



Chinese American Citizens Alliance

~ Looking Forward with a Look at History ~

In 1895, centered on exercising political rights of all Chinese-American citizens, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance was established by a small group of young Chinese born and raised in the United States. The organization was first established under the name "Native Sons of the Golden State" in 1895, but changed the name in 1915 and grew with the new name of Chinese American Citizens Alliance as more branches were established across the nation beyond San Francisco. Nonetheless, the purpose remained to "quicken the spirit of American patriotism...and to make secure their citizen's rights," a necessary goal during the era of anti-Asian propaganda in the late 19th century.

During the late 1800s, after the Gold Rush wave of initial migration, male Chinese immigrants were drawn to America to work on the transcontinental railroad. However, after the railroad was completed, white Americans worried that the Chinese effective but cheap labor would compete with white Americans for work. In response, a wave of anti-Chinese sentiment resulted, where a number of communities on the West Coast experienced riots in which Whites attacked Asians and destroyed Chinese sections of towns. This anti-Asian movement eventually led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that severely encouraged limiting immigration from Asia.

It was in this environment that the C.A.C.A. formed, by Chinese American youths who held strong in their belief of the importance of their American births and of their rights to set forth a new definition of what it meant to be American. The C.A.C.A. worked in many areas to provide benefits to Chinese Americans, including, for years, insurance benefits which were not available from mainstream sources. To inform the community, in 1924, the organization founded "The Chinese Times", the first Chinese-language

newspaper by American citizens whose unbiased news coverages brought respect and recognition to their efforts on an international level. The C.A.C.A. continued its efforts to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, leading the U.S. Senate to provide a formal apology in 2011, followed by an apology from the U.S. House of Representatives on 2012, for the discriminatory act. It championed the passage of House Resolution 415, recognizing the loyal and heroic participation of Chinese and Asian Americans in the Civil War. Over the decades, the C.A.C.A. has led other efforts in legislation to support Chinese Americans in immigration policy, and also to combat discrimination in areas such as education, economic opportunities, and crime, the last area including incidents where Chinese or Asians are targeted solely because of their race or ethnicity. The C.A.C.A. continues to grow with lodges now on the east and west coasts, north and south, of the U.S. Its mission to serve Chinese Americans has remained constant as it expanded not just geographically, but also with full membership now extended to women.

In New York, a prior organization also named Chinese American Citizens Alliance was formed by American-born Chinese in 1916 and is credited for many civil rights accomplishments. A hundred years later, after a thirty-years absence of any affiliated group in New York, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance of Greater New York was re-chartered on December 3, 2016. With the same goal and mission as the original Chinese American Citizens Alliance founded over 120 years ago, and with a fresh outlook and great respect for the community's heritage, CACAGNY will focus on real issues of concern to our community, such as crime, employment, and education, as it seeks to empower and enhance the future of Chinese Americans as citizens of the United States of America.

–Isabella Ding