THE STATE OF
Asian Minnesotans

Brief No. 2:

Immigration & Resistance

INTRODUCTION

In July 2020, the Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) held the second session in a series addressing the state of Asian Minnesotans, focusing on immigration. Taking place during a time of increasing anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric and rapidly changing rules about immigration, this conversation built on the first session's themes of xenophobia and anti-Asian racism, as well as CAAL's overall work to build safe and welcoming communities for Asian Minnesotan immigrants and refugees. Throughout the conversation, speakers Juliana Hu Pegues, Veena Iyer and June Kuoch wove together history, analysis and an assessment of the current policy landscape, while Sally Ohno Sudo, Jon Vang Tao and Geetanjali Mittal brought perspectives from their lived experiences and their communities.

KEY THEMES

1. How can we, as Asian Minnesotans, better reflect on our intent on this land where the waters reflect the clouds while embracing our own stories of travel?

2. Asian Minnesotans have a long and diverse history of immigration to Minnesota, yet our immigration stories include common themes:

2a. U.S. Colonialism has repeatedly displaced Asian people.

2b. Militarized policing domestically furthers the cycle of displacement.

3. Asian Minnesotans have continually built and rebuilt systems to support their communities when policy falls short or works against the interests of Asian immigration and Asian immigrants.

4. Assimilation and the model minority myth continue to harm and impede the progress of Asian Minnesotans.

4a. Asian immigrants to Minnesota and their U.S. born children often feel caught "between two cultures."

5. Asian immigration justice is intrinsically tied, through policy, economics, and criminal justice, to Black liberation.

CONTEXT

Demographics

Minnesota is the 22nd most populous state in the United States. Of Minnesota's 5.6 million residents, 55% reside in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Minnesota has seen a 29% growth in its population of color since 2010. According to MN Compass (2013-2017), Minnesota's racial demographics are 79.5% White, 6.6% Black, 5.5% Latinx, 5.1% AAPI and 1.1% Native/Indigenous.

84-85% of the over 312,000 AAPI Minnesotans live in the Twin Cities metropolitan area (259,000+). 15-16% of AAPI Minnesotans live in Greater Minnesota (53,000+). As of the time of this report, MN Compass displays data on 11 specific AAPI cultural communities. Data on the Karen community is notably absent and is often categorized under the Burmese category.

Asian Minnesotans also continue to be the largest foreign-born racial group in the state due to multiple factors; among them is the state's economic demand for educated workers, welcoming of refugee groups, and long history of adoption.

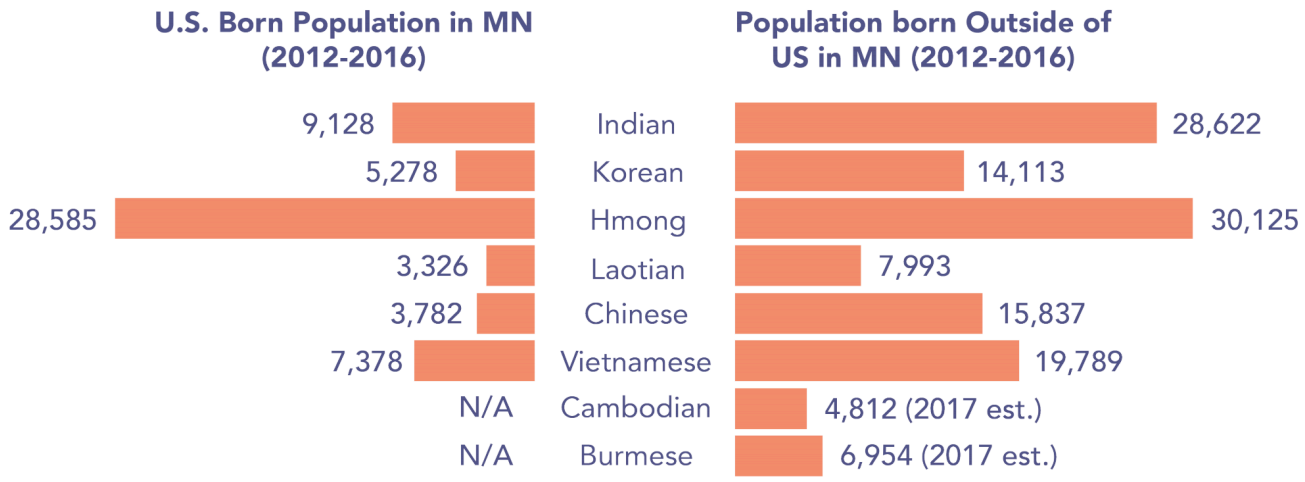


Figure 1. Source: MN Compass - Immigration - Key Measures.

