



Revealing the Asian American Pacific Islander Boys and Men of Color Field — Living in the Intersections & Invisibility of Race and Gender

Is there a field, who comprises it, and what are the challenges and opportunities to build power and equity?



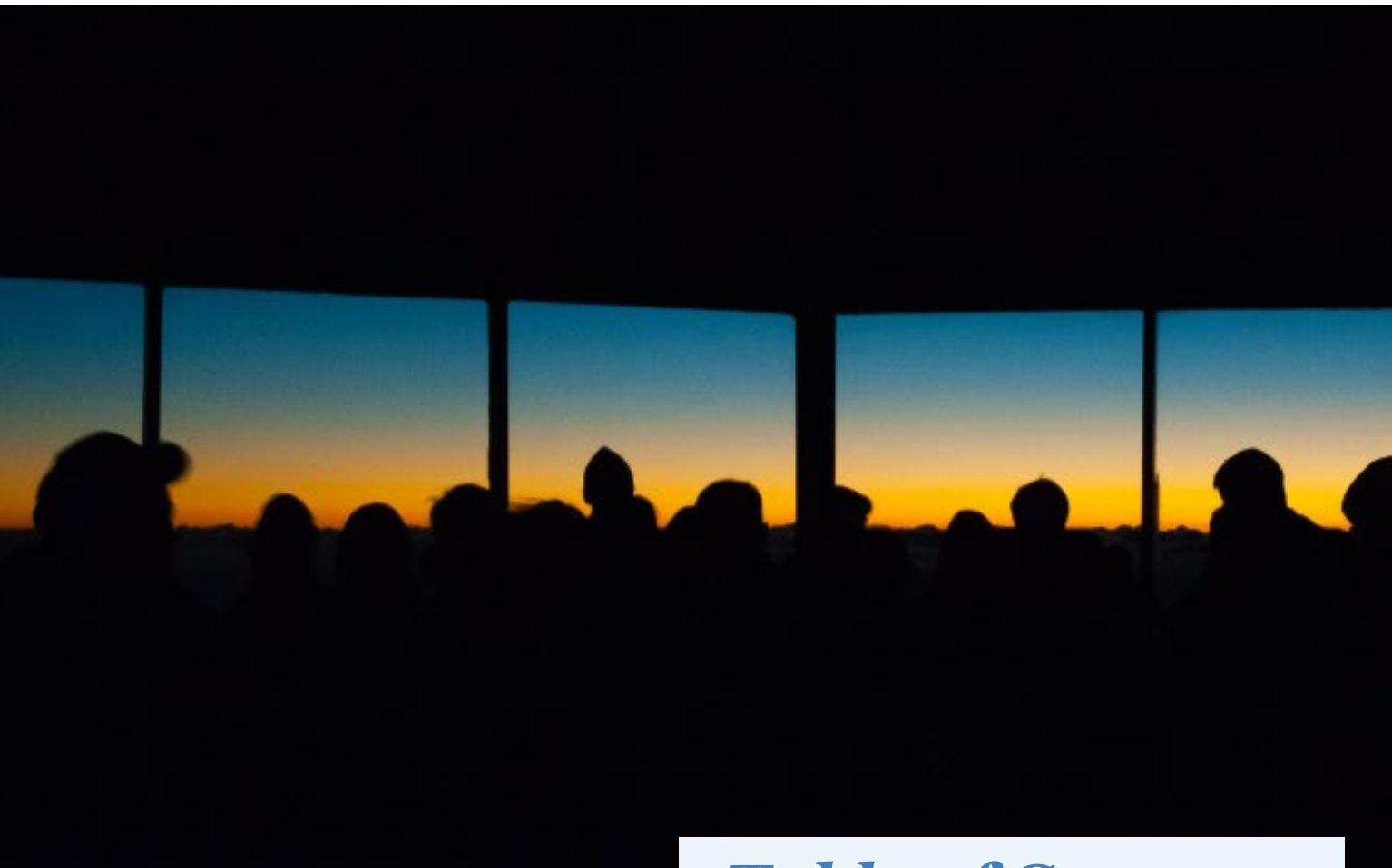


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The Executives' Alliance for Boys and Men of Color is a network of national, regional, and community foundations committed to removing structural and systemic barriers so that boys and men of color can realize their full potential. EA members vary in their approaches to this work; but they are bound by a shared commitment to increasing economic, educational, civic-engagement, and wellness opportunities for boys and men of color. www.funders4bmoc.org

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About Us

The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (**SEARAC**) is a national civil rights organization that empowers Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese American communities to create a socially just and equitable society. As representatives of the largest refugee community ever resettled in the United States, **SEARAC** stands together with other refugee communities, communities of color, and social justice movements in pursuit of social equity.

Having experienced severe trauma, the impact of war left many refugees and entire communities, particularly Southeast Asians, reeling from post-traumatic stress in addition to the challenges that families faced once resettled in the United States. As newcomers, many refugees were resettled into communities that lacked resources and faced high poverty and crime.

This ripple effect of trauma and poverty on Southeast Asian refugees compounded the challenges that many faced in attaining education, social and economic prosperity, and health—a cycle that perpetuates across generations. To date, Southeast Asian refugee communities continue to face high disparities in many areas of well-being, even a generation or two after having resettled in America. For example, while 15% of the share of the US population lives in poverty, 19% of Cambodian and 28% of Hmong American live in poverty, well above the national share. Additionally, 30% of Southeast Asian Americans do not hold a high school degree, compared to only 13% of the Asian American and US population.

These needs are compounded when looking at the needs of young Southeast Asian men, who experience higher rates of high school dropout, and higher rates of incarceration and deportation. For example, in some school districts in California, high school completion also includes disparities between men and women within AAPI groups. The high school completion rates for Hmong and Laotian males were lower than those of their female counterparts. Additionally, under the Trump Administration, deportation rates increased by 240% for the Vietnamese and Cambodian community – increasing an average of 37 individuals deported per year to 98. In 2017 alone, 122 individuals were deported to Vietnam, and 126 were deported to Cambodia. At **SEARAC**, one of our core values is our belief that the communities most impacted by the issues should be the faces and voices leading our work. Thus, SEARAC formed the Southeast Asian American Young

Men’s Collaborative (SEAAYM) in 2014 to address the intergenerational and complex traumas they face as 1.5 and second-generation Southeast Asian American young men growing up in low-income America through coalition building, policy development, advocacy training, and mobilization. In 2016, SEAAYM expanded to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Coalition Helping to Achieve Racial and Gender Justice (CHARGE) to be inclusive of additional Asian American experiences. CHARGE’s vision is to develop a youth and community-centered movement to shift policy, narratives, and youth advocacy capacity to ensure AAPI representation in gender equity dialogue.

As one of the only AAPI organizations resourced to support Southeast Asian and AAPI young men, this field analysis draws upon **SEARAC**’s direct experience being the convener of the SEAAYM and CHARGE, as well as our experience in connecting across national labor, education, and criminal justice coalitions to uplift the voices of our communities.

¹AAPI Data, using Bureau of Census, Analysis of PUMS Data ACS 5-Year Estimates, www.facts.aapidata.com

²U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B15002

³Teranishi, Robert. National Commission on Asian American & Pacific Islander Research in Education, “Ethnic and Gender Subgroup Differences in Education, Employment, and Incarceration in the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community” 2015.

⁴Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. Deportation Data Unpublished raw data 2019.



Introduction

AAPIs - A community at the intersections of race & gender

In recent years, there has been an increase in attention and investments for programs and policies that serve and uplift boys and men of color. These efforts recognize that the unique and pressing challenges faced by boys and men of color across the country too often go unaddressed, contributing to social and economic disparities that can negatively impact entire families and communities. The best among these efforts also acknowledge that the skills, talents, and contributions of boys and men of color are assets that can greatly benefit the nation as a whole.

The intentional focus and resources to support programs and policy initiatives serving boys and men of color can have deep and lasting impact, especially in some of the nation's most impoverished and overlooked communities. Yet, while national resources do exist to highlight the needs of boys and men of color, very few specifically highlight the needs, challenges, and assets of AAPI boys and men. Even less is known about the organizations that serve this population.

