

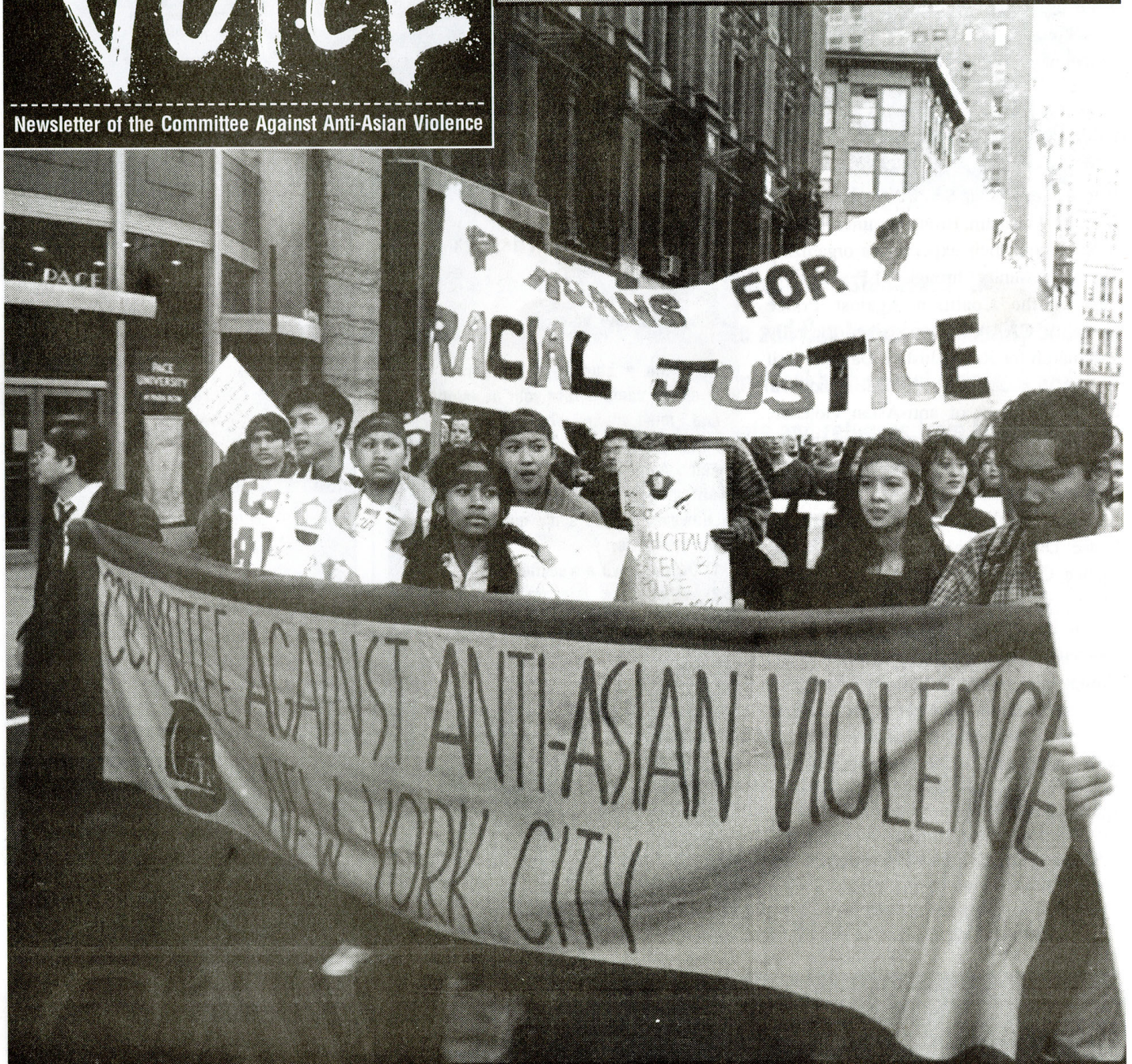
CAAIV

VOICE

Newsletter of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence

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Editors' note:



On the Cover: YLP youth lead CAAAV contingent on Racial Justice Day, 4/7/97
Cover Photo: Tong Poo

Dear CAAAV Voice Readers,

We wanted to start off this issue by saying THANKS to everyone who called or wrote in about the last issue. You are welcome to write us at the CAAAV office, 191 East 3rd Street, New York, NY 10009 attn: Voice, or email us at caaav@dti.net.

