



The Asian and Pacific Islander Community
in Multnomah County:
An Unsettling Profile

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forward involves discomfort. But action commitments first involve building awareness of the problem, its reach and its depth. Such is the contribution of this report.

Please know that the Asian and Pacific Islander community supports the creation of White allies in this work to advance racial justice. The community wants and needs allies for racial justice.

Executive Summary

This report is the most comprehensive undertaking to detail the experiences of those in the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community in Multnomah county³ to date. Discoveries made within this report are significant: racial disparities facing the community are pronounced as community members are unable to achieve racial equity in employment, education, occupation, incomes, housing and more. This summary emphasizes the nature of these differences, particularly in comparison with the national Asian and Pacific Islander experience, and interprets these findings, reaching a conclusion that the API community faces, as do other communities of color, particularly toxic local conditions that are borne of current and historic institutional racism and its corollary of white privilege. This summary concludes with a set of urgent policy recommendations: those that are specific to the API community and those that have been endorsed across communities of color by the Coalition of Communities of Color and which the API community sees as essential to its own prosperity and wellbeing.

Multnomah county's Asian and Pacific Islander community is diverse. Although the community is now spreading out into other parts of Oregon, historically, the API community has been most populated in the Portland area due to employment and to maintain ties to the larger ethnic enclaves.⁴ This introduction does not serve to simply recall past history, but also to frame current experiences. Although in some areas of the lived experience, Asian and Pacific Islanders in Oregon seemingly fare better than other communities of color, it is important to recognize the long history of racism and discrimination and the differing receiving contexts that immigrants experience upon arrival. It is also essential to recognize that the Asian and Pacific Islander community here in Multnomah county fares considerably worse than Asian counterparts as measured as a composite across the USA.

The national situation facing Asians and Pacific Islanders is, on the other hand, quite rosy: the community has better incomes, education, and occupations coupled with reduced use of social programs and services, when compared with Whites. Below is a brief scan of this comparison.

2009, USA	White	Asian
Occupation: Management or professional employment	39.0%	47.1%
Income: Median annual income (Full time, year round workers)	\$44,054	\$46,451
Education: Holds a university degree	30.9%	48.8%
Income Support: Gets food stamps/SNAP	6.0%	5.1%
Unemployment Rate (from August 2011)	7.9%	7.1%

Source: American Community Survey, 2009. Unemployment rate from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011.

This is indeed a rosy picture, one that might lead to optimism about the issues facing this community. Certainly, these data reinforce the idea that Asians have attained "model minority" status and advance

the discourse that equality between people of color and Whites is attainable. There are harmful consequences of this myth that affect the Asian Pacific Islander community widely. At the personal level, the myth induces inadequacy for anyone who does not measure up to the ideal of being “intelligent, industrious, enduring, obedient and highly successful.”⁵ Various counseling centers in universities around the USA have been tending to this issue,⁶ particularly since heightened issues of early school leaving and suicide attained national recognition.⁷ At Cornell University, 55% of completed suicides were students of Asian descent (who were primarily, but not exclusively US residents), despite being only 14% of the student population.⁸

The “model minority” myth has wider sociological impacts. To begin, the myth suggests that Asians have reached equality with Whites; yet despite the chart above, there are many areas where parity has not been reached, including poverty levels, the achievement gap in schooling, failing to graduate high school and more. Secondly, the myth reinforces the idea that simply working harder or smarter will assure that individuals can overcome disadvantage and discrimination. On an individual level this might be true, for in the absence of systems that ensure equity, the sole solution is individual effort. Such an approach, however, does not serve the community well: the myth deflates the imperative for systemic reforms. Implicitly (though not explicitly), this myth upholds that the path towards equity is simply to be addressed by individual fortitude. And thirdly, the myth advances what is mostly rhetoric about Asians being “near Whites” with a danger following that “often excludes them from the political discourse on race and inequality as they do not face racism, have no social needs, and have no problems as with the other minority groups.”⁹ As such, the myth narrows the solidarity that exists among people of color, advances a damaging discourse about the hyper-valuation of individual fortitude to overcome discrimination, and holds the potential to harm those in the API community when measuring up to these idealized standards is not possible.