In the process of conducting this analysis, two potential reasons emerged for explaining why AAPI boys and men and their community, or what we call the “field” in this analysis, is so unseen in the larger boys and men of color field. **As a result of double exclusion – not being seen as people of color, nor seen as men – AAPI boys and men have been both implicitly and explicitly invisible in the larger boys and men of color field.**

Racial exclusion – AAPIs are excluded from the racial lens and invisible or not considered as people of color due to the model minority myth.

As the fastest growing population in the United States, AAPIs represent a diverse set of ethnic groups with their own unique cultures and languages. However, aggregated data often mask particular needs of specific AAPI communities,

failing to account for the different experiences among AAPI ethnic groups. These differences and needs are also hidden beneath the model minority myth – the notion that all AAPIs are well-educated, high earners who do not face many economic, social, or racial disparities. As a result, general efforts to address racial disparities and inequities frequently overlook the specific needs of many AAPIs. A targeted focus is necessary and appropriate.

Like their African American, Latinx, and Native counterparts, many AAPI men and boys face significant challenges. Although aggregate data may paint a picture of uniform success and prosperity, the AAPI narrative changes dramatically once the data are broken down. Disaggregated data allows us to see and highlight the notable diversity not only in ethnic makeup of AAPI communities but also in how each community is faring socially and economically.

Research has shown that Asian Americans are the most economically divided group in the United States in terms of wealth. The gap in the standard of living between Asians at either end of the income spectrum nearly doubled between 1970 and 2016, making the income distribution among Asians the most unequal among America’s major racial and ethnic groups. In a deeper dive, data reveal that while Asian Americans (12.1%) overall are less likely than the general US population (15.1%) to live in poverty, certain ethnic groups, such as Hmong (28.3%), Bhutanese (33.3%), and Burmese (35.0%), have much higher poverty rates⁵. Stark disparities exist across the AAPI community in a number of categories, including education, health, language access, and many other areas, due to varying histories and lived experiences.

Additionally, the geographic location of AAPI communities also has an impact on their visibility and

the resources that are available to them. For example, in coastal cities such as Los Angeles or New York City, where there are larger AAPI communities, individuals can engage more resources and networks compared to other locations. But in smaller AAPI communities in less populated locations, many organizations, leaders, and community members find themselves facing unique challenges. For example, community members may be required to travel long distances to access resources—which in itself can pose as a barrier—or organizations may find themselves one of few, if not the only one, serving their communities with limited capacity. In places where there are fewer AAPIs, it can be more difficult to make the case to funders and policymakers that their community needs are important and that their investments will have wide impact.

It is also important to note the diverse historical experiences AAPI communities represent, as well as the present-day challenges that communities face because of them. Even within the AAPI community, there remains a great need for those of different ethnicities to understand each other better, be heard, and create deeper partnerships. Many AAPI communities have survived traumatic historical tragedies—whether they are newly arrived refugees fleeing war, or indigenous groups whose communities continue to experience colonization and cultural genocide.

Similar to other communities of color, AAPIs face systemic oppression and have deep histories of colonization. Individuals as well as entire communities are deeply impacted by these experiences and their legacies.

⁵Key Facts About Asian Americans, A Diverse and Growing Population, Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/08/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>



Gender exclusion – AAPIs are not seen as men through stereotypes and emasculation.

There are many harmful narratives that exist for who AAPI boys and men are—including stereotypes that Asian men lack masculinity, that they are undesirable, nerdy, physically inferior, and overly competitive, or that they are villains or gangsters⁶—and they are projected onto young men and boys from an early age. As one community leader shared:

“In Asian American spaces, the work is a lot different than what it looks like in other communities. In our Asian American men’s group, they talk about some of these things. They feel like their masculinity has been attacked, and a lot of it feels like fear...”

In contrast to the emasculation of some Asian American communities is the hyper-masculinity of Pacific Islander communities. One community leader shared,

“For young Pacific Islanders, it is hyper-masculation that makes them a threat. Their bodies are in contention through the narrative of a warrior-race that has led to dehumanization ... so that all the young men we serve don’t get to be human.”

Dismantling the double exclusion – bringing visibility to the AAPI field.

This field analysis is not the first effort to bring better visibility to AAPI boys and men to dismantle both the racial and gender exclusions. In the report “Widening the Lens” by Asian Americans/ Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), community research focused on identifying the issues impacting AAPI boys and men—from mass incarceration, to education injustice, to health trauma.

Rather than focus on the issues thoroughly explored in the AAPIP report, this field analysis focuses on identifying the “field”—i.e. the people, organizations, issues of focus, and tactics—that are being deployed within AAPI communities to better understand the important infrastructure they represent.



Specifically, SEARAC and the Executives' Alliance were interested in answering the following questions:

- 1.** Who are the major players – which key community – based organizations and grassroots efforts currently exist to move equity for AAPI boys and men?
- 2.** What strategies and approaches are being employed – to affect individual, interpersonal, or institutional change for AAPI boys and men?
- 3.** What are the capacity needs of the field – what type of support do organizations and grassroots efforts require to enhance their capacity to sustain long-term change for AAPI boys and men at the individual or institutional level?
- 4.** How is the AAPI BMoC field aligned to the larger BMoC field – how do the findings align with the broader analysis of needs and solutions within the Executives' Alliance, and where can alignment result in better outcomes for the field?

Answering these questions will help bring more attention and resources to organizations that serve AAPI boys and men. It will also inform work in the broader BMoC field, in coalition with national, regional, and local level leaders and organizations committed to working toward the well-being and success of all boys and men of color. This increased awareness may help to facilitate new partnerships and deepen dialogue about new strategies to strengthen cross-racial community building. This effort also promises to increase understanding of organizations within the AAPI boys and men field about the field's own assets and gaps.

⁶Liu, T., & Wong, Y. J. [2016, November 10]. The Intersection of Race and Gender: Asian American Men's Experience of Discrimination. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/men0000084>



Our Approach

Our initial question was,

Is there an AAPI boys and men field, and what does it look like?

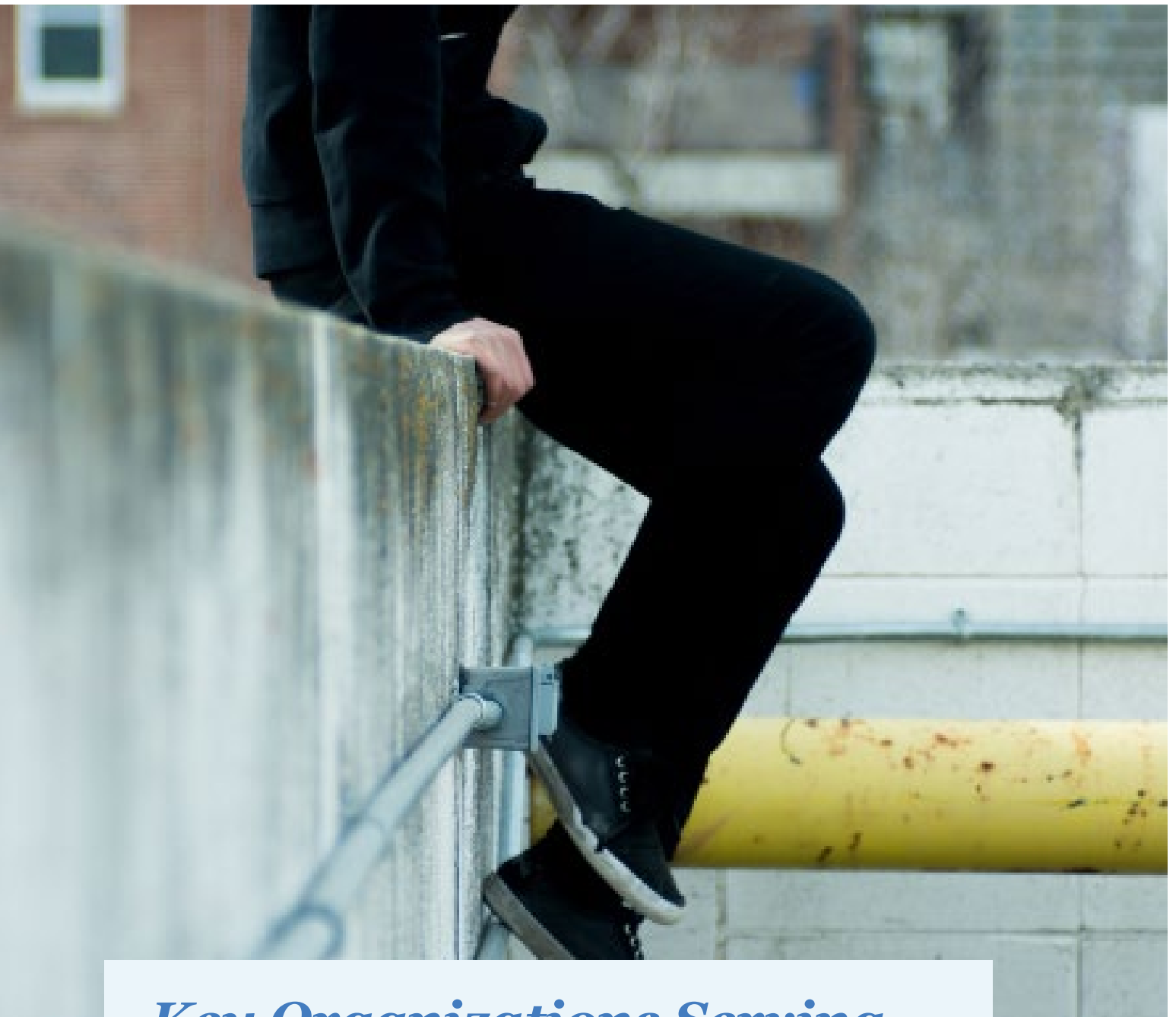
To answer this question, we utilized a qualitative field analysis that highlights the key themes from interviews conducted with leaders in the AAPI community who are running programs that serve AAPI boys and men. An Advisory Committee of six community leaders from within policy organizations and the AAPI community guided the formulation of questions to be asked, and recommended individuals to be interviewed. Additional interviews came at the suggestion of local leaders. In total, 25 leaders serving diverse AAPI populations from across the country were interviewed over the phone.