In this issue we feature CAAAV's Youth Leadership Project (YLP), coordinated by staff member Eric Tang. As part of the feature, read what Southeast Asian youth from the Fordham, Bronx community have to say about their experiences organizing their community through YLP. Also, as part of the Coalition Against Police Brutality, CAAAV co-sponsored the rally and march for Racial Justice Day on April 7. As in every issue, "Local Incidents" documents cases of anti-Asian violence, and our "Community Organizing" department gives updates on some of CAAAV's ongoing organizing projects. This issue, find out what's been going on with the Lease Drivers Coalition and the Racial Justice Committee. In "Readers Take A Stand," we reprint letters written by one of the victims of police brutality CAAAV has worked with, originally addressed to the Comptroller. And finally, our "Struggles for Justice" department gives you a look at the work of other organizations involved with social, political, and economic justice issues. So read on, and let us know what you think!

CAAAV Voice Editorial Collective
June 1997

Founded in 1986, the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAAV) organizes NYC Asian immigrant and working class communities to fight for systemic change.

VOICEMAIL

When space permits, we will feature letters from readers (we may edit for clarity and length).

>Date: Wed, 26 Mar 1997 16:52:28 -0500 (EST)

>To: caaav@dti.net
>Subject: CAAAV Voice

>

>Hi, I am a student at LaGuardia HS. Recently I came across your newsletter >and I must tell you what a wonderful job you are doing, not just for the >Asian American community, but for the well-being of the world in general.

> However, I have some questions about your newsletter:

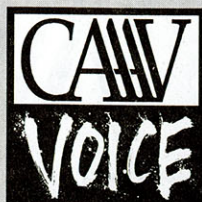
>1) Do you have a website?

>2) When was this newsletter established?

>

>Frank Mok

Thanks for emailing. We like getting feedback and will try to live up to your mighty expectations! 1) We do not have a website yet, but plans are in the works. When we do launch one, we will announce it here. 2) The CAAAV Voice began in 1990. Take care and KIT, the Editors



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CAAAV VOICE SUMMER 1997

Youth Leadership Project:

Youth Organizing in Southeast Asian Community



In Spring 1995, CAAAV's Southeast Asian Organizing Collective established the Youth Leadership Project (YLP) for the Fordham, Bronx Vietnamese and Cambodian community and its youth. YLP provides a space in which the youth, ignored by local high school programs and youth groups, can address both their varied histories as immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia and present-day challenges of racism, poverty, and other forms of violence.

YLP has grown tremendously from its 1995 program into a full-scale organizing project which works with youth and community members in order to systematically address community concerns, such as exploitative housing conditions, an abusive state welfare system, as well as youth leadership itself. To this day, YLP remains the only program in the area—service oriented or otherwise—designed specifically for Southeast Asian refugee youth.

Community Organizing: Beyond Youth Services

However, YLP's focus on youth has a larger purpose than typical "youth work" or "youth services." YLP's ultimate objective is to organize the broader Vietnamese and Cambodian community. Because of the youths' bilingual and bicultural skills, as well as their contact with a variety of community formal and informal organizations and institutions, they have great, generally untapped potential as community organizers. Yet YLP also recognizes the need to address issues particular to Southeast Asian youth. Therefore, YLP's program consists of two parts: political education workshops to address issues particular to the youth, and trainings to equip them as community

organizers. This two-pronged approach is essential because "youth issues" are inherently linked with the broader community's struggles for social, economic, and racial justice.

In the past two years, YLP has grown to fulfill and, often surpass, our original vision. In its pilot summer program in 1995, YLP worked with six local youth who were trained in community organizing skills and also implemented a summer tutoring and cultural enrichment program for Southeast Asian children in the area. Throughout the summer, CAAAV YLP organizers, with the help of the youth, explored the neighborhood, learning about the informal networks and systems of support that held the community together.

Most importantly, the program trained the youth in community organizing skills and developed a core group of organizers, half of whom returned for the 1996 Summer Program.

1996 Program: New Challenges

In early 1996 YLP expanded its outreach through weekly workshops at high schools, the health center, and the local library. YLP met with over seventy Asian youth, mostly Vietnamese or Cambodian, more than half of whom attended consistently. In

CAAAV VOICE SUMMER 1997



and communication skills. The youth trainees then began a four-week tutoring program for Southeast Asian children in Fordham, similar to the one in 1995. The youth tutored the children in math, reading and writing. Also, through frequent contact, including home visits, with the children's families, the trainees gained a deeper

May, thirty applied for the 1996 Summer Program. YLP was able to hire a total of ten Cambodian and Vietnamese youth, including three 1995 Summer Program graduates.

The 1996 Summer Program was an intensive, eight-week community organizing training with five components:

- 1) political education
- 2) implementation of a community-based project (the tutoring program)
- 3) organizing skills training
- 4) application of organizing skills (a short-term youth-run project)
- 5) creation of a youth-run community organizing project.

The program was designed to inspire and enable the trainees to develop on this final, on-going project to benefit their community.

