

Seminar on Citizenship, Immigration and Visa Issues

Hosted by: Duke Economic Dept, NAAAP, & TACAS

04/22/06

As the national debate over immigration reform continues to roil the country, more than 120 people pushed through literally stormy weather last April 22 to attend a **Seminar on Citizenship, Immigration and Visa Issues for Asians and Asian-Americans** at Duke University's White Hall.

The free public seminar was organized by TACAS and NAAAP and sponsored by the Duke Economic Dept. Featured presentations were question-and-answer sessions, and one-on-one consultations (in English, Mandarin, Korean and Japanese languages) with nine of the Triangle's leading immigration attorneys and with the Director of the USCIS (Citizenship and Immigration Services) for North Carolina.

- Richard Gottlieb, Director of the [USCIS Charlotte Sub-Office](#) (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, formerly the INS services operation)
- Nicola Prall of [Prall Immigration Law Firm](#) (Chinese/Malaysian-American)
- Murali Bashyam of [Bashyam & Spiro, LLP](#) (Indian-American)
- Laura Edgerton of [Maupin Taylor, LLP](#)
- Hong Zhou, [Hong Zhou Law Office](#) (Chinese-American)
- Jennifer Chun of [Chun Immigration Law Office](#) (Korean-American)
- Ame Coates of [Bashyam & Spiro, LLP](#)
- Ann Robertson of [Robertson Immigration Law Firm](#)
- Paul Suhr of [Paul Suhr Law Office](#) (Korean-American)
- Lynn Calder of [Pinnix & Allen, P.C.](#)

The attorneys and USCIS Director were divided into three panels dedicated to business-based immigration, family-based immigration, and deportation/removal, refugees/asylees, and immigration reform. A very wide range of subjects and problems were discussed.

The business immigration panel consisting of Attorneys Zhou, Bashyam, and Edgerton discussed H1B visas, PERM, permanent residency backlogs and retrogression, rejected labor certifications, requirements for companies hiring H1B workers including payment of prevailing wages, consequences of going out-of-status, Internet-available information, student visas, self-applications with bona fide job offers, selection of immigration counsel, and other topics.

The family-based immigration panel consisting of Attorneys Prall, Chun and Coates and Director Gottlieb discussed processing times for naturalization, family-based petitions and other services; the proposed creation of a full-service USCIS office in Raleigh; post-9/11 security checks and name checks; petitions for spouses, children, and siblings; backlogs in petitions for family members, which can stretch for more than one or two decades for siblings of US citizens from India, China and the Philippines.

The third panel consisted of Attorneys Suhr, Robertson and Calder. Atty. Robertson discussed naturalization and family petitions for asylees and refugees; conditions for asylum and adjudication in Arlington, VA; asylum cases from citizens of China (coercive population control including forced abortion and sterilization; religious persecution of groups like Falun Gong), India (persecution of religious groups such as Sikhs), Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Atty. Suhr led discussions on the removal and deportation process, the PATRIOT Act's expansion of grounds for removal, deportable offenses such as shoplifting, access of local law enforcement and immigration to each others' databases, and workplace raids. Atty. Calder discussed advocacy options and the various immigration reform proposals in Congress, including criminalization of undocumented migrants and of charity organizations and churches who provide services to migrants, earned legalization and guest worker programs, the DREAM Act dealing with children of undocumented migrants, and the Talent Bill dealing with retrogression problems, backlogs, H1B quotas and visa numbers for skilled professionals and their families. It was pointed out that comprehensive immigration reform affects not just undocumented Mexicans and Hispanics; it impacts legal immigrants, and migrants from Asia, Europe and Africa as well.

Note: These are only summary descriptions; persons with specific immigration concerns are advised to personally consult with an immigration attorney.

The seminar was hosted by the Duke University Department of Economics, NAAAP (National Association of Asian American Professionals), and TACAS (Triangle Area Chinese American Society)

Core coordinators for the seminar includes Attorney Nicola Prall, (NAAAP-NC Boardmember), Cyndy Yu-Robinson (TACAS External Affairs Director). Lily Chan (TACAS President), and Hector Javier (NAAAP-NC President)

Assisted in marketing, publicity, logistics and other areas includes Lori Bodee of Duke University, attorney Judy Tseng (NAAAP-NC Past President), David Yang (NAAAP/TACAS member), Julia Yip (NAAAP-NC Vice President), and Tingmei Jin (TACAS VP). Onsite support was provided by TACAS and NAAAP volunteers including Sam Tie, Frank Chan, Cindy Hardy, Sam Suen, Alex Chan, Ryan Chan, Vicky Yang, Susie Chen, and Binh Truong.

Nationally, 63% of Asian-Americans are foreign born. According to Census 2000 [figures](#), there were 93,133 foreign born from Asia in North Carolina, representing 21.7 percent of North Carolina's total foreign-born population, including refugees, undocumented migrants, students and highly-skilled professionals particularly in the RTP region. Much of this population plays pivotal roles in advancing North Carolina's globally competitive knowledge-based economy, yet Asian legal immigrants face some of the worst immigration, naturalization and family reunification backlogs in the world. Immigrant issues are thus a natural priority for our community, but Asian voices have been drowned out in the current national controversy over proposed reforms to our highly complex immigration laws. This immigration seminar was thus organized to give local Asians and Asian-Americans a venue to discuss specific concerns and solutions that affect their lives.

[Click here to download a copy of the event flyer.](#)

[Click here to download a Fact Sheet on "Asian Americans and Comprehensive Immigration Reform"](#) provided by our friends at the [Asian-American Justice Center](#) (AAJC).