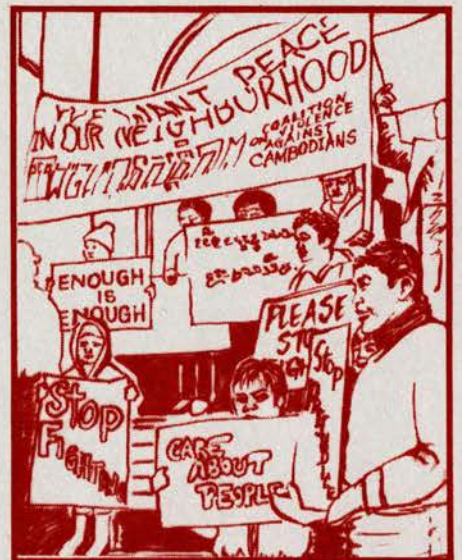
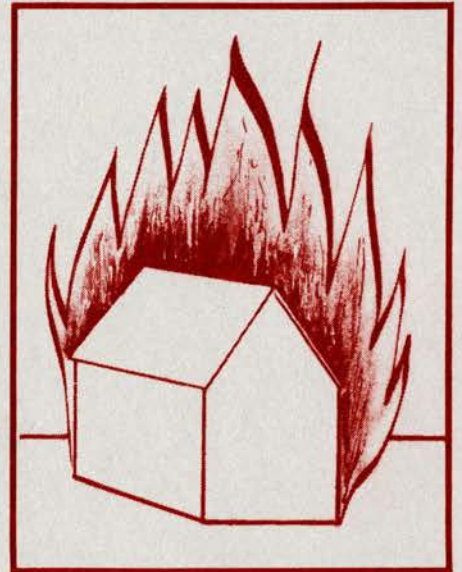
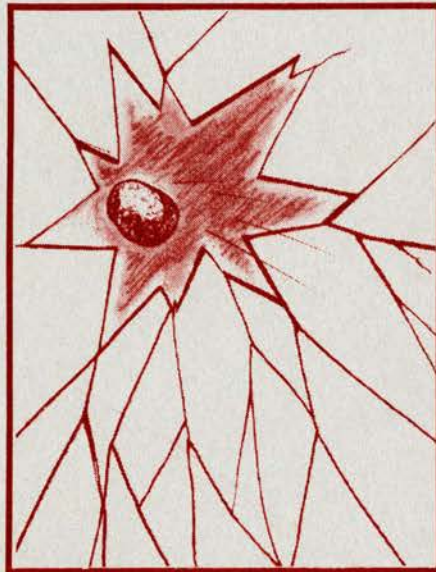


To Live in Peace...

Responding to Anti-Asian Violence in Boston

A Report of the Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project
Asian American Resource Workshop



To Live in Peace.... Responding to Anti-Asian Violence in Boston

Prepared by Elaine Song, Civil Rights Project Director

Production Coordinator: Robert Chin

Cover Designer: Aihua Chang

About the Asian American Resource Workshop

The Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW) is a community-based education organization whose mission is to educate, inform, and empower the Asian American community. The AARW seeks to document and promote the history, culture, and issues of Asian Americans to work with the community. Over its nine-year history, the AARW has strengthened its community base through leadership in various struggles, and through projects and events that bring together various Asian communities throughout Greater Boston. The Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project is a significant step for the AARW in developing its commitment to community education work. To begin this effort, the workshop has begun its first project.

To Live in Peace....

Responding to Anti-Asian Violence in Boston

The AARW staff consists of a full-time director, a part-time director, and several staff members. The AARW is currently accepting applications for staff members. For more information, please contact the AARW at 37 Beach Street, Boston, MA 02111. Office Manager: Man Chai Ng.

The AARW Board of Directors consists of several members. The AARW is currently accepting applications for board members. For more information, please contact the AARW at 37 Beach Street, Boston, MA 02111.

On May 1, 1987, a federal jury in Cincinnati, Ohio, returned a verdict in a case involving a hate crime against an Asian American. The jury found the defendant guilty of hate crime.

A Report of the Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project Asian American Resource Workshop

October 1987

For inquiries and copies:
The Asian American Resource Workshop
37 Beach Street
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 436-5210

Price: \$5.75 plus \$1.25 postage and handling

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To Live in Peace.... Responding to Anti-Asian Violence in Boston

Prepared by Elaine Song, Civil Rights Project Director

Production Coordinator: Robert Chu

Cover Design: Arlene Chung

About the Asian American Resource Workshop

The Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW) is a pan-Asian community-based education organization, whose mission is to work for the empowerment of the Asian American community. The AARW seeks to document and promote the history, culture, and issues of Asian Americans, to work with the community to develop resources for organizing and education, and to advocate for the needs of the Asian American community. Over its nine-year history, the AARW has strengthened its community base through leadership in various struggles, and through projects and events that bring together various Asian communities throughout Greater Boston. The Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project is a significant step for the AARW in developing its commitment to community empowerment work.

The AARW Staff

Executive Director: Frederick H. Dow

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Dedication to Vincent Chin

Acknowledgments

The AARW Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project, which began in December 1985, has reached its first milestone through this report. The cooperation and contributions of many individuals and organizations have made this report possible.

The previous leaders of the AARW under whom the planning and implementation of this report took place provided support and guidance for this report. Administrative Director Carlin Sagara and Program Director Shirley Mark Yuan provided guidance and feedback in the planning and implementation of this report. The report was reviewed and approved by the AARW Steering Committee.

This report is written in memory of Vincent Chin (1955-1982) and the many Asian American groups and individuals who sparked an entire movement for the civil rights of Asian Americans through his case.

Vincent Chin was a 27-year-old Chinese American from Michigan. On the eve of his wedding, two laid-off Detroit autoworkers bludgeoned him to death with a baseball bat. While beating him, they yelled, "it's because of you mother fucking Japs that we're out of work!" The case reveals the irrational and racist roots of anti-Asian violence. Yet even more unjust than the act itself was the sentence imposed on Chin's two assailants.

In 1983, both men were sentenced to 3 years probation and fined \$3,700. After storms of protests from Asian American and civil rights groups, in 1984, one man was convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison and the other acquitted of federal civil rights violations. In September 1986, a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned that conviction and the U.S. Department of Justice retried the case.

On May 1, 1987, a federal jury of 10 whites and two blacks in Cincinnati, Ohio acquitted Ronald Ebens of federal civil rights violations. Ebens will never spend a day in jail.

The case should be remembered for the struggle it inspired among Asian Americans everywhere who took their lives into their hands by organizing and demanding a new trial. Without the vision of these many groups and individuals, the political power of Asian Americans would not have reached the potential it has today. It is critical that the Asian American community continues and increases its involvement in the struggle for equality and justice.

Acknowledgements

Prepared by Elaine Song, Civil Rights Project Director

Production Coordinator: Robert Chu

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About the Asian American Resource Workshop

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Gathering the data for this report depended on the cooperation and support of the English as a Second Language instructors and coordinators who allocated a class for civil rights education and surveying. Those participated in this project should be recognized: **Ralph Raddell, Jessica Bethiny, and President Harold E. Shively** of Bunker Hill Community College; **John Robinson and Annie Chin** of the Chinese American Civic Association; **Ann Spanel and Joan Seeler** of the Jewish Vocational Services; **Mary Jo Hetzel and Ann Kayson** of the Jackson Mann Community School; and **Chanrithy Uong** of the Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association. Much appreciation to **Pastor Don Nanstad, Bounthay Phath and Phil Giffie** of the East Boston Ecumenical Community Council, **Donnell Lassiter-Stewart** of the Dorchester Task Force, and **Ratha Yem** of the Executive Office of Public Safety for providing background information on the areas highlighted in this report.

Another critical element of this project was the group of translators who interviewed individuals in their native languages. Special appreciation goes to them not only for their time, but also their sensitivity and commitment to serving the community: **Angela Liang, Erwin Huang, Catherine Tse, Cheung Wong (Chinese); Ly Van Nguyen, Diep Ngoc Vuong (Vietnamese); Chanrithy Uong, Bunna Men, Saly Pin (Khmer); and Phonh Sonpaniph (Lao).**

Several individuals also contributed time and effort to editing and writing. Written contributions were made by **Diane Chin and Frederick Dow.** Editing assistance was provided by **Therese Feng.**

Special thanks to **Robert Chu, Peter Kiang, Ramsay Liem, and Elizabeth OuYang,** for overall guidance of the report and the development of the Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project.

This report is funded by the **Foley, Hoag, and Eliot Foundation** and the **United Methodist Church General Commission on Race and Religion Minority Self-Determination Fund.** I am especially grateful to contributors and Board members of the **CISP Alumni Public Interest Fellowship** of my graduating class at **Northeastern University School of Law** for enabling me to work full-time on this project between September 1986 and August 1987.

Elaine Song, Director
AARW Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project

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Executive Summary

Since 1980, Boston and the nation have
Racial violence in Boston's Asian American community has reached crisis proportions. Children have been spit on while walking to school, houses have been burned down, people have been killed. This report offers an analysis of anti-Asian violence based on the views and experiences of its victims. Between August 1986 and June 1987, the Asian American Resource Workshop Civil Rights Project surveyed individuals and researched cases of anti-Asian violence to collect data on the needs and issues facing the Asian American community. This report has two purposes: to provide a community analysis of the problem that considers the social factors causing it and the personal experiences and opinions of victims; and to promote dialogue and action around civil rights issues throughout the different sectors of the Asian American community.

This report makes the following findings:

1. For many Asians, acts of violence, which are committed by Asians' own neighbors within their neighborhoods, occur in such overwhelming proportions that they have become a part of daily life.
2. Many Asians place little faith in the law enforcement system to respond effectively to the problem or to prevent it.
3. Due to linguistic, cultural, and other barriers, the Asian community is often denied access to the law enforcement system, which effectively denies them their civil rights.

4. Anti-Asian violence is an issue that has mobilized diverse sectors of the Asian American population to build a stronger political voice.

The AARW Civil Rights Project was established to develop solutions to anti-Asian violence and other civil rights violations. Its programs, which focus on empowerment in the Asian community, include community education, resource development, political organizing, and development of legal and policy strategies. It is not enough to react to the problem when it happens. The Asian community must make government agencies and elected officials accountable to it by mobilizing and inspiring the people to voice their needs and work together to develop common solutions to their problems. This report therefore calls for more concerted action throughout the Asian community to increase its ability to serve its community's needs. It should also be seen as the first step in developing a long-term strategy around the problem. The Project makes the following recommendations based on its findings:

1. Asian community groups and coalitions need to systematically reach out to and educate the Asian refugee and immigrant communities about civil rights issues and legal rights;
2. Community education and other programs should also concentrate on leadership development from within the communities;

3. The Asian community must be given the tools for organizing on a mass scale around civil rights issues including anti-Asian violence;
4. Community leaders should develop an agenda with law enforcement and government officials that includes the following recommendations:
 - a. The involvement of city governments through human rights commissions and other departments, in developing long-term preventative measures to address anti-Asian violence;
 - b. Improvement of access for the Asian community;
 - c. Establishment of civil rights units within police departments outside of Boston and training of police officers about civil rights laws as well as about the Asian American experience;
 - d. Community review mechanisms to evaluate police conduct;
 - e. Development of Asian American studies and multicultural awareness programs in Greater Boston's public schools.
5. A network of Asian groups and individuals from different geographic locations should be established in order to develop collective solutions to common problems.

4. Ongoing community-wide networking 33

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Appendix A: "A Report on Anti-Asian Violence in the U.S." - Japanese American Citizens' League 35

Racial violence in Boston's Asian American community has reached crisis proportions. Children have been spit on while walking to school, houses have been burned down, people have been killed. This report offers an analysis of anti-Asian violence based on the views and experiences of its victims. Between August 1986 and June 1987, the Asian American Resource Workshop Civil Rights Project surveyed individuals and researched cases of anti-Asian violence to collect data on the needs and issues facing the Asian American community. This report has two purposes: to provide a community analysis of the problem that considers the social factors causing it and the personal experiences and opinions of victims; and to promote dialogue and action around civil rights issues throughout the different sectors of the Asian American community.

This report makes the following findings:

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1. Asian community groups and coalitions need to systematically reach out to and educate the Asian refugee and immigrant communities about civil rights issues and legal rights;

2. Community education and other programs should also concentrate on leadership development from within the communities;

I. Introduction

Since 1980, Boston and the nation have witnessed a dramatic increase in racial violence against Asians. This report expresses the views, concerns, and experiences of members of Boston's Asian American community who have been victims of this violence. Following several months of information-gathering on incidents of anti-Asian violence, the Asian American Resource Workshop Civil Rights Project has written this report with two purposes: to provide a community analysis of this problem that considers the social factors causing it and the personal experiences and opinions of victims; and to promote dialogue and action around this issue throughout the different sectors of the Asian American community.

Specifically, the Project makes the following findings:

1. For many Asians, acts of violence, which are committed by Asians' own neighbors within their neighborhoods, occur in such overwhelming proportions that they have become a part of daily life.
2. Many Asians place little faith in the law enforcement system to respond effectively to the problem or to prevent it.
3. Due to linguistic, cultural, and other barriers, the Asian community is often denied access to the law enforcement system, which effectively denies them their civil rights.
4. Anti-Asian violence is an issue that has mobilized diverse sectors of the Asian American population to build a stronger political voice.

This report highlights the main issues which the respondents have identified; it is not, however, comprehensive. The report puts forth the point of view of those directly affected by the problem and makes recommendations based on their needs and perspectives.

In analyzing the causes of anti-Asian violence, this report will examine many social and historical conditions, both nationally and locally, which trigger racist sentiment. These conditions include racist media images, perceptions that Asians are the cause for economic hard times; lingering racism from the Vietnam War, and population increases.

With compelling social forces such as these, fighting anti-Asian violence requires strong initiative and commitment on the local level. Although various governmental and legal approaches have been effective in stemming the problem, it is clear that Asians have made the most major gains through efforts initiated from the heart of the community: the people themselves. This report will discuss the significance of community-based coalitions and institutions such as the Committee to Support Long Quang Huang, the Coalition On Violence Against Cambodian Americans, the East Boston Ecumenical Community Council, and the mutual assistance associations. These efforts have unified various sectors of the Asian community, increased political accountability, and improved the capacity of the Asian community to develop long-term solutions based on its own needs.



AARW Photo

Crowds gather in front of City Hall for justice, police accountability, and community control in the case of Long Quang Huang, summer, 1985.

The Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project is established to expand upon many of these efforts through a coordinated, long-term plan for capacity-building and organizing within the Asian community. This report should be viewed as the first step in developing a long-term strategy; it is directed to all who are concerned about the problem, but it is especially targeted to Asian community-based groups who have dealt with anti-Asian violence cases, and individuals who have personally experienced violence or are severely impacted by the problem. Following are the report's recommendations for a step-by step approach in capacity-building in the Asian community:

1. Asian community groups and coalitions need to systematically reach out to and educate their communities about civil rights issues and legal rights;
2. Community education and other programs should also concentrate on leadership development from within the communities;
3. The Asian community must be given the tools for organizing on a mass scale around civil rights issues including anti-Asian violence.

4. Community leaders should develop an agenda with law enforcement and other public officials that includes the following recommendations:

- a. The involvement of city governments, through the human rights commissions and other departments, in developing long-term preventative measures to address anti-Asian violence;
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 - e. Development of Asian American studies and multicultural awareness programs in Greater Boston's public schools.
5. A network of Asian groups and individuals from different geographic locations should be established in order to develop collective solutions to common problems.

