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feature

Clearing the Smoke: Second Hand Smoke and Social Justice in Low Income Housing Communities

by Lisa Fu

This is the first in a series of articles highlighting tobacco as a social justice issue for AAPI communities.

In San Francisco Chinatown, low-income residents are frequently exposed to second hand smoke while living in housing units called single resident occupancy (SRO) hotels. SROs have living spaces that average 10 feet by 10 feet and up to 20 people share one kitchen and bathroom. Over half of the population of Chinatown live in SROs, with an average of four people living there, and 85% being non-English speaking immigrants of color. The combination of dense living space, shared utilities, and poor maintenance by building owners presents notoriously unhealthy and un-safe living conditions. Many frequent complaints by the residents include second hand smoke, insect and rodent infestation, peeling paint, lack of heat, lack of a functioning stove, and leaky or broken toilets.

For tenants that include families and elders, sharing such close living quarters greatly increases the dangers of exposure to tobacco use. Second hand smoke is related to 38,000 deaths in the United



Posting of non-smoking signs in shared bathrooms and other public areas successfully deter smoking.

States and over 1 million illnesses in children. It also contains 69 identified chemicals that cause cancer and is connected to the development of respiratory and ear/eye problems among children. Enforcement of non-smoking building policies would not only decrease second-hand smoke exposure, it would also decrease tobacco consumption and increase smoking cessation among the smokers themselves.

Secondhand smoke exposure among low-income tenants is presumably not

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unique to AAPIs living only in San Francisco. Given the research showing the link between tobacco use and socioeconomic factors such as level of education and household poverty, smoking may be commonly found in low-income housing areas around the country in AAPI communities. In a report published by UCLA, seventeen low-income AAPI neighborhoods across the country were studied, in diverse communities spanning from Molokai'i to New York City. Socioeconomic similarities that were identified among the neighborhoods include: most residents were linguistically isolated immigrants with less than a high school education; poverty rates were at least three times higher than the national average; and subsidized housing was extremely limited.

Historically, organizing efforts by low-income housing tenants tended to overlook secondhand smoke in favor of other issues including lack of housing space, living conditions, and affordability. In San Francisco, secondhand smoke exposure became a priority after community organizers received several complaints from tenants. "A few years ago we didn't think about combining the two issues of tobacco and low-income housing until some of our members complained about the cigarette smoke. They couldn't take it," said Jessie Yu, Community Organizer at Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), a grassroots Chinese-American rights organization working with these communities in San Francisco. "We feel strong especially since the elderly and disabled have to stay in their room most of the day and some even 24 hours a day. What can they

"We didn't think about combining the two issues of tobacco and low-income housing until some of our members complained about the cigarette smoke. They couldn't take it..."

— Jessie Yu, Community Organizer

do?" Cigarette smoke from one room would easily travel and drift into a whole building floor, through light fixtures, ceiling spaces, and doorways. Although smoking inside common areas is illegal, 79% of residents "occasionally" or "frequently" smelled cigarette smoke in these areas.

Encouraging participation among Chinatown tenants was challenging, despite an established relationship with CPA and their 30-year history of empowering the community. "Tenants exposed to second hand smoke do not want to complain because they don't want to cause trouble with their neighbors," said Yu. Organizers at Chinese Power Against Tobacco (CPAT), a project at CPA, decided to collaborate with building leaders from CPA's Housing Justice Campaign by connecting the issue of smoking with building fire prevention. This has been a successful strategy to educate and gather support from the tenants.

CPAT community organizers and building leaders educated and worked with the Chinatown

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CPA organizers hold a press conference to kick off their smoke-free SRO campaign



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MISSION

To prevent tobacco use among the AAPI community through five priority areas: network development, capacity-building, education, advocacy and leadership development.

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director's note

As we enter 2004, there is good news and bad news as it relates to tobacco. The bad news is that tobacco control will continue to face funding challenges. It's unclear in the future what will be the commitment of government and foundation funding for tobacco control particularly to communities of color and other priority populations. On the statewide level, we face additional challenges in commitment to tobacco control — in California, for example, where we now have a governor that has appeared repeatedly on the cover of Cigar Aficionado.

