTICAL PLAN

We used several steps to understand how representative a surname was for each target ethnic group. First, we determined how unique a surname was by calculating the frequency of a surname for the target country relative to registered voters of the same surname from other countries. We then calculated the prevalence of a surname by determining the frequency of a surname among registered voters from the same country. These estimates demonstrated how representative a prominent surname was for an ethnic group.

After, we used bivariate analyses for each variable and the three comparison groups by surname and country. For age and years registered to vote, we calculated the mean. For gender, political party affiliation, voter turnout in the last election, and residence in a high-ethnic zip code, we calculated the frequencies. We also performed statistical tests to measure differences between comparison groups. We used t-tests for mean age and mean registered years and chi-square tests for the other variables—gender, political party, voter turnout, and neighborhood ethnic context—to compare the frequencies between the comparison groups.

We used the t-tests and chi-square tests to examine differences between groups A and C for several reasons. Group A includes foreign-born registered voters with the prominent surname. Group C encompasses all foreign-born registered voters from the target country. Thus, if a surname is representative of an ethnic group, group A should be similar to group C. Group B should produce values that are between group A and C because

it only includes individuals from the target country and surname. If the prominent surname is prevalent and unique, group B results should have fewer differences from group A.

For political party affiliation, we also calculated the dissimilarity index (DI) to understand patterns of registered voters across multiple political parties. DI measures evenness or segregation between two groups. It is frequently used to quantify neighborhood segregation,^{58, 59, 60} but has been also applied to occupational segregation to identify job distribution between males and females.^{61, 62, 63} The formula for DI used was

$$DI = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n |A_i - B_i| * 100$$

where A_i was the percentage of group A in political party i , B_i was the percentage of group B in political party i , and n was the number of political parties. The DI index varies from 0 to 100, where 0 indicates that the two groups are identically distributed, while 100 represents completely unequal group distribution.⁶⁴

RESULTS

First, Table 2 displays the frequencies for the

surname and country for each comparison group. It also includes the percentage that a prominent surname is unique to the specific country (e.g., the percentage of Kims that are from Korea and not other countries) and the prevalence or coverage of a surname among all registered voters from the target country (e.g., the percentage that Korean Kims comprise of all Korean registered voters).

The surnames were varied in their uniqueness and prevalence. Overall, Kim, Nguyen, and Chen were unique for the target country—more than 90 percent of foreign-born registered voters with these surnames came from the respective country of origin. Kims had the highest frequency among prominent surnames and comprised almost 20 percent of all Korean voters—thus, this surname was predominantly unique to Koreans and had a high frequency among registered Los Angeles County voters. In comparison, Patel was not as unique to India—almost 20 percent of Patels came from another country of origin besides India.⁶⁵ Chen was not as prevalent among Chinese—Chen comprises 5 percent of the nearly 50,000 Chinese registered voters. Nguyen represented the second highest proportion of voters from the respective country (Vietnam), or about 15 percent.

TABLE 2. UNIQUENESS AND PREVALENCE OF PROMINENT SURNAMES IN TARGET COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Surname	Target Country	% of Surname not from Target Country	% of Surname from Target Country (Uniqueness of Surname)	% of Target Country with Surname (Prevalence of Surname)
		$(A-B) / A$	$1 - ((A-B) / A)$	B / C
Kim	Korea	4%	96%	19%
Chen	China	7%	93%	5%
Patel	India	19%	81%	6%
Nguyen	Vietnam	5%	95%	15%

Note: Frequencies are for foreign-born registered voters with a known country of origin. Source: 2014 Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Calculated by authors.

Tables 3 through 6 include the bivariate for each surname and country for the demographic, political party, behavior, and spatial assimilation variables. The first column (A) contains information on group A (registered foreign-born voters with the prominent surname); column B has information for group B (registered foreign-born voters with the surname from the target country); and column C displays data for group C (registered foreign-born voters from the target country). If the prominent surname methodology is well representative of the ethnic group, then column C should be similar to column A. T-test and chi-square test p-value significance is between column A and column C.

Table 3 displays information for Kim (column A) and Korean registered voters (column C). When examining the mean or frequency for each variable, there were few differences between the three columns. However,

there were some statistical differences in the results. For example, gender differences between registered Kims and Korean voters were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), even though there was little quantitative difference between the percentage of women in group A and the percentage in group B (56 and 57 percent, respectively). There was also a 0.62 difference in the mean age of registered voters who had a Kim surname compared to voters who were from Korea (a mean age of 57 years old, $p < 0.01$). The DI value is 0.5 for political party—there was about a 1 percent difference between the 41 percent of all Kims who declined to state their political party and the 40 percent of all Koreans who declined to state their political party (p not significant [NS]). Finally, there was little difference between the percentage of Kims and percentage of Koreans who lived in high-ethnic zip codes—about 22 percent for both groups (p NS). While there were some statistically significant differences between Kims and Korean voters,

TABLE 3. KIM/KOREA BIVARIATE RESULTS

	All Kim (A)	Korean Kim (B)	All Korean (C)
Demographics			
-- Female**	55.6%	55.6%	56.9%
-- Mean Age***	57.2	57.7	56.6
Political Party			
-- Democratic	35.1%	35.1%	35.4%
-- Republican	21.8%	21.8%	21.7%
-- Declined to State	40.9%	40.9%	40.5%
-- Minor Parties	2.2%	2.2%	2.4%
Behavior			
-- Mean Registered Years	10.8	10.9	11.0
-- Voted in Last Election+	45.6%	45.4%	46.6%
Spatial Assimilation			
-- % in Top 11 Zip Codes	22.0%	22.3%	21.6%
N	7,030	6,743	34,623

Note: ** = $p < 0.5$; *** = $p < 0.01$. T-tests and chi-square tests are two-tailed. Top 11 zip codes were determined by taking the top 5% of percent total Korean population by zip code in Los Angeles County. T-test and chi-square test significance values are between group A and C.

+N for All Kim (A) = 6,107; N for Korean Kim (B) = 5,860; N for All Korean (C) = 29,966

Source: 2014 Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Calculated by authors.

there was little practical difference for these variables. Consequently, we confirm Shin and Yu's original findings that Kim is well representative of Koreans.⁶⁶

Chens were relatively well representative of Chinese, but with greater practical differences than Kim and Koreans (see Table 3). Chens (column A) were more similar to Chinese Chens (B) than registered voters from China (column C). For example, there was a 0.24 difference in mean age between all Chens and Chens from China, while there was a 0.93 difference in mean age between all Chens and all Chinese registered voters ($p < 0.01$). Yet, there were small real-world differences between registered Chens and Chinese voters. The mean registered years was about 11 years for both groups ($p < 0.05$). Approximately 47 percent of registered Chens and Chinese Chen voters lived in high-ethnic zip codes, higher rates than

registered Chinese voters (43 percent). Thus, Chens tended to be less spatially assimilated than all Chinese registered voters ($p < 0.01$). The largest percentage difference was in political party, where Chen voters declined to state political party (65 percent) more than Chinese voters (60 percent). Between these two groups, they had a DI value of 5 for political party affiliation.

Nguyens (column A) were relatively well-representative of Vietnamese (column C, see Table 5). About 54 percent of all Nguyen and all Vietnamese voters were female (p NS). Also, Nguyen voters (column A) had similar characteristics as Nguyen voters from Vietnam (column B) and all Vietnamese registered voters (column C) for mean registered years, spatial context, and political party. For instance, on average, Nguyen, Vietnamese Nguyen, and Vietnamese voter were registered for about 12 years.

TABLE 4. CHEN/CHINESE BIVARIATE RESULTS

	All Chen (A)	Chinese Chen (B)	All Chinese (C)
Demographics			
-- Female	53.9%	53.8%	56.0%
-- Mean Age***	52.5	52.7	53.4
Political Party***			
-- Democratic	20.0%	19.4%	22.4%
-- Republican	12.3%	12.2%	15.0%
-- Declined to State	64.6%	65.4%	59.7%
-- Minor Parties	3.4%	3.1%	2.9%
Behavior			
-- Mean Registered Years**	10.8	10.8	11.2
-- Voted in Last Election+	48.4%	48.4%	49.5%
Spatial Assimilation			
-- % in Top 13 Zip Codes***	46.9%	46.8%	43.1%
N	2,731	2,545	49,435

Note: ** = $p < 0.5$; *** = $p < 0.01$. T-tests and chi-square tests are two-tailed. Top 13 zip codes were determined by taking the top 5% of percent total Chinese population by zip code in Los Angeles County. T-test and chi-square test significance values are between group A and C.

+N for All Chen (A) = 2,469; N for Chinese Chen (B) = 2,303; N for All Chinese (C) = 44,148
Source: 2014 Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Calculated by authors.

TABLE 5. NGUYEN/VIETNAM BIVARIATE RESULTS

	All Nguyen (A)	Vietnamese Nguyen (B)	All Vietnamese (C)
Demographics			
-- Female	53.5%	53.2%	54.1%
-- Mean Age***	50.8	51.2	50.8
Political Party***			
-- Democratic	30.5%	30.1%	33.5%
-- Republican	28.1%	28.5%	22.1%
-- Declined to State	36.2%	36.2%	39.4%
-- Minor Parties	5.2%	5.2%	5.0%
Behavior			
-- Mean Registered Years***	11.5	11.6	12.4
-- Voted in Last Election+	51.3%	51.6%	52.1%
Spatial Assimilation			
-- % in Top 12 Zip Codes***	27.2%	27.5%	37.9%
N	3,075	2,931	18,977

Note: ** = p < 0.5; *** = p < 0.01. T-tests and chi-square tests are two-tailed. Top 12 zip codes were determined by taking the top 5% of percent total Vietnamese population by zip code in Los Angeles County. T-test and chi-square test significance values are between group A and C.

+ N for All Nguyen (A) = 2,745; N for Vietnamese Nguyen (B) = 2,619; N for All Vietnamese (C) = 17,018

Source: 2014 Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Calculated by authors.

Nguyens were more spatially assimilated than Vietnamese voters—while 27 percent of Nguyens and 28 percent of Vietnamese Nguyens lived in high-ethnic zip codes, about 38 percent of Vietnamese voters lived in high-ethnic zip codes (p < 0.01). The next largest percentage difference between Nguyens and Vietnamese for political party was between Republican voters—about 28 percent and 22 percent, respectively (p < 0.01). For other variables, Nguyen and Vietnamese registered voters had similar statistics. The calculated DI value for political parties between Nguyen and Vietnamese voters was 6.

Patel registered voters were well-representative of Indian registered voters for gender and mean registered years. However, there was greater variation for percentage of registered Patel and Indian voters who voted in the previous election (or 44 percent

and 57 percent, respectively, p < 0.01). Patels were less spatially assimilated than foreign-born Indians; about 27 percent of Patels lived in high-ethnic zip codes while 20 percent of Indians lived in high-ethnic zip codes (p < 0.01). Indian Patels did not have similar bivariate means as Indian voters, which emphasizes the diversity among Indian surnames. For example, the mean age of Patels was about 48.5, while the mean age of Indian Patels was 49.1 and that of Indian voters was about 47.1. For political party, Patels and Indians had the highest DI value among the four groups (9.5). However, since the dissimilarity index is from a scale of 0 to 100, the political party affiliation is relatively similar in distribution.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Our study has several important findings. First, there were distinctions in whether

a surname was well-representative of the ethnic group based on the uniqueness and prevalence of the surname. Our study confirms that Kim was well-representative of Koreans when researchers have limited resources to identify ethnic group trends and without self-identified race/ethnicity data. Chen and Nguyen were representative for most variables. In developing surname lists from Social Security Administration records, Lauderdale and Kestenbaum found that there were fewer than 400 names among Koreans and Vietnamese, while there were more than 3,500 surnames for Japanese and 12,000 for Filipinos.⁶⁷ If a target group has too many surnames, the most prominent surname will not be representative of the target ethnic group. Finally, Patel was the least representative of the respective ethnic group relative to the other three surnames.

Second, we found that PESH was useful for our demographic variables (gender and age) and voting behavior (mean registered years and voter turnout). There was greater

variation in political party and spatial assimilation, depending on the ethnic group. Third, while the t-tests and chi-square tests produced statistically significant differences, there were few practical differences for most of the variables depending on the comparison group. For example, the practical difference between comparison groups was relatively small for Chen relative to Patels.^{68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74}

It is important to note limitations to surname methods. First, we focused on voters who are foreign-born from a known country of origin. There may be distinctions between first, 1.5, and second generation individuals from the same ethnic group for some socioeconomic characteristics. For example, Charles found that US-born Asians were more spatially assimilated and lived in Whiter neighborhoods than foreign-born Asians.⁷⁵ Thus, the analysis may not be generalizable to individuals not of first generation status. Second, other studies have documented the limitation of using the surname method

TABLE 6. PATEL/INDIA BIVARIATE RESULTS

	All Patel (A)	Indian Patel (B)	All Indian (C)
Demographics			
-- Female	50.3%	50.0%	48.5%
-- Mean Age**	48.5	49.1	47.1
Political Party***			
-- Democratic	33.0%	32.1%	41.2%
-- Republican	13.9%	12.7%	8.1%
-- Declined to State	51.6%	54.1%	47.7%
-- Minor Parties	1.5%	1.2%	2.9%
Behavior			
-- Mean Registered Years	6.6	5.9	6.4
-- Voted in Last Election+***	44.4%	41.1%	57.0%
Spatial Assimilation			
-- % in Top 13 Zip Codes***	26.8%	27.8%	20.3%
N	519	418	7,270

Note: ** = p < 0.5; *** = p < 0.01. T-tests and chi-square tests are two-tailed. Top 13 zip codes were determined by taking the top 5% of percent total Indian population by zip code in Los Angeles County.
 + N for All Patel (A) = 417; N for Indian Patel (B) = 341; N for All Indian (C) = 5,712
 Source: 2014 Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Calculated by authors.

for women because of outmarriage with changing surnames.^{76, 77, 78}

Third, the study used Los Angeles County as a case study. The findings may not be the same in other regions. These surnames may not be the most prominent, and ethnic group composition may vary in other places, which would affect PESM effectiveness. For example, if a city has a lot of residents from Western India, there may also be a significant number of individuals with the surname Patel. PESM may be more useful in such a city than in geographies with more diverse Indian populations.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In a time of challenges to government data and growth of big data, surnames are important to examine as more than a methodological tool. PESM can help policymakers who have minimal resources to consider other applications of this method. This study used voting registration data, and PESM can identify which groups may need more targeted political outreach. For instance, if “Kim” registered voters are less likely to consecutively vote, policymakers may then choose to increase resources for Korean residents in their local jurisdiction.

Additionally, PESM is relevant for addressing discrimination. There is still evidence of discrimination across the US for Asian prospective renters whose race is identified through name—in Turner et al, prospective renters with presumed Asian names were more likely to be denied an appointment with a landlord than those whose name sounded more White.⁷⁹ With PESM, local policymakers can do their own tests of potential renters and homebuyers who send in applications with different surnames. Alternatively, residents of different surnames can be surveyed to learn more about their housing search experience and potential barriers they face.

People may also discriminate in hiring based on a person’s presumed ethnic identity. Thanasombat et al. found that employers discriminated against supposed South Asian and Arab Americans based

on resumes with presumed South Asian or Arab surnames.⁸⁰ More recently, Widner and Chicoine found that individuals with Arab-sounding surnames had to send two resumes to hear back from an employer for every one resume sent by a White male.⁸¹ Local policymakers can consider sending resumes to companies with the prominent surname to test if some groups experience more challenges; results can then be used to develop anti-discrimination workshops or resources for local employers.

