

# The Function and Limitation of the Korean American Association of Greater Philadelphia 1989 - 2000



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## Introduction

- The goal of the project was to collect primary sources that were produced by and deals with the Korean American community in Philadelphia.
- Although there has been a sizeable Korean community in Philadelphia since the 1970s, the archival material dealing with the Korean American community is sparse. This is especially unfortunate as the community has been actively publishing Korean language newspapers and newsletters.
- In the process, I collaborated closely with the Korean American Association of Greater Philadelphia (KAAGP). The KAAGP has been working as the umbrella organization of the Korean community since 1970, representing the 70,000 Koreans who live in the region.
- Understanding the story of the KAAGP will shine a light on the problems the first-generation Korean Americans faced and their effort to solve them. As the association was the face of the community for the last 50 years, looking at its development can show how the Korean American community itself developed over time.

## Methodology

- Even though the KAAGP was in possession of a sizeable collection of documents, they were not organized or categorized. During the summer, I itemized the contents of the boxes based on when the documents were created, scanned them, and handed both the digital and physical copies to the association.
- In total, the association had documents that spanned from the 14<sup>th</sup> president to the 28<sup>th</sup> president. These documents included, but were not limited to, meeting minutes from temporary and regular trustee meetings, speeches of the presidents, incoming and outgoing letters, fax records, tax records, and newspaper clippings. In total, I scanned and categorized roughly 200 documents during the duration of this project.
- Using the documents, the project looked at the function of the KAAGP and their limitations by looking at the changes the association went through. This was done through comparing similar documents created under different presidents.

## Result

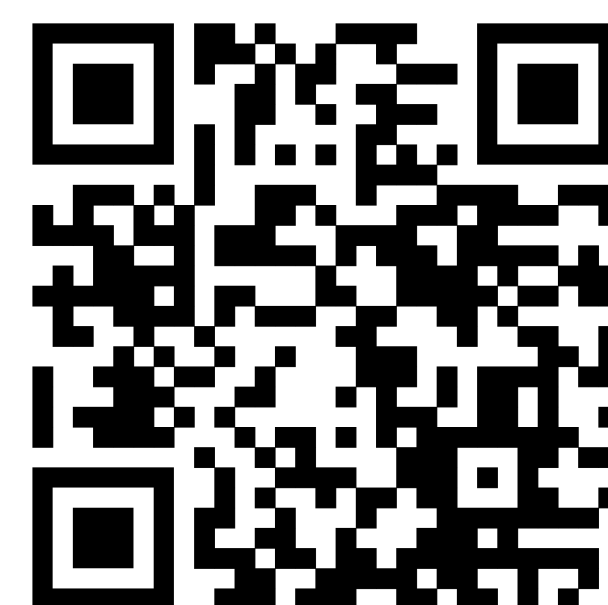
### List of notable sources

1. Newspaper clippings by the 23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> KAAGP
  - The newspaper clippings were crucial to provide context for the other documents. Unlike the other internal documents, the newspaper clippings weren't published by the association, giving a different perspective on the activity of the KAAGP.
2. Transcript of speeches of Dr. Daniel Yun (20<sup>th</sup> president), Gwang Soo Lee (25<sup>th</sup> president), and Adam Kim (27<sup>th</sup> president).
  - The transcripts reveal the increasing importance the association placed on political representation. These speeches, along with the yearly plans and budgets, showcase the areas of interest of the Korean American community.
3. KAAGP budget and yearly projects
  - The yearly budget and project plans reveal which areas the association had a vested interest in. As a non-profit organization, the KAAGP relied on the donations from the community members as well as grants from both the Korean and US government.
4. Incoming and outgoing letters between the city of Philadelphia, the Korean consulate, and the association.
  - The letters show the attempts made by the association to recommend Korean Americans into governmental positions as well as defend the rights of members of the community. This was especially true for cases when the matter involved the police.

## Conclusion

- The documents that were gathered show a community's effort to establish themselves in a foreign country. Specifically, it shows how an ethnic minority community came to understand the importance of political representation in the United States. The various campaigns and projects carried out by the KAAGP are a representation of the different methods of a new immigrant community navigating the political landscape.
- Even though the KAAGP began as a social organization, their by-laws and their publications reveals that their work extended beyond simple social gatherings. Instead, the KAAGP worked as an unofficial political body of the Korean community, working as a representative to the governments of South Korea and the US. They were responsible for advocating for the rights and safety of the new Korean Americans. This is shown in their continuous correspondence with the city of Philadelphia and the Korean general consulate in New York. These meetings were used to let the authorities know of the problems the community are facing such as the need for a Korean consulate in Philadelphia, or increased police protection in Korean owned businesses.
- Unfortunately, the structure of the association and the overreliance on the president of the association to fully fund it led to the community's diminishing support for the association, which hindered its effectiveness. In addition, the community at times viewed the association's attempt to be recognized by those in power as elitist, which led to the association being viewed as elitist. Despite these limitations, the KAAGP served an integral role as a middleman during a transitional period of Koreans adjusting to the life in the United States.

## Photos



Full list of documents



Photos of categorized documents



## Acknowledgments

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