

2007 Annual Report



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The Asian American Bar Foundation of Houston, Inc. (AABF), which was incorporated in 2005, is a non-profit, charitable and educational affiliate of the Asian American Bar Association of Houston (AABA) that is tax exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3). The AABF's mission is to educate and serve Asian American lawyers and Asian American communities in the greater Houston and surrounding counties. In furtherance of its mission, the AABF through the grant of scholarships, stipends and/or research funds strives and aspires to do the following:

- Encourage Asian American participation in the legal profession, legal scholarship and legal support services;
- Sponsor seminars, conferences and workshops on legal topics of interest or benefiting the Asian American community;
- Help fund legal aid facilities benefiting the Asian American indigent or working poor;
- Support new immigrants and Asian American youths through legal and educational forums; and/or
- Support activities which will promote and aid an improved system for the administration of justice and the improvement of the Bench and Bar in Harris County, Texas and surrounding areas.

CHAIR'S NOTE

Following up on the Asian American Bar Foundation's successful inaugural year, we spent 2007 strengthening our relationship with other Houston area charitable organizations and serving the legal and educational needs of the local Asian American community. We are pleased that the year's programming and fundraising was successful and look forward to continuing AABF programs such as the following:

In May, the AABF hosted a judicial dim sum banquet to celebrate Asian American History Month. This event received a very enthusiastic response from the judiciary and the community, and we packed our private room at Fung's Kitchen to overflowing. Judges from the various local courts gathered together with the Asian American legal community and our sponsoring law firms to feast on tea and Chinese snacks and to enjoy a presentation on the history and delicacies of the Chinese tradition of dim sum.

In July, the AABF was pleased to present a Public Interest Stipend to Anna Bocchini, now a third-year law student at the University of Texas School of Law. The stipend provided a supplement to Ms. Bocchini's summer income while she interned with Boat People SOS Houston, providing direct legal assistance to immigrant survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. Based on her experiences with this internship and a previous internship with the Political Asylum Project of Austin, Ms. Bocchini has decided to devote her career to public interest law with a particular focus on the human rights concerns that exist in every aspect of immigration.

In October, the AABF co-sponsored the Southwest Regional rounds of the Thomas Tang Moot Court Competition. Members of the Board of Trustees also helped to organize the regional rounds and volunteered as judges during the competition.

In November, the AABF Board of Trustees and Asian American Bar Association officer Joyce Kao Soliman were pleased to announce that the Ann-Hwa Kao Memorial Fund will be disbursed during 2008 to provide stipends for up to five law students interning with Lone Star Legal Aid to provide legal assistance to the members of the Asian American community in southeast Texas. These interns will provide legal assistance to victims of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita who are still trying to recover from those disasters, among others. The Ann-Hwa Kao Memorial Fund was established in memory of Ms. Soliman's mother, who passed away in 2006. Mrs. Kao was a resident of the New Orleans area for a significant part of her life, and we are pleased to have found a cause that will allow her memorial fund to help people from that region.

As I conclude my term as AABF Chair, I would like to thank the AABF's officers and Board of Trustees for dedicating so much time and energy to AABF's success. As the reports from our grant recipients and stipend winner demonstrate, in its short life, the AABF has already had a positive impact on hundreds of people in the Houston area. I trust that future Chairs, the Board of Trustees, and the AABA – the AABF's sister organization – will continue to support the journey that we have begun.

PATRICIA E. LIN
2007 AABF CHAIR

TREASURER'S REPORT

At the end of year 2007, the AABF had a total asset balance of \$57,524.10. This amount was composed of \$14,876.18 in the operational account and \$42,647.92 in the interest-bearing timed deposit account. The operational account is used for the routine activity of the AABF and organized in a QuickBooks accounting file in a monthly financial statement basis. The timed deposit account was established to generate an interest income on the funds not in current use.

Since AABF is not a for-profit business, there was no 2007 income in a traditional sense. The funds contributed to AABF are charitable donations by donors and not an income source to AABF. During the year, AABF made the following major disbursements:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| • Public Interest stipend | \$2,000.00 |
| • Thomas Tang Moot Court Competition | 1,000.00 |

Other expenses incurred by the AABF were for routine office expenses in running the foundation.

