

Organizational Contact List

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) was founded in 1983 in recognition of the needs of low-income Asian immigrant women. AIWA's mission is to empower low-income, limited English-speaking Asian immigrant women, youth and their families to bring about positive changes in their workplaces, communities and broader society. AIWA primarily works with Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese women in the San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley employed in the garment, hotel, restaurant, electronics assembly and other low-wage industries, as well as low-income immigrant youth. Through the successful Garment Workers Justice Campaign and Workplace Health and Safety Campaign, AIWA's women leaders have made important institutional improvements in the garment industry. AIWA's programs include weekly workplace literacy classes, leadership development training, targeted justice campaigns and youth development projects.

Oakland Main Office

310 8th St., Suite 301
Oakland, CA 94607

tel: (510) 268-0192
fax: (510) 268-0194

info@aiwa.org
www.aiwa.org

San Jose Office

1010 Ruff Street
San Jose, CA 95110

tel: (408) 289-8983
fax: (408) 289-8883

Centro Romero

From volunteer efforts of the Salvadoran community of the early 1980s, Centro Romero was created to meet the needs of a Latino immigrant and refugee population that continues to grow rapidly. Their interrelated programs include adult education, women's empowerment projects, legal assistance, youth learning and leadership development. Centro Romero's long-term organizational goal is to bridge a disenfranchised community of Latino immigrants and refugees into mainstream American society and to improve their opportunity for upward social mobility. The Women's Project (WP) seeks to celebrate the strength of Latinas in order to assert the importance of healthy individuals and family relationships. The philosophy of the WP is to empower individuals, to help women find their own voices and to increase each woman's capacity to take control and improve her life. Centro Romero takes a fourfold comprehensive approach to resolving women's issues: domestic violence case management; foster leadership development; conduct community education and outreach, and; collaborate with fellow service providers.

6216 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60660

tel: (773) 508-5300
fax: (773) 508-5399

Ctroromero@aol.com
www.CentroRomero.org

Chinese Progressive Association

Founded in 1972, the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) is a grassroots membership-based organization that empowers the Chinese community in San Francisco and promotes justice and equality for all people. CPA's campaigns and programs improve the working and living conditions of low-income immigrants and mobilize community members to project a stronger voice in the decision-making processes that affect them. The core strategies are community education, organizing, leadership development and movement building. Current programs include the Workers Organizing Center, the Housing Justice Campaign and the Common Roots Youth Organizer Program.

1042 Grant Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94133

tel: (415) 391-6986
fax: (415) 391-6987

justice@cpasf.org

Chinese Staff & Workers Association

In 1979, the Chinese Staff & Workers' Association (CSWA) began with mostly Chinese male, restaurant workers, but rapidly expanded to include garment and construction workers, caregivers, disabled workers, retirees and youth. Today CSWA has a membership of over 1,300 workers from various trades and ages, injured and non-injured, documented and undocumented and a leadership composed primarily of women. CSWA brings workers together across trades to fight for change in the workplace as well as in the community at large. Since its inception, CSWA has successfully fought for increased space for daycare; won a landmark case against the City of New York to stop a luxury development from being built in Chinatown that would have displaced low-income residents, while putting forth a new environmental perspective that included the people as part of the environment; pushed for the passage of manufacturer accountability legislation in 1998; and recovered over \$10 million in owed back wages and overtime pay.

Manhattan Chinatown Center

15 Catherine Street, 2nd Floor Rear
New York, NY 10038

tel: (212) 619-7979
fax: (212) 374-1506

Brooklyn Worker's Center

5411 7th Avenue
Brooklyn, New York

tel: (718) 633-9748
fax: (718) 437-6991

cswa@cswa.org
www.cswa.org

Domestic Workers United

Domestic Workers United (DWU) is a New York City-wide coalition of individual domestic workers and domestic worker organizations including the Women Workers Project of Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, Andolan Organizing South Asian Workers, Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, and Damayan Migrant Workers Association. DWU is organizing to raise the level of respect and recognition for domestic workers and establish fair labor standards in the domestic work industry of New York City. DWU's current campaign, "Dignity for Domestic Workers," seeks to establish a Standard Contract for all domestic workers including provisions for health care, paid vacation, notice of termination and severance pay. DWU's recent major victory was the passage of Local Law 96-A and Resolution 135 in New York City Council in support of rights and dignity for domestic workers.

