

ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER LEGAL OUTREACH

Dean Ito Taylor

As part of a group of student activists, Dean Ito Taylor co-founded Nihonmachi Legal Outreach, a non-profit social justice organization providing legal, social and educational services. For the past 26 years he has served as the Executive Director of what is now Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach. Inspired by the civil rights, antiwar, and ethnic studies movements of the 1960's and '70's, Dean and other founders worked to establish an organization that would breakdown long-standing barriers that denied Asians and Pacific Islanders equal justice.

Dean dedicated himself to advocating on behalf of disadvantaged people of color. Remembering the injustices suffered by his family, Dean joined with internees to advocate before Congress for monetary reparations to those unjustly incarcerated under Executive Order 9066. After law school, Dean worked for over 10 years as a poverty law attorney in the Chinatown and the Western Addition offices of the legal aid foundation in San Francisco.

Since becoming Executive Director in 1988, Dean has aided API Legal Outreach in developing strong, innovative social justice programs serving survivors of domestic violence, abused seniors, youth, and recent immigrants, as well as promoting cross cultural work with other communities of color. With his leadership, API Legal Outreach has grown from a staff of 3 to 50 while developing nationally recognized programs for the underserved, especially those with no access to legal rights and protections.

Under Dean's leadership, API Legal Outreach promoted culturally competent, holistic services before the terms were in fashion. In 1988, API Legal Outreach established the first program aimed at providing holistic services to survivors of domestic violence working in partnership with sister service agencies. In 1995, the agency initiated the first elder abuse prevention project for the API community. In 1997, API Legal Outreach brought together 20 high school students to launch the first violence prevention program in the area of dating violence for teens. And, in 2000, the agency established the nation's first API community program to combat human trafficking, modern day slavery involving women and children from Asia. Dean's dedication to expand access is reflected in the organization's diverse staff that provides culturally and linguistically competent services in over twelve Asian languages and Spanish.

Beyond his work with API Legal Outreach, Dean has been an Instructor with the Upward Bound Program at the University of California, serving college bound, at-risk high school students, has served on the Boards of Directors of Kimochi and the Japanese Cultural and Community Center, as well as chairing the Nihonmachi Street Fair and Oshogatsu Festivals. He has been a professor at the Schools of Law at John F. Kennedy University and New College, as well as in the Asian American Studies Department, University California, Berkeley. He has been a speaker at numerous conferences including those of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Administrative Office of Courts, the State Bar of California, the California Department of Health, and the National Asian Pacific Law Students Association.

Dean has been honored for his work by the Civil Rights Division of the U. S. Department of Justice, the National Asian Pacific Law Students' Association, the Asian American Bar Association, and was selected as a Local Hero by KQED Public Television.

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