

An Interview with Duy Ngyuen

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Duy Ngyuen, Vice President and COO of Asian Community Development Council, and was conducted on 1/14/22 by Magdalena Martinez and John Hudak. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

Interview with Duy Nguyen

SPEAKERS

Duy Nguyen, Magdalena Martinez, John Hudak

Magdalena Martinez 00:00

Well, so again, thanks so much Duy, for joining us. And just to confirm, are you okay opting in to have your responses attributed to you and to reveal your identity?

Duy Nguyen 00:12

Yes, ma'am.

Magdalena Martinez 00:13

All right, thanks so much. So we will kick it off. And if you could start off up by telling us a little bit about yourself and your current position, and your organization a little bit about your organization.

Duy Nguyen 00:25

Absolutely. So, my name is Duy Nguyen, and I am the Chief Operating Officer for the Asian Community Development Council. And our organization started in 2015. Well, we got a nonprofit status in 2015. It took us a little longer to get up and running.

But we've been in existence since then. And our main goal is to really bridge the gap or close the barrier, we can, you know, how many other metaphoric things we can use toward the growing Asian/Pacific Islander community in Nevada, to reach them with access to services that are needed to make their lives better, but mainly around the language access. As you may be aware, the Asian/Pacific Islander community in Nevada is the fastest growing population in the country as well as in our state.

Yet, there are limited number of resources available to this community, whether it's through education, through social services, through health care, through immigration, through a plethora of other services. Our community is definitely not at the table when it comes to these things. And then we're adding on the layer of language access. Many of the Asian/Pacific Islander community here in Nevada are composed of so many different backgrounds and cultures; there's at least 40 plus different cultures and languages and backgrounds.

So it makes our job a lot more fun in terms of, you know, it's not check one box and you're there, you have a lot more to cover in a very, very limited resources environment. So anytime we do anything, we

just can't say, hey, you know, that's one message and we're done. We have to translate it into so many different ones. The organization started as a civic engagement organization, meaning just to provide information to our community. And lo and behold, a couple years into our work, we were tasked with doing direct service, just because we already gained that credibility out there. And people in our community trust us to deliver those information.

So now they asked us to deliver our services. So we are now expanding our scope and mission to accommodate more. And it just kind of snowballed into so many things that we're doing. I'm so proud of our work and proud of our team. I can spend all day on this question on everything that we do. But just to sum it up. That's pretty much what Asian Community Development Council, or ACDC, does. And you know, just like the band that you're all familiar with, ACDC, we rock just in a different way.

John Hudak 03:33

I love it.

Magdalena Martinez 03:35

So Duy, could you talk a little bit more about ACDC's role during the pandemic?

Duy Nguyen 03:42

Well, we didn't know we're going to have one. I think when everything shut down in March of 2020, we were just trying to keep our employees safe. And so we just went into remote operation. And we wanted to be sure that we are still communicating with our demographics and communicating with our community and be able to just relay information. And we were all kind of standing by and being kind of like the messenger in waiting throughout our state, whether it's the state government, whether it's the county government or the municipality that we have contact with and other partner community organizations we work with, to see how can we be of assistance.

So one of the unique things about ACDC is that all of our staff, the primary requirement to be part of our team is you have to be able to speak another Asian language for you to be a part of the team. So with the market, the job market, the way it is, we've been very lucky that I would say 99% of our staff have that ability except for maybe one or two administrative staff who do not have that ability. But for the most part, we all speak one more Asian language on top of English.

So that was really our claim to fame. So when the initial shutdown happened in March 2020, we were standing by to be of assistance, whether it's any of the federal delegation members calling us from the congressional offices or the senatorial offices to the governor's office, as well as the county to disseminate information throughout our community and our network.

So I think that's one of the things that we pretty much... and also the health district, of course, don't want to miss that big piece of the puzzle. And I think that's one of the biggest tasks that we undertake,

because to translate is one thing. To properly use medical terminology and explain this concept that never happened or hadn't happened in our lifetime, was even more challenging, right? Trying to explain that into terms that our native languages can understand and, you know, that makes it a lot harder in terms of ensuring that we don't even lose ourselves in that translation work.

So that was phase one of our responsiveness, right? Well, phase two, you know, fast forward into all of these federal legislation that came through, first with the Cares Act that passed through the federal level and then when it got trickled down to us here in Clark County. We didn't think that we could play in that game in terms of being able to apply and give the resources to our community. And so we did. And thankfully, we received the support from the county social services where we were able to provide food, which is part of their what they call BNA, Basic Needs Assistance program.

So food distribution to families who are in need of nutrition assistance; and then housing, where folks were not able to pay rent, and they were on the verge of being evicted; and language barrier; and domestic violence; and landlord violence. There's so many different layers that kind of occurred within those few months, in 2020. So we were able to receive that grant through Clark County Social Services to deliver to those who need it in their community. So basically, the system definitely got us into emergency services delivery, where we never had that experience before.