2473 Valentine Ave.
Bronx, NY 10458

tel: (718) 220-7391
fax: (718) 220-7398

justice@caaav.org
www.caaav.org

La Mujer Obrera

La Mujer Obrera (Working Woman) is currently in its 22nd year as a community-based organization dedicated to changing the economic, social, political, and gender status of Mexican immigrant women workers and their families. Over the years, La Mujer Obrera has led the struggle against the "undeclared war" on Mexican immigrant women workers. Their strategy for a sustainable community includes seven basic needs: Political Liberty, Jobs, Education, Housing, Nutrition, Health, and Peace. The women have confronted profound discrimination that declares them to be unemployable, uneducable and unable to be community leaders in the United States because they lack English skills, have little formal education, are "too old," and have worked in factories most of their lives. La Mujer Obrera is focusing on the development of the Women's Institute as a community-based leadership development infrastructure dedicated to demonstrating that Mexican immigrant women workers are, and can be leaders of comprehensive community empowerment and social change initiatives. La Mujer Obrera is also developing the Initiative for a Bilingual Workforce Development Center in El Paso, structured and designed by North American Free Trade Agreement displaced workers.

2000 Texas Ave.
El Paso, TX 79901

tel: (915) 533-9710
fax: (915) 544-3730

info@mujerobrera.org
www.mujerobrera.org

Mujeres Unidas y Activas

Mujeres Unidas y Activas (United and Active Women–MUA) is a grassroots community organizing and leadership development program run by and for Latina immigrant women. MUA's mission is to develop the leadership and self-determination of individual women, and to defend immigrant rights, women's rights and social justice through targeted community education and organizing campaigns. More than 300 low-income Latina immigrant women are active members of MUA's two groups, based in San Francisco and Oakland. MUA's programs include peer counseling, conducting informational workshops, leadership development trainings, job training and placement, and engaging in community campaigns. Since its founding in 1989, MUA has developed as a model organization for other grassroots groups throughout the country. MUA's successes include helping hundreds of women break free from domestic violence; helping to save undocumented immigrant women's access to prenatal care in the state of California; and improving local agency policies regarding immigrant women and domestic violence.

San Francisco Office

3543 18th Street, #23
San Francisco, CA 94110

tel: (415) 626-2128
fax: (415) 621-8140

Oakland Office

2647 International Blvd., suite 108
Oakland, CA 94601

tel: (510) 261-3398

**Restaurant Workers
Association of Koreatown**

The mission of the Restaurant Workers Association of Koreatown (RWAK) is to fight to improve the working conditions of workers for human dignity and to unite all workers to help themselves and their coworkers. RWAK organizes Korean and Latino restaurant workers, educates and organizes members, and fights against exploitive working conditions in the restaurant industry. To promote the well-being of its members, RWAK also organizes support groups among restaurant workers.

3465 W. 8th St., 2nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90005

tel: (213) 738-9050
fax: (213) 738-9919

kiwa@kiwa.org
www.kiwa.org

In addition to the above organizations, representatives from the San Francisco Bay Area Arab immigrant community will be participating in this gathering to share their experience in building grassroots immigrant women's leadership.

Immigrant Women Leadership Gathering

Success, Power & Solidarity: Immigrant Women Leading Change

On March 25-27, 2004, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) will host the Second National Immigrant Women Leadership Gathering under the theme of *Success, Power & Solidarity: Immigrant Women Leading Change*. Forty immigrant women leaders and staff from nine countries and nine grassroots organizations across the United States will come together to share their leadership approaches and campaign successes, identify best practices, and present local, regional and national strategies to strengthen immigrant women's leadership.

