[4/27/22] HIP Electoral Organizing and Youth Led

[00:00:00] **Opening:** Apex express Asian Pacific expression.

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[00:00:30] **Paige Chung:** Hello. Welcome to acre Thursday on apex express radio we are going to interview one of our 11 organizations from the Asian American civil rights equality network. Also known as the AACRE network I'm Paige Chung. And I'm the host of acre Thursday. Today we're talking to Hmong innovative politics, also known as HIP

[00:00:49] Welcome to Kao Ye Thao and Maki from HIP. And we're going to talk about hips growth, their new strategic plan and their upcoming election year and their organizing around the election year. Will you each [00:01:00] introduce your names and roles at hip and one person that you admire?

[00:01:03] **Kao Ye:** Hello everyone. This is Kao Ye Thao with Hmong Innovating Politics and I work at the director of policy and partnerships with HIP here in Sacramento. People that I admire on my sisters.

[00:01:17] They've always been role models to me. They've always supported me, through my life and are still folks that love me unconditionally. I definitely think of my sisters.

[00:01:29] **Maki:** Hi, I'm Maki. She, her pronouns. And I am the Sacramento lead community organizer at hip. And I am currently in nascent inland also known as Sacramento by the Capitol and one person that I admire actually, you know what I've been at hip for a couple of years now, and the reason why I've stuck around for so long and want to continue the work is actually because of the women who co founded and also the women who have came into hip and continue to be such fierce and loving leaders in the [00:02:00] community.

[00:02:00] **Paige Chung:** Oh, wow thank you both. Maki, can you tell us a little bit about Hmong Innovativing Politics and the organizing strategies you guys are using right now?

[00:02:09] **Maki:** Yes. So our mission and vision at hip right now we actually have spent the last year restructuring and all that jazz, but for the most part, our mission is to advance social justice and build power with hmong youth and families through leadership development and multi-generational community organizing.

[00:02:27] And we envision a California of empowered communities that thrive in a socially and economically just democracy. We are actually based in Sacramento and Fresno as well. But originally this whole thing started in Sacramento with just a core group of friends who were like college graduates and hip wasn't like a thing yet, but folks were just wanting to empower the community and they came together super grassroots, just meeting up at like their friend's houses and stuff.

[00:02:56] And at first they were registering Hmong voters in the [00:03:00] community. This is way back in like an aisle way back, but this is back one decade ago in 2012, actually we're hitting our 10 year anniversary actually. And they were able to actually register 1500 Sacramento residents. And it was there, those residents first time participating in the election as well.

[00:03:18] So that was a huge deal. And so I think through that building With community. Around that same time, there was actually a lot of school closures happening at the SAC city unified school district as well. And they were trying to close down 12 schools and of course this is like in south SAC where like majority of the schools were in underserved black indigenous people of color communities.

[00:03:38] And so the parents and families that were concerned especially like the Hmong and Southeast Asian parents that were concerned, didn't have anyone else to go to. And so they reached out to these grassroots organizers. That they have been seeing around the neighborhood. And they was that hip was able to organize Hmong families alongside with other organizations who were organizing black and brown communities.

[00:03:58] And everyone fought together [00:04:00] against the school closures. Like unfortunately seven schools were still closed, but they were able to say the others. And then even after that they fought to reopen those schools to be either community hubs or something to so to community. And so right now our Sacramento office is actually in one of those former elementary schools.

[00:04:19] So if you go to our office, it's, it's literally a like former like elementary classroom with like a little sink and everything, and it's super cute. And if you actually go into this place, it's the fruit Ridge community collaborative and we're in room 12, but the whole building itself is just each classroom has been.

[00:04:38] We refurbished into a, like a nonprofit organizations office. And so as you're walking through the hallways, there's just so many resources and so many different folks that you'll like me. And and it's just so great that this was able to be reopened in that way and not just to like, be a vacant lot right.

[00:04:54] Or to be commercialized into something else. So super appreciative and super like humbling [00:05:00] to like, keep that story in mind, especially since like, I wasn't there for the origins, but I know these folks who were there,

[00:05:06] **Paige Chung:** wow. What an amazing story. It's like these kids who are from the neighborhood coming back from college and then saving all these schools that are being closed down.

[00:05:15] Unfortunately some of them won't be able to save, but that's an amazing place that you are able to organize from it's so like beautiful how that comes all the way full circle. Do you want to add more to that cow

[00:05:27] **Kao Ye:** to what Marcie was saying? I think that that origin story really speaks to how young people have always been at the forefront of Hip's work from our very beginnings to now. And still, when I think of our organizing strategy, it's really about aligning our work to center young people and, and their families.

[00:05:47] And that's really what we've been really thinking about unintentionally building out in the past year and a half with our strategic planning that is still ongoing. I think that [00:06:00] was a fundamental way that we understand our organizing is that in order to allow our young people to. Live as their full selves and to feel empowered and to feel part of the community.