While the national discourse on Asian achievement is problematic, API experiences in Multnomah county poses much greater challenges as this report reveals pronounced racial inequities. The key finding of this report is that the profile of the API community much more closely parallels other communities of color than Whites and the success of the API community at the national level is not experienced here. In almost every institution examined by this report, the API community fares worse than Whites. This is true of incomes, poverty rates, educational attainment (at both the low end and high end of measures), most educational achievement gaps, occupations, health care, some health outcomes such as low birth weight births, housing, political representation, hiring in the civil service, youth being held in detention and short term stays in child welfare.

A sampling of these disparities is included below. In the chart it can be seen that sometimes the experiences of the Asian community can be three times worse (such as the chances of having graduated high school, or the poverty rate among single parent families).

2009		Multnomah County	
		Whites	Asian
Educational Attainment			
	Less than high school	6.3%	20.5%
	Bachelor's degree	25.8%	23.8%
	Graduate/professional degree	16.1%	12.5%
Occupations			
	Management & professions	44.7%	36.4%
	Service	14.3%	20.0%
Incomes			
	Family median	\$71,296	\$57,807
	Full time year-round workers	\$44,262	\$35,967
	Married couples raising kids	\$81,636	\$63,931
	Female raising kids	\$37,485	\$28,270
	Per capita	\$32,740	\$22,035
Poverty rate			
	All families raising children	7.3%	13.0%
	Married couple families	3.3%	9.9%
	Female single parents	22.9%	25.1%
	Housing value (median)	\$298,300	\$260,300

Source: American Community Survey, 2009.

One logical question emerges: why are disparities worse here than across the nation for the API community? There are two lines of inquiry that help illuminate an understanding of this issue. The first is the composition of the API community as we wonder if there are more refugees here, or more recent immigrants here, or fewer members of more affluent Asian communities. The second question is whether the API community follows the pattern of other communities of color, and that the nature of racism and white privilege is deeper in Multnomah county, thus influencing worse outcomes for the API community. In essence, our question is whether or not this is a problem born of the community itself, or one that has been loaded onto the API community by the racial inequities in Multnomah county. Each possibility will be reviewed in turn.

When we explore the first line of inquiry – that of whether the composition of the community might explain for these variations – we see some signs that the composition of immigrants and refugees is distinct from the national profile. The local API community differs significantly from that of the national profile, but not in the direction that one would anticipate. We anticipated that Multnomah county would be home to a larger portion of new arrivals, and a smaller number of native-born residents. But such is not the case.

The region is home to a larger percent who are native-born Asians (meaning born in the USA), at 47.1% compared with 40.1% at the USA-level. Within the API community, there are smaller numbers of new arrivals, with 15% arriving in the last ten years, compared with 18% at the national level. Neither feature was expected. Having a larger native-born population should improve our data – not deteriorate

it, as the general wisdom is that the longer one resides in the USA, the greater the likelihood that one holds improved conditions. We also find that the most affluent of the Asian communities (Chinese and Japanese) are in fact more numerous in Multnomah county. The tally of these two communities in Multnomah county is 31% while the USA average is 28%. The conclusion from these data suggests that the experience of the API community is not suffering from a shortfall of Asian communities with greater affluence.

Another layer of the “composition hypothesis” is that the region might be home to a larger number of refugees, and since most arrive without financial resources (and are eligible for income support for the first eight months of their arrival in the USA), they are the most poor of the Asian communities. While we do in fact find that there are more refugees in the community than across the USA (38% compared with 16%), there are early signs that this might not account for the variance.¹⁰ We were able to look closely at the experience of those from Vietnam. The Vietnamese make up 30% of the API community (compared with 11% at the national level). But when we look at the experiences of the Vietnamese locally, we find that there are much worse outcomes here than across the USA. As the reader will see in later sections in this report, the local Vietnamese have significantly worse outcomes in all areas on which data was available: incomes, occupational profile, educational attainment and unemployment. Again, this was an unexpected finding as the researchers anticipated a similar profile of Vietnamese in Multnomah county and the USA itself. If the Vietnamese experience was approximately similar, we could have more clearly said that the refugee composition was likely partly responsible for pulling down the overall Asian experience. These data findings in fact point to the second hypothesis more robustly – for Multnomah county is being revealed to catalyze worse outcomes even for those holding the same ancestry. While we cannot say for certain that the experience of the Vietnamese is similar to other refugee-based communities, this is as good as our data gets. It is certainly the largest refugee community, and thus more likely to hold an influential role across the entire refugee-based communities.

