

2007 AWARDS

THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

2007 LOREN MILLER LEGAL SERVICES AWARD



STEWART KWOH

Executive Director

Asian Pacific American Legal
Center of Southern California



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STEWART KWOH is the founding Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (APALC). In founding APALC in 1983, Mr. Kwoh envisioned an organization that would be an effective voice and organizational leader focused on increasing access to legal services and education for the poor, protecting and advancing the civil rights of the diverse Asian Pacific American community, and improving inter-group relations by using a variety of strategies including direct services, impact litigation, education, policy, advocacy, collaborations and leadership development.

Due to the visionary leadership of Stewart Kwoh, APALC has become a key advocate for poor and limited English proficient Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in Southern California, as well as in California and the United States. APALC also has been at the forefront of identifying the cultural and language barriers that prevent poor AAPIs from accessing much needed legal services. As a result, the lives of thousands of individuals and their families have been improved in the areas of family law, domestic violence, immigration and naturalization, low-wage worker rights, consumer litigation based on national origin discrimination, language access, and public benefits.

During his 24-year tenure, Mr. Kwoh initiated many effective programs. Several were developed in collaboration with other organizations in order to increase the capacity to serve poor AAPI communities. One such program is the Asian Language Legal Intake Project (ALLIP) that APALC started with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA), Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLS-LA), and the Legal Aid Society of Orange County (LASOC). ALLIP assists Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Khmer (Cambodian), and Vietnamese-speaking callers with intake, advice, brief service, and referral on a range of legal issues. ALLIP's hotlines now handle more than 10,000 callers annually.

In addition to developing direct service programs, Mr. Kwoh invested significant resources in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating ethnic and language-specific data on AAPIs in California and throughout the United States so that legal services organizations, social service providers, funders, legislators, educators and others have accurate information about the needs of poor and LEP (Limited English Proficiency) AAPI communities and how to serve them.

“ **STEWART HAS BEEN
A TRAILBLAZER
IN FOSTERING
COLLABORATIONS AMONG
ETHNIC COMMUNITIES,
AMONG BUSINESS,
GOVERNMENT, AND THE
DISENFRANCHISED, AND
AMONG CIVIL RIGHTS
AND LEGAL SERVICES
ORGANIZATIONS...
HE HAS FEW PEERS TO
MATCH HIS REPUTATION
FOR INTEGRITY, SKILL AT
CONSENSUS BUILDING
AND VISIONARY
LEADERSHIP.** ”

BRUCE G. IWASAKI

Lim, Ruger & Kim, LLP
and 2004 Loren Miller Legal
Services Award Recipient

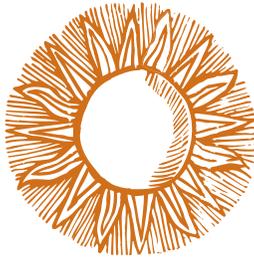
Under Mr. Kwoh's direction and leadership, APALC has initiated and co-counseled on significant impact litigation including:

- *Bureerong v. Uvawas*: A groundbreaking federal lawsuit in which 102 Thai and Latino garment workers won two precedent-setting opinions giving low-wage workers the ability to sue not only their direct employers but corporations such as retailers and manufacturers who contract with sweatshops; since *Bureerong*, APALC has achieved several legal victories on behalf of immigrant garment workers against well-known clothing companies, including bebe and Forever 21. APALC's cases often brought Asian and Latino garment workers together to demand accountability and an end to sweatshop conditions, and today APALC continues to represent low-wage Asian, Latino and African American workers.
- A landmark Title VI civil rights complaint filed by APALC in 1999 against the Los Angeles County Department of Public & Social Services (DPSS) for failure to provide equal access to LEP welfare-to-work participants resulted in a historic agreement reached 5 years later in which LEP families on welfare would be treated the same as families on welfare who are fluent in English; the settlement included significant reforms to DPSS as well as \$1.7 million in back benefits to primarily Asian language speaking clients who were terminated illegally.
- A lawsuit filed by APALC and Public Counsel in 2004 against the dealership Wondries Toyota in Alhambra for alleged systematic fraud and national origin discrimination; it was settled for a monetary award and resulted in broad changes in the dealership's "bait-and-switch" practices; APALC continues to represent consumers defrauded by businesses who seek to take advantage of non-English speaking immigrants.
- A federal lawsuit in which APALC joined with the NAACP LDF, MALDEF, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and the ACLU of Northern California to challenge UC Berkeley's admissions process as discriminatory against African American, Latino and Philipino high school students; APALC remains a leading Asian American voice for equal access to and quality education for students of all races in California.

APALC has been active in legislative and policy advocacy and uses these strategies to complement its litigation efforts. Following the *Bureerong* case, APALC helped draft and pass Assembly Bill 633 (Steinberg) in 1999 that created the strongest garment worker protection laws in the nation. The Wondries case helped APALC advocate for increased consumer protections for Chinese, Korean, Tagalog and Vietnamese speakers from unscrupulous business practices through passage of Assembly Bill 309 (Chu) in 2003. In 1997, Mr. Kwoh was one of the key forces behind the founding of the California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative (now the California Immigrant Policy Center) — one of the major immigrant rights advocates in Sacramento.

Mr. Kwoh's impact extends to the national arena, in which his vision and hard work led to the creation of the Asian American Justice Center, a powerful voice for Asian American civil rights based in Washington, D.C. with affiliates in San Francisco and Chicago, in addition to APALC in Los Angeles, and a community partners network that is over 100-strong throughout the country.

Mr. Kwoh was Chair of the Board of Directors of The California Endowment (2000 - 2002), the largest health foundation in the state. He has served as a board member and trustee of several foundations, philanthropic entities and nonprofit organizations. In addition, Mr. Kwoh has received numerous awards and in 1998 was named a MacArthur Foundation Fellow.



THE LOREN MILLER LEGAL SERVICES AWARD
WAS CREATED IN 1977 TO COMMEMORATE THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA.
THE AWARD IS GIVEN ANNUALLY AND HONORS AN
ATTORNEY WHO HAS DEMONSTRATED LONG-TERM
COMMITMENT TO LEGAL SERVICES AND WHO
HAS PERSONALLY DONE SIGNIFICANT WORK IN
EXTENDING LEGAL SERVICES TO THE POOR.



*The State Bar
of California*

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