[00:06:14] , we really have to support them in a framework that we call belong belief become. And we can elaborate more about that, but I think it's really exciting because I think this framework is about seeing them and supporting them as their whole selves, building their confidence and building their belongingness within their community so that they feel like they can actually participate in the community and be change agents and then providing them opportunities, whether that is through, civic engagement work but providing those opportunities for them to practice and really apply what they're learning about themselves, their community.

[00:06:49] **Paige Chung:** Yeah. You mentioned having youth and family at the core of the organizing. Can you speak about like, why that's so strategic for hips specifically in the places you organize Sacramento and Fresno

[00:06:59] **Maki:** [00:07:00] Yeah. So I think. In, in the origin story, right. We recognize that it was like the young folks who are organizing, but also that it was the parents and the the students that were really needing to support. And I think in the past few years doing this work we've gotten involved in like doing these civic engagement programs doing it alongside API fours CPA, partner organizations like APEC in KGA.

[00:07:24] And it's just been really great. But in doing that work and finally becoming like an, a real nonprofit organization a few years ago we were able to start hiring staff and outreach specialists to, work with the community and to do the canvassing and to also like really check in on community and to build relationships.

[00:07:42] And we also realized that like the folks who are coming into our program spaces were all like youth and young adults. And as we started to create these organic relationships with folks who are coming through our space coming through our programming we really wanted to cater to their needs and make sure that, [00:08:00] what, like, if these are the folks that are needing to be heard, and these are the folks who are eating space, right.

[00:08:04] Because when we think about what's happening at the Capitol, when we think about what's happening in the local election, the way we think about like local policies and things that are really hitting home for folks it's a lot of the young folks who are speaking up and speaking out, but needing a space for it, especially for among a Southeast Asian folks.

[00:08:20] There's no other organizations in the area that are doing this work for long as Southeast Asian youth and young folks. When you go to the city council, when you go to. All of these things like folks that are calling in, it's not representative of the whole Sacramento area or the Fresno population as well.

[00:08:37] Right. Speaking about like both offices, it's the same thing for both. And it wasn't until recently that, like we finally have an Asian and not just an Asian council member, but a female Hmong council member. My Vang is finally at the city, but that doesn't mean that, racism goes away.

[00:08:53] That doesn't mean that all of a sudden there's no more barriers. Right. But that, like, we still want to make sure that we're able [00:09:00] to connect with our community. And so we can kind of like, not exactly level that playing field, but it's more so of just like, and it's more than just like representation matters.

[00:09:09] Right. But to really provide this opportunity for our communities to feel empowered and to feel a part of the community and to also be able to. Be civically engaged, but not in a way where like, it's not that they are like the ones not like they are the ones that are like that, that I, not that they're the tools, but it's that the voting is a tool for them.

[00:09:35] So that they are so like, I would love for our community and our young folks to be so empowered. So, motivated to make change, to do what they want to do, that they can see all of these tools in front of them and be able to utilize those tools for change.

[00:09:52] **Kao Ye:** And like when you look at the brawl numbers, that data the median age for mung folks in California is actually [00:10:00] 23. And that really means that our population is predominantly young folks. And so by really investing in our young people. There's so much power to that to so much part that they can build within themselves now, but also for the future.

[00:10:20] And I think what's so powerful, like when I think of youth and families, and it's not to say that, when you're working with young people, you're not working with everyone else in the community. But I think that like empowering our young people because they are bridges within the community. Often like in our own families will live in multi-generational households.

[00:10:37] So as a young person, like I had to learn from an early age to advocate for myself and my family. And that's that's kind of been like a narrative that we hear a lot in first generation, refugee families in America. So I do think that like, it's so powerful to invest in our young people presently now because they are really our future, but it also makes so much sense because we're [00:11:00] predominantly a young population.

[00:11:02] **Maki:** And I want to add on real quick, too. So sorry. Now, like how you just said, just like sparked something. I know that like right now, too there's so much like conversations with like what's going on at like the school districts and with the teacher shortages and then even like with the education fund and stuff and, and are fighting about that and how it relates back to like our youth and our young folks too.

[00:11:24] And, working with the young folks right now, like I keep telling them, like, it was like when I was growing up, people would tell us you have a future, but now I'm like telling the young folks like, no, no, you're the now like this is happening right now. It's affecting you right now. Like folks are telling you to wait until they're like that, that we need to prep you for the future.

[00:11:42] But in reality, like we should've prepped you like for right now, because there's so much going on right now. And I think I just, I was talking with someone who was like 21 and they were saying that, they were concerned for the next generation and I'm looking at them like, no, no, no. I'm concerned about you, like this is happening to you, this housing crisis, this like everything [00:12:00] around you is happening to you.