The AARW Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project

Throughout its nine-year history, the Asian American Resource Workshop has addressed many of the crisis issues facing the Asian American community as an issue of community empowerment. Its struggles have been spearheaded by the belief that achievement of effective civil rights enforcement and equality begins with the people themselves. Through its Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project, the AARW is increasing its long-term commitment to addressing racial violence and civil rights violations from the perspective of those who are experiencing it.

Since the rise in the current wave of anti-Asian violence, the AARW has taken an important role in initiating and developing community-based coalitions. In 1983, the AARW initiated the Asians for Justice coalition, whose purpose was to promote civil rights for Asian Americans. When Chinese immigrant Long Guang Huang was beaten by a police officer in Chinatown in May 1985, the AARW helped initiate the Committee to Support Long Guang Huang. Most recently, the AARW assisted in forming the Coalition on Violence Against Cambodian Americans in Revere following a Christmas Eve fire which left 21 Cambodians homeless. The AARW has also sponsored educational forums, lobbied to have civil rights information translated into Asian languages, and worked with the media to increase public awareness.



Courtesy of Visual Communications

One of many cartoons from the late nineteenth century which promoted anti-Asian violence.

In December 1985, the AARW established a civil rights project through a grant from the United Methodist Church General Commission on Race and Religion. The Project began operating full-time in September 1986 when its project director was awarded the 1986 CISP Alumni Public Interest Fellowship from her graduating class of Northeastern University School of Law.

The Civil Rights Capacity-Building Project is dedicated to addressing the civil rights needs of the Asian American community by serving as a base for civil rights education, advocacy, and coalition-building. Its activities have included bilingual civil rights education sessions; needs assessment of incidents of violence against Asians; coalition-building within the Asian American community; and networking with government agencies and the civil rights community.

In its second year, the Civil Rights Project plans to intensify outreach and education efforts to broaden its base within Boston's Asian American community.

From "Race-Chin King," Why the Asians, Boston Phoenix, 18 June 1983.

II. The Problem: Definition and Root Causes

*A Vietnamese in Rambo stands for the same thing as a Toyota in the UAW ritual -- a threat to the American way that has to be destroyed.*¹

Asians who have settled into Boston's neighborhoods have confronted many myths and misconceptions about them. They have been misunderstood and mistreated -- as enemies and strangers; subhumans and superhumans. In East Boston, some say that Vietnamese and Cambodians eat and cook on the floor and that what they eat are the neighbors' dogs. One day in the summer of 1983, the Boston Police broke into a Cambodian home and searched their refrigerator for dog meat. According to residents in Revere, their new Cambodian neighbors are welfare cheats and are responsible for their economic misfortune. On the most material holiday of the year, Christmas, 21 Cambodians were burned out of their home from an arson.

Racial violence is violence committed against an individual because of the individual's race. Racial violence is a social and historical problem; it is neither new to Boston nor to Asians. From the first Chinese immigrants who came to the U.S. as cheap contracted labor to the current influx of Southeast Asian refugees, Asians have been the targets of violence during various periods of American history. (See Appendix A) With the

¹Peter Nien-chu Kiang, "Why the Asians," *Boston Phoenix*, 18 June 1985.

influx of Southeast Asians, the Asian population as a whole has doubled. Recent population data, compiled by the Massachusetts Office of Refugee Resettlement, reveals there are nearly 10,000 Southeast Asians total in Boston, making up half of the Asian population. Of the population in Boston, Asians make up nearly 4 percent. Unofficial estimates put the number of Asians in Greater Boston at approximately 30,000.



Courtesy of Visual Communications

One of many cartoons from the late nineteenth century which promoted anti-Asian violence.

Unlike our early history, the question of racial violence is now one of civil rights. The term civil rights recognizes that acts motivated by racism are forbidden and if they occur, they must be punished. Civil rights are basic freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, based on the principles that all people are to be treated equally regardless of race, religion, national origin, sex, handicap, and sexual preference.

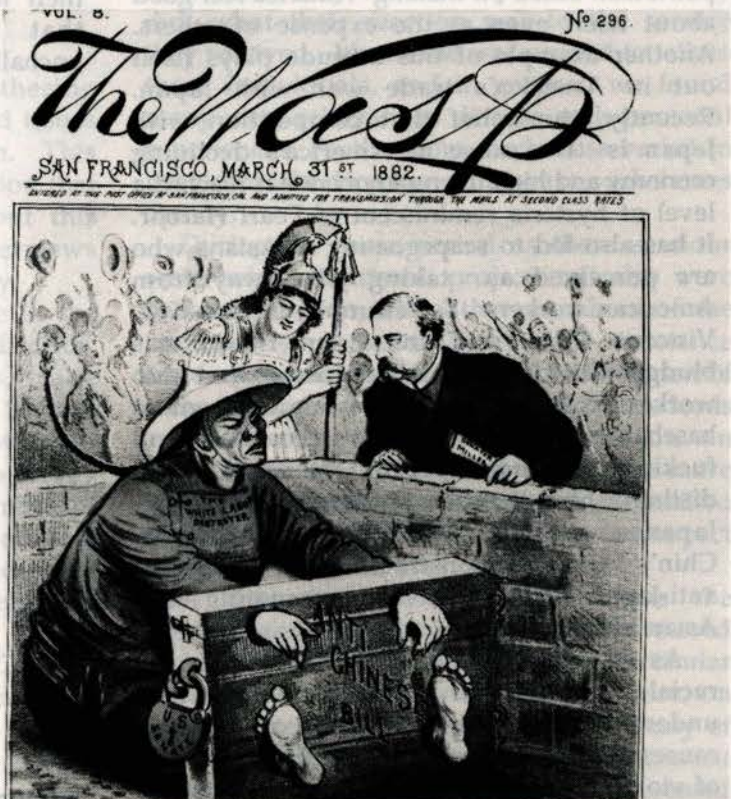
Yet although our Constitution is 200 years old, it was not until the 1960s when government agencies and society in general became responsible for enforcing civil rights. The Civil Rights Movement was significant for the mobilization and activism of Blacks from every walk of life, who forged a new collective spirit that challenged the existing system's segregationist practices. This movement advanced the causes of all people of color and offers inspiration to the Asian community's continued organizing efforts.

As an historic problem, racial violence clearly does not begin with a few misguided individuals; rather, it is rooted in the institutions which we trust to make our laws, and to shape our opinions and our attitudes.

Local, national, and international conditions contribute to anti-Asian violence. Some of these are: perceived economic competition and scapegoating, racist media images, lingering racism from the Vietnam War, and demographic changes.

The 1980s have been a period of economic turmoil, tension, and trade insecurity. Historically, this climate has led to anti-Asian violence, where Asians are scapegoated because it is believed that they take jobs away from American workers. The tendency to scapegoat Asians continues today in Boston's neighborhoods in various forms. Much of the scapegoating against Southeast Asian refugees is based on myths. One common misconception is that Southeast Asians refugees are welfare freeloaders who receive new cars and houses from the federal government without having to work for them. In the neighborhoods in which many refugees are placed, these myths create bitter resentment toward refugees. As a result, cars owned by Asians have become symbols of success, reason for resentment, and targets of violence.

In 1882, the myth that Chinese took jobs away from white workers led to the first bill that excluded the Chinese from immigrating to the U.S.



Courtesy of Visual Communications

Misconceptions and racist attitudes are allowed to survive on the streets due to larger forces such as racist media and anti-Asian campaigns. These forces, which virtually define public opinion, encourage and condone racism and portray Asians only as an enemy or outsider. One vivid example of the impact of the media is the movie *Rambo*, released in 1985. Sylvester Stallone plays a Vietnam veteran who returns to Vietnam in search of missing POWs. In the process, he must kill off Vietnamese and Russians who come in his way. This film, which canonized Stallone as the new American film hero, scapegoated the Vietnamese for the losses suffered by America while justifying violence against Asians.

The film's effects were clearly felt on the streets of Boston that summer. In addition to the fact that it was one of the worst periods of anti-Asian violence, Asian residents recall being told to go home because Rambo is here or seeing slurs like "Cambo" (referring to Cambodians) scrawled on walls in the neighborhoods.

Rambo signifies something larger as well. Its popularity derives from a twisted revival of patriotism based on making America feel good about itself even at the expense of others. Another example of this attitude plays itself out in America's trade war with Japan. Recently, the belief that competition with Japan is the cause of America's declining economy and high unemployment has reached a level of hysteria reminiscent of Pearl Harbor. It has also led to scapegoating of Asians who are perceived as taking jobs away from American workers. For example, in June 1982, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was bludgeoned to death by two unemployed auto workers in Detroit. While beating Chin with a baseball bat, they yelled, "It's because of you fucking Japs that we're out of work." Not distinguishing between Japanese corporations, Japanese people, and Chinese-Americans, Chin's killers demonstrated the impact that anti-Japan attitudes have in promoting anti-Asian violence.

As stated earlier, Boston's own history of racial intolerance and segregation must be understood as one of the prime contributing causes of violence in the city. Serious incidents of violence have occurred throughout Boston's history, some of the most serious being the series of murders of Black women in Boston in

the 1970s and the desegregation riots of the 1970s. The intolerance continues today in some of Boston's longtime institutions. One example is the response of an East Boston newspaper during the summer of 1983 when a series of fires were occurring to the homes of Southeast Asian refugees. While the causes of these fires varied, the *East Boston Times-Leader Free Press* published an editorial blaming the fires on the refugees, because they do not know fire safety. The article read: "These Vietnamese refugees who have moved to East Boston Bag and Baggage should be given some rules on fire safety hazards....And if they are willing to take chances in burning themselves into oblivion, it's one thing, but when they endanger the lives of their immediate neighbors, then, it's another thing...that second fire on Meridian Street could have been avoided if they had stuck to the safety rules."²

Many Southeast Asians are currently living in areas which have been the scenes of racial unrest in the past. The shortsightedness of refugee resettlement agencies in placing Asians in such neighborhoods without providing adequate preparation for the neighborhoods or their newcomers has allowed the attitudes that underlie racial violence to go unchallenged.

²*East Boston Times-Leader Free Press*, 23 February 1984.

III. The Findings

This section analyzes the information that the Project gathered as well as the methods used to gather it. Statements of victims and case studies should provide some understanding of the extent and nature of incidents of violence against Asians. Case studies in four areas of Greater Boston are highlighted: Dorchester, East Boston, Somerville, and Revere.

A. The Information-Gathering Process

The goal of the information-gathering process was to document the needs and issues facing victims of anti-Asian violence. This report is a compilation of the information that project staff have gathered throughout this process. It is based on individual interviews and surveys of members of the community.

In seeking to reach as many people in the community as possible, the project director, accompanied by bilingual translators, made guest appearances at English as a Second Language classes with large numbers of Asian students. The sessions were intended to survey members about any incidents they or members of their families have experienced and to educate individuals about their civil rights. Sessions were conducted between August and December 1986, at the Chinese American Civic Association, Bunker Hill Community College, Jewish Vocational Services, and Jackson Mann Community School.

Of approximately 250 individuals who attended these sessions, 22 relayed their experiences with project staff. Respondents were asked to fill out survey forms that asked details of their experiences or to relay the information orally to the interviewer. Questions were asked about the type of incident they experienced, the circumstances surrounding it, whether they called the police, and if they did, what their reaction was to the service they received. More time was needed to talk to these individuals, and in general, we found many were reluctant to discuss such personal experiences. Furthermore, each class varied in providing the freedom to discuss such issues openly.

During the same period as these sessions were being conducted, project staff also were making contacts with other members of the community such as the mutual assistance associations and community people who knew of areas undergoing problems. Taking those leads as well, staff interviewed victims on an individual basis. These interviews were more lengthy and involved, and led to more detailed statements as well as feelings about the impact of violence on their lives.

A final source of information was the agencies and individuals who have monitored incidents since they began in the particular communities, as well as newspaper reports on those incidents. This report looks at many of the same incidents but analyzes them in context of a larger trend. The information is presented in different ways in the following section,

therefore, because of the varied forms of data collection that were used.

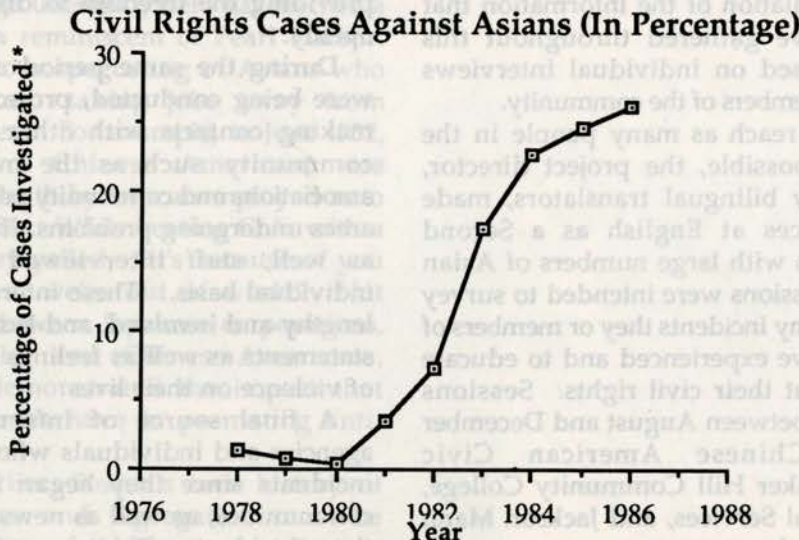
B. Analysis of Findings

Since 1980, Greater Boston has experienced a sharp and documented rise in incidents of violence against Asians. Three of them have

resulted in deaths: the 1981 beating and stabbing death of a Vietnamese refugee in Brighton by two white male teenagers; the 1983 stabbing death of a Vietnamese refugee in Dorchester by a white marine; and the 1985 beating death of a Cambodian refugee on the Revere Beach Parkway by two white men.



* Based on figures compiled by the Boston Police Department Community Disorders Unit



* Based on figures compiled by the Boston Police Department Community Disorders Unit

East Boston Times-Leader Free Press, 23 February 1984.

More common to the thousands of Asian Americans living throughout Greater Boston, especially the Southeast Asian refugees, are the daily stone-throwing, vandalism, physical assaults, and harassment within their own neighborhoods. Boston police records show nearly a 60 percent increase in reported incidents of violence against Asians since 1982.

In January 1987, Mayor Raymond Flynn issued a report on the progress of the Community Disorders Unit, the unit within the Boston Police Department which investigates racially-motivated attacks. The report reveals what it calls "dramatic reductions" in the number of civil rights violations in Boston, from 607 in 1978 to 157 in 1986.¹ For Asians, however, since 1981, the number of reported civil rights violations has steadily increased, from 36 in 1983 to 45 in 1985 and 41 in 1986. Incidents against Asians now account for 26% of officially documented racial incidents in Boston, while Asians make up only 3% of the city's population.

Official police statistics do not tell the entire story. In the Asian community, *most* cases of racial violence go unreported due to language barrier, lack of familiarity with the legal system, cultural barriers, fear of the police, fear of neighborhood retribution, and other factors. Law enforcement officials estimate a severe underreporting in incidents against Asians, ranging from 5 to 10 unreported incidents for every incident that is reported.

The question of whether an incident is racial and therefore constitutes a civil rights violation is difficult to resolve from a law enforcement standpoint. However, from the perspective of the Asian community, most incidents reflect the racial hostility which Asians must confront daily within their own neighborhoods.