Turning to the second line of inquiry, we explore the nature of institutional racism within the institutions and systems in the region as to their contribution to the dismal outcomes for the API community. For this, we turn to the experience among other communities of color. In each community (Native American, Latino, African American, African Immigrant and Refugee, and Slavic), disparities are worse here than national averages, and worse here than in King county (home to Seattle), and in many cases worsening in recent years. Given this pattern, we believe that the same dynamic is true within the API community. Furthermore, the lived experience of those in the community illustrates that racial discrimination and racial bias are rampant in the region. We know, as the reader will see further into this report, that the policy history facing the API community has been particularly egregious and the community has been harshly treated within Oregon.

Over the last two centuries a number of federal and state policies were implemented to challenge the successful incorporation of Asian and Pacific Islanders into the Oregon landscape. Immigration policies barring API entrance was a common tactic employed by the polity. During the late 19th and early 20th century, Asian immigrants were increasingly restricted from migrating to the US. At the same time, the US experienced its greatest immigrant wave in history; European immigrants arrived in unprecedented numbers. For many of the early Asian and Pacific Islander community, it was clear that being an Oregonian meant being White. The history of Oregon’s Asian and Pacific Islander community is the story of the movement of exploited workers, lured into the region by businesses and bosses, and often pitted

against the native White population in efforts to drive down wages. That the end result was often violence, racism, and discrimination should come as no surprise.

The passage of the Refugee Act of 1980 formalized the reception and resettlement practices for refugees across the nation, bringing the US into compliance with international laws, and ending former practices of quotas based on national origin.¹¹ A relatively generous welcoming environment was established through this policy that contained transparent practices for seeking asylum and refugee protection, and committed reliable financial aid for both refugees directly and for resettlement supporting organizations. It did, however, establish certain criteria for moving refugees off state aid as quickly as possible by requiring refugees to take the first job available and also to move to independence as rapidly as possible, namely to “insure that cash assistance is made available to refugees in such a manner as not to discourage their economic self-sufficiency” and that employment resources are available “to achieve economic self-sufficiency among refugees as quickly as possible.”¹² These requirements have recently been interpreted to require that refugees accept the first job offer made in order to move off state financial support rapidly. The consequence of such a policy is to foreclose and narrow options for refugees to recertify many of their internationally-gained qualifications. This narrows the possibility for refugees to attain the same level of professional occupations that they held or became qualified for in their country of origin, and means for many that they lose their pathways to affluence and more meaningful employment.

The API policy history has unspoken and insidious impacts on life today. The history of legislated anti-Asian treatment and labor exploitation sets the context for both acceptance of racial disparities, and influences the overall discourse of how the API community is treated, understood and positioned by mainstream culture. Common dynamics including being perpetually marginalized as “foreigners” (even when one may have been in the USA for decades), being economically exploited, being overly sexualized as exotic, being the target of racial violence, and being constrained by stereotypes that on one side portray the community as sneaky and arrogant, and on the other side as submissive and deferential. Almost 20 years ago, the Commission on Civil Rights detailed a wide array of civil rights violations and extended the impact of stereotyping:

[Stereotypes] may blind employers to the qualifications of individual Asian Americans and hence contribute to the glass ceiling that impedes Asian Americans’ success in managerial careers. It may also lead teachers and counselors to discourage Asian American students from even pursuing non-technical careers.¹³

This report specifically addresses the employment discrimination that results from damaging stereotypes and discourses about those in the API community:

Asian Americans face a number of barriers to equal participation in the labor market. Many of these barriers are encountered to a greater degree by the foreign born, who often confront linguistic and cultural barriers to finding employment commensurate with their education and experience, but even third- or fourth-generation Asian Americans find their employment prospects diminished because employers have stereotypical views of Asians and prejudice against citizens of Asian ancestry. Employment discrimination, to varying degrees is a problem facing all Asian Americans.¹⁴

Here is our best understanding of what is happening in the region for the API community that explains why racial disparities are so pronounced: while the community is host to a large number of refugees

(compared to national averages), our one window into this experience suggests that it is not the different composition that best explains the lack of success of those in the API community. Neither can other composition issues explain the variance – the API community has greater numbers of conventionally affluent Asians, more native-born Asians and fewer new arrivals than national averages. Accordingly, we reject the idea that it is the composition of the API community that accounts for its deeper challenges. Instead, alongside other communities of color, we assert that there are particularly toxic conditions of institutional racism and white privilege in this region that hold greater influence over the experiences of the API community and it is the combination of institutional racism and white privilege that primarily drives the community’s challenges. Accordingly, we entreat our civic leaders to place racial equity in the foreground of policy priorities. Urgent action is needed.

On the economic front, we need to assert that the transitions to what has been called the “new economy” or rather one that is marked by greater reliance on the market to address needs, has been a failure for the community. This transition over the last generation has been correlated by withdrawal of government policies to support those who are struggling in the market to find sufficient work at decent enough wages to pay the bills and provide for one’s family. The key message is that the promises of less government intervention have not served communities of color well, and large numbers in the region were effectively blocked from sharing in the affluence of higher income residents of Multnomah county who economically thrived over the last generation.¹⁵ The “new economy” in the USA today (and that has been emerging over the last 30 years) has seen the safety net shredded, many fewer supports for immigrants and refugees, and shrinking promise for catching up with non-immigrant communities:

The exploitation of immigrant workers is certainly not new – earlier waves of immigrants also faced discrimination and took up some of society’s dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. What has changed is the prospect for immigrant workers’ labor market success and integration into American community life, politics and society.¹⁶

Two significant policy changes have diminished opportunities for advancement of immigrants: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of the same year have significantly narrowed access to income support programs and legal protections from discrimination. The net impact is to “completely reinvent a welfare system that had been in place for more than six decades.”¹⁷ Gone for many were entitlements to support within the first five years of settlement (with the exception of 8 months of support for refugees, and for families raising dependent children) and removed were eligibility for many public benefits, unless one obtains citizenship.

Citizenship requirements are expansive, including the requirement that we have lived in the USA for a minimum of 5 years (reduced to 3 years if one is a spouse to a US citizen), speak, write and read basic English, pass a test on US history and government, be at least 18 years old and be of “good moral character.” In addition, one must have the \$680 fee to begin the process. This fee is not refundable should one withdraw or be denied the application. The two biggest barriers are English skills and the fee. Learning English is limited by opportunity, literacy, and ultimately by government investments in such programs.¹⁸ The application fee most deters those in poverty and in low income. Waiting lists abound for English language training, with a recent study of 184 providers across the nation revealing that the majority have waiting lists that can be as long as three years. Additional difficulties are created by access – the majority of immigrants want night or weekend classes, but such availability is very limited. A recent study showed only 6% of such classes were available during these preferred times.¹⁹ Cost is

another limiting factor with all government-operated programs running at capacity, and private providers are usually too expensive for new immigrants.

We acknowledge that more research would be helpful to draw these conclusions definitively. But such data is rarely available. Beyond just serving the purposes of this research report, the API community is eager to see data for all its communities. Urgent is the need to see the experiences of children in the school system, youth in juvenile justice, young adults in higher education, and for all: health, policing, incomes, poverty, occupations, educational attainment, linguistic isolation, health care and hiring in public service. We know from this report that many API communities are struggling.