We recognize that this field analysis has many limitations, and it does not intend to paint a full picture of all AAPI communities. Our interviews did not include individuals from all diverse ethnic AAPI communities. We reached out to our circle of community partners and with those who we knew were engaging with AAPI boys and men through their work. While limited in scope, we feel that we accessed a good sampling of leaders and organizations who are impacting the lives of AAPI boys and men, and we anticipate that this is the beginning of a series of opportunities to understand and better address the needs of AAPI boys and men across the country. We look forward to exploring the needs of diverse AAPI communities and innovations further at the local level.

As we embarked on this analysis, we initially assumed we would get a better sense of the capacity of the AAPI boys and men field because we know that there are organizations across the country that are working to improve the lives of AAPI boys and men. However, we realized we do not know the extent to which a field actually exists and whether there are efforts that are coordinated across the country, intentionally serving AAPI boys and men.

What follows is an analysis of what we heard throughout our interviews, grouped into the key themes that we sought out to learn more about—current efforts to move equity for AAPI boys and men, capacity needs of local organizations, and how leaders see the AAPI boys and men field aligning with the broader BMoC field, as well as how philanthropy can be a partner in advancing solutions for communities.

SEARAC believes that the best voices to tell a community's story are voices from within the impacted community. As such, this field analysis will include quotes from leaders who were interviewed. In order to enable leaders to speak honestly about their experiences, quotes have been kept anonymous to maintain confidentiality.



Key Organizations Serving AAPI Boys and Men

One of the key objectives of this field analysis is to learn about who is serving AAPI boys and men. While we recognize our limitations in knowing all the groups that exist to do this work, we reached out to our network of community-based organizations and leaders to connect with those they knew were doing the work. We were able to connect with many of these groups

for this field analysis. It is important to note, however, that many organizations, including those listed here, do not have programming exclusively for AAPI boys and men but instead have youth-focused programming that includes engaging AAPI boys and men.

California

API RISE

Location: Los Angeles, CA
Target population: Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Americans
Key issues: incarceration, re-entry, immigration
Connect: www.api-rise.org

AYPAL

Location: Oakland, CA
Target population: Asian and Pacific Islander youth
Key issues: leadership, community organizing, arts, collaborative and coalition building
Connect: www.aypal.org

Asian Prisoners Support Committee

Location: San Francisco, CA
Target population: currently and formerly incarcerated AAPI
Key issues: incarceration, deportation, re-entry support, education/ethnic studies
Connect: www.asianprisonersupport.com

Chinese Progressive Association

Location: San Francisco, CA
Target population: low-income and working class immigrant Chinese community in San Francisco
Key issues: civic engagement, tenant and worker organizing, youth and student organizing, movement and alliance building
Connect: www.cpasf.org

EBAYC

Location: Oakland, CA + Sacramento, CA
Target population: youth
Key issues: preventing youth violence, better schools, vibrant neighborhoods
Connect: www.ebayc.org

Educated Men with Meaning Messages (EM3)

Location: Long Beach, CA
Target population: Youth
Key issues: youth development, health education, advocacy
Connect: <https://educatedmenwithmeaningfulmessages.weebly.com>

Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)

Location: Los Angeles, CA
Target population: Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities
Key issues: advocacy, youth organizing and development, research
Connect: www.empoweredpi.org

Filipino Advocates for Justice

Location: Oakland, CA
Target population: Filipino and other youth
Key issues: immigration, worker support and empowerment, youth leadership, community organizing
Connect: www.filipinos4justice.org

Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries

Location: Fresno, CA
Target population: refugee communities
Key issues: health, education, advocacy, outreach, ministry
Connect: www.firminc.org

Khmer Girls in Action

Location: Long Beach, CA
Target population: Southeast Asian youth
Key issues: gender, racial and economic justice, culture and arts, leadership, community organizing
Connect: www.kgalb.org

Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance

Location: Garden Grove, CA
Target population: Asians and Pacific Islanders in Orange County, WI
Key issues: service, education, advocacy, organizing, research
Connect: www.ocapica.org

Samoan Community Development Center

Location: San Francisco, CA
Target Population: Samoan, Pacific Islanders
Key issues: economic self-sufficiency, solidarity, education, preserve customs and traditions
Connect: www.samoancommunity.org

United Playaz

Location: San Francisco, CA
 Target population: youth
 Key issues: violence prevention, youth development
 Connect: www.unitedplayaz.org

Vietnamese Youth Development Center

Location: San Francisco, CA
 Target population: Southeast Asians in San Francisco
 Key issues: education, leadership, health and wellness
 Connect: www.vydc.org

Hawaii**Hawaii Island HIV/AIDS Foundation**

Location: Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i
 Target population: persons affected by HIV/AIDS
 Key issues: HIV/AIDS, health
 Connect: www.hihaf.org

Illinois**JACL – Chicago Chapter**

Location: Chicago, IL
 Target population: Japanese Americans
 Key issues: civil rights, education, identity
 Connect: www.jaclchicago.org

Louisiana**VAYLA New Orleans**

Location: New Orleans, LA
 Target population: youth
 Key issues: youth empowerment, organizing, education, cultural awareness
 Connect: www.vayla-no.org

Minnesota**Man Forward**

Location: Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
 Target population: Hmong boys and men
 Key issues: end gender-based violence, promote gender equity, build new practices of brotherhood
 Connect: <https://www.facebook.com/ManForwardMN/>

New York**Mekong NYC**

Location: Bronx, NY
 Target population: Southeast Asian community in the Bronx and throughout New York
 Key issues: community organizing, arts, culture, language, social services
 Connect: www.mekongnyc.org

New Mexico**New Mexico Asian Family Center**

Location: Albuquerque, NM
 Target population: Pan-Asian community
 Key issues: anti-tobacco, community education, gambling, domestic violence and sexual assault, family and individual counseling, interpretation, legal consultation, multilingual family activities
 Connect: www.nmafc.org

North Carolina**Southeast Asian Coalition**

Location: Charlotte, NC
 Target population: Asian Americans in the Carolinas
 Key issues: community engagement, social justice, youth organizing
 Connect: www.seacvillage.org

Rhode Island

Providence Youth Student Movement

Location: Providence, RI

Target population: Southeast Asian youth

Key Issues: organizing, campaigns, legal support, immigration, anti-police misconduct, movement building

Connect: www.prysm.us

Washington

Asian Counseling and Referral Services

Location: Seattle, WA

Target population: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

Key issues: aging, behavioral health and wellness, employment and training, child and youth development, immigration, recovery services

Connect: www.acrs.org

Formerly Incarcerated Group Healing Together

Location: Seattle, WA

Target population: Asian Pacific Islanders

Key issues: incarceration, re-entry, immigration, mentoring, job skills, community engagement, advocacy

Connect: www.fightwa.org

Wisconsin

Freedom Inc.

