



Asian Immigrant Women Advocates PROGRAM REPORT

2010



Lan Fong Lau, Peer Organizer marches in solidarity at an anti-profiling rally in Oakland

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA)

is a community based organization primarily concerned with developing the collective leadership of low-income immigrant women and youth to bring about positive changes in their living and working conditions.

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From the Executive Director



Dear Friends and Supporters,

2010 was a highly rewarding year for AIWA and our members as we embarked on an organization-wide initiative to enhance our leadership programs and work with other groups to share our leadership development methodology. Public presentations and media coverage generated much broader interest in our leadership development programs and led several organizations to inquire about adapting our Community Transformational Organizing Strategy (CTOS, pronounced “See-toess”) to help them advance their organizing and advocacy work.

What sets AIWA apart from many organizations is that the women and youth we work with are intimately involved in the every day logistics of program delivery, assessment and decision making. One organizer expressed astonishment that

AIWA’s women and youth routinely schedule meetings and trainings, take notes, conduct outreach and supervise program activities, saying that despite all the campaigns their organization had engaged in to empower the community, their members had not reached that level of independence or program ownership.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

So it is with great pride I report that in 2010, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates’ educational and leadership programs have been successfully planned, taught, conducted and organized by Peer Coordinators, Peer Teachers and Peer Organizers with support from AIWA’s committed staff. These programs and activities protected the health and safety of low wage immigrant women workers and increased an understanding of health care reform and workers rights to demand better working conditions. Most importantly, AIWA’s programs promoted the leadership of immigrant women and youth to voice their concerns, organize their peers to participate in their own community and the broader society, and advocate for better working and living conditions at varied events such as community forums, a workers’ rights hearing, and campus presentations.

AIWA’s programs and activities are continually strengthened by using a data-driven approach made possible with the CTOS leadership database. Additionally, AIWA has begun to develop a “CTOS sharing tool” to enable other groups to synchronize the grassroots leadership development of their constituencies into their organizational priorities. As the beginning of a pilot project which will continue through 2011, cross-cultural leadership trainings were held with 2 other organizations in 2010.

ALIGNING OUR STRATEGY WITH OUR VALUES

At AIWA, we firmly believe that empowering disenfranchised communities through proactive leadership development will greatly contribute to a more just and peaceful society. Furthermore, it is an organizing strategy that we hope will help change social paradigms to better recognize each community’s potential strengths and contributions in building solutions to social problems and working in equal partnership.

With this in mind, our principal focus is to provide a path to empowerment and civic engagement that will remain grassroots based and community focused. Our programs reflect this vision. While it was not possible to include everything AIWA accomplished this year, I am pleased with how this program report highlights the experiences and voices of the immigrant women and youth members who are driving our organizational efforts. If you are interested in more information about AIWA’s work, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for joining us on our journey and for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Young Shin'.

Young Shin
Executive Director, April 2011

AIWA's Leadership in Context

Equal participation and equal opportunity are fundamental to the American vision of a democratic society that welcomes all its members, yet inequity, exclusion, and exploitation have more often been the experience of women, immigrants, low-income workers, racial minorities, and other disenfranchised groups.

Society has institutionalized systems such as colleges and universities to develop skills, knowledge and opportunities, but they are not designed to meet the needs of groups such as limited-English-speaking immigrant women. Workforce development programs help people find jobs, but they are not designed to change dismal working conditions in low-wage industries or transform low-wage workers into active social agents. Social justice coalitions build political power but there are very few successful models that integrate grassroots leaders into the coalition's decision making process.

AIWA firmly believes that the institutionalization of grassroots leadership development is critical to promoting equal opportunity and participation, improving living and working conditions for low-income communities, and eliminating the leadership disparity in this society. AIWA also believes that grassroots leadership skills can be learned, regardless of one's social and demographic background, when provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate leadership training and activities. AIWA's women and youth members are good examples of this. Eighty percent of AIWA members have household incomes of \$30,000 or less and 62% have no more than a middle school education. They are all powerful leaders and AIWA is proud to highlight their accomplishments and voices in this report.