For more background on Asian Minnesotan immigrants and refugees, see CAAL's July 2019 Brief About the Experiences of Asian Immigrants in Minnesota.

Why This Conversation? Why Now?

Throughout its history, immigration policy in the United States has been applied unevenly based on national valuation of white European people and idealistic notions of individualism and capital over the lives of Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latinx people. The United States' ideological roots in white supremacist values including capitalism, patriarchy, and anti-Blackness/racism, and its literal foundation on stolen land has allowed racist policy makers to position exclusion and policing as integral to the preservation of American values. These xenophobic immigration policies and anti-Black policing have a unique destabilizing factor on Asian immigrant communities. Policies

such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the National Origins Act of 1924, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 show repeated disruption of Asian immigrant communities and devaluation of Asian people. These policies and the worldview that allows them to exist are based in the United States' history of colonialism of Asian nations and commodification of Asian bodies.

Though enforcement of these policies have dealt devastating blows to communities and individuals through displacement, detention, and deportation, grassroots and community resilience have allowed immigrants and Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latinx people to continue to thrive; we are still here.

Grassroots movements led to the passage of major legislative reforms such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the Refugee Act of 1980, and the introduction of the New Way Forward Act of 2019. For every new piece of xenophobic or racist legislation rooted fueled by racist public sentiment, the community has shown its strength and persistence through its relationships and centering of people over capital and borders.

The amount of anti-immigration legislation that was introduced by the Trump administration continues to push immigration to the center of social, political, and national discussion; it is important that Asian Minnesotans gain an understanding of the community's diverse immigration history, powerful resilience, and the policies and events that continue to shape it.

As we build community to fight for shared liberation, it is integral to center the stories and safety of those most vulnerable in order to build a full and inclusive movement. With our collective voice, we must demand that our representatives, elected leaders, and policy makers fully embrace the multiple and complex circumstances of the Asian communities' immigration stories to shape both policies and narrative.

SUMMARY

KaYing Yang, CAAL's Director of Programs and Partnerships, opened the session, acknowledging that throughout our country's complicated immgration history, many different populations have experienced exclusionary policies, discriminatory practices, and hate crimes. In Minnesota, there are over 40 ethnic communities whose immigration and migration stories reflect the history of the country. Whether coming as refugees, adoptees, international students, workers, spouses, or asylees, all Asian Americans have immigration histories.

Asian Americans in Minnesota: Histories of Immigration and Resistance

Juliana Hu Pegues, Assistant Professor, Department of American Indian Studies, Asian American Studies Program, University of Minnesota, began with a land acknowledgment of the homelands of the Dakota, Ojibwe, and Ho Chunk people and citing Minnesota's original name, Mni Sota Makoce, which means "Land where the waters reflect the clouds."

Hu Pegues stated that such acknowledgements are important as they reframe history away from whiteness and lift up both the indigenous people who lived on this land and the indigenous identities carried by some Asians (specifically Hmong, Tibetan, and Karen people).

Hu Pegues provided an overview of the reasons Asian people immigrate to and within Minnesota, as well as the reasons people immigrate in general:

- ***Globally:*** shaped by colonialism, war, economic and academic opportunities, or family reunification
- ***Nationally:*** characterized by "secondary migration" due to xenophobia/racism or to find/build community
- ***Locally:*** influenced by resources (civic and religious), economic and academic opportunities, and especially family/community connections

Common themes within the timeline of Asian immigration to the United States broadly and to Minnesota specifically are the arbitrary nature of national and/or race-based policies and the resilience of community when systems that were never designed to include Asian people continue to function as designed. These themes continue to be visible today, specifically in the Karen community, the most recent refugee group from Asia.

Select Timeline Events Shaping Immigration to Minnesota

1882 Passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act drives the first major wave of immigration to MN, as workers seek to escape escalating racial tension and violence on the West Coast. By 1920, close to 1000 Chinese are living in the state.

1910s-1920s International students from China, Korea, Japan and the Philippines attend the University of Minnesota, Hamline and Macalester College and create ethnic specific student organizations.

1920s A wave of Filipino migrant workers come to MN in the late 1920s, including the farmworker organizer Philip Vera Cruz. MN companies such as the American Crystal Sugar Company recruit Filipino workers—exempt from exclusionary immigration laws due to the Philippines' status as a US colony—from the West Coast.

1940s As a result of Executive Order 9066 and Japanese incarceration, the Military Intelligence Service Language School moves from San Francisco to Savage, MN and then to Fort Snelling, bringing a wave of Japanese Americans to the school who are then able to sponsor family members out of prison camps.