Location: Madison, WI

Target population: youth of color in Dane County, WI

Key issues: ending violence, healthy communities, identity, community empowerment

Connect: www.freedom-inc.org

Hmong American Women's Association

Location: Milwaukee, WI

Target population: Hmong community

Key issues: domestic violence, sexual assault, support services, youth, LGBTQ, civic engagement

Connect: www.hawamke.org

National

National Pacific Islander Education Network

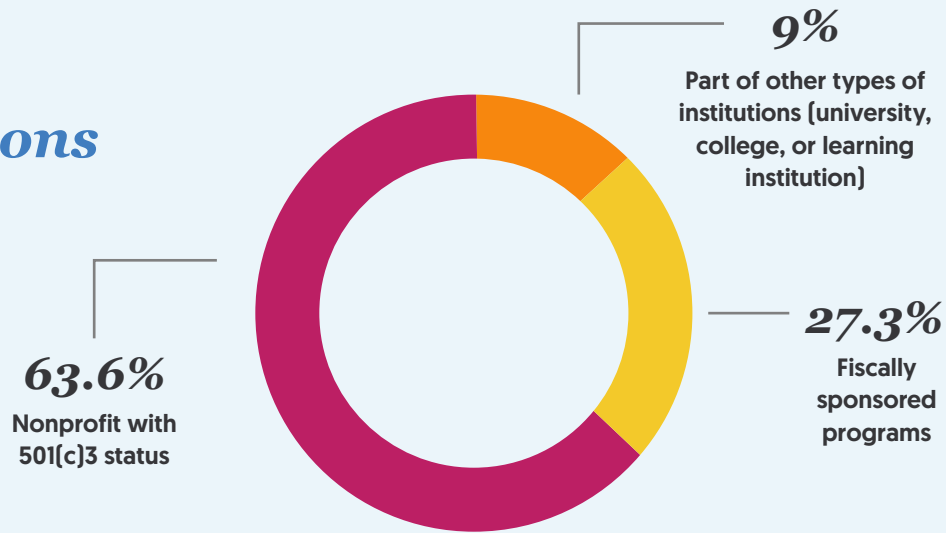
Target population: Pacific Islanders

Key issues: student achievement, education

Connect: www.npien.com

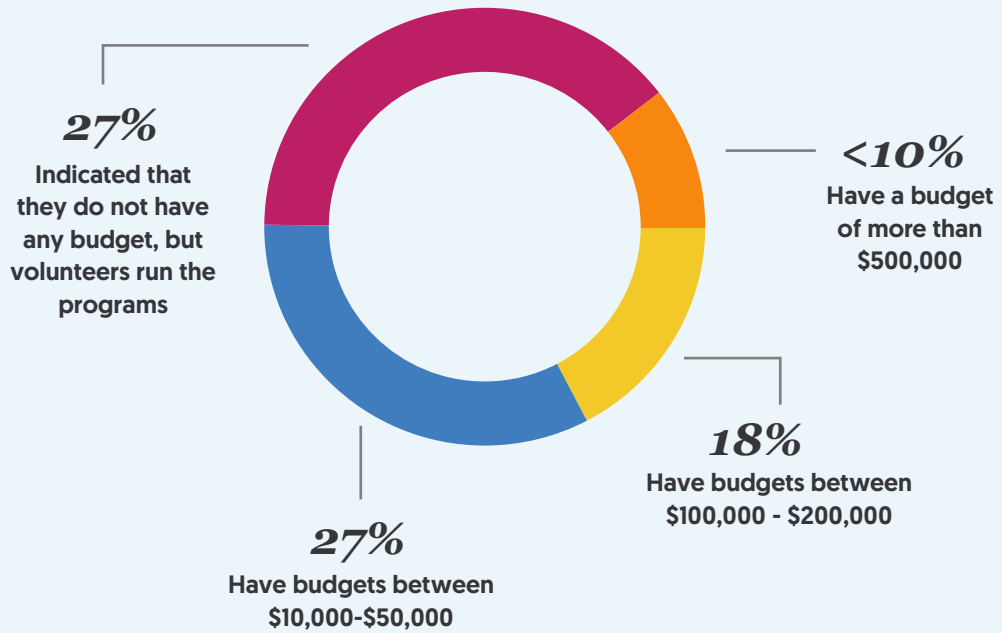


Types of Organizations

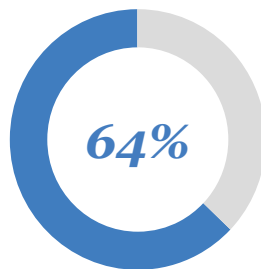


Budget Ranges

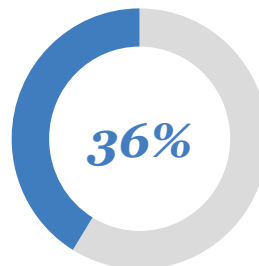
Of those who responded, organizational budget estimates for programming specific to youth and/or AAPI boys and men ranged from \$0 to \$700,000.



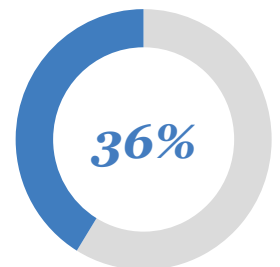
Sources of Funding



Private Foundation

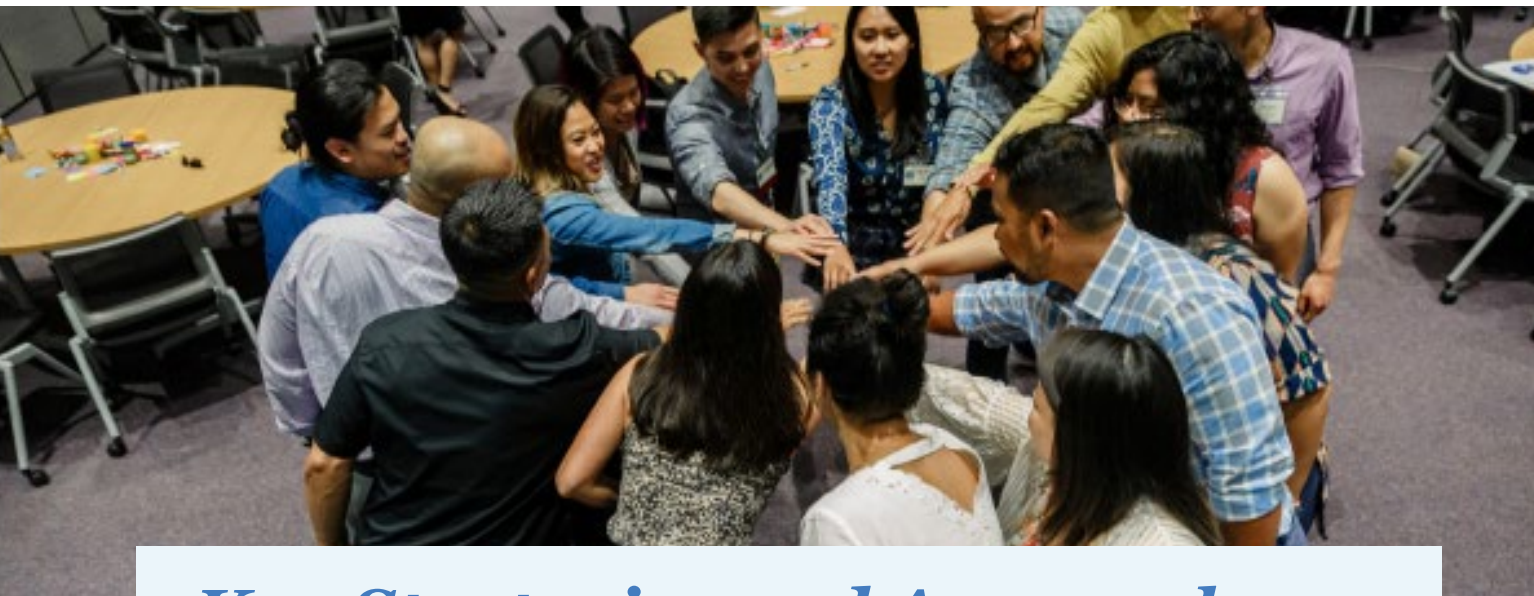


Public Funding



Individual Donors

*Categories are not mutually exclusive, as some organizations access resources across multiple entities.



