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How Asian Americans Will Restore Balance to California

Although Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs) comprise the fastest growing group in the country, the [data](#) only captures a slice of our communities' contributions to California. It is individuals and their stories that better reflect the growing impact of APIs on the future and direction of this great state.

Today Jinjie Lin calls the United States his home. Like many immigrants, the hope of the American dream assuaged many fears Lin carried when leaving his family and friends. "Things will not always be easy," Lin was reminded when he left his native China, "but in America, there is opportunity."

Six years after coming to America, Lin is a U.S. citizen and proud graduate of UC Berkeley, a significant achievement for this former community college student. The path wasn't easy. After years of hard work starting at junior college and then transferring to the prestigious public university, Lin received a cold awakening one afternoon.

"I remember being called into my counselor's office and being told that I would be dropped from one of my classes, a class I needed to graduate. They told me it was because the university lacked resources," Lin recounted to staff members at the Asian Pacific Environmental Network.

My family immigrated to California from Korea, with a brief stop in Canada. In many ways, it was the classic immigrant narrative. My parents worked seven days a week running a small grocery store in Santa Ana. I spent my afternoons after school at the public library until one of my parents was able to leave the store and pick me up. I was one of the lucky ones because of when I was born.

I went to excellent public schools and ended up getting a world-class education at UCLA.

Camping and hiking trips to California's unrivaled state parks system shaped my passion for the environment. Today, those shared resources are considered a privilege because of "a lack of revenue." Good schools, abundant open space and safe streets allow us to be our higher, better selves by opening doors of opportunity for everyone, not just the few that can afford it.

These two stories force us to ask ourselves, "In the 15 years between when I graduated from UCLA, and Jinjie from Cal, how did the [eighth largest economy](#) in the world and one of the premier public education systems in America essentially go bankrupt?" The simple answer is that California is now facing the [unintended fiscal impacts](#) of Prop 13, which passed in 1978 -- a measure that my parents most likely would have supported.

After three decades of cutting fat, then muscle, California's elected officials are now forced to make draconian budget cuts to K-12, higher education and vital safety net programs like unemployment assistance. A new generation of APIs voters are rising up and supporting revenue measures that restore their hopes to live the American dream.

Propositions on the ballot this November like Prop [30](#) and [39](#) will raise over seven billion dollars for education and security net programs by asking the top 2 percent of Californians to pay their fair share in taxes and closing corporate tax loopholes.

Asian immigrants and working class APIs feel the urgency for change and our community organizations are uniting together to make it happen. APEN, 18 Million Rising, and MIV Action Fund, along with a coalition of 22 organizations, support the release of the first ever California API Voter Guide, which offers a comprehensive solution to get our economy back in balance and working for families. The first and most comprehensive of its kind, the API Voter Guide is available in five Asian languages in addition to English. Fundamentally, we know that change cannot happen without the meaningful engagement of Asian Americans -- a population that constitutes [1 in 10 California voters](#).

On November 6, Jinjie, my parents and I will be casting our votes. We're saying Yes on Prop 30 and 39 and no on 32 not just for our families but because we know that the American dream isn't for a select few -- it's for all of us that are here now and those that will come in the future.

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