Several similarities between victims' accounts of incidents support this conclusion. These accounts indicate: that incidents within the neighborhoods happen disproportionately to Asian residents; that most Asians experience more than one incident to them or their property; and that most incidents are unprovoked and often have no other motive.

¹Civil Rights Investigations conducted by the Boston Police Department Community Disorders Unit, a report of the Boston Police Department CDU, 7 January 1987.

Many acts of violence were damage to property. Respondents were certain that these acts of violence were not random, but that they arose out of racial tension in the neighborhoods. Only the neighbors know which houses Asians live in and which cars belong to Asians. Some respondents can identify the assailants, but others cannot. However, many who have experienced vandalism in their homes have also experienced racial harassment on the street.

Another characteristic that is common to many respondents is that they have experienced a series of violent acts, whether it be broken windows every night or daily harassment. Often the smaller incidents lead up to one major and serious incident, which is often when the police step in.

In the Asian community, most cases of racial violence go unreported....

It is clear that the seriousness of racial violence can be measured in different ways. One way is by the quantified amount of damage to property or injury to the person. But for most Asian victims of violence, the most serious aspect of this current crisis is the fear that has been instilled in Asian residents and their families, who know that they are targets. This fear forces them to become prisoners in their own homes, and threatens their quality of life, sense of freedom, and peace of mind in ways that isolated incidents do not.

The respondents have provided critical insights into the limitations of the law enforcement system. The fact that so many racial incidents occur but that only a handful can be condemned as racial illustrates the inadequacies of the existing response system. In most instances, especially the common one of rock-throwing, there is little the police and government agencies can do, if they have no leads on who committed the acts. For the most part, therefore, few cases of violence against Asians have reached the courtroom and even fewer are successfully prosecuted as civil rights convictions. Although some government agencies have responded to incidents of anti-Asian

violence, the needs of Asians are still not being addressed in relation to the number of incidents which have occurred.

Whether it is a problem of law enforcement ineffectiveness or insensitivity, individuals attack Asians because they know they can get away with it. The community's powerlessness makes it more vulnerable to attack. Only by mobilizing the people to develop a community voice can powerlessness be defeated. The following discussion of how the problem has affected different communities includes examples of how communities are slowly developing this voice.

1. Dorchester: An unyielding problem

Dorchester has had a history of racial strife. For example, during the summer of 1983, a Vietnamese family was forced to move out of its house on Melbourne Street -- the same house that had been firebombed in 1982 when three Black families were living there. That same summer of 1983, a Vietnamese refugee was stabbed to death in Dorchester.

Many respondents who had experienced racial violence explained that the frequency of these acts has more of an impact on their lives than any specific incidents alone.

One Vietnamese man from Dorchester explained that because of the vandalism to his home, he had to move out: "Every morning, I would have to sweep the bottles thrown to my window. After two months, I moved out."²

Several respondents discussed the problems of vandalism to their cars in Dorchester, emphasizing that cars belonging to the Vietnamese were singled out for vandalism. One man stated, "On Dorchester Avenue, cars are being smashed all the time."³

One Vietnamese woman reported that her car was vandalized almost every week.⁴

One Vietnamese man reported what happened to a Vietnamese friend of his. He said that the man was sitting in his car when two men used a baseball bat to smash the windshield and hit him in the eye.⁵

²November 1986.

³Vietnamese man, August 1986.

⁴August 1986. Translated from Vietnamese.

⁵August 1986. Translated from Vietnamese.

Since January 1987, incidents against Asians in Dorchester have continued. In January, a Chinese family's home, which had been continually vandalized for three years, was vandalized twice. Again in January, two Asian males were assaulted by three white youths.

Another serious incident in January involved a mentally retarded Chinese man who was beaten up outside a bowling alley in Dorchester by three men yelling racial slurs. After the police arrived, a mob of men approached the scene. Three people, including two who arrived in the mob, were arrested. Two of them were charged with civil rights violations along with assault and battery charges.

The trial of the three men took place a week later in Dorchester District Court. All charges were dropped against one defendant, who was a juvenile. Civil rights charges were dropped against a second defendant. The third defendant received a six month suspended sentence.

"If I tell them to stop making noise, they will break the windows of my car or house during the night."

There were also statements that reflected the level of neighborhood tension. A Vietnamese woman from Dorchester stated that her apartment was continuously harassed whenever she would tell those making noise around her to stop. "If I tell them to stop making noise, they will break the windows of my car or house during the night."⁶ This problem is common among many we interviewed.

One of the visible groups working against racial violence in Dorchester is the Dorchester Task Force, which began in 1982, following a stoning death of a black teenager. One ongoing, long-term project of the task force is its youth councils, which operate throughout Dorchester as grassroots community-based neighborhood groups that involve teenagers in neighborhood activities. Now coordinated through the Bay Cove Human Services program, the program is

⁶August 1986. Translated from Vietnamese.

composed of 10 councils focusing on community service, social activities, educational and vocational development, and leadership development. Nearly 200 young people are involved in the program.

2. East Boston: No simple solutions

East Boston is currently home to approximately 2,000 Asians, mainly Vietnamese and Cambodians. Throughout its history, it has also experienced a high incidence of racial violence. For example, blacks living in East Boston have been firebombed out of the Maverick Housing Project, the site of many recent racial incidents against Vietnamese and Chinese living there. One resident reports what happened to him in November 1986, when he was walking home from work:

I was walking home from work at approximately 9 p.m. when I was attacked by several men. The men first yelled at me, but I did not understand what they were saying. I thought they were going to rob me, but they beat me up instead for no reason. They took nothing and left.

The people in my neighborhood hate the Vietnamese, and they think that I am Vietnamese because they cannot distinguish between Chinese and Vietnamese. A few months ago, my Vietnamese neighbor's car was vandalized and burned. Once, someone scrawled foul language on my door. The Asians who live in my neighborhood are harassed constantly. People would often try to walk in front of us on the street so that we cannot walk by. Some people have thrown eggs to our apartment windows and doors, and to our cars. I don't understand why they hate Asians so much. We never did anything to them.⁷

Many of the incidents in East Boston are part of a pattern, which begins with smaller incidents. In December 1982, within a month after moving in, one of the first refugee families to be settled in East Boston began experiencing incidents of harassment. Banging on doors, verbal abuse and similar types of acts were

precursors of one serious act where a 17-year-old boy invited himself into the family's home, sprayed lighter fluid over the family's belongings and set them on fire. The Police were then called; the individual was warned to stay away and incidents stopped.

Vandalism to windows and cars was also a frequent occurrence. Asian houses and cars were singled out for violence. At one Cambodian home in East Boston, constant rock-throwing, beginning in the Spring of 1983 and continuing for a year and a half, forced its three residents to move out. The police could do little in this instance because the perpetrators could not be identified.

More serious incidents of violence occurred to homes, namely fires, which have left numerous Southeast Asians homeless. Two fires were deemed arsons; others were accidental, but their occurrence in Asian homes led neighbors to blame Asians for causing the fires and endangering the rest of the neighborhood.

"The people in my neighborhood hate the Vietnamese, and they think that I am Vietnamese because they cannot distinguish between Chinese and Vietnamese."

In the summer of 1984, repeated vandalism of one Cambodian man's car led to a more serious incident. Following an altercation, the attacker one day stabbed the man with a screw driver. That same summer, a beer bottle was thrown through a window of a Cambodian home, at which time the residents came out and a fight started. In a court case in the Spring of 1985, the court stated that the incident was a brawl and imposed a slight punishment.

On Memorial Day 1985, a similar series of incidents took place where four Cambodian men were attacked by 15 to 20 white men. It began when one Cambodian victim looked out his apartment window and saw a boy kicking the side of his car. He then went outside to confront the people near his car. The attackers then chased him down the street where a gang of 25 white men were gathered. One man, with an

⁷December 1986. Translated from Chinese.

injured foot, hit the Cambodian man in the head with his crutch. Three Cambodian men who lived with him came out of the house to help him. Soon the original victim was attacked with a lead pipe, while one of his friends was hit with a hockey stick in the back. Three Cambodians were injured and taken to the hospital. A few arrests were made. The case was resolved with a financial settlement in August 1986.

September 1985 was the beginning of a Vietnamese family's ordeal with harassment and hostility. Some neighbors had been harassing and disturbing the residents of the apartment continuously. One person is said to have remarked, "We're not letting any more of them in here." In the summer of 1986, while one member of the family was carrying a chest of drawers up the stairs, a neighbor pushed her and the chest of drawers down the stairs. Although no injuries resulted, the victim went to file a complaint in court, and was harassed by the clerk of the court with questions about whether there were roaches in the chest of drawers, based on accusations made by the attacker.

Over the winter of 1986, Cambodian children were repeatedly harassed while walking to school. Older kids would spit on them or throw pebbles at them so as to provoke the older Cambodian kids into a fight.

A handicapped Vietnamese man in the summer of 1986 was assaulted in his car following repeated vandalism. The car had been vandalized in different ways from slashed tires to sugar in his gas tanks. In the summer of 1986, after he slightly bumped a parked car, a man from across the street punched him through his window.

While East Boston has experienced high incidence of anti-Asian violence, it is also an area where some of the strongest community-based initiatives have arisen in response to the problem. See Section V for a description of some of these proactive measures.

3. The Somerville Mystic Housing Project: Ignoring the problem

Since the resettlement of nearly 40 families into the Mystic Housing Project within the last three to four years, incidents of racial harassment, vandalism, and assaults have risen. But not until recently has action been

taken by the Police and Public Housing Authority. In fact, the Police repeatedly told victims that public housing tenants should expect to be attacked. It was difficult for Asian victims of violence to get help from the local police and public housing authority who did not understand the problem as relating to racism.

During the Spring of 1987, incidents of vandalism became particularly problematic. The following statement describes one resident's experience:

I have lived in this project for 5 months. The living room window has been broken four times; the bedroom window has been broken 3 times. Almost all the Asian families have had their windows broken, no matter how high up they are. None of the [white] American families have had their windows broken. Once, I heard a noise against my living room window. I went to take a look and the person with the rock saw me. When he saw me, he threw another rock to the window. That time, he broke it.... I am afraid of living here. I can't live in peace.⁸

Within one week during the same period, a Cambodian family experienced a series of incidents of rocks thrown through his window: on March 30, April 4, April 6, and April 7. These incidents occurred mainly during the night, while the family was sleeping.

I am always worried about tomorrow. I fear they will kill me or do something to my children. All I want is peace for me and my family. I want to be friendly to other people. Here, I am afraid. I just stay home all the time.

Every time something happens, I tell the Police and Housing Authority, but they can't do very much. I am very angry because no one can do anything about this problem.⁹

One case of repeated violence over a one-year period demonstrated the short-term effect of law enforcement solutions. In the summer of 1985, a Cambodian family secured a conviction against someone who had been vandalizing its home. The conviction had the effect of

⁸April 1987. Translated from Vietnamese.

⁹April 1987. Translated from Khmer.

preventing violence for a year, but it did not have the staying power to prevent it on a long-term basis. In the summer of 1986, a youth was arrested for vandalism of the family's home and car with rocks and a b-b gun. The youth received a sentence of probation and community service.

"The living room window has been broken four times; the bedroom window has been broken three times.... I am afraid of living here. I can't live in peace."

As a result of that and other incidents last summer, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law stepped in as did the State Attorney General's office to put pressure on local police and to meet with community residents about where to go for help. In addition, the Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association helped to involve the community in demanding action by translating and expressing their concerns.

Last fall, a Cambodian man from East Boston was visiting his friend at the project, and became involved in a dispute with another man, who eventually called his friends over. Two had metal sticks and attacked the Cambodian man. The result of this incident was a permanent court order restricting anyone from committing acts of racial violence. As a result of community pressure, the Housing Authority is evicting tenants who are arrested for harassment.

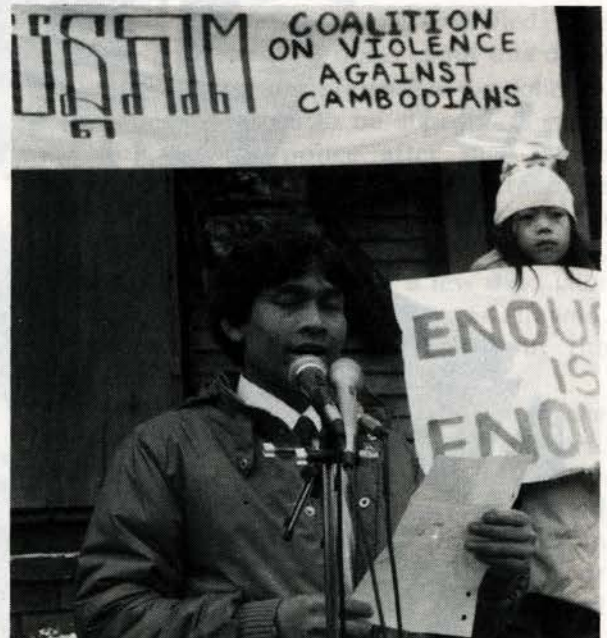
4. Revere: Making a community statement

Since 1981, Cambodians began moving to Revere to find affordable housing. Many went to escape the harassment they were experiencing in Boston. Once the number of Cambodians rose, especially within certain neighborhoods, however, Revere became symptomatic of the racial and cultural misunderstandings commonly faced by Southeast Asian refugees throughout Boston. Rocks thrown through windows, assaults on the street, racial slurs, spitting, and other forms of

violence are daily occurrences for many of the 1,300 Cambodian Americans in Revere.

One of the most serious incidents against Cambodians has been the deliberate setting of fires in Cambodian homes, a reflection of the hostility toward the residents for living in their neighborhoods. In the summer of 1983, two fires were set at 17 Highland Street and 25 Highland Street where Cambodians lived. Both were begun with newspapers and other inflammatory material being thrown on the porches of the houses. One significant fact about those incidents is that the residents in both houses had experienced harassment in the neighborhood previously. At 17 Highland Street, children had been harassed and told to leave town.

One year later, in 1984, a fire was set at 50-52 Highland Street by a Molotov cocktail. Although no one was prosecuted for this crime, neighbors observed that it was the same man who had harassed other Cambodians in Revere. Two of those incidents were: the beating of a Cambodian husband and wife by three white men who stopped the couple's car as it drove along Highland Ave.; and, in 1984, a rock was thrown through the window of 40 Highland St., injuring a small Cambodian child.



Therese Feng

Samath Chap, a victim of the arson at 9 Walnut Place, speaks out about it at a rally in Revere.

With racial hostility escalating, problems continued. In July 1985, fire destroyed a Cambodian home at 9 Walnut Place. The fire left 38 Cambodians homeless and represented the tragic culmination of six months of harassment to residents of the house. One month earlier, rocks, bricks and a trash can were thrown at the house in the middle of the night. A 26-year-old white man led a group of youths in breaking into one part of the house and attacked a Cambodian family with sticks and other weapons.

Unlike most cases of anti-Asian violence which have not reached the criminal justice system, a conviction of Robert Stephens for the attack at 9 Walnut Place was successfully secured in April 1986. The victimized family, although originally reluctant to bring charges and go to court, received encouragement and support from a local white store owner. However, the day after Stephens was sentenced to 7 to 10 years in prison, the store owner's car was firebombed and a Cambodian man was assaulted with a wooden board. These acts of retaliation highlight the neighborhood tension

surrounding the problem as well as the risks of pursuing law enforcement solutions.