And so we just kind of like learned by doing and really able to continuously get through to our community by delivering those services. And then when vaccines were available, because we did good, you know, at least start understanding we had [inaudible] from the food service delivery and the housing service delivery. We were asked to put on vaccine clinics and to vaccinate our community. And we had, of course, all the language translations.

And we were able to provide access to our community members in terms of access to the needed vaccines when it was available, and we have been doing it ever since. So, yeah, we went from kind of sitting duck to kind of now, it's like what else is we need to be doing? And the phone hasn't stopped ringing.

And so we have been able to be kind of blessed to have a great team to kind of figure it all this out. And we're still trying to, you know, learn as we go but so far, the impact has been amazing because we have helped over 15,000 individuals and families who otherwise would have been displaced because of lack of either language help, or they just don't know where to go, because they never afford this situation before.

Magdalena Martinez 10:20

Duy, I know that in some of your previous experience, you worked with small businesses in the Asian community. To what degree is the ACDC working with small businesses on top of the social services, delivery, and interventions?

Duy Nguyen 10:38

So, um, it's interesting that all of this kind of came together in a sense where people realize the capacity that we can provide. So before the pandemic, we were known to put on one of the biggest Asian night market in town. So this was this idea was a fluke back in 2018, was say, "hey, you know what, there's so many food options in Las Vegas, but everything is focused on to the tourists on the strip," right? But nothing really featured the local folks. So we then thought of just curating a selected group of vendors that are mom and pop restaurants in our town, and put on a night market style outdoors, for folks to come out and enjoy local foods that are run by Nevadans or Nevada businesses.

So that concept took off. And the first year in 2018, we had about 8,000 people show up where we only expected a few 100. That was nuts. In 2019, that number doubled and we had almost like 15,000 people showed up in the same parking lot. We had to shut the street down and you know, had all these food vendors from different ethnicities and cultures come through and folk just enjoyed the family experience.

So in 2020, when the pandemic hit, and everything had to be, you know, quarantined and social distanced and all that good stuff, those businesses suffered, of course, the most in terms of not being able to keep their staff employed or keep being able to pay their rent and their costs of operating that business. Our organization ended up turning around and helped promote their businesses through our virtual tools that we have.

So we established, instead of the Asian Night Market, which we could not do due to the health requirement, we did a Asian restaurant week, where we feature those same vendors so that number one, they will be able to have traffic coming into their restaurant for takeout and for, you know, delivery options, as well as being able to connect those vendors, those business owners with accesses to food and housing, if they happen to fall under those categories, or their staff. And also helped navigate where they need to go in terms of programs that were available to them, like the PPP that were available at some point.

And that was a mess, in terms of getting them the right people that would be able to help them with that. So we do what we can in terms of our existing partners that are already in place with the limited resources that we have. I know there are other organizations out there that does the same thing. And there needs to be more than just ACDC helping these small businesses. So I believe there are Chamber of Commerce's there are other entities who existed even before us that also is stepping in and help be part of the solution.

But ACDC, we're able to pivot quickly just because we're already doing it so for us, it's really just making the phone calls and say "Hey, you know what? Mister business owner or miss business owner, we have these resources already, and you will be working with us." And the thing about our community

just like any other community, that trust is so key in terms of letting them know and getting them to trust that information and be able to take advantage of those accesses and resources at that point. Most of the work that we do, we rely so much on that trust because they trust us to give them the right information.

Because there's just so many misinformation out there, right? And then they also see and hear things, and then they come back to us and try to validate and verify their information. So we have to be on top of our game all the time in terms of getting the right information, go through the vetting process before we put it out there, because our credibility is also on the line.

John Hudak 15:31

So sorry, I had a quick follow up on that last point about the sort of communication flows that exist between your organization and the community. During the pandemic, as you said, it was sort of all of a sudden, something no one expected. Was there a lot of communication from within the community, to your organization about what those needs were, what those questions were, how those needs were changing? Or was it a lot of your organization going out into the community to gather that info?

Duy Nguyen 16:05

I think it's definitely a two way street. But I think for us initially, we have to, like communicate out and ask for that. Ask for the... ask the question: what resources do they need, right? Because culturally, the Asian community have been very shy about asking for help. Or they don't trust. They don't trust government, they don't trust organizations, right? They just kind of trust their own little circle or their own family unit.

But outside of that is very hard to kind of get through. So we have to use our tools that we have existing in our organization, to reach out to the community and ask, like, are you okay, it's kind of like a wild check. Are you okay? What do you need? Do you need food? Do you need housing? Resources? What do you need? In turn, we were able to scale up our operation accordingly, to what the data that we would get back. In terms of, you know, people coming to us, as far as coming to us, it didn't really happen until we started getting the word out, like say, "hey, you know what, we have some resources."

