

Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute

Policy Recommendations

The Asian Pacific American population has grown tremendously following the elimination of racially biased immigration quotas in 1965. From 1970 to 1990, this population doubled each decade from 1.5 million in 1970 to 3.7 million in 1980 to 7.9 million in 1990. Based on recent trends, we project the population to be about 20 million by the year 2020. A recent Census Bureau report confirmed and projected Asian Pacific Americans as the fastest growing group, increasing by 412.5 percent from 1992 to 2050 as compared to 50.2 percent for all groups (*New York Times*, December 4, 1992). This population has and will continue to enrich this country culturally, socially, and economically. However, there are also severe problems—growing racial conflicts, poverty, underemployment, and limited accessibility to the political process—that affect both the nation and Asian Pacific Americans.

We believe that it is time now to formulate public policies from an Asian Pacific American perspective and to address both current and future problems, many of which are discussed in the following chapters in this book.

The authors have developed an extensive and diverse set of recommendations, which are reproduced in the appendix. A common thread is not a call for new policies per se, but a call to re-articulate existing policies so they are relevant for an increasingly ethnically and racially diverse society.

Three Broad Recommendations

1. *Recognize and promote multiculturalism and inter-cultural sensitivity within existing legislation, programs, and agencies.*

The growth of the Asian Pacific American population, along with the growth of other minority groups, is transforming the United States into a pluralistic society. This change holds great

promises in enriching this nation and in helping it prepare for a more integrated global economy. It is important that we adopt public policies that recognize this transformation and that provide a guideline for making this country a truly multicultural society.

In our public educational system, the cultures and histories of Asian Pacific Americans must be fully studied and researched, and the results be integrated into curricula and reflected in staffing.

In our social service agencies, programs and providers must be culturally and linguistically appropriate, so no one is excluded.

Similar changes are needed in development programs, including urban and labor policies, and in the arts and media.

- 2. Modify the concept of civil rights so protection covers the types of discriminatory practices encountered by Asian Pacific Americans.*

Asian Pacific Americans should enjoy the civil rights protections afforded to all Americans, and especially the laws that protect minorities against discriminatory practices. However, some problems facing Asian Pacific Americans are not adequately covered by existing laws, which have been developed in a black/white context.

In the field of higher education, there must be protection against restrictive admission quotas based on race.

In the employment area, we call attention to the "glass ceiling," which prevents Asian Pacific Americans from moving into management positions; unfair personnel practices based on language and culture; restrictions limiting opportunities and advancement in self-employment and other areas.

In the political sphere, Asian Pacific Americans must have access to the electoral process; their votes must be given full weight through the creation of influence districts; and if language is a barrier, appropriate bilingual material should be provided. In cases of anti-Asian bias and violence, the rights of Asian Pacific Americans need to be recognized and protected.

- 3. Expand programs that help Asian newcomers adjust to U.S. society in order that they can contribute to America's economic, political and social development to their fullest potential.*

Given the large proportion of Asian Pacific Americans who are immigrants, many of whom came after the 1965 Immigration Act, and those who are refugees, there is a grave need for programs that help make these individuals full and productive members of our society.

For adults, there must be more English language instruction, skills development, and job retraining programs. Opportunities for the transfer of expertise, skills, and creative energies must be enhanced and obstacles eliminated.

For youth, attention must be given to those with limited English proficiency.

For Asian Pacific American women, most of whom work, affordable and culturally appropriate childcare and services in support of employment, health care, and related matters are needed.

Asian Pacific Americans are long-standing members of America's diverse population. Demographically, we are a larger proportion of the current and emerging diversity. We seek a more active role in policy-making that promotes national development. We also wish to address limitations in current policies that impede the contributions that Asian Pacific Americans can make to develop ourselves, our communities, and our nation at large. These broad recommendations and the more specific ones in the appendix are meant to advance the dialogue.

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