Following the fire at 9 Walnut Place, Revere Mayor George Colella established Revere's first Human Rights Commission to assure the rights and protections of its residents. The gesture from the city's highest official signified an important step in recognizing the racial nature of the acts that were occurring and acting upon them.

The most recent major incident was an arson on Christmas Eve 1986 that left 21 Cambodians homeless. After this incident, the Cambodian community decided it had to make its own statement to the public and to government officials that "Enough is enough." Through the rally, the community continued placing pressure on city officials to ensure protection for its residents. As a result of these acts, the city is working with Cambodian community leaders in responding to incidents. The Mayor also plans to establish an Office for Southeast Asian Affairs. (See Section V.A. for specific phases of this effort)



Cambodian children from Revere came out against anti-Asian violence in January 1987.

Therese Feng

IV. The Law and Its Enforcement

The Massachusetts Civil Rights Act, enacted in 1978, "protects and promotes the safety, welfare, and freedom of all people of Massachusetts regardless of race, religion, national origin, sex, age, or handicap." A person who has violated another's civil rights by bodily injury may be imprisoned for as much as 10 years and/or fined up to \$10,000.

The responsibility for enforcing this act lies with local, county, and state government agencies, such as the Police, District Attorney, and Attorney General. These three agencies have different responsibilities depending on the stage of the case. This section will discuss three major stages: Police Response, Investigative units, and the Trial stage.

It is apparent from the respondents' comments that the role of the police is a critical factor in determining whether a case will be responded to appropriately. The police are the first individuals from the Law Enforcement system that victims come into contact with. A positive response from the police can lead to successful prosecution while an ineffective response can discourage the person from ever depending on the law enforcement system in the future.

A. Response: Police-Community Relations

As stated earlier, not all incidents of violence against Asians reach the police due to factors particular to the Asian community, such as language barrier and cultural differences. Respondents discussed their experiences with

the police as well as their perceptions of the police.

1. General comments on the police

One major problem cited was delay in response to calls. Some stated that the police never came or that they arrived an hour to two hours late. One Vietnamese man from Dorchester reported an incident he saw through a window from his home while his friend was being beaten. The police did not arrive at the scene until an hour and a half after he called. By then, the attackers had long since fled. The family of the victim was upset about this delay and consequently lost confidence in the police.¹

There also appears to be a problem with follow-up by the police after they have responded to an incident. One Vietnamese woman from Dorchester, who was able to identify her attacker and have her arrested, said she saw her walking free a few days later and did not understand why this was allowed. The police did not contact her about the circumstances of the case.²

Some respondents expected the police to take more of an active role in *preventing* violence. One Vietnamese man from Dorchester said he told the police that he and his family had experienced repeated incidents. His impression was that the officer was not inclined or interested in taking preventative action around the incident.³

¹October 1986. Translated from Vietnamese.

²October 1986. Translated from Vietnamese.

³August 1986. Translated from Vietnamese.

2. Access problems in the Asian community

There are problems in police-community relations that are particular to the Asian community and require critical action and adjustment on the part of law enforcement agencies. First of all, most of the Asian community is composed of recent immigrants and refugees who have no knowledge of their rights; many do not even know how to call the police. Secondly, even if people do know to call the police, their inability to speak English prevents them from getting a response. A large proportion of the Asian community is not fluent in English. Thirdly, there are many cultural barriers. Many Southeast Asian refugees avoid and distrust the police because of their negative conceptions of and experiences with police in their native countries. As a result of this lack of access, many Asians are denied the protection to which they are entitled.

2a. Lack of knowledge of laws

In general, many individuals we spoke with had little understanding of their rights in relation to the legal system. Many had questions about where they could go for help. Some common questions asked were:

Do we have a right to prosecute or not?

How much money will we spend if we want to hire an attorney?

What can I do if the police don't come?

Is there any ethnic staff working at the Boston Police Department?

The lack of understanding of their rights reinforces within the community a sense of powerlessness. Individuals often feel inhibited from speaking up, demanding their rights, and believing that they have a role in determining the quality of service provided to them.

2b. Language barrier

A second major problem in police-community relations is communication. The language barrier was frequently cited as a major obstacle to receiving an appropriate response from the police. Some respondents said that even if they call, the problems in communicating their problem over the phone presents the major obstacle in getting help. Residents in Chinatown said they were intimidated about

calling the police because of the language barrier.⁴

A Vietnamese woman from Somerville stated, "One day, I'm afraid that someone will get hurt and I won't be able to talk to the Police. I need an interpreter."⁵

There are currently 10 Asian police officers out of approximately 1,900 on the Boston Police force. There are 11 bilingual 911 operators. In addition, hotlines in Cantonese and Toisanese have been set up for the Chinese community. Information about these hotlines needs to be disseminated and hotlines in other languages should be set up.

2c. Neighborhood retribution

In addition to the inability to identify the attacker, other cases are not pursued because of the risks involved in identifying the person. There is a high burden placed on victims to testify against their assailants. In so doing, victims risk the threat of neighborhood retribution not only against their own families but against other Asian families in the neighborhood.

The incidents following the April 1986 conviction of Robert Stephens for civil rights violations against a Cambodian family in Revere is an example of the dangers at risk. (See Section II.C)

One Vietnamese woman from Dorchester stated, "The police came but I dare not tell them who they [the attackers] are."⁶

B. Investigative Units

1. The Community Disorders Unit of the Boston Police Department

When a racial incident occurs in Boston, it must be referred to the Community Disorders Unit (CDU), a special unit in the Boston Police Department established in 1978 to investigate racially motivated crime. The only body of its kind in Massachusetts, the CDU currently employs 11 police detectives, representing four ethnic groups and providing interpreters in five

⁴October 1986. Translated from Chinese.

⁵April 1987. Translated from Vietnamese.

⁶August 1986. Translated from Vietnamese.

different languages (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai and Spanish).

The CDU has been particularly interested in learning how and why racially motivated crimes differ from other types of crime; the special perception of victims of racial incidents, particularly regarding police response; and how the Department actually addresses the growing problem. From its initial investigations the CDU uncovered what it called a "persistent and compelling pattern of racial violence" which led to a reprioritization of policies within the Department, placing racial incidents within the "priority one" classification for investigation and response.

Other programs of the CDU include civil rights training programs for police officers and academy recruits; community outreach programs which inform neighborhoods of problems and attempt to stop the problems before they occur; and coordination of an interagency task force of local, state and federal enforcement agencies to pool resources as well as establish call-in systems where problems in certain areas are especially anticipated. Tactically, the CDU has sought to protect victims once an incident has occurred through injunctions and restraining orders in conjunction with the state Attorney General's office. (see following section).

Although no one can estimate the true effect of the existence of the CDU on the reduction of reported racial incidents since its formation (a recent report on the unit notes that the decline in reported racial incidents is proportionate to the general decline of street crime), it is clear that its creation has provided a resource which is seriously needed in the Boston neighborhoods plagued by racial tension and intolerance. As can be ascertained from many of our respondents' commentary, however, this resource can only be as effective as its availability and accessibility to the communities which are most in need. With a growing number of racial and ethnic minorities in the neighborhoods of Boston who are not English-proficient nor comfortable with the legal, political or enforcement agencies as they exist, more concentration must be placed on education, outreach and availability of bilingual resources. Consider this fact: there are 11 police detectives and six interpreters who focus on civil rights violations within the city of Boston and 139,155 Blacks, 46,890 Hispanics and

20,088 Asians.⁷ Effective prosecution of civil rights violators is questionable with odds such as these.



Civil rights booklets translated into Vietnamese, Khmer, and Laotian are important educational tools for the Asian community.

2. The Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's Office

The Attorney General (AG) is a publicly elected official, who serves as the chief law enforcement officer of the state government. The office's main function is to ensure the proper enforcement of state laws. Issues such as consumer protection, the environment, and racial discrimination require monitoring, assistance, and investigation from this office. The Attorney General's Civil Rights Division, although small in size, has played a significant role in improving the law enforcement system's ability to respond to cases of anti-Asian violence.

The AG office is responsible for enforcing the part of the civil rights law that allows victims to seek a court order against their attackers to prevent them from continuing to commit violent acts. This court order is called an injunction. Since the civil rights law came into effect in 1979, the injunction has been used frequently. In Revere, three injunctions were issued within

⁷Yohel Camayd-Freixas, "Apportioning 1980-1985 Population Growth to Boston Wards and Precincts: A Methodological Correction to the Decennial Census Commission Report," a report of the Latino Political Action Committee (based on the updated 1985 census), 11 June 1987.

two years, 1984 and 1985, within the same neighborhood.

The office also plays a role in criminal prosecutions. Prior to bringing charges, the AG office assists in investigations into the civil rights aspects of the case. In *Commonwealth v. Robert Stephens*, which went on trial in 1986, Civil Rights Division staff participated heavily in all phases of the case up to the conviction. The efforts led to one of the harshest sentences under the civil rights law.

In the day to day rumblings on the street, the office's presence is felt, especially in cities which do not have civil rights units within their police departments. These cities, including Revere, Chelsea, and Somerville, are less equipped to respond to cases of racial violence. In these instances, Civil Rights Division staff have stepped in to ensure adequate protection and to investigate cases with civil rights implications. These efforts may be partially attributed to the dedication and commitment of the Division's Asian American staff. In many ways, these staff members have helped to sensitize this office and make the office effective in serving the community. It can also be said that the office has gone beyond its usual mandate in monitoring the actions of various police departments and in aggressively pushing for action.

The Attorney General Civil Rights Division must become more visible in the Asian community, in aiding victims and in spotting

inadequacies in the current response systems throughout the state. Further, the office must work to ensure long-term accountability on the part of police departments and other public officials who have not yet developed an ability to address anti-Asian violence.

3. The District Attorneys

Each county has a district attorney, who is a publicly-elected official responsible for prosecuting criminal cases. This office seeks punishment and public condemnation for the wrongs committed against the victim. Such crime is seen not only as an offense to the individual, but also a crime against the people. Therefore, a public official is responsible for the case. The District Attorney has much decision-making power in how the case will be handled and whether to bring charges or dismiss the case.

When an attacker is arrested, an Assistant District Attorney is assigned to prosecute the case. Monitoring a case from the community's perspective involves working with this prosecutor closely. In the past, community organizing efforts have involved sending petitions, meeting regularly with the office staff, and discussing the handling of race issues in the courtroom from racist stereotyping to jury selection issues.

THE BOSTON GLOBE, MONDAY, MARCH 31, 1986

TATTERED DREAMS

Once in America, some Asians find bigotry, violence

by Gregory Wither
Globe Staff

Neang Nou, the wife of slain Cambodian refugee Bun Vong,

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Cambodia during four years of forced labor under the Khmer Rouge, it endured two years in a refugee camp in Thailand, where their daughters, Kanika

Aug. 4, as Bun Vong and a Cambodian companion, Bunyoeun Som, were returning home to Lowell on Revere Beach Park-

The Boston Herald, Friday, April 18, 1986 47

Judge: Race can't be used as murder motive

By L. KIM TAN

A MIDDLESEX Superior Court judge ruled yesterday that race cannot be used as a motive in the trial of two Somerville men accused of killing a Cambodian refugee.

Judge Robert Barton made the ruling following a motion by defense

seanult, both 24.

The two men are accused of manslaughter and assault and battery in the attack on Bun Vong, 35, and a friend, Bunyoeun Som, 26, following a traffic dispute in Medford last August as the Cambodians were returning to Lowell on Revere Beach Parkway

the judge's ruling to affect the outcome of the trial, which will begin after jury selection is completed today.

Nonetheless, at least 10 members and supporters of the Asians for Justice coalition, who attended the court proceedings yesterday, believe Vong died in a racially motivated in-

be separated from the whole incident," coalition member Elaine Song said.

Jamie Factor, community liaison for the Cambodian Community of Massachusetts, said she was convinced the killing would not have happened had Vong been of the same race as the accused.

have happened," she said. "That's my gut feeling."

Pelgro said he had no evidence that race was involved in the Aug. 4 incident.

Vong's death drew wide publicity last year when Gov. Michael Dukakis reportedly said, "This is one in a series of incidents in which



The Bun Vong manslaughter case raised many issues around the effectiveness of the civil rights law.

Each District Attorney has one assistant district attorney in charge of overseeing civil rights cases. This year, several counties throughout the commonwealth sponsored a conference on civil rights. Participating District Attorneys affirmed their commitment to vigorously prosecuting those who commit acts of racial violence. These commitments need to be actively affirmed in practice.

C. Access Problems in the Criminal Justice System

The most recent racially-motivated murder case against an Asian, *Commonwealth v. Scott Arsenault and John Febbi*, for the 1985 beating death of Bun Vong, a Cambodian refugee, illustrates how difficult it is to enforce the civil rights law due to the high standards required to convict someone.

To prove that the criminal act was racially motivated, evidence is limited to past acts or racial slurs. The incident leading to the murder of Bun Vong began as a car chase by the two assailants who were screaming out their windows at the victims. Vong's friend who was traveling with him and who survived the attacks, could not understand English well enough to testify that they had yelled racial epithets. Therefore, no civil rights charges were brought against the defendants. Given that a large portion of the Asian population is not proficient in English, this is a recurring problem that prevents effective enforcement of the civil rights law.

In the Arsenault and Febbi case, the decision not to bring civil rights charges had particularly dangerous consequences. Due to the absence of civil rights charges, the defense attorney motioned that race be eliminated as a factor in the case and that no reference be made to race. The presiding judge granted that motion. The prosecutor then motioned for questioning of the jurors regarding racial bias, yet because the judge had granted the previous motion, even this issue -- most central to ensuring jurors' unbiased decision-making -- was disallowed in questioning.

The impact of the cases where civil rights charges are brought underscores the importance of vigorous enforcement of the laws. Yet the many requirements of the law, that are not often easy to meet, underscores the fact that the responsibility for reducing racial violence does

not fall on the legal system and the law enforcement system only, but on public officials, policy makers, human rights commissions, and the community as a whole. One Chinese respondent from East Boston expressed the issue this way:

We need to prevent the problem as a whole, not only those people who commit the acts. Even if we put those people into jail, other people will do the same thing. The problem is caused by racism. I was attacked because I am Asian, and that is why I am afraid that it can happen again. If I wasn't Asian, I know this attack would happen just this time, but because I know that people are racist, I am afraid that it will happen continuously.⁸

⁸December 1986. Translated from Chinese.

V. Empowerment in the Asian Community

Empowerment in the Asian community refers to a process of enabling the community to increase its collective influence and participation in the political system. Its principles further American democratic ideals of exercising one's rights to speak and assemble freely. Over the last decade, different Asian communities have exercised these rights through community-wide movements and organizing efforts, and achieved positive results. One result is that these movements have improved the accountability of elected officials to the Asian community and strengthened the community's capacity to voice its needs and to establish its political presence.

Community organizing, coalition-building, and development of community-based organizations have proven to be vital for the Asian community, and can play an integral part in shaping the community's future. This section details the many community-wide movements around anti-Asian violence as models for potential organizing efforts.

A. What is Community Organizing ?

Community organizing is a people-based, democratic process of bringing about change. The strength of community organizing derives from the participation of people who lack individual power, and come together out of shared interests and concerns. Through the process of working together, they develop common goals and affirm a commitment to achieving those goals.

Where anti-Asian violence is concerned, community-wide organizing has been extremely effective in achieving protection and attention from state and city officials, as well as in allowing those who are most affected by the problem to speak out against the injustices happening to them.