Key Strategies and Approaches

How organizations are tackling major issues

Number of Organizations Addressing Key Strategies to Serve AAPI Boys and Men

12 Direct Service/
Legal Services

16 Advocacy/
Organizing

21 Leadership
Development

Number of Organizations Addressing the Issues of Focus

11 Education

10 Criminal Justice/
Mass Incarceration

5 Immigration

8 Health and Wellness

5 Arts/Culture/
Identity

AAPI organizations address a vast array of social and economic needs of communities across the country, tackling cultural and identity challenges as well as institutional and systemic needs. Some of these issues are common across racial and ethnic communities. But how we address them may sometimes require approaches that are unique to AAPI boys and men. In interviews, the majority of leaders identified systemic issues within the education, criminal and juvenile justice, immigration systems, and health as being foundational to addressing the needs of AAPI boys and men and, therefore, priority issues in their work.

Our interviews revealed the following key strategies and issues that are tackled by organizations, based on the responses from individuals interviewed and their organizational profiles. Nearly half of those interviewed provide direct services or legal services for community members. The majority of organizations incorporate advocacy and organizing strategies in their work. An even larger majority provide leadership programs for young people in their communities. This is likely due to the fact that interviewees were intentionally selected for their work with youth.

Education

Recognizing that education is foundational to lifting future generations out of poverty, many leaders interviewed mentioned the challenges that AAPI young men and boys face in this system and the efforts they are undertaking to uplift young people in education.

For example, in a 2015 California AAPI Youth Assessment report by The Asian American and Pacific Islander Coalition Helping Achieve Racial and Gender Equity (AAPI CHARGE), results from 813 surveys and focus groups illustrated that Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in particular experienced specific educational disparities. Some of the reports top findings included:

- 1 in 4 youth felt they did not receive the support they need to succeed in school.
- Almost half of Cambodian and Lu-Mien respondents reported their parents completed less than a high school education.
- 1 in 2 Cambodian, Laotian, and Lu-Mien respondents have not taken classes that taught them about their ethnic history, culture, and identity.⁷

Two major strategies emerged as themes in tactics used to support education equity:

1. Academic Support

Local organizations are providing academic support to help young people improve their grades and spark interest in higher education.

2. Advocacy

Others are helping communities to become advocates for themselves within educational institutions and are being the bridge between families and schools. One leader from the Southwest revealed:

“We have been pushing for ethnic studies to be taught. One teacher in the most heavily AAPI populated schools said that she didn’t even think of teaching AAPI history because she didn’t think they had any Asian students. AAPI students are just not being seen.”

Photography Credit Leland Simpliciano



⁷Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, 2015, California Asian American and Pacific Islander Youth Report. Unpublished raw data.

Spotlight

In some school districts in California, such as Oakland and Los Angeles, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino males have a 50% dropout rate, which is more than twice the statewide male dropout rate and nearly three times the national average. Cite: Robert Teranishi. National Commission on Asian American & Pacific Islander Research in Education, "Ethnic and Gender Subgroup Differences in Education, Employment, and Incarceration in the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community" 2015.



Criminal Justice

Some AAPI leaders shared their work to address the school-to-prison pipeline for AAPIs. With heightened security in schools, some communities continue to see their young people being targeted by school resource officers, in addition to being targeted outside school by law enforcement. For youth who are detained, some local organizations find themselves being the bridge between the legal system and families who cannot navigate the systems alone because there are few resources to provide support.

“We are the only nonprofit youth program targeting youth who are affected by the legal system and law enforcement. ... [We] provide court support [for] families. [We] translate and be the entity that judges talk to, to ask whether there is supervision at [our organization] if this youth is let out.”

Two major strategies emerged as themes:

1. Direct & Re-entry Services

Organizations interviewed described direct service work with currently incarcerated individuals inside the correctional system, as well as re-entry support for formerly incarcerated individuals, to build the networks and skills necessary for integration back into communities and families upon serving sentences. Organizations such as Asian Prisoner Support Committee [APSC] define beginning their “re-entry” work as the moment an individual is incarcerated, and that their approaches don’t just start when an individual is no longer incarcerated. APSC and sSimilar

re-entry organizations provide support to currently incarcerated individuals through programs focused on issues ranging from leadership development, ethnic history, to re-entry planning. Re-entry services ranged from employment support programs, to leadership development, housing, and peer support programs for formerly incarcerated individuals to support their efforts toward regaining their livelihood upon their release.. Many re-entry organizations are also deeply involved in community and policy advocacy efforts.

These organizations shared the common challenge that in the correctional system, the race and ethnicity of AAPIs are not recorded; they are usually categorized under the category “Other,” rendering them invisible both inside the corrections system and when they return back into their communities. This invisibility often results in a lack of investment toward re-entry programs that serve AAPI men and women. In addition, in many AAPI communities, the stigma of having been incarcerated runs deep and not only affects the ways they are able to rebuild their lives but also their relationships with close family and the community.

“I was charged at 16 as an adult. I served 15 years ... and my parents drove out every two weeks, six hours [driving], to visit me for 15 years, but when I got out and shared my vision of wanting to do this work, they weren’t supportive. ... There’s a lot of shame and embarrassment ... and I haven’t been in contact with my parents at all since.”

2. Advocacy

Many AAPI leaders on the forefront of efforts to serve formerly incarcerated individuals learned to organize from their time within prison. As advocates on the inside, leaders successfully pushed the prison system to create opportunities for inmates to learn and to facilitate discussions around their identities through the creation of ethnic studies based curriculum that focuses on AAPI history. Through these efforts, they have been able to partner with community leaders and speakers to participate in their programming

and co-present on topics around history and culture in those prisons. As community leaders who were formerly incarcerated, many continue to advocate for the work they’ve been a part of on the inside as well as support those who are leaving prison and are now re-entering into their communities. Many of these organizations and programs are volunteer based, working to address the basic needs that must be met when an individual is released from prison.

“Recidivism is closely tied to the first three years folks are out. We want to receive folks immediately. Basic needs are what we focus on as soon as they get out—food, shelter, water, and phone—in the first month. From there, we can transition to employment.”

Those serving formerly incarcerated individuals are very intentional about at the intersection of multiple issues, such as immigration and deportation, gender identities, masculinity, and racism, including internalized anti-Blackness in the supports they provide to individuals as well as in policy change.

Community leaders interviewed also voiced the strong recognition of opportunities to partner across racial and ethnic communities in pushing for criminal justice reform, and bringing in the intersections of immigration and LGBTQ issues to those efforts.

“There’s definitely much more work to do in creating partnerships, bridging the disconnect between the criminal justice reform movement with the immigration movement. Part of it is because the large population [within the] criminal justice reform movement is not impacted by immigration policies so there’s less interest in being pulled in that direction. Our job in working on crimmigration issues is to highlight the intersections where our social justice movements align—incarceration, criminalization, and discrimination.”

AAPI leaders on the ground who are addressing criminal justice reform issues are also very cognizant of the challenges shared with Black and Brown communities in addressing police brutality.

“A big component of work is that we have referrals and a system of mental health support for individuals who have trauma from encounters with police. [We also have] a rapid response network in regard to ICE raids.”