And you know, going back to, I know, this is really a bit of going down memory lane. But you know, the community, it's also being perceived stereotypically too, right? Because the Asian/Pacific Islander community is always perceived as that model minority community where they're educated. All of them either drive Lexus or Mercedes, or live in big mansions. And they don't need help. And that is a myth. Because yes, even though we have, you know, the 1% 2% of that caliber, but there's still that rest of that, you know, middle class, or even the the low income communities that are also of the Asian community.

And they are not even counted anywhere. So, so when going back to the 2008, you know, real estate nightmare that we had. Same thing. The Asian community was less outside of the conversation when it comes to giving help, because they're like, "Oh, those folks don't need help, because they're well off or,

you know, they don't need resources", right?. So, no, I was there in a different role, you know, during that time, but I remember how we had to bring resources outside of Nevada, because Nevada didn't have any access for the community.

So you know, going in with 2020, having gotten the back of my head, I go, "Okay, we need to ask for our place at the table, we need to make sure that our community is not forgotten", right? But at the same time, communicating with our community, "Remember that it's okay to ask for help. It's okay to tell us what your needs are. No, you're not going to be persecuted. No, folks are not going to be going after your, you know, who you are or your immigration status if there is any kind of questions about that." So those those kinds of things we still have to address on a regular basis.

And to this day, you know, we still have, you know, some of those folks that we have to have a more one on one conversation, just because they always will say, well, if it's too good to be true, it probably is. There has to be a catch somewhere. And that is why we continue to do what we do is because we want them to know, it doesn't have a catch, and you're not gonna be entrapped.

Because some of these communities, those are the former native countries that they came from, where, you know, the government is not a trusted institution, or there's some cultural catch, every time they receive something, so they carry that with them, you know, into their new home, and it kind of resonates, and it makes us a little bit more, you know, strategic in terms of talking to our community, and avoid using any of those trigger words, that may bring a negative experience to them. So you know, we have to play psychiatrist sometimes too.

Magdalena Martinez 21:15

Duy, you touched a little bit on the Great Recession of '08. I know you were in a different role. And that's one of our questions. I'm going to skip through a couple and then come back to them. But one of our questions, or one of the things that we're interested in hearing from you is how the Great Recession of '08 and now the COVID recession, what the difference is, and specifically, what tools maybe policy tools were you able to draw from? And I think, if I'm correct, you were with the Asian Chamber of Commerce at the time?

Duy Nguyen 21:50

I was on their board at that point.

Magdalena Martinez 21:52

Okay. And so you had some real insight into how the different levels of government were providing interventions. And now you're at the, you know, at the helm of ACDC? Can you talk a little bit about those experiences, from your perspective? Like, what the differences were? And then also what kind of policy interventions helped then? And, you know, would they have helped now? I'm really interested in hearing from you, what you think about that.

Duy Nguyen 22:24

So, with this, I have to bring up the census, the census, you know, is such a foreign process that happened every 10 years. People, you know, even folks who are in the know, like, you know, all of us here on this call, you put us out of your mind, you know, because it only comes once every 10 year, right? So in 2008, you know, the valley hasn't grown, in terms of the metrics that was available. No one was collecting those information, right? So I'm gonna go forward a little bit and then go backward to your question is that the 2010 census, there were a group of individuals and private funders that invested in the 'Complete Count' effort for the Asian community nationwide, right?

And that's a group called the the Wallace Cultural Foundation, and their CEO, their foundation, by the name of Su Van. Su invested in this effort to ensure that the Asian/Pacific Islander community is counted throughout the country, because of our growth. But no one knows that our number really, really makes a difference, right? So in 2010, when that happened, and we were on the map, as far as the fastest growing population in the country, also right here in Nevada, it showed that we grew by 100% from the 2000 census, right? It really caught attention at all levels of government, foundations, companies, communities trying to figure out like, "Whoa, where did they come from?"

Well, we've been here all along. It is we've been very quiet about it, right? So until that 2011-2012 timeframe, we were still invisible to the world. Right. So back then when I was in it. So going back to your question, in 2008, when I was... I'd only been in Nevada at that point for about four years, still trying to figure out the lay of the land. And I came from California. So previously before that, I spent a lot of time in Washington, D.C. so I had some knowledge of how to leverage the resources and bring them to Nevada, because, you know, in California, a lot of folks look like me. So I didn't have to worry about resources, because, you know, California had all of that. But Nevada was the Wild Wild West, right coming in here is like, "Oh, wait, these things are not available."

So you have to bring it in. So back then, in 2008, when the recession hit, and the housing bubble, we were not ready, and we didn't know where to find, and I didn't have enough political capital at that point, to navigate the process, right? And we relied also on the federal delegation at that point, to get us some support. But, you know, I think different from COVID, is that because it only hit home owners, it only hit, you know, a certain demographic of our community. Um, it wasn't a blanket situation where we can throw it out and say, "hey, everybody come and get these resources," right?