Three factors have proved to be significant in strengthening the capacity of the Asian community to organize: (1) identification of common issues and concerns as Asians in America; (2) broad-based participation and unity despite political, social, economic, and nationality differences, and (3) effective leadership that is representative of the community. In its organizing experience, the Asian community has recognized the common treatment and experiences that Asians in America share, despite differences in nationality, generation, and background. From this process, a new understanding about each other has developed, increasing the potential for stronger, unified efforts.

Unity has also been achieved. Often groups which have historically disagreed on most issues have come together around a single issue because it has broad implications for the community as a whole. Anti-Asian violence has been one such issue. One man we surveyed explained the importance of unity throughout the Asian community:

Many of us are outsiders and newcomers. Therefore, we don't feel like we can do much. We feel we can't make waves. But people

need to work together to protect themselves. In Cambodia, we were not unified. So other people took advantage of that. Learning from past experience, I feel that unity is the solution.¹

One form of organizing has been the formation of coalitions. Coalitions are composed of groups and individuals from different sectors of the community to unite around common goals and issues. The premise behind coalitions is that collaboration with diverse groups and individuals strengthens overall efforts around an issue. Participants come together based on mutual respect, commitment to common goals, and a willingness to pursue change through a democratic working process. People within the community take responsibility for providing leadership to this process where people work together as social equals to arrive at common solutions to collective problems.²

1. The case of Long Guang Huang: A community organizing victory

The May 1, 1985 assault and false arrest of a Chinatown resident by a plainclothes Boston police detective demonstrated the capacity of the Asian community to organize against injustice and violence. More than any other single issue in the last decade, the case of the beating of Long Guang Huang by Detective Francis Kelly mobilized broad sectors of Boston's Asian community in defense of Huang, and stands as a model for resistance and empowerment on behalf of a community.

For Chinatown residents, the incident aroused the resentment and bitterness that had been building up for years regarding various forms of real estate development and encroachment of the Combat Zone into Chinatown without the approval of the community. The issue in the Huang case, therefore centered around political power on a mass scale.

The first step in what turned out to be a four-to-six month community-wide process was to inform the community about the incident and to call them together to discuss their concerns. Two days after the assault, community members distributed a bilingual flyer detailing the incident and inviting the community to a meeting. With one day's notice, 300 Chinatown residents packed the local public school auditorium. The result of this meeting was a list of eight demands ranging from dropping all charges against Huang to institutional changes that would guarantee the safety and protection of Chinatown's community.



AARW Photo
Chinatown's elderly were among many who attended a citywide rally for Long Guang Huang.

¹Chinatown man, August 1986.

²Peter Nien-chu Kiang, "Capacity Building and the Asian American Community: Planning Organizational Development for the Asian American Resource Workshop," Community Fellows Program. Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 4 July 1985.

Out of this meeting, the Committee to Support Long Guang Huang was formed. It was chaired by two groups who had traditionally differed politically on many issues. However, the seriousness of the issue and the need for unity brought these groups together for the first time and allowed it to maintain a broad base of support. What strengthened the effort the most, however, was the underlying approach: to respect and proceed from the strength and imagination of the community people.³

The Committee served as the negotiating team with city officials and the Police Department. Due to the community pressure, Police Commissioner Roache was willing to meet and work with the Committee. Within one week after the incident occurred, Roache promised an internal investigation into Kelly's misconduct. Much of the pressure over the next few months focused on ensuring that Roache lived up to his promise.

The Committee met close to every day to strategize around getting their demands met and to discuss the development of events in the case. The Committee developed into various subcommittees which concentrated on the press, community outreach, and legal aspects of the case. One of its regular duties was to continually inform the community about developments in the case. The Committee had an information table in the public parks every weekend and held community meetings at critical points. What resulted from these democratically-run meetings were decisions such as staging a citywide demonstration, marches to the police hearings on Kelly's conduct, and organized groups to attend Huang's trial.

On June 18, around the time that a trial date was announced for Huang's case, 300 people marched and rallied at City Hall for justice, accountability, and community control. The rally drew widespread support from the Black and Latino communities, whose communities had also been victimized by police brutality, as well as from other community organizations and concerned citizens. When Huang's trial began on August 20, the courtroom was packed daily

³Robert Chien-chuan Chu and Hei Wai Chan, "Building a People's Movement: Grassroots Organizing in the Boston Asian Community," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 21 November 1985.

with representation from many groups and communities. On August 23, Huang was found innocent of all charges.

Community activism also forced the Boston Police Department to hold an internal police misconduct hearing on August 29. It became the first such hearing open to the public. The Support Committee mobilized individuals to attend the hearings daily. With daily coverage in the press as well, the hearing was closely scrutinized by the public at large, ensuring accountability of the appropriate officials and a level of fairness within the hearing.

The result of the hearing was a one-year suspension without pay, which is rare for such an act. The unprecedented punishment of Kelly set a new standard condemning police brutality. Due to the widespread support around this case from different sectors of the Asian community as well as from different communities of color, the case's results had widespread implications even beyond the borders of Chinatown.

The Huang case's impact also was felt beyond the time period during which it occurred. The long-lasting significance of the case lay in the point that it made about what the community can accomplish if organized and united. Throughout the campaign, the approach to achieve broad-based support worked, as the entire community participated in their own ways. One Chinatown activist involved in the Campaign writes in an Asian American quarterly:

Workers in the coffee shops followed the developments in the newspapers closely. Small crowds would gather to read the daily information posters put up outside the CPA even as the signs were being put up. The weekend information tables in the community were very popular. Restaurants donated food for fundraisers cooked by kitchen workers wearing red "Justice for Long Guang Huang" buttons.⁴

⁴Michael Liu, "Campaign for Justice: The Case of Long Guang Huang, *East Wind*, Spring-Summer 1987, pp. 33-35.

2. "Enough is Enough": Revere's solution to violence

The 1986 Christmas Eve fire at 52 Shirley Avenue in Revere sparked the outrage of the Cambodian community about racial violence, and spurred it into action. Within two weeks, Cambodian community leaders, following the wishes of the victims, planned and organized Revere's first citywide rally around racial violence. The message, which had been felt for too long, could finally be articulated: "Enough is Enough." The Coalition on Violence Against Cambodian-Americans in Revere, made up of four organizations, called for measures that would not only react to the problem but prevent it, by demanding a program to educate public officials against misconceptions of the Cambodian community as a key to ending violence.

Mobilizing for the January 10 rally took place on several levels within the community. The Christmas fire in Revere stirred the outrage and passion not only of the city's Cambodian American community, but of the entire Revere community. The incident became a prime agenda item for the next meeting of the Ward 2 Civic Association, the neighborhood group in Revere. The meeting brought together representatives from the Fire Marshal's office, the School Board, and many concerned citizens. Support for the upcoming rally was consolidated and discussions took place about holding a neighborhood dance on Valentine's

Day. Cambodian leaders also sent flyers door-to-door throughout Revere to alert neighbors about the rally.

In the Garfield School, students from all communities made signs for the rally during class hours. These children and their parents made up a significant contingent of the rally. In addition, several school board officials spoke at the rally about education as the key preventative measure to fighting racism. The heavy participation of the school system was extremely significant, given the importance placed upon it for developing the attitudes and opinions of children. The rally itself, held two weeks after the incident, drew over 200 people, Asian and non-Asian, reflecting the importance of this issue to the community as a whole.

Months following the rally, leaders from the Cambodian community developed a monitoring system with the Revere Human Rights Commission around further incidents. The development of more proactive measures can be achieved through continued organizing efforts. During the summer of 1987, the Garfield School in Revere conducted an education program for first and second graders that focused on racial harmony and language arts. The Garfield School also was the site of a series of summer workshops focusing on designing and creating a mural for the community. The mural, unveiled in September 1987, is a symbol of cultural pride in the Cambodian community.

Demonstrators came from all parts of Revere to make a united statement against anti-Asian violence.



Therese Feng



Courtesy of East Boston Vietnamese Association

The East Boston Vietnamese Association hosts the 1987 August Moon celebration.

B. Building Ongoing Institutions

1. From service to organizing: Meeting needs in East Boston

The spontaneous struggles following particular incidents have laid the foundation for longstanding organizational efforts. A unique program in East Boston has developed into an important model for empowerment through service and long-term advocacy and organizing.

"I think we've made a lot of progress," said Bounthay Phath, coordinator of the Cambodian Association in East Boston. "At first, people did not want to tell us their problems. Now, they are beginning to speak out." At the East Boston Ecumenical Community Council, a small community-based organization in East Boston, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and other Americans work together to address the pressing problems of their community. Begun in 1978 following a series of racially-motivated firebombings in the Maverick Housing Project against the homes of black families, EBECC has become a model for self-help, community service, and leadership development in the Asian community.

EBECC's main goal was to improve racial attitudes in its neighborhoods. Its reputation as a service center for the Asian community began

when the Our Savior Lutheran Church, where the group is based, decided to sponsor a refugee family in 1982. Once violence began, the community had no one else to turn to. Little by little, EBECC did what it could to meet the immediate service needs of members of the community by calling the police on their behalf, accompanying them to court, and sponsoring violence prevention workshops with the Community Disorders Unit to inform individuals about their rights. By initiating these actions, EBECC developed a relationship of trust and cooperation with many members of the community.

To bolster its service and organizing efforts, EBECC hired two Asian staff in 1985, a Cambodian and Vietnamese, to head associations based in EBECC. The effort was called Project Welcome. These staff members became a critical link with the community. One turning point in strengthening this relationship was the 1987 New Years Day celebration, which activated close to 200 people not only to attend the event, but also to coordinate and prepare for it. This gathering revealed that EBECC had developed into a gathering place for the community. It is also in keeping with EBECC's past philosophy of sponsoring positive activities that involve different sectors of the community. Since it began in 1978, it has sponsored, in conjunction with other groups, an annual celebration known as the Festival of Unity, which brings together the different cultures in East Boston.

In July 1987, EBECC added two part-time Asian staff and will implement a plan for increasing the organized strength of the Asian community. Weekly outreach to Asian residents, development and training of new leaders, and community-wide meetings are some forms of empowerment on EBECC's agenda.

2. The MAAs and BARCO: Unifying Southeast Asians

One of the primary advocates, resources, and representatives of the refugee community has become the Southeast Asian mutual assistance associations. Established in 1984 as refugee-run service centers, the MAAs have addressed issues and assisted the community in everything from job counseling, finding an apartment, providing interpreter services, to participating in development of long-term strategies that

have broad impact for the community. Within the Boston area, the Southeast Asian MAAs are the Cambodian Community of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Association of Chinese from Indochina, the Vietnamese American Civic Association, the Laotian American Cultural Association of Boston, the Kmhmu Family Association, and the Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association.

These organizations have undergone much growth and change throughout their short history. With the increase in violence and the systemic inadequacies in serving refugees, the MAAs quickly began participating in advocacy and organizing activities. In the summer of 1985, following several well-publicized incidents of violence, the Vietnamese American Civic Association initiated a day-long workshop on anti-Asian violence for the MAAs. Out of it came a commitment from its participants to meet regularly, share information and resources, and advocate collectively against injustices and inadequate government responses to incidents of violence.

With this commitment, the Boston Asian Refugee Coalition (BARCO) was born, composed of seven MAAs and guided by the following purpose: to collectively respond to

acts of racial violence against Boston-area Asian MAA communities. BARCO attempted to join the Southeast Asian refugee community into a stronger, united voice. Recognizing the increased victimization of refugees and the similar cultural, linguistic, and other barriers between all refugees and the law enforcement system, the basis of unity became clear.

The Coalition initiated activities such as violence prevention workshops for the community to improve police-community relations and crisis intervention. Other ideas, such as helping refugees overcome isolation and youth leadership development, were longer-term projects on its agenda. Although no longer a coalition, the MAAs still share information and are supporting each other through meetings and other events.

As these organizations stabilize and become financially independent, many can take an active role in the movement to enforce civil rights for their communities. In addition, several nonprofit organizations and foundations have formed in the Southeast Asian refugee community. Through the activities of these diverse groups, the communities will improve and increase their organizing strength.



Newsletters produced by the MAAs have become a key source of communication for Southeast Asian communities.

3. Asians for Justice

The Asians for Justice coalition formed in 1983 to do support work for the Vincent Chin case. The effort did not arise out of any one geographic community, but was begun by concerned Asian individuals, who recognized the severity of the problem and saw it as one that affected all Asians.

Taking its warning from the Vincent Chin case, the coalition began mobilizing around the case involving the stabbing death of Anh Mai, a Vietnamese refugee in Dorchester in the summer of 1983. The coalition began meeting with prosecutors and attracting media attention to the case. When the trial finally started in April 1985, members attended the trial to show support for the victims and to ensure a fair, unbiased proceeding. On May 1, 1985, a first-degree murder conviction and life sentence were handed down.

On the same day that the verdict was announced in the Anh Mai case, Long Guang Huang, a Chinese immigrant, was beaten by a police officer in Chinatown. Asians for Justice helped form the Committee to Support Long Guang Huang. The four-month effort became one of the most significant Asian community organizing efforts.

Asians for Justice also organized in 1986 in the case of Cambodian refugee, Bun Vong, who was beaten to death by two white men on the Revere Beach Parkway. (See Section II. B.) The first trial resulted in an acquittal of one defendant and a mistrial against the other. Through the advocacy of Asians for Justice, a second trial against the defendant who was not acquitted, was held, resulting in a 7-12 year sentence for manslaughter.

4. The role of pan-Asian organizations

Recent establishment of Asian American organizations, with pan-Asian consciousness, has served as an important starting point in developing a community-wide unity. In addition to the Asian American Resource Workshop, established in 1978, other organizations have grown in strength and membership since their inception in the early 80s. They include the Asian American Lawyers Association, the Massachusetts Asian American Forum, the National Association of Young Asian Professionals, and Asian Sisters in

Action, in addition to the many campus-based Asian American student organizations.

These organizations and others are recognizing the importance of working with community-based service and advocacy groups. The contributions of professionals, especially in the law and public policy areas, can make inroads in providing the community with the tools to determine its future. One potential for improving this relationship is the legal assistance fund established by the Asian American Lawyers Association in memory of Harry H. Dow, the first Asian American lawyer in Massachusetts. Harry Dow's strong belief in community empowerment was matched by his highly active role in various oppressed communities, including communities of color. The fund currently encourages legal assistance within the Asian community through internships and fellowships. This past year, it set up an anti-Asian violence project which focused on advocating for national hearings in the U.S. Congress. The Dow Fund will also stimulate and support locally-based activity that has a direct impact on Boston's Asian community.

5. Activism and roots: Asian student groups

Students have always played a critical role in the Asian American movement. Since the late 60s, Asian American students became active on campuses throughout the country, organizing around issues such as minority admissions policies and Asian American studies curricula. In Boston, many students took part in community-based activities such as teaching English classes and assisting social service agencies. In fact, the activities and initiatives of students planted the seed for several ongoing organizations to serve the Chinatown community.

Currently, there are several Asian student groups throughout the Boston area campuses. These groups, which formed for social, cultural, educational, and political reasons, have enabled students to become key voices for Asians and other minorities on Boston's college campuses. Many students have recently become involved in various organizing struggles. They have become involved by organizing petition drives, attending rallies, and attending trials for many cases of anti-Asian violence.

As student activism grows in strength, numbers, and diversity, the potential increases for students to do more ongoing, direct work with the community. Internships and work-study positions in community organizations as well as encouragement of educational workshops on campuses to develop Asian American consciousness are some ways to improve the relationship between students and the community.

