

SEEDING CHANGE WITH ASIAN/AMERICAN GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING WITH NC ASIAN AMERICANS TOGETHER

Shania Khoo, Benjamin N. Duke Scholar, NCAAT Youth Intern, Seeding Change Fellow



Introduction

This past summer, I completed the Seeding Change Fellowship as a Youth Intern with North Carolina Asian Americans Together. I aimed to learn more about grassroots organizing and movement careers. I was able to outreach and connect with NCAAT's youth base in the Triangle-Area, and I did my own projects surrounding abolition.

Key Responsibilities

- Support workshop and event planning and facilitation, program administration, and outreach to NCAAT's youth base (ages 14-22).
- Create a personal project that furthers NCAAT's mission of educating or engaging Asian/American communities on an issue, policy and advocacy, youth programs, or community engagement.
- Create digital content, including 1) a blog post on any topic within Asian American advocacy and 2) contributing to NCAAT and NCAAT in Action's social media features

Learning Objectives

- Connect with youth in North Carolina, especially to learn more about what valuable and fun political education looks like for them.
- Learn about organizing spaces/spheres in the Triangle Area of North Carolina. Get a better understanding of what organizing priorities are here and what work is being done.
- Gain administrative and facilitation experience.
- Learn with and empower youth and community members to engage with organizing to carry on the long legacy of Southern resistance by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

What is Seeding Change?

Seeding Change hopes build a national pipeline for the next generation of Asian American organizers, create an infrastructure for Asian American grassroots organizing, and experiment with building power and scale for our movements toward a vibrant social and economic justice movement. I was accepted into the Seeding Change National Fellowship, an intensive summer volunteer program that develops the skills, leadership, and commitment of young people to organize in our communities for racial, economic, and gender justice. The program combines substantial investment in political development and organizing training through placement at host sites with intentional community-building, personal reflection, and leadership development. My host site placement was NC Asian Americans Together.

What is NC Asian Americans Together?

Through civic engagement, leadership development, youth empowerment, and grassroots organizing, North Carolina Asian Americans Together (NCAAT) works closely with Asian/American communities to broaden cultural, social, and political boundaries for Asian Americans in the unique context of North Carolina and the American South. NCAAT is the only pan-Asian/American nonprofit organization in NC and works primarily to empower Asian Americans statewide in civic engagement and movement building.

Accomplishments

- **Youth Leadership Institute:** YLI is a summer program that brings together Asian American youth to explore their leadership and advocacy skills, attend educational workshops and professional development, and connect to like-minded youth across NC. I worked on logistics, figuring out the curriculum, schedule, tech needs, and outreach. And during YLI, I facilitated various discussions, including a story-sharing session, an Ethnic Studies letter writing campaign, and a campaign building exercise for data disaggregation in the US Census.
- **Copy, Cut, and Paste Revolution: A Zine-Making Workshop:** I created and facilitated my own workshop! The youth in attendance learned about the long history of revolutionary counterculture zines and the importance of zines to scream, shout, and feel what it means to be Asian in the diaspora. And the workshop ended on an art build where the YLI attendees created a zine with my guidance: <http://bit.ly/yilizine>.
- **Letter Writing:** I hosted an event to do internal letter writing to folks on the inside of Durham County Jail with huge support from my supervisor, who is a part of SONG (Southerners on New Group), which does abolitionist organizing through the South, including in Durham, NC.
- **Abolitionist Postcards & Stickers:** I came into this summer really wanting to feel more confident in myself as an artist and was also curious about how I could do art that aligned with my political dreams and visions. This is something that I discussed with my supervisor a lot, and it ended up evolving into a design that is centered on "build community, not prisons" and youth empowerment.
- **Social media graphics support:** I took on a number of graphics that I designed, including educational posts on Juneteenth and global solidarity through the lens of vaccine apartheid and outreach posts on NCAAT's programming.

Takeaways

This summer has continued to emphasize the importance of political education as a tool to make us conscious of struggles and oppression worldwide in order to better come up with strategies. I gained confidence in my art and design abilities and honed my ability to teach and facilitate workshops to youth audiences. My experiences doing youth engagement work this past summer has allowed me to share resources and knowledge, develop skills and strategies, and engage in a participatory culture that encourages everyone to contribute according to their own capacities towards a shared collective experience.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to NCAAT's Youth Coordinator Ziya Joy for their mentorship and supervision, to the Seeding Change team for the opportunity and guidance and community, and to OUSF for funding this incredible summer fellowship experience.



Figure 1. title slide of my workshop on zine-making



Figure 2. Cover page of the collective zine made as a part of my workshop on zine-making



Figure 3. The design of my abolitionist postcard and sticker that centers "build community, not prisons" and centers youth empowerment.