



SEARAC

2017 Annual Report

SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOURCE ACTION CENTER

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Letter from the Executive Director

The past year was not easy. The new administration launched attacks on nearly every issue we worked on – from attempting to repeal the Affordable Care Act to terrorizing our families through a surge of deportations. But as the only national civil rights organization representing Southeast Asian American communities, we fought back hard to defend and protect our communities.

Together, with community partners, youth, elders, and allies from across the country, we fought for our right to a country that values:

- ▶ Immigrant Families – by standing up to protect families against the largest roundup and deportations of refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam with old criminal convictions that we have seen to date.
- ▶ Health – by defending our right to affordable, life-saving care for all family members of all generations.
- ▶ Education – by passing historic policies that allow our students' often-invisible needs to be seen and addressed and creating a groundbreaking youth-centered report to reveal their challenges.

Together, we made history by hosting the first-ever Southeast Asian American March for Equity. Side-by-side, as descendants of survivors of wars and inheritors of democracy, we marched to honor the civil rights movement that made it possible for us to claim the United States as our home.

Together, we will continue to strengthen and expand the civil rights movement and realize our collective dream of a beautiful multiracial, multi-ethnic America.

In solidarity,



Quyen Dinh
SEARAC Executive Director



Mission

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.

OUR STRATEGIES ARE:



Building Powerful
Community Leaders
and Advocates



Community
Engagement and
Mobilization



National
and State Policy
Advocacy



Internal
Infrastructure
Building

OUR MAJOR AREAS OF WORK INCLUDE:



Education
Equity



Immigrant
Justice



Health
Access



Boys and Men
of Color



Aging with
Dignity

Fighting for Our Right to Family Unity

In 2017, the Trump administration escalated its attacks on immigrants with old criminal convictions, rounding up more than 100 Cambodian and 100 Vietnamese Americans from their homes and workplaces. Many had been living in the community for many years after receiving their deportation orders, growing their families and building their careers. The roundups were sudden, and the scale was unprecedented.

The community did not stay silent. Community-based organizations, grassroots groups, and individual advocates created powerful coalitions to monitor the roundups and support families. As the only national civil rights organization representing Cambodian and Vietnamese American communities, SEARAC played a crucial coordination and referral role by:

- ▶ Connecting families to supportive community-based organizations in their areas, such as the Southeast Asian Coalition in Charlotte, NC, VietLead in Philadelphia, PA, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco, CA.
- ▶ Guiding families to pro bono legal support to explore options to cancel their deportations.
- ▶ Sending families information to navigate the deportation process, including SEARAC's Resource Guide for Southeast Asian Americans Facing Deportation and our rapid response toolkit for families in crisis.
- ▶ Documenting the stories of families impacted by deportation, and using them to educate lawmakers about the reality on the ground and the urgent need for policy reform.
- ▶ Successfully pushing Congressional leaders to take a public stand denouncing the mass roundup of community members, including the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) and the California Asian & Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus.



Fighting for Our Right to Health

Before the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed in 2010, around 1 in 5 Southeast Asian Americans struggled to access basic health care. By 2015, in only five years, uninsured rates in the community were cut in half.

When the Republican Congress tried to repeal and replace the ACA in 2017, Southeast Asian American advocates mobilized to protect our access to care. SEARAC collected 365 comments from Southeast Asian American community members across 16 states. Community members emphasized that the ACA had made it possible to access affordable, life-saving care, sometimes for the first time.



► **My son was born with only one kidney, resulting in multiple checkups before and even after we [took] our son home. I wanted my son to be healthy, but I also couldn't help worrying about the medical expenses of each checkup. I had health insurance through my employer, but the co-pay for each visit was more than we could afford. Desperate to find affordable health coverage for my son and me, I applied for [Medicaid] and was granted coverage immediately. I felt relieved after that and didn't have any [more] suicidal thoughts. – SEAA RESPONDENT**



► **Please protect access to affordable health coverage. The Medicaid expansion helped my family take care of my dad's medical bills when he was in and out of the hospital after being diagnosed with liver cancer. The experience itself was traumatizing enough, and we are thankful that with his Medi-Cal and Medicare benefits, we did not have to worry about having enough money to see him live the rest of his days with dignity. My dad was able to transition on comfortably. – SEAA RESPONDENT**

SEARAC delivered the comments to 96 legislators: 32 senators, 63 representatives, and the Washington, DC, delegate.

Congress failed to repeal the ACA in 2017, thanks to the mobilization of community members like ours across the country.



Fighting for Our Right to Be Seen at School

“Asian Americans as a whole have statistically been seen as overachievers, and the ‘model minority.’ The disaggregated data tell a different story for Southeast Asians. It is imperative to look beyond broad census labels to understand how subpopulations are faring.” – CHANDA WOMACK, ARISE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Southeast Asian American students struggle to finish high school and access higher education, but many policymakers still don’t know it. Most school districts only collect and report data for Asian Americans overall, making it seem like all Asian American students are doing fine. The experiences of our Southeast Asian American students are largely invisible.

