

Overview

PrYSM was founded on November 8th, 2001, when a series of repeated Cambodian gang fights and resulting deaths inspired youth and local college students to fight for positive change in the community. The first campaign was against the deportation of Cambodian American refugees, who were being sent back to the country from which they fled a genocide and civil war. Today, PrYSM is a youth organization which challenges and supports Southeast Asian youth to become leaders, organizers, and critical thinkers, by offering educational workshops, leadership opportunities, mentorship, and oversight of youth-led community organizing projects.



Constituency

- Southeast Asian Youth
- LGBTQ

Mission

“PrYSM organizes at the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation by centering youth, female, queer, and people of color leadership in our campaigns, our organization, and our communities. PrYSM mobilizes queer Southeast Asian youth, families, and allies to build grassroots power and organize collectively for social justice.” –PrYSM website

Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Providence

Racial profiling and harassment by the Providence police—Non-white drivers in Rhode Island were searched at rates disproportionately higher than white drivers.¹

“We have this Cambodian guy that lives upstairs from the office. And he has a seven year old daughter and a three year old son and he was with his elderly father, and he was pulling into the parking lot and got pulled over by the police. Apparently the cops pulled him over because some white lady called them and told them that there’s a Cambodian guy harassing her on the road. And you know, we were just sort of watching that and helping to explain the situation, but the kids were terrified. And they didn’t do anything wrong and nor did their father. Oftentimes that’s [the kids’] first encounter with the police, is when the police are profiling their parents.” –Sarath Suong, Executive Director

Educational disparities among Southeast Asian (SEA)—data from 2010 indicate that:

- between 34-39% of SEA in Rhode Island do not have a high school diploma,²
- disaggregated data show that nationwide, SEA have among the highest high school dropout rates.^{3,4}

“A lot of young people are pushed out and not graduating and not having the time and the space to think about life goals and life plans.”

Lack of daycare—places the burden on family members (relative caregivers)

“Just this last year alone we had two young women drop out of PrYSM because they had to stay home and take care of their siblings or their nieces and nephews...we see a lot of the elders and the grandparents doing the babysitting and without the resources to pay them for their labor. And a lot of the parents are working a lot too so when one of them has a baby ... she had to stop working and then only he was working and then they had to move into his parent’s home to help take care of the child.”

Mental health and stress experienced by adults impacts children zero to five

“The mental health strain on the parents of these young children also affects these children’s health and livelihood. You know if you have to work so much because you weren’t able to graduate high school and at the same time being constantly harassed by the police when you’re coming home, it takes a toll on you.”

Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Providence

18%

of young children (ages 2-5) in Rhode Island were **overweight** in 2007.⁵

81%

of adolescents do not eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.⁵



Only 1 in 5 high school students exercise an hour a day, every day.⁵

PrYSM's Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

• **Community Safety Act (CSA)**

PrYSM led the campaign to pass a local city ordinance to hold the Providence Police Department accountable for their racial profiling practices. The CSA will restore due process rights back to young people who are put into the gang database and it will prohibit Providence, as a city, to collaborate with ICE.

"It's been four years of organizing, of campaigning, of mobilizing, of negotiations and tonight is the second city council hearing to get it voted. I would say [it's been] our biggest major victory for the past 15 years. And it's exciting. And I really think that with the Community Safety Act as law, the community and PrYSM will have a tool to defend our community and especially our young people from the police and from the state from throwing them into the prison pipeline."

• **The Quality of Life for Southeast Asian Youth in Providence Report**

PrYSM surveyed over 15% of Southeast Asian young people living in Providence (2007 and 2010) and published a report that covers various topics of interest to the community, including: the history of Southeast Asians in Providence, the experiences of queer and trans Southeast Asian youth, education, gangs and the police, and young women.

"That's the first time there's ever research and data done for the community, by the community in Providence about Southeast Asian young people...we see [the publication of the report] as a success, 'cause we were able to put out a narrative and hard numbers about the disparities and the needs of this community. And it's nice to be able to go to universities and see it in people's syllabus or on their bookshelves."

Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

Drop-in Space for young people (24 and under) —provides a safe space to hang out, have discussions, build community and become engaged in other programs and campaigns.

Core Organizing Programming—cohort of high school aged youth who do leadership development, political education, and campaign work.

Community Defense Project—legal support program (e.g., court support, direct representation at trials or referrals); mental health support services for survivors of police brutality; community organizing initiatives to engage survivors and families of those affected by police violence.



Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health

1. Couple direct services with organizing

“Having a community lawyer who specializes in police encounters, and being able to offer that as a real resource for the community. So that it's not like we're talking to families and saying, ‘Okay, we'll get back to you, we'll find you a lawyer.’ Actually it's the lawyer that's talking to the families and the individuals, and it's been great to have her on staff, it's been great to have her so accessible. Making sure that we can keep a community lawyer on staff and accessible to the community is really important, in doing defense work and doing organizing against state violence.”

2. Prioritize relationship building.

“We try to prioritize our relationships to each other, first and foremost, before our work and our relationship to the movement. And I'm relearning this lesson again in these past few months. In knowing that we must always, as hard as we're doing campaign work, and as hard as we're doing the organizing work, we must also work just as hard to really check in with each other and to support one another. And that's always been a value of ours, as a family. We use the word family more than we do organization when we describe PrYSM.”

Allies/Partnerships Working on Children’s Health

- Making Connections- Chicago, IL <http://mcstudy.norc.org/>
- The Center for Southeast Asians- Providence, RI <http://www.cseari.org/>
- Southeast Asian Freedom Network- national collective <http://www.prysm.us/movementbuilding/national/>
- Grassroots Asians Rising- Oakland, CA <https://www.grassrootsasians.org/home>



Website: <http://www.prysm.us>

Address: 669 Elmwood Ave. Box 16, Suite B-7,
Providence, RI 02907

Telephone: 401.338.7450

Email: info@prysm.us

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/PrYSMPvidence/>

Twitter: @PrYSMFam

Instagram: @prysmfam

LMU | LA
Psychology Applied
Research Center

Loyola Marymount University



1. (2014, December 15). Data Shows Racial Profiling Increasing In Searches During Motor Vehicle Stops. Retrieved from <http://riaclu.org/news/post/data-shows-racial-profiling-increasing-in-searches-during-motor-vehicle-stops>
2. (2017, January). ARISE: Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education. Retrieved from [https://d3n8a8pro7vymx.cloudfront.net/ariseducation/pages/21/attachments/original/1487623066/ARISE_Fact_Sheet_\(1\).pdf?1487623066](https://d3n8a8pro7vymx.cloudfront.net/ariseducation/pages/21/attachments/original/1487623066/ARISE_Fact_Sheet_(1).pdf?1487623066)
3. (2017, April). The Condition of Education. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coj.asp
4. Yam, Kimberly (2017, June 29). Rhode Island House Passes Act that Would Expose Asian-American Achievement Gap. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/rhode-island-education-asian-americans_us_59526cb9e4b02734df2d7e06
5. (2010). Eat Smart, Move More: Rhode Island: A Plan for Action 2010-2015. Retrieved from <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/actionplans/2010InitiativeForHealthyWeight.pdf>