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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

“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.”

“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.”

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“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.”

“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.”

Here is a summary from 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 & 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.”

**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.”

**How Immigration Impacts Asian American Families?**

Through the support of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, CAAL conducted a broad scan with immigrant and refugee partners and service providers to learn what immigration issues are impacting Asian Minnesotans as well as what services are available to them. Through this process, CAAL has launched an immigration initiative called Safe and Welcoming Communities, where we will dive into these findings to create authentic solutions to addressing inequities impacting Asian immigrant and refugee Minnesotans.
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 contact Jenny Srey, Lead Organizer, at jenny@caalmn.org