



Strategic Plan 2018-2020

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Introduction

Since 2005, APACE (Asian Pacific Islander Americans for Civic Empowerment) has been actively organizing Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) to make our communities' voices heard. Despite the progress we have made, more work needs to be done to strengthen our political power. Effective advocacy for our communities' needs requires a seat at the table, but AAPIs are under-represented in all levels of government. We are the fastest growing group of people of color in Washington State and we represent 6.5% of all eligible voters. Yet only seven – less than 1% – of all 147 state legislators are AAPIs. This strategic plan lays out our next steps for empowering AAPIs to participate in the political process.

Increasing our organizational capacity is a prerequisite for advancing our mission. We will hire our first executive director, and subsequently add more staff positions, to build on the achievements of our dedicated volunteers. To address the inadequate representation of AAPIs in government, we will develop a pipeline of candidates through culturally competent training programs. Electing candidates who are well-positioned to effect change requires data to inform decisions about the best use of our resources. The 2020 census can provide that data, but its accuracy is contingent on AAPIs' willingness to be counted. Therefore, we will conduct outreach encouraging AAPIs to participate in the census. We also support national AAPI organizations' calls for a more precise breakdown of ethnic and racial census data.

Although APACE works directly with AAPI communities, we share a commitment to racial, political, and economic equity with other communities that face injustice. This strategic plan will guide us toward our vision of a more just, inclusive, and progressive society that benefits all of Washington State.

Theory of Change

The Problem

Although AAPIs are among the fastest growing populations in our state, our economic and political power has not kept up with our numbers. AAPIs are disproportionately hurt by racial inequality, poverty, and job insecurity. Our health outcomes are poor and our education outcomes are inadequate. Yet our communities' low level of political engagement prevents us from effectively advocating for policies that address our problems.

The Solution

AAPI communities must actively participate in the political process, become decision-makers in government, and champion progressive policies that raise the quality of life for all of us.



Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

We envision a just, inclusive, and progressive Washington State with racial, political, and economic equity for all people, including AAPIs.

Mission

We expand democracy by identifying and removing barriers that prevent AAPIs from full civic engagement. We create pathways that educate and mobilize our diverse communities to take civic action across Washington State.

Values

Political Action: We mobilize AAPI voices and votes to be a powerful, unified force in electoral and civic affairs.

Transformation: We recognize that electoral processes alone are not enough to create widespread systems change. We believe that true social change requires a commitment to personal, institutional, and structural transformation.

Accountability: We prioritize transparency and modeling a culture of learning that embraces resilience, reflection, and reparation.

Community: We are committed to building partnerships, strengthening local networks, practicing shared decision making, and regularly seeking input to better understand the needs of our diverse community.

Self-Determination: We value the wisdom and experience of every voice in our community and are committed to empowering all AAPIs to participate in determining our future.

Equity: We acknowledge that systems of oppression impact individuals differently based on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, religion, immigration status, English-language proficiency, ability, age, and class. We are committed to building political power that is centered on the voices of those most vulnerable to injustice.

History

APACE's roots lie in the Asian American movement of the 1960s, when AAPI activists founded our predecessor, the Asian Coalition for Equality (ACE). ACE was created to fight for equal opportunity programs that included AAPIs.

In 1997, ACE was reborn as APACE (Asian Pacific American Coalition for Equality). Its resurgence was driven by the threat posed by Initiative 200 (I-200), which called for an end to affirmative action in Washington State. In just seventeen months, APACE built relationships with national political organizations and partnered with nineteen other groups in the fight against I-200. I-200 passed, despite forceful opposition by organizations representing people of color, women, and progressives.

From 1998 to 2005, AAPI political organizing continued, but only during the campaign season. In 2005, APACE was relaunched to build our communities' capacity for effective year-round civic engagement. To emphasize this commitment, we updated our name to Asian Pacific Islander Americans for Civic Empowerment. APACE was also restructured as three entities: APACE, a 501(c)(4); APACEvotes, a 501(c)(3); and APACE PAC. Since its creation in 2010, APACEvotes has organized voter registration drives and nonpartisan get-out-the-vote campaigns. Beginning in 2012, our 501(c)(4) has coordinated independent expenditures for races for governor and the state legislature, as well as for selected ballot initiatives. From the 22,000-name database APACE created in 1997, we have expanded our outreach to over 150,000 AAPI voters.

Strategies

1. Hire an executive director

To elevate APACE's performance as a high-functioning organization, we will hire an executive director who will take the lead in putting together a team of professional staff. Our vision is too ambitious, and our mission too important, to be realized by our existing team of volunteers and board members. In the hiring process, we will seek a candidate with political experience, leadership skills, and a profound understanding of AAPI communities. With a dynamic executive director, APACE will become a potent force in Washington politics.

