



ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

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MEDIA RELEASE

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AALDEF FILES CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT AGAINST PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) today filed a complaint for civil rights violations with the U.S. Department of Justice charging the School District of Philadelphia and South Philadelphia High School (SPHS) with discrimination against Asian students on the basis of race and national origin in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The complaint charges that the District and School acted with “deliberate indifference” to the harassment against Asian students and “intentional disregard for the welfare of Asian students” at SPHS. The complaint cites numerous instances in which school officials were notified by teachers and Asian students about the increasingly hostile environment towards Asian students but failed to take any steps to prevent the widespread attacks on Asian students on December 3, 2009.

On December 3, 2009, large numbers of Asian immigrant students from SPHS were assaulted in and around the school throughout the day. Thirteen Asian students were sent to the hospital due to their injuries. For over a year before the December 3rd attacks, AALDEF in collaboration with local community groups - Asian Americans United, Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, Boat People SOS, Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia, Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia, and Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition, Inc. - urged school and district officials to address in the increasingly hostile environment for Asian students at SPHS without success.

AALDEF Staff Attorney Cecilia Chen said: “The failure of the Philadelphia School District and South Philadelphia High School to acknowledge and address the severe harassment of Asian students at SPHS led to the December 3rd attacks. The School and District must be held accountable for failing to protect Asian students at SPHS.”

Following the attacks on December 3rd, over sixty Asian students from SPHS boycotted the school for eight days citing fear for their safety and concern at the District’s repeated failure to address the widespread anti-Asian violence at the school.

Chen continued: “The students have gone back to school but that does not mean that the school is now safe. Asian immigrant students are still being targeted and threatened. We want to ensure that Asian immigrant students can go to school in a safe environment.”

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The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), founded in 1974, is a national organization that protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans. By combining litigation, advocacy, education, and organizing, AALDEF works with Asian American communities across the country to secure human rights for all.