During the first two weeks, the youth trainees learned about Asian American history, the history of the relationships between the United States and Asian countries, racism, the socioeconomics of poverty, labor struggles, immigration patterns and legislation, domestic violence, and environmental racism. They also investigated specific issues facing the Southeast Asian community in the Bronx, as well as differences and similarities in the struggles of nearby Black and Latino communities. These sessions included lectures, guest speakers, discussions, videos, two weekend retreats, field trips, interactive workshops, and community exploration exercises. There were also trainings on structure and process—working collectively and consensus-building, understanding each others' strengths and limitations, follow-through on responsibilities, delegation of work,

understanding of the economic and social backgrounds of these families and the problems shared by Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants. The families also came to know the youth as community advocates. The tutoring program graduation was well attended—including more than 30 parents, relatives, family friends, and community members.

Learning and Applying Community Organizing Skills

The youth trainees also participated in workshops on community organizing. They learned how to identify, analyze, and prioritize problems in their community, and how to present issues and mobilize support around them. As part of these trainings, current local struggles were analyzed with respect to their focus, outreach methods, and strategies for action. As an example, the youth attended a conference sponsored by the Environmental Justice Alliance and learned about the organized efforts of various communities in New York City fighting to improve the conditions of their neighborhoods.

In order to apply the skills they had learned and to develop ties as a group with the Southeast Asian community, the youth trainees designed a one-day community event, "Monsoon: The Rise of the Southeast Asian Youth," at the end of the summer. In order to plan the event, the trainees donated many hours of their own time, organized a core group of 16 Southeast Asian volunteer youth from their community, and solicited help from many more community members.

On August 17, 1996, more than one hundred Southeast Asian community members, including many of the families from the tutoring program, attended the five-hour event consisting of cultural

performances, presentations of traditional Southeast Asian clothing, and Southeast Asian food and music. The youth trainees wrote in the event program, "[This] Southeast Asian Community Event is the first community event organized by Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao youth of the Fordham, Bronx. Along with raising funds for future community projects, this event is organized to build a stronger, interactive Southeast Asian community. This is a step towards self-determination and community empowerment."

Through the hands-on experience of designing and implementing their own short-term project the youth trainees learned the challenges of time and resource management, prioritization of tasks, interpersonal dynamics with volunteers, and fundraising. The youth also developed a close group spirit, frequently socializing together outside of the program.

A Youth-Run Organizing Project: Housing and Welfare

The final phase of the summer program focused on the creation of an on-going youth-run community project to begin in the fall. Through intensive discussions and evaluations of the first seven weeks of the program, the youth trainees identified housing conditions as an urgent issue for their community. During home visits for the tutoring program, they had learned of many problems—holes in the wall giving way to rats, collapsed floorboards causing injuries to small children, broken doors and locks, and lack of heat in the winter. Many Southeast Asian families, uninformed about the conditions of their leases and tenants' rights, were targets of exploitative landlords who raised rents without providing basic repairs. YLP and the youth trainees view landlord abuse, coupled with the neglect of protective governmental agencies, as a form of violence against the refugee and immigrant communities.

As YLP began its outreach for the fall 1996 housing campaign, it soon realized that the most pressing issue for community members is the new federal law which cuts off all documented immigrants from food stamps and Social Security Income (SSI). (After five years, Vietnamese and Cambodian

refugees are reclassified as documented immigrants.) For some, the new law could mean a loss of nearly half their income. YLP's analysis of the 1990 U.S. Census found that, in the five-tract area in which YLP works, Asians (most of whom are Southeast Asian) have a per capita income of \$6,297, with 42.4% of them living below the poverty level. YLP surveys, conducted with housing organizing visits in selected buildings in the area, showed reality to be even worse. In fact, at least 90% of Southeast Asian families are receiving some form of public assistance.

Recognizing the need to fight welfare reform initiatives, the youth organizers (graduates of the summer program) began distributing welfare rights information during their housing organizing visits. The goal is to inform Southeast Asian families about their welfare rights and possible appeals or alternative sources of aid.

In late March, YLP held a communi-

ty-wide meeting on welfare reform. During this meeting, families were able to work one-on-one with welfare advocates, including the youth organizers and volunteers trained by CAAAV and the Asian American Federation-New York. In addition, people in the city's welfare program were introduced to a city-wide network against the economic exploitation of the welfare program.

New Growth: Looking Ahead

As the YLP begins its third year, it will expand its organizing training and



step up community campaigns. This summer, the youth organizers from the previous year will continue working with community members around housing and welfare, further developing a sustained organizing campaign. Meanwhile a new group of youth trainees will go through the rigorous summer training. This summer's training, renamed the Summer Institute, will do more to integrate political education workshops with the on-going community organizing campaigns. The trainees in the 1997 Summer Institute will learn organizing skills by assisting the veteran youth organizers.

The housing and welfare organizing and the continuing development of the Summer Institute has led YLP into new and exciting directions. The promise of the program is best articulated by the youth themselves (see sidebar), who envision themselves involved in more organized and determined struggles for their communities.