It was very targeted, in a sense, where we have to be very nimble, because of the limited resources that we have, in terms of getting the information out to people. So back then we had no data. Back then we had limited resources. Back then it wasn't you know, a number that we could say, hey, you know, what, we have x number of people who are affected by this. We just had to throw it out there. And I remember, I brought a colleague organization of ours in California.

And they've been doing housing since day one. They started in 2001 and they actually brought their staff here to Nevada, and they brought translators here to Nevada. And I remember I was conducting a workshop out of a classroom at one of the higher ed institutions here. And we just filled the room. And we had workshops of what resources are available. And we had translators and we invited the representative from the federal offices of how the federal government can help to get these folks out of that situation and save their life savings in some of these situations that they were in. And it we made it happen.

But we felt that our hands were so tied, because all we could do at that point was just provide information. There's no immediate relief that we can provide to the community. So I think when, going back to the census information and realizing the numbers that we had, right? Still, after the recession, folks are still moving to Nevada, because the cost of living is still very, very low compared to the rest of the country. So then when 2011 and 2012, when we have those data, fast forward to COVID time, we, I think, didn't want to relive 2008-2009, and be able to really scale better. Because I was active during that time.

And so therefore, you know, I'm better in asking the questions now. Of course, our young staff who are in their early 20s, of course, you know, they were kids at that point. They don't remember any of that. So, definitely this is their first but this is kind of like our second go around. This time, we'll be more prepared in terms of making sure that we have to say out loud in the early stages and go, "Hey, we're still here. Our number is actually bigger than before." And in 2020 Census, through the Cultural Foundation effort and through their investment, we were able to ensure that our community are completely counted during the process.

And it showed that we had even higher growth. They thought the number had kind of stayed put but no, we had incremental growth from the 2010 census. So now, you know we are definitely of a critical mass here in Nevada. And so therefore ACDC existence is timely in terms of ensuring that we need to be ready, and language is still a primary component in that. Yeah, some of our committee members may understand basic English, right? But when it comes to legislation, or laws or rules or policy or procedure, even me, you know, as someone who is proficient and went to school here and got my college degree here, sometimes I have a hard time understanding what all of this means.

So how's that going to help with our immigrant community who is new to the U.S., and they come, you know, during this timeframe, you know, they're going to be fresh out of the water. So we just have to be a little bit more prepared. So every time I read something, I would look at it first and I go, "Do I understand it?" I need to then take a step back and look at what a, you know, someone who have limited English proficiency be able to understand this, and how do they navigate this because, you know, I will see it differently, they will see differently, and we got to combine all of our experiences together to be able to kind of connect, and that's why our tagline for ACDC is educate, connect and empower. Because

if you miss that connection, you're not going to be able to do much, right? You can educate all day long but if they don't connect with that education, then you don't do anything but just wasting your time.

Magdalena Martinez 31:18

To follow up on that idea of Educate and Connect, as you think now about the COVID recession, in what ways did ACDC work with other organizations, whether they were nonprofits or governmental agencies in order to educate, connect about the resources available for the Asian community?

Duy Nguyen 31:43

Well, I mean, again, I think we are blessed because we are definitely accessible. So we were able to collaborate with many organizations, you know, and I'm gonna get in trouble for not being able to mention everybody's name, right. It's a long list of collaborators. But, you know, we work with frontline, folks, we work with first responders. So we work with the Asian/Pacific Islander Nursing Association, we work with the Filipino Nursing Association.

The Filipinos are the largest Asian group here in Nevada. And so we work with their first responders and medical professionals to, you know, get through and educate and provide resources. We work with student groups in CSN and UNLV and Nevada State College because these young people are able to volunteer their time and to help with the food distribution or with the vaccine clinics. They're ready and willing and able. That's part of their community service. We work with the Nevada Chinese Association, the Las Vegas Korean Association.

We work with the Ninth Island Auntie's, you know, Las Vegas is known as the ninth island of Hawaii. So, you know, we get to work with the large Hawaiian community that that moves and settle here in Las Vegas. And, you know, working with with the Vietnamese community of Las Vegas, that's another significant population here. So there are many community organizations that are small, but they have access to their community members who don't socialize outside of that bubble, right.

So that is one way to collaborate is to really work together. And then we work with local organizations, or government agencies, like the Clark County Social Services, you know, I have to give kudos to, you know, Kristin Cooper, who is managing a lot of programs coming at her, but she was able still to kind of add us into the process. And then Kevin Shiller with the county, as well, you know, him and Kristin together with their teams really, really add the API community as part of the recipient that needs these resources. So we were able to really work with them and then of course, the state level with the governor's office, Governor Sisolak, as well as the federal delegations from US Senator Cortez-Masto, to Rosen to the congressional folks.

