Chinese Community Action Coalition

Mission: To uphold and promote the civil rights of the Chinese in Hawaii; define the needs of the Chinese community; advocate for and provide sufficient social services for the Chinese community; and advance fairness and justice for all.

History: The CCAC was founded by Daniel Leung and Gregory Yee Mark. It was incorporated in December 1988. It has lobbied for 1) bilingual services, 2) increased services for the Chinese community, and 3) a Hawaii’s ethnic museum.

Activities: The Coalition’s Board of Directors serves as a permanent focus group to assess the needs of Honolulu’s Chinese community. In addition, a series of public forums were held from 1988 to 1991, to discuss and identify Chinese community needs. Finally, in 1991, CCAC conducted the Chinese Community Needs Assessment Survey. Its major findings were that Chinese immigrants believe that they could function better in the U.S. if they could improve their English language skills and become citizens.

Therefore, in 1996, the Coalition began a direct service English tutoring program with the support of over twenty-five students from the University of Hawaii’s at Manoa, and volunteers from numerous other Chinese organizations, with the goal of enabling immigrants to pass the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) exam. Since the project’s inception, approximately 1,000 immigrants and refugees have enrolled. Over half of these are senior citizens living in or near Chinatown, who mostly need a review of common English usage as well as an intensive review of the INS exam. Beginning in 1998, the Honolulu Chinese Citizenship Tutorial Program became a collaborative effort involving the Coalition, the Child and Family Service (CFS), the University of Hawaii’s at Manoa, Chaminade University, and Kapiolani Community College.

The English language/INS exam tutoring sessions are held daily at the CFS office, Sundays at the Sun Yat-sen Chinese Language School, and when necessary, at the Association for Chinese from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Each session is two hours long; there may be up to three sessions per day. The sessions focus upon two areas: 1) understanding and passing the INS exam, and 2) conversational English. The goals of the project are: 1. To help the immigrants of the Chinese community in Honolulu to pass their citizenship exams in order to achieve naturalization status and keep their welfare assistance; 2. To promote inter-ethnic agency, community, and university collaboration; 3. To raise the consciousness of university students about the discriminatory legislation targeted towards immigrants; and 4. To promote and facilitate the empowerment of immigrants in Hawaii.

The Coalition also carried out a historical study of the Chinese community in Kona, Hawaii; helped to celebrate the Chinese Bicentennial in Hawaii by initiating and co-sponsoring
a series of public forums concerning contemporary Chinese immigrant needs; promoted the 1990 Census’ Public Awareness Campaign for the Chinese community; and run a senior citizens group and the Chinese Health and Social Club. In the mid-1990’s, welfare reform measures and changes in U.S. immigration policies contributed to a negative impact upon immigrant communities throughout the United States. As a result of this, in 1996, the Chinese Community Action Coalition initiated a voter registration campaign that netted over 400 new Chinese voters. In October 1996, CCAC organized a political forum in Chinatown, at which over 425 people listened to candidates state their platforms in both English and Chinese.

Recently, the Coalition helped to co-host conferences such as the 24th annual Chinese Immigrant Services Agencies Network International, held in Honolulu October 9 and 10, 2003, that brought together representatives of the Chinese Immigrant Services Agencies Network International, from agencies in 20 major cities on the U.S. mainland, Canada, and Hong Kong, to discuss how to improve services to Chinese immigrants and refugees. The conference was cosponsored by the Hawaii Chinese History Center and the Hawaii Immigrant Services.

**Membership:** The Coalition is a non-profit community-based organization. Membership is for Chinese senior citizens, college professors and students, community social service providers, and professionals who share common concerns regarding the Chinese community. There are 17 board members, and 100 affiliated members.

**Association presidents**

1988–02    Gregory Yee Mark  
2003–pres.  Bryan Man  

Sources: Correspondence with Gregory Mark, Bryan Man, and Yuk Pang Law

Twelve board members at meeting in 2001 with co-founders Daniel Leung and Gregory Yee Mark, and current president Bryan Man