“With the CTOS model,
I can see a clear path
to becoming a strong
leader at AIWA.”

—Leadership program participant

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Read more about
organizing methods
at [www.aiwa.org/
programs.php](http://www.aiwa.org/programs.php)

AIWA in the Public Spotlight



In 2010, AIWA's peer leadership programs received national attention and recognition, including several requests to share our leadership model with other groups. Following are some public recognition highlights from the year.

More Online

Read featured articles at www.aiwa.org/publications.php

- In 2010, AIWA was featured in several publications highlighting the importance of grassroots leadership.
- In April, AIWA's Executive Director was the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign's Balgopal Lecture Series Keynote speaker.
- In May, AIWA participated in a panel hosted by the US Dept of Labor.
- In 2010, seven organizations expressed interest in CTOS for possible adaptation in their own groups.

"Thank you so much for spending the time with us and explaining the CTOS model. I was blown away by how AIWA has been able to structure, design curriculum, set-up metrics, evaluate, and have the technology to track and follow community members as they develop into grassroots leaders and take on issues! And that AIWA is now looking to broaden the impact by sharing with other organizations to test and tweak for their constituents, is truly activist organizing to the nth degree."

—Linda Okahara, Director of Community Services, Asian Health Services

“My name is Shirley. I am a retired factory worker. On weekends I am a peer coordinator for AIWA’s literacy & computer classes in Oakland. I supervise 6 classes, 10 teachers (including peer teachers), childcare and I coordinate the committee meetings.

When participants ask why AIWA’s English curriculum emphasizes workplace health and safety and immigrant rights information, I explain that AIWA not only wants to teach survival English such as talking with a bus driver, but also about justice for immigrants, so we will know how to exercise our rights as immigrant women.”

—Shirley Liang, Peer Coordinator



Shirley Liang smiles during a break in coordinating the literacy classes in Oakland.

Women's Program Highlights

AIWA's programs are designed to develop immigrant women's leadership skills. AIWA is proud to highlight our grassroots leaders' successes and activities in 2010 and elevate the voices of the women who are planning, organizing and leading AIWA's programs and empowering their peers through education, leadership development and collective engagement.

LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Work Place Literacy and computer literacy classes are an ever popular program with immigrant women. With an emphasis on leadership advancement and civic engagement, the classes are an important part of the women's transformational experience.

In 2010, 242 immigrant women participated in literacy programs and the curriculum focused on workplace conditions, sexual harassment, health care reform, reporting a crime or medical emergency, and developing referral networks of community resources.

Classes are coordinated by the Peer Coordinators and taught by peer teachers in partnership with dedicated volunteers. Class curricula are proposed and tested by the women's literacy program committees.



Hui Zhen Yu teaching an immigrant woman about her workplace rights

More
Online

Read sample
curricula at
[www.aiwa.org/
programs.php](http://www.aiwa.org/programs.php)

CAMPUS PRESENTATIONS

Campus presentations are an important opportunity for limited English speaking immigrant women to connect college students' theoretical learning with the women's experiences, and to engage young people as volunteers.

For women leaders, it's a great opportunity to demonstrate their leadership skills such as public speaking. It's also a great opportunity to share and impart the knowledge about

their leadership transformation and the collective achievements of low income immigrant women.

Kwei Fong Lin is a former garment worker. She has an elementary school education, and says initially she did not know how to improve her life. She credits AIWA with developing her leadership skills and motivating her to learn new things and achieve her goals.



"At first when I saw so many students I was very nervous and afraid I wouldn't accomplish my goals of sharing AIWA's work with them. But I gathered my confidence and talked with them about my experiences. The students listened very attentively and when I explained how we developed ergonomic chairs to prevent workplace injuries among garment workers, they were very impressed."