PESM can also strengthen existing records that do not require self-reported race/ethnicity. For example, prison and incarceration data may include individual race/ethnicity, but such data are not consistently collected or are missing entirely. Thus, studies such as Bales and Piquero used surnames to identify more Latinos who were sentenced to incarceration.⁸² If local policymakers have data without much or any self-reported race/ethnicity, they can use PESM to strengthen their demographic analysis. Thus, surnames can be used not only to identify individuals, but also to understand people’s behaviors and areas of disparities that policymakers and researchers can address to make our cities and neighborhoods more inclusive.

ENDNOTES

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and 79 percent of people born in Vietnam identified as Vietnamese. Ong, Pech, and Pfeiffer ("The Foreclosure Crisis in Los Angeles") also used this technique.

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the designated country of their ethnicity due to secondary migration. For example, the parents of a person with the surname "Chen" may have migrated from China to another East Asian country, and the registered voter would then not be listed as born in China.

Foreign-born Patels also indicated that they were born in the United Kingdom, Kenya, and Zambia, which follows patterns of British colonialism. Patels, from the Patidar caste in Gujarat, were appointed key administrative government duties during British colonial rule, and have migrated to former British colonies.

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ASIAN AMERICANS, NATIVE HAWAIIANS, PACIFIC ISLANDERS, AND THE AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS: THE NEED FOR GRANULAR RACIAL AND ETHNIC PUBLIC HEALTH DATA

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Mental illness is among the most serious—and under-addressed—public health issues in the United States. According to the National Institute of Mental Health,¹ approximately 1 in 6 Americans live with some form of mental illness, defined as a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder. Twenty percent of these patients suffer from mental illness so severe that it significantly compromises their capacity to carry out daily activities.² The consequences of undiagnosed or poorly treated mental illness—the most common of which is Major Depressive Disorder, affecting almost 7 percent of all Americans³—can be devastating. Patients with mental illness struggle with daily activities and are therefore more likely to be homeless,⁴ to lack consistent employment,⁵ to be incarcerated,⁶ to be the victims of violence,⁷ or to die by suicide.⁸ In 2006, Americans spent approximately \$137 billion dollars on mental healthcare.⁹ Yet this spending remains inadequate to offset the full financial impact of this nation's public mental health crisis: an estimated \$193 billion is lost from annual earnings due to mental illness,¹⁰ and the high correlation between mental disorders and other chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease,¹¹ pulmonary disease,¹² and metabolic syndrome (diabetic or pre-diabetic)¹³ places an additional and profound economic burden on the public. Former New York State Commissioner of Mental Health Dr. Michael F. Hogan noted in 2002 the paradox

that total spending on mental illness had “skyrocketed” in the United States, but that this spending was taking place “not . . . in the treatment system but in the criminal justice system, in the general health care system, . . . and in the welfare system.”¹⁴

“We are spending too much on mental illness in all the wrong places,” concluded Dr. Hogan. This statement underscores the desperate need to develop new public policy modalities for addressing the American mental health crisis. One area where American public policy can—and must—redirect its mental healthcare resources is in collecting public health data in a manner that reveals mental illness trends by patient race and ethnicity. Improving this process will help identify specific at-risk populations and enable the development of specialized mental healthcare resources and treatment programs.

In this short commentary, I will discuss how our current, overly-broad data collection standards fail to capture the complexity of America's mental public health crisis, and I will specifically focus on how ethnically disaggregated data remains lacking for the Asian American and Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities. I will explore how the lack of granular ethnic data compromises efforts to develop public policy to address Asian American and NHPI mental health, and conclude with a brief overview

of current efforts by Asian American and NHPI advocates to expand the collection of ethnically disaggregated public health data in the United States.

NUANCING THE AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH PICTURE

Generalized mental health statistics obscure the variation in mental illness prevalence by patient background. The reason for this variation in diagnosis of mental illness—a broad term referring to a constellation of distinct mental disorders—are complex and remain the topic of active research. One possible explanation is based upon the specific pathogenesis of distinct mental illnesses: some mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, first manifest symptoms in young adulthood,¹⁵ which facilitates diagnosis among patients in this age group. However, relevant to public policy discussions is the evidence that mental health disparities are most significantly dependent upon factors related to patient socioeconomic status, which can influence both the extent of professional and personal stressors, and the availability of individual and community support networks for mental health education, diagnosis, and treatment. Younger patients, for example, are less likely to have healthcare coverage¹⁶ and are also often under unusually high stress related to the transition into adulthood. Not coincidentally, younger patients are also more likely to be diagnosed with mental illness compared to patients 50 years or older.¹⁷

Variations in mental illness diagnosis according to patient background are further specific to particular mental disorders. For example, both major depression and bipolar disorder are more prevalent in young adults aged 18-29 compared to older adults, whereas generalized anxiety disorder is most prevalent among adults aged 45-59.¹⁸ In addition, although women are also more likely than men to be diagnosed with a mental illness,¹⁹ certain disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are more prevalent among male patients than female patients.²⁰ These findings underscore the complexity of the American mental health

crisis, and the importance of generating highly-granular public health data to identify disparities in mental healthcare access and improve treatment.

Several studies show that mental healthcare disparities are particularly significant along racial and ethnic lines. Indeed, former US Surgeon General David Satcher noted the relevance of patient racial and ethnic background in a 1999 report, writing,

Even more than other areas of health and medicine, the mental health field is plagued by disparities in the availability of and access to its services. These disparities are viewed readily through the lenses of racial and cultural diversity, age, and gender.²¹

Although the overall prevalence of many mental disorders is comparable between White patients and patients of color, non-White communities carry a greater mental illness disability burden due to reduced access to mental healthcare services, poorer quality of care, and the impact of racism on mental health and socioeconomic status.²² The Department of Health and Human Services explains:

Minorities have less access to, and availability of, mental health services. Minorities are less likely to receive needed mental health services. Minorities in treatment often receive a poorer quality of mental health care. Minorities are underrepresented in mental health research. The recognition of these disparities brings hope that they can be seriously addressed and remedied.²³

Despite the evidence showing that mental health disparities are particularly severe in non-White communities, comparatively few studies have focused specifically on mental health in the Asian American and NHPI communities.²⁴ Those that do reveal that the public mental health crisis disparately affects Asian Americans and NHPIs compared to

other racial and ethnic groups, and that existing mental health resources have failed to adequately penetrate these communities.

THE ASIAN AMERICAN & NHPI MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Comprising over 18 million people (or 5.7 percent of all Americans),²⁵ Asian Americans are among the fastest-growing racial populations in America.²⁶ The Asian American community includes members of over 20 different ethnic subgroups, of which the largest are Chinese (22 percent), Filipino (19 percent), Asian Indian (18 percent), Vietnamese (10 percent), Korean (9 percent), and Japanese (7 percent).²⁷ The remaining 15 percent of Asian Americans include members of over fifteen other—primarily Southeast Asian American—ethnic groups.²⁸

Originally included under the United States Census' Asian racial grouping, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander advocates successfully sought in the 1990s to be counted as a separate racial grouping to reflect both this community's unique history under colonialism as well as its distinct socioeconomic trends.²⁹ Of the 1.5 million NHPIs in America, 41 percent identify as Native Hawaiian, with the remainder identifying as Samoan (13 percent), Guamanian (10 percent), Tongan (5 percent), Fijian (3 percent), Marshallese (2 percent) or other Pacific Islander (26 percent).³⁰

Our understanding of Asian American mental health is severely disadvantaged by the overall lack of racially and ethnically disaggregated public mental health data, as well as the small sample size and low statistical power often characteristic of the few studies that provide such information for Asian Americans; this problem is further compounded for NHPIs. In addition, one-third of Asian Americans and one-eighth of NHPIs are limited English-language proficient³¹ which may further limit their participation in large-scale mental health surveys administered primarily in English. Citing the dearth of adequate data, the Office of the Surgeon General observed in 2001 that "less is known about the rates of psychiatric disorders using DSM categories

for [Asian Americans and NHPIs] than for most of the other major ethnic groups."³²

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ASIAN AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH IS SEVERELY DISADVANTAGED BY THE OVERALL LACK OF RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DISAGGREGATED PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH DATA, AS WELL AS THE SMALL SAMPLE SIZE AND LOW STATISTICAL POWER OFTEN CHARACTERISTIC OF THE FEW STUDIES THAT PROVIDE SUCH INFORMATION FOR ASIAN AMERICANS; THIS PROBLEM IS FURTHER COMPOUNDED FOR NHPIs.

Most large-scale surveys that report figures for Asian American and NHPI populations find that members of these communities are diagnosed with mental illness at similar³³—or slightly lower³⁴—rates compared to the general American population. However, focused studies that oversample specifically from Asian American communities or that administer surveys in Asian languages often paint a different picture. Some have shown, for example, that the incidence of major depressive disorder has increased among some Asian Americans, including college-aged students³⁵ and older Asian immigrants,³⁶ compared to their non-Asian peers. Suicidal ideation—a major risk factor for death by suicide—is also heightened among Asian American college students.³⁷ One study focused on NHPI mental health reported that the prevalence of both depressive disorders and anxiety disorders are significantly higher for NHPIs compared to all other racial or ethnic groups in America.³⁸

As the US Surgeon General reported in 1999 for other non-White communities, mental illness disparities within the Asian American and NHPI communities are most likely related to disparities in mental healthcare access and service usage. Asian Americans are more likely to lack health insurance compared to non-Hispanic Whites,³⁹ possibly due (at least in part) to higher rates of Asian Americans employed by small businesses that do not

provide employee health insurance benefits. Moreover, Asian Americans are significantly less likely to seek general mental health-related services,⁴⁰ which probably delays diagnosis and treatment. Indeed, among interviewed Asian Americans who reported symptoms that met the criteria for a DSM-IV diagnosis, less than one-fifth said they had sought mental health care services.⁴¹ Thus, although Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino patients are hospitalized for psychiatric symptoms at lower rates than Whites, hospitalized patients are admitted with more severe symptoms resulting in lengthier hospital stays.⁴² Usage of mental health and substance abuse services is also significantly reduced among NHPI patients,⁴³ and associated with above-average rates of psychiatric hospitalizations within this community.⁴⁴ Several factors likely contribute to the reduced rates of mental health services among Asian Americans and NHPs, including cultural stigmas against mental illness,⁴⁵ a lack of cultural awareness or education on mental health,⁴⁶ a lack of culturally competent⁴⁷ and linguistically-accessible services,⁴⁸ and a lack of physical or economic access to mental healthcare coverage.⁴⁹

ETHNICITY-SPECIFIC TRENDS IN ASIAN AMERICAN AND NHPI MENTAL ILLNESS

Paradoxically, despite the increased prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation among Asian Americans,⁵⁰ the aggregate rate of completed suicides for Asian Americans and NHPs is otherwise similar to (or lower than) Whites for both men and women across most age groups.^{51,52} Indeed, only for young and elderly Asian American women is the suicide rate higher compared to other racial or ethnic groups.⁵³ This seeming contradiction may be an artifact of the ethnic subgroup diversity of the Asian American and NHPI communities with regard to factors that affect mental illness diagnosis and treatment, such as socioeconomic status,^{54,55} educational attainment,⁵⁶ acculturation⁵⁷ and other cultural factors,⁵⁸ and mental healthcare access.⁵⁹

The Asian American and NHPI communities are comprised of ethnic subgroups that vary widely with regard to median household income and educational attainment. The overall median household income for Asian Americans was \$71,709 in 2012.⁶⁰ However, this figure obscures the broad range of median household incomes within the Asian American and NHPI communities. Ethnic disaggregation of these data reveals that Asian Indian, Filipino, Japanese, and Chinese Americans earned median household incomes that are much higher than the national (and aggregated Asian American) average for that year.⁶¹ However, many more Asian American and NHPI ethnic groups—including Vietnamese, Laotian, Samoan, Cambodian, Hmong and Bangladeshi American households—earned over \$20,000 less per year than the average Asian American household.⁶²

Educational attainment is similarly varied across Asian American and NHPI ethnic groups. Whereas over 50 percent of Asian Indians, Chinese, and Korean Americans have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, a majority of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Samoan, and Tongan Americans have not had any college education.⁶³ Given the strong inverse correlation between socioeconomic status and depression,⁶⁴ it comes as no surprise that several studies have also found that rates of mental illness vary widely among Asian Americans and NHPs across ethnic subgroup,⁶⁵ and that mean statistics that report only rates for the aggregate Asian American and NHPI populations fail to reflect these distinctions.

Acculturation—the extent to which a patient is socially and politically assimilated into their surrounding culture—may have one of the most obvious impacts on rates of depression and suicide within the Asian American and NHPI communities: US-born Asian American women are more likely to receive a mental illness diagnosis within their lifetimes compared to foreign-born Asian American women, or Asian American men regardless of nativity.^{66,67} This is likely due to the observed higher rates of mental healthcare services usage among more acculturated Asian Americans: second- and third-generation

Asian Americans are several times more likely to seek mental health treatment compared to first-generation immigrants.⁶⁸ Asian American ethnic groups are diverse with regard to rates of acculturation: whereas over two-thirds of Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Asian Indian Americans are foreign-born, two-thirds of Japanese Americans are US-born.⁶⁹ Thus, it may be unsurprising that one analysis of suicide patterns from 1980 found a significantly higher suicide rate for Japanese Americans compared to Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans.⁷⁰ A more recent study included comparisons between Whites and six Asian American ethnic subgroups (and that also disaggregated data by gender) and confirmed this earlier finding: the suicide rate for Japanese American men is nearly twice that of Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese American men.⁷¹ Investigators also found that Chinese, Korean, and Japanese American women die by suicide at higher rates than Asian Indian and Filipina American women.⁷²

Studies alternatively show immigration status to confer either a sensitizing or a protective effect on depression and suicide,^{73,74,75} but immigration type may also strongly correlate with prevalence of mental disorders among Asian Americans. Roughly 20 percent of Asian American immigrants enter the United States as refugees and asylees⁷⁶—most from Southeast Asian American countries and often escaping the Vietnam War and its aftermath. Several studies have shown that the rates of major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are particularly high among Southeast Asian refugee populations^{77,78} likely related to these communities' shared trauma of military violence, property loss, and resettlement⁷⁹—the effects of which can impact the mental health of successive generations.⁸⁰ Alarming, the suicide rate among certain Southeast Asian American refugee populations (such as resettled Bhutanese Americans⁸¹) approaches twice the national rate for all Americans. Yet, the dire epidemic of depression, anxiety, and suicide among Southeast Asian American refugee populations is obscured when only the low aggregate suicide rate generalized across all Asian Americans is reported.⁸²

Consequently, few mental healthcare resources or other mental health public policy initiatives are directed towards this particularly at-risk Asian American population or other vulnerable Asian American or NHPI ethnic groups.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE FIGHT FOR DATA DISAGGREGATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH DATA

Even amidst a troubling dearth of general epidemiological data on Asian American and NHPI mental health, the lack of ethnicity-specific information further compromises efforts to develop public policy aimed at addressing the mental health crisis in vulnerable Asian Americans and NHPI communities. Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans are by far the most widely-studied of Asian American populations⁸³; consequently, comparatively little is known about the mental health crisis as it affects South Asian American, Southeast Asian American, and NHPI ethnic subgroups. This lack of ethnically disaggregated mental health information is particularly troubling given low rates of mental healthcare usage among Asian Americans⁸⁴ and NHPs⁸⁵ that could be improved with more culturally- and linguistically-appropriate programs that target specific at-risk ethnic subgroups. However, such at-risk Asian American and NHPI populations cannot be identified without improved mental illness research focused particularly on these groups. Efforts to generate such studies are hampered by the lack of any consistent requirement across state and federal data collection agencies to collect and report detailed Asian American and NHPI patient ethnicity information in large-scale demographic surveys that are used for subsequent analysis; instead, most public data collections combine data for the diverse Asian American and NHPI communities into aggregated statistics for the whole group, masking all ethnicity-specific disparities in mental illness and mental healthcare access and usage.

