



NEW AMERICA
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We Will Fight Back in Defense of Our Communities



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As Donald Trump's presidency barely passes its one-month mark, Trump has launched profound threats against immigrants and refugees, our human rights, and our climate. In the face of his hateful and destructive policies, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are rising up. Recently, 10 out of 14 members of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders resigned in protest. In California, we are resisting in many different ways.

As Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, our families have long endured attacks on our health and safety. Some of us immigrated to the United States, only to be targeted by waves of racist anti-immigrant backlash, to suffer Japanese internment, or to arrive as refugees like in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, AAPI immigrants and refugees continue to make invaluable contributions to the economy and culture of our country.

Along with other low income communities and communities of color, we are on the frontlines of racism, poverty, and pollution. From Oakland to our motherlands, AAPIs are also on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Our families have endured super-storms, drought, sea-level rise, displacement, food shortages, and the spread of disease because of climate change. In Oakland's Chinatown, low-income Asian immigrants live with harmful air pollution at the intersection of three major freeways. Climate change is not a "Chinese hoax." Our communities are facing the root causes and the impacts every day. While the fossil fuel industry is polluting our neighborhoods, sabotaging our economy, and destroying our planet, we are paying the price.

The targeting and scapegoating of immigrants and refugees stem from corporate power and a right-wing agenda of hate that see both human dignity and the sanctity of the planet as obstacles to their profit-driven agenda. As we fight to fortify the ability of immigrants to call California home, we also must protect the places and neighborhoods where we live, work, and pray. That is why we are advancing local and statewide solutions to the climate crisis. Asian Americans are growing our power beyond the polls to influence California legislators to advance equitable state policies that will benefit and protect our communities. Across California, Asian American voters overwhelmingly support a just transition for workers and communities away from fossil fuels and equitable access to solar and renewable energy. Asian Pacific Environmental Network is mobilizing AAPI voters to take action—we are asserting our vision and our power.

The Asian Pacific Islander Caucus of the California Legislature continues to advance environmental justice policies. Six out of the nine members of the caucus scored 100 percent on the California Environmental Justice Alliance's Environmental Justice Scorecard this year, which assesses the level that legislators supported environmental policies that improve low-income communities and communities of color. We expect the API Caucus to demonstrate a deeper commitment to defending our communities against the threats ahead, especially as environmental justice champion Senate Pro Tem Kevin De Leon joins the Caucus. We are proud of the leadership of Assemblymember Rob Bonta (D-Oakland), who just introduced AB 3 to defend all immigrants in California. Now more than ever, we need our legislators to lift up our shared values of equity and inclusion in defense of dignity for people of color. The California Legislature has demonstrated bold resistance by addressing climate change and by protecting the rights of immigrants and refugees—we will continue to push them further.

Last year, the legislature, with the support of community leaders, passed landmark climate laws, SB 32 and AB 197. These laws set California on a path towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while prioritizing reduced pollution in the most overburdened neighborhoods in the state. Our legislature modeled what it's like to center voices from the frontlines of poverty, pollution, and racism. We will continue working with decision makers like Assemblymember Bonta to safeguard these wins and keep the health, protection, and dignity of our communities a priority for California.

The environmental and immigration rollbacks that lie ahead will impact frontline communities deeply. The wellbeing, safety, and integrity of all communities of color are under attack every day in this new political landscape. As we brace ourselves against these attacks, we will ensure that new policies bring clean air, good jobs, and protection to these same communities first. We will ensure that the halls of power recognize and embed the wisdom and lived experience of these communities into law. We will make bold and meaningful progress for justice and we will be resolute in our resistance. Our communities and our climate can afford nothing less.

Mia Yoshitani is the executive director of [Asian Pacific Environmental Network \(APEN\)](#), the only organization in the United States that builds the power of low-income Asian American immigrant and refugee communities to win environmental justice and a just transition away from fossil fuels.