Two data practices severely impact our ability to understand local API communities. First, the decision of the Census Bureau to drop the long form from Census 2010 has decimated the data available to us to learn about the API community. As the reader will see in this report, the researchers have drawn heavily upon 2000 Census data compiled by the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum – a group that worked with the microfile data from Census 2000 to provide information for various API communities. This has been a valuable source of information for this report, but it cannot be updated as no long form was conducted in Census 2010. Many people think that the American Community Survey (ACS) offers a viable alternative, but the sample is too small to provide us with reliable information beyond the three largest Asian communities. Quite simply, when the Census used the long form, there was a robust enough size to report out on most API communities. But the ACS completes surveys on only 1.8% of the population – sufficient to profile large communities and for the USA as a whole, but entirely inadequate for gaining insights into smaller communities. This means that we will never be able to gain the insights available in 2000 for a full range of API communities, and a tragic loss for those in the API community who need to understand the experiences of specific communities.

Second, administrative databases rarely offer disaggregated data on the API communities. The dearth of data on the various communities within the API community is pronounced. It is rare that we are able to disaggregate the data by ethnicity, refugee status, language or origin. While we understand that there may be costs involved in routinely analyzing such data, the nature of the API community warrants exploration as comprehensively as possible. Disaggregated data would help us understand much better the degree to which various API communities struggle and would help us establish some priorities for addressing racial equity and programs to serve the communities.

To this end, the Coalition of Communities of Color is finalizing a “*Data Protocol*” to provide concrete guidance on collection of data on all communities of color. While we understand that there may be financial issues that limit the possibility of tracking, we urge that this be given priority. One researcher admonished the research community to respond to the plight of invisibility: “societies never become effectively concerned about social problems until they learn to measure them.”²⁰

There is abundant flexibility within existing administrative databases to collect information on race, ethnicity, origin, language spoken at home, refugee state and length of time in the USA. Such data collection would ensure that researchers would be able to provide disaggregated information routinely and/or by request. While the API community aims for routine practices, at the very least collection of these data, and coding them into databases would allow for such analysis upon request.

In conclusion, the Asian and Pacific Islander community in Multnomah county has faced a particularly egregious policy history, and suffers from deep racial disparities that, to a large degree, the USA-wide API community is protected from. Conventional ways to understand this locally toxic situation is to consider the impact of the composition of the local API community and examine the proportions that are new arrivals, native-born, from affluent API communities, and refugee. When investigated in this report, the portion of new arrivals, native-born, and affluent community presence in fact should be protective factors in racial disparities. Only the large refugee community would contribute to downward pressure on the API experience. But here, when looking at the largest refugee community – the Vietnamese community – parity between the local and USA-wide community does not exist as conditions for the Vietnamese are much worse in Multnomah county. Thus the Vietnamese experience causes us to assert that institutional racism and the influence of a racist past hold greater explanation potential than the composition of the community. We are forced to conclude that the twin practices of institutional racism and white privilege operate with such intensity in the local region that significant disparities result for the API community.

We turn now to a synopsis of the concrete policy reforms that are to be given priority in redress of the racial disparities that challenge the API community. These reforms are expanded upon in the final section of the report, *Policy Recommendations*. We make the following recommendations for addressing the needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander communities in points one through five, and then detail the policy recommendations that are shared by the plurality of all communities of color (points six through sixteen).

1. Poverty reduction

The impediments that API communities face in narrowing disparities and advancing towards racial equity with Whites are rarely diminishing through regular participation in education and the labor market. Additional supports are required to facilitate parity. These include measures to ensure prompt, accurate and low cost recognition of foreign credentials and work experience. In addition, expanded supports are needed for refugees.

2. Social Inclusion and Language Training

An alarming amount of those in various API communities are linguistically isolated and have less than good English language skills. This creates barriers to social inclusion and to participation in civil society, as well as in attaining education and employment. Solutions include expanded access to English as a Second Language programs, improved availability of cultural interpreters and translation services across institutions and services, supports to gain US citizenship, and social inclusion of the API community in building a responsive policy environment by ensuring that community leaders are provided a key role in developing policies that affect the API community.

