

LEVI STRAUSS FOUNDATION

Pioneers in Justice



Chris Punongbayan

Executive Director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Asian Law Caucus

www.advancingjustice-alc.org

Chris Punongbayan doesn't want to be your mentor. He wants to be your comrade.

It's a leadership style Chris learned shortly after college from the executive director of the [Audre Lorde Project](#), Joo-Hyun Kang, who invited Chris to sit on her board. When Chris expressed his gratitude using the 'm' word, Joo-Hyun replied, "I'm not your mentor. We are comrades."

Those simple words made Chris feel that despite his youth, his contributions were highly and equally valued. Now, more than a decade later, he believes that it is his responsibility to bring new voices into the social justice movement, learn from them, and build ownership with them.

Chris has been involved in grassroots activism in the Asian American, immigrant worker and LGBT communities on both coasts of the country, and his vision of social justice is grounded in the realities of those communities.

After graduating from Brown University and UCLA Law School, Chris worked as a Ford Foundation New Voices Fellow with Filipino Advocates for Justice in Oakland, before joining the Positive Resource Center in San Francisco as a staff attorney, representing clients living with disabilities. From 2006-2008 Chris also served as Vice-Chair of the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice — Asian Law Caucus, based in San Francisco, is the nation's oldest organization advocating for the civil and legal rights of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Its mission is to promote, advance and represent the legal and civil rights of these communities, with a focus on addressing the needs of low-income, immigrant and underserved individuals. In addition to supporting clients with legal expertise, the Caucus seeks to bring together elements of policy advocacy and community organizing so that through one person's individual struggle it is able to achieve broader results for the community.