[00:12:01] And so like, we gotta like figure that out too.

[00:12:05] **Paige Chung:** Yeah. I didn't know that about the mung community in Fresno Sacramento being the median age, being 23. So it's so strategic to, to consider like, the majority of the groups and also how crucial that role is to play in a household with, grandmothers and grandfathers and elders, and then, also their younger siblings and then being sort of the mediator between all those different generations.

[00:12:27] And I was thinking too, like historically Southeast Asian people when they migrate to the U S after, the war in Southeast Asia, Many of them are so, vulnerable to incarceration, to to gang violence, all those sorts of things and what an empowering way to spend and focus on the people who are also the most powerful, but used to be like, and maybe in some ways are so some very vulnerable populations. And yeah, that's amazing work that you all are doing. Can you talk about how you both got involved in hip and what your journey has been to arriving at hip?[00:13:00]

[00:13:00] **Kao Ye:** I will start us off, I started, I knew of hip starting in high school. That was the first time I learned about hip and I think that's really beautiful because I meant that, like I learned about organizing and working for community change at a young age when I was still learning about the world.

[00:13:16] And honestly, when I learned about a hip, I was so intrigued by the mission and the work of hip as a young person, I knew that I always wanted to do work in, in my community of Sacramento. But often, like when you think of what is community work look like, it was usually like community service, right?

[00:13:35] A lot of like direct services that you're helping to contribute to, but you don't really learn about organizing and actually thinking about the work from like a systems perspective. And so with him, Learning about voting and learning about like actually bringing my community along with me to advocate for changes that we want to see, like that was such a powerful mission.

[00:13:57] And so I continue to stay [00:14:00] involved with him throughout my college years volunteering, whether that be canvassing, phone banking, helping table at events, it was something I enjoyed so much. And so when I got the opportunity to come on board in 2021, I was like, yes, like, let me really go where my heart is.

[00:14:20] Right. Because I think the work with hip is where it doesn't really feel like work. It's work that is so personal. And so, that's, that's how I got started with it. And that's how I I'm, that's why I'm still with hip

[00:14:34] **Maki:** yeah. So this is Maki. I think for me coming, my story with hip I actually used to want to work in education or public education. A few years back when I first like, one of the reasons why I went to college and all of that also was because I wanted to like make changes in education system because growing up, like I can see like the disconnect and just seeing like the disparity in our communities as well.

[00:14:59] And I really wanted [00:15:00] to go back and change that. Cause I kind of figured, that that's where the root of it is. And I had such a strong connection with with being an educator. But coming out of college, Going into testing the waters. I never got my teaching credentials, but I like did a lot of different, tried a lot of different things at the local schools and stuff.

[00:15:19] And I talked to a lot of administrators and I realized that this was just not what I wanted to do, that the change that I wanted to make was not going to happen if I get sucked into the public education sector, because then it, it just was a different route, me wanting to do systems change work, but not knowing that it was called systems change work.

[00:15:38] Because I didn't like grow up with organizing skills or being an organizer. But I did do a lot of working with student organizations on campus and doing like peer counseling and supporting them going through college. But I've never done like the actual, like the social justice aspect of it.

[00:15:54] And I never knew like how to name all of those things. And it wasn't until I discovered that HIP was was hiring some like [00:16:00] temporary, like outreach specialist and it was super seasonal, but you know what I saw and I was just like, let me just take a swing at this and do a complete restart. And I'm totally down to just see how this goes.

[00:16:10] And I think within the first week of working as an outreach specialist doing canvassing and phone banking, I was so drawn in with just the way that I was able to engage with the community and also knowing on a deeper level of like what hip was doing and the, goal, knowing that even though it was like slow work change doesn't happen overnight, but that I was on a path that made sense for me.

[00:16:34] That's what sucked me in. And then after that I became a team lead. I became a seeding change fellow with the the national cohort through CPA's seeding change program. And then I was actually placed at hip and that's when I started to work at hip. And then I became a community organizers, full-time staff at hip, and that's kinda like how I got into it.

[00:16:54] And I feel like the layers of hip just kept like unraveling itself as I kept going through that. And I [00:17:00] kept wanting to know more and more about organizing and about what's really going on here and how to really support our young folks so that so that they can also find themselves to, and I think that's why, when Cal how you was mentioning the belong believe become piece earlier part of that strategy is also recognizing.

[00:17:15] Our young folks who have gone through like the programs or even myself included, or other staff, have gone through those like steps without like realizing it, finding that sense of belonging at hip and finding like that, that moment where you're just like, boom, yes, this is me, I'm going to own it, and I can of course the struggles with imposter syndrome with . But it's, about overcoming that and really like taking ownership of having a voice in these spaces that we were not meant to have a voice in.