Spotlight

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders are being disproportionately incarcerated. The number of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander prisoners in custody increased 144% between 2002 and 2010. With a lack of available data, Native Hawaiian

and Pacific Islanders remain largely invisible in the corrections system as well as in communities where targeting and mistreatment of this population go unrecognized.

“Within the last five years, there have been very public incidences of police violence and death by police. Tongan men in California and Arizona [were among those victims], but you don’t hear about them. It’s an apparition when you try to make the case for AAPI ... around criminality.”



Immigration

Addressing challenges along the continuum of immigration issues is critical for many AAPI organizations. From addressing issues of integration, language access, to deportation

and policies affecting the undocumented organizations on the ground are tackling them all, while also often feeling invisible in the broader narrative around immigration.

Two major strategies emerged as themes:

1. Direct Legal Service

Many of those who work to serve formerly incarcerated AAPIs voiced that immigration is often their number one issue among that population. Immigrants, even those lawfully present (green card holders), who have been formerly incarcerated, can face detention in immigration facilities and deportation indefinitely. Their criminal conviction may trigger deportation even if they have served all of their time, or if their convictions are decades old and they have shown to be law abiding since. There are few avenues for convicted individuals to fight their deportation,

and obtaining the right information and legal help can be costly and time consuming, in addition to navigating a complex immigration system. Many of these individuals are Southeast Asians who fled war and genocide. Some were born in refugee camps in third countries along the way and face deportation back to a country they don't know. For this population, leaders on the ground must help them navigate the complex criminal justice and immigration systems but also must help individuals address the deep re-traumatization they and their families experience through deportation.

2. Advocacy

Advocacy is a key component to many organizations serving immigrant communities. Many organizations, especially those serving individuals re-entering into communities after incarceration and others serving immigrants and refugees, do advocacy around immigration policies such as citizenship and deportation policies.

There is also an expressed need to support newer immigrant families as they integrate into American society and navigate complex systems that are often not culturally or linguistically accessible to them. Without support from local organizations, many families face challenges in accessing necessary resources and may often go without them.

“There are lots of discrimination for English Language Learners. They turn away our folks at Social Security and say that if they don't bring their own interpreters, they can't serve them. ... Our mayor assessed city services to see who has a language access plan and no one did ... so we are working with the implementation committee on this.”

Spotlight

Southeast Asian Americans are disproportionately impacted by deportation. Today, more than 2.7 million Southeast Asian Americans live in the United States, but at least 16,000 have received final orders of deportation. More than 13,000 of these final orders are based on old criminal records, which comprise 80% of total Southeast Asian American deportations, compared to only 29% of all immigrants with deportation orders. Citation: Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, “The Devastating Impact of Deportation on Southeast Asian Americans” 2017.

Health & Wellness Through Arts, Culture, and Identity



Across the board, community leaders identified trauma as one of the major underlying challenges for AAPI boys and men. AAPI communities have experienced trauma throughout history, and its effects can be felt in communities, families, and individuals today. From the internment of Japanese Americans, to the colonization of Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, to the genocide and war that

Southeast Asian communities escaped, and to present-day atrocities around the incarceration, deportation, and racist targeting of AAPI boys and men, trauma is intergenerational and deeply rooted in the lives of AAPI boys and men. There is a recognition that deep healing is needed across communities as well as interpersonally as we support and uplift future generations.

Three strategies emerged as common themes for how health and wellness is being addressed:

1. Holistic definition of “health”

Organizations expressed seeing their work in other areas, e.g. education, developing identities, and community and individual healing, as being part of their strategies to address the social determinants of health defined as the various environments and settings (e.g. school, church, workplace) that impact an individual’s health.

2. Integration of arts, culture, and identity

Rather than viewing arts, culture, or identity work separately, organizations strategically integrate and deeply weave these approaches into their programming with AAPI boys and men to heal through past individual trauma by recognizing the historical factors leading to their trauma, and re-claiming historical assets as a pathway to healing.

3. Culturally appropriate mental health support

Utilizing a range of culturally appropriate approaches ranging from clinical approaches (e.g. individual therapy, group therapy), to other forms of community-healing approaches (e.g. support groups, cooking classes).

Spotlight

Southeast Asian Americans face disparate mental health concerns as survivors of war. A study by the RAND Corporation found that 62% of Cambodians experience post-traumatic stress disorder, compared to only 3% of the general public. Nearly half of all Cambodian youth have symptoms of depression. Citation: G Marshall, T Schell, M Elliott, S Berthold, & C Chun, *Mental Health of Cambodian Refugees Two Decades After Resettlement in the United States* (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2010).



Unique Characteristics of Organizations and Programs Serving AAPI Boys and Men

In addition to understanding the types of strategies and approaches that were being implemented, we also wanted to know what was unique about their approaches. Three key themes arose from this:

1) There are organizations and programs across the country who do great work to support AAPI boys and men, and many of them are run by individuals from within the communities they serve; **2)** having an intersectional lens and seeing the efforts to support AAPI boys and men as part of broader efforts to

address numerous issues across race, gender, and other social disparities, is necessary and core to the work that many are doing; and

3) while there is great work happening across the country, there remains a need for a cohesive analysis or strategic framework that connects these organizations to each other. In other words, there is a field of work being done to support AAPI boys and men, but there are opportunities to strengthen and connect one another in the field.

The organizations typically address a variety of issues and serve multiple gender and racial populations beyond AAPI boys and men

The vast majority of organizations and programs serving AAPI boys and men are not exclusively focused on this population alone. Youth programs in AAPI communities largely serve both young men and women, and some from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Of those interviewed, fewer than half indicated that they have programming exclusively focused on AAPI boys and men. This should not be viewed as a deficit, but a reality that there are many unmet needs within our communities, and local programming often must address many issues and multiple populations at one time with limited resources. This also does not mean that the programs are not intentional about their approaches for young men and boys, but that leaders also see the value in engaging across gender identities as important to the development of boys and men. This

breadth and diversity are strengths that foster a holistic analysis and comprehensive approach to the work.

In some programs, there is intentional outreach to engage more AAPI young men and boys, and in some instances, there are challenges in doing so, perhaps due to cultural norms and expectations. For example, in low-income AAPI families, young men and boys may feel the responsibility to be a contributor to family income. In some PI communities, the pull of a life dedicated to football and the military may be so strong that young men and boys are often tracked into those fields early on. In other programs, such as re-entry programs serving those who were formerly incarcerated, by sheer number of individuals affected, men are the majority who participate. As one leader shared:

“The economic disparities, inequity, and gentrification are very much in everyone’s face. It’s pushing them out or pushing them to prioritize work over school. We have students who don’t have a social life because when they leave school, they go to work to support their families.”

Furthermore, in many cases, community leaders noted that there were not many existing programs or models to focus specifically on AAPI boys and men. For some communities, programming for AAPI boys and men is modeled after programs that have historically

served women and girls. In a number of interviews, leaders shared that their youth programming for more intentional inclusion of boys and men, were modeled after existing programs within their organizations for women and girls. One leader shared:

“Feminist young cis men in our organization put it upon themselves to start these men’s circles. Our base has always been primarily women. We’ve had more cis men participate in the past few years. ... Now, with more men, it’s starting to emerge just how masculinity plays out. [Some] don’t feel man enough in non-Asian space ... social anxiety and other mental health issues come out.”

There is also a strong recognition among many that the work to serve AAPI boys and men must intersect with efforts to uplift women and girls, LGBTQ, immigrants, and other communities of color. These communities and the challenges each community faces are not seen as mutually exclusive of one another. Rather, there is

acknowledgement that they are all intersecting. Many leaders interviewed identified that they were already applying an intersectional lens in their work and engaging across communities and issue areas, while also intentionally supporting the needs of the young AAPI boys and men with whom they work.

“Not every[one] that comes to a men and boys program are identifying as straight, hetero ... When we first started, we made sure that the participation of queer men were front and center, and the conversations couldn’t be had without them.”