The good news is that the APPEAL network and movement continues to grow. A special thanks to Karen Rezai and APPEAL staff for keeping us moving forward during my 6-month sabbatical. This coming year will be an exciting one for APPEAL as we celebrate our 10th Anniversary and a decade of tobacco control activism and community development. We will convene four leadership summits in 2004 including the Cross Cultural Leadership Institute in Washington State, the Guam Leadership Summit, the APPEAL Youth Leadership Summit, and the APPEAL Policy Leadership Summit.

Our efforts to expand our capacity building work on tobacco with AAPI communities across the country have been boosted by the convening of community advocates at a recent Southeast Regional meeting in Orlando, Florida. With the 2000 U.S. Census documenting growth in the AAPI population throughout many states, we also hope to visit new regions and strengthen continuing regional partnerships.

As we look at the challenges facing tobacco control in the next year, we will need to become more grounded in our community efforts and more responsive to the tobacco industry tactics. APPEAL has begun the effort to reground ourselves by bringing Lisa Fu back to APPEAL as our Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator to help mobilize local AAPI communities on tobacco and against the tobacco industry. In the coming year, we will also be hiring a community organizer and launching an initiative to provide resources to community and national organizations on tobacco and social justice.

While focusing on the local community level, we also recognize the need to address global tobacco issues. Even though the first global treaty on tobacco control has been developed and countries have begun the process of ratifying, the threat of tobacco in Asia, the Pacific and other regions around the world looms large. There are few places where tobacco has not made an impact. In my personal travels, I've even witnessed tobacco smoking in the thinnest air of the Himalayas at 16,000 feet and in the isolated regions of Patagonia in South America. We need to partner with Asia and the Pacific to assist each other with tobacco control strategies and continue to voice our concerns about the devastating role of U.S. (and other) tobacco companies worldwide.

We hope you will participate in helping to move the tobacco control and social justice agenda forward in the AAPI community and other communities of color. We wish you continued success in your tobacco control work in 2004 and beyond. Health and happiness to you and your families! ■



mini-grant highlights

Show Me the Money: APPEAL Mini-grant Program Supports Local Tobacco Control Efforts

by Rheena Yangson

Building awareness of tobacco control issues in the AAPI community is only the first step towards looking at tobacco as a social justice issue. Through our work with AAPI communities across the U.S. and the Pacific Islands, APPEAL has identified resources such as funding and technical assistance and training as major factors in bridging awareness and action.

Finding funding in the current political climate has been exceptionally challenging for community-based organizations that are just beginning to address tobacco control issues among AAPI communities. In response to the readiness of these communities to address local tobacco control issues and their need for resources and technical assistance, APPEAL launched a mini-grant program in three states with growing AAPI populations and where participation by the AAPI community in the larger tobacco control movement was limited: Florida, Texas, and Utah.

The mini-grant program was a success in building grassroots tobacco control efforts in AAPI communities. Their projects are just the beginning of what APPEAL hopes to be an ongoing effort for local AAPI groups to mobilize against tobacco. APPEAL is very fortunate to have such committed partners working at the local level. We are proud of the work they are doing and hope to continue building stronger collaborative relationships. Most importantly, APPEAL hopes that the mini-grant projects will encourage other community groups in their regions to become involved in the tobacco control movement.

| FLORIDA |

National Alliance to Nurture the Aged and Youth (NANAY), Inc. *North Miami, FL*

NANAY created a needs assessment survey to measure youth tobacco initiation or use, adult tobacco use, and rate of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke among Chinese and Filipino American communities in South Florida. Other activities included distributing health information regarding tobacco use at community events such as the Philippine Independence Day Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival.

Council For Filipino American Organizations of Central Florida (CFAO), *Celebration, FL*

CFAO organized a health fair where community members could learn about the hazards of tobacco use and receive free health screenings. Other activities included conducting monthly educational workshops regarding the hazards of tobacco use for the Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Indian communities in central Florida.

Philippine American Society (PAS), Inc., *West Palm Beach, FL*

PAS, Inc. used surveys to capture the knowledge/attitudes/beliefs of Filipino women and girls regarding tobacco use. Other activities for this project included conducting a health education workshop addressing tobacco use and cardiovascular disease, distributing tobacco information at

community events, and outreaching to the Asian Chambers of Commerce to educate them on tobacco issues affecting the community.

Santo Nino Devotion of Palm Beach Lake Worth, FL

This group recruited and trained Filipino American youth to design a tobacco control program. Some of the activities included training youth to use PowerPoint, promoting smoke-free church activities/events, and distributing health education materials regarding tobacco use at a faith based conference for youth in Maryland.



