

FROM THE JOURNAL COMMITTEE

The MIE *Journal* Committee is pleased to present this issue dedicated to Serving Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Communities. As the nation has turned its attention to recent attacks on AAPI communities, many of our legal aid programs have sought to do more to support our AAPI staff and serve our local AAPI communities. Our responses have included a wide range of faceted approaches, including understanding more about our histories. One often celebrated story is the extensive contribution of Chinese workers to the completion of the transcontinental railroad in the late 1800s. Like many immigrants now, these Chinese workers had no other choice but to take on the most difficult, dangerous, and exploitative jobs. I wonder how our organizations might have advocated for the Chinese railroad workers today—for better living and working conditions, fair wages, language rights, access to health care, other services for themselves and their families, and basic freedom. Could we have contributed to change the course of history that followed?

Less discussed is the narrative surrounding the roots of current anti-AAPI hate, which can be traced to white supremacy and racism over a century old. Around the time of the transcontinental railroad's completion, rising anti-immigrant sentiment, racism, and violence was escalating. In fact, this year marks the 150th anniversary of one of the largest racially motivated attacks in U.S. history. On October 24, 1871, a mob of 500 people attacked Chinese immigrants in Los Angeles' then Chinatown neighborhood. Many were shot, stabbed, and hanged, leaving 19 mauled bodies lying in the streets. Unsurprisingly, the attackers went unpunished. Asian Americans were also often the target of the Ku Klux Klan, particularly in the American West, where Chinese workers were targeted and terrorized. This animus and hatred led to the end of the concept of "open borders" and resulted in the first restrictive immigration laws based on race. The Page Act of 1875 and the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 were some of the first of these restrictive laws, laying the foundation for over a century of racism against AAPI communities, which continues today.

Our special feature explores ways in which legal aid organizations can deepen their services to AAPI communities, with articles focusing on historically marginalized and underserved populations, such as older adults and Pacific Islanders. Themes around movement lawyering, centering AAPI experiences, and the importance of

building trust are powerfully portrayed throughout several contributions. Authors also poignantly explore their own personal and professional accounts of racism and discrimination during their legal aid journeys. Our special feature illustrates that although the diversity within our AAPI communities is great, our struggles against racism and injustice have brought AAPIs together collectively to fight for systemic change.

We hope this issue memorializes the important work and struggles of our time, as we reflect more on what we will pass on to future generations. In July 2021, Illinois became the first state in the nation to require

Asian American history in public school curriculums. I am fortunate that my children, third generation Korean Americans, have attended a local school with a Korean dual language program, where AAPI history, such as lessons on the Chinese railroad workers, was integrated into their curriculum. This experience has made them proud of their bilingualism and confident in their identity, something I did not experience growing up. Earlier this year, my family and I participated in a Stop AAPI Hate march in Los Angeles' Koreatown, where we live. We walked down Olympic Boulevard with friends, community members, and allies of all backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and generations, holding multilingual signs and chanting together. It was a rare feeling of inclusion, pride, and acceptance that I was grateful to experience. We hope that this special feature will galvanize us to think creatively and make similar spaces for our AAPI client communities — spaces that are equitable, multilingual, safe, and welcoming, so that those who have been silenced for too long can tell their stories, be valued, and bravely seek and obtain justice.

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