C. Consolidating Asian American and Third World Unity

Few issues have united broad sectors of the Asian American community the way that anti-Asian violence has. All Asians are subject to attack, regardless of culture, language, or nationality. Vietnamese have been attacked and told to go back to China; Chinese have been attacked because they look Japanese. Likewise, racist media stereotypes and myths of economic success have negative impact on all Asians.

Asians who have involved themselves in the various struggles against anti-Asian violence have recognized the racist roots of violence. Struggling against racist forces requires resistance to common perceptions and attitudes about Asians in favor of those based on the community's own perceptions. The act of consciously identifying as an Asian American is itself a significant act of resistance. The term Asian American arose out of the ethnic pride movements of the 1960s which gave birth to terms such as "African-American" instead of "Negro" and "Asian American" instead of "Oriental." Identifying as such is an affirmation of our relationship to the social, cultural, and historical experience of Asians in America. It places our personal experiences in context of the collective.⁵ At the same time, it underscores the common treatment of all racial minorities in America and leads to identification with other people of color as well.

Common bonds and common issues also exist between Asians and other communities of color, because communities are often affected by issues in similar ways. During the Huang case, the support from leaders in the Black community

revealed the high level of concern around this issue. Its support and solidarity with the Asian community placed even more pressure on the city to meet the community's demands. At the same time, the recognition by Huang Support Committee members that the issue had significance throughout other communities was a motivating factor in pursuing its demands.

Recent issues involving the movement to make English the official language and the fight over land control provide further examples of common issues that can lead to common struggles. The bill to make English the official language in Massachusetts has severe negative impact on linguistic minorities from all racial backgrounds. Solidarity around this issue and related issues such as bilingual education and immigration rights has helped to bring together Asians, Latinos, and Haitian groups. The closing of the Orange Line in May 1987 brought the Chinatown and Roxbury communities closer together. Both recognized the importance of community input in developing alternate transportation systems and to work together to develop a unified stand. Working together dispelled previous claims that the communities cannot agree and cannot get along.

Improving bonds with other communities of color can help prevent many of the tensions that have occurred between communities. Violence between Hispanics and Asians in Chelsea in May 1987 reveals the powerlessness placed upon both groups who are forced to compete over the same scarce resources. Similar problems are occurring between Blacks and Koreans in New York City and Blacks and Asians in Philadelphia. In addition to the common oppression and scarce resources plaguing both communities, many conflicts have arisen due to misunderstandings and lack of education about each other's community. Community groups need to take responsibility for developing cooperative and harmonious interracial relations so that communities can unite rather than fight over common problems.

⁵Kiang, "Capacity Building."

VI. Conclusions/Recommendations

The extent and seriousness of incidents of anti-Asian violence reflects a steadily worsening anti-Asian climate and a warning that civil rights violations will continue. Both government agencies and the community have important roles to play in preventing the problem and in achieving long-lasting change. Local and state governments can initiate measures that would help meet the immediate and long-term needs of the Asian community. The community's responsibility lies in voicing its needs to the appropriate officials and agencies, and ensuring that those needs are met.

This report has attempted to provide one kind of voice and perspective that is rooted in the community. It also marks a beginning of a long-term effort by the AARW Civil Rights Project to help develop a community-based approach to anti-Asian violence and other civil rights issues.

The many successful organizing efforts undertaken in the Asian community thus far can be seen as models for organizing in the community. Although all of the efforts outlined in this report focus on racial violence, the community can also draw lessons from them in organizing around other civil rights injustices, such as housing, education, and employment.

At the same time, government agencies need to recognize the value of community involvement and input in developing more effective long-term solutions that meet the community's needs. Following are recommendations which require the participation and cooperation of all parties discussed in this report.

A. General Recommendations

Prevention can take place in many ways. Following are some critical areas that the AARW Civil Rights Project has identified over the past year.

- Improvement of the Asian community's access to the law enforcement and criminal justice systems through court interpreters, bilingual emergency operators, Asian police officers, and other measures which would address the linguistic and cultural barriers between the community and the legal system;
- Involvement of city governments, through human rights commissions and other departments, in developing long-term, preventive measures to address anti-Asian violence;
- Establishment of civil rights units within police departments outside of Boston and education and training of police officers on civil rights laws and on the history and experiences of Asians in America;
- Integration of community input on the progress of the above efforts and establishment of community review mechanisms on police misconduct;
- Development of multicultural education and Asian American studies courses in Greater Boston's public school systems.

1. Improving access

To break the barriers between government agencies such as the police, and the Asian community, Asian victims need to feel

comfortable in seeking assistance from these agencies. One of the most serious problem now is the language barrier. Not only should systems be put into place such as more bilingual emergency operators, but the community must be made aware of these services.

Law enforcement officials need to reach out to the community through means such as bilingual resource materials and education sessions. Visibility in the community is critical in order to develop a stronger sense of trust on the part of the community and to confront many of their negative perceptions of the police.

2. The role of human rights commissions

Human rights commissions in Boston, Revere, and other parts of Greater Boston can take significant roles in developing and recommending policies that would address the problem on a long-term level. Activities such as further documentation of needs around racial violence and other civil rights issues can be undertaken by these commissions. Further data collecting and analysis can better define the needs of the community. In cities with serious incidents of anti-Asian violence, such as Los Angeles and Philadelphia, the human rights commissions have sponsored public hearings as a way of documenting the experiences of Asian victims and to make recommendations applicable to different institutions, including schools and police departments. Locally-based hearings by human rights commissions should be considered.

3. Civil rights units and civil rights training

Boston's Community Disorders Unit provides a model for effectiveness in combating racial violence. The quality of service has differed greatly in areas that did not have CDUs, such as Somerville. Using the model of the CDU in other cities throughout Greater Boston would improve the responsiveness of police departments in civil rights cases. The Attorney General and District Attorneys can take a role in seeking the creation of such units.

On a long-term level, cities need to make commitments to implementing civil rights policies that work for the Asian community and to ensuring proper training for its police officers. Police departments throughout the state are required to provide only two hours of training on

civil rights laws as part of approximately 250 hours of training overall. Being able to analyze a civil rights case will make a difference in whether the victim's civil rights are protected. Training should focus not only on how to identify a civil rights case, but how to anticipate one. Police officers should also be trained on working with minority communities. Regarding the Asian community, police officers need to understand their duty to inform the community about their rights and to continue communication and follow-through.

4. Community review mechanisms

A community review mechanism to monitor police behavior is based on the premise that the police are accountable to the community. Such a board is vital because of the longstanding record of police brutality, particularly in communities of color. For several years, advocacy and community-based groups have been exploring possibilities for developing a civilian review board for monitoring the activities of the Boston Police Department. Although several models have been explored, through the efforts of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and other groups, no concrete steps have been taken to establish one.

5. Multicultural awareness

Many acts of racial violence stem from misunderstandings and misconceptions about Asians. Without education and cultural awareness in the school systems, children get most of their knowledge and understanding of Asians through distorted media images and stereotypes. Multicultural awareness allows children from different ethnic backgrounds to share their unique cultures with others. Having multicultural awareness built into existing school curriculum would accomplish three goals for young people: developing their knowledge of their cultures as well as of the cultures of their classmates; acquiring a positive attitude of respect and challenge in dealing with people from different cultures; and enabling them to relate comfortably on an interpersonal level with others from the same or another culture. As Boston's ethnic

community grows in diversity and size, so does the need for multicultural awareness.¹

Asian American studies should also be integrated into the mainstream curriculum. This education helps to defeat the common perception that Asians are foreigners and do not belong in America. Teaching the long and varied history of Asians in this country increases the understanding of Asians as Americans equally entitled to constitutional and civil rights guaranteed to everyone. Asian American studies courses provide an understanding of the nation's discriminatory past and unfair treatment of Asians, stories which have been left out of most major textbooks.

B. Building an agenda for the Asian community

The process of organizing around racial violence can involve all members of the Asian community. Yet in the information-gathering process which led to this report, the Civil Rights Project has met many people reluctant to voice their concerns about such issues. Capacity-building in the Asian community can be viewed as a step by step process, involving education, communication, and leadership. To begin this process, the community must develop a sense of confidence in itself as having a voice and a right to be heard. Community leaders can play a critical role in ensuring that that is done.

The Civil Rights Project recommends the following priorities for capacity-building in the Asian community:

- Outreach and education by Asian community leaders around civil rights issues and legal rights;
- Developing leadership from within the Asian community to represent the views of various constituencies and to remain informed about issues facing their communities;
- Building upon current organizing initiatives that work for the people within the community;
- Establishing a network of Asian groups and individuals from different geographic

locations in order to develop collective solutions to common problems.

1. Education

Developing the community's knowledge about their rights is one of the first steps toward self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and citizenship participation. Existing organizations and coalitions can work jointly with government and law enforcement officials in providing education that informs the community about their rights while also informing government officials about the needs particular to that community. The ultimate goal, however, of this education, would be to enable members of the Asian community to draw upon these tools in dealing with and confronting civil rights problems through community organizing and other forms of expression.

Many Asians in the community are confused about what rights they have. The pamphlets prepared by the Attorney General's Civil Rights Division in Asian languages can be an important tool to empowering the community. These booklets were not available to the Asian community this year. They should be made available through programs and activities which serve Asians, including English as a Second Language classes, employment and training classes, and service agencies. Possibilities for integrating civil rights education into the regular curriculum of some of these programs should also be explored.

2. Leadership development

In any organizing efforts, leaders have been key to success. Leaders need to clearly understand the needs of the community on a personal and a political level. Leaders must also be respected by the community they serve. Many leaders have experienced injustice personally and are willing to coordinate efforts to bring the community together around them.

Identifying such leaders can improve the development of educational programs that suit the particular community's needs. Community leaders and service workers should educate their own communities about what they can do about the problem. Workshops should be initiated within the community through churches and community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and legal organizations. In

¹Catherine A. Wong, Asian American Resource Workshop Newsletter, June 1986.

addition to informing the community about their rights, these leaders need to tell the community that they also have the right to speak up when they feel they are not being served and demand protection.

The model of East Boston's Project Welcome stands as a successful model in capacity-building. After having conducted several education sessions and developed close connections with the community, it is now concentrating on developing the leaders who have arisen from the community for service to the community.

3. Developing organizing initiatives

As communities have experienced heightened levels of violence and found there were no satisfactory solutions anywhere, they turned to each other for self-help and support. This base of support is the most important factor in community organizing. Communities who have developed this base can increase their effectiveness in meeting both short-term and long-term goals.

Communities can also seek assistance in organizing by networking with other groups and by consulting with organizations who provide assistance, such as the AARW Civil Rights Project. Assistance and guidance in working with government officials and in publicizing issues in the media are some areas of its experience. In addition, the Center for Community Action, which began in July 1987 to assist organizing efforts especially in communities of color, has resources which are available to the Asian community. The Center can provide training to community organizers and acts as an important base for networking with other groups.

4. Ongoing, community-wide networking

The organizing and institution-building efforts outlined in this report reveal that many successful organizing efforts have been locally-based, grassroots initiatives with clear neighborhood and nationality boundaries, such as the Chinese community in Chinatown and the Cambodian community in Revere. Once having established these roots, it is important to recognize the similarities across different communities as well, in an effort to increase the

organizing and communication base of the Asian community.

To build the community as a unit of action, it is important to identify common interests and to consolidate an Asian American consciousness. Communities need to continue to seek support and assistance from each other, and to share information on issues, strategies, and plans for developing collective solutions to common problems. Community organizations, pan-Asian groups, and student groups all have important roles to play in building the community's capacity.

Out of this information-sharing process, community representatives can develop priorities as to the critical issues facing the Asian American community, and to design a plan for advocacy and coalition-building toward long-term, institutional change.

C. Capacity-Building and the Role of the AARW

The AARW has led and assisted many community struggles around civil rights. Its long-term commitment to institutionalize this work indicates its interest in building a strong base that facilitates community action and that advocates for institutional change. Its long-term goal is to increase the organized strength of the Asian community in addressing civil rights issues and to provide the community with the tools to advocate and organize on its own behalf.

As the Civil Rights Project begins its second year, it will continue to assist community organizing efforts and coalitions as well as to work closely with community-based organizations. It has also designed a program of outreach and education within select communities of Greater Boston. Regular updates with members of the community and follow-up civil rights education sessions are some of the activities planned as its next steps. As a possible model of community empowerment, the results and progress of the civil rights education program will be disseminated to interested individuals and organizations.

This report will be one of the major educational tools used in this program. From this report, it is hoped that members of the community will feel encouraged to express their views and experiences to Civil Rights Project staff. The AARW would like to know what the

Appendix A

The Rise in Anti-Asian Sentiment

Excerpted from Japanese American Citizens' League,
"A Report on Anti-Asian Violence in the United States."

The resurgence of anti-Asian sentiments in the United States over the past few years has been documented in a growing number of incidents reported in both ethnic community vernacular press and in the mainstream media. The vicious bludgeon murder of Vincent Chin in 1982, in the economically distressed city of Detroit, has been the centerpiece story which has brought much attention to this unfortunate trend. The inventory of incidents and events related to this phenomena that are included in this report are indicative of this significant and growing problem.

Discrimination and violence against persons of Asian ancestry in the United States has had an extensive history. Early immigrants were required to endure hardships, not only of social adjustment and social condition, but of racial hatred directed at them. Over 600 pieces of legislation directed against persons of Asian ancestry were enacted between 1800s and the early 1900s. Sanctions and prohibitions were imposed, limiting or excluding Asian Americans from citizenship, intermarriage, land ownership, employment and other forms of participation in American life. The intensity of anti-Asian sentiments culminated during World War II. The highest levels of all three branches of the Federal Government acted to exclude persons of Japanese ancestry from their homes on the West Coast and placed over 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in inland camps surrounded by barbed wires and guarded by armed military without any charges filed, and without any due process of law.

Many barriers excluding Asian Americans from full participation in American society have been reduced. In 1947, the Federal Alien Land Law, prohibiting persons not eligible for citizenship from owning land, was repealed. In 1952, the Japanese American Citizens League achieved a major campaign victory by supporting legislation that made citizenship available to the first generation (Issei) as well as other new immigrant Asians. The 1956 initiative known as Proposition 13, finally removed the Alien Land Law statutes in California. Court challenges, legislative campaigns and direct initiatives were implemented to erode the historical barriers imposed on persons of Asian ancestry in the United States. In 1959, after 21 years in the Congress, a bill providing Hawaii Statehood was finally realized when ethnic population considerations were diminished.

The post war period reflected a gradual improvement in anti-Asian sentiment. The American Chinese, Filipino and Japanese populations served with distinction during WWII. In particular, the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team, a segregated unit composed of Japanese Americans, became the most decorated unit in American military history for its size and length of service. The record of the 100th/442nd dramatically demonstrated the loyalty of Japanese Americans to the United States. This record provided a foundation from which the anti-Asian attitudes of many Americans, who raised skepticism about the ability of Asian

Americans to assimilate into American society, were eased. To a large extent it was this record that facilitated the passage of legislation to make Hawaii the 50th State. There had been considerable opposition in the Congress to admit the territory because of reservations regarding Hawaii's large Asian population.

U.S. involvement in the Korean War and in Vietnam, continued a history that maintain Asian people and nations as the "enemy." The continuation of military encounters in Asia in the post World War II period, maintained an ongoing focus upon one or another Asian people as an enemy of the United States. The public perception of Asian people as enemies, with all the vilification accorded enemies, was reinforced over time.

