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Asian American Collaborative Hosted Mayoral Forum

Forum hosted 8 leading candidates for Mayor to discuss issues of concern of diverse Asian American New Yorkers as they recover from the pandemic and face rising reports of anti-Asian hate incidents

New York, NY - The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) is leading a collaborative with 39 Asian American community based organizations that hosted an Asian American community mayoral candidates' forum starting at 5:15 PM on May 4, 2021, at the beginning of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. PIX 11 was the official media sponsor for the event.

The highly anticipated 2021 mayoral race is set against a backdrop of an Asian American community traumatized by both a global pandemic and rising reports of anti-Asian hate incidents. Asian American unemployment grew over 6,900%, the highest of any racial group. Asian Americans also were hit harder by the COVID-19 pandemic, with Chinese New Yorkers having the state's highest COVID-19 mortality rate at 35.7%. At the same time bias-based incidents against Asian Americans rose 933% in New York City alone in the last year, the highest of any city in the US, according to recent reports. Stop AAPI Hate reported 3,800 incidents in 2020 alone, and many more incidents have gone unreported.

"We thank all those who contributed to our 2021 Asian American Community Mayoral Forum, especially our 39 diverse Asian American community organization partners. Last night, our communities heard from eight candidates about their plans to support our healing and recovery. The pandemic and more recent instances of violence have only exacerbated the Asian American community's struggles. For too long, the model minority myth and the lack of accurate and disaggregated data accounting for our ethnic diversity, have rendered the needs of our community invisible. Community-based organizations on the ground have had to stretch to meet growing community needs exposed by the pandemic. And to truly support our healing and recovery, the next Mayor must address more deep-rooted issues and under-investments that have long-impacting our Asian American communities," **said Anita Gundanna and Vanessa Leung, Co-Executive Directors of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF).**

The following candidates were in attendance: **Eric Adams, Art Chang, Shaun Donovan, Kathryn Garcia, Ray McGuire, Dianne Morales, Maya Wiley, and Andrew Yang**. Participants were part of one of two 50 minute panels to answer questions prepared by the collaborative around issues related to pandemic recovery and social inequities that bookended a presentation on ranked choice voting by **Sandra Choi** from the **MinKwon Center of Community Action and APA VOICE**. Award-winning journalist and **PIX 11 reporter Shirley Chan** moderated. Over 8,000 viewers were reached. This event was streamed simultaneously on PIX 11 and aired on Queens Public Television later in the evening. The forum was simultaneously interpreted into Bengali, Cantonese, Korean, and Mandarin. A recording of the forum will be released in Nepali, Pashto, and Punjabi following the event.

"SACSS has been thrilled to partner with CACF and partner agencies to sponsor the NYC Mayoral Forum at a time when the Asian community in New York is experiencing multiple challenges - recovering from the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and the growing anti-Asian hate crimes. It was very important that our communities were able to hear from the Mayoral candidates on how they plan to address these critical issues. As the fastest growing population in New York City, we needed to hear from the candidates on how they will address issues such as access to healthcare, food insecurity, senior support, and legal and housing support," said **Sudha Acharya, Executive Director, South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS)**.

"The Asian American community's strength and power lies in our diversity. As a rapidly growing voting block, the Nepali-speaking community welcomes the candidates from yesterday's forum and their responses to the questions presented. Adhikaar looks forward to engaging Nepali-speaking New Yorkers in the upcoming elections, through voter education and GOTV work, and continuing to uplift the issues that impact immigrant workers - worker rights, health access, language justice, mental health and other issues integral for an equitable recovery for the most marginalized," said **Narbada Chhetri, Director of Organizing & Programs, Adhikaar**.

"The YMCA of Greater New York is proud to have co-sponsored this important mayoral forum focused on the Asian American community. We're grateful to CACF and other partners for their valuable work in ensuring access to information for New York City's diverse communities. We know New Yorkers are eager for comprehensive information about this year's elections, and CACF has ensured that our Asian American communities are part of the discussion," **Sharon Greenberger, President & CEO, YMCA of Greater New York**.

"We would like to thank the candidates for sharing their viewpoints last night and CACF and all of the participating organizations for collaborating to provide this important forum for our communities," said **Jennifer Sun and Thomas Yu, co-executive directors of Asian Americans for Equality**. "We were encouraged to hear the candidates express support for AAPI New Yorkers and to promise more resources for struggling AAPI small businesses and community members who have been historically neglected. While these sentiments are appreciated, they must now go well beyond one candidate forum and become central issues in this campaign and become policy priorities for our next mayor."

"Sapna NYC and other CBOs have been on the ground throughout this pandemic filling in where NYC has failed its most vulnerable residents whether it's distributing food, helping get people vaccinated, or addressing the devastating anti-Asian hate crimes. Although the APA community makes up over 15% of the community, we remain largely invisible and overlooked, including by elected officials and when it comes to city funding. We were heartened to hear the commitment these candidates voiced to investing in our APA communities and will make sure to hold them to these promises. Our next mayor must be committed to an equitable

recovery that centers our most vulnerable communities and doesn't leave the APA community behind," said **Diya Basu-Sen, Executive Director, Sapna NYC.**

Margaret Fung, executive director of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) said, "In addition to facing serious economic losses and the devastating impacts of gentrification on their neighborhoods, Asian Americans have been targeted by a surge in hate violence. The next mayor of New York City must ensure the physical safety of all New Yorkers, including Asian Americans. The mayoral forum addressed many community concerns and will help ensure that Asian Americans cast an informed vote in the June 22 primary elections."