In 2001, AIWA convened the First National Immigrant Women Leadership Gathering (IWLG) to bring together low-income, immigrant women activists to discuss issues of common concern, including workplace health and safety, low wages, affordable housing and violence against women. This historic gathering enabled grassroots immigrant women leaders to discuss issues affecting them and their families, and to learn from each other's struggles and successes. At the Gathering, there was one overriding issue that united all the women—the importance of organizing, educating and developing immigrant women leaders who can bring about change in their communities.

The immigrant women participants envisioned future gatherings where they could continue to learn from each other and strategize to build a strong immigrant women's movement in the U.S.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the increase in

The Goals of the Second National IWLG

Share each other's stories, work, vision and challenges in developing grassroots immigrant women's leadership

Highlight and showcase examples of concrete institutional changes resulting from immigrant women empowerment

Present local, regional and national strategies for immigrant women leading change

anti-immigrant sentiments and actions in the U.S., along with the national economic downturn has disproportionately affected immigrants and people of color communities. The increasing gap between the have and have-nots will continue to affect broader American society. We believe these trends must be challenged by those who are most affected, especially low-income immigrant women. To that end, the participants of IWLG seek to address the fundamental issues facing their communities and to continue fighting for justice and equality for all.

All the attendees of the IWLG are themselves low-income immigrant women who have personally experienced difficulties of living and working in the U.S. with limited or no English language skills and few

employment opportunities. They come from Barbados, China, El Salvador, Guatemala, Korea, Mexico, Palestine, Philippines, and Vietnam, and have been working in low-wage industries, including restaurant, garment, electronics assembly and domestic work in cities across the U.S. Through years of training and development, these women have become community leaders and have led successful grassroots campaigns that have made positive changes in their workplaces and communities. They have passed city ordinances raising the minimum wage and made groundbreaking progress in improving the working conditions of garment workers. They have organized multi-racial coalitions to win workers and immigrants' rights, and successfully formed economic development projects. This year's IWLG provides a valuable forum to highlight and disseminate the messages of this vitally important segment of American society—women who are effecting important changes in our communities nationwide.

Profiles: Immigrant Women Leaders

Carolyn H. de Leon-Hermogenes & Barbara Young

Domestic Workers United

New York, New York

Carolyn de Leon is an immigrant from the Philippines who worked as a domestic worker for over 14 years in Hong Kong and New York City. She joined the Women Workers Project of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence in New York City in 1998. For many years, Carol participated in several justice campaigns on behalf of exploited Asian domestic workers. Currently, she is a board member of Domestic Workers United.

Barbara Young came to the U.S. from Barbados, where she was a transportation worker until she was laid off, due to the impacts of globalization in her homeland. She was active in the Barbados transport workers union, but moved to New York to support her family in Barbados. Barbara became active with Domestic Workers United through attending meetings and participating in the “Dignity for Domestic Workers Campaign,” and became a Steering Committee member in 2001. She was a leader throughout the campaign testifying before the City Council, leading many actions, and making important decisions that advanced the campaign.

Celeste Jimenez

La Mujer Obrera

El Paso, Texas

Celeste Jimenez was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, and immigrated to the U.S. over 20 years ago. Celeste lived in the South-central neighborhood of El Paso, Texas, formerly known as the “Garment District” her whole life and worked in many small garment factories. But after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), she was laid off and could not find work due to massive closings of hundreds of garment factories. She joined La Mujer Obrera (Working Woman) over 10 years ago and participated in its English classes and leadership training programs. Celeste has played an important part of every campaign since then—for the rights of Spanish-speaking immigrant workers for retraining and job placement. Through her extensive community campaign experience, Celeste knows every block of the South-central neighborhood and its dynamics. Celeste is a member of the Neighborhood Revitalization Committee and has been instrumental in the development of La Mujer Obrera’s strategy for the development of a sustainable community. She has inspired and trained many women leaders at La Mujer Obrera.