The project of generating more granular mental health information for Asian American and NHPI communities would

greatly benefit from current efforts to expand the collection of ethnically disaggregated general public health data for Asian Americans and NHPs. Although Asian American and NHPI communities comprise more than thirty ethnic subgroups, most data collection efforts are not required to provide a comprehensive range of ethnic self-identification options to respondents. As a result, most Asian Americans and NHPs are invisible in public health data collections.

“Disaggregated data will help us target resources where they’re most needed,” according to the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders,⁸⁶ which spearheaded an effort under the Obama administration to improve the disaggregation of public data collection for Asian American and NHPI ethnic subgroups. State-by-state campaigns have focused on requiring state data collection agencies to offer additional ethnic self-identifiers to respondents that would encompass several Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander groups, including Bangladeshi, Hmong, Indonesian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, Fijian, and Tongan. In 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed California State Assembly Bill AB1726, which requires ethnic disaggregation of public health data, into law after years of advocacy by Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander civil rights groups.⁸⁷ A similar bill (A7352) passed the New York State Assembly⁸⁸ and now awaits a vote in the New York State Senate, while yet another such bill (H3361) is under consideration in the Massachusetts State House.⁸⁹

The need for other states to pass similar data disaggregation legislation is both obvious and urgent. Without improved and consistent data collection practices that are finally able to represent the diversity of the Asian American and NHPI communities, the full scope of the mental health crisis among these communities is unknown and effective public policy programs cannot be developed.

Proof of the value of disaggregated public health data comes from the history of the Asian American and NHPI communities themselves. For decades, the US Census

has offered respondents from these communities the option to identify only under an aggregated Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander racial identifier, and resulting demographic data failed to capture the distinct socioeconomic challenges faced by Asian American and NHPI communities. In 2000, a separate racial category for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders was included in the US Census, allowing for the collection of public data that disaggregated Asian American and NHPI respondents. Within less than two decades of this change, investigators have been finally able to focus their research on the specific mental health disparities affecting NHPs,⁹⁰ and community organizations have been able to develop mental healthcare services that are culturally specific to at-risk NHPI populations. Similarly, initial efforts to disaggregate the Asian American racial category across the country added ethnic categories for some of the larger Asian American ethnic groups such as Chinese, Filipino, and Indian. Not only has the availability of such data helped to identify specific mental illness disparities affecting certain Asian American ethnic groups, but mental health resources serving predominantly Asian American communities are increasingly offering culturally responsive services and mental health outreach programs in the non-English languages of surrounding Asian American communities.

The fight to disaggregate Asian American and NHPI public health data is relatively new, and ongoing; thus, the benefits of these efforts on mental health public policy remains to be fully determined. It is increasingly clear, however, that policymakers must prioritize the creation of public health datasets that accurately reflect the ethnic makeup of surveyed racial communities. This can only be accomplished through the detailed collection of ethnically disaggregated public health data. As the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Empowering Pacific Islander Communities, and Southeast Asia Resource Action Center compellingly argued in a joint statement, “Better data on the different needs of our communities translates to more effective public health strategies that save lives.”

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SKILLS-FOCUSED IMMIGRATION REFORM IS NOT ENOUGH

CALVIN HO

In the current political climate, bipartisan agreement on immigration policy seems like a fool's dream. Democrats and Republicans struggle to find any common ground on this highly controversial topic. Not so long ago, however, both parties supported increasing the proportion of immigrants who are highly "skilled" (those with a bachelor's degree or above).¹ Numerous bills for increasing the proportion of immigrants who are selected based on their educational qualifications have been proposed in the last few decades. These range from comprehensive immigration reform bills to colorfully named single-issue bills like the STAPLE Act, so named because it would "staple" green cards to international students' diplomas.

More recently, the Reform American Immigration for Strong Employment (RAISE) Act supported by the Trump administration proposed a Canadian-style points system for selecting immigrants. This proposed system would dramatically favor young workers with doctorates who have received offers for highly paid jobs.^{2,3} The proposal is framed as favoring the very highly educated, obscuring the fact that it also shuts out the majority of would-be immigrants, who have limited education and would work in low-paying jobs.

Skilled immigrants are well-liked. Public opinion research using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methodologies has

shown that nationals in receiving countries generally do not see skilled immigrants as an economic, racial, or cultural threat.^{4, 5, 6, 7, 8 9, 10, 11} Additionally, politicians in receiving countries respond to a political climate that is increasingly hostile to "undesirable" immigrants (such as undocumented labor immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees) by focusing the public's attention on "desirable" skilled immigrants. They often attempt to reduce inflows of unskilled migrants to show anti-immigrant groups (who focus their ire mostly on unskilled immigrants) that the government is responding to their demands. This then gives them an opportunity to increase inflows of skilled immigrants, in response to pro-immigrant groups' demands.¹² For instance, in his late 2014 executive action on immigration, President Barack Obama announced measures to clamp down on undocumented border-crossing, while extending the time that student visa holders can work in the United States after graduation.^{13, 14}

Though the RAISE Act did not advance, other proposals to make formal education the primary criterion for immigrant selection will likely be put forward. Smaller-scale skilled immigration measures, such as preferential immigration policies for international students, expanded temporary skilled worker visas, and expanded investor migration visas may also be part of the discussion. Retooling the immigration

system to give preference to skilled workers would have dramatic consequences for the labor market, the political system, and the lived experiences of racialized people in the United States. We have already seen this with the landmark Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Celler Act). The removal of nationality quotas and the introduction of limited immigration pathways for skilled immigrants in the 1965 law led to the dramatic growth of some East and South Asian origin populations, who had been previously barred from entry. These groups would likely grow even further under a policy such as RAISE. Because ethnic lobby groups tend to support immigration policies that expand access for their groups, many Asian American interest organizations would likely welcome a skills-focused immigration system.¹⁵

My doctoral research on the development of skilled immigration policies in the United States and Canada shows, however, that this welcome must be cautious. Advocates for immigration reform must recognize that a white-collar immigration system cannot stand alone, and that such proposals are distractions from the current immigration crisis. The RAISE Act and most other proposals to replace the current US immigration system with one focused on skilled immigrants do not make any additional provisions for low- and medium-skilled labor. Like the Hart-Celler Act, these proposals bill themselves as systems that include immigrants who are highly educated, young, and well-paid. This positive framing obscures the fact that they exclude those who are less educated, older, and poorly paid. Implementing such a system would communicate to the public that lawmakers can do something about immigration, even though undocumented immigration, the main immigration issue on the political agenda today, remains unresolved.

Immigration is a hot topic today because nearly all sides can agree that the population of undocumented immigrants has grown to an unsustainable point. Most of these immigrants arrived in the country with limited formal education and currently work in low- and medium-skilled jobs.

Immigration reform must, at minimum, address the legal status of the current undocumented population and ensure that future needs for low- and medium-skilled labor continue to be met. Failing to address the undocumented issue today will only kick it down the line to the next Congress. Furthermore, an immigrant selection system that is exclusively focused on skilled immigrants would cause conflict within the pro-immigration coalition, given that skills-focused systems often ease the path to legal immigration for immigrants from some countries, favoring them over immigrants from other countries

FAILING TO ADDRESS THE UNDOCUMENTED ISSUE TODAY WILL ONLY KICK IT DOWN THE LINE TO THE NEXT CONGRESS.

LOOKING ACROSS THE 49TH PARALLEL

Canada is an appropriate point of comparison because its immigration policy had been similar to that of the United States through the mid-1960s, when the two countries responded differently to similar pressures to remove explicit racial discrimination from their immigration systems. Prior to the mid-1960s, both countries had racially exclusionary immigration policies that favored White newcomers and sharply restricted opportunities for non-Whites. While the Chinese Exclusion Acts on both sides of the border are the most well-known examples of racial exclusion in immigration, the whiteness of the immigrant pool was also maintained through diplomatic pressures against sending countries and discriminatory consular officials.^{16, 17} Even European groups who were not considered fully "White," (e.g., Jews and immigrants from the southern and eastern parts of the continent) were subject to discriminatory nationality quotas.¹⁸

The Allies' victory over the Nazis and the demonization of their genocide made de jure racism *déclassé* after World War II. Simultaneously, decolonization struggles around the world, the Civil Rights movement in the United States, and active lobbying

from European ethnic organizations called for the end to racially discriminatory immigration policy in settler-colonial countries. By the mid-1960s, lawmakers in both the United States and Canada had mustered the political will to find new ways to select immigrants and enacted landmark policy changes that are, by and large, still in effect today. Both nations decided to combine selection based on family ties and selection based on skills, but in different ratios. While the 1965 Hart-Celler Act in the United States prioritized family reunification, the 1967 Canadian points system focused on recruiting new skilled immigrants.¹⁹ The near-simultaneous implementation of these two programs allows us to examine the distinct policy challenges that arose as a result of these decisions and compare demographic outcomes across the same period of time.

IGNORING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

The most pressing immigration issue in the United States today is what to do with the population of 11 million unauthorized immigrants (about 3.4 percent of the current US population).²⁰ Many of these immigrants crossed the US-Mexico border without authorization, while others fell out of status when their visas expired. Undocumented immigration is a significantly less salient issue in Canada, so much so that neither scholars nor the government regularly publish estimates of the number of “nonstatus” immigrants. Research from the late 2000s suggests that the number of nonstatus immigrants was between 200,000 and 500,000, or at most 1.5 percent of the 2009 population.^{21, 22} Given Canada’s geographic distance from the developing world, nearly all nonstatus immigrants are visa overstayers rather than unauthorized border crossers.

In the United States, each political faction sees a different problem with undocumented immigrants. Some see these immigrants as criminals who need to be deported en masse. Others see a vulnerable population that should be granted a path to legal status. Though the two sides rarely see eye-to-eye, most agree on a handful of contributing

factors: American employers’ preferences for an exploitable and sub-minimum wage labor pool; historically lax enforcement of immigration regulations; and an immigration system that does not give low-skilled immigrants an opportunity to come to this country, unless they are a relative of a citizen or permanent resident.

This last point is a key policy difference between the United States and Canada. In their 1960s immigration reforms, neither country created a policy for permanent immigration of blue-collar immigrants with no preexisting family ties. In response to employers’ demand for access to blue-collar immigrant labor, Canada created guestworker programs. Now called Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) programs, these immigration pathways give low- and medium-skilled immigrants work visas that are valid for a certain period of time. These programs have resolved much of the demand for low-skilled immigrant labor. Meanwhile, the United States opted instead to leave the low-skilled immigration question unanswered. Lawmakers addressed demand for low-skilled labor by turning a blind eye to the growth of an undocumented population and ensuring that unauthorized immigrants have limited rights and precarious status. By not allowing blue-collar immigrants to enter the country legally while persecuting them for their liminal status, American lawmakers have made a second class of vulnerable and expendable workers.

It is an economic and moral imperative that we address the current undocumented population, as well as future needs for low- and medium-skilled labor. Previous attempts to address undocumented immigration have shown that regularizing the status of people living in the shadows has overwhelmingly positive economic effects. For instance, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), enacted in 1986 under the Reagan administration, gave amnesty to nearly 2.7 million undocumented immigrants.²³ This allowed them to move into better paying, more prestigious, and more highly skilled jobs.^{24, 25} The effects of regularization are not limited to the individual immigrants and their families, since higher pay results in higher taxes, and

allows workers to make larger investments in their communities. An economic model of comprehensive immigration reform in 2012 found that regularization would add at least \$1.5 trillion to US gross domestic product over 10 years.²⁶ From a moral perspective, forcing 11 million people (about the same size as the population of Ohio) to remain in legal limbo is grossly unethical. Research has shown that this lack of status and stability affects every aspect of their lives, leading to worse psychological, social, and economic outcomes for themselves and for family members who are US citizens.^{27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32}

Furthermore, the economic and political pressures that pull low-skilled immigrants to the United States and push them out of their home countries are not going away. As a liberal market economy, the United States will continue to generate demand for low-skilled labor that cannot be filled solely with domestic supply.^{33, 34, 35} Political instability, repressive regimes, economic distress, climate change, and other factors will continue forcing people to move. For much of the Western Hemisphere, the United States is the obvious safe haven, even as the country's politicians seek to make it as inhospitable as possible. With the US sharing land and sea boundaries with countries that are much poorer, even the greatest wall cannot keep all border-crossers out.

RACE-NEUTRAL POLICY WITH RACIALIZED RESULTS

Immigration systems that focus explicitly on formal qualifications also tend to produce racialized results, even though they select immigrants based on racially neutral attributes. This is clearly evident when you compare the immigrant populations in the United States and Canada by education and region of origin. Compared to immigrants to the U.S., immigrants to Canada are both more likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher, and less likely to have less than a high school education.³⁶ Furthermore, immigrants to Canada tend to be more educated than the average Canadian-born person. While 23.8 percent of native-born Canadians age 15 or older in 2015 had a bachelor's degree or above, 41 percent of immigrants who arrived

between 2001 and 2011 had a university degree.^{37, 38} In the United States, meanwhile, the proportion of native-born individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher (31 percent) is nearly the same as for the foreign-born (30 percent).³⁹

Both the United States and Canada are home to immigrants from all over the world, but the region of origin distribution in the two countries is starkly different. Fifty-one percent of immigrants living in the United States in 2015 were born in Mexico, Central and South America, or the Caribbean, while 27 percent were born in South or East Asia.⁴⁰ Thirty-three percent of immigrants living in Canada in 2011 were born in East, Southeast, or South Asia, forming the largest group of immigrants in the country, while immigrants born in Central and South America (including Mexico) were just 6.5% of the total.⁴¹

In the United States, cross-tabulating region of origin by education shows a clear relationship between the two. For instance, 57 percent of Mexican immigrants in 2015 had less than a high school education, versus 15 percent of South and East Asian immigrants and 9 percent of the native-born. Conversely, 51 percent of South and East Asian immigrants had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 6 percent of Mexican immigrants and 31 percent of the native-born.⁴² These differences are a result of different entry pathways. South and East Asian immigrants have largely come through skilled employment channels, while many Latin American immigrants in the United States arrived without documentation. However, the educational infrastructure in the sending country also matters. The potential immigrants who were best positioned to take advantage of U.S. employment immigration and the Canadian points system in the 1970s and 80s came from rapidly developing countries with strong school systems and growing middle classes, such as Taiwan and South Korea. Now, immigrants are more likely to come from China and India, who are at stages of development similar to the "Asian Tigers" back then. Skills-based immigration proposals like the RAISE Act typically require a bachelor's degree or higher to immigrate.

This would effectively favor immigrants from a handful of Asian countries, if only because these countries have the educational infrastructure and class composition to create a large population of would-be white-collar immigrants.

These types of proposals would be highly unpopular with Latinx advocacy groups. They could rightly claim this skills-based policy would shut out immigrants from Latin America, even if explicit discrimination is not written into the statute. The support of Latinx advocates is essential for immigration reform since Latin American immigrants are by far the largest region of origin group and the most salient immigration issue is the undocumented (largely Latin American) population. Latin American governments could also try to use diplomatic pressure to stop such a proposal since it would disproportionately affect their citizens. Such a move is not unprecedented; foreign policy concerns were a major factor in shaping the 1960s immigration reforms, as well as previous immigration policies like Chinese exclusion.⁴³

THE ALTERNATIVES

The United States needs to reform its immigration system in a way that addresses the biggest immigration issue of the moment: the 11 million unauthorized immigrants living in fear and administrative limbo. The lack of entry opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled immigrants after the 1965 Hart-Celler Act was a major contributor to today's immigration crisis. The immigration reform that the United States needs now must address demand for labor at all skill levels. A proposal like the RAISE Act, which selects immigrants based on formal educational qualifications, could be a core element of a response to this crisis. However, it will only exacerbate the current undocumented immigration issue unless it is paired with measures to regularize the current undocumented population and address future needs for low-skilled labor.