For the foreseeable future, the goal of AABF is to bolster our total asset base so that we can allocate more of our assets to different fixed income securities and other financial equities that will give us best optimal return on our assets. The AABF's financial strategy continues to focus on building a sustainable corpus to support the AABF's charitable and educational mission.

AABF Supporters

The AABF was formed by a group of former AABA presidents and officers who identified the need for the AABA to have a charitable arm through which it could promote legal education, participation in the legal process, access to justice and other issues to benefit the Asian American community in the greater Houston area. The AABA has traditionally donated 50% of the net proceeds from its annual gala to an appropriate charitable organization. The AABF appreciates the AABA's continuation of this tradition through its donation of a portion of the proceeds from the 2006 Gala. In addition to the AABA's support and partnership in such fundraising activities as the Silent Auction and the Judicial Dim Sum, the AABF wishes to thank its other donors and supporters, especially those who provided support at Fellow levels:

AABF DONORS

The Honorable Herbert Gee
Ms. Patricia Lin
Lyondell Chemical Company

The AABF would also like to thank the firms and individuals who generously sponsored our Judicial Dim Sum event to celebrate Asian American History Month:

Chrysanthemum Level Sponsors

Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P.
Gardere
Smyser Kaplan & Veselka, L.L.P. and Jason Luong
Vinson & Elkins L.L.P.

Jasmine Level Sponsors

Bracewell & Giuliani LLP
Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw

AABF JUDICIAL DIM SUM



Justice of Peace David Patronella, Judge Lynn Bradshaw-Hull, Judge Bonnie Hellums, Judge Herbert Gee



AABF Trustee Trang Tran, Judge Reece Rondon, and AABA Director Alex Chae



Justice George Hanks and AABA President Emily Kuo



Judge Herbert Gee, Judge Frank Rynd, and Judge Martha Hill Jamison join AABA members and AABF officers in eager anticipation of dim sum.

AABF 2007 PUBLIC INTEREST STIPEND



AABF Chair Patricia Lin (r) presenting the Public Interest Stipend check to University of Texas School of Law student Anna Bocchini.

2007 THOMAS TANG MOOT COURT COMPETITION
SOUTHWEST REGIONAL ROUNDS



The winning moot court teams, both from Southern Methodist University's School of Law, with the final round judges.



Along with AABF Vice Chair Catherine Than (not pictured), Joseph Tung (l) and John Tang (r) organized the Southwest Regional competition, which was hosted at South Texas College of Law.



Dan Hu, John Cleland and Patricia Lin volunteered to judge preliminary rounds of the Southwest Regional competition.

GRANT AND STIPEND RECIPIENT REPORTS

The following reports were provided by recipients of AABF community grants and the public interest stipend:

Boat People SOS Houston, 2006 Community Grant

Project Staff: An Phong Vo & Ngoc Thanh Nguyen

Agency: Boat People SOS, Inc.

Project Title: Immigration Legal Outreach Program

Start Date: January 1, 2007 End Date: December 31, 2007

Project Summary:

1. **Education:** Our target was to provide 24 workshops for 2000 Asian and Vietnamese immigrants and refugees; we have provided in-person education for 655 Vietnamese people through workshops. We have broadcasted 15 workshops on immigration law and legal remedies for domestic violence and human trafficking on Vietnamese-language radio stations with an estimated listenership of tens of thousands of Vietnamese listeners.
2. **Raise Awareness:** We have conducted 11 workshops, aired 15 radio broadcasts, hosted one Recognition Day event, and participated in numerous outreach activities. We distributed in the community flyers and informative brochures in order to raise awareness on immigration law; disseminated 700 brochures and 1000 flyers; and printed 24 articles on immigration law in *Mach Song*, our national newspaper.
3. **Direct Representation or Referrals:** Our goal was to increase direct immigration representation or referral to the target group. In 2006, we provided direct representation to 129 clients. In 2007, we increased our client representation to 442.

Project Outcome:

4. **Workshop Participation:** Our first 3 workshops were not successful. At each workshop we only had a handful of participants. We found out that our target population is reluctant to sign up and attend workshops. We began to conduct workshops for existing groups, such as the senior groups, who hold regular meetings. At the conclusion of one workshop for a senior group, we assisted Mr. and Mrs. Trinh Thanh, both victims of war and former torture survivors, in applying for medical disability waivers, and they became US citizens in September and November, respectively.