1940s MN colleges accept several hundred Japanese American students whose attendance at West Coast colleges is interrupted as they flee forced relocation and incarceration. This rapid response is fairly unique and MN soon has the second largest population of Japanese American students in the country.

1950s Korean students stay in MN due to impacts of US-Korean war, followed by military brides who then sponsor other family members. The war also leads to the adoption of infants from Korean orphanages, spurring the rise of transnational adoption in US.

1965 Passage of the Immigration and Nationalization Act abolishes discriminatory national origin quotas and leads to a rise in migration of Filipino families and single professional Filipinas, as well as growth of new South Asian communities in MN.

1970s	The India Association of Minnesota begins as the India Club of Minnesota, with proceeds from its first fundraiser going to support drought relief in India. Today, Indian Americans comprise the second largest ethnic group in the state.
1975	The post-1975 wave of refugees flee Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, coming to US from wartorn Southeast Asian countries or refugee camps in Thailand, Guam or the Philippines. In MN, 4,600 refugees were sponsored in 1975, numbers that then grew with secondary migration from other states in the US.
1976	The first Hmong families arrive in MN in 1976. Within five years, MN has the largest urban concentration of Hmong people in the US, due to secondary migration from other states and sponsorship of families in refugee camps when Hmong Minnesotans are able to gain citizenship.
1996	The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act expands the crimes that could automatically mandate detention and deportation and allows retroactive application, setting in motion a federal policy of mass detention and deportation, including the detainment of 8 Cambodian men from MN in August 2016.
2016-2020	A political climate of growing anti-immigrant policies and a rise in xenophobia leads to a precipitous drop in refugees coming to Minnesota. One of the two countries that refugees are still arriving from is Myanmar.

Hu Pegues drew attention to the rising community power and contributions of Asian Minnesotans that both increase representation at the policy level and enrich the shared community of Minnesota. The elections of Mee Moua, Cy Thao, and Satveer Singh Chaudary show the growing power of Asian Minnesotans as a voting block interested in having a say in our future. The formation of arts organizations including but not limited to Asian American Renaissance, Theater Mu, Pangea World Theater, Mizna, and the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT) show the importance of preserving and writing our own stories and adding to the already rich art's community in the region. For better or worse, Minnesota is our home, too, and we are invested in making it reflective of our diverse experiences.

Even as Asian Minnesotans grow in both representation and population (Minnesota is currently seeing its highest immigration numbers from Myanmar), broad policy continues to operate against community interests. Hu Pegues notes a precipitous drop in all immigration to the United States since 2016 as well as gaps in systems designed to provide resources to newly arrived immigrants combined with growing anti-immigration/anti-immigrant sentiment. A notable example of this gap is the increased risk currently faced by recent Asian immigrants to both exposure to COVID-19 (specifically for Karen meat-packers) and continued incidents of xenophobia and racism.

Finally, Hu Pegues' timeline illustrates the amorphous nature of "Asian-ness" as it relates to Whiteness and American-ness through policy, economic interest, and colonial history. Different segments of the Asian community have, throughout history, been effectively tiered based on intersecting notions of xenophobia and economic need (Ex. Filipinx people being exempt from the Immigration Act of 1924 because of the Philippines' status as a US Territory and the need for agricultural laborers). With this in mind, it is crucial that we, as Asian Minnesotans, center values of inclusion and plurality of truth in movements over binaries and zero sum game approach to policy change.

Community Panel

The session featured the stories of three community members whose families' lives have been shaped by immigration in different ways. Although the three stories represented very different communities and parts of history, common themes around displacement from origin countries and displacement within the United States and Minnesota emerged. The stories shared were stories of resilience in the face of adversity and illustrative of the ways in which immigration policy has both benefited and harmed communities in different ways at different times.

Sally (Ohno) Sudo, Twin Cities Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League

Sally (Ohno) Sudo, a retired school teacher, shared her family's story of settling in Seattle, Washington, being incarcerated for three years during World War 2, and then relocating to Minnesota through military, educational, and employment sponsorships.

We had no home to go to and my father had no business left."
- Sally Sudo

Sudo was born and grew up in Seattle before being forcibly relocated, along with over 120,000 Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast, to ten prison camps throughout the United States (mostly near Indian Reservations) in 1942 after President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. Sudo and her family spent the next three years living in a camp in Minidoka, Idaho. Because of the speed with which the order was carried out, her family lost their home and business in Seattle and faced an uncertain future.