[00:17:42] **Paige Chung:** Yeah, thank you both for that. I really love hearing about your journeys about how you got to hip. I think sometimes there's this idea about where change can happen. I'm really glad that you talked about that on part of your journey Maki and like how both of you are really gravitating towards system change. HIP [00:18:00] recently conducted a strategic plan. Can you talk about that and what it entails?

[00:18:04] **Kao Ye:** We are still currently going through that strategic planning process. I feel like we're making such huge strides in that process, but last year we we hired consultants to help us really be evaluate kind of do like a kind of level set us to succeed. How we, how far we've come and where we are at, and really making sure to reevaluate the work to ensure that the way we were doing our work, that it was aligning with our values and that it was really centering our young folks.

[00:18:38] And so part of that process really has been a process that has involved all staff. So this is the first time that as an all staff, we are co-creating, and co-designing what our strategy is together. And it's been a long process, but honestly, it's been so, very impactful. Maki, do you have anything to [00:19:00] add about that strategic planning process?

[00:19:02] **Maki:** Yeah, I can add a little bit We definitely had to like, take a pause after the 2020 elections. I say pause, Bain reality. Like we did so much last year in regards to like COVID response and also healing space for our young folks. But in reality, I think it was just in recognition that like 2018 to 2020 was just such a rush of elections after elections.

[00:19:23] And then we were trying to build up our youth and young adult space to support folks who are also, needing that space as well. But in, in terms of like our staff and, and everything towards the end of 2020, there was a lot of energy, but it was also a lot of feelings of like burnout just from the heaviness of everything and the emotional toll from COVID happening the pandemic.

[00:19:43] And then also all of the violence that was happening as well. Especially towards black folks as well, and really addressing all of that in 2020, it was just a lot. And so, at the end of 2020, we also had a couple of directors like transition out into doing some amazing work actually.

[00:19:59] But it was also [00:20:00] time to, recognize that we're at a good point where we can like reevaluate, reassess where we're at and consider all of the young folks who have been a part of this space and the folks who are needing this space, like what, how do we re format ourselves to really fit the needs of our communities in that way. And so, I think for us, it was just really thinking about how to integrate our programs and they provide a lot more like healing support and wellness into everything I'm really wanting to incorporate like the narrative as well, because w when it comes to civic engagement, sometimes they can get really like number heavy, a number of driven.

[00:20:36] But in reality, we know that what's really going to like what the biggest takeaway is. Isn't just the numbers, but the numbers of folks who are really being transformed from our programming, who are the folks who are being transformed from from being in our internships, from being in our youth and young adult spaces from being in our healing spaces, because we are trying to provide something that's different than what other folks are [00:21:00] providing.

[00:21:00] Right. Really trying to. In this work of trying to dismantle the patriarchy and dismantling capitalism and stuff it is really heavy work that I mean it's Fresno, it's Sacramento, it's the valley we're not in the bay surrounded by other folks who are doing this kind of solidarity work and doing this transformative work. So we're just trying our best to hold it down out here and also like reinvent things, but also not reinventing the wheels. Right. We're definitely like calling up on our friends from other organizations to get some feedback too in, in terms of like our curriculum and programming and but then also like shifting it and adjusting it to work for our Hmong communities, right? Because that the healing that our young folks are needing is going to be different than what other folks in other communities are needing. And so really wanting to incorporate all of that and also in terms of trauma too and family trauma and intergenerational trauma, like that's going to look a lot different too. And so like, it's been one heck of a year trying to figure all of that out, honestly. And a lot of trial and error. And I [00:22:00] think we're finally at a point where we do have programs coming up in the upcoming spring and this summer as well. And so we are just like wrapping up like our strategic planning,

[00:22:10] **Paige Chung:** Yeah, it sounds like both of you are really talking about the process of both like living life in the pandemic and the black lives matter uprisings. And then also thinking about centering the young people through the process of getting the focus to be about healing and wellness in the community. And I know that you also do a lot of programming around the youth in the summer. And can you talk about the significance of the summer organizing Institute and what that does for the youth in the hip community? Kao

[00:22:41] **Kao Ye:** of course. And I actually not directly leading the planning of the summit organizing institutes Maki, actually. For the past few years has led that development. So I want to leave ample space for my, to be able to talk about that experience in that purpose. I remember before I was working at hint, [00:23:00] I remember seeing the summer organizing Institute and I remember wanting to participate in it, unfortunately did a time conflict. I wasn't able to, but I think that as a young person, it appealed to me because it was a way for me to like really be able to build my skills in being able to really work on social justice and really work in my community, but also be surrounded by other folks. And so for me, as I think about the similar organizing institutes from my understanding, this is our third year really coming in into this programming year and every year has been a little bit different, but I think that at the core, it really is about.