Mr. Hy Pham, from New Orleans, resettled in Houston as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Pham was a soldier who was imprisoned and tortured for years in a re-education camp in Vietnam. He and his family immigrated to the US under the Humanitarian Operation Program. His family subsequently left him because he was always sick and unable to work. BPSOS assisted him in applying for medical benefits, social services and citizenship. Three days before his oath ceremony, his wallet was lost/stolen and everything he owned was gone, including his most valued possessions, \$60 dollars and his green card. Our summer interns, Daryl and Anna, contacted several Houston Public Transportation System locations trying to locate his wallet. Finally, we drafted an affidavit on his behalf to explain what had happened, and requested that the surrendering of his green card at the ceremony be waived (otherwise he'd have to apply for a new

green card which would cost him \$290 – something he cannot afford – and in the process would delay the date of his oath). Mr. Pham was able to swear in as a proud US citizen on 07/25/2007.

5. **Expanded Outreach Efforts:** We expanded our outreach parameter to Port Arthur, Texas, where there is a large population of underserved Vietnamese. At our first workshop in Port Arthur, a woman who suffers from depression and has a left eye injury learned that she is eligible for a medical disability waiver to become a US citizen. Ms. Xi Nguyen's application was approved and she became a US citizen this past October.
6. **Radio Broadcasts:** We were invited as guests on a radio show. After the broadcast we began receiving numerous phone inquiries. We then decided that we would reach a bigger audience if we aired our workshops. Recently, a domestic violence victim, Ms. M., came in for assistance and admitted to us that she did not realize there were legal remedies available to her, and more importantly, she would not have had the courage to get out of her abusive relationship had she not heard us discuss this sensitive subject matter on air, learned to trust us from listening after three times, and decided to seek our help.

Daya Inc., 2006 Community Grant



Dear Members of the Grants Committee,

We would like to report to you that the \$1000 grant money graciously given to Daya from the AABF launched our Legal Education Initiative in 2007. The grant money given was successfully used in putting together *two large* outreach events that were attended by well over **250** individuals from all walks of life. The outreach brought us together with many attorneys in the community and culminated in Daya starting its "*Legal Clinic*" in 2008.

Daya, which means compassion, began twelve years ago as a helpline for abused South Asian women, when this crippling problem was not acknowledged in our community. The demand for Daya's services has increased phenomenally. In 2007, Daya received over 3000 distress calls (compared to 1200 in 2005); 90% of our clients are of Indian and Pakistani origins. This strongly confirms violence in South Asian homes and stresses that Daya's work must continue. In 2007 Daya started its own Transitional Home for women and children survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

On January 13th Daya put together a legal seminar titled "*Knowing Your Rights*" at the Houston Community College (Inner Loop). There were three guest attorneys who practiced corporate, family and immigration laws. Presentations were made on family law as well as immigration issues. There was an interactive audience of about 65 individuals who asked many questions and shared their personal triumphs or disappointments with the legal system.

The seminar had a few memorable moments, but the most intense came when one woman from the audience stood up and asked the Family Law attorney how she could be reassured of her safety once she returned home after having turned in her abusive husband to the police the night before. She told of how she had been beaten many times and when the night before her husband flung her against the wall she had fallen on the glass end table. The glass had shattered, cutting her hands in several places, and her husband left her bleeding on the floor while he went into the kitchen to grab a knife. She at that moment knew she had to ask for help and call 911. The husband had spent the night in jail and was to be released that afternoon, and she was afraid to go home. The audience was absolutely taken aback and there was pin drop silence as the woman begged for answers and dug for hope. It was a powerful moment when a survivor's story and a survivor's struggle were discussed openly at such a forum, giving a real face versus mere stories we all have read before.

The very complicated problem of women on H4 visa status (spouse of a professional working in the US) with no social security number or work permits was discussed. Legal rights were discussed and resources provided for help in situations of abuse. Laws regarding divorce and spousal and child support were discussed in great detail as well.

