



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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THE AIDS INSTITUTE SUPPORTS RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY

Washington, DC - The AIDS Institute is pleased to support the annual **National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**, set for Monday, May 19, 2008 with hopes of helping to put an end to HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination.

National Asian and Pacific Islander (A&PI) HIV/AIDS Awareness Day sprouted from the Banyan Tree Project, which is funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. The Banyan Tree Project is a groundbreaking national campaign designed to foster acceptance and compassion toward A&PIs living with, or at risk for HIV/AIDS. Other campaign activities include the development of public service announcements (PSAs) dramatizing the critical issue of HIV/AIDS in A&PI communities.

Through informing, teaching and setting a positive example, the project goal is to stop the cycle of discrimination and silence, by eliminating barriers that delay or prevent access to HIV prevention and care services.

Asian and Pacific Islanders (A&PI) comprise more than 40 different ethnic groups and communicate in over 100 languages and dialects. Yet the rich diversity of these communities also presents particular challenges in confronting HIV/AIDS in the 21st century. The U.S. A&PI general population is currently estimated at 12.8 million or 4.5 percent, and will grow to 37.6 million by the year 2050.

"AIDS rates are rising in API communities where saving face and silence are blankets that cover daily life, making sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases taboo topics," notes TAI Director of Education Michelle Scavnick. "**National API HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** is the first step in breaking the silence and reducing the shame associated with HIV/AIDS and we applaud the *Banyan Tree Project* for their efforts."

According to the The Banyan Tree Project, A significant number of female API's who are HIV positive or who have AIDS report not understanding their at risk status, or have an unwillingness to divulge information about their sexual history. Yet at least 80% of AIDS cases among API women have been attributed to heterosexual contact, the highest percentage of any racial/ethnic group. In addition, they have noted that many government agencies and healthcare providers do not perceive API's, especially women, as being at risk for HIV. Most API's do not learn of their HIV status until they are already symptomatic or through mandatory screening.

To learn more about the *Banyan Tree Project*, and for more information on **National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**, please visit: www.banyantreeproject.org as well as A&PI Wellness Center, www.apowellness.org

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For more information and to become involved in AIDS advocacy work, please contact
The AIDS Institute at: (202) 835-8373, or by email at: Info@theaidsinstitute.org or www.TheAIDSInstitute.org

*The AIDS Institute is a national nonprofit agency that promotes action for social change
through public policy research, advocacy and education.*