A regularization program must allow all undocumented immigrants to become green card holders and give them a pathway to citizenship. Allowing 11 million people to live

THE UNITED STATES NEEDS TO REFORM ITS IMMIGRATION SYSTEM IN A WAY THAT ADDRESSES THE BIGGEST IMMIGRATION ISSUE OF THE MOMENT: THE 11 MILLION UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN FEAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE LIMBO.

without fear of deportation, work above the table, and make long-term investments in themselves and their families is the right thing to do, for both moral and economic reasons. Addressing future needs for low-skilled labor is much more complicated. An ideal solution would be to allow some number of immigrants without formal educational qualifications to immigrate directly from abroad, just like skilled immigrants can do today. Perhaps new blue-collar immigrants could apply through a different points system based on skills other than those taught through formal university education.^{44, 45} Other potential models include some Canadian provincial programs that allow "entry-level and semi-skilled" immigrants to apply for permanent residency if they have a job offer in certain economic sectors or regions of the province.⁴⁶ Expanding the current lottery-based Diversity Immigrant Visa Program could be an option, though the program as it stands excludes the countries with the highest level of demand for immigration. Furthermore, it has a human capital bar of its own. It requires either a high school diploma or two years of experience in a skilled trade. As of 2018, the bar for work experience is set so high that even some very skilled blue-collar tradespeople like carpenters and welders could be excluded, let alone farmworkers, home health care aides, and other job categories heavily staffed by undocumented immigrants today.^{47, 48}

One solution inspired by the Canadian experience would be to revisit the idea of a guestworker program. Immigrant rights advocates have traditionally been wary of these policies. Immigrants in these programs as they exist today are often very vulnerable to exploitation. Americans have seen this in action with the Bracero Program (1942-64) and the deportation campaigns that followed, as well as with the continued existence of the H-2A agricultural guestworker program,

which punishes immigrants with deportation if they speak out against poor working conditions.⁴⁹ Canadian advocates have called out their government's TFW programs for creating a "permanently temporary" second-class of labor.^{50, 51, 52, 53} However, it is not impossible to design a guestworker program that protects immigrants' rights. In Canada, for instance, not all TFW programs are equal. Some programs for skilled workers allow the immigrant to take their visas with them to new employers. Another feature of the Canadian immigration system is that individuals can enter on a temporary status and apply for permanent residency while in the country. This is the primary pathway for international students who want to stay in Canada after graduation. Perhaps the United States could create a pathway for low-skilled workers to become permanent residents after some years on a guestworker status.

American lawmakers have long looked to Canada's skilled immigration policy as a model. However, they should not ignore how our northern neighbor's approaches to other forms of migration have worked in conjunction with the skilled labor migration stream. It is clear that the United States must address the undocumented immigration crisis. Replacing the current immigration system with a proposal like the RAISE Act would not accomplish that. By ignoring the current undocumented population and failing to address future needs for workers without college degrees, these skilled migration proposals simply kick the immigration issue down the road to the next Congress or presidential administration. A comprehensive immigration reform that brings undocumented immigrants out of the shadows and addresses labor needs at all skill levels is the only way forward.

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR WHOM?:

CULTURAL TACTICS IN THE PURSUIT OF ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

DELAND CHAN

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." — Brundtland Report, United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).¹

"Social sustainability concerns how individuals, communities, and societies live with each other and set out to achieve the objectives of the development models that they have chosen for themselves, while also taking into account the physical boundaries of their places and planet Earth as a whole." — Andrea Colantonio.²

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1987 Brundtland Commission first coined the term "sustainable development," many efforts have emerged to refine this definition, raising critical questions of what is to be sustained, by whom, and using what means and measures. From the Triple Bottom Line—defined as people, profit, and planet³ to the Four Pillars of Sustainability—the environment, culture, economy, and society⁴—theories of sustainability encompass more than ecological concerns of the Earth's biophysical and carrying capacity.

Sustainability includes a broad realm of concerns around economic development, social inequity, and cultural histories and practices. Most recently, definitions of sustainability through the lens of environmental justice have called for "just sustainabilities"—a shift away from sustainability as a one-size-fits-all paradigm that works for all communities.⁵ In this way, the literature has offered a range of theoretical interpretations, amounting to divergent definitions of sustainability that recognize the pluralistic needs and expertise of communities, described by Leonie Sandercock as "insurgent planning histories".⁶

Despite these theoretical contributions, cities have essentially converged in their strategies of sustainability. From PlaNYC to the Los Angeles Sustainable City pLAN, the policies and terms of "sustainability,"

"resilience," and "livability" have given rise to similar menus of prescribed solutions to target the reduction of carbon emissions and greenhouse gas emissions. When released in 2007, PlaNYC included 127 initiatives that addressed brownfield mediation, housing, open space, transportation, energy, water and air quality, and climate change—all to achieve the city's stated goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent by 2030.⁷ Governments around the world have followed suit by creating sustainability blueprints at the citywide scale, and the United States alone boasts more than 56 sustainability plans.⁸

While these policies are a step in the positive direction of symbolizing commitment to sustainability, they are detrimental if pursued without a nuanced analysis. In effect, they endorse a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to sustainability that exacerbates inequality and, more often than admitted, serves the real estate and finance industries.⁹ In such a paradigm, the state uses environmental strategies as engines of economic growth to recreate the power structure that benefits the elite and privileged classes, creating what Melissa Checker calls "environmental gentrification."¹⁰ As critics argue, PlaNYC uses technical and highly scientific measures that "fail to resonate with the everyday lives of people in their communities and do not necessarily make any sense in the specific geographies of communities."¹¹ This approach is likely to

cause tensions and result in highly ineffective or failed solutions.

Emergent initiatives have demonstrated that an alternative approach is possible. This article examines the case studies of Los Angeles Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict Plan and San Francisco Sustainable Chinatown Plan located in two historically Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) immigrant communities in core urban areas that, in confronting the threats of gentrification and displacement, created neighborhood sustainability plans to guide the trajectory of future development. These plans were made possible through multisector partnerships that brought together government agencies, community development corporations, design firms, and intermediary nongovernment organizations that offered technical and funding support.

Both initiatives emerged with a similar goal in mind: the development of a community-led sustainability plan that identifies and elevates culturally-relevant definitions of sustainability. In effect, these plans call for the consideration of cultural heritage in the pursuit of ecological sustainability. The experience of these two AAPI communities suggests that sustainability plans would greatly benefit from taking a blended approach, converging policymaking and divergent theories of sustainability, particularly as they inform the quality of life in AAPI communities.

MAKING THE CASE FOR CULTURAL TACTICS

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau describes *tactics* as everyday practices undertaken by individuals and communities and informed by on-the-ground realities—in contrast to *strategies*, which are externally imposed on the existing social order by those in positions of power and privilege.¹² To apply de Certeau's framework to sustainability policymaking, state-sponsored forms of sustainability are strategies. They assume the "a-political language of sustainability" in technical and scientific terms¹³ and coalesce into the unquestioned universal agreement of end goals.¹⁴ In contrast, sustainability tactics are

informal actions, values, and beliefs that guide how people relate to space and place. They result in tangible human influences on the land in terms of development patterns and social practices. These tactics closely resemble what Miriam Greenberg refers to as "vernacular sustainabilities" such as the "everyday survival tactics of low-income people" that have visible spatial manifestations in farming towns to sprawling suburbs to the inner cities.¹⁵

Potential tensions and conflict arise when a community's tactics are not aligned or are in direct opposition to the strategies created by broader institutional structures, such as a citywide sustainability plan. Strategic plans developed without genuine community input and consultation at the onset and throughout the process both fail to recognize tactics that support implementation and can also undermine the original intent and efforts of these plans.

Existing studies have noted that policies intended to achieve environmentally sustainable outcomes in the sense of reducing carbon emissions and improving the Earth's biophysical and ecological conditions can backfire when they fail to gain cultural and social acceptance. This was particularly notable in Mexico City, where a government-led strategy to reduce congestion and the number of cars driven resulted in more cars on the road as impacted communities used tactics to bypass this policy and buy more vehicles.¹⁶ Similarly, the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy examined 42 neighborhoods in 12 metropolitan areas in the United States where transit-oriented development was put in place. The study found that the new infrastructures resulted in increased property values and displaced existing populations who relied more heavily on public transportation in favor of higher-income residents more likely to own cars rather than utilize the transportation improvements.¹⁷

These outcomes demonstrate that sustainability must be approached holistically in order to be effective. It must take into account existing relationships, values, and practices that foster social acceptance. Without a concerted effort to

address the cultural norms governing a community's tactics of sustainability, a blind push for sustainability strategies in the ecological sense could undermine its own intent and overall long-term effectiveness.

COMMUNITY-LED SUSTAINABILITY PLANS IN AAPI COMMUNITIES

Recent years have led to novel forms of grassroots resistance against top-down approaches to sustainability. Community-led initiatives such as the Los Angeles Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict Plan and San Francisco Sustainable Chinatown Plan challenge the dominant practices of sustainability as a one-size-fits-all paradigm. Instead, they argue for a holistic approach to sustainability in which social equity and cultural heritage are considered to be equally important elements of sustainable cities, along with the pillars of environmental quality and economic vitality. Specifically, these initiatives address the experience of low-income and ethnic communities that, in response to the threat of gentrification and displacement in core urban areas, created neighborhood sustainability plans to guide the trajectory of future development. These community-led plans relied on multisector partnerships between the public sector, community development corporations, design firms, and technical assistance intermediaries.

The historical context of Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and San Francisco Chinatown lends an important backdrop, as former tactics of resilience have evolved into current discourses and practices of sustainability. The two neighborhoods came to exist because of unique historical factors and immigration patterns. Their central locations made them important as places of economic and cultural refuge. Tactics born of necessity and survival were of paramount importance, as many residents of these neighborhoods settled there to escape government policies that made it illegal to purchase land and own or manage businesses anywhere in the city outside San Francisco Chinatown or Los Angeles Little Tokyo. In part, these communities owe their existence to self-preservation tactics in the face of broader institutional structures that were intended to annihilate the community.¹⁸

Today, rising property values and development pressures in central urban areas have renewed the struggle for survival; long-term residents and businesses now face displacement. Citizens have become increasingly wary of city-initiated plans that channel investment into these neighborhoods under the overarching guise of sustainability. These plans have raised questions about the extent to which low-income and immigrant communities benefit from these practices and whether environmental policies primarily benefit those who are well-off.¹⁹

Nonprofit community development corporations (CDCs) with strong existing ties in the neighborhood have responded to these conversations by leveraging decades of experience with land use, zoning, and community planning issues. CDCs have long advocated and led neighborhood-scale projects, such as streetscape design and open space plans that emphasize community-based planning and public participation. While the practice of community engagement is not necessarily new to them, CDCs are increasingly aligning their work with the tactics of sustainability as leverage for identifying community priorities and retaking control of investment. In doing so, they challenge the one-size-fits-all sustainability paradigm and menu of prescriptive treatments, arguing that more can be done to include the community's social and cultural values. These efforts recognize that sustainability is more than just a "green" and ecological concern; rather,

CITIZENS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY WARY OF CITY-INITIATED PLANS THAT CHANNEL INVESTMENT INTO THESE NEIGHBORHOODS UNDER THE OVERARCHING GUISE OF SUSTAINABILITY. THESE PLANS HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH LOW-INCOME AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM THESE PRACTICES OR WHETHER ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES PRIMARILY BENEFIT THOSE WHO ARE WELL-OFF.

it inherently demands that cultural and behavioral considerations be taken into account for plans to gain social acceptance and therefore lead to long-lasting, sustainable outcomes.

LITTLE TOKYO CULTURAL ECODISTRICT

The Little Tokyo neighborhood, located in downtown Los Angeles, has been home to a thriving Japanese-American community since the late 1800s. In 2012, the City of Los Angeles announced an effort to build the Little Tokyo/Arts District Regional Connector rail station, sparking fears of gentrification and displacement by rising property values, as witnessed from transit-oriented development in other cities.²⁰ The Little Tokyo Service Center, a community development corporation founded in 1979, convened stakeholders to address these concerns through a long-term development vision. The initiators of the plan focused on answering the following question: "How do we achieve 'just growth' and grow in a sustainable, equitable and inclusive manner as we as a region target development around transit stations and transit corridors?"²¹

The ensuing Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict plan embodies a sustainability model that recognizes and elevates more than 130 years of Japanese-American heritage and the cultural values of the community. The plan grounds the concept of sustainability in community-identified values, including *mottainai* (what a shame to waste), *kodomo tameni* (for future generations), and *banbutsu* (interconnectedness), woven into a contemporary environmental context.²²

With these values in mind, the neighborhood created a development vision integrating ecological features like district-scaled green infrastructure heating and cooling, stormwater management, a greywater filtration system, and a photovoltaic grid expected to yield a 35 percent savings in energy and water usage.²³ The plan also cataloged existing neighborhood assets and community priorities, such as affordable housing and cultural facilities.²⁴ In sum, the Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict plan blended ecological, social, and cultural considerations into a sustainability plan developed with

strong participation from a community-led coalition of environmental, arts, and cultural organizations.

SUSTAINABLE CHINATOWN

The Sustainable Chinatown Plan in San Francisco, California is another example of a neighborhood-led sustainability plan that is grounded in community values and priorities. In 2016, the San Francisco Department of Planning initiated the plan with the Chinatown Community Development Center, a nonprofit CDC founded in 1977. As with Little Tokyo, the Chinatown plan was spurred by concerns of gentrification and aimed to mitigate potential negative impacts of transit-oriented development, specifically the incoming Central Subway light rail station. The plan focused on six areas: greening the public housing stock, acquiring and rehabilitating private housing, improving the public realm, upgrading district-level green infrastructure, tracking open data, and engaging community partnerships.²⁵

Through the Sustainable Chinatown plan, the community was able to assert their definition and priorities for sustainability in a comprehensive manner. Some of the outcomes addressed ecological concerns, such as efficient irrigation systems, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces. Others addressed water and energy efficiencies at the building level, through the use of light-emitting diode (LED) lighting, high-efficiency windows, and new appliances. However, much of the plan also looked beyond the environmental aspects and focused on economic vitality through the preservation of affordable housing, which is a serious concern for a neighborhood with a median income that is one-fourth of the citywide average.²⁶ The Plan also called for strengthening social bonds through partnerships and maintaining the cultural heritage of the neighborhood as a historically immigrant and ethnically Chinese neighborhood by preventing displacement and gentrification. This effort is particularly visible in current efforts to redesign Portsmouth Square, the only major public park in the neighborhood, to resonate with community culture and history.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict Plan and Sustainable Chinatown Plan offer several important lessons for how cities can support sustainability efforts in AAPI communities. First, both processes were initiated and driven by a community-based organization with strong existing ties in the neighborhood. Both cases were successful because the process was anchored by a non-profit CDC that then worked to assemble a range of multisector stakeholders, creating a plan that is responsive to community-based values and priorities. The Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict Plan was led by the Little Tokyo Service Center in partnership with the urban design firm Mithun, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and Enterprise Community Partners, a nonprofit intermediary that provided technical assistance. Similarly, the Sustainable Chinatown Plan was led by the Chinatown Community Development Center with the San Francisco Department of the Environment, San Francisco Planning Department, and Enterprise Community Partners. These diverse partners not only provided funding to make this work possible, but also provided valuable intellectual capital, such as the NRDC contributing to the environmental impact analysis of the Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict plan.