Youth from the Santo Nino Devotion of Palm Beach at a smoke-free basketball tournament.

The Chinese School of CAACE, Inc. Orlando, FL

The school used the study of Chinese language and culture to educate Chinese American youth about the negative health effects of smoking. Some of their activities included translating tobacco use educational materials from English to Cantonese, the development of a website with facts about the hazards of tobacco use, and holding anti-tobacco essay contests.

www.orlandochineseschool.org

Nritya India Dance Academy Altamonte Springs, FL

The dance academy worked with the South Asian community to teach them about the negative health effects



Dancers from the Nritya India Dance Academy

of tobacco use, specifically bidis and paan. Their activities included incorporating tobacco use education with traditional Indian dance, educating Indian merchants on the health hazards of tobacco use, and encouraging Indian restaurant owners to serve paan without tobacco.

Philippine Nurses Association of Central Florida, Inc., Lake Buena Vista, FL

This group surveyed Filipino American youth about their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding tobacco and tobacco use. Other activities included providing educational workshops regarding tobacco use and disseminating health information at cultural events.

| UTAH |

Pacific Islander Health Network (PIHN), Lehi, Utah

PIHN trained outreach staff and Pacific Islander youth to conduct outreach and educational tobacco presentations to community members (faith-based organizations, elementary and high schools, and student clubs on college campuses). Other activities included conducting a tobacco use awareness campaign over a Pacific Islander radio station, and outreaching to faith-based organizations for the purpose of addressing tobacco issues in the Pacific Islander community.

Asian Association of Utah Salt Lake City, Utah

The project's goal was to educate Lao youth and adults on the hazards of tobacco use and begin dialogue with the community regarding tobacco use cessation. They also worked to reduce the exposure of Lao families to second-hand smoke. Some of the activities included implementing outreach and tobacco use education activities at worksites and cultural meetings.

| TEXAS |

Youth Awareness Mentoring Outreach (YAMO) Tobacco Prevention Project Houston, TX

YAMO worked to educate Vietnamese youth and adults about the dangers of tobacco use and train local leaders to become tobacco control advocates. Their activities included organizing a health fair to educate the community on the health effects of tobacco use and conducting outreach in the community.

Vietnamese Culture and Science Association, Houston, TX

In collaboration with local Vietnamese radio stations, newspapers, and magazines, this group created a tobacco use prevention media campaign for the Houston Vietnamese community. Other activities included campaigning for smoke-free dining nights at local Vietnamese restaurants and conducting a panel talk show at a local Vietnamese radio station. ■

outreach

Participants 'Create Visions for Partnerships' at APPEAL Southeast Regional Meeting

by Duong-Chi Do



APPEAL Regional Partners explain their projects and share experiences with meeting participants.

In an effort to stimulate action towards developing a regional identity for AAPI organizations working on tobacco control in the southeast, APPEAL brought together over 40 adult and youth community leaders from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina on September 25th and 26th in Orlando, Florida for the "Creating a Vision for Partnerships Southeast Regional Meeting."

Special guests at the meeting included representatives from

APPEAL's Regional Partner organizations in California, Hawai'i, New York, Ohio and Washington. Meeting participants shared experiences and received advice on mobilizing AAPI communities around tobacco control issues. In addition to topic specific networking time on youth, women, research and data, and cessation, participants attended skills building workshops on cultural competency, coalition building, fundraising/grant writing and evaluation.

The participants showed great enthusiasm for the unique opportunities that the southeast regional meeting afforded. During breakout sessions, they generated ideas on how to create opportunities for partnership, collaboration, and the sharing of resources. Everyone agreed that in the near future, a coalition should be established to connect the efforts of the various organizations in the southeastern region of the U.S.

The meeting was a natural extension of the work that Dr. Josephine Mendoza Kershaw, Director of the Minority Resource Development Center at Florida A&M University, has been doing in the last three years to mobilize AAPIs in Florida around tobacco issues. Dr. Kershaw, a former APPEAL Fellow, has been coordinating trainings on AAPI tobacco issues for the different regions in Florida and played a key role in bringing together a diverse group of community advocates for this meeting. ■



Participants engage in activities highlighting priority issues in local tobacco control efforts.