By 1960, the population of Asian Americans in the United States reached a total of a half million, less than 0.5% of the total population. The movement for expansion of civil rights was an item on the national agenda. Asian Americans participated in, and were impacted by this national movement. One effect of the civil rights movement was the expansion and liberalization of immigration quotas to Pacific Rim nations. By 1970, the population of Asian Americans reached 1.5 million, a 300% increase, largely due to greater equity in the allocation of quotas for immigration from Pacific Rim nations and the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The 1980 census records 3.5 million persons of Asian ancestry, 1.6% of the total U.S. population. The geographic concentration is in the West Coast of the United States, resulting in only part of the country familiar with Asian Americans on a first hand basis. With persons of Asian ancestry accounting for 40% of the immigration to the United States, compared to 6% in 1965, and over one third of these declaring an intent to reside in California, the continued expansion of Asian American communities must be anticipated.

Concurrent with the increase in Asian immigration, the third and fourth generations of Americans of Asian ancestry, particularly in the Chinese and Japanese communities were reaching their majority; a generation of Asian Americans impacted by the civil rights and peace movements. A marked interest in ethnic identity and pride characterized this period, reflected in the development of Ethnic Studies Departments in various universities. The early Asian immigrant communities were reaching

maturity. Educational achievement, per capita income and other measures reflected this growth.

The initial emergence of the economies of Pacific Rim nations became visible during this same period. Increase in trade relationships, as well as strategic military ties, placed a growing national focus on Asian countries. By 1981, the trans-Pacific trade volume exceeded the volume across the Atlantic for the first time in the over 200 years of the nation's history, further emphasizing the public attention on the Pacific Rim. Taking place in the context of a global change in economic relationships, the United States, especially in key, traditional industry sectors was, and is currently, in a period of recession, high inflation and high unemployment. The agitation stemming from an environment of international trade conflicts touches the lives of Americans of Asian ancestry.

Appendix B

Massachusetts Civil Rights Laws



GENERAL LAWS, 202, 37

No person, whether or not acting under color of law, shall by force or threat of force, or by intimidation or interference with, or attempt to interfere with, or interference with, or deprivation of any other person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right secured to him by the constitution or laws of the Commonwealth or by the constitution or laws of the United States. Any person convicted of violating this provision shall be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year or both. And if bodily injury results, shall be punished by a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not more than ten years, or both.

Violation of this statute is a misdemeanor. There is no statutory right of arrest. If no bodily injury results, violation of this statute is a misdemeanor with no statutory right of arrest. If could, however, be arrestable if a breach of the peace takes place in the officer's presence.



GENERAL LAWS c. 265, § 37

No person, whether or not acting under color of law, shall by force or threat of force, willfully injure, intimidate or interfere with, or attempt to injure, intimidate, or interfere with, or oppress or threaten any other person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the constitution or laws of the Commonwealth or by the constitution or laws of the United States. Any person convicted of violating this provision shall be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year or both; and if bodily injury results, shall be punished by a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not more than ten years, or both.

If no bodily injury results, violation of this statute is a misdemeanor with no statutory right of arrest. If could, however, be arrestable if a breach of the peace takes place in the officer's presence.



GENERAL LAWS c. 265, § 39

Whoever commits an assault or a battery upon a person or damages the real or personal property of another for the purpose of intimidation because of said person's race, color, religion, or national origin, shall be punished by a fine of not more than five thousand dollars or not more than three times the value of the property destroyed or damaged, whichever is greater, or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than two and one-half years, or both.

Violation of this statute is a misdemeanor. There is no statutory right of arrest for this offense. If, of course, the act is committed in the officer's presence and it constitutes a breach of the peace, it will be an arrestable offense.



GENERAL LAWS C. 265, § 23B

No person, whether or not acting under color of law, shall by willful or wantonly assault or battery upon a person or damage the real or personal property of another for the purpose of intimidating or harassing said person on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Whoever violates this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than five thousand dollars or not more than three times the value of the property destroyed or damaged, whichever is greater, or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than two and one-half years, or both. Whoever is fined or imprisoned under this section shall also be punished by a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not more than ten years, or both.

Violation of this statute is a misdemeanor. There is no statutory right of arrest for this offense. If, of course, the act is committed in the officer's presence and it constitutes a breach of the peace, it will be an arrestable offense.

If no bodily injury results, violation of this statute is a misdemeanor. If a statutory right of arrest is established, it could, however, be arrestable if a breach of the peace takes place in the officer's presence.

TATTERED DREAMS

Once in America, some Asians find bigotry, violence

By Gregory Witcher
Globe Staff

Neang Nou, the wife of slain Cambodian refugee Bun Vong, sat weeping in the kitchen of her three-room apartment in Lowell as she mourned not only the death of her husband but also the death of their dream.

It was a dream of two immigrants for freedom, opportunity and prosperity in the United States. The dream came to an end in what many Asian-American activists say is an emerging pattern of racially motivated anti-Asian violence in metropolitan Boston.

The couple's dream began in

Cambodia during four years of forced labor under the Khmer Rouge. It endured two years in a refugee camp in Thailand, where their daughters, Kanika and Anny, were born after they fled their homeland in 1979.

The family entered the United States in October 1981 and settled in Revere. Bun Vong found work as a hotel steward in Cambridge.

In August 1984, the family moved to Lowell to be closer to a Billerica firm, where Bun Vong got a higher-paying job assembling medical equipment.

The end of the dream began with a 2 a.m. traffic dispute last

Aug. 4, as Bun Vong and a Cambodian companion, Bunyoeun Som, were returning home to Lowell on Revere Beach Parkway.

What started as an argument about whether one passing car cut too closely in front of another ended in a beating that left Bun Vong with a cracked skull. He lapsed into a coma and died 10 days later in a Boston hospital.

Seated now in the kitchen of a three-decker on Walker Street in Lowell, Neang Nou, 35, is unemployed, physically disabled and despairing.

VONG, Page 8

■ VONG

Continued from Page 1

"I came here to live in freedom with my husband and children, the same as everyone else," Neang Nou said in Khmer through an interpreter while Kanika, now 5 years old, recited the alphabet in flawless English in her bedroom. "Since my husband died and left me and my two children, what good is freedom now?"

Trial to start today

Asians for Justice, a coalition that formed in late 1983 after a U.S. Marine fatally stabbed Anh Mai, a Vietnamese refugee, outside his home in Dorchester, plans to monitor the trial of Scott S. Arsenault and John M. Febbi.

The two 24-year-old Somerville men are charged with manslaughter and assault and battery in the attack on Bun Vong, 35, and Bunyoeun Som, now 26. The trial was due to start today in Middlesex Superior Court in Cambridge.

Bun Vong's death probably would not have attracted so much news media interest if Gov. Dukakis had not attended his wake and denounced crimes of racial intolerance.

The attack climaxed a series of well-publicized assaults that led to the establishment in late July of the Boston Asian Refugee Coalition, a group of seven Southeast Asian mutual assistance associ-



Family photo of Bun Vong and his wife, Neang Nou.

ations, to halt anti-Asian violence.

The Boston Police Department denies the assertion by advocacy groups such as Asians for Justice and the Boston Asian Refugee Coalition that anti-Asian violence is increasing.

However, statistics show that cases investigated under the state civil rights law involving Asian-Americans grew 59 percent from 1982 to 1985, from 27 to 46, and now account for one-quarter of the annual caseload of the department's Community Disorders Unit.

Sgt. William Johnston, who heads the unit, estimated that one-half of the cases they investigate for possible civil rights violations are racially motivated. He said that more than 90 percent of the cases prosecuted for criminal and/or civil violations of the civil rights law lead to convictions.

The Metropolitan Police Department, which conducted the 10-day investigation that led to the arrest of Arsenault and Febbi, said the attack on Bun Vong and Bunyoeun Som was not racially motivated — as did the defendants' relatives and attorneys — and no civil rights charges were filed.

"In the Bun Vong case, it's apparent that Febbi and Arsenault shouted words at the Cambodians, but the surviving Cambodian doesn't understand English, so he can't testify as to whether or not they were racial, so the prosecutor and the police won't apply the civil rights law," said Peter Kiang, a founder of Asians for Justice. "When the civil rights law is so strictly tied to the use of racial epithets in an attack, that makes [its enforcement] really problematic for the Asian community."

In 1984 four of 11 of the restraining orders issued under the civil rights law were aimed at protecting Vietnamese refugees in Dorchester and Worcester and Cambodian refugees in Revere and Lowell.

The percentage climbed to 57 percent last year, when Asian-Americans in Mattapan, East Boston, South Boston and Revere were alleged to be the targets of defendants in four of the seven civil injunctions issued.

Boston Police Commissioner Francis M. Roache said he's not overlooking the fact that violence against Asian-Americans, particularly Southeast Asians, is a serious problem.

Roache said in a recent interview, however, that statistics purporting to show a rise in anti-Asian violence reflect instead increases in reporting as new Asian immigrants learn how the American criminal justice system works and how to use it.

He attributed the increases to outreach efforts by the department and the state attorney general's office, and to public condemnations of racial bigotry by Dukakis and Mayor Flynn.

"They're all talking about what a wonderful job they're doing. If they were doing so many wonderful things, these problems wouldn't exist," said Jacob Schlitt, director of the regional office of the US Commission on Civil Rights.

Kiang, who is also program director at the Asian American Resource Workshop in Chinatown, said part of the explanation for the violence lies in the rapid growth of the city's Asian-American population and in the placement of Southeast Asian refugees in its neighborhoods.

Boston's Asian-American population grew 40 percent, from 15,000 in 1980 to 25,000 in 1985, according to a state census and the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Asian-Americans now account for 4 percent of the city's 621,000 residents, the census showed.

Of the city's 25,000 Asian-American residents, approximately one of every three entered the United States after 1980 from Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos, according to the state Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Unprepared for hostility

Usually, these people first lived in white working-class neighborhoods, such as Dorchester, East Boston and Brighton, that were poorly equipped, socially or psychologically, to receive them, Kiang said.

Barriers of language and culture aside, the refugees were also unprepared for the hostility that outsiders frequently encounter in Boston's turf-conscious neighborhoods, he said.

Asian-American community activists cite several factors that fuel anti-Asian sentiment.

One is anti-Japanese rhetoric by US politicians and business and labor leaders. For instance, when House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.) was in Detroit in 1982 to discuss the crisis facing American automakers from foreign competitors, he told reporters, referring to imports from Japan, that if he were president, he would "fix the Japanese like they've never been fixed before."

Ratha Yem, who works with Cambodian refugees in Chelsea and Revere, suggests it can also be attributed to lingering racism from the Vietnam War.

"People believe that Southeast Asians fought against American

soldiers in Vietnam ... and they see us as a whole as the enemy," Ratha Yem said. "It also stems from jealousy. They suspect that Asians are buying new cars and houses with welfare benefits they are not entitled to."

Negative film portrayals

The portrayal of all Asians as "the enemy" in films, such as "Rambo" and "Year of the Dragon," contributes to persisting negative racial stereotypes, Kiang said.

The myth of Asians as a "model minority" also helps create resentment, Ratha Yem said. This myth surfaced in the '60s to help defuse black protests for equality by portraying Asian-Americans as people who "work hard, don't complain, take care of their own problems, don't protest and don't

riot - so why can't you blacks be like them," he said. It reemerged in the '80s when blacks were again pitted against other minorities and portrayed as a group that "made it without needing affirmative action."

"All these things together encourage acts of violence or inflame racist acts against Asians," said Julian Low, administrative director of Asian American Resource Workshop.

Kiang, referring to today's trial in Cambridge, said: "We will be there in the courtroom because we feel the killing of Bun Vong is related to the larger context of anti-Asian violence, locally and nationally."

"Out of the Vong case we want a clear message to be put out: 'You cannot take an Asian's life cheaply.'"

Asia Bashing

Bias Against Orientals Increases With Rivalry Of Nations' Economies

Post-Vietnam Immigration Of the Industrious Poor Also Brought Resentment

Violent Death of Bun Vong

By JAN WONG

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

REVERE, Mass.—Sun Mam knows better than to walk to work. When he does, he runs a gantlet of youths who pelt him with rocks and bottles. In winter, they have hurled chunks of ice. Once, someone tried to beat him up, but Mr. Mam outran his assailant.

"They say, 'Cambodian, you go back home,'" says Mr. Mam, a 36-year-old who now drives to his job as a store manager in this working-class suburb of Boston though he works just a block from home. Vandals slashed his tires, smashed his windshield and, one night, flipped his car over on its roof. Recently, someone tossed a Molotov cocktail onto his porch, but it failed to explode immediately and a friend kicked it away.

So far, Mr. Mam hasn't been injured. His friend, Bun Vong, whom he met five years ago in a refugee camp, was less fortunate. Last year, after a traffic dispute, a white electrician punched Mr. Vong, shattering his face and pushing a facial bone into his brain. Mr. Vong died 10 days later. Because the only witness, a Cambodian friend riding in Mr. Vong's car, didn't speak English, it was never established whether racial epithets—a key indication of racial motivation—had been used in the altercation. But Asian groups protested the incident and called it racist.

Incidents of Racism

Sparked by economic rivalry, with Asia and fueled by an influx of immigrants competing with the poor for scarce resources, racism against Asians is worsening around the U.S. In an East Peoria, Ill., church, parishioners taunt Vietnamese newcomers. In Washington, D.C., arsonists firebomb Korean stores. (At least 11 such incidents have occurred in the past two years.) And in a play area at the San Francisco zoo, a tiny voice tells three-year-old Jay Wakabayashi, a fourth-generation American, "This sandbox is for white kids only."

Bigotry also has been seen in business circles. While some blue-collar workers attack Asian immigrants in their neighborhoods, corporate executives have used racial slurs in their fight against Asian penetration of their markets.

"What is going on reflects how powerful the economic resurgence is in Asia," says Ezra Vogel, the director of Harvard University's U.S.-Japan program. "At local bars, people are talking about it, and there's one kind of expression. In board rooms, it has another kind of expression. The feelings of competition are very powerful and very deep." Adds Robert Matsui, a Democratic congressman from California, "There is latent anti-Asian sentiment in this country. The trade imbalance is merely the trigger."

Having It Easier

Some say Asians generally have it easier in America than blacks and Hispanics do, and certainly no worse. And awareness of prejudice directed at Asians is leading to some changes. Both lawmakers and judges have become tougher on ethnic "hate" crimes, and even Hollywood has been cutting blatantly anti-Asian scenes from motion pictures.

Still, Asian Americans say, verbal and physical attacks generally are getting worse. "It's very sinister. . . . You're not even a second-class citizen, you're a foreigner," says Doris Koo, the executive director of Asian Americans for Equality.

The racism recently directed at Asians in the U.S. is hardly unprecedented. An 1870s economic depression led to the 1882 Exclusion Act, which prohibited immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years, and Japanese-Americans were interned in camps during World War II. But animosity subsided in the postwar period only to become resurgent in recent years, according to Gene N. Levine, a sociologist at the University of California at Los Angeles. The latest wave began in the late 1970s, when Asian companies—particularly Japanese—started to edge out American ones and large numbers of Southeast Asian refugees entered the U.S. in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

Statistical Evidence

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, in a report this year, concluded that violence against Asians is a national problem. The Justice Department reports a 62% increase in anti-Asian incidents in 1985 over 1984. In Los Angeles County, Asians have been the target of 50% of racial incidents this year, compared with 15% in 1985, according to the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. Anti-Asian incidents now account for 29% of racial crimes in Boston, up from just 2% five years ago, according to the Boston Police Department, which has a special unit to deal with racial crimes.