YLP Youth Write About Their Experiences

In what ways do you think you benefited?

After being in YLP I've learned new laws that can help people who don't know much about this country. I can use my knowledge that was learned from CAAAV to help people to understand their rights and for them to know what is legal and illegal.

—Sara Por

I have gained a knowledge that I probably wouldn't have been able to get on my own, in the education system. I learned that we have the power to come together as a community to overcome obstacles. I learned how to have fun and help my community at the same time.

—Samlath Tuy

From participating in YLP, I have benefited the outgoing skills to be more open and talkative in front of a crowd. The most useful skills that I have received from this program, that I know will be very useful for my future is the skills to be able to organize.

—Tram Troung

I've become much more aware of things around me. For example what

people with power are trying to do and how I can help not only myself but my community. I've also gained knowledge that schools wouldn't teach about Asian history and other things (laws).

—Chhaya Choum

How do you think your attitudes have changed?

Just looking at myself I was going nowhere fast. Since being part of YLP I feel more comfortable everyday knowing I am trying to help improve the Asian community in the Fordham Bronx area. I soon realized that my community is not just my neighborhood but the Fordham area is my community too. I feel my life has taken a dramatic turn. The future looks bright for both my family as well as my community, but so far it has not been good for any of us.

—Thoul Tong

Ever since I have been part of YLP, I have had more respect for my background and my culture. I have been paying more attention to my family's history and the struggle they went through.

—Tram Troung

Do you think people see you differently?

I think back then people thought that I'm a thug. But now [since being part of YLP] I think the ones that had doubts of me are surprised.

—Sinoch Yann

My mother sees me different, she thinks what I'm doing is good for the community. She wants me to continue what I'm doing.

—Peter Bip

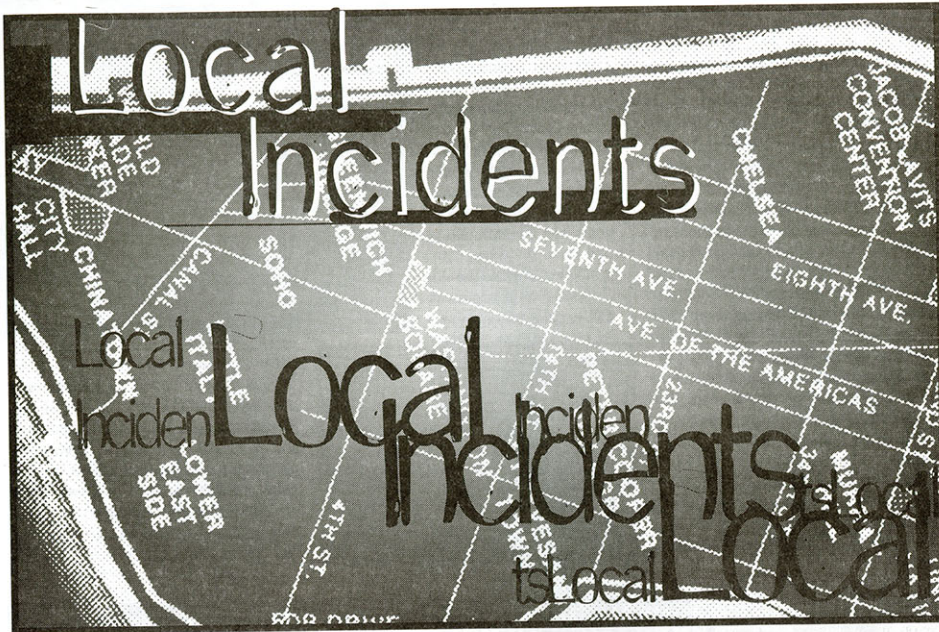
Do you feel your community has changed since the program began?

I think it's going to take more of our effort to get it done. Also more effort on the part of the people in the community. They have to make more of an effort to come out and stand on the issues they believe in and not keep silent about what they believe in.

—Thoul Tong

My community hasn't changed but I feel that it will eventually improve. Changes like this are very slow. Only patience, hard work and time will tell.

—Chhaya Choum



Victories for Chinese Victims of Police Violence

Chinese Woman Acquitted in Brooklyn

On December 4, 1996, Ngan Lee—a Chinese woman assaulted and arrested by NYPD Officer Tacconi of the 60th Precinct in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn—was acquitted on wrongful charges of harassing a police officer (See CAAAV Voice Summer '96). Officer Tacconi and his partner testified that Ms. Lee—whose first language is Cantonese—had coerced her children in English to lie and say that the police had hit her. On November 21st, Ms. Lee's 11-year-old daughter countered the allegations by testifying against the officers' claims.

Ms. Lee's trial was closely followed by the Chinese-language press, which has been monitoring cases of police brutality within the Chinese community. Ngan Lee will file a lawsuit against the City of New York for police misconduct and wrongful prosecution.

