

2015

Annual Report



ASIAN AMERICANS
**ADVANCING
JUSTICE**

LOS ANGELES

Building upon the legacy of the
Asian Pacific American Legal Center



● SACRAMENTO

Our mission is to advocate for civil rights, provide legal services and education, and build coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders and to create a more equitable and harmonious society.

LOS ANGELES ● ● SAN GABRIEL VALLEY
● ORANGE COUNTY

SINCE 1983, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA) has proudly served and advocated for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities. As the nation's largest legal organization focused on AANHPIs, we advance justice for all marginalized communities through direct services, impact litigation, policy advocacy and research, leadership development, and capacity-building of partner organizations.

In 2015, we had over 85 staff and a budget of \$10.7 million, more than double our budget from five years ago. In addition, 580 volunteers contributed more than 21,000 hours last year, worth \$4.3 million in additional assistance for our organization, our community partners, and most importantly our clients.

As we grow, we also continue to expand our impact. In 2015, we reached 10,000 limited-English speaking callers who contacted our Asian language legal helplines. There were thousands in Southern California and across the nation whom we helped to escape domestic violence, apply for immigration benefits, learn English and U.S. civics, and naturalize as U.S. citizens. And through our leadership programs, we served nearly 1,700 local youth and community members.

But our impact is greater than numbers. It is the stories of youth leaders like Trina Pasambul, who went from DACA client to community organizer, and clients like Touch Hak, for whom we helped secure a significant stay of deportation so he could provide his very ill brother with a kidney transplant. It is the cases we litigate, like the California Voting Rights Act lawsuit against the City of Fullerton on behalf of the city's sizeable Asian American population that has never been able to win a city council seat.

And it is the journey of all who have touched our lives over the years, like the 72 Thai garment workers who were imprisoned as virtual slave laborers in suburban El Monte. Freed in 1995, they brought a lawsuit that resulted in a \$4 million settlement and led to major changes in California's regulation of "sweatshops," retailer and manufacturer accountability, and federal immigration visas for trafficking victims. In 2015, we were thrilled to celebrate 20 years of freedom with these courageous workers, some of whom are now U.S. citizens, proud parents, and business owners.

Thank you for your generous support that has allowed us to be so impactful. We look forward to your ongoing partnership as we continue to fight for justice and a voice for our communities.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stewart Kwoh".

Stewart Kwoh
President & Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Nita Song".

Nita Song
Chair, Board of Directors

TWENTY YEARS OF FREEDOM: The Journey of the El Monte Garment Workers

Twenty years ago, in a case that grabbed international headlines, more than 70 Thai garment workers were found in captivity, living and sewing behind barbed wire and under armed guard in a suburban Los Angeles apartment complex. The immigrants had been sewing garments for some of the nation's leading retailers and manufacturers, in conditions that amounted to modern-day slavery, for as long as seven years.

But the labor enforcement raid that uncovered the enslaved workers led not to freedom, but instead to imprisonment in an immigration detention center. Trafficked from Thailand to the U.S., the workers lacked legal status and were effectively sent from one prison to another. Under pressure from immigrant and worker rights advocates from Advancing Justice-LA, Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance, and Thai Community Development Center, immigration officials finally released the garment workers on August 10, 1995.

"It was only after being released from immigration detention, after years of being held in the El Monte compound, that the workers were able to experience America for the first time," said Julie Su, California's labor commissioner and former Advancing Justice-LA litigation



director, who served as lead counsel in the groundbreaking case. In the end, the workers won a \$4 million settlement that sparked sweeping changes in corporate accountability, including holding companies responsible for meeting minimum wage requirements for all workers at every level in the production chain.

The case also paved the way for a range of immigration relief for victims of trafficking and domestic violence, including the creation of the "T" and "U" visa categories, which grant trafficking victims lawful immigration status and work authorization. The workers themselves helped secure the nation's strongest anti-sweatshop law, making California a model for protecting low-wage immigrant workers.

In the years since they were released, the workers have been pursuing the

American dream, starting families and businesses, and becoming citizens.

"Ever since that day we were rescued from El Monte, it's been like a dream come true. We have enjoyed our lives. We married. We have kids, own a house, have jobs, own a car," said Maliwan Clinton, a former worker and mother of two teenage sons.

"Since this case, my life has been better. I have my freedom. I became a citizen. I can enjoy a basic thing like riding my motorcycle to the beach," said Win Chuiagnan, another former worker and the proud owner of a Thai restaurant in Los Angeles.

Despite the horrible working conditions they suffered and a harrowing journey through both the immigration and legal systems, the workers have been powerful voices for justice. Speaking to the workers at an event commemorating the 20th anniversary of their freedom, Julie Su emphasized the impact of their decision to stay in the U.S. to hold their traffickers accountable for what they had done.