Future communities looking to replicate this work should be aware that a CDC, in anchoring the process, will have specific expertise and a particular approach to community development. As the mission of a CDC is to develop affordable housing, the organization receives a substantial share of funding from developer and property management fees. Therefore, it is important to recognize that a CDC is not necessarily a neutral party and that it may be necessary to bring in additional diverse viewpoints—such as that of other community-based organizations that represent the interests of advocacy, labor, and merchant groups—to foster vigorous debate and to allow for different sets of priorities to emerge throughout the process.

Second, these case studies offer a pathway for the reconciliation of community-led sustainability initiatives and citywide sustainability plans. This article is not calling for the elimination of broad-reaching efforts

such as PlaNYC and Los Angeles Sustainable City pLAN in lieu of every neighborhood in the city advocating for their own piecemeal sustainability plan. Far from that, citywide plans have an opportunity to work in coordination with locally initiated efforts at the neighborhood scale. A citywide plan is still needed, particularly as it can provide funding and offer coordination across city agencies. These plans, however, should complement the bottom-up will of communities that are seeking to define sustainability on their own terms. A citywide plan is still needed to assist with implementation and to coordinate across multiple community-led plans, but the needs and priorities should come from the community that will be impacted by these strategies. In this way, cultural tactics of sustainability can be leveraged to support citywide strategies and provide the means for tackling ecological sustainability.

CONCLUSION

To achieve sustainable cities, policymakers should lead with the intent of asking, “Sustainable cities for whom?” The Los Angeles Little Tokyo Cultural Ecodistrict Plan and San Francisco Sustainable Chinatown Plan serve as two tangible case studies in which neighborhoods can develop plans that define and evaluate sustainability from a holistic perspective. Both initiatives emphasized flexible, bottom-up, inclusive, and participatory planning and design processes, whereby elevating cultural considerations became a means to achieving ecological sustainability. Future work to develop sustainability plans in AAPI communities and in local communities more generally could be served well by acknowledging and leveraging local context in order that proposed solutions resonate with community members and ensure its long-term sustainability.

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REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FOR ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC WOMEN'S FORUM (NAPAWF)¹

INTRODUCTION: THE REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

The term "reproductive justice" was first coined in 1994 by the group Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice, who believed the mainstream reproductive rights and feminist agendas did not meet their needs.² The reproductive justice framework adds an intersectional lens to the traditional pro-choice movement by recognizing that each person's reproductive choices are uniquely affected or limited by the various racial, sexual, physical, economic, social, institutional, and religious factors that surround them.³

Reproductive justice operates under three principles that center and support a woman's right to: 1) decide to become a parent the conditions under which to give birth; 2) decide not to become a parent, which includes having access to all options for ending or preventing pregnancy, and be treated with dignity; and 3) parent existing children in safe, supportive communities free from violence and oppression.⁴

For Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), a reproductive justice framework acknowledges the diversity within our community and ensures that different aspects of our identity, such as ethnicity, immigration status, education, sexual orientation, gender identity, and access

to health are considered in tandem when addressing our social, economic, and health needs. While the mainstream reproductive health movement has traditionally prioritized access to abortion as the singular challenge that all women face, the reproductive justice movement takes an advocacy approach that recognizes the complex and lived experiences that impact an AAPI woman's reproductive life and choices. When it comes to reproductive health, simply having rights is not enough; AAPI women experience varying layers of intersectional oppression that affect their ability to access these services.

In this commentary, the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) describes the primary barriers to full realization of reproductive justice for AAPIs and immigrant women of Asian descent in the United States. Specifically, we examine three critical themes: reproductive health access, immigrant rights, and economic justice. We conclude with a list of policy principles NAPAWF believes are crucially important for moving the needle on reproductive justice for AAPIs and Asian immigrant women.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACCESS

Cultural and legal barriers such as stigma around sexual behaviors, lack of access to family planning, and harmful anti-choice

policies restrict AAPI women from accessing a full range of reproductive health services, including abortion, contraception, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Without legal protections and access to basic reproductive health care, many AAPI women and families are left without crucial sexual health and family planning services. In this section, NAPAWF describes those cultural, legal, and political barriers in greater detail.

AAPI YOUNG WOMEN

Studies show strong parent-child communication about sexual health and sexuality promotes healthier decision making among teens.⁵ However, sex and reproductive health are often considered taboo topics within AAPI communities, and frank discussions about sex do not usually occur in AAPI households.^{6,7} One study found that more than half of the young AAPI women surveyed felt uncomfortable talking to their mothers about reproductive health, and more than one-third never discussed pregnancy, STIs, birth control, and sexuality in their households.⁸

As a result, many AAPI teens do not learn about sexual health or reproduction from their families. This leaves AAPI teens to receive their sex education from outside their household, through school, friends, and the media. Yet the content offered in school sex education programs varies significantly depending on state laws and local school districts.

Without accurate information or comprehensive sex education, many young AAPIs become pregnant and choose to terminate their pregnancy. Pregnant AAPI teens seeking abortion care face significant challenges. Thirty-seven states, as of 2017, enforce laws that require a woman under the age of 18 to notify or obtain consent from one or both parents before she can receive abortion care.⁹ As noted above, a significant proportion of AAPI youth do not talk to their parents about sex. Requiring AAPI women and girls to notify their parents or gain their consent to receiving an abortion may delay their abortion care, which leads to riskier, late-term abortion procedures.

CULTURAL AND LEGAL BARRIERS SUCH AS STIGMA AROUND SEXUAL BEHAVIORS, LACK OF ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING, AND HARMFUL ANTI-CHOICE POLICIES RESTRICT AAPI WOMEN FROM ACCESSING A FULL RANGE OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES, INCLUDING ABORTION, CONTRACEPTION, AND TREATMENT FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIS). WITHOUT LEGAL PROTECTIONS AND ACCESS TO BASIC REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE, MANY AAPI WOMEN AND FAMILIES ARE LEFT WITHOUT CRUCIAL SEXUAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES.

In some cases, it may also lead to young women proceeding through an unwanted pregnancy or facing barriers to obtaining abortion care.¹⁰

CONTRACEPTION AND FAMILY PLANNING

AAPI women use contraception at rates similar to other women of color.¹¹ Yet a closer look at these numbers indicates that AAPI women use less effective contraceptive methods at much higher rates compared to women of other races and ethnicities. On average, only 10 percent of women report relying on condoms, while AAPI women report using this method at 24 percent.¹² One in three AAPI women use the calendar method for pregnancy prevention, a prevalence approximately double those of other racial and ethnic groups.¹³

While these methods of contraception are inexpensive, they are also the least effective, placing AAPI women at greater risk of unintended pregnancy. Only 57 percent of AAPI women have reported ever using birth control pills, a more effective pregnancy prevention method, as compared to 68 percent of Hispanic or Latina women, 78 percent of Black women, and 89 percent of White women.¹⁴ AAPI women's rates of usage of non-pill hormonal contraception—such as intrauterine devices (IUD) or implants, considered the most effective forms of contraception—are even lower.

Compared to 44 percent of all Black women and 38 percent of all Latinas, only 19 percent of AAPI women have ever used a hormonal method of contraception other than the pill.¹⁵ As a result, many AAPI women often experience unintended pregnancies or make the decision to seek an abortion, where they may encounter barriers to accessible and affordable abortion care.

SEX-SELECTIVE ABORTION BANS

Legislative proposals seeking to ban sex-selective abortions are premised on misinformation and stereotypes about Asian American women.¹⁶ In theory, the bans would punish doctors and health providers who perform or assist with so-called “sex-selective abortions,” abortions based on the sex of the fetus. Providers could face jail time, fines, or lawsuits from a patient or her family. In practice, sex-selective abortion bans target and discriminate against AAPI women. Supporters of these bans rely heavily on xenophobic rhetoric suggesting that AAPI immigrants import “backwards,” gender-biased cultures from Asian countries that favor the birth of sons, thus perpetuating anti-immigrant sentiment and negative stereotypes about AAPI women.¹⁷ For example, South Dakota State Representative Don Hagggar, a Republican, stated in favor of state legislation banning sex-selective abortions: “Let me tell you, our population in South Dakota is a lot more diverse than it ever was. There are cultures that look at sex-selection abortion [sic] as being culturally okay . . . And I think that’s a good thing that we invite them to come, but I think it’s also important that we send a message that this is a state that values life, regardless of its sex.”¹⁸ Records from Arizona’s 2011 state legislative session also reveal that a state senator said, “We know that [female infanticide] is pervasive in some areas [like China and India]. We know that people from those countries and from those cultures are moving and immigrating in some reasonable numbers to the United States and to Arizona.”¹⁹ While son preference exists to a certain extent in some Asian cultures, there is no evidence that Asian American women in the US are seeking abortions due to son preference: in fact, Asian women in the US actually have higher birth rates for female babies than other races.²⁰

Proposals to ban sex-selective abortion have gained strong momentum in recent years. In 2013 and 2014, such bans were the second most-proposed abortion restriction.²¹ To date, sex-selective abortion bans are in effect in eight states—Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota.²² Most of the states where sex-selective abortion bans have passed are among those with the largest or fastest-growing AAPI populations. Such bans have been proposed in 12 of the 15 states with the largest AAPI populations and 10 of the 15 states with highest AAPI growth rates.^{23, 24} At the federal level, Rep. Trent Franks (R-AZ) introduced House bills banning so-called sex-selective abortions in every Congress since 2008 until his resignation in December 2017.²⁵

In many states, doctors and nurses who merely suspect a patient is seeking a sex-selective abortion are required to report them to authorities. Due to fear of criminal or civil penalties, doctors may scrutinize the decision of an AAPI woman to have an abortion in ways they would not scrutinize if the woman was of another race or ethnicity. Threatening providers with criminal and civil penalties could decrease the availability of services for already underserved communities by intimidating doctors out of performing abortions. Furthermore, such laws open the door to various other pre-viability abortion bans—for example, six-week or “heartbeat” bans, bans against race-selective abortions, and bans against abortions of fetuses with Down Syndrome—that are unconstitutional and only restrict women’s rights and access to abortion.²⁶

HYDE AMENDMENT

The Hyde Amendment, which denies federal Medicaid coverage of abortion services, makes it difficult and often impossible for many low-income AAPI women to exercise their right to make personal decisions about their reproductive health. At a minimum, states must cover those abortions that meet the federal exceptions under Hyde: when continuing the pregnancy will endanger the woman’s life, or when the pregnancy results from rape or incest.

Women on Medicaid are already struggling to make ends meet. Restricting Medicaid coverage of abortion forces one in four poor women to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.²⁷ Moreover, a woman who wants to get an abortion but is denied one is three times more likely to fall into poverty than a woman who is able to obtain an abortion.²⁸

Nearly one in five AAPI women rely on Medicaid.²⁹ The program is particularly important for Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander women. For example, 62 percent of Bhutanese women, 43 percent of Hmong women, and 32 percent of Pakistani women currently receive their insurance through Medicaid.³⁰ After the US Supreme Court's 2012 ruling on the Affordable Care Act (*National Federation of Independent Businesses v. Sebelius*) many states have expanded Medicaid eligibility for those with an income of up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and therefore increased the number of people covered under Medicaid.³¹ With expanded Medicaid eligibility, it becomes even more critical for abortion and reproductive health services to be covered. For AAPI women struggling to make ends meet, paying for an abortion out of pocket can be an insurmountable barrier to accessing care.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Language differences compound existing barriers to accessing and receiving appropriate reproductive health care services. The inability to communicate or understand English, particularly health-related or medical terminology, makes it difficult for AAPI women with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to navigate the health care system. Moreover, the barriers faced by LEP women are often compounded by discrimination, which makes accessing basic health care even more difficult. Without adequate interpreting or translation services, women may be forced to seek language assistance from individuals with whom they do not want to share sensitive health information, such as a child or an abusive partner. Furthermore, research has found that even in health care settings that provide a diverse range of interpreters, communication remains a challenge because

of the unique dialects, tones, expressions, and terms surrounding reproductive and sexual terminology.³²

The availability or lack of linguistically appropriate outreach and assistance can have a dramatic effect AAPI access to health care even before the point of service. A recent report found that state and federal agencies provided insufficient language assistance during the ACA's first open enrollment period, leading to confusion among LEP AAPI consumers and, in some instances, deterrence from enrolling in the marketplaces or in Medicaid altogether.^{33,34} Inconsistently translated and delayed in-language assistance materials exacerbated the already low health literacy among LEP AAPI enrollees and made enrollment difficult, if not impossible, for many community members.³⁵

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CARE

The concept of culturally competent care includes linguistic competency as well as a provider's ability to recognize and respond to the different values, preferences, beliefs, and needs of an individual patient. Given the diversity of AAPIs and the significant number in our community who are LEP or new to Western systems of health care and medicine, culturally competent care beyond interpreting services is critical to ensuring health equity for AAPI women and their families. For example, in the Hmong community, health is seen as inextricably linked with spiritual factors that Western providers fail to consider.³⁶ Additionally, the Hmong language has few medical terms, making health care communication even more complex.³⁷

Culturally competent care requires incorporating traditional treatments, such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, and traditional birthing practices into Western clinical practices and education. Many times, non-Western remedies and treatments are not covered by health insurance plans, leaving AAPI women with the limited options of either forgoing care altogether or receiving health care in a manner that is disempowering and unfamiliar. A recent study found that among all racial groups,

APIs are the most likely to feel looked down upon by their providers and least likely to perceive their background as understood by their providers.³⁸ This lack of connection between the AAPI community and providers diminishes the quality of care.

For AAPI women in particular, cultural stigmas around reproductive health care often influence how AAPI women perceive and utilize these services. AAPI women may avoid seeking care because of the cultural stigma associated with sex or reproductive health, and due to misconceptions about what preventive care, such as a Pap smear, entails or is used for. With cultural competence and linguistic translation services, these stigmas and accurate comprehensive sex education can be addressed in the patient's native language.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

Appropriate access to preventive, routine, and critical health services for AAPI women and their families often relies on their immigration status. AAPI immigrant women have become an invaluable part of the American fabric, yet they must navigate a convoluted immigration system that devalues their contributions and limits their access to health care coverage. In this section, NAPAWF describes the challenges associated with the immigration status of AAPI women in greater detail.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

A significant number of women from Asian countries live in the shadows as undocumented immigrants. Undocumented individuals in the United States totaled an estimated 11.4 million people; of these, 1.3 million were of Asian origin and more than 5.3 million were immigrant women.³⁹ Among the top ten countries of origin for those without immigration status in the US, five Asian countries are represented—the Philippines, India, Korea, China, and Vietnam.⁴⁰ Without immigration status, AAPI immigrant women face threats to deportation and family separation, cannot access the ACA health insurance marketplace, and have no path to accessing Medicaid.

In 2012, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) rolled out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which provides two years of temporary relief from deportation for eligible undocumented young immigrants, as well as work authorization. These individuals must submit evidence documenting date of birth, age upon entry, continuous residency, educational enrollment or military service, absence of certain criminal convictions, and the absence of a threat to national security or public safety.^{41, 42, 43, 44} The program provided protection from deportation for approximately 800,000 undocumented immigrant youth until the Trump administration rescinded the program in September 2017, ultimately eliminating these protections and putting thousands at imminent risk of deportation. NAPAWF and other reproductive justice organizations such as the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health have organized around protecting DACA and advocating for the DREAM Act⁴⁵ as a reproductive justice issue. Subjecting individuals to deportation and family separation violates the third core tenet of reproductive justice: to be able to raise children in safe environments with dignity. Thus, immigration status and a pathway to citizenship for all immigrants remain core reproductive justice priorities.

