



Asian American Federation

**UNIVERSITY
SETTLEMENT**

PRESS RELEASE

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***Asian American Federation and University Settlement Launch
Initiative to Address AAPI Hate Crimes with Support from the U.S.
Department of Justice***

***DOJ Funding to Bolster Community-Led Efforts to Strengthen
Support for AAPI Communities***

New York, NY - The Asian American Federation (AAF) and University Settlement announced new funding from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) Bureau of Justice Assistance that will support joint programming focused on combating the rapid rise in anti-Asian hate crimes that has persisted since the pandemic.

Building on the success of University Settlement's Rejoice! Organize! Activate! Reclaim! (ROAR) festival – which fostered safety and community in partnership with AAPI New Yorkers and Chinatown residents – the new joint programming will feature three annual affinity-building events. These free, public events will take place in various locations across Lower Manhattan, starting in May 2025 and running through late 2027. Some events will also take place in local public high schools to foster engagement and connection with AAPI youth. The event series, coordinated by The Performance Project @ University Settlement, will feature culturally relevant performances designed to spark community dialogue and foster healing and connection, and will feature culturally relevant storytelling and food.

In addition, the Asian American Federation will present in-language sessions on situational awareness, conflict de-escalation, and upstander intervention. At these events, AAF will also include workshops on reporting hate and bias-related incidents, and opportunities to connect with mental healthcare resources and self-defense instruction.

To expand the impact of this initiative beyond New York City, AAF will convene an Anti-Asian Hate Violence Working Group to develop a replicable "playbook" of best practices for community-based approaches to addressing hate. The playbook, which may include insights from the event series, will also be shared with law enforcement to strengthen their support for the AAPI community.

AAF and University Settlement will partner with a number of AAPI community organizations, including Asian Americans for Equality, Immigrant Social Services, and House of Chow, to develop content for the event series and drive audience engagement.

"At a time when violent rhetoric and hate crimes against AAPI communities remain a pressing issue, this new funding from the Department of Justice is a lifeline for community safety. We are proud to work with University Settlement to build on proven initiatives to expand support for those affected by hate violence. This funding will help us to strengthen community-led safety efforts to tackle hate violence, share mental health resources, and create space for dialogue and connection. By providing in-language resources and tools, as well as best practices to help law enforcement better support AAPI communities, we are taking meaningful steps to ensure every member of our community feels seen, heard, and protected," said **Jo-Ann Yoo, Executive Director of the Asian American Federation**.

"Every New Yorker deserves to feel safe, everywhere in the city. But with hate crimes and violent rhetoric targeting AAPI people still on the rise, we still have a long way to go to live up to our city's promise of inclusion. We know that building stronger relationships across our communities through creative expression and dialogue; ensuring that our neighbors have the tools they need to de-escalate and defend against incidents of violence and hate; and to ensure they are properly reported and tracked when they occur; and creating pathways to mental health and wellness supports are all vital ways we can build safety and resilience for all AAPI people in our neighborhoods. We are proud to partner with the Asian American Federation in this important work, and grateful to the United States Department of Justice for its crucial investment in our shared vision for community safety," said **Melissa Aase, CEO of University Settlement**.

"Anti-Asian hate incidents have remained unacceptably common since the pandemic, making our city feel unsafe for far too many New Yorkers," **Congressman Dan Goldman** said. "I am thrilled that the Department of Justice is partnering with the Asian American Federation and University Settlement to host events featuring workshops, performances, and listening sessions promoting mutual understanding, educating community members on de-escalation tactics, and addressing this unacceptable hate head-on. AAF has been at the forefront of combating anti-Asian hate, and this partnership will utilize University

Settlement's century of expertise to ensure we reach New Yorkers where they are and stay on the offensive against discrimination, prejudice, and bias of all kinds."