You know, Dina Titus, Susie Lee and Steven Horsford. All of them were in constant communication with us. We have regular briefing, and all the information was really flowing together, which is really nice to see, as, you know, some of those people, you know, get press conferences, and they do a lot of

public speaking. But people don't see the behind the scenes work, which was really exciting because all of us coming together and trying to help everybody. And so that really, really motivated me to even try and see what else we're leaving off of the table. So those are the entities that truly, truly make a difference in this, whatever stage of the pandemic we're in.

John Hudak 35:45

Duy, can I follow up on that? So it sounds, so I mean, it's great to hear that the governor's office, that the county, that the congressional delegation were receptive. And so, you know, there's sort of, for people to affect policy, there's a, there's a couple of processes, right? First, you have to have a critical mass, which you said you had. Second, that critical mass has to have a voice, which your organization definitely serves as that voice. But then people need to listen to that voice.

And it sounds like from what you're describing, that voice has been heard during this process. Have you seen, compared to the 2008 recession, or compared to other smaller challenges that have popped up in between that the voice is not only being magnified for the AAPI community, but it's being better received within the proper channels of government of the voice of that community and the needs of that community? Do you want me to rephrase that?

Duy Nguyen 36:48

Yeah, I'm sorry, I didn't get the question in there.

John Hudak 36:51

Sure no problem. Um, have you..? Are you seeing that over time that the voice of the AAPI community is better received better understood, better acknowledged by the proper channels of government, county, state and federal? Or does it seem sort of, like it's stable over time?

Duy Nguyen 37:09

I think it has increased a lot. It's still not where it needs to be. But I think it gotten better from the recession until now, with COVID, I think, because of the investment of some of these funders or private funding, coming into the state, to help ACDC build our capacity and get that word out, right. So we literally send our team everywhere, in terms of wherever that information may be, right. And we definitely stand on the shoulder of the other communities that have already come ahead of us. Like, you know, I always say that we were, we are where the Latino community was 40 years ago.

We're learning a lot of things that we didn't know about, right. So, um, so for that, I lean on the resources and expertise of some of the things that our Latino leaders have worked on in the last few decades, and then be able to kind of pivot that into how we can be better in terms of being visible and being at the table. So, so with with the electoral involvement, I think that also is another key because the civic engagement part, right?

The communities, there may be, you know, citizens for generations, but they don't participate in voting. And so for us, you know, my other hat is, is the executive director of One AAPI in Nevada. And, and we are a 501 C four organization, and our goal is to educate our community and encourage them to take part actively, whether it is voting, or whether it's running for office or take a role in the leadership in the all levels of government, whether it's appointed or elected. Because then when people see those, then they realize that we need everybody at the table.

And right now, you know, some, you know, powers that be still think we're monolith like one check, and you're done, right? So we got to continue to get more people that look like me and my team in different I guess, industries, whether it is the gaming industry, to government, to the small businesses to leaders to be, you know, visible then I think folks will start noticing, right? Because that is is one way to do it. And the other way is that we got to be able to tell the story. So the narratives in before was that Asians are so bad at telling people about themselves.

They're like, they're not able to, you know, culturally talk about themselves, because they're, they were programmed not to, right? I'm trying to change that narrative in ensuring that we tell our story, we tell our story more, and that there's more of us contributing to that narrative, so that people are aware. And that is definitely a key component of our work.

John Hudak 40:38

Great. Thanks.

Magdalena Martinez 40:40

Duy, in thinking about the last couple of years, what do you wish the different levels of government would have done? Or could do differently for the COVID recession?

Duy Nguyen 40:56

Wow. I don't think we have enough time to talk about it. Ah, wow.

Magdalena Martinez 41:07

It'd be like a top three.

Duy Nguyen 41:10

Well, you know, I have to be very PC when I answer this question, because the unfiltered version in my head is definitely should not say anything in this recorded conversation. But, uh, let's just say the biggest, because flaw that I see is that everything happens so fast, and the time is never ever sufficient. But then things get really, really, really get stuck in rhetorics, right.

And I don't think I'm saying anything new. This part, you know, with such a divided nation that we're in right now, in terms of political rhetoric, that even when things like this COVID recession and pandemic

is happening, folks are still fighting for things that are not really relevant. So what I'm really, really discouraged about, you know, even from the the last administration to this administration, on a federal level, the political rhetoric, and the divisiveness has just pit, even our own community against each other.

And I think that's the part where, as a nonprofit leader in our community, I just had to kind of part ways from those noise, and just focus on delivering the resources to those that are needing them, right? And, and kind of put those things aside, but it's hard to do, because we have community members that come up to us with, you know, misinformation, and it's such, it's so politically charged, that it's hard for us as a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, trying to explain to them that "here, these are the facts," and we are here to really help the community.