Sudo's older brother volunteered for the US Military the day after graduating from high school in the prison camp. He was assigned to the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) in Savage, MN (later moved to Fort Snelling). Sudo's brother, Joe, was able to sponsor three of their siblings to move to Minnesota for education and employment. Eventually, the entire family reunited in Minnesota, where they faced discrimination and difficulty finding gainful employment. Many other Japanese-Americans followed a similar path to Minnesota.

Sudo highlighted the continued work of the Japanese-American Citizens League and the Nisei Student Relocation Commemorative Fund and the American Friends Service Committee's legacy, which provided scholarships to Japanese American students displaced by World War 2.

"We were put in prison without ever being charged with any crime. The constitution did not protect us. The government said it was a military necessity but, in truth, it was caused by war hysteria, a long history of racial discrimination, and a failure of political leadership. Our battle cry is NEVER AGAIN."
- Sally Sudo

Sudo closed by connecting the struggles of Japanese-Americans during World War 2 to current-day issues of children being separated from their parents and kept in cages on the southern border, and people experiencing discrimination due to their race or religion.

She referenced these injustices as reasons her story is still important to share today.

Jon Vang Tao

Jon Vang Tao spoke about the role of US colonialism and war on the Hmong and Lao immigration story and its impact on his own family and community and the continued role of policing through deportation.

"I had to grow up between two sets of values and cultures."
- Jon Vang Tao

Vang Tao gave a brief history of the role of Hmong and Lao mercenary soldiers in the US Secret War in Laos during the Vietnam War. Despite technical superiority, the US struggled to fight the war and relied on Hmong and Lao allies who knew the land. These allies were left behind when the US withdrew and were forced to flee to other parts of the world to escape Communist soldiers.

Many churches affiliated with the US refugee resettlement program across different states assisted Hmong and Lao resettlement. However, the assistance was often framed as transactional or even evangelical and sowed the seeds of a continuing divide within the community over the role of Christianity. Because of the haste with which they needed to escape, many families relocated with little or nothing. This was exacerbated by Southeast Asian families being resettled into under-resourced neighborhoods. Many Hmong and Lao refugees struggled to find support from social, education, and health systems because of English language barriers and living in poverty in the most impoverished neighborhoods. They also struggled with expectations to fit into US cultural norms. Vang Tao shared that many Hmong and Lao people were understandably more concerned with meeting their basic needs rather than with cultural integration.

Vang Tao was born and grew up in St. Paul, MN, and struggled to navigate between two cultures, feeling that he needed to choose between his cultural self and material gain. He talked about his youth and finding ways to entertain themselves and the limitations for young men of color hanging out in public spaces.

Vang Tao talked about the personal and community impact of policies meant to be "tough on crimes" and the 1996 immigration reform bill. Mandatory minimum sentencing and the expansion of deportation had a destabilizing effect on a community that was finally gaining its footing. For example, young men gathering together in parks did not realize that an Asian gang task force was profiling them. Vang Tao mentioned that they thought it was amusing and did not realize the consequences of "messing" with officers by joking about being associated with gangs. The 1996 law made deeper connections between crime and deportation, giving more power to law enforcement agents. As deportations dramatically increased following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, memorandums of understanding were pursued with Cambodia and Vietnam to begin deportations to these two countries.

In 2016, Vang Tao traveled to Cambodia with the 1Love Movement delegation. He observed the inhumanity of deportation of returning refugees to a country they've either escaped from or never knew, and the added trauma and pain of leaving families and lives behind in the US. He talked about Release MN8's campaign to fight deportations and support families devastated by the removal of loved ones. Upon arrival to Cambodia, deportees had to learn a new language and figure out how to survive economically and personally. They are often easily identified by their "American" mannerism, how they speak and walk. They are often seen as criminals and preyed upon. Vang Tao noted that many have died by suicide. He also highlighted that many Southeast Asian felony-based deportations occurred after time served and the intersection with the United States' prison industrial complex. Individuals who have served time in the US and are released are punished again by deportation. Many of the deportees are punished for what they did as youth many years ago. They had since overcome barriers, found jobs, and created families who rely on them for stability. Deportation hurts the most innocent and vulnerable: the children who must live without a parent.

"After these deportations, the family and the friends are left to pick up the pieces after the US tears families apart."
- Jon Vang Tao

Vang Tao ended by reading a testimonial by a community member whose father is living with a deportation order.

Geetanjali Mittal

Geetanjali Mittal shared her personal immigration story and talked about how she fits into a community of immigrants that enrich the country. Mittal immigrated to the United States about eight years ago and, personally, had a relatively smooth process. She noted that the process has become increasingly rigorous in recent years.

