

# AALDEF: 35 YEARS OF JUSTICE IN ACTION

## The 1970s

1974



- The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund is formed at Asian American conference in New York City.
- Calls for hiring of Chinese American construction workers at Confucius Plaza in Manhattan's Chinatown.
- Mounts campaign to stop the deportation of Filipino doctors, recruited to fill shortage of medical personnel in United States.

1975

- Represents Chinese Americans arrested in protest against police brutality in Manhattan's Chinatown; organizes rally to support innocent bystander Peter Yew, who was beaten by police after complaining about their mishandling of a minor traffic incident.



1976

- Opens its first office at 43 Canal Street in Manhattan's Chinatown.



1977

- Wins federal ruling to establish rights of immigrant fathers to obtain permanent residency for illegitimate children from People's Republic of China.

1978

- Begins free legal advice clinics at Hamilton-Madison House, Korean Senior Citizens Society and other community agencies.



1979

- Intervenes on behalf of Asian American Law Students Association in *Doherty v. Rutgers Law School*, defending the inclusion of Asian Americans in minority admissions programs in suit brought by rejected white law school applicant.
- Files *amicus* brief in U.S. Supreme Court in *Fullilove v. Kreps*, supporting the public works set-aside provision for minority businesses, including Asian American enterprises.

## The 1980s

1980

- Represents Silver Palace waiters fired for protesting against the employer who took their tips; assists in the formation of the first independent Chinatown restaurant workers' union.



1981

- Secures bilingual assistance for Chinese-speaking unemployment insurance claimants after negotiations with the New York State Department of Labor.
- *G.J. Eliza Realty, Inc. v. Gin Wing Mah*. AALDEF wins punitive damages for tenants at 84 Elizabeth Street in Manhattan's Chinatown after landlord fails to provide heat, hot water and other essential services for two years.

1982

- Joins national campaign to demand federal civil rights prosecution of the murderers of Vincent Chin, the Chinese American engineer beaten to death by two unemployed auto workers in Detroit.

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## The 1980s

- Files objections with Justice Department to NY redistricting plan that divided Manhattan's Chinatown between two state assembly districts.
- Speaks at NY Chinatown rally of 15,000 Chinese garment workers on strike for new union contract.
- Testifies in support of Japanese American redress before U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.



### 1983

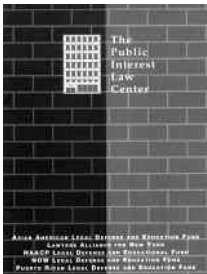
- Files *amicus* briefs in U.S. Supreme Court supporting the rights of undocumented immigrants to receive public education (*Plyler v. Doe*) and to organize under National Labor Relations Act (*Sure-Tan v. NLRB*).



- Organizes the first Chinatown housing fair in New York City.
- *Jin v. Board of Estimate*. Files *amicus* brief arguing that English-language notices of zoning changes violate due process rights of Chinese-speaking tenants; favorable decision later reversed on appeal.

### 1984

- Fred Korematsu makes first public appearance in New York City for AALDEF's 10th anniversary celebration at Lincoln Center, featuring the East Coast premiere of Steven Okazaki's film, *Unfinished Business*, about the Japanese American redress movement.
- AALDEF joins NAACP Legal Defense and



Educational Fund, Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund and Council of New York Law Associates to form Public Interest Law Center at 99 Hudson Street in Lower Manhattan.

### 1985

- Negotiates voluntary agreement with NYC Board of Elections to provide sample ballots in Chinese and hire interpreters at poll sites.
- North Star Fund presents AALDEF with Frederick Douglass Award for "outstanding contributions to the struggle for political, social and economic justice."

### 1986

- *Chinese Staff and Workers' Association v. City of New York*. AALDEF wins landmark New York Court of Appeals ruling requiring environmental review of new developments that may displace low-income tenants, small businesses; construction of high-rise Henry Street Tower is blocked.
- Participates in formation of Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence, which organizes the first educational forum in New York City on hate violence against Asian Americans.
- After Congress passes Immigration Reform and Control Act, AALDEF conducts community education campaign about new law penalizing the hiring of undocumented immigrants.

### 1987

- Testifies in Washington, D.C. before the House Subcommittee on Census and Population about the impact of the new immigration law upon the Census count of Asian Americans.



