

## THE ASIAN COMMUNITY OF ARIZONA

Dr. Arif Kazmi P.E., Ph.D.

Former President, Arizona Asian American Association

**With** the construction of railroads and rail bridges, the Asians entered Arizona in large masses in the early 1800s. The Chinese and Japanese became the railroad workers while the agricultural lands were worked by people from India (includes regions known as Pakistan today). With the tremendous effect of World War II, additional Asians, such as Vietnamese, Filipinos and Cambodians, entered the United States, making Phoenix their permanent home.

When Phoenix was declared the capitol city, it became a hub for agriculture and various industries. Asian farm owners and workers began moving to Phoenix and Tucson to provide higher education to their children and get acquainted with the urban life. In the early- to mid-1900s, Asians, in particular the Chinese, started their own businesses and created a Chinatown in downtown Phoenix. We still see the landmarks of those days in buildings such as Sun Mercantile on Third and Jackson street.

Today, Arizona Asian Americans make up some of the most vibrant communities in Phoenix. The number of Asians in Arizona has increased in the last decade due to a huge number of refugees arriving from countries where they were being persecuted by dictatorial regimes.

Many international companies with a significant presence in Phoenix, such as Intel, Honeywell, Microsoft and top hotels, also are well established in China, India, Malaysia, Japan, Dubai and other Asian countries. As a result, they have been instrumental in having many high tech Asian graduates work for American companies in and out of Phoenix.

After a meeting of various Asian-American and Pacific Island community leaders, the Arizona Asian American Association (AAAA) was founded in 1988 and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1992. Association members include more than 14 different Asian-American communities with different linguistic backgrounds and specific cultures.

To resolve community issues, the AAAA community is encouraged to contact decision makers at different levels of government - city, state and federal. The AAAA is committed to assist its community that faces challenges in its efforts to improve quality of life. As an organization, we hope to continue to grow and share our culture with the rest of our Arizona communities.