A Brief About the Experiences of Asian Immigrants in Minnesota
Throughout our country’s complicated immigration history, many different populations have experienced anti-immigrant attitudes, exclusionary policies, discriminatory practices, and hate crimes; but, we’ve always managed to address the issue and become a better country because of it. If history has a lesson for us, it is that we must again address what is happening today to immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, because it may not be too far-fetched to say that our country’s soul and livelihood depends on this.

In the last several years, the increasing nationalist and anti-immigrant/refugee/asylee momentum has grown from the fringes to the mouths of our nation’s leaders, and it is having chilling and traumatizing affects in our Asian Minnesotan and other communities. The community in turn has nudged and asked that CAAL integrate immigration into our community building work. It is for this reason we conducted a small scan to better understand what immigrations issues are impacting Asian Minnesotans, and what the current service (legal, policy, advocacy, support, community education) landscape looks like to help Asian Minnesotans facing immigration challenges.

As an organization deeply rooted in advancing justice and equity, immigration issues are intertwined with all our efforts to ensure Asian Minnesotans have equal opportunities to succeed and become fully contributing members of their communities. We share this brief to provide some community context about the Asian Minnesotan population and what we’ve learned through our scan in order to build understanding, as well as to share our organizational next steps to continue engaging the community, and to define a path forward towards building safe and welcoming communities throughout Minnesota.

In the U.S. and in Minnesota, the Asian American population continues to be the largest population born outside of the U.S. and is the fastest growing racial group. We have an important role to play in the future of our state and country, and we welcome conversations, partnerships, and actions that include our people.

Bo Thao-Urabe

Executive and Network Director
Deportation*

The formal removal of an alien from the United States (U.S.) when the alien has been found removable for violating the immigration laws.

Family Petition (Family Reunification)

U.S. Citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents (Green Card holders), and refugees admitted or asylees granted asylum within the past 2 years may petition for their family members to immigrate to the U.S. This is commonly referred to as family unification.

Green Card

Also known as a Permanent Resident Card, Form I-551, or alien registration card. USCIS issues Green Cards to foreign nationals as evidence of their lawful permanent resident status in the U.S. For Form I-9, it is acceptable as proof of identity and employment authorization. Although some Green Cards do not have an expiration date, most are valid for 10 years. Cards issued to individuals with conditional permanent resident status are valid for two years.

H-1B Beneficiary (Worker)

1) The approved petition associated with a specialty worker admitted on the basis of professional education, skills, and/or equivalent experience (the H-1B subsection uses this definition); 2) a specialty worker whose petition to work temporarily in the U.S. has been approved by the DHS.

Naturalization

The manner in which a person not born in the U.S. voluntarily becomes a U.S. citizen.

Public Charge

For purposes of determining inadmissibility, “public charge” means an individual who is likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence, as demonstrated by either the receipt of public cash assistance for income maintenance or institutionalization for long-term care at government expense.

Note on Definitions: Definitions from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which administers the nation’s immigration services. Those denoted with an * are from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which enforces immigration laws.
People who identify as Asian have been Minnesota’s largest population born outside the U.S. since 1990. Asian Americans, in general, are also the fastest growing population in Minnesota. Notably, U.S. born Asian Minnesotans comprise 34.5% of the total population of Asian Minnesotans overall.

Median age of about 28


273,000 & Growing
5% of MN’s population

Source: 2017 U.S. Census Bureau.

10 Minnesota cities with the largest proportions of Asians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>City and County</th>
<th>Percent of Asians</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Saint Paul (Ramsey)</td>
<td>17.91%</td>
<td>300,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brooklyn Park (Hennepin)</td>
<td>17.26%</td>
<td>79,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brooklyn Center (Hennepin)</td>
<td>16.75%</td>
<td>30,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Canada (Ramsey)</td>
<td>16.08%</td>
<td>10,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Maplewood (Ramsey)</td>
<td>14.86%</td>
<td>40,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Falcon Heights (Ramsey)</td>
<td>14.39%</td>
<td>5,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Eden Prairie (Hennepin)</td>
<td>10.04%</td>
<td>63,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Shakopee (Scott)</td>
<td>9.96%</td>
<td>40,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Worthington (Nobles)</td>
<td>9.92%</td>
<td>13,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hopkins (Hennepin)</td>
<td>9.74%</td>
<td>18,217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey (Kolmar, 2018).

Immigration Issues Identified by Asian Minnesotans (Non-Exhaustive):

Asian Indian: H-1B Work Visas
Korean: Adoptee Citizenship & Deportation
Hmong: Deportation, Citizenship, and Family Reunification
Chinese: H-1B Work Visas and Family Reunification
Vietnamese: Deportation and Public Charge
Cambodian: Refugee Resettlement, Citizenship, and Public Charge
Karen: Deportation and Public Charge
**WHO ARE ASIAN MINNESOTANS & WHY DOES IMMIGRATION MATTER?**

**Figure 3. Language spoken at home by Asian subpopulations age 5 and above**

Sources: Faculty Publications from the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, et al, 2013; National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (CAPACD) et al, 2015; Financial Literacy Center, et al, 2012.

Where are Asian Minnesotans located?

