



## **Are you young? You need to attend this conference**

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OAKLAND \_ Echoing the national trend of youth voter interest in this year's election, the Asian Communities Center for Reproductive Justice tomorrow will conduct a conference that attempts to engage Bay Area teens in California's upcoming election.

While the presidential race has dominated discussions of youth participation in the critical election, a host of California initiatives have also spurred passionate debate among local first-time voters and civic-minded teens, said Dana Ginn Paredes, organizing director of the center.

Specifically, Propositions 4, 6 and 8 will be the focus of the conference, titled "Youth + Power = Change," because the issues involved could have a profound impact on the younger sector of voters. Accordingly, teens old enough to vote—and even those not old enough to vote—should be a part of the political process, Paredes said.

"We'll be talking about the significance of getting involved," Paredes said. "Elections aren't just about putting people into office. The youth we've been in contact with have been really excited about this election."

Prop. 4 would require parental notification and a waiting period on abortions for minors. It's the third time the issue has been placed on the California ballot, the last being in 2006.

Prop. 6 would require the state to spend more on prison and parole operations, with the cost being footed from the state's general fund, as well as reallocating funds currently used for K-12 education, higher education and health and human services, among other state-wide services. It would also deem any youth 14 years or older convicted of a "gang-related" felony unfit for trial in juvenile court, meaning youths would be tried as adults and face more stringent sentencing.

And Prop. 8 would nullify the recent landmark State Supreme Court ruling that allows same-sex couples to marry in California. If passed, it would amend the state constitution to say "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

Paredes said these measures are of particular concern to youths. "They were super outraged about these ballots," she said. "They don't need unrealistic laws to make it harder for them."

The conference will feature several local artists who will conduct workshops throughout the day. It will also feature live blogging and video recording from attendees.

Approximately 175 youths are expected to attend the event. Paredes welcomed others interested to attend, but said finding a seat may be difficult. The conference will be held Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in downtown Oakland, at 1223 Preservation Park Way. For information about the conference, call (510) 434-7900.

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