

BACKGROUND

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) firmly believes that youth have a fundamental role in creating positive change for the Asian Pacific American community. Established in 2004, **Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP)**, CACF's youth leadership program, aims to support the future generation of leaders by providing youth with the opportunity to build their leadership and advocacy skills. ASAP Youth Leaders engage in policy advocacy through an education reform campaign and participate in activities that improve their literacy skills, civic participation, and college eligibility. ASAP Youth Leaders work to improve their school and communities by raising awareness and providing recommendations on educational issues that affect Asian Pacific American students in New York City. ASAP encourages youth to be advocates for themselves and leaders in their communities.

ASAP YOUTH LEADERS: 2016-2017 Cohort

The 2016-2017 school year marks the thirteenth cohort of Youth Leaders in ASAP. ASAP's 21 Youth Leaders attend New York City public high schools and represent the diversity of New York City's Asian Pacific American student population. They live in the neighborhoods of and attend the schools in Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx. They range in age from 15-19, and are ethnically diverse and identify as Chinese, Tibetan, Cambodian, Malaysian, Vietnamese, Bangladeshi, Taiwanese, Korean, Indo-Caribbean, Indian, and Middle Eastern. 81% of them qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, and 98% of them are multilingual. 48% are immigrants from outside the US.



ASAP Youth Leader at a legislative meeting with Steven Miller, the legislative director for Councilmember Van Bramer.

ASAP MISSION STATEMENT

"As youth advocates, we have all experienced and seen issues in our community that need to be addressed. We experience discrimination and racism, and we are often overlooked because of the model minority myth. By advocating for these issues, we can give our community a voice and make justice a reality for the Asian Pacific American community. We are people of color who have limited power. We will work in coalitions with other communities of color so we can turn a minority voice into a majority and create change. We are young but that doesn't mean we can't be leaders; it just means we have more time to learn and enforce change."

ETHNIC STUDIES CAMPAIGN AND STUDENT NEEDS

During the 2015-2016 academic year, ASAP Youth Leaders developed an ethnic studies campaign. Through their research, ASAP has found that influential figures and important historical events related to the Asian American community are often underrepresented in public school curriculum. As all students must take history and social studies courses in school, the lack of representation may convey a sense of devaluation of Asian Pacific American contributions to social change. This lack also perpetuates the model minority myth, which is the idea that all Asian Pacific American youth are high achieving, smart and focused only on academics. Thus, they are often overlooked for services for their unique needs despite the fact that only 50% are considered prepared for college and a career after graduating high school. The current campaign is focusing on establishing January 30th as Fred Korematsu Day in order to highlight his role as an activist for Asian Pacific American civil rights. Through the ethnic studies campaign, ASAP hopes to raise awareness of influential Asian Pacific American figures and their accomplishments. By doing so, they also hope to spotlight needs of the Asian Pacific American student community, and advocate for changes that will meet these needs.

For more information, please contact Vanessa Leung, at (212) 809-4675 x 101 or vleung@cacf.org

Asian American Student Advocacy Project is made possible with the generous support of:
City Council Members Margaret Chin, Daniel Dromm, Peter Koo, Karen Koslowitz, and Paul Vallone, and Partnership for After School Education.