We don't have an agenda. We don't care where you are leaning politically. We just want you to get the resources that you need. And even in terms of the vaccine distribution of all of these, you know, anti-vaxxer out there. Again, they're getting the information or not getting information, because our government is not spending enough time to fight that misinformation campaigns. And it's really up to leaders like us, you know, everybody here on this call, to try to peel all that craziness layer out and really get to the service delivery.

So we are still fighting for crumbs. And that's the hard part. Because if you think of federal government, you know, have that spending bills and it goes to the state and then from the state, it goes to the whoever's controlling it, then it goes to the county and it goes through to, then it goes to some other processes and then it gets to us. So by the time it gets to us, sometime that timeframe is really really questionable, because you know, they could have money sitting in you know, somewhere, some decision making process and then it gets stuck. And then by the time it gets to us months have gone by, right? We have that ARP, American Rescue Plan, that got passed months ago. And we still haven't seen anything in this level.

So in terms of that, that get frustrating to all of us, who is really here to get the assistance for people. But we still had to sit there and just wait and sitting our hands, because we are limited, right? And that's the hard part, that even I tell my staff that are doing the Food Distribution Program that like, "Hey, you know, what we are at the mercy of the powers that be, that the food assistance can go away tomorrow. I don't, I don't have the ability to tell you anything else." We just go as we can but I can't... and me coming from the corporate world, you know, unless the money's in the bank, I don't do anything, right? I don't operate like where, you know, borrow from other things and make happen.

No, I need to be able to make our organization, solvent. And for us having to provide for so many people with the resources are so limited, it is definitely putting more gray hair, or my hair falling out from just thinking about how we're going to be able to kind of opened our doors, much less worried about all the fighting that happens 2000 miles away.

John Hudak 46:56

Duy, I want to be mindful of your time. I've got a couple of questions before we wrap. One sort of builds off of what you were just talking about and the other is sort of a big picture question. So to follow up a little bit on the answer that you just gave. You had mentioned earlier, the importance of trust in the AAPI community and the the role that distrust can play. Have you found that with these sort of uncertainties around government funding, government programs, what's passed by Congress and not necessarily arriving in the community, are your members and the communities that you serve losing trust in government and the ability of government to respond because of what's been going on?

Duy Nguyen 47:51

And, you know what, I would, before I answer that, I would definitely rephrase that. You know, I'm not sure if I can speak for the community on every feeling that is in folks, because again, we are to reiterate, nonpartisan, you know, nonprofit. There are all levels of reaction in the in this, and then adding on the many cultures and languages. I would definitely wish there are some magical money that come through so we can do that research work. That would be amazing. Like, people don't think about the research dollars, but I'm preaching to the choir here because you know, that's what you all are doing. But that's where I am also frustrated, because I don't have the resources to go after those data to be able to ask people what their thinking is, and whether they are frustrated or they're content. Oh, my I really doubt anyone's content at this point of what's going on, and how can government do better? Or what more can they do?

So, I'm sorry, that's kind of a non answer in a way, but it's hard for me to say that the Asian community feels this way the Asian community feels that way, right? If I attempt to say something right now, oh, my God, I'm gonna get hung out to dry very quickly. Because the the diversity and the complexity within our own Asian/Pacific Islander community here, um, it's just hard to answer that question. But I can say this, I'll use my own family, for example.

You know, my wife and my parents and my in-laws are on three different spectrums on what is needed and what the government should do or what us as individuals could do, and I'm on my own island in my own family. So think about that dynamic, actually, you know, me, my wife, my parents and my in laws, we're on 1,2,3,4..we're on four different spectrums of this, of the view of this pandemic and the current state of our, you know, world or health and future, right.

You know, even I mean, if I can pull my eight year old, I bet he has a different feeling because now he were told that, you know, he has to take a pause, on the five day pause on a virus that he can't see. Or he can't, you know, he doesn't know what's going on? And how do you tell an eight year old that your world is unpredictable? That I don't know, if you get to go to school tomorrow, I don't know if you know, we're going to be able to do anything, because none of us can guess because none of us has gone through this before. So all of us are just trying to figure this out, right? So in my own family dynamic,

and you multiply that by the 400,000 that exist in Nevada, we need more research on it. But I would say that nobody, nobody's on the same page about how to take that next step.

John Hudak 51:21

No, I appreciate that answer. Thanks a ton. And for just being so honest about it. I really, I really appreciate that. So my last question for you is, as you've mentioned, a lot of things have changed over the past couple of years, what are maybe 2-3-4, big things that have changed in your organization that is going to make the organization function a little differently in the future and work with the community differently in the future, sort of what have you learned about your own organization, and the community you serve through COVID?