[00:23:42] Providing an environment for young people to really feel belonging with other young folks that are also passionate or interested in learning more about their history and also their community, but also really starting to build their skills in becoming [00:24:00] and taking action. As as, as an individual that really wants to be involved in the community.

[00:24:05] So I think that there's kind of, it's sort of multifaceted, but at the core, it really is about starting to build that community and young leaders. And yeah, I mean, right now we are in that planning process, we've brought in new organizers that. Has energized that planning process, I think, bringing in more folks with different perspectives as our lead community organizer I knew that Maki is very much directly involved.

[00:24:31] And so yeah, making space Marquis for you to also add in based on, your experience over the years with the Institute and what's to come I would love to give the space to you.

[00:24:41] **Maki:** Yeah, no, thank you. That was really beautifully put actually cow. But yes. So, the summer organizing is to and, and where definitely not stuck on that name too.

[00:24:52] Right. Just because I think for the most part, understanding the fluidity of Change in our community and [00:25:00] of the youth and the young folks who are continuously growing as well. When we had named it the summer organizing Institute in 2020 prior to that I actually was working with another community organizer at hip Katie, who is in Fresno, who is now our director of programs.

[00:25:15] But we were both doing similar things where I like she was also bringing up youth to do like programming for them to like just develop their own leadership skills. And I was doing the same in Sacramento. We realized, you know what, let's just do this, where we're like we do a couple of days during the summer as like a program for our youth and young adults to just really get to build a cohort together and get to know each other and build community with each other while also experiencing like the individual transformation, the leadership development connection with the community and to really.

[00:25:47] Develop like their love and passion for the community and social justice. Right. Like, and really like figuring out like their root causes of things. I think one of the things that we don't learn in [00:26:00] school is, is the critical thinking lens. Because going through school, we just, we just get told to do this and that, and from left to right.

[00:26:07] In order to get a good grade, you just got to follow the books. But in reality, I'm like whose books are these whose narrative is that? And so for a lot of like folks in the Hmong community, a lot of our parents push us to be doing well academically. But when it comes to like civic engagement, when it comes to Having the critical thinking lens, making decisions on our own and really like being independent.

[00:26:30] No, one's really pushing for that. And so I think for us, we just really wanted a way for folks to really develop and own their own personal leadership. Right. And whatever that may look like for them and understanding that in order for them to get there, it's so much deeper than just just going to like a leadership conference and being like.

[00:26:49] You got the powering, you go do it it's one thing to like inspire folks. That's inspiring words versus like having folks actually go through a three, four day process to get like the tools [00:27:00] to really do their own healing work and to really address like the root causes of why trauma is happening and why trauma is it happening in our community and really acknowledging how colonialism has affected us all and really acknowledging the.

[00:27:13] That like, you were saying earlier with the, the incarceration rates that were happening in the nineties and stuff like really acknowledging that was also another thing related to narrative work, right. Where we were fed and told stories about like how Southeast Asian folks are like, like if you're brown, then like you're a bad person, and really getting like racially profiled for that and not understanding that that this is a systemic problem. It's not that that racism just happened overnight. And I think it, it just really this program really allows folks to just Dig into their own personal self, on a deeper level.

[00:27:47] So that way, like whatever they choose to do after, like they don't have to, stick around and become like a part of our youth and young adult programming or anything. Right. Like we're not pushing for that. This is really so that our young folks can go [00:28:00] and like into their community. Just feeling empowered to be themselves.

[00:28:04] **Paige Chung:** I know for me when I was getting politicized in my early college years and in my early youth, it was very eye opening for me to learn about colonialism, as you spoke about, and also thinking about the impacts of colonialism on a personal community and like a family level how my family has personally been impacted by the war.

[00:28:24] I'm wondering for you, both of you who are like leaders in this summer organizing Institute, are there moments or is it like stories where you see eyeopening things happening for young people as you guys are going through the workshops and stuff? Like, do you have a story in mind at all?

[00:28:39] **Maki:** There's definitely a few. So it was because like when, when we were doing these so during our summer organizing Institute, , I love like flow. And so, when, when Katie and I had originally created this we, we kind of. It had things spaced out in the curriculum, spaced out in a way where we saw it flowing a certain way similar to like the belong believe the come.

[00:28:59] Right. [00:29:00] And so in this sense, it was like day one is about the self, and digging into some of that, Southeast Asian history and also talking about gender. And then day two was really digging into more of the roots and looking at our personal narratives.

[00:29:12] And then also starting to think about digging into the systems of oppression and the four eyes as well. And then day four was let's organize, what is organizing? And then folks realize that they've been organizing, a lot of folks have organized before in ways that they don't recognize as organizing.

[00:29:28] And it's the day that the last day is usually just, this big day of like realization for them. But throughout the. Three four days, depending on which, which program it is because we've been trying different things. So the first year it was like three-day program last year was a four day program who knows what it's gonna look like this year yet.