Fei Yi Chen

Chinese Progressive Association

San Francisco, California

Fei Yi Chen is from Guang Zhou, China. After immigrating to the U.S., Fei Yi worked as a garment worker and electronics assembler. She worked at Lee Mah electronics factory in 2001 when the owner closed the factory without paying the workers. Fei Yi was one of the worker leaders who led a successful campaign to win compensation from Lee Mah, with support from Chinese Progressive Association. In 2003, she and other community leaders at CPA led a successful citywide ballot initiative Prop. L to raise the minimum wage to \$8.50 in San Francisco, one of the most expensive places to live in the U.S. Fei Yi worked on this campaign as CPA’s Peer Organizer and coordinated communitywide outreach through phone-banking, leafleting and mobilizing volunteers. She believes that building immigrant women’s leadership is important because it gives women the confidence to fight for their rights and determine their own future.

Sook-Ja Kim

**Restaurant Workers
Association of Koreatown**
Los Angeles, California

Sook-Ja Kim immigrated from South Korea 10 years ago. She immediately faced unfair and unjust treatment from employers. Sook-Ja applied for a waitress position at a Korean restaurant but was denied because she was considered too “tall and chubby” for the job. She then applied for a cook’s position so her appearance would not be an issue. She worked 12-hour days 6 days a week for \$1,300 a month. And because Sook-Ja could not afford childcare, her eight-year-old son had to wait alone at home for his mother to return from work. After six years of working, Sook-Ja went to a workers rights workshop at Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates in 1999. She discovered that she had been receiving only half of what she was entitled to and had been treated like a slave while getting paid below minimum wage without overtime pay. She became an active member of the campaign to improve the working conditions of restaurant workers in L.A.’s Koreatown. In 2000, Sook-Ja and other restaurant workers formed the Restaurant Workers Association of Koreatown to educate mostly Korean and Central American immigrant workers about their rights. Because many restaurant workers face workplace health and safety violations but do not have access to healthcare, RWAK started a free health clinic for the association members. Sook-Ja is a board member of RWAK and continues to fight for the rights of low-wage immigrant workers in the restaurant industry.

Claudia Llanos

Mujeres Unidas y Activas
San Francisco, California

Claudia Llanos immigrated from México. She currently works as a maintenance worker at a retail store in downtown San Francisco. Previously, she worked in an electronics assembly *maquiladora* (sweatshop) on the U.S.-Mexico border. There she witnessed extreme violence against women workers, and gained personal experience with the injustices of the global economy. When she arrived in the U.S., Claudia faced domestic violence, isolation and disorientation. She came to Mujeres Unidas y Activas (United and Active Women) in 2002 to find support from other immigrant women and became active through various leadership training and community campaign. Currently, Claudia is working with other MUA members to identify the focus of a new community organizing campaign. As part of this process, Claudia has interviewed other women and realized that many Latina immigrants face similar problems: isolation, domestic violence, abuses of workers’ rights, and lack of access to health and education services. Claudia hopes that through this campaign, MUA will build the power of immigrant women and eventually achieve legalization for all immigrants. She believes that women need to become leaders in their own lives and realize their own potential. When more women become leaders, the whole community will benefit.

York Ping Toy

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates
Oakland, California

York Ping Toy immigrated to the United States from China in 1990 and has been a garment worker for 14 years. When she first started working, the minimum wage was \$4.25 an hour, but she was only paid \$3.50 an hour “because she was a new immigrant.” In most of the 15 garment factories where she has worked since then, she has seen that type of exploitation repeatedly. The demanding work and poor working conditions took their toll on her body as she suffered for years with what she thought was arthritis. When she received a flyer to attend a free clinic established by Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, she went seeking relief from the pain in her hands, arms, shoulders and lower back. The doctor at the workers’ clinic told her that she had an easily prevented work-related injury. York Ping became active in AIWA’s programs and was encouraged by her son to get involved in the Peer Health Promoter Network (PHPN). The training workshops helped her understand the cause of injuries and how to avoid them. She wants to pass on what she learned to other women. York Ping believes leadership development is important because she sees that as immigrant women empower themselves and increase their confidence, their collective power can make changes in the community. Currently York Ping is working in a factory that does not have ergonomic chairs or adjustments, where she sees a great opportunity to organize workers to improve the health and safety conditions in that factory.