Mittal gave a brief history of the three major waves of Indian/South Asian immigration occurring in the early 20th century, in the 1970s due to the Hart-Celler Act, and in the early 21st century. Many Indian immigrants have historically arrived through employment sponsorship in highly technical fields, contributing heavily to the model minority myth. Mittal noted that this is only one piece of the story and that Indian community spaces exist through hard fought organizing. She highlighted that the full community includes more than skilled technical workers. For elders who came to be reunited with family, there are both fewer resources and less mainstream enthusiasm to help people adjust.

"It's not just the story of immigrants, it's also the stories of individuals who want to thrive in any kind of environment that they are in and that's why is really important that immigrants are not seen just as immigrants but also as individuals."
- Geetanjali Mittal

Mittal talked about current difficulties within her community, including young people feeling caught between two cultures and new limitations on visas and visa extensions. She spoke about the uncertainty over whether families will stay together, compounding existing uncertainty about whether Indian immigrants will ever feel truly welcomed. Mittal talked about the impacts of this uncertainty being amplified during COVID-19. The rise in domestic violence seen nationally is especially complicated in Indian families as a spouse's visa may be based on remaining with an abusive primary visa holder.

Mittal detailed the historical and continuing importance of contributions made by immigrant communities to the United States. The country is economically richer because of immigrant contributions at all levels and is culturally richer because of the diversity of experiences reflected in the population. Mittal further asserted that limiting the arrival of new people and failing to support the people who are here would be detrimental to the United States. She noted that truly supporting immigrants means offering multi-faceted services, the way a tree needs numerous kinds of nutrients to grow strong.

"We are not the weeds,
we are the nutrients that are
enriching this country."
- Geetanjali Mittal

Current-Day Immigration Policies

Veena Iyer, Executive Director, Immigrant Law Center of MN (ILCM), provided a comprehensive overview of current-day immigration policies, noting that policies and their enforcement are often changing and anyone with specific questions should always consult an immigration attorney.

Iyer shared that her family's immigration story closely mirrors the Hart-Celler Act's history; her father immigrated from India and sponsored her mother to immigrate and become a lawful permanent resident. Iyer noted that the process for her parents took about a few months and would be much longer if they immigrated today.

Although it is less overt than in the past, current-day immigration policy actively excludes non-white immigrants, deters immigration from non-white countries, and disrupts and dismantles immigrant communities. This is carried out through broad policy that privileges white European family structures and values such as individualism over collectivism. Additionally, the current-day immigration policy intersects with other policies rooted in anti-Blackness and xenophobia including but not limited to policing, distribution and protection of wealth, and colonialism.

COVID-19 and Immigration

COVID-19 has had an outsized effect on vulnerable communities, and individuals and immigrants are no exception. Policy responding to the pandemic builds on approaches to limiting immigration, including travel bans and a halt to all Consular processing of visas abroad. There have also been significant delays in Adjustment of Status processing domestically and delays caused by USCIS refusal to conduct immigration interviews remotely, and the potential furloughing of already understaffed agencies.

Effectively, the already complex system of immigrating to the United States and applying for citizenship has become more complicated and dangerous because of the increased potential for exposure to COVID-19. Once here, immigrants (especially those from Asian countries) face barriers in accessing COVID-19 related AID and xenophobia from an increasingly polarized and anti-immigrant public. Xenophobic influence on policy is evident in recent changes to the Public Charge rule, which deters immigrants from accessing public services, including healthcare. While the policy itself was applied in a colorblind manner, the demographics of people most affected by these changes make clear that the point is to hinder non-white immigrants from building sustainable roots in the country.

Economic Implications

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, employment-based immigration was already actively changed to deter immigration (mostly from China and India) and create structural barriers for current immigrants and their families to remain in the United States. These barriers are evident in dramatically higher denial rates for employment-based visas from China and India as well as increasingly long processing times (up to 50 years) for employment-based green cards resulting from country-based immigration limits put in place by the Hart-Celler Act.

Long processing times may result in children of employment-based immigrants turning 21 and having to return to a country they never knew. For example, if a child moves to the United States with a parent with an employment-based visa, the child will reach age of majority before their parent has attained citizenship, making the child an undocumented adult.

This is especially appalling because, in many cases, employment-based immigrants are sought out because they offer skill sets unavailable in the United States employment pool (most often in the STEM field).

Employers are made to provide documentary evidence of the lack of qualified Americans for these roles, which must then be corroborated by immigration authorities. By extending the processing time places these workers and their families into a state of uncertainty over their future in the United States. It should also be noted that 1) employment-based visa applications are prepared and submitted by experienced immigration attorneys retained by companies seeking skilled workers rather than the individual workers themselves, and 2) there has not been an increase in requests for this type of visa. The increase in denials is indicative of xenophobic and anti-immigrant policy.