[00:29:44] We're trying to still figure out the details. But for the most part at the end of each workshop, we also allow space and time for folks to process and to do either like journaling reflections or to do vocalized reflections as well. And folks definitely do resonate [00:30:00] with it because a lot of folks who are like in high school or in college depending on which, age range they are in and also depends on their relationship with their parents too.

[00:30:07] Right. Not everyone knows like the stories, the refugee story and about the wars and stuff. And for folks who do know they're starting to like see things from a different lens and they're just like, holy crap. I didn't realize this was what was happening on the other layer. And then for other folks, you're also hearing things about just how they're gaining more curiosity.

[00:30:27] And they're wanting to like do their own personal research, and this is from folks who may have previously not, been doing like their own research because once again, when we're in school, we're not really told to like, have our own perspective and lens. But we're told to do research based on a specific subject in a specific, very specific way. And so I think this just allowed folks to really like have like their own opinions and start to develop their own critical lens of things as well.

[00:30:51] Oh, I do have one story. And this one actually made me cry. But last year we were doing our program and this was far using young adults [00:31:00] program because it was virtual because of COVID.

[00:31:02] We actually ended up doing it like cross region. So it was a mix of Fresno and SAC youth in one cohort. And then it makes us sack and Fresno young adults in another cohort. And in the youth cohort after we finished the programming, I think it was about like a month later. So it was probably like September or something and a parent messaged us.

[00:31:23] And this mom, she was just saying that, you know what? My daughter was a part of this summer program. And after being a participant, I have noticed that she is more confident and proud of being Hmong. She even ran for activities commissioner at her middle school and won on her own. She applied and she worked for this position.

[00:31:41] I can't help, but know it is because of their experience with your program. And I still remember, like at this point I was just so tired of working, but I was like it's this, that keeps me going too, and I just remember crying about it and I'm kind of, I'm crying right now too, but just reading it again, bringing back those [00:32:00] memories, and this is like why I do what I do.

[00:32:02] **Paige Chung:** A lot of hearts in the room. I feel so emotional after hearing that story. Kao do you have any stories like that or moments like that with the youth.

[00:32:11] **Kao Ye:** Sadly, I don't get to work too much directly with our young people, but what's so cool is that I feel like most of folks in our organization or most of at least half are still young adults like I recently. And so when we say young adults when we were talking about youth, we're talking about high school, age 13 to 18, and then for young adults, it's 18 to 25. And I just turned 26 last year. So I feel like I'm still very much a young adult and I'm still going through my belong belief, become process of being an organizer in the community and figuring out what that really means for me and in him.

[00:32:52] A majority of us are. Half of us at least are still young adults. And so I think I, I can speak on rarely someone that's [00:33:00] really coming to mind is Tammy who's actually Fresno field organizers. So Tammy currently is based in, in Fresno and in their work they're helping to organize our civic engagement programs.

[00:33:13] Our year-round civic engagement programs, Tammy had started as an outreach specialist, very similar to Maki's journey as well. And after, after going through that experience as an outreach specialist Tammy became a team lead for us and then has now transitioned to our field organizer.

[00:33:34] And so I think that journey mirrors a lot of like what of everyone who works with PIP. And there's a lot of our journeys. Coming through him in some server capacity and feeling that sense of belonging and building that confidence within ourselves to continue the work. I think that Tammy's story really resonates with my own journey as well.

[00:33:54] And it's just so beautiful that to Maki's point, right? Like really [00:34:00] we realized that like as a young organization with leaders that are from the community building ourselves up in the work is just as important. And that investment that we put in ourselves is, is a reflection of the love and investment that we will provide for other young folks in the community as well. So providing that same level of care, because I think the journey for everyone as an individual is also very different, but very similar in a lot of ways.

[00:34:29] **Paige Chung:** Thank you for sharing about Tammy's story Kao.

[00:34:31] We'll be taking a short break to listen to Annie Nguyen's First EP called change of plans. And includes three songs called, "Remember," "Sidewalks," and "2003". You're listening to 94.1 KPFA San Francisco, 89.3, Berkeley 88.1, Fresno 97.5 in Santa Cruz and online@kpfa.org.

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[00:36:24] **Paige Chung:**

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[00:40:41] **Paige Chung:** Annie Nguyen's First EP called change of plans. And includes three songs called, "Remember," "Sidewalks," and "2003". You're listening to 94.1 KPFA San Francisco, 89.3, Berkeley 88.1, Fresno 97.5 in Santa Cruz and [00:41:00] online@kpfa.org. Let's get back to our interview with Hmong innovative politics.

[00:41:05] So I know that this year is an election year. Can you tell us about what hip has planned for organizing around the midterm election season?