—Kwei Fong Lin, AIWA Senior Trainer

"As a Peer Teacher, I've learned a lot. Although I am still the same person, I feel I have become bolder and more knowledgeable and my communication skills have progressed. I now have the guts to speak up and lead a group of people. I have improved my confidence, and I can support other immigrant women. —Hui Zhen Yu, Peer Teacher



ERGONOMIC HEALTH TRAININGS

In a renewed effort to improve worker health and prevent injuries in low-wage industries where immigrant women workers are concentrated, AIWA women leaders conducted ergonomic health training sessions for 295 participants who primarily work in the garment, electronics, food service, packaging, and home health care fields.

Ergonomic Trainings are planned, and outreached by the Peer Organizers and led by AIWA's Senior Trainer Peer Leaders.



“My name is Young and I am a Peer Organizer. In 2010, we did a lot of outreach and ergonomic trainings for immigrant women. I am proud of the work I did to improve health and safety for immigrant women.”

—Young Hee Paek, Korean Peer Organizer

“The ergonomics training helped me understand why my neck hurts all the time. I started taking more breaks to ease my pains and be healthy.”

—JingAi Wu, Electronics Assembler

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP IN OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

In 2010, two Senior Trainers trained Cantonese-speaking parents from a local organization to advance their advocacy skills around child care funding equity and policy issues.

“The AIWA leaders are good leaders. In the beginning when they just started learning they were not too strong, but later they grew to have more power. They know the strategies. We at Parent Voices want to work with AIWA because we want to develop the same way as AIWA.”

—Xiao Wang, Parent Voices

CROSS CULTURAL TRAININGS

In 2010, two Chinese & Korean AIWA Senior Trainers led multilingual training sessions for a group of Vietnamese workers and advocates from the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative.

The bilingual training sessions were to encourage more active participation in the collaborative, regardless of language ability, and to develop skills to work together in partnership.

2 cross organizational (& multilingual) leadership trainings trained approximately 14 leaders of other organizations in 2010.

“In the nail salon industry, consumer rights are stronger than workers rights. It was good to meet the Korean and Chinese trainers to learn from their experiences and think about how we can make changes to improve our working conditions.”

—Vinh Luu, Organizer, California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative

“We shared our achievements and approaches, which Bananas can adapt to work on their issues. In addition, I learned about child care issues and brought them back to share with AIWA members.”

—Chi Mei Yeung, AIWA Senior Trainer



Chi Mei leads a training with Bananas' Parent Voices members



“When I heard about the Nail Salon Collaborative, I wanted to work with them. It reminds me of my work in the electronics industry, soldering, breathing and touching the toxic materials for 20 years. It is important to share what I’ve learned to make a difference.”

—Chung Hee Cho, AIWA Senior Trainer

IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY

In May 2010, 5 AIWA Immigration Committee members participated in a public rally in response to the proposed Arizona law, in order to express solidarity with Latino immigrants.

Committee members are peer leaders who hone their issue-based organizing, facilitation and speaking skills by working together to find proactive, on-the-ground solutions to community problems.

“Although much of the rally was in Spanish and our translator couldn’t understand it, we felt a great solidarity with the Latino community. We want them to know we support immigrant rights and oppose immigrant oppression and profiling.”

—Lan Fong, Peer Organizer & Immigration Committee Member



Youth Program Highlights

The Youth Build Immigrant Power program empowers low-income immigrant youth and the leadership development project Asian Youth United is almost entirely youth planned and led. AIWA is proud to highlight their sophisticated leadership and organizing skills.

YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

In 2010, youth committee members concluded their “College? I’ve Got the Way!” campaign to introduce a college track for limited English speaking immigrant students.

As part of the campaign, AIWA youth leaders oversaw the implementation of a special orientation process for all English Language Learner students at 2 Oakland High Schools.

Students received guidebooks called *ELD College Ready* in Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese or Khmer outlining the specific milestones that have to be attained in order to qualify for admission to a state university or college in California.