DUE PROCESS AND IMMIGRATION DETENTION

In 1996, a set of immigration policies—the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA)—resulted in the expansion of the definition of criminal offenses, known as “aggravated felonies,” which can trigger mandatory deportation with little relief.⁴⁶ Southeast Asian immigrants, many of whom obtained green cards after arriving here and seeking safety as refugees, have been among the most affected within the AAPI community by these harsh policies. Over 2.5 million Southeast Asians live in the US; since 1998, over 13,000 of them have received final orders of deportation.^{47,48}

The threat of deportation among Southeast Asians not only tears families apart and

thus threatens reproductive justice, but also negatively impacts their economic stability, employment, and reproductive choices. While the majority of deportees consist of men, the struggle that women endure to keep their families together amidst the threat of deportation is often overlooked.

ACCESS TO MEDICAID

Foreign-born women are almost twice as likely as US-born women to lack health insurance.⁴⁹ Differences in health care coverage for women of reproductive age (ages 15-44) are even more dramatic between native-born citizens and noncitizens: approximately 42 percent of noncitizens are uninsured, compared to 13 percent of native-born citizens.⁵⁰ Even worse, undocumented immigrants are prohibited from accessing health services through Medicaid and are not allowed to purchase private health insurance through the ACA health insurance exchanges.

Even lawfully present immigrants face restrictions. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 prohibits immigrants from accessing Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) within the first five years of obtaining lawful immigration status.⁵¹ This "five-year bar" can be a matter of life or death for immigrant women and their families waiting to access vital health care services. Other lawfully present immigrants, like those present under DACA, are not only prohibited from accessing Medicaid and CHIP, but are also excluded from ACA marketplaces and subsidies.

IMMIGRATION AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a devastating reality for many women in the AAPI community: approximately 40 to 60 percent experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁵² Local surveys and studies of specific populations further reveal the severity of the issue. For example, among Korean American women in Chicago, one study revealed that 60 percent of those interviewed experienced physical abuse by an intimate partner sometime in their lives.⁵³ According to a study of Vietnamese women

in Boston, 47 percent reported enduring physical violence by an intimate partner during their lives and 30 percent indicated it occurred during the prior year.⁵⁴ One study of South Asian women in the Greater Boston area found that over 40 percent of participants reported being physically or sexually abused by their current male partners in their lifetime.⁵⁵

For many immigrant AAPI women trapped in violent marriages, securing their stay in the United States can be challenging, since maintaining legal status often requires cooperation from the abusive spouse. This dependency allows batterers to exact control over women, for example, by not filing immigration papers or even threatening deportation. In fact, one study found that one-fifth of immigrant women surveyed reported their spouses had used such immigration-related abuse tactics, and a quarter of participants stated immigration status prevented them from leaving abusive relationships.⁵⁶ This reality forces many women to choose between two equally disempowering options: remaining in a violent situation or losing their immigration status. Moreover, victims without legal immigration status are up to half as likely to call the police and report crimes committed against them.⁵⁷

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

While on the surface it appears that AAPI women fare well economically compared to women of other races, dissecting the data further reveals that a disproportionate number of AAPI women live in poverty, occupy the low-wage workforce, and experience unique challenges in caring for their families. Until AAPI women have equitable, fair wages, paid family leave, paid sick days, and protections from workplace harassment, reproductive justice remains unattainable. Economic security should not interfere with a woman's ability to make reproductive decisions or to raise a child with dignity.

AAPI WOMEN: AN ECONOMIC PROFILE

AAPI women are employed across a variety

of sectors, ranging from managerial and professional to service, where they occupy positions as caretakers, domestic workers, housecleaners, and garment workers.⁵⁸ Although AAPI women make up 2.9 percent of the overall workforce, they comprise a disproportionately high share of the low-wage workforce at 4.4 percent.⁵⁹ In 2015, 11.7 percent of all Asian women were living in poverty, compared to 9.6 percent of non-Hispanic White women.⁶⁰ Despite the “model minority” myth—the idea that Asian Americans fare better than other racial minorities due to work ethic and educational background—data reveals a more nuanced picture of the lived experiences and struggles of AAPIs.

Moreover, AAPIs who identify as transgender or gender nonconforming suffer even higher rates of poverty. While there is limited data on transgender and gender nonconforming individuals, the 2015 national US Transgender Survey (USTS)⁶¹ revealed significant economic disparities among AAPI respondents. While 15 percent of AAPI transgender and gender nonconforming respondents—higher than the overall sample—reported a household income of less than \$10,000, only 5 percent reported receiving food stamps or WIC assistance.^{62,63} Nearly a third (32 percent) of all AAPI respondents reported living in poverty, compared to a quarter of White respondents (24 percent).⁶⁴ This is in part due to employment discrimination: 8 percent of AAPIs reported losing a job due to their gender identity, and 11 percent reported quitting their job to avoid discrimination.⁶⁵

AAPI WOMEN AND THE WAGE GAP

Following the 2016 election, 87 percent of AAPI people polled agreed that employers should pay women and men equal wages for equal work.⁶⁶ While some Asian American women earn 85 cents for every dollar a White man earns—more than the average woman⁶⁷—the success of high-earning Asian American women contributes to the myth of the “model minority.” This minimizes the effects of structural racism and sexism and reinforces existing patterns of discrimination. The myth further marginalizes the experiences of AAPI women whose work does not fit the model minority stereotype, stigmatizes their experiences

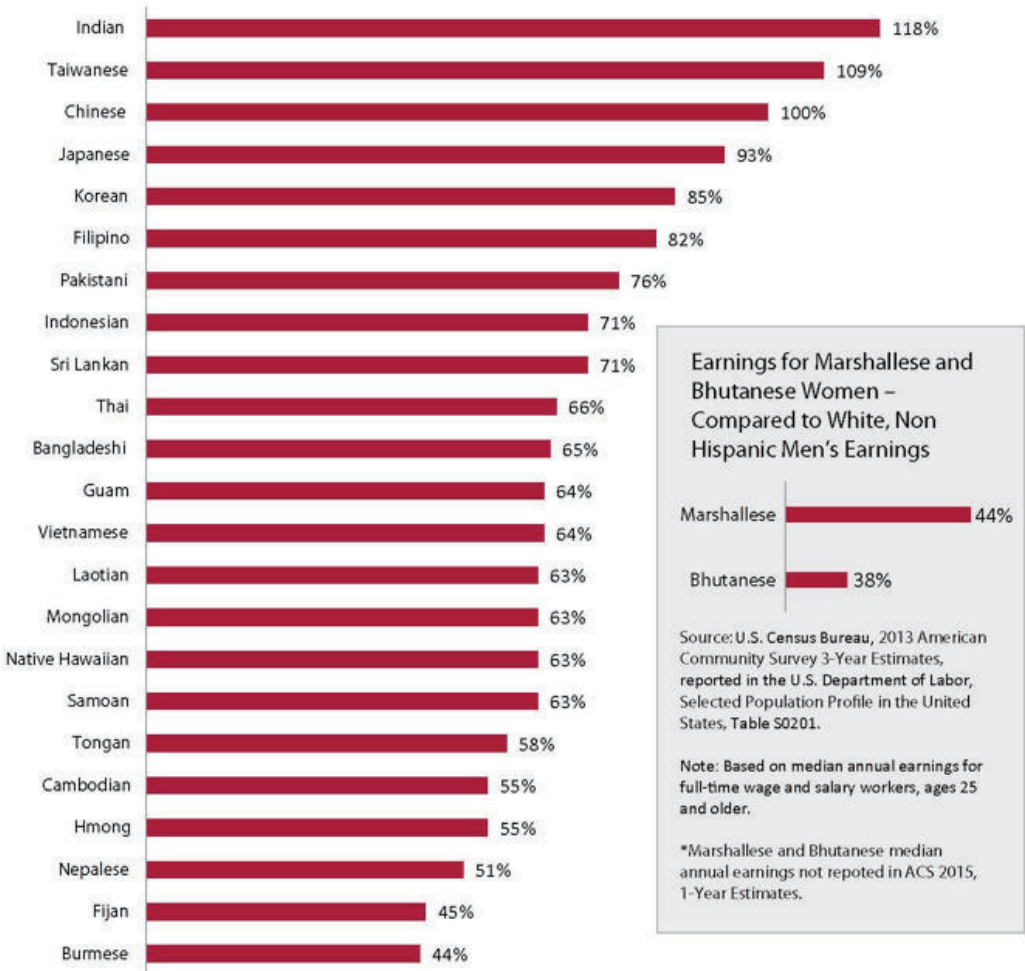
of economic insecurity, and continues to devalue their work in both professional and service sectors. Ultimately, their invisibility disenfranchises AAPI people from social and political advocacy aimed at closing the gender and racial wage gap.

Indeed, while full-time, year-round AAPI women workers are some of the highest paid in the US, many AAPI women experience wage disparities worse than those of White women—and Bhutanese, Marshallese, and Burmese women experience the highest wage gaps compared to all other ethnicities. Bhutanese women only earn 38 percent of what White men earn annually, while Marshallese and Burmese women earn 44 percent.⁶⁸ Asian women overall experience a loss in wages greater than \$6,500 over the course of the year, and it takes approximately 14 months for them to earn what a White, non-Hispanic man earns in 12 months. Bhutanese women specifically experience a \$33,163 loss in wages annually; what a White man earns in one year, a Bhutanese woman has to work more than 2.5 years to earn.⁶⁹

The pay gap widens further for Asian American women with age. The National Women's Law Center estimates that Asian American women 45-64 years make just 69 cents to each dollar earned by a White man, while working Asian American women 65 years and older make a mere 58 cents to the White male dollar.⁷⁰ Over a lifetime, pay inequities accumulate to \$349,000 in lost wages for the average Asian American woman in the workforce.⁷¹ This inequity contributes to the higher poverty rates for Asian American women over the age of 65 (16 percent) compared to both White, non-Hispanic men (5.3 percent) and Asian American men (13.1 percent) of the same age.⁷² These disparities in earnings have a devastating impact on AAPI women who need financial resources to support their families and save for retirement.

While wages earned between AAPI men and women of the same ethnic background reveal different patterns, AAPI women overall experience one of the widest *within-ethnicity* wage gaps compared to other racial and ethnic groups: in other words, the gender

Earnings for AAPI Women Subgroups Compared to White, Non-Hispanic Men's Earnings



Earnings for Marshallese and Bhutanese Women – Compared to White, Non-Hispanic Men's Earnings

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, reported in the U.S. Department of Labor, Selected Population Profile in the United States, Table S0201.

Note: Based on median annual earnings for full-time wage and salary workers, ages 25 and older.

*Marshallese and Bhutanese median annual earnings not reported in ACS 2015, 1-Year Estimates.

Figure 5

Source: NAPAWF calculations based on 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates using IPUMS-USA available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (IPUMS). Figures are based on women's and men's median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. The typical white, non-Hispanic man earned \$55,000 in 2015.

gap between Asian women and Asian men is even larger than the gender gap between White women and White men.⁷³

AAPIS AND OCCUPATIONAL GENDER SEGREGATION

In many cases, LEP and lack of language access severely limits the type of occupations AAPI women can take on. In 2016, approximately 20 percent of Asian women worked in the service industry, compared to 12 percent of Asian men.⁷⁴ Disaggregated AAPI data reveals that women in certain AAPI ethnic communities are even more disproportionately represented in low-wage industries with a median income under \$30,000 per year. For example, Thai, Mongolian, Malaysian, Indonesian, Laotian, and Micronesian women are more likely than the average woman worker to be employed in the restaurant industry.⁷⁵ Vietnamese, Bhutanese, Fijian and Cambodian women are overrepresented in personal care and service occupations, which include manicurists, hairstylists, childcare workers and personal care aides.⁷⁶ Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Nepalese, and Korean women occupy retail jobs at higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups.⁷⁷

PAID SICK AND FAMILY LEAVE

AAPI households are more likely than White households to include children and multigenerational family members.⁷⁸ Many AAPIs also have different expectations for family caregiving as compared to White communities. For example, AAPIs are more likely to take on the responsibility of taking care of older, adult family members in the home due to traditions of filial piety.⁷⁹ AAPI women living in multi-generational households face the added financial and social challenges of caring for dependent children and older adults despite earning smaller paychecks and fewer employment benefits, particularly for AAPI female-headed households. A key tool for working AAPI women to meet their caretaking and financial responsibilities is to have paid sick and family leave time.

A recent study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that 33 percent of Asian American women and 47 percent of

immigrant women workers overall lacked access to sick days for themselves.^{80,81} Many more do not have paid sick leave to care for family members or loved ones. Even with paid sick leave, many workers may fear retaliation or consequences for taking time off work, forcing them to choose between recovering from an illness and keeping their job.⁸²

In addition, AAPI women workers are often caregivers for family and community members and therefore need paid sick leave policies with broad and inclusive family definitions. Family leave policies should also adopt gender-inclusive definitions of "family" to recognize LGBTQ families, single parent families, and multi-national families. Fostering healthy communities where AAPI women can thrive means supporting policies that enable AAPI women to care for their health and the health of those they consider family.

Paid sick policies should also be expanded to include "safe days" allowing people impacted by violence—including intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence, and stalking—to use paid sick leave for medical and legal appointments. An estimated 40-60 percent of Asian women report physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁸³ Expanding paid leave to include safe days would help reduce barriers to reporting and care following sexual and physical violence.

Without access to paid sick days, low-income AAPI working women with caretaking responsibilities are forced to make the impossible choice of caring for a family member or feeding their families. Taking care of a sick family member is even more difficult for female heads of households, who have the added burden of being both the primary breadwinner and caretaker in the family. Furthermore, low-income AAPI women who already lack access to health care are sometimes forced to compromise their own health and work while they are sick so that they are able to support themselves and their families.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

NAPAWF works toward a vision of

reproductive justice where each woman has the ability, resources, and support to care for their bodies and communities. NAPAWF also works to prevent major rollbacks to the gains of the past decade in reproductive health and health coverage. Furthermore, in order for our immigration system to live up to the ideals and values of the US Constitution, it is imperative that our immigration laws include a broad and inclusive path to citizenship that keeps families together and ensures immigrants have equal access to health services. Lastly, labor and workplace policies must be implemented to ensure that AAPI women can find their economic foothold and care for themselves and their families with fiscal confidence. To that end, NAPAWF promotes the following policy principles:

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- AAPI women need comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care that supports them throughout their lifetime.
- AAPI women need access to safe and legal abortion.
- Health insurance coverage should be expanded, not restricted.
- Health care for AAPI women must be culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Disaggregating reproductive health data for AAPI women helps target resources.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

- US immigration policy must include an accessible and timely roadmap to citizenship for all immigrants.
- Family unity for immigrant families is reproductive justice.
- Immigrant women and families need access to affordable, quality health care.
- Immigrants need protection from violence, not systems and policies that perpetuate violence.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- Employment benefits must support women and their families.
- The existing safety net system must be protected and strengthened to assist AAPI women, families and communities in poverty.
- Data disaggregation reveals the diversity of AAPI women in the workforce

ENDNOTES

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The National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) is the only national, multi-issue Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women's organization in the country. NAPAWF's mission is to build a movement to advance social justice and human rights for AAPI women and girls. Following the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the organization was established by 157 Founding Sisters in September 1996. The Founding Sisters identified six issues areas to serve as the platform and foundation for NAPAWF's work: civil rights; economic justice; educational access; ending violence against women; health & reproductive freedom; and immigrant and refugee rights. Since then, NAPAWF has grown to a staffed organization with offices in Brooklyn, NY and Washington, DC, Chicago, and Atlanta. The organization has a large member base organized into 15 chapters. For information on NAPAWF, visit www.napawf.org or email info@napawf.org.