Members of the target population often staff these organizations and share similar life experiences with those they serve

Nearly all leaders we interviewed are members of the communities they serve – they grew up and live in those communities, or they are re-entering into their communities after time spent incarcerated. In addition, many leaders are also employing young

men from within the community, some of whom were once participants in their programs, who have a deep knowledge of the strengths and challenges individuals face and are uniquely positioned to engage and serve authentically.

“The people we hire on board, 90% are formerly incarcerated. This exemplifies the model that individuals who are most impacted lead the work and the organization.”

It is important to note, however, that due to cultural dynamics within AAPI communities, being an individual from within the community may also have its challenges. The communities may be so tightly knit that community members served can also be family

members, friends, or acquaintances. As a result, the leaders on the frontlines are themselves navigating complex identities and dynamics. For example, one leader comments:

“For young men in the AAPI community, what we are trying to do is address with families, issues that need to be addressed, talked about, in a way that doesn’t shame your family members and without the fear of being casted aside or judged.”



The organizations are not typically connected via a shared analysis or strategic alignment

When asked whether leaders felt that there was an AAPI boys and men field, interviewees shared mixed feelings. There is a recognition across the board that there aren’t many programs that exist to serve AAPI boys and men specifically. Moreover, while some efforts exist, they currently do not represent a field that is connected and grounded in shared goals, nor are there resources allocated to them. A few respondents indicated that there is an AAPI BMoC field because there are groups working to address the needs within communities, even though they are not as well connected or known as such.



Capacity Needs of the Field

Photography Credit Leland SImpliciano

Nearly every community leader interviewed shared the challenges around having enough organizational capacity to maintain and grow their work. From the lack of access to philanthropic networks, to funding gaps, and the stresses over simply being

able to ensure that staff are paid, many organizations are doing meaningful and impactful work, but opportunities to strengthen the existing efforts are plentiful.

Sustainable funding

Like many community organizations across the country, AAPI organizations are stretched for capacity. Even for organizations that have been around for many years, even decades, some are still operating as start-ups

because of their lack of capacity and resources. Many rely heavily on the commitment of volunteers to sustain their work.

“We’ve been volunteer driven for about 12 years now. ... We never wanted to be part of the nonprofit industrial complex, but given the needs of the community [and] the lack of resources supporting individuals impacted by mass incarceration, we needed to raise funds to support individuals who are coming out of the system.”

As organizations rooted in justice, however, leaders are acutely aware that their inability to increase organizational capacity to maintain the work and

provide living wages can perpetuate the cycle of poverty and inequality that they are seeking to address within their communities. One leader reveals:

“If there’s anything that makes me lose sleep at night, it’s that I have young Southeast Asian men and boys with records who depend on me to provide them with paychecks. Stipends don’t work. They have bills, rent, and families.”

Demands exceeding resources

The capacity needs of ethnic community-based organizations are further challenged because they serve very diverse racial and ethnic communities with the few resources that they have. This means that they must address a number of very complex issues at any given time, stretching themselves to be responsive to those they serve while simultaneously staying connected to broader movements.

“Organizers and folks from other places know that we are under-resourced in the South, but that acknowledgement doesn’t lead to anything else. We can’t always be at these national tables. Between being on these phone calls and going to court [to support youth], there are some clear challenges. ... There is just not another social justice organization [in this area] for Black, Latinx, Chin, [and] Montagnard youth.”

Lack of disaggregated data

Consistently, leaders point to the lack of disaggregated data in the majority of metrics that measure success and disparities within communities as one of the largest issues AAPIs face. The lack of available disaggregated data

and the model minority myth that inaccurately portrays AAPI communities as one homogenous, economically and socially well-to-do community is felt deeply by leaders, organizations, and entire communities.

Inadequate infrastructure to meet opportunity for mentorship programs

Community leaders also identified a great challenge regarding mentorship and having opportunities and space for AAPI boys and men to explore their identities. Many low-income AAPI youth are the first in their families to receive a formal education, and their parents may not be

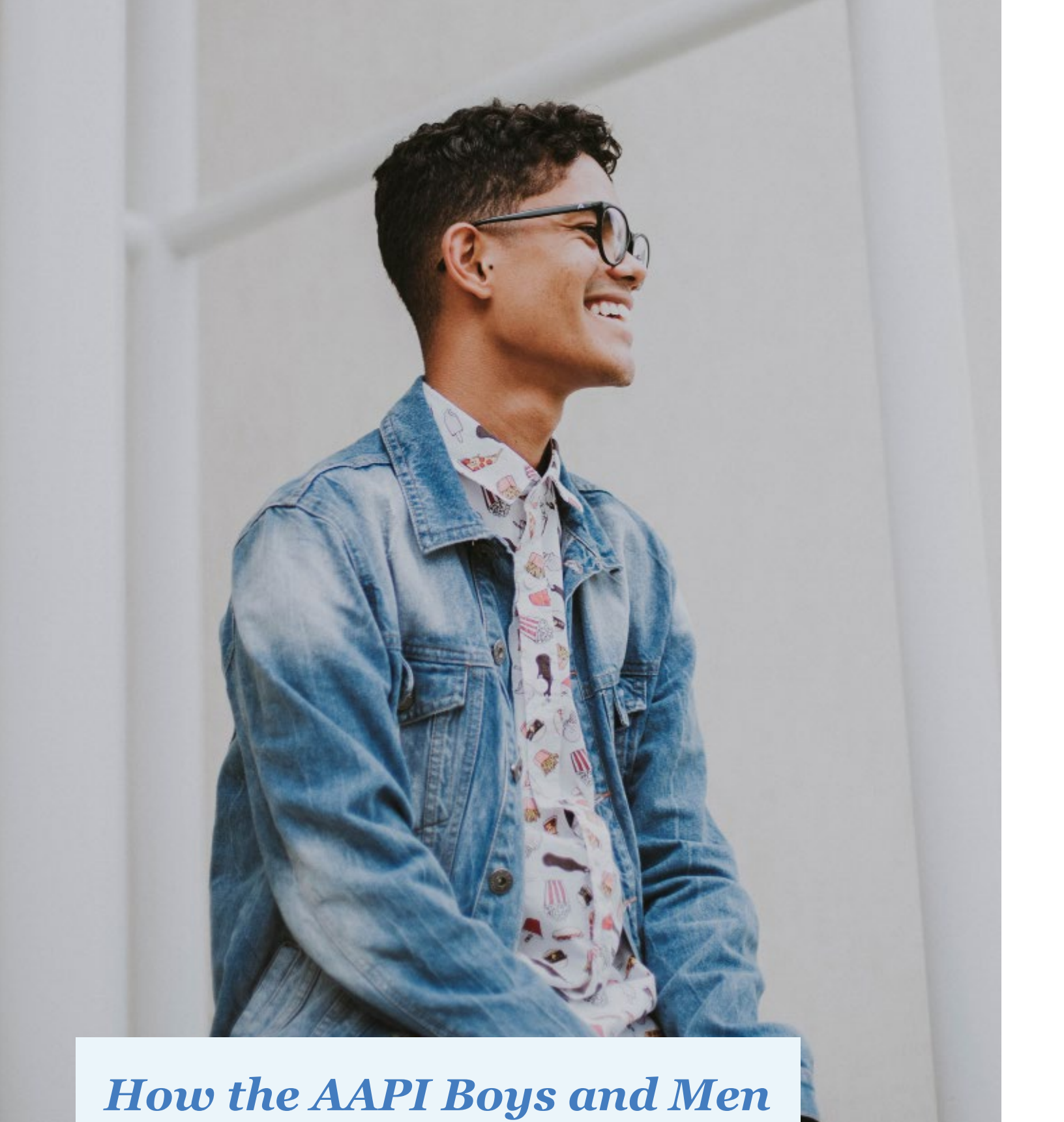
able to help them navigate the education systems, career options, or social settings. There is value in mentorship for AAPI boys and men, but there are great challenges across the country in finding mentors to support them.

“[Finding mentors] is challenging because people haven’t had that kind of support themselves.”

“There needs to be more push from leaders to come back and put in work into our communities to foster positive role models and talk about these things that are impacting our young men and boys. Spend more time with them. The majority of our cultural practices is to leave it to the women. [We] need to have more men see their own values. ... it’s an opportunity to change the narrative and to show our young men and boys something different.”