- Represents Dr. Kaushal Sharan, one of several South Asians attacked in Jersey City by hate group named "Dotbusters"; works for passage of hate crimes law in New Jersey and testifies before U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights on anti-Asian violence.

- *New York Times* photojournalist Dith Pran and redress advocate Michi Weglyn receive first AALDEF *Justice in Action* awards honoring outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to social justice and racial equality.

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## 1988

- Conducts first exit poll of Asian American voters in presidential election.



## 1989

- After Tiananmen Square massacre, AALDEF counsels hundreds of Chinese nationals about immigration law and visa extensions.
- Testifies before NYC Charter Revision Commission in support of expanded City Council.

## The 1990s

## 1990

- Protests casting of white British actor in lead Asian role in Broadway musical, *Miss Saigon*; works with NYC Human Rights Commission to organize hearings on discriminatory hiring practices of Broadway theater producers.



- *Wong v. City of New York*. Chinatown residents sue NYPD for breaking down apartment door and assault on 7-month pregnant woman; City settles federal lawsuit for \$90,000.
- Educates Asian American communities about the importance of participating in 1990 Census.

## 1991

- Works with Asian American Bar Association of NY and Lower East Siders for a Multiracial District to develop city and state redistricting plans that keep Asian and Latino communities together.
- Joins Asian Law Caucus and Asian Pacific American Legal Center to create NAPALC in Washington, DC.

## 1992

- AALDEF is the only Asian American group invited to testify before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee on expanding minority language assistance under the Voting Rights Act, affecting 200,000 Asian Americans nationwide.
- Files EEOC charges and organizes the Campaign for Economic Justice at Foley Square, challenging discriminatory hiring practices in the NY construction industry.

## 1993

- Golden Venture freighter runs aground in Far Rockaway, Queens; AALDEF represents Chinese immigrants seeking political asylum.
- *Ng v. City of New York*. Two Chinese American families sue NYPD for raid based on anonymous tip about “illegal aliens”; City settles suit for \$75,000.

## 1994



- Leads advocacy effort to secure first fully-translated Chinese-language voting machine ballots in New York City under the Voting Rights Act.
- Launches Asian American Citizenship Project in response to anti-immigrant sentiments; assists thousands of permanent residents to become U.S. citizens.
- *Chan v. City of New York*. Off-duty police officers pistol-whip Chinese American teenager, causing serious head injuries. AALDEF wins \$125,000 settlement for Chan and his three companions.

## 1995

- Represents family of Yong Xin Huang, a 16-year old Chinese American shot in the head by New York City police officers in Brooklyn; City pays \$400,000 to settle federal civil rights lawsuit.



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## The 1990s

- Demands public apology from U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato after he uses Japanese accent to mock Judge Lance Ito.

### 1996

- Wins consent decree in *Nhem v. Fall River Housing Authority* after racially-motivated killing of Cambodian resident, improving services and security for Massachusetts public housing tenants.
- Conducts exit poll of 3,264 Asian New Yorkers in the Presidential election; 39% are first-time voters.
- *Nguyen v. City of New York*. City settles police brutality case for \$65,000 after Vietnamese American student beaten in Chinatown mall.
- *Ashgar v. City of New York*. AALDEF sues NYPD for racial harassment and assault of Pakistani livery driver; City settles lawsuit for \$50,000.

### 1997



- *Chan v. Jing Fong*. Wins \$1.1 million settlement for immigrant workers at Chinatown's largest restaurant in two suits for back wages and tips filed by AALDEF and NY State Attorney General.

- *Lizardo v. Denny's, Inc.* Files civil rights action against Denny's restaurant in Syracuse, NY, where Asian American students were denied service and beaten up outside by white customers.
- Rev. Jesse Jackson joins AALDEF press conference in NYC to support White House nomination of Bill Lann Lee, the first Asian American named to Justice Department's top civil rights post.
- AALDEF executive director named to Mayor's Task Force on Police/Community Relations, formed in response to police torture of Abner Louima in Brooklyn police precinct.