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POLICIES ARE TO FAILURE AS DREAMS ARE TO DIE

BRYAN THAO WORRA

Because I don't want to look back 45
Years from now and say "I told you so,"
As an AAPI I'm obliged to speak up, to hear,
to try.

As a poet, I see a lot from the ground.
(And occasionally a different point of our
shared sky,
Which isn't always clear, but easier than tax
codes,
Or the five thousand things that need
reform yesterday.)

Over 80 percent of Lao don't make it
through college,
Let alone doctorates in a time when a
bachelor's
Is the new high school diploma with no
options
For "equivalent experience" in our society.

There's no funding for community
newspapers and radio,
Training in key technology to reduce hassles
in navigation
Of our byzantine systems the envy of
Minotaurs.
Our gatekeepers are swamped and can
barely pivot
To most causes du jour.

You're shrinking the arts, one of our last
hopes
To break free of intergenerational poverty,
To discuss hope, wisdom, and intercultural
harmony.

The hoops to create small ethnic businesses
who can
Employ our people when the latest leading-
edge factories
Opt to offshore production might as well be
on fire, too.

Chafing against disaggregated data or
family reunification,
Humane immigration, or effective
rehabilitation,
Firearm solutions, police reform, or help for
mental health,
Especially PTSD, you asked for my opinion,
not "poetry."
"Practical" ideas, not science fiction and
fantasy.

But here's a start, if we want prosperity.

“PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR PROBLEM IN 250 WORDS OR LESS,” LAO AMERICAN EDITION

BRYAN THAO WORRA

Author's note: The Laotian American experience is unique amongst other Asian American experiences. Between 1954 and 1975, the CIA interfered with the Laotian civil war by raising an army of over 30,000 guerillas and engaging in a nine-year bombing campaign that left over 30 percent of Laos contaminated by cluster bombs to this day. The United States dropped more bombs on Laos during that period than it dropped on Germany and Japan combined during World War II.

The model minority stereotype is a particularly insidious myth for policymakers as they try to address the needs of a diverse Asian American population. Many Laotians immigrated to the US as refugees during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many continue to experience significant achievement gaps, including a \$20,000 wage gap and a high rate of child poverty compared to other Asian Americans. Policymakers can better serve the Laotian community and address the issues Laotian Americans face by being informed with disaggregated data.

Transitioning from a Lao monarchy
To what's passing for American democracy
After all our covert wars and violations of policy
Isn't as easy as discussing Mae and apple pie.

What do we set aside for refugees
From abroad, these old veterans who fought
In our holy mountains and valleys in secrecy,

With names like Phou Pha Thi, Long Cheng,
The Plain of Jars, Savannakhet or the Bolovens,
Filling the sky, the soil with US cluster bombs

Of dubious reliability, of uncertain, explosive legacy?
Today children under 12 die every month in Laos discovering
A history American teenagers aren't ever taught.

How much blood between two continents, now?
How many lost dreams of Lao, of Hmong, Of Khmu, Tai Dam, lu Mien and Lue?

Wisdom dies every day among us, some with roots
Older than China. We, who'd remained a people

Across millennia of flood, fire, occupation, and loss.
You act as if we have nothing to teach you.

In your cushioned office, you tell me it's complicated
Being an American ally.

"Arlington Cemetery is for veterans who are citizens."

"It's expensive to build a real monument to our friendship."

"We can't give your children a break on college tuition."

"For all of this shed blood, there's no expedited naturalization."

"Why do your families need to remember who you are?"

You make me fight every time, every year
For even a mere fifty dollars
To record and preserve our stories intertwined
Like smoke and snakes, donkeys and elephants,

Liberty and memory.

CAMBODIAN AMERICANS: A ROADMAP FOR REPRESENTATION THROUGH EDUCATION, POLITICS, AND MEDIA

MONICA KWOK

(Previously published on Huffington Post, 30 October 2017)

I used to ride my bicycle down the block from my childhood home where the earthquake-fractured cement gave way to a collection of colorful blooms. I would admire the innately resilient wildflowers, surely planted unintentionally, before racing back to where my grandfather stood looking on.

My grandparents left Phnom Penh on 16 April 1975, hours before the Khmer Rouge captured the city. In fact, they were initially turned away at the border, but ultimately escaped with the help of a brave and compassionate government official. They, along with their five young children, spent the next two years in a refugee camp in Thailand before relocating to Australia and, eventually, the United States. I grew up hearing snippets of this story and stories like these, but it was not until early adulthood that I truly understood the repercussions of this trauma, particularly among first-generation Cambodian Americans today.

First-generation Cambodian Americans are a highly underserved and underprivileged group in our country. As such, they would benefit from more recognition and representation in order to overcome the barriers that hinder their socioeconomic success.

Cambodian Americans as a group rank among the nation's poorest, with some of the lowest educational attainment rates

across demographics. According to the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 23.9 percent of Cambodian Americans live in poverty.¹ The Center of American Progress reports that fewer than 15 percent of Cambodian Americans hold a bachelor's degree or higher.² The Cambodian American population's low educational attainment stagnates its social mobility and perpetuates the cycle of poverty for its younger generations, who struggle with their own unique set of issues, including gang violence,³ poor mental health,⁴ and for those that do pursue higher education, low retention rates.⁵

Communities of color are often shallowly portrayed in American society. The Cambodian American population is one of many that fall victim to harmful mischaracterizations, namely the model minority myth,⁶ which is often applied broadly to the general Asian American population. Positive stereotyping of Asian Americans as a group places those who do not fit the mold of high achievement in positions of alienation and heightened social stigma. On a practical level, because their unique challenges remain unacknowledged, these outliers do not receive the assistance they need to advance. But it is rare, and perhaps even impossible, for positive transformation to occur without two prerequisites: a plan and a support system. In order to distinguish ourselves as separate from what

is unfortunately cast as a monolithic group and become more proactive citizens of this country, Cambodian Americans must actively engage in sectors most likely to empower through representation and facilitate awareness of the specific issues affecting our community. That is why it is imperative for Cambodian Americans to seek or create opportunities in leadership, particularly in the fields of education, politics, and media. In the same vein, it is absolutely crucial for Cambodian Americans to support each other and others like us.

CAMBODIAN AMERICANS MUST ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN SECTORS MOST LIKELY TO ACHIEVE EMPOWERMENT THROUGH REPRESENTATION AND FACILITATE AWARENESS OF THE SPECIFIC ISSUES AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITY.

American educational policy generally miscarries its duties to one of the country's most underprivileged communities. Too often, admissions professionals overlook Cambodian American students as a distinct ethnic group, and instead follow the positive statistics that aggregate Asian American students into a homogenous group of successful students. While Chinese Americans and Indian Americans do have high rates of educational attainment, that is simply not the case for Southeast Asian Americans. When this disparity is overlooked, the interests of vulnerable Asian American communities go unrepresented.⁷ The aggregation of Cambodian Americans into the "Asian" group leaves them out of the picture in terms of policy decisions (educational and otherwise) and deprives them of a fair review for admission into educational institutions—both of which are crucial to improving the group's socioeconomic condition. This astigmatic image can be remedied through activism and awareness of disaggregated data among the public.

Empowerment through engagement begins with the Cambodian American community itself. Many Cambodian Americans who do pursue higher education struggle with

navigating the admissions process and, once on campus, other aspects of student life. Because many young Cambodian Americans are the first in their families to attend college in the US, managing academic processes both broad and granular becomes a self-taught endeavor. This method of development is burdensome and inefficient. However, there are signs of a narrowing education gap for younger Cambodian Americans. While fewer than 65 percent of Cambodian Americans overall finish high school, those born in the United States fare much better at around 85 percent.⁸ This is indicative of an upward trend in educational achievement, resulting in more Cambodian Americans equipped to encourage and advise younger members of our community in matters both academic and professional. There is a compelling case, therefore, for more Cambodian American mentorship programs, like the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Lowell's Young Professionals Leadership Program.⁹

While political empowerment and participation were much more difficult for Cambodian Americans two decades ago, due to initial language barriers, lack of community establishment, and an overwhelmingly young population, the circumstances are wildly different today. Cambodian Americans are becoming increasingly politically active, as demonstrated by strong voter turnouts¹⁰ and heavy engagement in local elections,¹¹ especially in cities with sizable Cambodian American populations such as Long Beach, Seattle, Philadelphia, and Lowell.

Another prominent example of the rise in Cambodian American activism is the tremendous grassroots movement against the deportation of Cambodian refugees,¹² many of whom were raised in the United States. Such civic participation is integral in advancing communities like ours, which suffer from struggles largely unknown to the greater American society due to a lack of disaggregated data and the subsequent hidden opportunity gaps this creates.

Another way to positively reinforce our community's recent strides and bring attention to areas in which we seek improvement is through crafting our own

narratives and documenting our unique experiences on our terms. In 2017, I connected with Phatry Derek Pan, founder of *Khmerican*, a news and media organization that covers and curates stories unique to the Cambodian American experience and the greater Cambodian diaspora, and quickly became an active proponent of the media company. This year, *Khmerican*, which currently reaches 3 million readers a month, celebrates its five year anniversary and renews its commitment to encouraging public engagement among Cambodian Americans. With a firmly established Long Beach office and a Phnom Penh office in the works, *Khmerican* aims to expand its reach to include publications in Oceania and Europe, *Khmeroo* and *Khmeropean*, respectively, in the next year. The growth of *Khmerican* and other media companies like it is integral to supporting the rising promise of Cambodian Americans in education, politics, and beyond.

Despite the challenges, it would be imprudent to dismiss the notion that to some degree, Cambodian Americans today are lucky. We live in a time and place where it is easier than ever to mobilize, share, and act, making it possible to channel our ancestors' sorrows into our descendants' fortunes. In its very inception, the Cambodian American community was conditioned to thrive in the face of hardened barriers. Like wildflowers, we continue to demonstrate strength in fragility and the ability to grow in places unexpected.

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MODEL MINORITY MUTINY: WHITENESS IS A PLAGUE

ALICE LIOU

Asian American identity has historically been one of resistance, subversion, and protest. In both courts and communities, Asian Americans have fought for the right to citizenship,¹ educational access,² fair treatment,³ and working conditions⁴ since the late 1800s. On American plantations, Asian laborers organized across ethnic groups to strike against unfair wages and conditions.⁵ During the Japanese internment, the No-No Boys resisted the mandated allegiance survey.⁶ In Asian enclaves across the country, groups like I Wor Kuen formed to address community needs for healthcare reform, job and draft counseling, and childcare; on college campuses, organizations like the Third World Liberation Front and the Asian American Political Alliance led student strikes to advocate for Ethnic Studies and control over hiring and retention of faculty of color.⁷ In the 1960s, the Asian American Movement joined and fought alongside multiracial solidarity coalitions to protest racism and neo-imperialism in the United States.⁸

Despite this history of struggle, whiteness⁹ constructed “Asian American” as a monolithic identity of submission, complicity, and model minority behavior.¹⁰ In response to the increased politicization of the Asian American Movement, the mainstream media created, perpetuated, and reified the model minority myth; thus, in place of the rich, robust history of Asian American communities and identity, whiteness

reduced Asian American culture to a simple equation: a strong work ethic and family values can prevent a group from becoming a “problem minority,” regardless of historical marginalization.¹¹ This construction became central to the way Asian Americanness was socially understood and talked about, and in turn, a conception that Asian Americans began to internalize as our racial legacy.

As both an educator and a student in social studies, I do not remember reading a single K-12 social studies textbook where Asian American identity was discussed in detail. Had it not been for friends, mentors, and activists who advocated for the institutionalization of Ethnic Studies, I also would not have encountered this history in college or graduate school. When I work with Asian American youth, I watch them gape in disbelief when they learn simple facts about Asian American history—like that two Asian Americans ran for President in the 1960s and 70s. It is a deliberate, political maneuver that they do not know their own histories—that we have to advocate incessantly for access to this kind of education.

More commonly, I encounter Asian American students and parents who have deeply internalized the model minority myth, and who believe it better to have a “good stereotype” as a wedge minority than to occupy a “lower” position in the racial hierarchy. Where there could be an

understanding of our history of resistance, there exists a belief in the meritocratic, individualistic, and capitalist rhetoric of bootstrapping and the American Dream. Where there could be a connection to political movements of the past and collective racial solidarity in the present, there is an aspiration to achieve, accrue, and outdo others by adhering to White cultural norms and standards. There is, presently, even an intentional effort to dismantle affirmative action for in-group gain—at the expense of historically underrepresented racial groups in higher education—using colorblind, meritocratic arguments that belittle the historical and political significance of the policy. In short, where there should be Asian Americanness, there is whiteness.

WHERE THERE COULD BE AN UNDERSTANDING OF OUR RICH HISTORY OF RESISTANCE, THERE EXISTS A BELIEF IN THE MERITOCRATIC, INDIVIDUALISTIC, AND CAPITALIST RHETORIC OF BOOTSTRAPPING AND THE AMERICAN DREAM.

Some may call this overconfidence in meritocracy, individualism, and capitalism a result of the cultural residues from the immigrant aspiration to do better by the next generation through personal sacrifice. Some of it, also, may be considered a residue of historical trauma in parents' and students' mother countries, where past political circumstance colors current relationships with wealth and social capital. However, these discourses ignore the responsibility of whiteness in creating these social circumstances of oppression and trauma to begin with. They turn a blind eye to American imperialism abroad and the omnipresence of capitalism as a tool of oppression and exploitation of laborers by whiteness. Furthermore, they disregard the neoimperial and corporate projects of whiteness that benefit from Asian and Asian American culture, where Asian/American subjects are often reduced to objects to be commoditized, exoticized, fetishized, and appropriated. Even where meritocratic phenomena (e.g., high-stakes testing, aspirations of going to

a "good college," and pursuing career paths for social mobility) exist in Asian countries, there is no doubt that globalization and the privileging of Westernization in developing economies have played a role in exposing these nations to whiteness. Whiteness has influenced cultural values in a neocolonial fashion.

While first, 1.5, and second generation Asian Americans try to make sense of their hyphenated and intersectional identities, they do not have access to a complex, rounded history of Asian America to situate themselves in or reconcile with their own stories of identity, migration, and diaspora. Instead, they have the model minority myth. As a result, where we, as a community, could form coalitions to support one another and to protest unfair labor laws, wages, immigration policies, and racial discrimination, we work harder to conform to the rules of whiteness to "get by." Instead of using historical consciousness and communal strength to subvert, reclaim, and reconstruct unjust systems, we give them more power by buying in. We even compel Asian American youth to participate in whiteness by sustaining whiteness's discourses of grit, obedience, and delayed gratification in regards to work and school, even where it has proven to be harmful for their mental health.¹² Over 50 years after the model minority myth was first constructed, whiteness continues to reduce and erase key elements of Asian American identity from the mainstream understanding of Asian Americanness—and with it, possibilities for our future.