Victories for Police Brutality Victims

The Coalition for the Advancement of Police Accountability (CAPA) had more reasons to celebrate as the wrongful charges against its other members were recently dismissed in court. Charges against WC—beaten and arrested by a 5th Precinct officer (badge #19633) on July 27, 1996—were dropped on December 19, 1996. And charges against MYL—maced and racially and sexually taunted by a 61st

Precinct officer (badge #11066) on May 27, 1996—were dismissed on January 22, 1997 (See CAAAV Voice Winter '97).

New Cases Brooklyn

Chinese Woman Falls Victim to Racial and Sexual Harassment

AT, a Chinese woman who has been racially and sexually harassed by a neighbor for the past two years in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, received little justice from the Brooklyn District Attorney's office. AT's neighbor threatened her with remarks like: "Chink" and "Are you horny? Do you know some Chinese sexual gestures?" Her neighbor has also threatened her life and even broke her window and fence on numerous occasions. Despite repeated reports to the NYPD, the police failed to remedy AT's situation. The police finally brought charges against the neighbor when he attacked AT with a broomstick.

Although AT told Bureau Chief Frank Manero of the Brooklyn District Attorney's office that she did not think mediation would resolve her dispute (as attempts at mediation had failed in the past), his office scheduled mediation in her absence. Throughout the case, Manero remained inaccessible to AT, and every time she appeared in court, her case was assigned to a new Assistant District Attorney who had no knowledge of the history of the case. After AT finally wrote

a letter to District Attorney Hynes complaining about her experience with the judicial process, Manero offered an ACD (Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal) to AT's neighbor. The ACD will dismiss the charges in 6 months. AT is now fearful of further violent harassment from her neighbor.

Manhattan

Japanese Man Assaulted by Police

On November 21, 1996, KK, a Japanese man, was severely beaten and arrested by several police officers from the 13th Precinct.

As he was entering a Dunkin Donuts on 23rd Street and Broadway, KK was approached by a police officer who directed a comment at him. Possessing very little English skills, KK did not respond to the officer's comment and proceeded to enter the shop. The officer then struck him on the back of the head and knocked him onto the sidewalk. Two to three more police officers came on the scene and began beating him. KK was eventually arrested by Officer Matthew Ryan (#17163) and charged with attempted assault, resisting arrest, and disorderly conduct.

KK lost consciousness and later woke up in the hospital where he was treated for a broken nose and other injuries. KK's court-appointed attorney referred him to CAAAV, alarmed by the extent of his injuries.

Korean Woman Raped and Brutally Beaten



Illustrations: Debi Roy-Chaudhuri

In December 1996, CC, a Korean woman working for an escort service, was raped, strangled, beaten, and left for dead in a downtown Manhattan office building. She was found in a coma by a security guard that weekend; had she been found 24 hours later, she would have died. The perpetrator, Michael Sperko, a self-proclaimed martial arts expert and military school graduate, was arrested for attempted murder, rape, and robbery. On May 22, 1996 Sperko pleaded guilty.

Innocent Chinese Youth Framed and Railroaded

19-year-old BZ, framed by 5th Precinct NYPD officers for two crimes he did not commit, was imprisoned at Riker's Island for several months while awaiting trial. In May 1996, BZ was arrested as a suspect in a robbery that took place in a brothel on May 7, 1996. In November 1996, BZ sat through a jury trial at Manhattan Criminal Court in which witness testimonies pointed to the conclusion that BZ had been framed. On the morning of November 18, as BZ awaited the jury's verdict, the prosecutor announced to the court that BZ is a member of a Chinatown gang, and that he was wanted as a suspect in a murder that took place on November 15 in a supermarket on East Broadway in Chinatown. The court proceedings were adjourned, and the same arresting officers from the first case arrested BZ a second time in the courtroom and sent him straight to Riker's Island where he was imprisoned without bail.

One week after the second arrest, BZ returned to court to receive the verdict from the first trial, and was acquitted by the jury. Despite evidence that points to BZ's innocence in the murder

case—such as a clear alibi and a videotape taken by the supermarket surveillance camera in which BZ is nowhere to be seen—the same assistant district attorney (ADA) who unsuccessfully prosecuted BZ in the first case refused to dismiss the charges against BZ in the murder case.

In March 1997, BZ was unexpectedly released from Riker's Island on a \$1 bail, with no explanation from the ADA to him or his lawyer as to why he had been imprisoned in the first place and why he was suddenly being released. On March 10, 1997, BZ went to court and his charges were formally dismissed. The ADA did not appear in court that day, but instead sent a message to the judge requesting dismissal.

CAAAV believes that this case is yet another example of the criminalization of our youth by Chinatown's 5th Precinct and the Manhattan District Attorney's office. BZ plans to file a civil suit against the city, the police, and the ADA for malicious prosecution.

