

December 11, 2003

## **Equity for All? Educational Opportunities for Southeast Asian Americans 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education***

### **Purpose**

*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) is an important milestone in the struggle to make education more equitable for Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, because of the nature of *Brown*, and the historical foundations of segregation in our country, public attention is most often focused on desegregation between African Americans and white Americans. Although the last few decades have seen the scope of this research expand to include Latino and, to a lesser extent, Asian American students, it has not yet incorporated the importance of ethnic diversity present within both the Latino and Asian American populations. This project represents an important step toward this goal by broadening the view of policymakers, educators, community leaders, and others, to examine and publicize the issue of educational desegregation and, ultimately, educational achievement as it relates to an often overlooked and increasingly marginalized population, Southeast Asian Americans.

Asian American students are seen by many to be “model minorities” with high levels of both academic and educational success when compared to other people of color. However, this perception misses the diverse nature and experiences of Asian American students. In many regions Asian American students are simultaneously the most integrated and segregated minority groups in America, with a wide range of educational achievement and employment outcomes. However, because of poor disaggregation of data by Asian ethnicity, the educational challenges faced by many in the Southeast Asian community have been hidden and largely ignored by the majority of researchers and policymakers, even as children of Southeast Asian decent are having a much larger impact on many locations around the United States. Good research and clear data are necessary if we are to understand and address the educational challenges and barriers that face Southeast Asian communities -- data and research that are currently not readily available.

### **Call for Papers\***

Inspired by the spirit of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, and generously funded by State Farm Insurance, the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC), and The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University are jointly commissioning research on “Southeast Asian Educational Opportunity.” The studies will provide policy-relevant research on the barriers, challenges, and opportunities that exist for the Southeast Asian community, whose largest ethnicities include Cambodians, Laotians, Vietnamese, and Hmong. Paper proposals in the following areas, but not limited to the specific subtopics, will be considered:

1. **Segregation and Schooling.** How segregated are Southeast Asian students’ educational environments when compared to other racial and ethnic groups? What is the context of schooling

for Southeast Asian students in the United States? Do Southeast Asian students attend schools with other Asian American students or with students of different racial/ethnic groups? How does Southeast Asian school segregation vary by school/family income, language use, or Limited English Proficiency? In schools where large numbers of Southeast Asian American students attend school, what is the racial/ethnic composition of the staff?

2. **Educational Status.** What does the educational profile of Southeast Asian students look like? Do the students tend to live in communities with low levels of average achievement on statewide tests? What is the rate of high school completion, college enrollment, and college and graduate school completion? What are the resources available to Southeast Asian students in the schools they attend? To what extent are Southeast Asian students receiving bilingual or ESL instruction? What is the educational attainment of the parents of Southeast Asian students? To what degree are Southeast Asian students likely to receive special education services?
3. **School-Community Relationships.** How do schools and educational institutions relate to and support Southeast Asian individuals (including parents) and/or community-based organizations? In what ways are schools and educational institutions supporting the specific needs of Southeast Asian American communities such as providing adequate training and support for teachers? How can schools and educational institutions meet these specific needs more effectively?
4. **Existing Data and Data Systems.** What systems should be in place to make data more relevant to analyze Southeast Asian American communities? Where does data exist that will allow us to answer questions relevant to Southeast Asian communities -- including small independent datasets or administrative records of states, school districts or colleges -- that disaggregate Asian communities by ethnicity and how can they be mined to answer important questions? Which questions must be addressed and have not been to date? Which data sets could be merged to answer questions about longer-term outcomes? What data not now publicly available could potentially be released? To what extent are Southeast Asian communities being undercounted or missed by various datasets, including the Census?
5. **The Influence of Demographic Change.** How does the increase in Southeast Asian school age populations compare to other Asian and non-Asian groups? What unique factors influence the enrollment and schooling patterns of Southeast Asian students? How will these patterns interact with state and local policies to help and hurt the educational opportunities available to Southeast Asian students?
6. **The Immigrant and Refugee Experience.** What is the experience of Southeast Asian immigrant or refugee students in schools and universities? What are the barriers to their full use of the educational structures/opportunities available to them? How are their experiences similar to and different from that of other immigrant and refugee groups? What is the pattern of economic/educational mobility between first, second, and third generation Southeast Asian students?

7. **Language.** How are the language challenges that face Southeast Asian students different and similar to those faced by Latino and other East Asian students?
8. **Race Relations.** To what extent do Southeast Asian students face discrimination, anti-Asian sentiment, and violence by students, teachers and administrators? How do these experience effect school performance? What are the impacts of school policies, such as discipline policies, on Southeast Asian students?

The proposal's cover page should include (1) the title of the paper; (2) the author(s) and affiliation(s); (3) the name of the primary contact with email and telephone number; and (4) the category into which the proposal fits (from the list above). Paper proposals should be no longer than **5 double spaced pages**, excluding references, and should include a separate 250-word abstract (on its own page). To the greatest extent possible, the proposal should describe (1) the questions to be addressed and the population groups to be included; (2) the data sources to be drawn upon; (3) the theoretical framework or philosophical approach; (4) an indication of the amount of work that has already been completed; and (4) initial results/conclusions/points of view. **Although there is a special focus on the particular issues and needs of the Southeast Asian community, special consideration will be given to papers that place the experiences and opportunities of Southeast Asian students into a larger context, and compare those experiences with the experiences of other racial/ethnic groups including the larger Asian American population (or other Asian subgroups), Latinos and African Americans.** Southeast Asian American community leaders, teachers, and organizers of all ethnic and racial backgrounds, in addition to professional researchers and academics, are encouraged to submit proposals. Lead authors are expected to be available to participate in an invitation only roundtable that will bring them together with academics, advocates and policymakers to discuss first drafts of their papers. This roundtable is tentatively scheduled for September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Of the papers accepted, all will be posted electronically, and several will be selected for final publication.

A stipend of \$1,000 will be paid for each accepted paper. An additional \$500 per paper will be provided to authors whose papers are chosen for final publication.

**Proposals must be received electronically by Friday January 30, 2004.** Authors will be notified of selection by Friday, February 20, 2004.

Please submit proposals electronically to Chungmei Lee at [clee@law.harvard.edu](mailto:clee@law.harvard.edu).

For more information, please contact Chungmei Lee at [clee@law.harvard.edu](mailto:clee@law.harvard.edu), (617) 496-4044, John Yun at [jyun@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:jyun@education.ucsb.edu), (805) 893-2342, or KaYing Yang and Max Niedzwiecki at [searac@searac.org](mailto:searac@searac.org), (800) 600-9188 or (202) 667-4690

\*This project is generously funded by State Farm.