



BPSOS

EMPOWERING, ORGANIZING, AND EQUIPPING
VIETNAMESE INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES
IN THEIR PURSUIT OF LIBERTY AND DIGNITY

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BPSOS Welcomes Justice Department's Finding of Merit in Asian Students' Complaints of Racial Violence at South Philadelphia High School

Philadelphia, PA – BPSOS, a Vietnamese American non-profit organization serving the Greater Philadelphia region, welcomes the news that the U.S. Department of Justice has found merit to Asian students' complaints alleging that they were frequently abused and not given proper protection at South Philadelphia High School.

"We are grateful that the Department of Justice recognized the pattern of abuse and violence at South Philadelphia High School. We consider this a step in the right direction for our students," said Nancy Nguyen, Delaware Valley branch manager of BPSOS. "We hope that the district will take the DOJ merit finding seriously by enacting broad, systemic reforms to improve the school climate and embracing strong collaboration with community organizations."

The civil complaint was filed by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, working in collaboration with BPSOS and several other community-based organizations, including Asian Americans United and Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia.

This coalition – called South Philadelphia High School Asian Student Advocates (SASA) – launched protests after violent incidents at South Philadelphia High culminated in a school-wide racially motivated attack on December 3, 2009, in which at least 26 Asian students were assaulted by groups of African American students both inside and outside of the school building. At least seven injured students received medical treatments at area hospitals. Numerous assaults on Asian students have reportedly occurred in the past years without effective actions taken by school officials.

A committee of Asian students met with school district officials the day after the December 3, 2009 attacks, but the students were not satisfied that the school was taking adequate safety measures. In response, approximately 70 students launched a week-long school boycott, starting Monday, Dec. 7.

Rather than focusing on their attackers, the students agreed to bring attention to the school administration and advocate for initiatives to ensure learning safety and promote cultural awareness and tolerance for all students. The student protests quickly garnered support from the media as well as many civil rights organizations and evolved into a grassroots advocacy and public awareness campaign that attracted national attention.

BPSOS has supported students after their ordeal and helped to raise national awareness of the issue. In December 2009, Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang, Executive Director of BPSOS, called upon school officials and community leaders across the country to follow the issue closely and lend their support to the Asian students affected by the violence.

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Founded in 1980, BPSOS is a national community organization operating at 18 locations across the United States. BPSOS empowers individuals, strengthens families, and builds communities through Direct Services, Advocacy, Media, Community Development and Organizing, and Research. For more information, please see www.bpsos.org.