Chinatown Van Driver Brutalized by NYPD

On January 31, 1997, CZ, a young Chinese man, was assaulted by 5th Precinct police officers on the corner of Grand Street and Chrystie in Chinatown—the same location where KL and WC were assaulted by the police in two separate incidents last summer. (See Voice Winter '97.) CZ, a van driver for his father's van company, was parked next to a parking meter when a police car pulled up next to him. The officer motioned him to leave the parking space. CZ drove to another block. The police followed him and ordered CZ to step out of the van. When CZ showed the police his license, an officer ordered him to put his hands up, and choked CZ from behind. Three plainclothes officers joined him, pushed CZ to the ground and kned him in the face. CZ was arrested and taken to the 5th Precinct and charged with disorderly conduct.

On February 14, 1997, CAAAV accompanied CZ to criminal court where his charge was dismissed due to lack of evidence. CZ plans to file a civil suit against the City of New York.

Community Organizing



This section provides news from CAAAV's four organizing programs:

- The Lease Drivers Coalition
- The Youth Leadership Project
- The Women Workers Project
- The Racial Justice Committee

Lease Drivers Coalition Protests Police Abuse and Demands TLC Reform

Recently, LDC has been working intensively to gear up for its two major campaigns, "Protest Police Abuse of Taxi Drivers" and "Call for a Democratic TLC." The New York City yellow cab driver community totals close to 30,000 drivers. A majority of the drivers are male immigrants of color, mostly from South Asian countries including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka. Driver after driver stated to LDC organizers that LDC must build a mass membership to have a legitimate bargaining tool. Collective action is seen as drivers' only advantage. To build membership, LDC members—both drivers and non-drivers—are there at restaurants where other taxi drivers stop for a bite. They are there at gas stations and garages at shift change when day drivers are turning the cabs over to night drivers. They tap into informal networks through mosques, through garages, and over four different CB channels. Membership of both day and night drivers has expanded and continues to grow.

"Call for a Democratic TLC" demands that the regulatory body for yellow cab drivers, the Taxi and Limousine Commission, acknowledge the experiences and perspectives of drivers in its rules, regulations, and policies. The campaign has three central demands:

- the creation of an independent committee of lease cab drivers within the TLC to participate in policy decisions;
- a change in the TLC meeting day, time, and location so that day and night drivers can attend;
- a requirement that garage owners and brokers make their finances public.

LDC is collecting signatures for a petition demanding a public meeting with the TLC Commissioner.

"Protest Police Abuse" aims to draw public attention to the NYPD's harassment, excessive ticketing, assault, and wrongful arrest of drivers. Though drivers commonly talk about these problems, information about the experiences has never been consolidated. LDC is collecting this information now, along with the names, badge numbers, and precincts of the police officers who perpetrate the offenses. LDC coordinator Bhairavi Desai states that this campaign will "make the public aware of what drivers already know: that taxi drivers face daily police abuse."

Racial Justice Committee Conducts Petition Drive Against Police Brutality and Holds Yong Xin Huang Remembrance

Petition Drive

RJC, in partnership with the Coalition for the Advancement of Police Accountability (CAPA), a group founded by Chinese victims of police violence, has been conducting weekly petition drives in Chinatown and Brooklyn. The



drives aim to raise support for Kanog Lu, a Chinese youth brutalized by 5th Precinct officers, and to build community consciousness around other cases of police brutality and negligence. RJC's outreach efforts have been rewarded by increased support from the Chinese community as evidenced by editorials printed in the Chinese press as well as the letters, faxes, and contributions made to CAAAV's all encouraging RJC and CAPA's effort. Buttressed by this growing support, RJC will pressure the Manhattan District Attorney to investigate the rising numbers of police abuses in order to bring about fundamental structural and policy changes in the criminal justice system. One critical demand is having readily accessible Chinese language translators in the 5th Precinct.

Yong Xin Huang Remembrance

On Sunday, March 23, nearly a hundred people gathered in Chinatown's Columbus Park to observe the two-year anniversary of the murder of Yong Xin Huang by NYPD Officer Steven Mizrahi. Speakers included other victims of police violence like Susan Chan as well as representatives from Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's office, Project REACH, the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, the Korean Merchants' Association of the Village, and others. Yong Xin's sisters also spoke. Mourners donned blue ribbons and tied white carnations around Yong Xin's portrait while drummers from the Center for Korean American Culture performed. Hyun Lee, coordinator of the Racial Justice Committee, summed up the event: "a day of mourning, but also a day of strength."

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Photographs: Ting Poo

Over a thousand people and dozens of organizations turned out to support Racial Justice Day on April 7, 1997. The rally began at City Hall and was followed by a march that snaked through Chinatown and the Lower East Side. Racial Justice Day concluded in Washington Square Park, where organizations vowed to continue the fight against police brutality.