"The Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC) commends all mayoral candidates who are connecting with and listening to the needs of community-based organizations serving New York's vulnerable Asian-American communities. As we collectively fight against the rise of anti-Asian bigotry and advocate for expanding funding and opportunities for our communities, we are heartened to know that we have champions in policymaking who are ready to stand with us to create an equitable city for all," said **Rawaa Nancy Albilal, President & CEO of the Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC).**

"Apex for Youth is deeply concerned about the impact of coronavirus-related racism on our youth. Even before the pandemic, Asian American youth were facing a crisis in mental health. The next mayor must lead with a determination to end the scourge of anti-Asian violence and to support our youth with the services they need in the face of bullying, economic insecurity, and having navigated an entire year of remote learning in mostly immigrant, limited English proficient households," said **Jiyoon Mary Chung, Interim Executive Director, Apex for Youth.**

"It is important for us to know how our next mayor will address our concerns as we recover from the pandemic and economic crisis that impacted the low income community the hardest," said **OCA-NY.**

"The Chinese Progressive Association is pleased to have been a co-sponsor of last night's Asian American Community Mayoral Candidate's forum. The forum provided us with more information to enable voters to rank their choices in June. We continue to look forward to hearing directly from all the candidates how they will address economic, social, and health issues facing low-income immigrant communities in Chinatown and the Lower East Side" said **Mae Lee, Executive Director of the Chinese Progressive Association.**

"CPC is proud to have worked with CACF and community partners in sponsoring this mayoral forum. The Asian American community has the highest increase in voter turnout in New York, but two-thirds of Asian American voters have never heard from an electoral campaign. This forum was an important opportunity for mayoral candidates to make their case to New York City's fastest growing and most diverse community. We learned more about the mayoral candidates' platforms to improve the economic, social, and health conditions faced by the Asian American community. We hope that the new mayor will follow-through on any commitments to make our community more visible and voices better heard," said **Wayne Ho, President and CEO of the Chinese-American Planning Council.**

"An eye opening event to see a wide range of experience that the candidates offer. The CACF platform provided an ability to see the differences between the candidates on issues that affect the Asian American community," said **Julie Azuma, Board Member of Japanese American Association of New York.**

"The 2021 primary elections are a remarkable time for APA communities, as more APA New Yorkers are running for office, getting registered, and participating in our City's democracy than ever before. The next NYC Mayor will have the Herculean task of a just and equitable recovery from COVID-19, and last night's multilingual, community-based mayoral forum is an important step in encouraging our communities to vote with the info and resources they need," said **John Park, Executive Director of the MinKwon Center**.

"The Academy of Medical & Public Health Services (AMPHS) was pleased to co-host this mayoral forum with CACF and our community partners last night. The Asian-American community is the fastest-growing population in New York City, yet faces disproportionate challenges that often go ignored, including the highest poverty rates, highest COVID-19 fatality rates, and historical increases in anti-Asian hate crimes. AMPHS has been filling the gaps where our governments have failed to do so through our free health and mental health services, vaccine navigation assistance, and food distribution during COVID-19. The Mayoral candidates who spoke last night not only discussed issues centering an equitable recovery for APA communities from COVID-19, but also health access, education, and funding issues that have plagued our communities for years. We hope that the forum, which was provided to over 8,000 individuals in five different Asian languages, will lead voters in our community to make an informed choice for the best Mayor to represent them in NYC next year," said **Mon Yuck Yu, Executive Vice President & Chief of Staff of the Academy of Medical & Public Health Services (AMPHS)**.

CACF brought together the following **host organizations** to plan the forum and develop a candidates' survey to understand the priorities and plans of candidates.

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services, Inc. | Adhikaar | Apex for Youth | Arab-American Family Support Center, Inc | Asian American / Asian Research Institute - CUNY | Asian American Arts Alliance | Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund | Asian Americans For Equality | Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) NY | Chhaya CDC | Chinatown YMCA | Chinese Progressive Association | Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) | CMP | Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans (CAPA) | Community Inclusion & Development Alliance (CIDA) | Damayan Migrant Workers Association | GAPIMNY—Empowering Queer & Trans Asian Pacific Islanders | Homecrest Community Services Inc. | Immigrant Social Services, Inc. | India Home | Japanese American Association of NY | Japanese American Social Services, Inc. | Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC) | Korean Community Services of Metropolitan NY (KCS) | Mekong NYC | MinKwon Center for Community Action | NAPAWF | National Federation of Filipino American Associations - NY Chapter (NaFFAA-NY) | OCA-NY | Pilipino American Unity for Progress - NY Chapter (UniPro-NY) | Sakhi for South Asian Women | Sapna NYC | South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS) | South Asian Youth Action (SAYA) | United Chinese Association of Brooklyn | UNITED SIKHS | Women for Afghan Women | YMCA of Greater New York

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