Duy Nguyen 52:01

Well, thank you for asking this question. Magdalena was in the audience when we announced this back in early December, at our inspiration gala is we're now embarking on the health aspects of our organization. We've been a champion so far, again, through the blessing of Nevada health exchange, and the State Health Exchange to provide the Health Navigator for folks to access the affordable care insurance. And we've done this for the last four years and we have just exceeded our number every year. So now pivoting over to the pandemic where we had to provide vaccines. Then it dawned on us that that medical access point is still missing, that folks don't have places to go, that speak their language and understanding their their their medical history if they don't speak that language, or understanding that culture, right? Nevada is still a desert, when it comes to those asset points.

So ACDC is embarking on putting on a medical clinic, a center for this diverse community to be able to access. So we're embarking on that this year. We held a fundraiser back in December. So we'll get some seed money going. And we're going to put on this clinic and we're going to launch it this April. Because we know that this COVID, at least what we've seen the last couple of years is not going anywhere anytime soon. All these variants coming up and people are definitely...health is their number one on top of mind--doesn't matter what community you're speaking to.

Right, because this thing affects everyone. So we know that for the uninsured, the underinsured and for folks who are living in their own bubble, we have to provide an access point. And you know, we know that in recent months, there are other communities who are coming out with stronger health initiatives. And so we need to kind of play ball in that same angle as well. By ensuring that if you have health, then everything else you can deal with during this time, these unprecedented times. And if you can survive that, then everything else, it's easier to handle.

So ACDC, in the next 12 to 24 months, you know, on top of everything else we're doing we're adding and we're embarking on this health journey, so that we can at least be responsive to our community in terms of that access point. We know that we don't have all the answers, but we know that this is a starting point. And you know, we're very fortunate to have amazing advisory board members on our

organization who are affiliated with academic institutions. So like, we're working with Shelley Berkeley, through Touro University. And we just met with the UNLV medical school too. And so we're trying to add all these pieces together, because they have students, medical students, medical student doctors who speak these native languages that we need, and they just need a community to get plugged into. And before they had to go outside of Nevada to do this, but right now we have the ability to provide those for them here, so that they can learn while they're finishing up their degree.

So that is a good transition for us to be able to collaborate, and work with our existing community to kind of put all the pieces together. So that is happening rapidly. And we want to be able to provide this access point. So definitely, that's a priority. And then the second thing is that, we have to be able to get more directly engaged to putting our voice at the table. So that is through our electoral process that, you know, doesn't matter who, where, when, and what side you're on, as long as you go out there and you put that vote, because then the powers that be will realize that we are here in significant numbers.

But they won't be able to do that until they know that we are going to the polls, we're getting educated. For those of us who are eligible, we are going to get naturalized so that we can go through the process and make our voices heard that way. So that is the sort of strategy for us is to really, really educate our community and connect them to these things that they're not... They didn't think they need them. Because you know, that power that one vote, they didn't think that it was important before, collectively as a group, I think, you know, like the Latino community have shown us, like the African American community have shown us.

There are...together, you know with those two communities and us, we are actually a majority minority. I was told I'm not supposed to say that. Because that's actually not a bad, this is a bad thing. But anyway, the majority minority community here in Clark County. And so we want to be able to do it organically, right? Have people understand that it's not just an every two years or every four years process, that those accountability, how we can really get the attention of the powers that be is that we continue to stay engaged. So we will find that basic need service delivery.

We will deliver it but through that breath, we're able to tie it back to engagement that, hey, look, these health services can go away, these food services can go away, these educational services can go away, if the community doesn't continuously remind those who are elected to serve us that we're here. And we're here to stay. And we're here 365 days a year, and not just between Labor Day and Election Day, every even number of years. So that is the work that we're going to continue to do. But now we're just gonna pivot and add the Health Center to it.

And then third, last but not least, is to work on this housing piece, because I think that this housing inflation is scaring all of us too that. we don't know if there's going to be another bubble coming, right? So one of our partners just got named into region nine. He's the director of region nine for the Department of Housing & Urban Development. He actually was here on the ground helping us even

though he was a city council member in California, he actually connected us to food resources back in 2020 and we just learned that he just got appointed by the Biden administration to head up the HUD office for region nine, which is the largest region in the country.

And so we're gonna expand on that, and be ready in case that hits again in 2022, right, 14 years after that other incident. So we'll be ready this time. So basic needs: health, housing, nutrition. If we can cover these three things, then our community can do better and can focus on other things that will help them live better, once they have these basic things taken care of by organizations like us.

John Hudak 1:00:59

Great.

Magdalena Martinez 1:01:00

Really helpful, Duy, thank you so much. John, did you have a follow up?

John Hudak 1:01:04

I didn't the only thing I wanted to sort of close with quickly, Duy, in addition to thanking you for being generous with your time with Magda and me today is, is there anyone else that you would recommend us reaching out to about this sort of topic, the questions that we've asked, the research that we're doing?