"Because of you, the federal government passed laws to make it possible for survivors of trafficking and domestic violence and other crimes to fight for their dreams," she said. "Now workers in all different industries seeking justice look to your case and see that they can go all the way to the top to hold companies responsible."



Asian Americans Shut Out of City Hall

Lawsuit Filed Against City of Fullerton Leads to Major Voting Rights Victory

In March, Advancing Justice-LA, along with ACLU of Southern California, the Law Office of Robert Rubin, and Sidley Austin LLP, filed a lawsuit against the City of Fullerton for violation of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). Brought on behalf of the city's sizeable Asian American population, the lawsuit charged that the city's existing at-large elections—in which city council members are elected by every voter in the city, regardless of where the candidate and voter live—deny Asian American and other minority populations the ability to exercise their collective voting power.

"Although almost one in four eligible voters in the City of Fullerton is Asian American, Asian American



candidates, who enjoy widespread support from the Asian American community, have been consistently

defeated under the at-large voting system, denying the community meaningful and fair representation in the city," said Deanna Kitamura, supervising attorney for Advancing Justice-LA's Voting Rights Project.

In July, a settlement was successfully reached and the City of Fullerton agreed to develop a district-based system for electing its city council which it will present for voter approval in November 2016. The city must also include extensive community input into the potential district lines. Advancing Justice-LA continues to work with community groups and community leaders to engage and educate the public regarding the map drawing process.

Spotlight: TRINA PASUMBAL

From Client to Rising Community Leader

Trina Pasumbal first came to Advancing Justice-LA for help in applying for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. "The most important thing for me was finding someone who was there for me and who could support and guide me," said Trina. "As an undocumented student, you can feel really lost and hopeless, so having someone support you and show you that you don't have to go through this alone is key."

Trina was then introduced to ASPIRE-LA, an undocumented Asian and Pacific Islander youth-led organization where she met her "second family" and where she was introduced to the immigrant youth movement. Through her work with ASPIRE-LA, she was inspired to encourage other undocumented youth to seek out help and resources and to get organized around the issue of immigration. Trina became an intern with Advancing Justice-LA's youth leadership program and eventually a long-term fellow helping lead youth leadership trainings.

Through the youth leadership program, Trina has worked directly with undocumented students, parents, and community members in the San Gabriel Valley. Her leadership has helped to create safe, intergenerational,

multilingual spaces where undocumented persons of all ages can get resources, share their stories, and advocate for themselves and their community. Today, she is a staff organizer for ASPIRE-LA, the first Asian and Pacific Islander undocumented youth organization in Southern California, working with youth throughout Los Angeles. As a rising community leader, Trina is realizing her dream of making sure other undocumented youth never feel alone.



Trina Pasumbal (center) at the 2015 Family Empowerment Festival

Cambodian Refugee Confronts Deportation, Fights to Save Dying Brother



In 2014, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) granted a one-year deportation reprieve to Touch Hak, so he could donate a kidney to his older brother, Puthy, who was suffering from end-stage renal failure and undergoing kidney dialysis.

Touch, a Cambodian refugee and lawful permanent resident, was relieved to be able to help the brother who had supported him through many hard times.

Touch had come to the U.S. with his family in 1985 after fleeing the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia. "I struggled a lot growing up in a refugee camp, and then the projects when my family came to California," said Touch. As a fifth grader, he survived a shooting at his Stockton elementary school, when a gunman entered the schoolyard and killed five Southeast Asian refugee children. Without counseling or support, Touch struggled in school and eventually fell into addiction. After being charged with a drug crime in 2005, he was faced with a deportation order.

"I lost everything when I went to prison, but my brother was always there for me and helped me turn my life around," said Touch. "I owe so much to him. Now it's my turn to be there for him."

The brothers were devastated when preliminary testing showed they were not a match for a kidney transplant but they found a pilot program at UC San Diego which would match them with other donor-recipient pairs. The program, however, required Touch to remain in the country for at least three years to undergo lengthy testing and post-operative care.

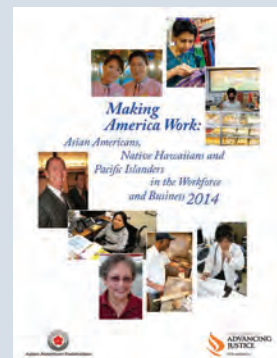
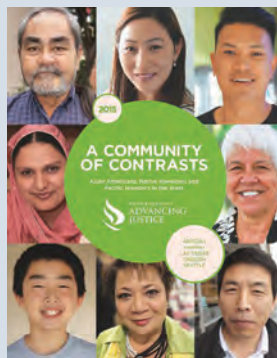
In July, Advancing Justice-LA staff attorney Jacqueline Dan filed an application with ICE to postpone Touch's deportation order for a three-year period. In September, Touch was granted another one-year stay, which was not long enough to allow him to qualify for the new pilot program.