From the beginning of the year when we launched into the Legal Education Initiative we kept on running into the much hidden issue of drug and alcohol abuse amongst the South Asian community and the possible increase of domestic violence in the presence of such abuse. We knew there are legal consequences that an immigrant community that is isolated is not aware of. We finally decided to be very brave and take the taboo issue head on in the year 2007. On August 11th we collaborated with the University of Houston and put together a full day educational seminar titled “*Hidden Nightmare: Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among South Asian Youth*”. On our panel were the most respected people in this field in Houston (doctors, psychiatrists and law enforcement). Ed Brandon, retired weatherman and a recovering alcoholic, was the key note speaker.

Our biggest hurdle was the taboo nature of the topic that kept people from signing up with fears that they would be identified as having families with drug problems. We were greatly surprised as well as encouraged to have over 170 people attending the all day seminar. We had a successful second generation Indian young man who spoke of how he was a functional addict and discussed his encounters with the law and his final decision to turn his life around for his twin children who he was going to lose in a legal battle. His very personal talk brought tears to the eyes of many in the audience. A theatrical performance by the Shunya Theater was funny as well as thought provoking. Kris Moore, Assistant DA, discussed the law for teenagers caught with drugs and alcohol. She gave examples of cases she had dealt with and gave several resources that parents could tap into to get help for their children and to get educated on their rights and responsibilities. The seminar was greatly interactive and we received outstanding comments on our evaluation forms. A few attendees discussed how they were recovering addicts themselves and had found the seminar to be right on target with the information. Everyone commended us on the effort and requested we continue putting together seminars of such nature in the future.

Our *Legal Education Initiative* led us to meeting several new attorneys in the community and strengthening relationships with ones with whom we had been working before. Understanding the legal needs of our growing clients’ population revealed the dire need for us to initiate a legal clinic of our own. In the middle of last year we decided to start a *Daya Legal Clinic* with attorneys who already were either providing our clients with pro bono services or were charging nominal fees. After much discussion and brainstorming, *Daya’s Legal Clinic* will officially start this year as one hour of phone time every week with immigration and family law attorneys for our clients who meet the screening guidelines. In the screening process we shall consider her residence, her income (or access to it) and current legal representation status. Beside the six attorneys we have one paralegal who will offer help with immigration paperwork, answer questions about immigration issues and offer additional resources.

Daya is very grateful to AABF in helping us with the grant money that led to our *Legal Education Initiative*. Through your grant money we were able to affect the lives of hundreds of individuals with education about their legal rights. The grant also enabled us to understand the needs of our client population and start a *Legal Clinic*. We hope that AABF and Daya can work together in the future as well.

Regards,

Maliha Imami-Alam
Community Development Coordinator
Daya, Inc.
713-981-7645

Maliha@dayahouston.org

PHOTO GALLERY



“Knowing Your Rights”



Youth Discussion: “Hidden Nightmare: Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among South Asian Youth”



“Hidden Nightmare: Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among South Asian Youth”



Dr. Degner: *“Hidden Nightmare: Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among South Asian Youth”*



Theatre Performance: *“Hidden Nightmare: Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among South Asian Youth”*

Anna Bocchini, 2007 Public Interest Stipend

I am extremely grateful to have been awarded the AABF public interest stipend to fund my summer internship with Boat People SOS. It was a pleasure to work with this wonderful organization, whose mission is to assist (primarily Vietnamese) immigrants and refugees in their search for a life in liberty and dignity by empowering, equipping, and organizing individuals and communities. I was able to be directly involved in a wide variety of cases, from applying for medical waivers for naturalizing Vietnamese war veterans and survivors of torture to helping complete a visa application for a victim of human trafficking. I also had the opportunity to research fascinating topics such as the globally existent exploitative marriage broker trafficking rings. Additionally, I was able to aid in task forces seeking to heighten awareness of human trafficking and domestic violence in immigrant communities, as well as to promote public policy change in regard to issues such as Amerasian citizenship. As much as I enjoyed working on these long-term projects, my favorite moments from the summer involved simple triumphs that brought immediate joy to clients, such as convincing a USCIS officer that our client could take his naturalization oath with copies of his identity documents after he lost his originals on the bus, and informing another client that her young children had been granted T Visa derivative status and would be able to join her in the United States.

Thanks!

Anna Bocchini