

# **Brooklyn Community Board 7**

## **Asian Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes**

Date: March 25, 2021  
Time: 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM  
Place: Brooklyn Chinese-American Association  
5000 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Brooklyn, New York  
Topic: Asian Hate Crime

The Asian Affairs Committee zoom meeting was attended by approximately 400 businesses and residents of Sunset Park. Due to zoom platform limitation, the meeting was held with two zoom accounts simultaneously. Since the CB7 zoom platform was operated by community board staff, I apologize that we were unable to identify and record all attending board members.

### **I. Opening Remarks**

#### Cesar Zuniga, Chair of Community Board 7

Hate has no place in this City and Sunset Park. Dealing with this type of hate for a long time, we need to stand up against it together. In addition to calling out this overt hate, how do we deal with the subtle and structural hate. I suggested dealing with this through our educational system, reforming curriculum that helps to inform people who are not like us about who we really are and form a community that is united.

#### Paul Mak, Chair of Asian Affairs Committee

There is a long history of hate crimes against Asian Americans, especially after the pandemic. There has been a 150% increase. Incidents such as verbal harassment, bumping and coughing to Asian victims are just examples of non-violent discrimination. It is difficult for the NYPD to capture all encounters. Just by reporting to police would not completely eliminate the problems.

I recognize the importance of incorporating this into our education system and fostering the idea that everyone should work together, learn and respect different cultures. There are currently proposed bills to deal with Asian hate crimes, but nothing has been finalized yet. Having legislations are important, however, how the police interpret racial encounters and various other details still need to be ironed out.

In order to escape from the potentially dangerous situations - making sure that you and your family are not in harm's way, walking away from confrontational situations and contacting the police would be the best way to deal with the hate crimes at this time.

#### Kin Fung, Member of Asian Affairs Committee

Encourage everyone to come out to report to the police what they have seen and heard. I believe the NYPD will do a lot, such as recording the case, adding them onto other reports, and acting on these reports. Step out and tell everyone what you have experienced.

Denny Chen, Member of Asian Affairs Committee

We are all here for one reason, hate. It has been there for so long. Education will prevent a lot of this. Teaching and helping people understand how to respect. We are hard working people, we come here to fulfill our American dream. We all have the same purpose, to help our family and children have a better life. All our sacrifices should be respected. We all need to stand up against all the hate and harassment; we can call on the NYPD for help. Thank you to all the officers around us that come out to support and protect us.

Kenny Guan, Member of Asian Affairs Committee

I've grown up here for more than 30 years. I know what it is like to be discriminated against and hated for being Asian. I always had to fight back and defend myself, so don't be afraid. We all belong here; this country is built by immigrants. We are so unique and united; this is why we love America. When I say "defend yourself", an example of this is an elderly lady who was attacked and defended herself. She was about 75 years old and still defended herself. Be smart, call 911, but also fight in your own way to survive and defend yourself. The language barrier for us is also a big issue. I encourage you to learn more English. We stand together with all the Asians against all the hate.

Wai Ko, Member of Asian Affairs Committee

I have been in the US for more than 40 years. Everyone says call 911, I don't agree with this. I don't agree because the number one thing they will ask you is "do they have a weapon?" "is anybody hurt?" You will be ignored because you respond with no. You have to take care of yourself if someone wants to hit you. If you can prevent or avoid it, just run away! If you don't fight back your life could be at risk. I saw a lot of things that were not fair during my time working at the police department. The best thing for us is to become united together and watch each other's backs. Let your politicians know and go out and vote! Always protect yourself and call 911.

Peter Abbate, Assemblyman

I want to stress that Education is extremely important. This is America, everyone is welcome here. There should be no violence against people who live here. The police are very committed especially in our neighborhood to help the violence stop. I would tell people to report it to 911 and anyone you can. Let people in your neighborhood and community groups know what is going on so we can help. There are things that the NYPD and elected officials can do. It is our job that we make sure the NYPD is following up with these reports. We need better education in our local groups and additional funding for these groups. We need to use what we can to stop this hate.

Cynthia Felix:

I've seen a lot of activities happening and I do want to show my support. I am saddened by the things going on. I do hope that through education we get better because together we are stronger. Thank you for encouraging people to speak up because a lot of the time people are afraid.