Community-based organizations including the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, CAAAV, La Nietas, the Audre Lorde Project, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and the Student Power Movement coordinated Racial Justice Day to protest police violence against people of color. Angry family members movingly spoke about the loss of the loved ones at the hands of the police. Speakers included Joyce Huang, the sister of Yong Xin Huang. Racial Justice Day came in the wake of yet another police killing: Kevin Cedeno, a Trinidadian youth who was shot in the back and killed by the NYPD the day before the rally.

CAA AV organizers and volunteers marched with a strong contingent of active members as well as youth from the Youth Leadership Project. Before the rally, CAA AV and other Asian organizations arranged a press conference for Asian media.

Staff Changes



Photograph: Ting Poo

CAA AV Welcomes New Staff Member

A warm welcome to Ai-jen Poo, our new staff member. On January 1st, Ai-jen assumed the

responsibilities of part-time Program Coordinator for CAAAV's Women Workers Project (WWP). As a previously active member of the program, Ai-jen will be able to use her experience to further develop WWP activities. Before joining the staff, Ai-jen served on CAAAV's Board of Directors as WWP representative.

Ai-jen is a graduate of Columbia University, majoring in Women and Gender Studies. Currently she tutors at the Writing Center of the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Ai-jen plans to devote her energy to the development of long-term relationships with Asian immigrant women workers, and to using advocacy as a tool for community organizing. Great to have you aboard, Ai-jen, and we all wish you a bundle of success!

CAA AV's 1997 summer intern, Joanne M. Chang, has completed her internship, and will be graduating from Cornell University this month.

Joanne has been instrumental to CAAAV's direct mail appeal project, the Yong Xin Huang memorial event, cleaning up and updating our press clippings, helping with community education requests, and other activities. Bringing creative energy, a sense of humor, patience and enthusiasm to her work, Joanne will be missed, and we wish her the best of luck in Taiwan this summer. We look forward to seeing her when she returns.

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Readers Take a Stand



Illustration: Lee Mee Kim

On July 7, 1995, Xiang Zhou was assaulted by four plain clothes police officers in the Grand Street subway station. The officers wrongfully accused Mr. Zhou of not paying his fare and took him into a room in the station where they verbally and physically abused him. He was then taken to the 5th Precinct and given a summons for "resisting arrest." He received a small victims compensation from the City of New York (see CAAAV Voice Fall 1995). Here, we reprint two letters Mr. Xiang sent to the New York City Comptroller.

October 6, 1996

Office of the NYC Comptroller
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007-2341
Re: Claim #95PI022747

Dear Mr. Lawrence Schindelheim:

I was very glad to receive your letter dated 10/1/96, with regard to the settlement of my claim.

Money is not so important to me as justice. You can imagine, a person who paid the token couldn't take the subway and couldn't get service—what he got was just arresting, beating and insulting. I think anybody who experiences such a kind of matter would feel it was not fair, and would become angry.

I'm a person who is very conscious of his reputation and cherishes his credit. For more than one year since the incident happened, I have been trying every means to seek justice. I filed a complaint with the C.C.R.B.; the Chinese community newspaper and t.v. in New York reported my story; and I sought help from the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence. I consulted a lot of Chinese lawyers, and I regarded it as a good chance for me to improve myself and the Chinese community.

So for more than one year, a lot of time, money, energy and emotional drama was involved. I experienced how hard and difficult it is to find justice. I experienced that a person who lives in this world should be fair, just and responsible for others, not to mention policeman whom the government gives the right and the power to defend the people. I found that it is very easy for a policeman to charge an innocent person, because he knows how to take advantage of the situation.

I'm a newcomer to the U.S.A. I had been in the U.S.A. for just 14 months when the incident happened. I didn't know how society operated. I did not have enough money, energy and experience to fight the police. Meanwhile, I have come to know that it is not so easy to fight the police. (In fact, sometimes I feel very lucky compared with innocent others who died because of the brutality of the police.) All I can do is to be true, honest, observe the law, and trust the government.

Sincerely,

Xiang Zhou



November 21, 1996

Office of the NYC Comptroller
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007-2341
Re: Claim #95PI022747

Dear Mr. Lawrence Schindelheim:

Thank you so much for your letter concerning the settlement to my claim.

Although \$410 is not a big sum of money, it is significant and meaningful to me. My exhausting effort finally brings some positive results. When the incident happened, I felt that I was groping in the dark. I was not familiar with the law; I didn't have much money to get sufficient legal aid; I didn't have connections to help me. All I relied on was my courage, and the persistent pursuit of justice. I did nothing wrong, so I thought nobody could prevent me from seeking justice.

On the other hand, I think your revised offer is based on your deep investigation into my case. So I think it shows your respect for the fact that you are sympathetic for innocent people. In addition, it is also the result of the effort of the Asian community. Without their help and support, I couldn't have gotten such results.

