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MORE ASIAN AMERICANS LIVING IN SAN GABRIEL VALLEY THAN IN 42 STATES

New report highlights poverty, housing, and environmental challenges facing overwhelmingly immigrant community

LOS ANGELES - According to a new report from Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA), there are over half a million Asian Americans living in Los Angeles County’s San Gabriel Valley (SGV), more than there are in 42 states or in the cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Chicago. Using the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau and numerous government and academic sources, *A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the San Gabriel Valley* sheds light on a part of the community often hiding in plain sight.

“The Asian American population in the San Gabriel Valley is a community deeply impacted by poverty and low-wage work, affordable housing concerns, and environmental challenges,” said Jeffer Giang, Research Analyst at Advancing Justice-LA and the report’s primary author. “With over two-thirds born outside the U.S., it is a rapidly growing community directly impacted by the current debate on immigration.”

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of majority Asian American cities in the San Gabriel Valley doubled from 6 to 12. While Chinese Americans make up over half of its Asian American population, the region is also home to large Filipino, Vietnamese, and Korean American populations. The report also estimates there are approximately 58,000 undocumented Asian Americans living in the San Gabriel Valley.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, thousands of Asian Americans and NHPI in the San Gabriel Valley are low-income or live in poverty, many working in service industry jobs whose pay is the lowest in the region. 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data show that over 66,700 Asian Americans and nearly 1,000 NHPI in the region live below the poverty line; nearly a third of Asian Americans overall are low-income. While over 45% of Asian Americans and 37% of NHPI work in management, business, science, and the arts, a majority work in other occupations. Approximately 16% of Asian Americans and 18% of NHPI are employed in service-related occupations, working in restaurants, nail salons, or as caregivers. Across the four county subdivisions that make up the San Gabriel Valley, median earnings for all service industry workers fell between \$17,476 and \$18,576 and were lowest among major occupational categories.

“This groundbreaking report highlights the poverty status of Asian Americans and income disparities facing low wage service workers in the San Gabriel Valley,” said Lisa Fu, Program and Outreach Director for the

California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative. “It is an important tool for community organizations to use to deepen our outreach, organizing and advocacy strategy in the region.”

Data included in the report also show both rising housing costs and thousands of Asian Americans who spend more than they can afford to on rent and mortgages. Between 2015 and 2016, the average rent in the San Gabriel Valley increased 4.9%. In 2016, the median home price rose to \$662,400, compared to \$559,000 countywide. According to 2015 ACS data, nearly 69,000 Asian Americans in the region are burdened by the high cost of housing, spending 30% or more of their household income on housing costs. Over 52% of Asian American renters and 49% of Asian American homeowners with a mortgage spend 30% or more of their household income on housing.

“Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in the San Gabriel Valley are facing tremendous pressure from surging housing prices,” said Annie Fox, Regional Lead Organizer at LA Voice. “The movement of affordable housing policies in the coming years will be defining for the community.”

Data from the California Environmental Protection Agency and Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment show that the San Gabriel Valley is home to some of the most polluted parts of California. According to the state’s CalEnviroScreen 3.0 data, over 25% of the San Gabriel Valley is severely polluted, with one in four census tracts in the region at or above the 90th percentile for pollution burden statewide. Approximately 70% of census tracts in El Monte, 46% of census tracts in Rosemead, and 40% of census tracts in San Gabriel are severely polluted. Particular pollution challenges facing the region include the release of toxic chemicals from industrial facilities south of the 10 Freeway; drinking-water contamination in Alhambra, Arcadia, Irwindale, Monterey Park, Temple City, and West Covina; and exhaust from vehicle traffic along the 10, 60, 210, and 605 Freeway corridors.

“This report is important because it sheds light on what many of us already know in the San Gabriel Valley,” said Scott Chan, Program Director of Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement. “Our communities are built in and among major environmental hazards that drastically impact the health of our communities.”

The report was made possible through the generosity of Bank of America, AARP, and the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation.

“Bank of America helped fund this specific research to raise awareness for not only the tremendous socio-economic impact and potential of the San Gabriel Valley’s Asian America population to the Southland, but also to better understand where resources are lacking so that we can help the underserved get on the path to financial stability,” said Garrett Gin, Bank of America market executive for Los Angeles. “Thanks to the work of organizations like Asian Americans Advancing Justice, more resources can be focused on addressing those gaps and help create more economic opportunity for this dynamic community.”

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Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles is the nation’s largest Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) legal and civil rights organization and serves more than 15,000 individuals and organizations every year. Founded in 1983 as the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Advancing Justice - LA’s mission is to advocate for civil rights, provide legal services and education, and build coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. Through direct legal services, impact litigation, policy analysis and advocacy, leadership development and capacity building, Advancing Justice - LA seeks to serve the most vulnerable members of the AANHPI community while also building a strong AANHPI voice for civil rights and social justice.