In addition, many leaders shared that struggles around identity are especially challenging for AAPI boys and men, especially when layered with cultural and gender norms that perpetuate the idea that boys and men do not explore topics like identity and feelings. There are just not enough

opportunities or space created to allow them to explore their complex identities. Part of grappling with individual identities is also the preservation of culture and how young people can gain a stronger grounding of self through understanding their own histories and people.



How the AAPI Boys and Men Field Aligns with Broader BMoC Efforts

Alignment with needs and solutions, but gaps in engagement

While there is recognition that AAPI boys and men share many of the same challenges as those of African American and Latinx boys and men, particularly with respect to criminal justice and education issues, there needs to be stronger AAPI representation of diverse AAPI communities within BMoC specific spaces, and greater opportunities for dialogue within those spaces to work across racial and ethnic groups. In other words, leaders shared that they are often not invited to engage in BMoC spaces, and/or know of these spaces/coalitions only after meetings have occurred.

In certain places, such as California, leaders shared that there have been stronger efforts to collaborate and support each other across communities. For example, in California, The Alliance for Boys and Men of Color has intentionally reached out to AAPI communities to inform and make decisions related to multiracial

coalition programming and strategies. On a national level, there are opportunities to increase these types of models, e.g. creating a National Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, or sustaining conferences such as “A Gathering of Leaders,” to allow for the creation and strengthening of authentic partnerships. Leaders overwhelmingly did not know whether the national BMoC coalitions and/or opportunities to engage nationwide existed.

Leaders also recognize the internal and cross-community healing that is necessary to build stronger relationships across communities of color to engage in broader efforts. There is a strong consensus that the efforts to uplift AAPI boys and men cannot be done in a vacuum and must apply an intersectional lens across race, gender, and social and economic status.

“In the work that we do, how do we look at the anti-Blackness internalized and address this? Inside the prison system, we have started to look at how to do cross-cultural engagement across communities to heal.”

Exclusion from broader narrative

AAPI leaders interviewed largely felt that, currently, AAPI boys and men are missing from the broader BMoC efforts, meaning that they do not see themselves in the current narrative. However, some recognize that this is authentically so, as the BMoC field is led by leaders from

African American and Latinx communities who are addressing critical issues within those communities. Nearly all leaders, however, recognize the opportunity and importance of the BMoC field to strengthen its work to be more inclusive of diverse AAPI organizations.

“BMoC is incredibly important and largely framed and authentically centered around Black and Brown folks.”

Exclusion of LGBTQ perspectives

In addition, some indicated that the current BMoC field has also not been intentional about including LGBTQ perspectives. Many of the local groups that are supporting AAPI boys and men have a strong focus on engaging LGBTQ youth

and apply a gender equity lens in their work. For communities to see themselves as part of a field or movement, they must know that all of their intersectional identities will matter and be supported in that effort.

“The way it moves is that it ends at the part of how these systems impact men and boys of color, to race and class, but no real deep gender analysis around it.”



How Philanthropy Can Be a Partner toward Advancement

It is widely understood that very little of philanthropic investments go to AAPI communities. According to the latest research, just 0.4% go to

AAPI communities — let alone to programs that serve AAPI boys and men, specifically.⁸

Expanded funding

Nearly all leaders interviewed felt strongly that philanthropy should to play a bigger part in supporting AAPI young men and boys and AAPI communities in general. However, AAPI leaders also want to ensure that, in asking for more resources for their communities, philanthropy does not fund them at the expense of other communities. In other words, philanthropy should expand the pot, and not shift resources from one community in need to another. Funding is, by

far, one of the biggest capacity challenges as many organizations are either running off of very limited and unstable resources or are largely volunteer supported. Many also expressed a need for philanthropy to understand the diversity within AAPI communities more deeply and engage groups more authentically, by being in the communities and connecting directly with the community members they serve.

“Philanthropy may fund a person or a group doing great work and then feel like they’ve checked the box once they funded that one group.”

⁸ Growing Opportunities, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, 2007, <https://aapip.org/publications/growing-opportunities>

Measure impact by long-term change rather than short-term numbers

Leaders also shared the struggles with getting philanthropy to invest in AAPI communities because the size of their communities may be smaller. This is something that is especially felt

across AAPI communities in smaller cities, such as locales where Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asian Americans reside, where populations are smaller in size or are more spread out.

“For small communities like ours, numbers mean a lot to [foundations]. Our conversations with foundations are that there’s potential for high impact in our community even if our numbers are small.

Funders have to expand the way that they think about counting impact in communities. [We are] tightknit communities that are loyal to things that work for them. There’s potential for greater impact even when it looks like on paper, you are only touching a small number of people.”

AAPI leaders expressed the need for more unrestricted and long-term investments in their communities, as well as measurements of success that do not just take into account the number of people served. Community organizations are committed for the long run. The work they do are deeply rooted in their communities, and many of the successes they achieve may not be seen or realized for many years—long after the lifespan of a single grant.

There is great potential for partnership and for deeper commitment to AAPI communities in ways that could create lasting impact. There is also a great deal of interest among community leaders to engage in conversations on how to pursue more meaningful and lasting partnerships, and now—as the communities continue to grow and as the social and political climates become more hostile toward communities of color and immigrants—it is even more critical.



Where Can We Go from Here?

There are a number of recommendations that we draw from this field analysis to begin conversations and actions around tackling some of the toughest challenges that organizations serving AAPI boys and men are facing.

1. Increase access to funding.

Many leaders expressed that they faced barriers in accessing foundation funding, especially when it comes to building out programs to serve AAPI boys and men. Many smaller organizations are continuously denied funding regardless of the impactful work they are doing. Some expressed that if funders could make the time to visit their organizations and sit in on a group session, they would get a better sense of how much impact they can have, even as a small organization.

2. Expand the pot and allocate resources to AAPI organizations.

Nearly all leaders interviewed expressed the need for more resources allocated to AAPI-serving organizations working directly within communities. Even when resources are allocated to AAPI organizations, many felt that they were often confined to larger, well-known organizations, and it doesn't always trickle down to the organizations in the communities. Leaders expressed a need to expand the pot for more resources because they did not want to see funding shift from one community in need to another.

3. Create space for engagement.

Some leaders expressed that they simply do not have the network to engage with critical funders who could support their work. Some are new leaders and some are in places where there are not a lot of investments flowing in. Leaders expressed that foundations can use their resources and networks to create spaces where AAPI-serving organizations can connect with others in the field, both funders and others serving boys and men of color.

4. Allocate resources for cross-community healing and building.

It is widely recognized that there is a desire and a need for organizations serving AAPI boys and men to have the space to authentically engage in the broader movement with leaders from other communities of color to heal and continue learning and building.

5. Disaggregate data to better understand the AAPI community.

It is widely recognized that there is a desire and a need for organizations serving AAPI boys and men to have the space to authentically engage in the broader movement with leaders from other communities of color to heal and continue learning and building.



There's More to Know

There are a number of recommendations that we draw from this field analysis to begin conversations and actions around tackling some of the toughest challenges that organizations serving AAPI boys and men are facing.

- 1.** How does an intersectional lens, incorporating gender equity, look specifically for AAPI youth and the programs that serve them?
- 2.** What more can we learn through the creation of issue-specific briefs about how AAPI boys and men are faring around key topics such as immigration, criminal justice, education, health, and education, using disaggregated data?
- 3.** How do gender norms affect the lives and decisions of AAPI boys and men and their paths toward success?



In Conclusion

In this moment, when communities of color are continuously being attacked not only in the places they live, work, and play, but also in policy-making and national rhetoric, solidarity across communities is crucial and must be cultivated. The moment is ripe for our communities to build power together, through an intersectional lens that honors all of the complex identities we embody—across race, ethnicity, gender, and social and economic status. We know that the solutions we seek to address the disparities in our communities can be found within

those very communities. AAPIs have long been rendered invisible because of the model minority myth, but we know more now than we have before; indeed, some of this knowledge is the understanding that we need to continue to examine community-specific data and support strategies that may be different from more familiar approaches. With this knowledge, we are responsible for responding and investing in AAPI communities and to create collective spaces to support boys and men of color across the country.



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