Goal: Hire six staff members supported by a stable budget

Tactics/Activities:

- Raise funds to ensure a consistent cash flow for salaries
- Develop HR procedures, including guidelines for the hiring process
- Use board members' social networks to recruit high-quality candidates

Measurable Outcomes: Annual hiring and retention goals met

2. Develop a pipeline of AAPI candidates

For the AAPI community to become politically empowered, more AAPIs must hold political office. That means our communities need a pipeline of candidates. To succeed, however, novice candidate training about campaign strategy, fundraising, and communications is needed. Although training opportunities for prospective candidates exist, Washington State's AAPIs need a culturally competent approach that addresses our unique needs and strengths. We will build on our robust civic engagement program to develop a pipeline of candidates who are politically savvy and supported by their community.

Goal: Establish a training and leadership pipeline to increase representation of progressive AAPI champions in municipal, county and state government

Tactics/Activities:

- Send AAPIs to local and national candidate trainings for people of color

Measurable Outcomes: Five new AAPI candidates elected or appointed to state and/or local government office

3. Ensure the availability of accurate data about our communities

We need reliable, detailed data about our communities to be effective advocates. The 2020 census presents an opportunity to ensure that government data accurately reflects our population. Currently, however, census standards for collecting and reporting on race and ethnicity fail to capture the complexity of AAPI communities. Nationally, AAPI organizations are mobilizing to improve those standards through responses to the White House Office of Management and the Budget's request for comments. Locally, we will conduct robust census outreach to educate AAPIs about the importance of participation and counteract national anti-immigrant propaganda. With accurate census data, we can target our work to generate maximum impact from our political activities.

Goals:

- Increase overall AAPI participation in the 2020 census
- Ensure that census data collection replaces current "Asian" self-identification category with broader range of choices reflecting diverse AAPI identities

Tactics/Activities

- Update database to include email addresses and phone numbers of current AAPI members
- Track action alerts
- Get a seat at the table where census decisions are made

Measurable Outcomes: Higher rate of AAPI participation than in 2010 census

Areas of focus

Economic Justice

Economic justice is vital to ensuring that AAPIs are full participants in the democratic process. When AAPIs lack economic security, the pressure of immediate needs can make it difficult for them to be civically engaged. We believe that all AAPIs should have fulfilling jobs that pay a living wage and should live in safe, affordable homes. Vulnerable members of our communities need the protection of a strong government safety net. Yet our communities face institutional barriers to economic success. The myth of Asian Americans as a model minority perpetuates the stereotype of our communities as affluent and ethnically homogenous. In actuality, racism and anti-immigrant prejudice undermine our opportunities for employment. Our communities are not alone in facing economic injustice. By working to remedy it, we contribute to the efforts of other marginalized communities to achieve economic security and enjoy the opportunities that all people in Washington State deserve.

Political Equity

To achieve political equity, AAPIs must be active participants in the electoral process and become effective advocates. Because we are currently under-represented in government, we have not had a say in how our communities are governed. The absence of AAPIs who hold office creates a vicious cycle: potential candidates do not have models or mentors who can help them succeed, thereby perpetuating our under-representation. Because census data collectors do not reach enough AAPIs and census categories do not adequately reflect our diverse identities, the extent of our under-representation is poorly understood. By advocating for AAPI representation in government, we contribute to the broader progressive movement seeking to ensure that all people of color achieve political equity at polling places and in all branches of government.

Racial Equity

Racial justice is a core tenet of our philosophy and the foundation of our work. Communities of color face structural, institutional, and internalized barriers to participation in the democratic process. We are committed to overcoming those barriers so that our communities are civically engaged and politically empowered. Without a seat at the table, our communities' needs go unmet and racial inequality deepens. AAPI representation in government is essential to our communities' ability to exercise their right to self-determination.

We acknowledge that racial oppression takes different forms in different communities of color. At the same time that we work in solidarity with broader communities of color on racial justice issues, we also focus on confronting racism within AAPI communities. Through a power analysis of AAPI positionality within America's racial constructs, we examine the forces perpetuating anti-blackness in our communities. We also examine internalized racism, a subtle form of oppression that affects AAPIs as well as other people of color. By deconstructing the model minority myth, assumptions about assimilation, and other stereotypes specific to the AAPI experience, we will strengthen our resistance to racial oppression.

We are committed to an intersectional approach to racial justice. We understand that our community is made up of individuals who face injustice on multiple fronts. Classism, sexism, religious oppression, and anti-immigrant prejudice all have an impact on the diverse groups that make up the AAPI community. By building a racial justice framework within our community, we will strengthen our alliances and actively support all who are impacted by oppression.