**Figure 5. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.**

**Educational Attainment**


**Figure 4. Source: 2017 U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey.**

**15,486 Businesses**

**$3.7 Billion in Revenue**

**19% with Paid Employee**

This is what we heard from community during our scan:

**Distrust of Government**

“There is a lot of reasons for communities to fear the government whether they were persecuted back at home or they receive services from the government and need those to stay. So Asian participation in the census, particularly Southeast Asian communities, has been super low.”

**Social and Economic Challenges**

“I think this is something almost every international student faces, the assumption that you don’t know things because you’re not from here. There’s always this assumption that you’re not good enough, that you don’t know what you’re talking about, ‘why are you even here?’ kind of atmosphere. You do start to experience that as you start going into interviews and meeting people. That is something that I have always felt and has affected my level of confidence too.”

**Strain on Families**

“There is a gap between free legal services and being able to pay for legal services in the ‘low bono’ area, just normal working people can’t necessarily come up with ten thousand dollars to do legal work, but they are working so they are not qualified for free legal aid.”

**Greater Sense of Insecurity**

“There was a lot of anxiety and a lot of concern, a lot of negative feelings about the [American] immigration policy that has manifested ... Before 2016 there was no sense that you would get deported if you were a contributing community member, you could operate pretty freely if you are a ‘good citizen’ there was just a pretty casual feeling about that ... Around 2016 when we saw the government going after people who were not criminals though they were undocumented, there was a lot of fear.”

**Lack of Resources:**

**Work Visas**

“We cannot travel as we please, we have to check with the school to make sure we have all the documents, even our school attendance influences our visa, we have to think about that when we go home for summer vacation or travel to other countries.”

“You ask around for people who have had similar experiences [to yourself]. Last year I needed to apply for my OPT extension, and wanted to know if I could leave the country during that period ... At the time I asked [my friend] what she did during that period, she told me that she could exit the country but when she came back she was locked in a room and it took from four hours to one day to let her back in.”

“I think that is how people feel living here, you cannot control your life, you don’t have the freedom to do everything that you want.”

**Family-Based Visas**

“Protecting family based visas is another thing, we use family based visas a lot, and it is very common for people to come here and petition for their parents, their siblings and their kids to come here. A lot of us have done that. There are a lot of proposals to cut that so that you can only petition for your wife or a spouse and immediate children but you couldn’t petition for siblings, parents or grandparents.”

**Adoptee Rights**

“There’s been a lot of conversation about a lot of the language around immigration and deportation for folks who are not connected to their cultures, language in any way. The language used to rally folks around immigration and deportation has turned off adoptees to the cause.”
WHAT DOES THE CURRENT SERVICE LANDSCAPE LOOK LIKE?

1. Fragmentation of resources makes them difficult to access when needed.

   "Individuals or families facing immigration challenges don’t know where or who can help them. There’s no clear point of access, no place for people to connect; making it difficult for individuals or families to know where to seek help without significant effort."

2. Asian immigrants lack access to legal services.

   "There are not enough low-bono immigration services."
   "Many Asian immigrants are unable to access various services because of a language barrier."

3. Families don’t have support when they have members who are facing a variety of immigration challenges.

   "Bureaucracy prolongs uncertainty and prohibits individuals and families' planning for the future."
   "The threat of deportation instills fears and feelings of insecurity for families."
   "When a family member is detained by ICE, it separates families and leaves them without financial support."

4. There is little support for work place immigration and education-based immigration challenges.

   "There is limited funding to support immigrants who come to the US with a medical degree. Many must re-do their residencies."
   "International students can only have 90 days of unemployment or they lose their OPT status and can no longer apply for an OPT extension."
What’s Next?

What might CAAL be best positioned to work on in the existing immigration ecosystem to ensure Minnesota is welcoming, safe, and protective of Asian immigrants and their families? Combined with the plethora of information we gathered, CAAL will explore the following:

1. **Build a narrative for both immigrant advocates (inside) and the broader mainstream community (outside) about Asian immigrants in Minnesota.** There is consensus that community leaders both within the broader immigrant rights field and among Asian organizations need language to convey the story of Asian immigrants and how they are impacted by the wide spectrum of immigration issues and policies. Most importantly, this narrative needs to be inclusive (and not divisive) of all immigrant and refugee groups.

2. **Compile a searchable, online resource list.** Many individuals and service providers shared the challenges of finding and securing credible immigration experts to handle cases and provide information. As one advocate shared, “People don’t know where to go – we could do better but don’t know how.” A clearinghouse of resources for Asian immigrants is needed to help community members and advocates access relevant and credible resources.

3. **Support Coalition and Policy Efforts.** Individuals shared that in some spaces, such as the Southeast Asian deportation efforts, CAAL has been a strong and critical supporter. In other spaces where the organization has not been as strong of a supporter or participant, individuals indicated an interest to have CAAL more present.

4. **Be a Convener.** While cross-community collaborations exist to advance some immigration issues, many participants expressed interest in CAAL as a catalyst across immigration issues, particularly those that have significant impact on Asian immigrant communities in Minnesota. A few individuals also discussed challenges in funding to do immigration work and questioned what more could be done together.

5. **Engage Impacted Communities.** Partner with impacted communities to dive deeper into the following issues:
   - Deportation
   - H-1B Visas
   - Citizenship/integration
   - Family Reunification
   - Adoptee Rights
   - Special Visas (Domestic Violence)

If you are interested in working with us, please stay in touch at info@caalmn.org or (651) 756 - 7210.