NOTE: This paper will not opine on the reasons why STEM-based skill sets are not available domestically in the US, except to note increased divestment from education and social services and increased investment in law enforcement and military spending.

Effectively, these policies intersect to reinforce the white American view of Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latinx people as disposable sources of labor at every level. Additionally, policies that are not inclusive of whole family units reinforce myths of white individualism as the driver of successful capitalism. Further, these policies' long-term economic impacts will continue to destabilize communities and negatively affect the entire United States economy. As can be noted throughout history, in periods of economic downturn, communities and individuals who are already vulnerable will be at the highest risk.

Humanitarian Immigration

Anecdotally, we know that increasing climate change and violent conflicts abroad are driving more people to seek safety and opportunity in the United States. In many cases, the root causes for this displacement lie in the mismanagement of natural resources in the interest of capitalist interests driven by the world's superpowers, in no small part supported by national interests even as global commerce makes all nations more dependent on one another. In a sense, out-dated notions of international winners and losers drive self-destructive policies domestically and abroad to make less land livable while increasing wealth gaps.

One of the many byproducts of this global problem is increased immigration based on displacement. In the United States, this has been met with xenophobic and short-sighted immigration policy that seeks to bar the most vulnerable human beings from entry while profiting from the very factors that make these people vulnerable. Whereas refugee and asylee statuses are granted based on persecution or well-founded fear of persecution in the homeland, the routes to gain these statuses have become more complex and enforcement of the policies has become stricter. Arguably, this stems from a lack of empathy from policy-makers more concerned with instituting process than with understanding the root causes of immigration.

As of this webinar in July 2020, the United States has resettled the smallest amount of humanitarian refugees since 1980.

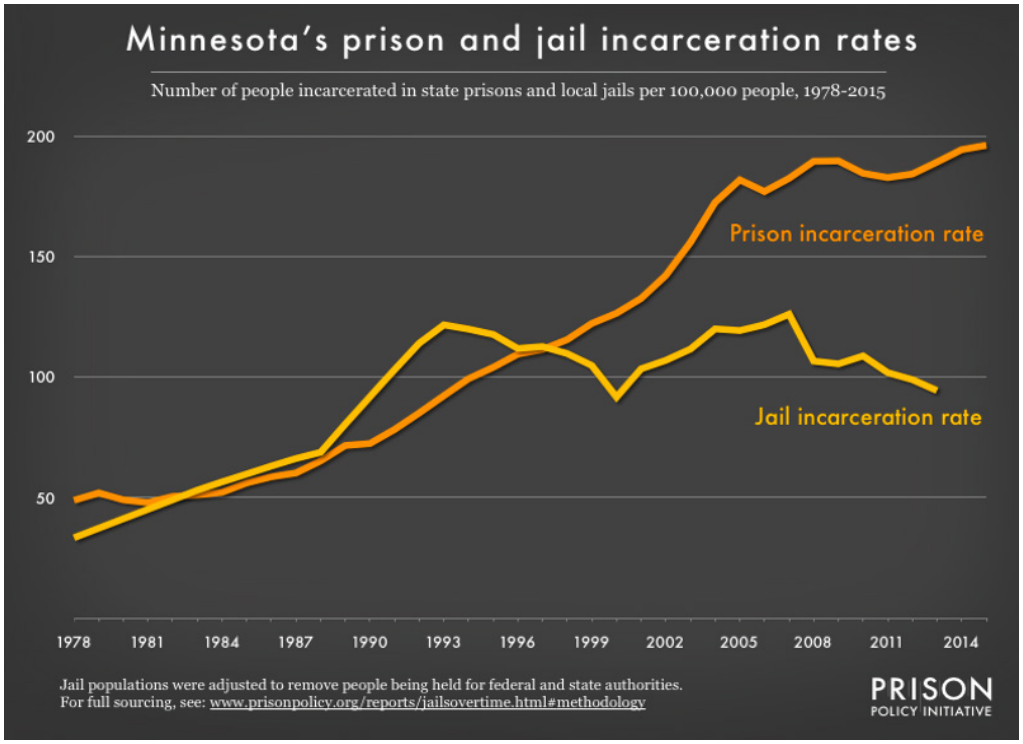
Criminalization of BIPOC and Immigrant Communities

June Kuoch gave a brief history of the increasing criminalization of Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx and immigrant communities, explicitly highlighting the connection of policing of AAPI immigrant communities and anti-Blackness, and gave an overview of current movements happening across communities.