[00:41:13] **Kao Ye:** Yeah. So this year is an election year. The primary election is on is June 7th and then the general election is November 8th. So for this year HIP we are currently planning our six months civic engagement program for the rest of the year. And for us, when we think of civic engagement, it really does align with our organizing and our youth leadership development, because for us voting is just one of the tools right.

[00:41:41] That we can use to do systems change. And so for civic engagement, a lot of our work has been around voter education and information. What the program usually entails is really doing direct outreach to community members, making sure that they [00:42:00] understand how to vote when to vote and just really help them navigate through that process.

[00:42:04] When we first started really when his work first started and we w we were hyper-focused on the, the voter education and that civic engagement component and to the state, that's still a core component of our work. Really, because for us, one of the ways that we can ensure that the voices of our community is heard is through voting.

[00:42:25] Right. And again I think what's beautiful is that through the strategic planning process, we're understanding that this is while a core component, just one of the components that we can really. Create transformative change. And so that's what the civic engagement program is entailing. We do have the art planning volunteer days.

[00:42:44] So for folks that want to get involved there will be more opportunities that will be promoted through our social media channels. So please do be on the lookout for those opportunities to phone bank and canvas with us in our [00:43:00] civic engagement work.

[00:43:01] **Paige Chung:** Your social media handles are?

[00:43:03] **Kao Ye:** On Facebook? Please follow him at hip California and also on Instagram at a hip California. What I love about our social media is that we're very active. And so we're continuously providing information, promoting different opportunities. COVID the COVID pandemic is still very much real. So we also provide a lot of resources, ongoing resources on.

[00:43:30] **Paige Chung:** And can you talk about the difference between the primary election on June 7th and the general election on June 8th for the listeners?

[00:43:38] **Kao Ye:** Yeah. So the midterm or commonly known as the primary election will be on June 7th. And then there's actually another election this year, which is called the general election on November 8th.

[00:43:51] And the difference between the primary election on June 7th and the general election, November 8th is that engine seven, you're voting for [00:44:00] the candidates that you want to nominate to vote for in the general election. And so you so in that sense, it's actually really important to participate in the primary election because you're determining, who are the folks that you're actually going to be, that that's actually going to be on the ballot in the November election.

[00:44:17] And then in the primary election, you also may be voting on local. What we call measures depending on what county or what city you're in these measures may be a little bit different, but you may also see that on your ballot, in the primary election.

[00:44:43] In terms of our work for the election year, we do have a civic engagement program planned out for the year, and it really is centered around educating, informing our community members about how to, when to vote, right? Whether it's the [00:45:00] primary election or the general election, how to vote and just navigating and supporting them through the process.

[00:45:07] Because it is really important that our community, our Hmong and Southeast Asian American community is turning out to vote.

[00:45:23] **Maki:** And for this year's election for a hip, in the past, we recognized that a lot of the folks who come to work with us, to do the election, to work and to do the phone banking and canvassing that we want to also make sure that they are, a part of our youth and young adults faces and that we're providing the right, training and workshops, and also the holistic spaces for them all as well, in terms of healing and wellness.

[00:45:44] One of the things that we saw actually in the past couple of years is the need for that healing space. And so, this aside from like our civic engagement program, that's going to be running from may up until November, actually. Alongside of that in our youth and [00:46:00] young adult spaces in our youth justice program, we will actually also be doing healing circles for our our young women.

[00:46:07] And then also For our queer trans space as well. We have a group called Quip that came organically as kind of like an organization of their own outside of hip, but with hip support over the years. And then is now like also becoming a part of hip again, because the folks who have been a part of it are also now a part of hip and wanting to immerse it all together too.

[00:46:31] And then for hip. For hip, we also want to make sure that we're meeting our young folks where they're at and so really wanting to build a stronger support and a stronger lens for the LGBTQ plus community. And then also for the solidarity work as well. Right. And so in the past couple of years, we recognize that aside from the pandemic and what was happening with COVID, there was also a lot of a lot of things brewing in the homes of our young folks in terms of seeing anti-blackness in our community in terms of [00:47:00] seeing anti-aging hate in our community in terms of seeing violence against queer and trans folks as well. And so really seeing the need for a space for folks to really be able to process what they're going through for them to have a cohort, to work together through these issues and to still build. All of that together alongside the work. So that way we are addressing all of these things and not just doing the work.

[00:47:22] We're not like we're not just machines, but that this work is deeply tied to our personal lives and we choose to do this work because we want to make these changes in our communities, but also understanding that we cannot make these changes if we're not addressing it within ourselves as well.

[00:47:38] If we're not dealing with our own, anti-blackness our own biases. If we're not dealing with our own trauma, then it's going to be hard for us to also like work with our own community. When we do see these things happen in our communities. Right. Because sometimes it's so easy to just dismiss folks and to be like, you know what, we're not on the same page.

