

# Asian American Union for Political Action

39 Bowery • Box 339 • New York, NY • 10002

20 January 1988

Dear Friend,

The Thienvanich Justice Committee of the Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAA AV) is making an urgent appeal for funds on behalf of the family of Vuthikrai Thienvanich who was shot to death by a transit police officer on the morning of December 12, 1987.

Originally from Thailand and a 15-year resident of the U.S., Mr. Thienvanich was shot in the abdomen, chest and extremities by transit officer Nelson Bracero in Brooklyn, who alleges that the victim had threatened him with a steak knife. Thienvanich, a devout Buddhist and reliable and well-liked employee of a video company, was on his way to Chinatown that Saturday morning as was his weekly routine. His family, shocked and outraged by the brutal and senseless murder of Vuthikrai, has decided to conduct an independent investigation for which an estimated \$2500 is needed.

The nature of the criminal justice system in this city has forced the Thienvanich family to hire an investigator and pathologist in order to insure that the truth be known. Specifically, the investigator is needed to track down witnesses and recover information about officer Bracero and hospital records. The pathologist will be asked to examine the autopsy report, tissue and clothing specimens, and relevant slides.

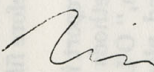
Several of the questions regarding Mr. Thienvanich's death include the nature of the altercation, if any, preceding the police shooting, why it was necessary for the officer to have shot five times, and why the Medical Examiner's office has not been forthcoming with a pathology report. The Brooklyn District Attorney's office has yet to question any witnesses, nor has a grand jury been convened. It is of utmost importance that the family get as much information as possible before the grand jury convenes.


We will be holding an emergency fundraiser at the home of Lani and Roger Sanjek on Tuesday, February 2, from 6-9 pm. Their address is 320 Riverside Drive, at 104th Street, Apartment 3G.

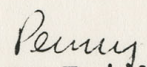
Members of Mr. Thienvanich's family, attorney Eric Poulos (the lawyer retained by the family) and CAA AV representatives will be present to give and update on the case and to answer any questions you may have. A buffet dinner will be served. This fundraiser is being organized by the Asian American Union for Political Action (AAUPA), a newly-formed organization of independent Asian Americans.

We hope that even if you are unable to make the event, you will contribute generously to this cause.

Towards justice,

  
Mini Liu

  
Lani Sanjek

  
Penny Fujiko Willgerodt

RSVP: 718/604-3757



# Cop's Slaying of Thai Man Probed

By Rita Giordano and Bob Liff

A coalition of Asian-American civil rights activists is aiding a private investigation into the fatal shooting Dec. 12 of a native of Thailand by a transit policeman. Police reported that Vuthikrai Thienvanich, 41, of Coney Island, Brooklyn, went berserk and repeatedly lunged at officer Nelson Bracero with a kitchen knife before being shot five times by the officer. Transit police spokesman Albert O'Leary said Bracero first tried to use his nightstick to subdue the knife-wielding man at the Brighton Beach stop of the D train, and that the first three bullets fired at the man did not stop him.

O'Leary said, transit police, Acting

Chief Vincent del Castillo met with Chinatown civic leader Joseph Mei after Mei requested a meeting to discuss the death. Eric Poulos, a lawyer hired by the Thienvanich family, said he plans to hire a pathologist to perform an independent autopsy.

"What they're concerned about is, first of all, finding out the truth, finding out what happened and what the district attorney is doing about the case," Poulos said of surviving members of Thienvanich's family. "They say he has no history of being violent, no history of guns or knives."

"We want to prove exactly what happened," said Lersvedhya Thievanich, 47, the dead man's brother.

A routine investigation by the Brooklyn district attorney's office is also under way, O'Leary said. Bracero has been reassigned to clerical duties pending outcome of the investigation, as is also routine in shooting incidents, O'Leary said.

Mini Liu, the cochair of the Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence, said Asian civil rights activists have become increasingly concerned with a general rise in anti-Asian activities, including evidence of discrimination in housing. She said Thienvanich, a janitor with a Brooklyn technical company, was a devout adherent to Buddhism, which she described as a "nonviolent, nonconfrontational religion."

O'Leary said detectives questioned several witnesses to the 9 a.m. incident as well as the officer before filing a preliminary report.

"The preliminary report is that the officer used several methods to disarm and quell the situation," O'Leary said. "He talked to him and pleaded with him to give up the knife, constantly backing up, and the officer first used his nightstick to try and subdue him.

"The guy got madder and started slashing. The officer fired one shot to no effect, then a second shot and a third to no effect," O'Leary said. "He fired two more and the man went down. Even as he lay there on the ground, he went for the knife."

## Asian Group Assails Probe of Man's Death

A coalition of Asian-American activists has accused the Brooklyn district attorney's office of dragging its feet in the investigating the Dec. 12 fatal shooting of a Thai man by a transit officer.

Leaders of the Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence said they are also questioning the conduct of the Transit Authority and Transit Police in the case, and they said they plan to air their criticisms at a news conference this evening.

The coalition is participating in a private investigation being conducted by the family of Vuthikrai Thienvanich, 41. Police said that Thienvanich was shot five times one month ago by Transit Office Nelson Bracero, 28, after the man allegedly went berserk at the Brighton Beach stop of the D train and repeatedly lunged at the officer with a knife. Transit police's initial investigation showed Bracero acted within department guidelines.

The dead man's family, however, claim their relative had no history of violent behavior.

—Rita Giordano