However, I must say that the settlement is far from the damage I suffered from the incident. For more than one year and a half, the economic loss, the mental and physical damage caused by the incident is not so easy to be counted by money. I am at a loss why society always uses money to measure, solve, and make up for justice. No wonder a lawyer told me that in the U.S., money is justice and justice is money.

Although I accepted your offer, I still have lost hope. In my opinion, such an incident could have been avoided if the police had been fair and responsible. I still remember the day I was arrested, there was a lot of police — all in plain clothes — waiting around the entrance of the subway. It was very easy for them to see who paid the token, and who did not.

Thank you again for working on my case.

Yours Sincerely,

Xiang Zhou

Struggles For Justice



El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice

Founded 15 years ago in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, El Puente ("The Bridge") began as a Latino-based community organization committed to "bridging self and community for peace and justice." In 1993, the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice opened as the academic and research arm of El Puente, described as "the only public high school for human rights in the world." The Academy's curriculum reflects El Puente's commitment to social justice and community-based needs. Some student-driven projects have included screening neighborhood children for lead poisoning; producing annual arts and cultural festivals; and fighting for issues ranging from immigrants' rights to police brutality. El Puente also incorporates and cherishes the cultures of its racially marginalized students, even offering classes on break dancing by one of hip hop's pioneers—Crazy Legs. More recently, El Puente made a strong showing on Racial Justice Day. The El Puente Academy stands as a model for public educational institutions beginning to recognize the need for curriculums that bring the community and community issues into the classroom.

Project REACH

Project REACH is a multicultural organization that works on a number of fronts to combat discrimination, including heterosexism, homophobia, AIDS-phobia, sexism, and ageism. Using an empowerment model, where youth run and participate in all aspects of programming, Project REACH organizes around an agenda of social responsibility and social change and encourages youth to take more (or take back) control of their lives and the communities in which they live.

Project REACH has a number of program areas. Pro-RADS (Project REACH Anti-Discrimination Space) is a drop-in center for queer youth. Youth are currently forming a new organization centered on Pro-RADS in which youth will sit on the board and provide direction in programming, fundraising, vision, and implementation. CASAA (Community AIDS Support Action Agenda) works with HIV-positive youth. Womyn's Base focuses on sexual assault, rape, and gynecological health. Youth Organizing Youth is a network that provides youth services, organizes around youth issues, and trains youth for leadership in organizations. HOTT (Health Outreach to Teens), created in collaboration with the Lesbian & Gay Center, provides youth weekly access to a mobile health clinic. Project REACH is also planning its Summer Social Issues Program, where youth are trained around anti-discrimination organizing, peer counseling, and skills like workshop facilitation. For more information, contact Project REACH at 212.966.4963 or visit the office at One Orchid Street in Chinatown, Manhattan.

Arson at Chinese Staff and Workers Association

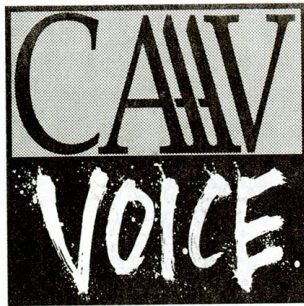
On January 29, 1997, a fire was discovered in an abandoned brothel directly

above the Chinese Staff and Workers Association. "From the timing, it looks like the CSWA was targeted because they were speaking out against sweatshops," a senior police officer said, according to Jim Dwyer (Daily News, 1/30/97). No one has been charged. The fire follows the NYS Attorney General's announcement of a \$1.5 million lawsuit against Jing Fong Restaurant on behalf of 58 workers for back wages and stolen tips. New York State Attorney General Dennis Vacco called for the immediate reinstatement of Jing Fong waiter Mr. Deng and a court injunction which would force the restaurant to comply with labor laws during the court proceedings.

"Politicians usually come to Chinatown for free food at fundraisers while they ignore the deplorable working conditions. Vacco shocked the Chinatown community with this lawsuit; however, the workers who were brave enough to complain against management and provide testimonies to the NYS Attorney General's Office two years ago at the preliminary hearings made the lawsuit possible," said CSWA staff member Kwong Hui.

After Vacco's announcement Chinese American Restaurant Association (CARA), whose members include Chinese restaurant owners, held a press conference for the Chinese press at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association where CARA representatives denounced CSWA. "Some Chinese are helping outsiders to hurt our community. If the Chinese don't engage in a counter-attack, we will continue to be discriminated against, to be pushed around by other people. We hope Chinese restaurants and businesses get together and demand an apology from Vacco," said CARA honorary president Yeng Tin Moy.

It has been two years since the first Jing Fong worker was fired for speaking out about working conditions. CSWA asks that supporters maintain pressure, increase awareness on this issue, and boycott Jing Fong.



Newsletter of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence

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