### 1998

- Represents family of Rishi Maharaj, an Indo-Caribbean man brutally beaten in Queens by white men wielding baseball bats and shouting racial slurs.
- *Wang v. Hua Great Procetech*. AALDEF files federal lawsuit on behalf of Chinese immigrant garment workers, seeking to establish new legal theories to hold both the clothing manufacturer and factory owner liable for minimum wage and overtime pay; wins settlement of \$285,000.
- *Clinton v. Glavin*. AALDEF files *amicus* brief in U.S. Supreme Court in support of sampling in Census 2000.
- *In re Montefiore Family Health Center*. Files Title VI complaint against Bronx hospital after Vietnamese and Cambodian translators are eliminated; equal access to health care restored to over 8,600 individuals.



### 1999

- *Singh v. El Quijote Restaurant*. AALDEF sues restaurant under Title II of the Civil Rights Act for refusing to serve Sikh wearing turban; lawsuit settled for \$10,000 and "no headgear" rule changed to allowed religious garb.
- AALDEF files Title VI lawsuit against NY State Labor Department after it announces plans to close New York City offices with bilingual staff and institutes telephone claim system; settlement includes language assistance for Chinese-speaking unemployment claimants.
- *Rothe Development Corp. v. U.S. Department of Defense*. Files *amicus* brief in Texas federal court, supporting inclusion of Asian American small businesses in federal minority contracting programs.



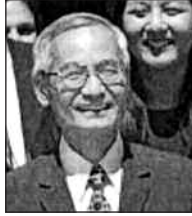
- Secures major Census policy change protecting confidentiality of undocumented immigrants.

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The 2000s

## 2000

- Organizes East Coast teach-in about the selective prosecution of nuclear scientist Wen Ho Lee, who was indicted for mishandling restricted data. A New Mexico federal judge releases Lee after nine months of solitary confinement, citing government misconduct.
- Conducts multilingual exit poll of over 5,000 Asian American voters in Presidential election.
- Represents four Asian American students at



Binghamton University who were attacked on campus by a trio of white wrestlers shouting racial slurs; calls for federal probe into state's prosecution of the assailants.

- Begum v. Saleh*. AALDEF wins settlement for Bangladeshi domestic worker who toiled in slave-like conditions for a Bahrain consulate official.

## 2001

- After Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, AALDEF represents South Asian, Arab and Muslim victims of hate violence and immigrant detainees held indefinitely without criminal charges; mounts major campaign to respond to ethnic and religious profiling and the post-9.11 anti-Asian backlash.



- AALDEF and National Employment Law Project publish *Rights Begin At Home: A Handbook for Domestic Workers*, the first legal rights handbook of its kind in the nation.

## 2002

- Moon v. Kwan*. AALDEF files federal lawsuit on behalf of Korean maintenance worker forced to work overtime without pay in midtown Manhattan hotel; after trial, judge awards Moon \$440,000 for back wages.
- Chen v. Street Beat Sportswear*. Federal judge rules that manufacturers are responsible for the wages and overtime pay owed to garment workers employed in its factories; employer settles case for \$285,000.
- AALDEF is first group to reach out to Bangladeshi residents of East New York after the brutal murder of journalist Mizanor Rahman; organizes Know Your Rights trainings to address growing tide of hate violence.
- Works with New York Voting Rights Consortium, a multiracial collaborative, to coordinate state and local NY redistricting plans and election reform advocacy; monitors Korean-language ballots and assistance in New York City.



- Works with Beyond Ground Zero network to organize major protests against failure of FEMA and other government agencies to provide disaster relief to Chinatown residents.



## 2003

- Provides legal assistance and representation to over 1,000 immigrants across the country affected by Special Registration, a post-9.11 policy requiring males from Muslim countries to register with immigration officials.



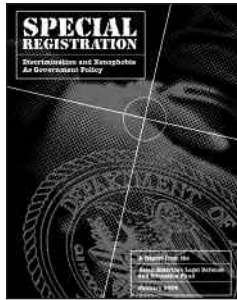
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## The 2000s

- Releases new report, *Asian Neighborhoods in New York City: Locating Boundaries and Common Interests*, a multi-ethnic Asian community survey of neighborhood concerns.
- *Liu v. Donna Karan International*. AALDEF represents Asian and Latino garment workers in federal lawsuit against clothing manufacturer and garment factory for unpaid overtime wages; federal judge rules that employer cannot demand workers' immigration status in discovery proceedings; DKI settles case.
- *Chung v. New Silver Palace*. Wins federal ruling upholding waiters' right to sue individual restaurant owners and managers who take tips or demand kickbacks. Some owners settle for \$489,000; AALDEF wins \$2.9 million judgment against other owners.
- *Grutter v. Bollinger*. Files *amicus* brief in U.S. Supreme Court, supporting consideration of race in Michigan Law School minority admissions program.