Duy Nguyen 1:01:26

Um, can you give me some criteria on the qualification?

John Hudak 1:01:34

So in general, we're looking at a broad swath of individuals: business, education, healthcare, community development, etc., inside and outside of government. And so people who really have an ear to the ground for what is going on in the communities. What we're hoping to do is talk to people like you to get a better understanding of what the average individual is going through, the challenges and the sort of relief, if any, that they're getting, and so people who have that real good pulse of the community, in as broad of terms as I could offer, as I could say, is who we're looking for.

Magdalena Martinez 1:02:20

And I'd say specific to the Asian community.

Duy Nguyen 1:02:23

Okay. Okay. That helps, that helps. You know, because we don't have a lot of elected officials that look like us, we rely on those who are passionate about our community, you know, the other person who had been with the AAPI community since day one, since he got elected is county commissioner, Justin Jones. He has been instrumental in getting all of us the resources that we need because he represents a large Asian district. And so, Commissioner Jones has been instrumental in connecting all those dots for

us. So you know, sometimes, it's those who understand and see where they're going to be able to connect everybody together, rather than rely on someone, sometimes who looks like us, but has no idea what the heck they're doing. I can give you a few names but I got to turn off the recording when that happens. But yes, I would, if you allow me to ponder on those names.

John Hudak 1:03:35

Yeah, absolutely.

Duy Nguyen 1:03:36

I'm not sure what your timeline is in getting all this wrapped up.

John Hudak 1:03:41

No, So we see this as a multi-month project. And so yeah, if you could get us names within a couple of weeks, that would be great.

Duy Nguyen 1:03:51

Great. I'm trying to get you the doer rather than a talker, because...tons of those. Um, and my unfilteredness will always get me in trouble. But, you know, I know that at least with Magdalena (she knows me for a while now), that my honesty has always been my preferred method of communication.

John Hudak 1:04:16

I like that.

Duy Nguyen 1:04:17

But with these contacts, I want to make sure that I give you all the right people who give you substantive things rather than just checking the box conversations.

John Hudak 1:04:29

Great. I appreciate that.

Duy Nguyen 1:04:32

Great, I will work on those and I will get them over to you.

Magdalena Martinez 1:04:37

Thank you, Duy, so much.

John Hudak 1:04:39

Yeah, this has been great, uhm really helpful for the research. And like I said before, thank you so much for your time.

Duy Nguyen 1:04:46

Absolutely. Magdalena. I have huge respect for her and her work as a leader in the community. So of course when she asked I never ever say no. I've said no to her husband many times but for Dr. Martinez is always a yes.

Magdalena Martinez 1:05:05

Thank you, Duy, so much. I appreciate you.

Duy Nguyen 1:05:08

Well it was nice meeting you, John.

John Hudak 1:05:10

Likewise, and my next trip out as long as conditions allow hopefully we can say hello in person.

Duy Nguyen 1:05:17

Oh, you're not based in Las Vegas?

John Hudak 1:05:20

I'm in Washington, D.C. but Las Vegas is my home away from home. I'm there 5-6-7 times a year for work. So yeah, I get out there as regularly as possible. COVID has made me very sad that I've not been able to enjoy what I consider my second home.

Duy Nguyen 1:05:36

So well, D.C. is my second home. I go there as much as I can. COVID definitely has changed a lot. But I actually was I managed to be there a couple of times during the pandemic, of course, running up the hill and, you know, complaining. So yes, but D.C. is actually one of my favorite places to go. Because, you know, when you're in the district, you can get lost and, you know, just play tourist and there's just so many things you can do. And my mom's side of the family is all from the D.C. area so I'm in D.C., Maryland, Virginia. So what area of D.C. you're in?

Duy Nguyen 1:05:39

So I'm in the Petworth neighborhood, so it's about five miles north of the Capitol.

Duy Nguyen 1:06:25

Yep. Yep. That's a very nice area.

John Hudak 1:06:28

Thank you. Um, so yeah your next time in town, don't be a stranger. Please feel free to reach out we can grab coffee or something like that.

Duy Nguyen 1:06:34

Absolutely. I frequent DuPont quite a bit because you probably heard of Kramer's?

John Hudak 1:06:40

Yeah, of course.

Duy Nguyen 1:06:41

Yeah. That's my hangout spot.

John Hudak 1:06:44

Excellent. And Brookings is two blocks from there. So um, it's when we're back in the office, it's easy to meet there.

Duy Nguyen 1:06:53

Awesome. Awesome. Well, great. Well, thank you for connecting us and I appreciate this. And, yes, please let me know what else I can do to help and I'll be glad to do whatever I can.

John Hudak 1:07:05

Great. Thanks a ton, Duy.

Magdalena Martinez 1:07:07

Thank you. Have a good weekend.

Duy Nguyen 1:07:08

Thank you. You too. Bye.

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