[00:47:56] As I got to work with you, but at the end of the day, like if we're really trying to build [00:48:00] community, then we got to bridge all of these things. We've got to meet folks where they're at. And especially with among a Southeast Asian communities, like it is so diverse. Everyone has so many opinions. And so how are we building community together?

[00:48:13] How are we bringing our young folks together? Aside from like the elections because yes, like voting is important, but at the end of the day, like some folks are not connected to voting, right. Because maybe they didn't see that it was effective growing up. Maybe they try voting before and they just don't see it as like important.

[00:48:30] Or maybe it wasn't a value that was passed down in their family household because we didn't have a voting system back where we came from, and so there's so many things. Complex things and so many layers to this work that it's deeper than voting. And so that's why for me, it's so important for us to do the work with the youth and young folks to build like the critical lens and the social justice lens.

[00:48:49] It's not that like, voting is important just because the government tells us to, but that voting is important because it is going to impact our lives. And it's been impacting our lives for the past [00:49:00] 20, 30, 40 years since being refugees in this country. But we didn't realize that because nobody ever told us that all of these policies were affecting us, the drug on wars, policing, all of that stuff.

[00:49:11] We were, told that these are good things, but at the end of the day, like there was so many hidden things and so many our folks were left out of those conversations, but we're victims of that, those conversations. But yes, Quip clip stands for queer Hmong intersectional pride, and they are located in our Fresno office because that's where it like happened organically.

[00:49:40] And we are currently trying to figure out what that looks like for our Sacramento space as well, because there's also been an ask from our young folks in the Sacramento area to also develop that spaces.

[00:49:53] **Paige Chung:** That was amazing. I love what you're talking about, supporting young people in their queerness and their transness and thinking about all the different [00:50:00] identities that people hold up and all the multiple and all of the ways that they are and letting them see themselves for their authentic self.

[00:50:08] I think those are all my questions. We talked about such amazing things. Today. We talked about the amazing work we're doing about youth leadership and the summer organizing Institute, the election year, your strategic plan, that's happening currently.

[00:50:22] **Kao Ye:** Thank you all so much for tuning in. And just for listening to our story, a story that will continue to be tell told from, different perspectives and different folks that become involved in this space. I think I just want to really end it by saying that being part of the hip space has been personally part of my healing journey.

[00:50:43] Really lots of learning and eLearning that I had to go through. But I I'm so thankful really for my colleagues, for my friends. In the hip space to continue to support me in my growth. And I'm just eager for all the work. All the love all the [00:51:00] building that it is that is ahead for us this year. As well as future years as we look ahead for the longterm.

[00:51:07] **Maki:** Yes, thanks so much. We actually, this upcoming year is going to be busy I know like most organizations with spring cups from, are coming up and summer coming up and then the fall elections. But despite all of that, we'll still definitely be active on our social media.

[00:51:24] Don't forget to, find us at at hip California. And that's on Instagram and Facebook. And then also you can also find our S Friday emails through our website as well. And connect with us there. If you have any questions or anything. In terms of like opportunities that are coming up.

[00:51:40] If you're wanting to get involved we will have canvassing and organizing days. And then we'll also have our summer organizing program. However, that is limited to like the Sacramento region and the Fresno region. So if folks definitely let them know. And then in terms of our youth and young adult spaces as well, that is for the Sacramento and the Fresno region as well.

[00:51:58] Yeah, but just super appreciating [00:52:00] this space to be able to talk about him, to talk about our stories. It it's such like a full circle kind of feeling to be here. I think I'm just super, super, super appreciative. Also all the partner organizations as well that have been like support us, supporting us through all these ways.

[00:52:15] And definitely like looking forward to hanging out in the bay with all of our bay area folks in the future. When things started to get more safe as well.

[00:52:25] **Paige Chung:** Yes. Thank you. Both Maki and Kao Ye for being on apex express today. Apex is a proud member of Asian-American for civil rights and equality acre network.

[00:52:34] You can find out more@acre.org. You're tuned into apex express radio 94.1, KPFA 89.3 K PFP in Berkeley and online@kpfa.org. Thank you both for joining me today, Kyle and Maki, and for sharing so much wisdom. If you want to grow alongside us, join us. You can follow hip at hip California on Instagram and Facebook, please check out our website, [00:53:00] kpfa.org to find out more about hip's growth, their strategic plan, and all of the amazing work they're doing.

[00:53:05] Thank you to all the listeners out there in the bay area and beyond. Let's continue to organize and get free together. Apex express is produced by me, li Jalina Keon Lee pre-team and gala checar. And page chunk tonight's show is produced by me page chunk.

[00:53:19] Thanks to the team at KPFA for their support and have a great night.

[00:53:24] Annie Nguyen's First EP called change of plans. And includes three songs called, "Remember," "Sidewalks," and "2003".

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[00:55:03] **Paige Chung:**

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