Almost 40% of Hmong and 20% of Lao families in the United States live in poverty, compared to 12% of white families. Many students’ parents and grandparents speak limited English and struggle to help their children navigate the educational system. Little data exists on educational outcomes for Southeast Asian American students, but census data tells us that 28% of Vietnamese, 30% of Laotian and Hmong, and 24% of Cambodian Americans age 25 and over do not have a high school diploma,¹ compared with 14% of Asian Americans overall.²

SEARAC supports community-based organizations in fighting for data at the local and state level to reveal more accurately how Southeast Asian American students are doing in school. Our Southeast Asian American Action and Visibility in Education Program (SAVE) program combines capacity building, organizing, advocacy, and action-oriented research to connect the real experiences of Southeast Asian American students to local, state, and federal policy advocacy campaigns.

1. U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

2. U.S. Census, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In 2017, SAVE partner ARISE made history by pushing Rhode Island to be the third state in the nation, after Washington and Minnesota, to require their education department to disaggregate Asian American student data. ARISE joined other local advocates (many of them graduates of SEARAC's Leadership and Advocacy Training) to testify before state legislative committees.

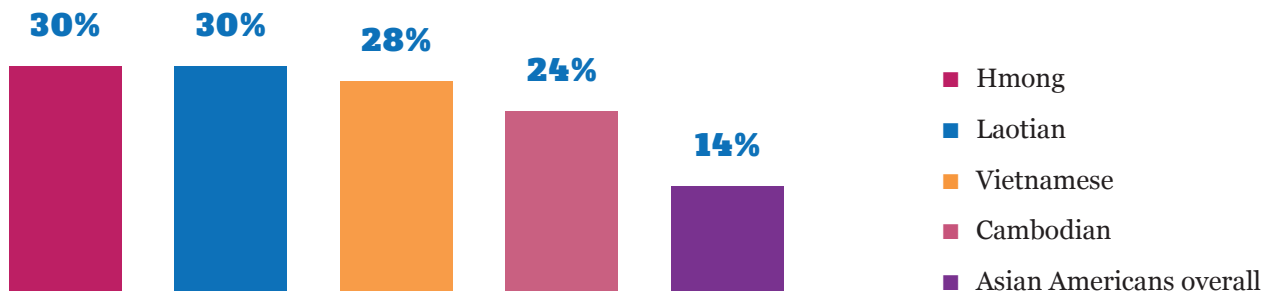
ARISE Executive Director Chanda Womack said, "Asian Americans as a whole have statistically been seen as overachievers, and the 'model minority.' The disaggregated data tell a different story for Southeast Asians. It is imperative to look beyond broad census labels to understand how subpopulations are faring."

Womack continued, "This is a big step forward for our community. Organizations like the Providence Youth Student Movement (PrYSM) and SEARAC have been working on this for over a decade. It's encouraging and empowering that our state leaders understand the need and stand behind this."

SAVE partners include:

- Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education [ARISE] (RI)
- Khmer Girls in Action (CA)
- Southeast Asian Coalition (NC)
- Southeast Asian American Access in Education [SEA3eD] Coalition (WA)
- Stone Soup Fresno (CA)
- Vietnamese Friendship Association (WA)

Percentage of community members over age 25 with less than high school diploma



Fighting for Our Youth

Southeast Asian American youth in California face unique challenges and barriers in their communities. But most policymakers cling to the idea that all Asian American communities are thriving economically and educationally. In 2017, a SEARAC-led coalition of Asian American and Pacific Islander youth set out to change that by collecting and analyzing their own data.

SEARAC's Asian American & Pacific Islander Boys & Men of Color Coalition Helping to Achieve Racial & Gender Equity (CHARGE) collected more than 900 survey responses from largely Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander youth across California to produce the California Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Youth Report.

CHARGE coalition partners



“For far too long, educators and policymakers have known almost nothing about the disparities that exist among AAPI youth, as well as pressing unmet needs across AAPI subgroups. This report should be a wake-up call to the state’s policymakers to invest resources in better data collection to paint a fuller picture of the needs, challenges, and assets of our state’s AAPI youth.”

— QUYEN DINH, BEFORE THE CALIFORNIA ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

The data revealed a number of challenges Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander youth face related to economic security, school culture, mental health, unsafe or unaffordable neighborhoods, and the criminal justice system. Key findings include the following:

- ▶ More than 90 percent of Samoan, Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao respondents reported their family is worried about having enough money to pay their bills.
- ▶ Half of respondents indicated they had been bullied in school.
- ▶ More than one in three Chinese-Vietnamese, Lao, Vietnamese, and Cambodian respondents said they had no positive adult allies at home to support or mentor them when they are having problems.
- ▶ In aggregate, one in four respondents reported feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods.

In November, CHARGE coalition members presented the report’s findings and policy recommendations before the Select Committee on Asian Pacific Islander Affairs of the California State Senate and the California Asian & Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus.

