



OUR CIVIL RIGHTS VISION:

EXPANDING POWER TO WELCOME
THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN
50TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY



PRIORITY FOCUS 1:

MIGHTY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Community is our greatest strength. We are proud that our legacy of grassroots community building and mobilization has made SEARAC a torchbearer for political and social change. For the next four years, SEARAC is committed to uphold the mission for more inclusivity. We will expand our work to include more communities who, affected by US wars and occupation, share the experience of coming to America as refugees, immigrants, or include their descendants. In addition to mobilizing our collective power as ethnically diverse communities from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, SEARAC builds bridges for solidarity with communities from Burma and Bhutan. We will seek partnerships that expand our support and understanding of other underrepresented refugee communities. In shaping a more inclusive Southeast Asian American political identity, SEARAC deepens its commitment to social justice — a source of growth, inspiration, and resilience.



DATA DISAGGREGATION

We saw important gains in educational equity through data disaggregation in New York and New Jersey — states where Southeast Asian American communities are often overlooked. SEARAC continues to lead the national charge on data disaggregation, a critical step in dismantling the harmful model minority myth and helping to ensure equitable resources for our students. We can't get what we need if we're invisible.

PRIORITY FOCUS 2:

SHAPING NATIONAL POLICY FROM THE GROUND UP

Our power rests on defining clear goals that shape national policy. SEARAC's Equity Agenda aligns our grassroots work to our national priorities and assesses how we can take bold action to make the highest impact. For the next four years, SEARAC will build on our successes in three policy areas: Immigration, Education, and Aging & Mental Health. Keeping families together and restorative justice are at the heart of our immigration work as we lead the conversation on dismantling the prison-to-deportation pipeline. SEARAC will continue to demand educational equity through data disaggregation and push policymakers to see how the model minority myth makes the specific challenges Southeast Asian American students face invisible. Thirdly, we will expand our work to guarantee our elders live safely with dignity and that mental health and healing resources are accessible.



SOUTHEAST ASIAN DEPORTATION RELIEF

Southeast Asian refugees are three times more likely to be deported, subjecting them, their families, and communities to the destabilizing and ongoing trauma of separation. In September 2022, SEARAC joined California House Representative Alan Lowenthal to introduce the Southeast Asian Deportation Relief Act. This vital legislation aims to restrict deportations and allows work permits for those with deep roots in their communities who have lived in the United States for decades as lawful permanent residents.

PRIORITY FOCUS 3:

BOLSTERING CALIFORNIA FOR NATIONAL CHANGE

As home to the largest Southeast Asian American community in the nation, California sets precedent for what is possible. SEARAC will expand our California team with new staff and training, boosted organization-wide support, and leadership development. Empowered with the autonomy to lead, this team will create policy priorities to guide state-powered wins. A new website and an updated agenda for our partners on California priorities stand on the horizon.



THE RIGHT TO HEAL

SEARAC is dedicated to destigmatizing mental health. For the Southeast Asian American diaspora, the trauma of war, genocide, and displacement has produced a disproportionately high need for mental health support. In 2019, SEARAC launched a campaign to collect stories from Southeast Asian Americans based on their experiences with mental health conditions. *The Right to Heal: Southeast Asian American Mental Health in California* was published as a result, revealing invaluable community feedback across languages and ethnicities, innovations in culturally appropriate care, and policy recommendations backed by research and data. This comprehensive report represents a crucial step in qualifying how funds could be used to serve our communities more effectively, setting an example for the work to be done nationally.

PRIORITY FOCUS 4:

CULTIVATING LEADERS AND SHIFTING NARRATIVES

If the engine behind SEARAC's policy wins is our base of supporters, our fuel comes from innovating mobilization tools, creative resources, and community education. Our objective is to deepen community power through programming. Our flagship Leadership & Advocacy Training, started in 1999, will get a reboot as it resumes in-person, bringing participants together in DC for the hands-on experience of uplifting their communities' stories and learning the building blocks for affecting national policy. Through a creative arts residency and enhanced digital tools, supporters will join our movement to shift and redefine narratives that produce systemic change. Our Field Mobilization and Communications teams will innovate media outreach, toolkits, and campaigns to activate the power of our base, and shape public opinion and policymaker decision-making. By launching a National Southeast Asian Network, we will boost on-the-ground response and actions to support national wins.



LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY TRAINING

"I traveled to DC for the first time and, in the bustling, chaotic halls of Congress, I discovered that there are many special interest groups trying to influence our society. I learned how to overcome my nerves and share with my legislators my experience of working with people impacted by incarceration and deportation. I developed skills and relationships that I will carry with me forever."

- Danny Doan, SEARAC's Field Manager

PRIORITY FOCUS 5:

A PATH FORWARD AS SURVIVORS WHO THRIVE

We have come so far together and SEARAC's path forward is a commitment to creating an organization that is sustainable and resilient for generations to come. We believe that healing starts internally, and our priority is protecting the well-being of our most precious asset: our people. We are committed to ensuring our staff are well-resourced professionally and in the essential roles they play in their families and communities. To prioritize a sustainable work environment, SEARAC will develop a new hybrid infrastructure and focus on staff retention through updated pay scales, promotions, and new hires to better meet our ambitious agenda while also supporting staff during extended leave periods. We will also concentrate on professional and capacity development by creating a board-to-staff or staff-to-staff mentorship system and figure out potential growth by tapping into the passion, knowledge, and creativity of our team. SEARAC will expand programming to include three internships annually, equitable outreach and recruitment beyond elite colleges and universities, and longer-term planning for a funded fellowship.

Resiliency requires putting structures in place to ensure our organization can withstand broader changes. For longevity, SEARAC will make ongoing internal improvements such as clarifying accounting practices, onboarding a new audit firm,

and shoring up investments to ensure a three-month cash reserve. Our fundraising will increase foundation, corporate, individual, and board giving, with the aim to raise \$4 million to sustain growth beyond 2025. Restructuring our organization for growth will also include assessing organizational capacity, labor division, and staffing needs.

Since our start in 1975 responding to refugee crises in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, SEARAC began and continues to be an organization unafraid of redefining its mission to meet the evolving needs of its diverse, quickly growing, and changing community. What has stayed consistent – what bridges the past to the future – are the caring, courageous, and visionary communities that led it to become the organization it is today. We are excited to start this new chapter by recognizing our communities' power. While there is so much work left to do, it is also important to celebrate how far we have come: state and national victories, increased strength and visibility of our communities, and 50 years of grassroots organizing that has made us a powerful, enduring movement representing the largest immigrant community settled in the United States. We invite our community to join us in writing a new page where, as survivors, we thrive joyfully, dream boldly, and act on our limitless potential together.