APPEAL Discusses Funding Alternatives with Representatives of National Organizations

by Reiko Mayeno

Last October APPEAL held a fundraising seminar — Funding Alternatives for AAPI Communities — in Washington, D.C. The seminar was held as part of an ongoing effort to encourage and provide assistance to national AAPI organizations in adopting tobacco-free funding policies. As organizations struggle with diminishing funding resources, it is particularly important to consider and set ethical parameters for receiving funding.

The seminar, attended by representatives from twelve national

AAPI organizations, provided an opportunity for participants to discuss and debate the issue of ethical funding. Joe Lucero, former executive director of the Asian Law Caucus, opened the day by sharing his experience of adopting a tobacco-free funding policy for that organization. Participants then built their skills in developing alternative sources of funding in sessions on corporate funding, foundation grants, and cultivating individual donors. Speakers Donna Chancellor, CEO of Chancellor

Communications Group, Jack Alotto, Executive Director of the Santa Clara City Library Foundation, and Martha Lee, Executive Director of the Kellogg Fellows Leadership Alliance, provided practical tips and strategies based on their experiences. Additionally, staff from the White House Initiative on AAPIs provided an update on their most recent activities.

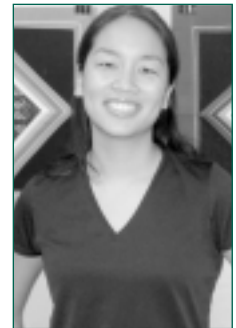
For more information on tobacco-free funding, please contact Reiko Mayeno at rmayeno@aapcho.org or (510) 272-9536 ext. 124. ■

project updates

New Staff

Lisa Fu,
Community Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator

Lisa Fu has rejoined APPEAL in October as the Community Advocate and Leadership Coordinator. She recently graduated from UCLA School of Public Health with a concentration in Community Health Sciences. Lisa has experience working at AAPI organizations in California and Guam around issues including tobacco control and cancer. Most recently she has worked with the Chamorro community at Guam Communications Network in Long Beach, CA. ■



Lisa Fu

Next APPEAL Youth Leadership Summit Fast Approaching

The second APPEAL Youth Leadership Summit is tentatively scheduled to take place during the last week of July in the San Francisco Bay Area. The APPEAL Youth Leadership Program Planning Committee is underway in revamping the curriculum to ensure that next year's program will be an experience to remember for years to come. Participant applications are due by April 23, 2004. To be placed on the mailing list for the call for nominations, please contact Duong-Chi Do at dcd0@aapcho.org.

calendar of events

March

- 9th Biennial Symposium on Minorities, the Medically Underserved & Cancer: *March 24-28*
- Kick Butts Day: *March 31*

April

- 3rd National Symposium on Young Adults: *April 21-22*
- APPEAL Youth Leadership Summit participant applications due: *April 23*
- Deadline for APPEAL's RFA for Health Justice and Tobacco Control: *April 26*

May

- Washington State Tobacco Control Leadership Institute: *May 10-14*
- Guam Tobacco Control Leadership Summit: *May 24-28*
- World No Tobacco Day: *May 31*

July

- APPEAL HYPE Summit: *last week of July*

September

- APPEAL's 10th Anniversary Leadership Summit

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SRO tenants to advocate for the enforcement of San Francisco Health and Labor Codes prohibiting smoking in common areas of hotels, such as hallways, bathrooms, laundries, and kitchens. The City of San Francisco also promised to address language barriers by establishing a Chinese-language telephone line that residents could call to register complaints. Recently, CPA was awarded a grant from The Praxis Project to continue the CPAT Housing Campaign, advocating for strict building-wide policies to reduce second hand smoke in the SROs.

This is just one example of the impact that community organizing has had in empowering AAPIs with a voice that would otherwise not be

heard. Individual and community empowerment on all levels can promote positive and healthy change. "This empowerment will not come merely from providing information, even in a language and format that is accessible," said Lisa Hasegawa, Executive Director of the National Coalition of Asian Pacific American Community Development. "It is linked to economic stability, sense of community, employment status, self esteem, mental health, etc." Through community organizing and education, AAPIs in Chinatown's low-income housing have been empowered to make their home a more positive, healthy, and tobacco-free place to live. ■



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Call for Proposals

APPEAL released a call for proposals in early February for an initiative to support Health Justice and Tobacco Control in AAPI communities. Grants of up to \$50,000 per year for two years will be awarded to organizations with experience in community organizing. Regional Informational Forums will be conducted in February and March 2004. For information and updates, check www.appealforcommunities.org.



Applications will be
due April 26