"Asian New Yorkers are still grappling with ongoing violence and hate crimes, which makes solutions for community safety still as urgent as ever. Earlier this year, I was proud to introduce the Hate Crimes Modernization Act, which was included in the final New York State FY2025 Budget, and I welcome community-centered approaches towards safety, such as this collaboration between the Asian American Federation and University Settlement. In order to ensure a safer New York for all, we must not only hold perpetrators of hate accountable but also strengthen AAPI communities through resources, dialogue, and wellness," said **Grace Lee, New York State Assemblymember, 65th Assembly District.**

"Asian Americans for Equality has been proud to be a vital partner in AAF's Hope Against Hate Campaign for over three years, working tirelessly to combat anti-Asian violence. Together, we've expanded access to in-language safety resources; trained Community Companions to provide protective presence in Manhattan's Chinatown and Lower East Side; and equipped community members with skills to feel safer. Anti-Asian bias and the fear and anxiety it causes among our community members is not going away – which is why investing in community-centered safety solutions is more important than ever. We are excited to continue this partnership to provide life-changing resources and build safer, more resilient communities," said **Thomas Yu, Executive Director of Asian Americans for Equality.**

"Immigrant Social Services is excited to join University Settlement and the Asian American Federation in this critical initiative supported by the DOJ. For decades, we've been in the trenches with the Chinatown/Lower East Side immigrant families and children who enrich New York City and beyond. We also know firsthand the fears, challenges, and harm experienced by the community. As we face an uncertain future, this initiative reflects our shared commitment to using the arts and community-driven programs to foster safety, healing, and empowerment," said **Beatrice Chen, Executive Director of Immigrant Social Services.**

"Alongside University Settlement and the Asian American Federation, House of Chow is honored to contribute as a non-profit arts organization to programming that addresses anti-Asian hate crimes. We are grateful for the Department of Justice's support in this incredibly necessary initiative. Since 2015, House of Chow has been a pioneering force in New York City advocating for Asians in Hip-Hop Dance and the greater arts. Through educational workshops, media projects, and performances, we respectfully center Asian identities and lineages within intersectional and cross-cultural experiences. As part of this initiative, we will perform a dance theater piece called #UnapologeticallyAsian, which traces the roots of racism towards Asians in the U.S. and provides space for mourning lives lost to anti-Asian hate. We hope that our culturally relevant artistry and facilitation will foster more empathetic relationships in our intergenerational diaspora and inspire greater

understanding towards Asians in our greater New York community,” said **Yvonne Huatin Chow | 周化炜 (they/she), Founder & Artistic Director of House of Chow.**

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About the Asian American Federation

Founded in 1989, the Asian American Federation is one of the strongest leadership voices advocating for better policies, services, and funding that lead to more justice and opportunity for Asian immigrants, one of the most historically under-resourced communities in New York City. As an umbrella leadership organization, they work together with 70 community-based organizations providing vital social services to 2.17 million Asian New Yorkers, to raise the influence and well-being of the pan-Asian American community through research, policy advocacy, public awareness, and nonprofit support.

Learn more at www.aafederation.org.

About University Settlement

University Settlement partners with 40,000 New Yorkers on the Lower East Side and in Brooklyn every year to build on their strengths as they achieve healthy, stable, and remarkable lives. For over 135 years, we’ve collaborated with our neighbors to pioneer highly effective programs that fight poverty and systemic inequality. Established in 1886 as the first Settlement House in the United States, we bring the values of that movement into the 21st century by meeting New Yorkers where they live, listening deeply to all perspectives, engaging with every individual holistically, and creating space for people to organize. Joining together with our neighbors to advocate for justice and equality, we help build community strength.

We work with New Yorkers of all ages. We infuse a commitment to civic engagement, equity, and communal action into each of our programs, which include early childhood education, mental health and wellness, benefits assistance and eviction prevention, adult literacy and education, healthy aging, community and recreation centers, performing and visual arts, and youth development.

Learn more at www.universitysettlement.org.