

Legislation Text

File #: 220427-A, **Version:** 1

Honoring Philadelphia-born author, podcaster, cultural critic, media trailblazer, and Peabody award winner Phil Yu, founder of “Angry Asian Man,” a destination website on Asian American pop culture, politics, sports, and more, and co-author of the New York Times best seller *Rise: A Pop History of Asian America from the 90s to Now*.

WHEREAS, Phil Yu was born at St. Agnes Hospital to Jason and Boosung Yu, Korean immigrants who resided in South Philadelphia and whom he recalled as naming him after his place of birth. He grew up in Silicon Valley, California, where his love of movies, film and Bruce Lee grew in part out of his parents operating a video rental store; and

WHEREAS, Yu attended Northwestern University where he studied radio, film and TV, and was one of the first students to take courses in a newly-formed Asian American Studies program, founded after Asian American students went on a 23-day hunger strike in 1995 to protest the lack of a program at the University; and

WHEREAS, Yu returned to California where he worked at the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM) and later earned a M.A. in Critical Studies from the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. He currently lives in the Los Angeles area along with his wife Joanna Lee and their daughter; and

WHEREAS, Yu founded the blog “Angry Asian Man” in 2001 “on a whim” as an online space to share news and perspectives from Asian America. In an interview with National Public Radio, Yu said: “The idea of an angry Asian anything is kind of an affront to people's general perceptions of Asians in America. I think a lot of time we get pegged as very subservient, docile, passive. You know we are often painted as the model minority. We're to keep our head down and not make waves, not rock the boat. And I just thought the name 'Angry Asian Man' was a little bit provocative when people see it. They go 'whoa, this is not a concept that I'm used to.' And I thought it's okay for Asians to speak up. It's okay for us to stand up and get angry about things in the face of injustice”; and

WHEREAS, In 2002, Yu’s blog came to prominence during the nationwide protests against the retailer Abercrombie & Fitch for its series of T-shirts featuring racist Asian caricatures and stereotypes. Yu’s critical analysis of the racism behind slogans that mocked labor, language and Asian American history became a must-read for thousands of young Asian Americans particularly on college campuses. His calls to action included posting corporate contact information and helped advance the protests, ultimately resulting in the retailer yanking the offensive T-shirts from its stores; and

WHEREAS, Yu’s blog took off with his signature line “That’s racist!” which exposed and condemned ignorant, racist stereotypes and behavior. Within a decade he had more than 250,000 unique visitors a month to the site. His coverage of Asian Americans in entertainment - particularly in music, film, food, art, and design - were often one of the earliest exposures Asian American artists received; and

WHEREAS, When he was laid off from his day job, Yu decided to pursue his passion and made “Angry Asian

Man” a full time venture, branching out into podcasting, web features, public speaking, and more. In 2014, he executive produced the film “Awesome Asian Bad Guys”; and

WHEREAS, For more than two decades, “Angry Asian Man” has been a destination site for all things Asian American in news, media, and pop culture. His site covered the protests against a proposed casino in Philadelphia Chinatown and the boycott and civil rights campaign led by Asian immigrant students at South Philadelphia High School. As Asian Americans have continued to grow in prominence and visibility, Yu has been documenting the moment, announcing the latest in restaurants, art, films, TV and music, as well as highlighting prominent elected officials, activists, organizing campaigns, and more; and

WHEREAS, During COVID and amid rising attacks nationally against Asian Americans, “Angry Asian Man” became an indispensable site documenting hateful acts, calling out authorities who failed to act in defense of Asian Americans, and urging people to action - whether to donate, to speak out, or to rally; and

WHEREAS, In March 2022, Yu, along with his co-authors - journalist Jeff Yang and filmmaker and producer Philip Wang of Wong Fu Productions - published *Rise: A Pop History of Asian America from the 90s to Now*. The book was inspired by late night discussions of the phenomenal rise of Asian American culture, including films like “Crazy Rich Asians,” juxtaposed against increasing anti-Asian hate and violence around the nation. *Rise* is a love letter to and for Asian America, its history, its people and movements, and its cultural impact as experienced over the last three decades; and

WHEREAS, In March 2022, Yu was honored with a Peabody 2022 Trailblazer award for holding to the ideals of the web as a “collaborative medium.” In announcing the award, the Peabody wrote: “He spoke up when others did not. He built community and allowed space for that community to be creative and innovative, to see themselves as creators and valued/respected audience members. For upholding the original vision of what the web could be, encouraging and inspiring the next generation of creators and community, for being unapologetic about centering the Asian American experience and for staying angry, Phil Yu is awarded a Peabody”; and

WHEREAS, Yu’s catchphrase “Stay Angry” has itself become a cultural touchstone, featured in mainstream movies and more. Yu said his slogan “Stay Angry” was meant to remind Asian Americans to “stay vigilant, keep conscious, don't give up the fight”; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia’s Asian American community has a vibrant history in staying angry and keeping alive a vital Asian American justice movement that has advanced civil and voting rights, youth leadership, education quality, housing, immigration justice, and criminal justice reforms benefiting Asian Americans and the broader Philadelphia community, and pledges to stay angry whenever and wherever injustice presents itself; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby honor Philadelphia-born author, podcaster, cultural critic, media trailblazer, and Peabody award winner Phil Yu, founder of “Angry Asian Man,” a destination website on Asian American pop culture, politics, sports, and more, and co-author of the New York Times best seller *Rise: A Pop History of Asian America from the 90s to Now*.