



Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

October 3, 2003

Dear Friends:

It is with deep regret and much sadness that I announce my resignation as Executive Director of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) effective December 31, 2003.

Although I am leaving SEARAC as its Executive Director, I'm working with the Board of Directors to determine a role for my continued involvement at SEARAC. It is my hope that I can serve as a consultant for a short time in 2004 in order to provide as much support to the new leadership as possible and to ensure a seamless transition.

Working as SEARAC's Executive Director for nearly six years has been extremely rewarding to me personally and professionally. I've gained important and valuable leadership, management and advocacy skills. I've learned to appreciate patience, and yet be able to make quick assessments and decisions when called upon by our nation's leaders. Best of all, I've learned a great deal about each of the Southeast Asian American communities across the country, the advocates who support refugee and immigrant communities and the contributions of our tireless civil rights leaders. Your stories and activism have inspired me and made me a stronger person.

Over the years, SEARAC has enjoyed many victories and made positive impact on and in the Southeast Asian American community, nationwide. Our list of accomplishment is long and growing, all as a result of hard work by many at SEARAC. In the span of five years, SEARAC's financial situation has stabilized with a diversified base. With the able leadership of the Board and the hard work of the staff, we've raised over \$2.5 million in grants and \$1.4 million in contracts — and approximately \$750,000 of capacity grants went *directly* to the mutual assistance associations (MAAs). Our projects grew from three to six major programs providing effective advocacy, technical assistance and action research.

SEARAC's advocacy is helping to empower thousands of Southeast Asian Americans to become civically engaged and to carry out and redefine the "American Dream". Our ability to serve as a true voice for the community created partnerships among many communities in the civil rights and refugee and immigrant rights communities. Our initiatives to conduct applied research and publications have stamped us as experts in our field. The Southeast Asian American community is recognized as a critical constituent in policy-making and as a thriving member of the Asian American community, all because of SEARAC's leadership. Today, some policy-makers have a growing awareness of why it is necessary to have SEARAC at the table. And our colleagues understand that SEARAC's work is — democracy in action. I am deeply proud to be a building block of this community development and empowerment movement of which I believe is the cornerstone of any democratic society.

I know there is so much more that needs to be done. Nevertheless, I believe that SEARAC's current stability, outstanding staff, and Board with its emphasis on leadership development, provide the organization with a wonderful opportunity to integrate other strong, energetic and effective leaders to guide this fine organization to fully realize its mission.

It has been an exceptional honor and privilege to work with the SEARAC staff, Board of Directors, colleagues in Washington, DC, and the hundreds of community leaders throughout the country. I salute all of you and look forward to working with you again very soon.

Warmest Regards,

KaYing Yang
Executive Director