The CHARGE partners include:

- Asian Prisoner Support Committee
- Asian Resources, Inc.
- AYPAL: Building API Community Power
- East Bay Asian Youth Center
- Educated Men with Meaningful Messages (Families in Good Health)
- Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
- Fathers and Families of San Joaquin
- Filipino Advocates for Justice
- Filipino Migrant Center
- Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries
- Khmer Girls in Action
- Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
- United Playaz
- Vietnamese Youth Development Center

Fighting for Fair and Humane Immigration Legislation

Advocates at SEARAC's 18th annual Leadership and Advocacy Training (LAT) stood united to defend immigrant and refugee families from deportation. Over 50 advocates from 13 states representing 19 community-based organizations and 11 universities came together in Washington, DC, to sharpen their skills to advocate for fair and humane immigration laws that keep families together.



Nancy Yeang, Rancho Cucamonga, CA

“LAT gave me the opportunity to connect with other Southeast Asian community members who understood what I meant when I said, ‘I’m a first-generation Cambodian-American.’ The intergenerational trauma discussions made it okay for me to talk about my lived experiences without feeling judged or ashamed. Instead, the training helped me refocus my lens and see that my experiences are a source of strength, and that I could tell those stories as a way to advocate for policies and resources that would help the Southeast Asian community.”



Bee Yang, Appleton, WI

“The stories I heard from several of those who had been detained and in danger of being deported were memorable. It really struck me hard that we as a country, a people, can do that to others. It’s so dehumanizing. Then to see the courage and resolve from those same individuals and their families to come and try to help keep others from experiencing the same thing is very admirable.”



Janit Saechao, Richmond, CA

“My LAT experience has been life-changing, to say the least. It was the first time in my life that I felt heard, understood, and supported by a room full of people, without having to justify my story. Through the course of three days, I felt empowered to use my story as a tool to truly advocate on behalf of my community and for the people I love. Before LAT, I never imagined myself stepping foot on Capitol Hill. I thought, ‘I am only one in millions of people; how would my voice ever matter?’ Through this experience, however, I see that change is tangible and real, and I possess all the power necessary to create systemic, long-lasting change.”

Inspiring, Connecting, Healing, and Strengthening our Fight for Civil Rights

In October 2017, SEARAC held our first-ever national equity summit in Washington, DC. Moving Mountains: A Southeast Asian American Equity Summit brought together more than 150 Southeast Asian American advocates, organizers, artists, direct service providers, students, elders, and allies from 22 states for three days of community-driven workshops and plenaries.

The convening culminated in the Southeast Asian American March for Equity on the National Mall to reflect on the community's 40+ year journey, from surviving war and displacement as refugees to honoring and carrying on the legacy of the American civil rights movement.

At the March for Equity rally, SEARAC Executive Director Quyen Dinh stated, "We march today to demonstrate our self-determination as survivors of war and warriors for peace and justice, not just to sustain but to expand a civil rights movement that made our resilient fight for social justice possible. We stand here to defend our right to claim our home in a beautiful, multiracial, multi-ethnic America."

The goals of Moving Mountains:

- **Inspire** - sharing information and analysis on challenges facing Southeast Asian Americans and community-driven solutions to achieve equity
- **Connect** - building collaborative, supportive relationships
- **Heal** - creating space for community healing and reflection
- **Strengthen** - cultivating a shared Southeast Asian American political identity

Photos: March for Equity
at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial







**"Moving Mountains
wasn't just a
conference. It was
a homecoming."**



**"Moving Mountains
was completely
uplifting, healing,
and much needed."**



**"Many people
mentioned that it
felt like being with
family - I agree."**



**"Standing alongside
these fierce Southeast
Asian American brothers
and sisters, who share
the same journey as
descendants of survivors
of war, I feel that I've
come home."**

Financial Statements

Southeast Asia Resource
Action Center, Inc.

REVENUE	2017	2016
Grants-Foundation/Nonprofits	1,424,995	1,245,380
Grants-Corporate/Business	53,333	10,722
Individual Contribution	23,504	11,806
Fundraising Income	—	9,744
Other Income	6,162	27,733
Total Revenue	1,507,994	1,305,385

EXPENDITURES	2017	2016
Program Expenses	1,248,942	1,167,667
Administrative Expenses	145,329	148,980
Fundraising Expenses	30,542	43,471
Total Expenses	1,424,813	1,360,118

NET ASSETS	2017	2016
Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year	1,205,719	870,676
Release from Restriction	[507,472]	389,776
Total Net Assets	781,428	1,205,719

Funders

FOUNDATIONS

AT&T Foundation
 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
 The California Endowment
 Four Freedoms Fund
 Nathan Cummings Foundation
 Sierra Health Foundation
 W.K. Kellogg Foundation

ORGANIZATIONS

Asian Americans Advancing Justice
 Los Angeles
 National Asian Pacific
 Center on Aging
 National Education Association
 RISE for Boys and Men of Color
 Teach for America

CORPORATIONS

State Farm®
 Comcast
 N Cheng LLP

Donors

\$4,000+

Hengsum Heng

\$1,000+

Nerou Cheng
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\$500+

BF Home Company LLC
 Michelle Ho
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 Cat Nou
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 Nkauj lab Yang

\$250+

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 Many Uch
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\$100+

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 Hilary Binder-Aviles

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 Kunthary de Gaiffier
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 Khanh Dinh
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 Sopheary Giese
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