Whiteness is a plague. It burrows its ideas of power, domination, superiority, and ownership into any healthy tissue it can find. It causes us to regard our fellow human subjects as competition, rather than as partners in a collective movement for liberation. It shackles us to materialism and unhealthy ideas of success that devalue physical, spiritual, and mental health, communal happiness, and interpersonal relationships. Importantly, it severs us from a rightful education of our historical situatedness and identity. As a result, we lose our sovereignty and ability to self-determine

as human beings. In this political moment, more than ever, it is time to challenge and reject whiteness and the well-worn narratives it has projected on us to build community that can reclaim possibilities for Asian Americanness. On a policy level, this means pushing for the inclusion of Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies in K-12 curricula, as well as creating community spaces and sustained funding for cultural and political education and collective organizing. With the precedent set by the US District Court of Arizona's recent ruling that the Tucson Unified School District's ban on Mexican American Studies is a violation of the 14th Amendment,¹³ a concerted effort to institutionalize Ethnic Studies programs has the potential to permanently establish shared historical knowledge and political language in schools. However, shifting mindsets away from whiteness is a communal onus that all civic actors—not only policymakers—must take on. It begins with changing the daily conversations we have with each other to focus on wellness, solidarity, and happiness instead of success, achievement, and competition. Continued change relies on questioning what is, nurturing our reimagining of what could be, and encouraging both. Thus, as Asian Americans, we must ask ourselves: what do we owe to ourselves and others as descendants of a radical political legacy? What could "Asian American" mean and achieve as a sociopolitical entity when we demand definition and recognition on our own terms? What can we accomplish by teaching our communities about radicalness—and what could this collective conscientization do to make imagined futures realities in our communities?

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LESSONS OF “RADICAL IMAGINATION”: WHAT THE FILIPINX COMMUNITY CAN LEARN FROM THE BLACK COMMUNITY

TONY DELAROSA

In today's reductionist political climate, rampant with white supremacy and the erasure of people of color (POC), we are charged to take solace in what author and professor of African Studies at San Francisco State Shawn Ginwright, calls “healing spaces.” The term “healing spaces” could refer to, but is not limited to: affinity groups, art collectives, or churches. These collective spaces are where we, as POC, *surthrive*. I allude to the term “surthrival” because many POC, especially in spaces not designed by and for us, find ourselves caught in the exhausting pendulum between surviving and thriving. In the following discussion, as an educator and researcher working with young POC, I explore the concept of “radical imagination” in both the Filipinx American and Black communities and how this concept can create practices that improve the lives of marginalized communities.

“Radical imagination” is not at all a new concept in describing collective hope. Ginwright defines it as viewing and living in the world as it should be, rather than as it currently stands. I argue that this is necessary for our *surthrival* as POC.

In the op-ed “Radical Imagination is a Necessary Sustaining Force for Black Activism,” Savonne Anderson reminds us that leaders of color have been doing this work since the Civil Rights Movement. This call to radical imagination is exemplified

in Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” speech. Anderson describes this speech as “the epitome of finding a dream in the midst of weariness, as both an activist and [B]lack person living through injustice.” Radical imagination is one of the many themes and tools that artists of color use today to summon their identity and reimagine themselves in alternative spaces. Afrofuturism, which falls under the umbrella concept of radical imagination, refers specifically to idea of seeing oneself, as a Black person, existing in the future. Of course, in a world where Black people endure racially motivated violence and targeting, Afrofuturism is both political and fantastic. Janelle Monae draws on Afrofuturist visions in her science-fiction themed album “The ArchAndroid.” The mere costume design and idea that Black people have some form of relationship with space travel speaks to the idea of “access.” Imagined access to the future combats the erasure of Black people from science fiction, art, literature, and media. From the worlds of Star Wars or Star Trek, Black protagonists are, unsurprisingly, not the first images that come to the average viewer's mind, because Black protagonists haven't been allowed to permeate science fiction culture the way that White protagonists do. Beyond musical artists, poets have been writing about radical imagination as well. Famous spoken word poet and writer Danez Smith captures this perfectly in their piece “Dear White America”:

"Dear White America, I've left earth in search of darker planets, a solar system that revolves too near a black hole. I have left a patch of dirt in my place & many of you won't know the difference; we are indeed the same color, one of us would eventually become the other. I have left Earth in search of a new God. I do not trust God you have given us . . . Take God back: though his songs are beautiful, his miracles are inconsistent . . ."²

You don't have to read past the first line to get the point. As a form of reclaiming one's place in the future and in histories that continue to be plagued by liminality and erasure of POC, what does Afrofuturism mean for other marginalized communities? As a Filipinx American, the more I lift the curtain veiling Filipinx American history, the more "erasure" as both word and feeling becomes an inevitable obsession. As a community, we find ourselves erased from literature, political leadership, the entertainment industry, and more. In the 1965 Delano Grape Strike,³ for example, even within the POC community, the work of Filipinx American Larry Itliong was eclipsed by the glory Cesar Chavez received from the press. Such erasure makes me think critically about which aspects of radical imagination we are adopting from the Black community, and which are we claiming as our own. If Filipinx Americans wrote such poems, would this be considered co-opting a survival method, or is this a means of collective praxis and part of the solidarity of POC activism?

One recent hashtag demonstrates how Filipinx Americans are practicing radical imagination: #*MagandangMorenx* (translated from Tagalog as gorgeous dark person) was created as a reclamation of beauty and hope for darker skinned Filipinx Americans who are constantly discriminated against solely based on the shade of their skin and texture of their hair.⁴ Rapper and spoken word artist, Ruby Ibarra, echoes the same sentiment in her new album "Circa 91."⁵ She commences her album with a bold line from her song "Brown Out":

They teach me to erase that brown,
subconsciously I lose my crown
'Til I don't even recognize the
person that's inside me now

I remember hearing these types of comments from my entire family because I would be the darkest one in the family after going to the beach or doing what kids do in the summer—soaking up the sun. They would yell out, "Careful, don't get *nasunog*,"—don't get burnt." Who would have thought the sun could be someone else's source of oppression? I would hear my grandmother, aunts, uncles, and lighter-skinned cousins echo this same sentiment, as if getting dark was equivalent to the absence of lighter or fairer skin, the absence of being visibly or capably beautiful.

Filipinx American radical imagination can be found in the book project, the *Filipinx Radical Imagination Reader*, an anthology that celebrates Filipinx American literary voices.⁶ In the design and technological world, two Filipinx Americans have radically imagined themselves as the protagonists of a recent video game that teaches its players about Filipinx history.⁷ One of their stated primary reasons for doing this is that most action and adventure gaming is centered around a European or White male protagonist, like in any form of popular media. Access to technology made their ideas of radical imagination more viable and tangible, making it more accessible to broader and more diverse audiences.

Exploring radical imagination ultimately speaks to how POC in the 21st century are drawn to salvaging moments and manifestations of critical hope. President Obama's campaign was doused in this idea of hope, but only in its mythical form. When I refer to mythical hope, I refer to Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade, Professor of Raza Studies at San Francisco State University; he explains how this concept of "hope" can be dangerously conflated if not sufficiently analyzed. He asserts the following about President Obama's campaign,

The significance of the election
of a black man as the president

of this country is undeniable, especially given our past and present national failure to meet the challenge of racial equality. But immediately after an election that few would have predicted, the overstatement of its significance began; it became naturalized as the consequence of a fictitious color-blind society.⁸

This excerpt speaks to how President Obama was falsely held up as evidence of a “post-racial era.” Rather than fool ourselves and deny that we are up against a system that will drastically change within our lifetime, we can start accepting a truth about where we can start to set the stage for our communities to thrive in this era of Trump, especially if the Filipinx American community has no idea why we must engage in radical imagination in the first place. Like the Filipinx American pioneers before us, we can start radically imagining ourselves out of erasure through simple awareness building, as we see in hashtags, poems, and other storytelling mediums. Beyond this, we can move to more macro-moments where the radical imagination takes on systemic change in collective critical consciousness benefiting people of color as a whole.

There are myriad ways to create more spaces and opportunity for radical imagination to flourish, not only for Filipinx Americans but for all marginalized communities. As a researcher and educator, I charge education policy makers to engage in the following practices to strengthen one’s own sense of radical imagination and its potential impact on individuals and communities:

- 1) **EXPOSE ONESELF TO CURRENT RESEARCH ON “RADICAL IMAGINATION”:**
Alex Khasnabish and Max Haiven’s recent book, “Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity,” is an in depth study defining radical imagination, historical context, and how to move from radical imagination to radical social change.
- 2) **FIGHT FOR POLICIES THAT COULD POTENTIALLY PROVIDE MORE EQUITY TO PEOPLE OF COLOR, SUCH AS MA**

BILL H.3361.

In Massachusetts, bill H.3361 changes how data about Asian Americans is aggregated. It supports the concept of breaking down the term “Asian” into more subgroups, which would make visible Filipinx Americans and other Southeast Asian groups often eclipsed by the umbrella classification.⁹ Fighting for this type of bill will give a more accurate picture of Asian Americans and support debunking the harmful model minority myth imposed onto many Asian Americans. It will increase opportunities for students and families to accurately explain their unique financial and social situations, especially in applying for college. If this legislation passes, it may also have positive implications for other communities whose circumstances are obscured by blanket terminology such as Latinx and Black.

3) **LEARN ABOUT RADICAL MOVEMENTS THAT CAUSED RADICAL SOCIAL CHANGE:**

Earlier in this article, I mentioned the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a quintessential example of radical imagination for the Black and overall POC communities. Protests and campaigns are also great examples of radical imagination shifted into radical social action: for example, the 1968 San Francisco State Strike that fought for an Ethnic Studies Program,¹⁰ the 2013 Black Lives Matter campaign in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer George Zimmerman, and the 2017 Women’s March, a radical expression of disapproval of recent election results and Donald Trump.

4) **ATTEND A RADICAL IMAGINATION CONVOCATION:**

a. For the 16th Annual Alumni of Color Conference by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, as one of the three directors who wrote this year’s vision, we invoke Ginwright’s voice as part of our guiding principles to our collective narrative below:

Chapter 2 | Reimagine:

Chapter two of our conference calls on the concept of “radical imagination,” which is the ability to reimagine the world, life, and

social institutions not as they have been designed currently but as they could and should be. This re-imagination requires the courage, passion, and intelligence to recognize that the world can and should be radicalized. Re-imagination is not just about dreaming of different futures, it's also about bringing those possibilities back from the future to work on the present, to inspire action and new forms of solidarity today.¹¹

b. Other convocations that intersect with the theme of radical imagination are The National Education Association's Conference on Racial and Social Justice,¹² The Radical Imagination Conference hosted at Oregon State University,¹³ and the Ethnic Studies Conference hosted at the Virginia Commonwealth University.¹⁴

5) PRACTICE RADICAL IMAGINATION BY ATTENDING AFFINITY GROUP MEETINGS AS A GUEST AND LISTENER REGULARLY.

a. Policymakers have the ability to make systemic change that could radically improve the lives of those who are oppressed both internally and externally. That stated, the goal of attending an affinity group regularly as a learner is to expand one's perception on how others view oppression and triumph from a different positionality. How can you engage in radical imagination if you don't understand how marginalized communities think and feel? Employers outside of education, such as AT&T, Cisco Systems Inc, Amgen Inc, McDonald's Corporation, and Walmart have already been employing aspects of radical imagination by adopting affinity groups to recruit and retain people of color and marginalized communities. In the case of McDonald's, according to *Forbes*, "Women and people of color make up 73% of [its] total workforce, 43% of all franchise staff and 55% of suppliers," which proves that affinity groups and networks are having a positive impact on the diversity, inclusion, and equity of their workforce.¹⁵

Thinking back to the school setting, serving

as a listener will give policymakers insight on the types of tangible needs of both students and staff. The YMCA goes beyond affinity groups and has created professional and leadership networks such as: Hispanic/Latino Leadership Network and Affinity Group, African American Leadership Network and Executive Forum, Asian American Leadership Network and Affinity Group, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Leadership Network and Affinity Group, and the Women's Leadership Network and Affinity Group. I argue that one can increase their own sense of empathy and trust quotient between different communities in attending these groups and allowing for these groups to flourish.

White ally groups exist as well in order to build the diversity, equity, and inclusion competencies of White allies aim to better support POC and other marginalized communities. A 2009 study at the University of Pennsylvania by Ali Michael and Mary Conger outlines the impacts of White affinity groups in helping White people build their own awareness of their positionality and privilege, and take action on the most effective ways to serve.¹⁶

b. Schools that already recognize the need for radical social change usually have affinity groups along with a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) task force. In this case, one should attend a DEI task meeting, to learn about both formal and informal strategies of creating a just and equitable community for all students and staff. Organizations that support schools, like Teach For America (TFA), already have national and local DEI components, as well as affinity groups in each region called "The Collective."¹⁷ The national component is responsible for the overall vision of how larger TFA convocations, such as the School Leaders of Color Summit or TFA 25th Anniversary Summit (17,000 attendees), will be grounded in DEI systems, as well as the overarching vision of how TFA engages its alumni of color. Broadly speaking, that national team thinks of a strategy to strengthen its alumni network. In 2011, the TFA Alumni of Color Network was reported at 5,000 alums, while in 2016 it is at 13,000 in counting. Part of this strategy is

keeping the national network informed of education policies that both positively and negatively impact our nation's at risk youth.

On the local level, each region elects an advisory board of 10-20 members, and one steering leader that helps facilitate a democratic process of developing a strategy to best engage the TFA alumni. The Alumni Director, a formal staff position in each region, is responsible for keeping these engagement strategies accountable. Some events include cross-generational support by providing panels on higher education or public policy in order to get alumni thinking about and applying to pursue positions in these areas, which are historically low in representation. Other events include the teacher story slam event, where both alumni of color and allies convoke around teacher stories in order to build empathy across lines of difference.¹⁸

Public and Charter school networks can increase their impact on their own current staff and alumni of color by creating both district and school-wide opportunities and spaces for teachers and staff of color, where their mental, social, academic, and professional needs are met.

6) INTERVIEW, LISTEN, AND SURVEY CURRENT SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY TAKING RADICAL ACTS TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO.

In sticking to the theme of radical imagination in the Black community, two names that immediately come to mind are DeRay McKesson and Brittany Packnett, cofounders of Campaign Zero. Campaign Zero is an organization that provides a "comprehensive package of urgent policy solutions—informed by data, research and human rights principles—[that] can change the way police serve our communities."¹⁹ Currently, the school to prison pipeline is a salient issue for communities of color, specifically for black and brown youth. Using Campaign Zero's research to dismantle oppressive policies while creating policies that preserve human life and build empathy is a radical act.

7) REINVEST FUNDING IN NATIONAL

AND LOCAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS AND WITHIN SCHOOLS THAT PROVIDE SPACE FOR YOUTH TO PRACTICE RADICAL IMAGINATION THROUGH CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.²⁰

a. Marginalized communities suffer from the imagination gap, where students can't imagine themselves outside of their own zip codes, let alone as authors of their own lives. Programs that empower youth agency and voices include: the National Guild for Community Arts Education,²¹ MassLEAP (Massachusetts Literary Education and Performance Collective),²² Boston Pulse Poetry,²³ Arts for Learning (Miami),²⁴ and MyCincinnati (Music for Youth in Cincinnati).²⁵

b. Research also shows that integration of the arts since the No Child Left Behind Act is associated with higher SAT scores: students who have taken more courses in the arts also score higher on both Verbal and Math portions of the SAT.²⁶

ONCE OUR INDIVIDUAL POC COMMUNITIES CAN RECOGNIZE THAT OUR HOPE IS INTERTWINED, WE CAN START MOVING FROM "MYTHICAL" TO "CRITICAL," FROM "SURVIVAL" TO SIMPLY "THRIVING"; FROM MERE "WELL-BEING" TO A DEEPER "RADICAL HEALING."

These seven practices of radical imagination can be summarized as acts of social justice. The point of radical imagination is ultimately to move towards radical social change, but not doing so in a vacuum. As Alex Khasnabish and Max Haiven wrote, "radical imagination is an ever-unfinished process of solidarity."²⁷ This is why I can't discuss radical imagination in the Filipinx American community without honoring the work that has been done before in the Black community. Their vision of hope is as much as our own. Once our individual POC communities can recognize that our hope is intertwined, we can start moving from "mythical" to "critical," from "suthrival" to simply "thriving," from mere "wellbeing" to a deeper "radical healing."

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