Immigrants win today, but will continue the fight tomorrow

President Obama delivers his promise of relief, but 6 million immigrants will continue to live in fear

Atlanta, GA, November 20, 2014 — WASHINGTON, D.C. - After years of community-led advocacy, which included Asian and Latino undocumented immigrants linking arms to stop deportation buses and directly challenging the President’s claim that he lacked authority to take executive action, immigrants finally won a victory today when President Barack Obama announced his plan for administrative reforms.

This action means that an estimated 4.9 million undocumented immigrants, including approximately 400,000 Asian immigrants, will receive temporary relief from deportation. But it also means that nearly 6 million people will still face the risk of deportation and that Asian immigrants will still have to wait decades to join their family members in the United States due to our country’s overwhelming visa backlog.

“Our deportation stories have been left out of the national immigration conversation,” said Chris Punongbayan, executive director of Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus. “People don’t realize that there are increasing numbers of Asians and Pacific Islanders who are undocumented, poor, and locked up. More than a quarter of undocumented AAPIs are living below the poverty line. Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders, many of whom have lived their whole lives here, are deported for criminal convictions at five times the rate of other immigrants. Today’s action does not end all of these deportations and we will continue to fight on their behalf until all deportations end.”

“We have been waiting patiently, and today, many more families can sleep soundly and without fear,” said Mee Moua, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC. “But there is much more work to be done. Nearly 1.8 million people from Asian countries are waiting decades for a family sponsored visa. It’s incredibly painful to wait decades to see your children, brothers, sisters and parents. In many cases, it’s financially difficult to support family in both the United States and abroad. The president took the first step in addressing the visa backlog today. But the president can’t fix our broken immigration system alone. Congress must craft a permanent solution.”

More than 13 million of the nearly 17 million Asian Americans living in the United States are immigrants, and 1.3 million are undocumented. While often overlooked in the immigration debate, Asian American families face the same hardships caused by our broken immigration system as other immigrant groups. More than 250,000 Asian American and Pacific Islanders have been deported during the Obama Administration.

About Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (formerly Asian American Legal Advocacy Center or AALAC) is the first non-profit law center dedicated to Asian immigrants and refugees (“Asian Americans”) in the Southeast.

Our goal is to engage, educate and empower under-represented Asian Americans to greater civic participation.

We are one of five independent organizations that make up the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Together with our affiliates in Chicago, DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco, we bring more than 100 years of...
collective experience in addressing the civil rights issues faced by Asian Americans and other vulnerable and underserved communities. Visit www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org.