Dick Chung:

I believe that the law enforcement is doing what they can within their limit to fight against these crimes. The only problem I'm seeing is the judicial side of things. The court system and the reform system that promote all these violent crimes. I know that for this past year there have been actions to close loopholes in our bills/amendments. Another problem is our education system. We need to

get schools involved so young children start learning that everyone should be working hand in hand, instead of promoting that one racial group is higher than another. I also work with the assembly minority office, I would also like to see what we can do at the state level.

## **II. Experiences/Issues/Comments Shared by the Asian Residents and CB 7 members**

- Questions regarding carrying guns or other tools for self-defense when in a dangerous situation have been raised by the audience. Comment was made that if the person is in a life-threatening situation, he or she might consider using it for self-defense. But, obtaining gun license is difficult in NYS. It is strongly suggested that if anyone is in danger, the person should escape from the harmful and dangerous situation and call 911 for help.
- Homeless issues were brought up during the meeting. More resources for dealing with mental health issues are needed. Mental health issues also need to be tackled. We are all entitled to defend ourselves, if you feel that your life is in danger you need to do whatever you can to defend yourself. We need to have a serious conversation about supporting people with mental health issues. We have been having this conversation, but we need to have it in a much more intentional and broader conversation about resources, and what more we can do to address mental health conditions. Everything for me circles back to educating our communities and bringing resources in to truly tackle some of these structural questions.
- Verbal assaults have been happening frequently during daily life of Asian residents, while they are shopping around, on the way to work/home, taking subway, walking on the street or running errands. Avoiding confrontation with any potential attackers by not having eye/physical contact with them. Call 911 and report any incidents via phone or online although it doesn't help on the spot but we should still report the case and speak up. Efforts should be made on how to define freedoms concerning expression and verbal harassment from hate.
- Reporting an incident to hate crime department is difficult even though there is no language barrier for Asian residents. Since the victim could not identify the suspect, the victim was told that she should not even bother to make this report. She had been waiting outside in the cold for 3 hours but she insisted on reporting. Some follow up was made but to this day there has been not much else. As someone who can speak English, have multiple resources, and know his/her rights, and other things, what about people who do not know English? (How can we make this process easier and more respectful for people in our community? How can we make it so people in our community can access resources? Violence is more than just physical.)
- Police patrol has been increased in the neighborhood these days. Residents worried that there will be police lay-off due to the police reforming since they heard the related rumors which might affect the patrolling and protection of our neighborhood. Due to the increase incidents happening around the country, besides increasing the number of police, patrols and protection, all attendees hoped to see legal action taken against people who target Asians.

- The hate crime suspects could be easily released and do not have any legal consequence. This is something the elected official and communities need to address and modify.
- Racism and bullying verbally and physically have been also happening in the school. How can the DOE system make sure our children are safe, and other children are not bullying others verbally and physically. How do we as institutions undo this racism? We need to make sure all our institutions are focused on eradicating racism, white supremacy, and holding people accountable. It's not ok to wave things off.

### III. **Additional Remarks:**

#### Cindy VandenBosch

I am disheartened to hear all these stories about people saying hateful and racist things by people who don't even know you! It hurts all of us. We are neighbors and everyone brings so much to our communities and cities in so many ways. All of us on the community board feel that we need to support the Asian American community in the best way we can. We are going to do our best, and thank you for having the courage to come on and share your stories.

#### Jimmy Li

It's heartbreaking to hear all these stories. I appreciate the support and staying in solidarity with the AAPI communities. There is a lot we as individuals can do, not only the AAPI community, but our allies. Congresswoman Grace Meng is trying to push resolution 151 to denounce hate and racism against AAPI communities. This is going to hold people accountable and bring more task forces.

#### Sam Sierra

You have our support. We stand with you. You are not by yourself. Together, we will defeat this monster that is racism.

#### Paul Mak

We look forward to working with the Asian communities and all other communities to eliminate the racial tensions. There has been a long history of Anti-Asians. We need to work together with each other, the police department and our elected and public officials to find ways to create and enhance legislations to better support and protect the Asian community.

Thank you again for attending this highly important meeting. We will make notes on your advice and ideas, hopefully to utilize them in the future while we tackle the issues. It won't happen without your support. Thank you again. Have a good night!

\*\*\* Meeting Ended \*\*\*