The System Is Not Broken

Kuoch highlighted the gradual shift of anti-Blackness from chattel slavery to strategic divestment from education, health, social services, social services, and the increase in crime and punishment systems. This shift created and continues to increase the criminalization of poverty so that imprisonment is used as a supposedly color-blind method to control and limit while serving to further white supremacist control of Black people.

While these systems have historically targeted Black and Indigenous people, the economic and often geographic proximity of AAPI communities (specifically Southeast Asian/refugee communities) to Black and Indigenous communities results in a shared concern. Simultaneously, artificial racial hierarchies such as the model minority myth pit communities of color against one another as they repeatedly try to claim space even as white supremacist systems actively and repeatedly displace, disrupt, and dismantle them. This is evidenced by the disparate rates of incarceration among Black and Indigenous people and the dramatic rise in incarceration overall resulting from intentional criminalization of poverty (e.g. the War on Drugs).



Anti-Black policing and criminalization of poverty are strongly connected to the criminalization of immigration. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act caused an increased rate of incarceration and deportation of Southeast Asian people; Southeast Asian people swept up in raids targeting poor Black neighborhoods face the added consequence of potential deportation, further dismantling communities often already in existential distress.

MN Nice ≠ MN ICE

The recent uprisings in the Twin Cities following the murder of George Floyd provideded a number of opportunities to re-imagine systems in a more community-based way. While the uprisings created more momentum around the movement to defund and abolish the Minneapolis Police Department, (Ex. St. Paul Public Schools and the Minneapolis Parks Board both terminated contracts

with their cities' police departments), there has not yet been a large-scale, deep examination of the role of police. City leaders have not acknowledged that the very notion of policing is rooted in white supremacy and capitalist values that place higher regard on property and commerce than on Black and Brown lives.

In the Twin Cities, specifically, too many white and non-Black Minnesotans remain comfortable enough to feel removed from the growing need for a re-imagined version of public safety. This is evidenced in Minneapolis' high standard of living existing parallel to staggering disparities between white and Black Minnesotans in every measurable category. Additionally, this comfort deters many white and non-Black people to dismiss police abolition out of hand for fear of total anarchy and unchecked violence, rather than thoughtfully considering it for what it is: Divestment from systems of crime and punishment and re-investment in community resources such as education, health, and social services. Further, white supremacist notions of assimilation have taken root in some parts of the Asian community, resulting in further divides between communities of color (Ex. Officer Tou Thao's complicity in George Floyd's murder). It is of particular relevance to Asian Minnesotans that defunding police includes defunding ICE.

Kuoch concluded their presentation by reiterating that the wellbeing of AAPI communities, especially Southeast Asian communities, is intrinsically tied to Black communities' wellbeing and by stating that AAPI organizers must seek to follow the lead of Black organizers.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Immigration policy and the public and political discourse around it continues to shift and change. Within weeks of this session, several questions raised were resolved (including the status of student F-4 visas) while other problems, including the full impact of COVID-19 on immigration policies and practices, continue to develop. As of the time of this webinar and brief, some questions to be explored further include:

1. How do we urge all Minnesotans, not just those who are directly impacted, to create protections for immigrant/refugee families?

2. With limited services to support individual families on the frontlines fighting for loved ones during the immigration crisis, what role can organizations play in supporting, shepherding, and sustaining this work?

2a. What are mental health service providers currently doing, and what more must they do, to improve and integrate culturally appropriate mental health services and assessments?

2b. How are legal service providers working in partnership with impacted families and community organizers to address the harm immigration policies have had?

3. How can education curriculum be expanded or corrected to better include all facets of immigration (Ex. State incarceration of Japanese-Americans during wartime, sponsorship, and the intersections between immigration and the prison system)?

3a. How does not teaching children, especially BIPOC children, about history that reflects them impact all Americans? How does only learning about generals, diplomats, colonizers and invaders affect the social and emotional state of our Asian youth?

3b. How can a more full knowledge of American immigration be made accessible to adults who may have had limited access to immigration history?

4. Immigrant children and the children of immigrants/refugees face unique challenges, often characterized as existing "between different worlds." Given the strong relationship between criminal justice and immigration (i.e. deportation), what may present as "youthful rebellion" for other young people may have devastating consequences for immigrants and/or their children. How can community resources be positioned to specifically support immigrant/refugee children facing multiple barriers?

4a. How can immigrants' and their children's stories be used to respond to "tough on crime" narratives and policies?

(continued)

5. In recent years, the political and media discourse around immigration has been framed as a partisan social problem in need of solving, often through drastic and reactionary means (Ex. anti-immigrant policies, deportation, family separation). How can the discourse be shifted to include more creative, community-based perspectives?