### 2004

- Releases new report, *Special Registration: Government Policy As Discrimination and Xenophobia*, documenting plight of working-class immigrants who were unfairly detained or deported.
- Wins deferred action for Malik Muhammad Akbar, a Pakistani immigrant with serious health problems, who faced deportation after complying with Special Registration.
- Testifies before U.S. House Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, criticizing EPA's failure to test air quality and clean up buildings affected by toxic dust from World Trade Center site.



- *Chatham Towers v. Bloomberg*. Court rules that New York Police Department should have prepared environmental impact statement studying post 9.11 security

zone around police headquarters and street closings that adversely affected Chinatown tenants represented by AALDEF.

### 2005

- Monitors Justice Department consent decree requiring Lafayette High School in Brooklyn to implement an anti-harassment policy after Pakistani and Chinese immigrant students are attacked.
- Wins \$175,000 settlement in back wages for Chinese and Latina garment workers from sportswear manufacturer Jenna Lane.
- Launches the Asian Anti-Trafficking Initiative, to provide legal representation to Asian women and girls trafficked to the U.S. as domestic servants, sex workers and restaurant employees.
- Represents Cambodian refugees facing deportation after change in immigration laws expands list of deportable crimes.



### 2006

- Testifies before U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in support of 25-year reauthorization of key provisions of the Voting Rights Act.
- Conducts multilingual exit poll of over 4,700 Asian American voters in 9 states for midterm elections.
- *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education and Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*. Files *amicus* brief in U.S. Supreme Court supporting use of race as a factor in voluntary school desegregation plans.
- *Oung v. Lowell School Committee*. Wins reinstatement for Cambodian and Puerto Rican teachers in Lowell, MA who were fired after taking a flawed English fluency test required after a state English-only education initiative is passed.
- As part of Beyond Ground Zero Network, establish the first health clinic at Bellevue Hospital to track and treat Chinatown and Lower East Side residents with 9.11-related health problems.



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The 2000s



- Joins national and local protests against punitive immigration enforcement bills proposed in Congress.

workers, who were physically abused by a Long Island couple found guilty of slavery and trafficking.



## 2007

- *Mamun v. Boulud*. Bangladeshi and Latino workers sue celebrity chef Daniel Boulud and his Manhattan restaurant, Daniel, for failing to promote them to higher-paying positions while advancing less-skilled white workers. AALDEF wins settlement that includes pay raises and a non-discriminatory promotions policy monitored by the NYS Attorney General's office.
- *Chinatown Voter Education Alliance v. Ravitz*. In response to AALDEF's lawsuit under the Voting Rights Act, New York City Board of Elections agrees to update and improve its Chinese- and Korean-language assistance programs.
- Manhattan federal jury awards \$182,000 to Susan Kim, a Korean immigrant nail salon worker who was fired after demanding regular breaks; campaign begins to reform wage and hour practices and hazardous working conditions in nail salons in NYC.
- Launches New Jersey-Asian American Legal Project, which provides in-language legal assistance on workers' rights and immigrant rights to NJ's fast-growing Asian population; AALDEF opens office in Newark.



- *Ke v. Saigon Grill*. After trial, federal court awards \$4.6 million in back wages and damages to 36 Chinese immigrant take-out delivery workers at two Manhattan restaurants.
- *David v. Signal*. Represents 300 Indian H2-B shipyard workers in New Orleans federal court with claims against their former employer of human trafficking, involuntary servitude, discrimination, and civil RICO violations.
- Organizes first-ever National Asian American Education Advocates Summit to discuss ways to improve public education.



## 2008

- *Baoanan v. Baja*. Secures T visa for Filipina immigrant worker trafficked to the U.S. by former ambassador and sues for back wages after being forced to serve as a domestic worker.
- *Samirah v. Sabhnani*. Files federal lawsuit for back wages owed to two Indonesian domestic



- Conducts the nation's largest multilingual exit poll of 16,665 Asian American voters in 11 states and Washington, DC; poll shows overwhelming Asian American support for President Barack Obama.
- Releases new report, *Left in the Margins: Asian Americans and the No Child Left Behind Act*.
- Launches new project on affordable housing and equitable development in Asian American communities.

