

Preface

With this publication, our two institutions—Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP) and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center — continue a partnership which has led to the establishment of the nation's first Asian Pacific American public policy institute. We hope this policy report, like others we have already released and those we will publish in the future, will serve to inform public discussions and shape public policy deliberations about the most important and compelling policy issue-areas facing the nation's rapidly growing and diverse Asian Pacific American population.

There is no question that economic issues are of immense interest and concern to all Americans. There has been substantial debate and speculation about the health and recovery of the American economy from various vantage points, be it from Washington, Wall Street, or South Central Los Angeles. Public opinion polls in recent years have shown that the economy is the number one concern of the majority of Americans. Indeed, the 1992 presidential campaign, which had been forecast to be a referendum on George Bush's first-term performance in the diplomatic and military arenas, became dominated by domestic economic issues like creating more jobs, reducing the federal budget deficit, and revitalizing urban cores.

This report on Asian Pacific Americans and the American economy is intended to respond to the compelling public interest on economic policy issues. Asian Pacific Americans, who now number 7.2 million nationally and are expected to grow to 20 million by 2020, have been and will continue to be important contributors to — and beneficiaries of — many different sectors of our nation's economic structure from their high visibility in advanced technology industries to their relative invisibility among the ranks of the working poor and unemployed.

Asian Pacific Americans are an extremely diverse population, and their roles in the American economy are also diverse and multifaceted. As Ong and Hee note in one of the chapters in this book, "It is impossible to distill the economic status of Asian Pacific Americans into a single statistic." Unfortunately, that happens all too often, particularly when unwarranted and simplistic conclusions are drawn from a few census indicators to label Asian Pacific Americans, in monolithic terms, as a successful or model minority group.

This report seeks to go beyond these catchy one-liners, and to provide the most comprehensive and up-to-date empirical and policy-oriented analysis of the impact, contributions, and status of Asian Pacific Americans and the changing American economy. It does this through the first-ever, in-depth examination of the growing presence and participation of Asian Pacific Americans in four major areas of the nation's economic structure — high technology, health and medical services, inner-city communities, and social welfare. This empirical analysis, which is based on a rigorous examination of 1990 Census and other economic data, provides information on Asian Pacific Americans on a national scale, as well as in relation to the three major urban concentrations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. The latter represent the top three Asian Pacific American communities in the country, and account for nearly 60 percent of all Asian Pacific Americans.

However, aside from providing accurate and full empirical findings and information, this report seeks to enhance understanding of how Asian Pacific Americans draw linkages between the realities of their own situation and the intense and varied levels of policy debate that are occurring around economic issues, be they unemployment, urban revitalization, or technological innovations. Their economic policy concerns are oftentimes overlooked, distorted, or delegitimized by the highly influential stereotype of Asian Pacific American success. This report provides important alternative policy-oriented perspectives on the major economic issues and concerns of Asian Pacific Americans by leading policy specialists.

Like our other joint policy research activities and publications, this publication reflects the special strengths and goals of our two institutions. The UCLA Asian American Studies Center, established in 1969, is one of four ethnic studies centers at UCLA, and one of the nation's oldest programs in Asian American Studies. Through its research, teaching, publishing, and public educational activities in fields ranging from literature to urban planning, the faculty, staff, and students of the Center have sought to advance scholarly and policy understanding of Asian Pacific Americans.

LEAP is a nonprofit organization founded in 1982 to develop, strengthen, and expand the leadership roles played by Asian Pacific Americans within their own communities as well as in mainstream institutions. LEAP's mission is to achieve full participation through leadership, empowerment and policy, which is be-

ing realized through the creation of the innovative Leadership Management Institute (LMI), the newly established Community Development Institute (CDI), and the nationally recognized Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute (APA • PPI).

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