Together with the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) and nearly 40 national and local organizations, Advancing Justice-LA continued to advocate for Touch, meeting with senior ICE officials to request a stay of removal on humanitarian grounds.

"ICE told us that their internal policy was to only grant a one-year stay of removal," said Jacqueline Dan. "We had to point out that their own regulations fully allow them to grant any amount of time that they deem appropriate under the circumstances."

In October, Touch finally received a letter from his local ICE field office informing him that he would be granted a three-year stay of removal upon enrollment into the paired donation program at UC San Diego. The three-year stay is the longest ever granted by ICE, and it finally provided Touch the opportunity to repay Puthy's love and support over the years.

2015 DEMOGRAPHIC REPORTS



Our Reach & Impact in 2015



580

VOLUNTEERS,
interns, and pro bono
attorneys contributed
over **21,000 HOURS**—
worth **\$4.3 million**

23,500

**GET OUT THE VOTE
(GOTV) CALLS** made
to registered voters in
10 Asian & Pacific
Islander languages



425

INDIVIDUALS
enrolled in
ESL/Civics courses

1,685

youth & adults participated
in **LEADERSHIP TRAININGS**,
community service events,
and large-scale convenings



7,814

**CITIZENSHIP
APPLICANTS
ASSISTED**

by Advancing Justice-LA
& NEW AMERICANS
CAMPAIGN partners
across the U.S.



174 **SUBGRANTS**

to community partners
worth **\$2.2 million**



354

**DACA
APPLICANTS
ASSISTED**



10,000

calls made to
legal helplines in **8**
languages

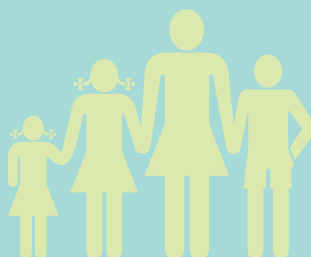
89



**community-based
organizations**
provided with **CAPACITY
BUILDING SUPPORT**

607

domestic violence
SURVIVORS SERVED



6,152

INDIVIDUALS
across **11** counties enrolled
in state and local health
coverage programs by
Advancing Justice-LA
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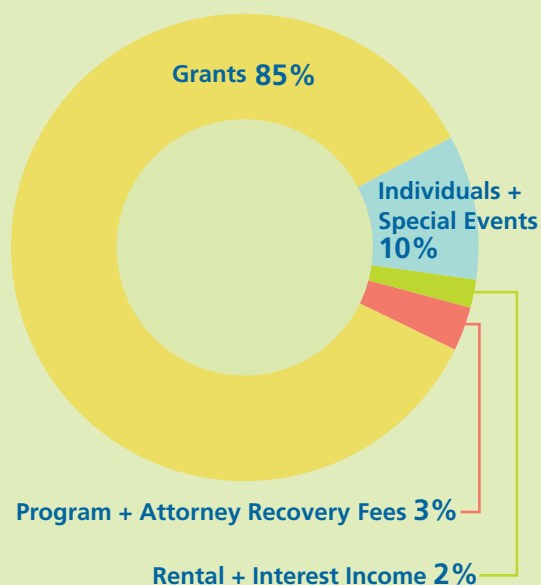
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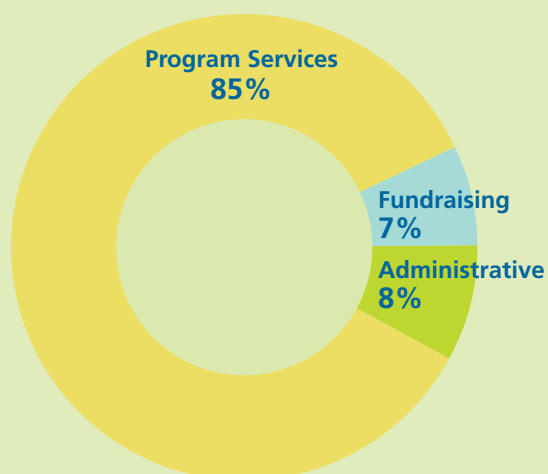


2015 Statement of Financial Position

SUPPORT & REVENUE



EXPENSES



ASSETS

Cash + Cash Equivalents	\$2,911,907
Long-term Investments	\$7,272,753
Grants + Pledges Receivables:	\$3,451,460
Property + Equipment, Net	\$2,237,459
Deposits	\$9,050
TOTAL ASSETS	\$15,882,629

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable + Accrued Expenses	\$165,041
Accrued Employee Benefits	\$250,351
Grants Payable	\$900,340
Custodial Funds	\$2,814
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,318,546

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$7,430,252
Temporarily Restricted	\$6,133,831
Permanently Restricted	\$1,000,000
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$14,564,083

TOTAL LIABILITIES + NET ASSETS **\$15,882,629**

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