

For immediate release

Contact: Linda Poeng
Phone: 510-435-2945
Email: linda@odalc.org

**Oakland Digital hosts first meeting between
Burmese Community & White House AAPI Chair**

On Thursday, August 18th 2011, Oakland Digital Arts & Literacy Center (ODALC) hosted the first meeting between the Burmese Community and Daphne Kwok, Chair of President Barack Obama's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders. This historic gathering in downtown Oakland was part of the White House Initiative for positive change in the AAPI community.

The Initiative aims to improve the quality of life and opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders by increasing access to federal programs.

"We love Oakland and the beautiful diversity that our City is blessed with," said Shaun Tai, Executive Director of Oakland Digital. "It's important to take a closer look at and address the needs of the Burmese community, as well as other underserved groups within the AAPI."

A packed house of over 40 community leaders and individuals, working directly with the growing Burmese refugee populations in the San Francisco Bay Area, participated in an intimate discussion with Kwok. A large number of Burmese refugees have come to the United States seeking political asylum. Several pressing issues affecting the Burmese population were discussed, including those regarding health, education, and a lack of job training.

As one of the fastest growing refugee populations in the United States, Burmese refugees remain an underserved minority in federal programs. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 16,720 persons of Burmese descent resided in the United States. That number is estimated to have risen to at least 50,000 today, with over 400 refugees from Burma having been resettled to the San Francisco Bay Area over the last few years.

As demand for refugee services continues to grow, a series of follow-up workshops are already being scheduled.

"It's not common to see these groups together. I'm proud of my community," said event organizer Mary Nicely. "[The event was] totally energizing."

For more information about the AAPI initiative, visit www.whitehouse.gov/aapi.

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