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Majority of Asian Americans against Prop. 8, study finds

Study examines voting habits of Californian Asian Americans

Written by *ELYSSA THOME*
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A comprehensive survey of Asian American voters in California released last week found that a majority of Asian Americans oppose Proposition 8, the constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. Professors from Rutgers University, UC Berkeley, UC Riverside and USC conducted the study.

The authors of the survey, known as the National Asian American Survey (NAAS), say it is the most comprehensive survey of the political views of Asian Americans ever.

Many, like Wayland Lee, the president of the campus Asian American Association, see the survey itself as an important step.

"Most of the time, Asian Americans are ignored when it comes to political issues," Lee said. "I'm glad someone took the time to find out what the Asian American community thinks. There are many analysts who believe that the Asian American vote will decide the outcome of this election."

As part of the survey, potential voters were asked if they favored the change to the constitution proposed by Prop 8 that would define marriage as exclusively between a man and woman. The survey found that 57 percent of likely Asian American voters did not favor the change, 32 percent favored the change and 11 percent said they did not know if they favored or opposed the change. The survey included 1,900 likely Asian American voters and was conducted in eight languages between Aug. 18 and Sept. 26.

The survey also broke the results down by national origin.

"Across all national origin groups in the survey, more opposed than favored ... changing the Constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman," the report stated. A solid majority opposed the measure among Chinese, Filipino, Korean and Vietnamese voters, and a near majority of Japanese Americans (46 percent) and Asian Indians (47 percent) did so as well.

Prop 8 was the only proposition discussed in the survey, which also examined presidential candidates and voting factors like the economy and health care.

Both My Diem Nguyen, UC Davis student affairs officer for Asian American Studies, and Lee noted that the Asian American community tends to be more conservative, especially in the older generations. Nguyen said the results of the survey reflect a desire for civil rights more than political liberalism.

"My sense is that the community recognizes that it is wrong to discriminate or unjustly take

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away civil rights from gay and lesbian people," Nguyen said.

Lee agreed that the proposition is about rights, but also said the results of this survey do not show a universal opinion in the diverse community.

"Although a majority of Asian Americans polled opposed the proposition, there is a sizable number of respondents that support the proposition," Lee said. "The Asian American community is too diverse to really make a generalization; it encompasses too many different groups of people and too many different ideologies."

Whatever the result of the election, Nyugen said she sees the study as positive for the community.

"I feel that the young Asian American Pacific Islander political scientists who initiated the NAAS survey sought to address the problem of low voter turnout and political engagement in the community," she said. "The AAPI community is a large and growing community and our voter participation becomes more and more important, particularly in this upcoming election."

For full survey results, go to naasurvey.com/assets/2008-NAAS-CA-report.pdf.

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