5a. How can policymakers be held accountable to support community-driven policies that protect our immigrant and refugee families?

6. In the US and Minnesota, immigrant/refugee communities make significant economic and cultural contributions to the ever-expanding diversity of the population of the United States but are often limited or barred from government aid during times of crisis. How can policy be changed to be more inclusive?

6a. With immigrant communities over-represented in essential and skilled labor roles within the US economy, what investments must be made to ensure short-term security and long-term economic growth?

6b. How might the ongoing trade conflicts with China and India impact the status of Asian-Americans and Asian people living in the United States?

Summary by Jon F. Jee

REFLECTION
by Donna Maeda

As individuals and communities, we are shaped by the narratives we are given and the ones we tell about our own lives. Claiming our stories and connecting them to larger narratives is part of claiming power and resisting oppressive systems. In Japanese American communities, it often took decades for survivors to claim their own telling of the story of incarceration during World War II. When Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes to be incarcerated during World War II, there was no national outcry about racism or the violation of constitutional rights; no national organization took a stand in support of the community. Many young Nisei (second generation) had no broader narrative about rights and belonging into which their own stories fit. Decades after WWII, a Nisei veteran shared a story with a group of my students about going into town with other soldiers on a break from basic training in Mississippi.

When they boarded a city bus, the driver told the Black soldier in the group that he had to sit at the back of the bus; the driver wouldn't allow the others to sit with him. Together they all got off the bus and from then on, the group always walked into town. Reflecting on his life, this Nisei veteran said, "If I had learned the history of Black resistance, I never would have volunteered for the army in the first place." After the war, he understood the limitations of trying to prove his loyalty by joining the military. He connected his story to that of other communities to see his life in a bigger narrative of injustice, resistance, and movements for change.

The speakers in CAAL's "Immigration and Resistance" event create a rich narrative that weaves together histories and experiences of diverse Asian communities in the U.S. They show connections between communities subject to exclusionary and racist immigration policies, as well as their collective resistance and mutual support. Professor Juliana Hu Pegues's overarching history, and the personal and community stories offered by Sally Ohno Sudo, Jon Vang Tao, and Geetanjali Mittal, demonstrate how Asians have been brought together under a single racial category through representations as alien and unable to assimilate into American norms. Veena Iyer's presentation shows the concrete effects of these representations in immigration law and policy. The idea that Asians are fundamentally "other" has justified exclusion and deportation of members of our communities, as well as limiting access to resources. The speakers also show that representations that appear more positive, as hard-working and successful, still demonstrate that Asian Americans lack the power of collective self-representation as we are called model minorities in attempts to blame other communities for their inability to succeed. The representation as model minorities fails to take into account how immigration and other policies have prioritized highly educated, skilled immigrants from Asia. The model minority myth also makes invisible Asians who lack opportunities to succeed. Both representations of Asians as unassimilable and as model minorities demonstrate the dangers we face when we don't have the social and political power to place our own stories into larger national and transnational narratives.

As Professor Hu Pegues points out, many Asian communities have grown in the U.S. due to U.S. colonialism and wars in Asia, as well as policies that create economic, social, and political conditions that prompt people to leave their home countries. These contexts of arrival contribute to conditional terms of acceptance. Minnesota has supported refugee communities, but within complex dynamics of dependency, notions of white superiority, and expectations around assimilation. At the same time,

those who arrive due to the prioritizing of highly skilled immigrants in immigration law and who seem to fit the model minority are also vulnerable to changing acceptance and rejection dynamics.

As they demonstrate how we have been subject to others' representations, the speakers also show how we claim a common Asian American identity to gain power to change those representations and the laws, policies, and practices they justify. Together the speakers show histories of survival, adaptation, and resistance. Asian American immigrants have created communities with practices of mutual support. Our communities use law, organizing, and advocacy for policy changes in order to challenge oppressive practices. Our communities also use the arts to assert new narratives that complicate how we have been represented.

The histories and stories brought together in the "Immigration and Resistance" event refuse our communities' dehumanization and show how we enrich notions of "American" culture. This moment of the COVID-19 pandemic and uprisings against anti-Blackness and racism show the importance of community care and collective responsibility. As speaker June Kuoch points out, re-claiming Asian American identities with deeper understandings of our collective histories can foster solidarities with other racialized communities.

This CAAL session contributes to the re-defining and re-claiming of Asian American identities that bring out histories together for the continuing work of resistance and solidarity. Collectively, the speakers resist ways we're defined by, and positioned within, structures of U.S. colonialism and xenophobia. By bringing these speakers together, CAAL provides space to broaden understanding to support immigrant and refugee communities and create solidarity with other communities in movements for justice.

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