3. Education Equity

Many API communities are struggling academically, as illustrated in the disaggregated data by language. It is essential that our priority language communities receive intensive and comprehensive supports to ensure their educational success (in achievement and in graduation). So too a large and growing number of API youth and adults are prohibited from attending higher education due to prohibitive tuition fees. Both rising tuition rates and charging out-of-state tuition rates for undocumented residents are to blame. And once entered in higher education, too many youth drop out as a result of complex factors.

4. *Visibility for the Entire API Community*

Research and database reforms are essential to ensure that there is routine and accurate disaggregation of the API community by origin, by refugee status, and by length of time in the country. We also press for research reforms at the national level that would ensure that the experiences of our local communities can be fully articulated every two or three years.

5. *Attention to Priority Communities*

Our most distressed communities are Cambodian, Thai, Hmong, Korean, Tongan, Samoan, Asian Indian and Laotian. And while we have only one data point for some communities (achievement scores on educational benchmark tests), the rates of their distress in this education score is so terrible, we have decided to place these communities in the priority list: Karen, Pohnpeian, Rohingya, Nepali (typically of Bhutanese origin in this region), Chuukese and Burmese. These fourteen communities are those experiencing the deepest distress, and those warranting most immediate attention through programs and services.

We conclude this *Executive Summary* by detailing the policy recommendations that are the foundation for racial equity across communities of color.

- 6. *Reduce disparities with firm timelines, policy commitments and resources.*** Disparity reduction across systems must occur and must ultimately ensure that one's racial and ethnic identity ceases to determine one's life chances. The Coalition urges State, County and City governments and school boards, to establish firm timelines with measurable outcomes to assess disparities each and every year. There must be zero-tolerance for racial and ethnic disparities. Accountability structures must be developed and implemented to ensure progress on disparity reduction. As a first step, plans for disparities reduction must be developed in every institution and be developed in partnership with communities of color. Targeted reductions with measurable outcomes must be a central feature of these plans.
- 7. *Expand funding for culturally-specific services.*** Designated funds are required, and these funds must be adequate to address needs. Allocation must recognize the size of communities of color, must compensate for the undercounts that exist in population estimates, and must be sufficiently robust to address the complexity of need that are tied to communities of color.
- 8. *Implement needs-based funding for communities of color.*** This report illuminates the complexity of needs facing communities of color, and highlights that Whites do not face such issues nor the disparities that result from them. Accordingly, providing services for these communities is similarly more complex. We urge funding bodies to begin implementing an equity-based funding allocation that seeks to ameliorate some of the challenges that exist in resourcing these communities.
- 9. *Emphasize poverty reduction strategies.*** Poverty reduction must be an integral element of meeting the needs of communities of color. A dialogue is needed immediately to kick-start economic development efforts that hold the needs of communities of color high in policy implementation. Improving the quality and quantity of jobs that are available to people of color will reduce poverty.
- 10. *Count communities of color.*** Immediately, we demand that funding bodies universally use the most current data available and use the "alone or in combination with other races, with or without Hispanics" as the official measure of the size of API communities. The minor over-counting that this creates is more than offset by the pervasive undercounting that exists when

outsiders measure the size of these communities. When “community-verified population counts” are available, we demand that these be used.

