Post-Election:

Stemming the tide of voter apathy

Atlanta, GA, November 13, 2014 — We are stemming the tide of voter apathy in the South, one person at a time. That’s our philosophy and approach at Advancing Justice - Atlanta. Similar to the leaders (Fannie Lou Hamer!), groups and volunteers who worked together in Mississippi in the 1960’s for a campaign now known as Freedom Summer, we approach voter registration and engagement as grassroots community organizing. We meet with people and small groups one by one, door to door, most often engaging Asian immigrant and refugee Americans who have never registered or voted in America. We believe when there’s more people engaged in civic life -- especially people of color including Asian immigrant and refugee Americans -- everyone benefits and the common good is strengthened.

While building a movement takes time, we did make some serious headway this year despite it being one of the worst years in recent history for voter turn-out.

We helped buck the historic trend of lowered voter registrants in our target county, Gwinnett. Historically the number of voter registrants is lower in Mid-term years than in Presidential election years. But in Gwinnett County -- home to the largest Asian population in Georgia and the location of most of our voter registration work -- the number of registered voters increased slightly between 2014 and 2012 while all surrounding counties (following state and national trends) dipped.

Voter Turn-out Increased in our target DeKalb Precinct of Clarkston. Similar to the number of voter registrants, percentage voter turn-out also drops between Mid-Term and Presidential elections. Sadly, we saw that this year's voter turn-out was even lower than the 2010 Mid-Terms (and possibly the lowest ever since the 1940's!). Still, we saw a bright spot in our DeKalb County target city and precinct of Clarkston, possibly the most diverse city in the US and prime refugee resettlement site in Georgia. Percentage voter turn-out went up from 40% in the 2010 mid-term elections to 43.3% in 2014! We believe this is in huge part to the energy and commitment of our refugee-led, Clarkston based community partners who provided volunteers, linguistic and cultural expertise to reach our most newly arrived brothers and sisters. Special thanks to Atlanta Chin Community of Atlanta, Bhutanese Association of Georgia, Somali American Community Center, and Zahau Nunphung Pawlkawm all of whom are based in Clarkston.

What can we do next to advance justice in the South? We are working hard to develop a legal strategy to fight back against systems and processes that suppress immigrant and minority voters both in Georgia and other mostly Southern states. The Interstate Cross Check program is just the latest to be uncovered and we will muster all the legal strength that we have to support the grassroots organizing efforts on the ground. Getting new immigrant and refugee voters to get registered and turn out to vote requires us to not only provide motivation and information on the importance of engagement, but ensuring access to their constitutional right to vote.

Your support has helped stem the tide of voter apathy in Georgia, will you help support us now in this next step of the struggle by making a charitable, tax-deductible contribution of $100 or any amount you can give?
Click on the link to make a donation through Palpal, Network for Good or Georgia Gives Day: http://www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org/ways-to-give/donate/. THANK YOU!

Helen Ho, Founding Executive Director and Lead Attorney, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta

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.