"Violence against Asians in this region and throughout the country is the fastest-growing area of discrimination," says Martin A. Walsh, a Justice Department official in Boston. Though part of the increase may be the result of better reporting, he says, some racially motivated crimes aren't classified as such and thus go uncounted.

Some Asians partly blame inflamma-

Asia Bashing: Racism Directed at Some Orientals Increases in Neighborhoods and Executive Suites

Continued From First Page

tory rhetoric by American business leaders for the street violence.

Lee A. Iacocca, the chairman of Chrysler Corp., has compared the Japanese economic threat to the Soviet military threat. "It's not Russia that's laying waste to my business . . . it's Japan," he told a group of House Democrats last year. While the U.S. aims missiles at the Soviets in "the front yard," he said, "our friend is taking over the back yard."

Last January, Michael Smith, a deputy U.S. trade representative, referred to the Japanese as "Nippers" in an on-the-record discussion with reporters. His office, asked about the remark, says that "Ambassador Smith does not recollect using the term" but that, nevertheless, he "deeply regrets any offense." And Roger B. Smith, the chairman of General Motors Corp., told Fortune magazine in an August issue that his goal was to "beat the hell out of the Japs" in the auto industry. Mr. Smith "really kind of got carried away," says a GM spokesman. But, adds the spokesman, auto executives do use the word "Jap" among themselves, though "not with any intent."

Invoking Pearl Harbor

Some businessmen go beyond words. Last November, Henry C. Grover bought ads in Texas newspapers to sell bumper stickers with the legend "Remember Pearl Harbor, Save American Jobs." Asked whether this inflames anti-Asian passions, Mr. Grover, who has sold several thousand of the bumper stickers, snaps, "Nonsense. The Japanese have never forgiven us for whipping them in World War II. They're evening the score by destroying American industry."

Other firms use anti-Asian sentiment to appeal to customers. Russell Harrington

Cutlery Inc. of Southbridge, Mass., stamps on its butcher-knife blades dates of World War II battles with Japan, including the first air strike on Tokyo. "It's a way of identifying that we're fighting enemies," says Edmond A. Neal, the company's chief executive. He, too, denies that he is fostering racism. "In business competition, you fight for your market. There's nothing vicious or vituperative about that," he adds.

Some corporations, on the other hand, are sensitive to anti-Asian slurs and oppose them. At a strategy meeting last year at Intel Corp., a salesman showed a cartoon of World War II bombers with a caption that read: "Beat the Japs." Andrew Grove, the president of the semiconductor company, ordered the slide destroyed. "We're locked in a bitter competition with Japanese manufacturers," says Mr. Grove. "But I said, 'Hey, that's tasteless. They're Japanese. Call them Japanese.' Besides, we aren't fighting World War II."

The Chicago Tribune quit using "Jap." as an abbreviation in its syndicated crossword puzzle after readers complained last summer. And, similarly, some movie producers have become more sensitive.

Louis Malle's film "Alamo Bay" won an award from an Asian-American actors' group for its sensitive portrayal of Vietnamese fishermen harassed by Texans threatened by the competition. And Universal Studios Inc. recently edited the videotape version of its comedy "Sixteen Candles" after objections were raised about the movie.

The studios "would have a lot of second thoughts about using 'nigger' in a script. But using 'chink' or 'Chinamen,' they just totally miss that," says Stewart Kwoh, the executive director of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, which negotiated

cuts with Universal. Although two references to "Chinamen" were kept in, certain scenes were deleted from the videotape.

Consciousness Raising

"The Asian community is becoming better organized, more aware, more vocal," says Ruben Estrada, a Universal official. "Now, if we make a film where we think there's going to be a problem, we'll call [a community group] and say, 'What do you think?'"

But despite such new sensitivity in the movie business, there are few other signs, particularly at the American grass roots, that things are getting better. Sanyo Manufacturing Corp. learned as much when it bought a struggling television and microwave factory in Forrest City, Ark. It pleased job-hungry workers by tripling the work force to 1,200. But when workers staged a 21-day strike over wages and benefits last October, the shaky truce quickly crumbled. Strikers brandished signs that said: "Japs go home" and "Remember Pearl Harbor."

With more and more immigrants taking more and more jobs, such tensions are spilling over into the neighborhoods. Asians now are the biggest single group of legal immigrants to the U.S. Last year, they accounted for nearly half of immigration, up from one-third a decade ago. Like generations of poor European immigrants before, the newly arrived Asians tend to work hard and cluster together. In Rhode Island's Providence County, for instance, officials estimate that one in 30 residents is Southeast Asian.

Asians' high visibility and numbers sometimes provoke resentment—and worse. On the West Coast, angry American fishermen fired shots at a Vietnamese boat last year. "They [the Vietnamese] fish all day long," says Chieu Pham, the executive

escape, the refugees arrived expecting to find the freedom and justice that they believed were enjoyed by all in America. Instead, it is America's ugliest face that has been presented to them.

The Revere fire is still under investigation. But constant friction between Cambodian and white residents in the neighborhood has led officials to think the fire was set.

It would be the worst cruelty if it turns out that someone left his own Christmas celebra-

has given thugs the idea that they can victimize racial minorities.

Discrimination is not the only reason to allow the responsibility of every day. It is a purposeful choice. It is a choice to be made. It is a choice to be made. It is a choice to be made.

The fire was not an accident, but a unit of stand against bigotry by people in communities can make a difference.

director of the Vietnamese Fishermen Association of America in Oakland, Calif. "They don't go in for a beer. They don't go in to watch football. That makes other people mad." Wallace Warfield, the Justice Department's acting director of community relations in Washington, says Asians own more shrimping boats on the Gulf Coast than whites do. "The irony is the Asians outworked . . . the Americans," he adds.

Harlem Boycott

The conflict isn't just with whites. In Harlem, in New York City, blacks last year boycotted several Korean stores, charging that shopkeepers were rude and didn't hire blacks. And in Los Angeles, there are more and more disputes between Hispanics and Asians, says Fred Fujioka, a criminal lawyer with the firm Gomez & Fujioka. "The poor," says Mr. Fujioka, "are scrambling over the same scarce resources."

In Revere, Mass., Robert Gaber, a neighbor of Sun Mam's, disapproves of the rock-throwing youths. But, he says, "Immigrants used to come from countries nearly as civilized as the U.S. These people come from jungle communities." His street, he complains, "looks like a refugee camp." Others believe the Asian immigrants win government aid at the expense of white have-nots. Catherine Penn, a former Revere city councilor, says refugees enjoy special privileges, including drivers' licences obtained without demonstrating fluency in English. (That isn't a requirement.) And she adds, her voice lowered, "The rumor, strictly a rumor, is that they eat dogs."

In fact, because many of these newest immigrants take two and sometimes three jobs, they are soon off welfare. The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement in Washington considers welfare merely a "transitional" phase for Southeast Asian refugees.

Savuth Sath, 34, has two jobs that make his workweek 70 to 80 hours long. He also finds time to study for a real-estate licensing exam. Last February, the Cambodian

bought a two-family house in Lynn, Mass. Now, five years after he arrived in this country from a refugee camp, he is planning to buy a second property.

"For the American poor, it doesn't take too much hot weather [before] people are sitting around, drinking beer and feeling sorry for themselves," says Jerome Winegar, the headmaster of South Boston High School, which, as a result of busing, is 13% Asian in a neighborhood that is 97% white. "The next thing, they're over kicking the windows out of the new Pontiac."

Reducing Crimes

Authorities are looking for ways to reduce ethnic crimes. In part because of violence against Asians, at least 14 states have passed laws dealing with racial offenses. And Rep. Norman Y. Mineta is co-sponsoring a bill that would require the Justice Department to compile statistics on "ethnic-hate" crimes.

Courts also are cracking down. In 1982, two laid-off Detroit auto workers convicted of fatally clubbing Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American, originally were sentenced to three years' probation and fined \$3,780 each. After protests over the light penalty, one of the men was later convicted of violating the victim's civil rights and was sentenced to 25 years in prison. That conviction was overturned on appeal, and the case is to be retried. Last June, Scott Arsenault, the electrician who killed Bun Vong, was sentenced to seven to 12 years in prison.

Nonetheless, tougher sentencing hasn't yet reduced violence against Asians. In Revere, youths still menace Sun Mam, Bun Vong's friend. He can do little but try to ignore them as he drives that one block to work. "I try to close my eyes. I try to close my ears. Because this is my second country," he says. "I already lost my first country to the Communists."

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Uniting against bigotry

A suspicious fire on Christmas Eve in Revere left 22 Cambodian refugees homeless and Christmasless. The same night four Vietnamese men were beaten in a restaurant parking lot in Stoughton.

Where are the usual expressions of public indignation? More important, where is the show of unity and support that could demonstrate that these communities will not tolerate racial violence and bigotry?

Indochinese refugees have had a cold welcome in Greater Boston. They are the victims of racial insults, beatings and more subtle forms of discrimination. In America they have faced some of the same abuses that they fled their own countries to escape.

After suffering more hardship in refugee camps, the refugees arrived expecting to find the freedom and justice that they believed were enjoyed by all in America. Instead, it is America's ugliest face that has been presented to them.

The Revere fire is still under investigation. But constant friction between Cambodian and white residents in the neighborhood has led officials to think the fire was set.

It would be the worst cruelty if it turns out that someone left his own Christmas celebra-

tion in order to deprive others of their holiday. What is certain is that the building was looted after the fire.

In Stoughton, three young white men have been charged in the beating of four Vietnamese waiters who were leaving work at the Mandarin House restaurant. The police say the attack was unprovoked.

Violence against Indochinese refugees continues without the outcry that would be raised if another minority population were forced to live in fear. Perhaps it does not seem so much like bigotry if discrimination is not based on something as obvious as skin color.

Or perhaps it is because many Indochinese speak different languages. Or maybe the Reagan administration's hostility to civil rights has given thugs the idea that they can victimize racial minorities at will.

Discrimination against any group for any reason is abhorrent; and it is the responsibility of every decent, just citizen to actively oppose mindless violence. If Indochinese are allowed to be victimized today, it will be another group tomorrow.

The police can do only so much, but a united stand against bigotry by people in communities can make a difference.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 1987



Revere Mayor George V. Colella speaks at rally yesterday. At right is Ratha Yem, one of the organizers of the demonstration.

300 march in Revere against violence toward Cambodians

By Doris Sue Wong
Globe Staff

REVERE — Cambodian leaders made a plea for peace and friendship yesterday from the steps of a charred wood-frame house they say is the latest evidence of a pattern of harassment and violence directed against members of the Cambodian community here.

"We want to be good neighbors and to share in the life of the Revere community," said Kowith Kvet, a member of the week-old Coalition on Racial Violence against Cambodian-Americans in Revere. "We will not tolerate acts of violence against us."

Police estimated 300 people, Asian, black and white, took part in a two-hour demonstration organized by the coalition to denounce acts of bigotry.

Bearing placards that read, "No more racist ar-

son" and "Prejudice hurts," the men, women and children trudged through the morning snowstorm from City Hall to the burned house at 50-52 Shirley Ave., where they tacked up a red, white and blue banner with the message, "We want peace in our neighborhood."

Twenty-two Cambodian refugees were left homeless on Christmas Eve when a blaze, which fire investigators say was deliberately set, destroyed the two-story house on Shirley Avenue. It was the second suspicious house fire in two years in the neighborhood, which is home to most of Revere's estimated 2,000 Cambodian refugees. A July 1985 blaze left three dozen Cambodians homeless.

The house fires, however, were only two among a series of problems Cambodian refugees have encoun-

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METRO/REGION

300 march in Revere to protest acts of violence against Cambodians

■ REVERE

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tered since the early 1980s when they began resettling in large numbers in this city, according to organizers of the demonstration.

"We have a lot of discrimination, assaults, cars burned down, broken windshields and houses burned down," Samath Chap said in an interview.

Samath Chap, a three-year resident of Revere, later told the demonstrators, "I fled my country because of the violence. I hoped to find peace here."

But Samath Chap did not find tranquility. He was one of three Cambodians attacked outside their home at 9 Walnut Place in 1985. Last year Robert Lee Stephens, a former Revere resident, threatened retaliation when he was convicted of the attack and sentenced to up to 10 years in prison on assault and civil rights charges.

After the court sentencing, a fire broke out in his home, Samath Chap said. He said fire officials have determined the fire was accidental, but he remains convinced it was not. He added that harassment and violence are not only directed at Cambodians in Revere, but other Southeast Asian refugees living in Chelsea, Lowell and Boston.

"We want peace and we want to be left alone," Samath Chap said. "We want to be good friends.

"We are doing this because we need help. People do not understand why we came here and we get a lot of trouble. We don't want another fire and have people get killed."

The coalition is asking the city to establish a police department unit to investigate civil rights violations and racially motivated crimes and a training program for police and other public officials about attitudes and stereotypes the public holds about the Cambodian community.

In addition, the coalition wants the Revere Fire Department to adopt arson prevention measures and the Revere Housing Authority to develop emergency response procedures for fire victims and to help those displaced by the Christmas Eve fire find new homes.

Vowing to assist the Cambodian community in its "quest for peace, harmony and love," Mayor George V. Colella said, "We will not tolerate what has happened over the past couple weeks.

"We empathize with your plight. We will work together with you to make sure your life is a better life, not only in this country but in the city of Revere."

Secretary of Public Safety Charles Barry promised that the state fire marshal's office and State Police would work with local officials "to make sure there is a vigorous investigation and a vigorous prosecution and to send

out a strong message incidents such as [the Christmas Eve arson] will not be tolerated."

Ratha Yem, a former community activist and a member of the state office of public safety, blamed the troubles faced by the Cambodian community on a "handful of perpetrators" and urged others in the city to work jointly to achieve racial harmony.

Rally organizer Sunna Som said that since he resettled in Revere in 1982, "I have heard many times 'Cambodian, go home.' It is depressing to me. We are hungry to seek peace in our neighborhood."

William Waxman, a member of the governor's advisory council on refugees and co-principal of the nearby Garfield Elementary School, said, "I'm worried for the children."

At the Garfield, there is no racial disharmony among Cambodian, Spanish, Chinese and white students because teachers and administrators will not tolerate it, he said.

"The children can get along well if only the adults can learn to," Waxman said, directing his comments at parents. "Children can learn a better lesson than this kind of bigotry and hatred.

"Please think when you are home and around the dinner table and you talk about a child's name or color, what you're doing is festering a cancer in your own child."

Appendix D

Asian American Resource Workshop organizational structure
September 1, 1986 to September 30, 1987

AARW Staff

Administrative Director: Carlton Sagara
Program Director: Shirley Mark Yuen
Civil Rights Project Director: Elaine Song
Office Manager: Har Yee Wong

AARW Steering Committee

Chair: Kevin Fong
Margaret Chin
Robert Chu
Frank Mark
Jeffrey Moy
Suzanne Pan
Jason Tong

The Steering Committee was the governing and policymaking body of the AARW. It reviewed and approved this report prior to publication.

AARW Board of Directors

Chair: Vivian Lee
George Cha
Gloria Chun
Frederick Dow
Vic Lai
Albert Lau
Tunney Lee
Ramsay Liem
Michael Liu
Steve Ning
David Sakura
Liz Ahn Toupin

The Board of Directors served in an advisory capacity to the Steering Committee and Staff.