YOUTH COMMITTEE: SEAL OF BILITERACY

In the spring of 2010, AIWA’s Youth Build Immigrant Power leaders surveyed 263 students and led focus groups with an additional 20 students. Surveys were collected anonymously in English, Chinese, and Spanish. Survey results indicate a profound sense of marginalization among English language learners and a near universal desire for more positive recognition programs. It is hoped that a Seal of Biliteracy achievement award would highlight their special bicultural skills and identify students for further educational and job opportunities. In 2010, AIWA youth leaders worked with the Oakland school district to implement this local portion of a statewide Biliteracy campaign.

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award which would be affixed to a student’s transcript to recognize fluency in one language and proficiency in a second language, regardless of their national origin, primary language or race. Students applying for the Seal of Biliteracy recognition would be assessed for their language abilities in each language. It is a concrete step in the longer term efforts to increase visibility of English Learner immigrant students and generate greater support for immigrant talents and achievements.



CROSS TRAINING WITH NATIONAL AUDIENCE OF YOUTH ADVOCATES

In June 2010, AIWA’s Youth Build Immigrant Power (YBIP) project sent 10 Core Leaders to the US Social Forum in Detroit.

They led a workshop with over 40 youth advocates from around the country to share their local successes in improving language access and educational equity for immigrant students.



Tammy Liu (left) & Mu Ting Cen (center) help lead off the opening march at the US Social Forum in Detroit.

“Through this forum, we felt like AIWA already planted the seed in our hearts, and now Detroit is like the soil and sun that gave us energy to grow into sprouts and later become a tree that will bear juicy fruits. And those fruits they will become seeds and pass on to another and so on.”

—Tammy Liu, Youth Core Leader



Becky Tsang facilitates a leadership training with other immigrant youth

ASIAN YOUTH UNITED TRAINING PROGRAM

Asian Youth United is the building block of AIWA's youth leadership program. The popular 16 week program includes a training retreat and an action project of the participants' choice.

In 2010, 18 youth completed the AYU training program and 36 youth engaged in a GOTV precinct-walking action project.

"I learned a lot in AYU. The trainers were really good. Even though we started out as strangers, but we became a community by the time we finished."

—Anonymous comments from training evaluations



"When I started coming to AIWA I was so shy, but now I love interacting with others. I have more confidence when speaking with adults and can lead other youth. I like to hear their solutions for problems in our community."

—Kathy Yu, Training Intern

Numbers at a Glance



PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICITY

- 4 articles were published relating to AIWA's leadership work
- Presentation at US Dept of Labor AAPI Round Table Discussion May 2010
- AIWA's Executive Director and a long-term AIWA supporter jointly presented a workshop at a conference of the University of Illinois at Chicago's "Low-Wage Work, Migration and Gender Project" May 2010
- 4 AIWA Senior Trainers gave 2 university class presentations
- AIWA Executive Director gave University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign Balgopal Lecture Series Keynote address April 2010



OUTREACH & AIWA EVENTS

- 360 people attended the year end annual community event December 2010
- 263 limited English speaking youth completed surveys (in 4 different languages) on language access in schools Spring 2010



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- 242 literacy program participants in 2010
- 50 youth participated in the Youth General Meeting Sept 2010
- 20 youth participated in survey follow-up focus groups Spring 2010



LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

- 295 immigrant women attended ergonomic trainings
- 17 women participated in a Training the Trainer retreat March 2010
- 18 youth participated in the AYU leadership training program Fall 2010
- 21 youth participated in the Campaign Internship Spring 2010
- 36 youth participated in a leadership retreat October 2010
- 29 youth participated in a campaign strategy retreat March 2011



PEER LEADERSHIP IN AIWA

- 26 women took part in Peer Leadership opportunities at AIWA as Senior Trainers, Peer Coordinators, Peer Organizers, Peer Teachers, Peer Trainers and Membership Board Members
- 22 youth took part in Peer Leadership opportunities at AIWA as Training Interns, Campaign Interns and Core Leaders

LEADERSHIP IN BROADER SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY

- 14 grassroots leaders of 2 other organizations participated in AIWA's cross organizational (& multi-lingual) leadership trainings Fall 2010
- 10 youth core leaders attended the US Social Forum Conference in Detroit June 2010



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