- 11. Prioritize education and early childhood services.** The Coalition prioritizes education and early childhood services as a significant pathway out of poverty and social exclusion, and urges that disparities in achievement, dropout, post-secondary education and even early education must be prioritized.
- 12. Expand the role for the Coalition of Communities of Color.** The Coalition of Communities of Color seeks an ongoing role in monitoring the outcomes of disparity reduction efforts and seeks appropriate funding to facilitate this task.
- 13. Research practices that make the invisible visible.** Implement research practices across institutions that are transparent, easily accessible and accurate in the representation of communities of color. Draw from the expertise within the Coalition of Communities of Color to conceptualize such practices. This will result in the immediate reversal of invisibility and tokenistic understanding of the issues facing communities of color. Such practices will expand the visibility of communities of color.
- 14. Fund community development.** Significantly expand community development funding for communities of color. Build line items into state, county and city budgets for communities of color to self-organize, network communities of color, develop pathways to greater social inclusion, build culturally-specific social capital and provide leadership within and outside communities of color.
- 15. Disclose race and ethnicity data for mainstream service providers.** Mainstream service providers and government providers continue to have the largest role in service delivery. Accounting for the outcomes of these services for communities of color is essential. We expect each level of service provision to increasingly report on both service usage and service outcomes for communities of color.
- 16. Name racism.** Before us are both the challenge and the opportunity to become engaged with issues of race, racism and whiteness. Racial experiences are a feature of daily life whether we are on the harmful end of such experience or on the beneficiary end of the spectrum. The first step is to stop pretending race and racism do not exist. The second is to know that race is always linked to experience. The third is to know that racial identity is strongly linked to experiences of marginalization, discrimination and powerlessness. We seek for those in the White community to end a prideful and inaccurate perception that Multnomah County is an enclave of progressivity. Communities of color face tremendous inequities and a significant narrowing of opportunity and advantage. This must become unacceptable for everyone.

Advancing racial equity depends on eliminating the multitudes of disparities profiled in this report. The authors of this report, and the communities represented within, aspire to catalyze an understanding of the challenges facing communities of color and to provide us all impetus to act, to act holistically, and to act under the leadership of communities of color who have the legitimacy and the urgency to remedy many of the shortcomings that besiege Multnomah county.

Following the close of this *Executive Summary*, we turn first to the issue of data adequacy and then to a detailing of typically little-known policies that forms the basis of institutional racism, the residue of which remain today. With this policy history detailed, we then focus on the challenges and solutions to pervasive undercounts of the API community. Then to the racial disparities that form the bulk of this report – and the various ways in which we were able to disaggregate the data across various

communities. The following communities are profiled at the composite level: the Asian and the Pacific Islander community, and also those who arrived during various waves of immigration, including the experiences of those who were born in the USA. Then we have, to the best that data permits, the following communities profiled in detail:

- Chinese
- Filipino
- Pacific Islander communities, with details available for Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan and Guamanian or Chamorro
- Refugee communities including Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian
- A more expansive review of the Vietnamese community
- Smaller Asian communities including Asian Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean and Thai

The report then shifts to detailing the bright spots on the policy landscape, details of recent trends and changes (from 2007 to 2009), and concludes with a full articulation of essential policy reforms that will address racial disparities and advance racial equity – with the corollary that improving the lives of those who struggle has the ripple effect of improving quality of life across the region. Prosperity for communities of color will build prosperity for all. Indeed, drawing from the United Nation’s Human Development Index, across the USA, we holds the position of #4 in the world, but when inequality among the population is factored into human development (specifically in education, income inequality and life expectancy), the USA drops to position #12 globally, illustrating the well being of our most vulnerable communities brings down our overall vitality as a community.²¹

Data Adequacy

Data adequacy has been a significant problem for the Asian and Pacific Islander community. The API community has been very interested in detailing the various Asian communities within the overall Asian and Pacific Islander community, as identities along ethnic lines are typically more important to community groups than an overall identity as Asian. We know, from this report, that there are some API communities that struggle more than others, but that drawing conclusions as to which suffer the most is almost impossible as we are relying on data that is dated for as the reader will see, the researchers have had to rely on data from the year 2000 for an array of smaller communities.

While the API community wants and needs accurate data to understand the nature of the challenges and respond accordingly, it is also in the interests of mainstream society to enable finer tuning of resources and to support cost-effective interventions. Rather than a widespread response to the entire community, better data would support better research, and this in turn would support more targeted interventions with the greatest promise for narrowing disparities and subsequently for improving quality of life across the entire community.

Data challenges have been numerous. Briefly, they fall into the following categories: the first being inappropriate aggregation across categories, the second being an absence of disaggregated data at all, and the third being an absence of data for small communities. And sometimes there are additional problems due to the presence of the “model minority” myth that suggests that Asians have obtained parity with Whites and no longer require monitoring. Such is the situation with labor statistics (which often do not include separate categories for the API community, such as unemployment), and with