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Honoring twelve of Philadelphia's trailblazing Asian American leaders: Lily Yeh, Aisha Khan, Ali Zakar and Nanjeen Kabita, Hor Chou, Pastor Aldo Siahaan, Anna Perng, Nancy Nguyen, Su Ming Yeh, Chef Chris Cho, Wei Chen, and Le-Quyen Vu for their transformative work in building community, expanding educational opportunity, preserving culture and the arts, investing in youth leadership, and upholding civil rights on the occasion of Asian American and Pacific Islander History Month.

WHEREAS, Asian American and Pacific Islanders have played a pivotal and often unrecognized role in developing the fabric and history of the United States of America. Here in Philadelphia, Asian Americans preserved and protected one of the nation's few remaining Chinatowns, submerged the Vine Street Expressway, won Section 8 housing at the former Admiral Court Apartments in West Philadelphia, were the lead plaintiffs in the *Y.S. vs. School District of Philadelphia* lawsuit that established English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and bilingual staffing, won a landmark federal civil rights settlement around bullying and harassment of Asian immigrant youth, defended against anti-Asian hate and violence, took on criminal justice reform and opposed mass incarceration, decried indefinite and inhumane detention and the mass deportation of immigrants, and helped build the movement to declare Philadelphia a Sanctuary City; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia owes much of its progress to the inspiring advocacy of countless trailblazing Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders across communities and across social struggles, to whom this City is forever indebted. While some are renowned across the City, others have yet to receive the recognition and gratitude they deserve; and

WHEREAS, The trailblazing leaders identified here represent a microcosm of the breadth and diversity of the Asian American experience and creative spirit. They stand out in fields as diverse as the arts, civil and voting rights, education, and community organizing. They have helped build institutions that truly serve the people, and have inspired others to follow in their path; and

WHEREAS, Lily Yeh is the visionary artist and co-founder of the Village of Arts and Humanities, which started as a transformative art park in 1989 and has developed into a cultural hub in North Philadelphia, serving thousands of young people every year through arts-based opportunities for self-expression and personal success that engage youth and their families, revitalize physical space, preserve Black heritage, and advance social change. In 2002, Lily Yeh founded Barefoot Artists, an organization which brings the transformative power of art to impoverished communities across the globe through participatory and multifaceted projects that foster community empowerment, improve the physical environment, promote economic development, and preserve and advance indigenous art and culture. Since then, she has helped launch arts projects in countries all over the world, including Rwanda <https://segd.org/content/rwanda-healing-project>, Kenya <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/korogocho-kenya/>, Ghana <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/accra-ghana/>, Ecuador <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/salinas-ambato-ecuador/>, Syria <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/damascus-syria/>, China <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/the-dandelion-school-transformation-project-beijing-china/>, Haiti <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/city-soleil-haiti/>, India

<http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/ladakh-india/>, Taiwan <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/chi-chong-school-mural-taipei-taiwan/>, Palestine <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/balata-refugee-camp-west-bank-palestine/>, and the Republic of Georgia <http://barefootartists.org/projects/international/dzegvi-republic-of-georgia-1999/>; and

WHEREAS, Aisha Zia Khan is the founder, President, and Executive Director of Twelve Gates Arts, a landmark gallery dedicated to social change and showcasing the work of artists of color and South Asian and Middle Eastern artists to address injustice and promote cross-cultural community and understanding. Twelve Gates Arts is one of the few galleries dedicated to featuring international artists and artists of color in the Old City neighborhood. Along with her husband and partner Atif Sheikh, Aisha Zia Khan has curated exhibitions exploring colonization, migrant labor, the role of women for a free Kashmir, the global refugee crisis, as well as dedicated exhibits addressing Japanese American internment, Black Lives Matter and decrying South Asian anti-Black racism. A former social worker and financial analyst, Aisha Zia Khan has said she hopes to inspire a generation of South Asian children to see themselves and their potential in the works she puts forward; and

WHEREAS, Ali Zakar and Nanjeen Kabita are the co-founders of Moder Patshala, which has served the Bangladeshi-American community since 2004 by creating a flourishing community space that provides tutoring and homework support, ESL classes, creative writing workshops, book clubs and recreation opportunities for children and youth, as well as parenting education and technological literacy classes for adults. Ali Zakar and Nanjeen Kabita set out to ensure children in the Bangladeshi-American community had access to the necessary tools for their full academic development. Through hard work and generosity, their program has boomed, with hundreds of students owing their success to the care and support they received. Additionally, Ali Zakar and Nanjeen Kabita have devoted themselves to strengthening and engaging the Bangladeshi-American community as a political and cultural force; and

WHEREAS, Hor Chou is the President and Founder of the Cambodian Business Association of Greater Philadelphia. Hor Chou has been a tireless advocate for the rights of Cambodian immigrants and refugees, and supported the creation of 1LoveMovement, which organized to liberate Cambodian community members from the abuses of the criminal justice and mass deportation systems. Through his leadership, Hor Chou supported the establishment of a Southeast Asian Market at Franklin Delano Roosevelt Park in South Philadelphia, and successfully advocated for increased philanthropic and City funding to expand the economic and cultural impacts of the market. Hor Chou volunteers his time to advancing civic engagement, voting, and the creation of sanctuary spaces to preserve identity, culture, and communal legacy for the Cambodian community; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Aldo Siahaan is the Pastor and founder of the Philadelphia Praise Center, a Congregation in West Passyunk which has served the Indonesian community for over 15 years and acts as a community hub connecting parishioners to education, housing, and social service resources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pastor Aldo Siahaan ensured community members had access to food, critical supplies, and vaccinations, and he has played a role in supporting victims of anti-Asian hate and violence. He is a member of Mosaic Mennonite Conference, and was one of the six co-founders of Pejuant Indonesian Coalition for Social Justice; and

WHEREAS, Anna Perng is a mother, life-long community organizer, and disability rights activist who recently joined the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as Special Assistant in the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Prior to joining ACL, she co-founded the Chinatown Disability Advocacy Project, which has empowered parents to advocate for systemic change, language access, disability justice, and inclusion in the Greater Philadelphia area. She was also an appointee to the Obama Biden Administration in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Anna Perng is a recipient of Art-Reach's 2021

Individual Impact Award, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities's 2021 Champion of Equal Opportunity, and 2022 PCDC Making A Difference Award; and

WHEREAS, Nancy Nguyen is the Executive Director and co-founder of VietLead, a social justice, grassroots organization focused on youth engagement and organizing through a lens of racial justice and anti-violence, health promotion and navigation, civic engagement, and community-building projects. Her work with VietLead around school facilities resulted in lead remediation projects at Furness High School and across the District. Nancy Nguyen was one of the adult organizers leading the 2010 federal civil rights settlement against the School District of Philadelphia over its refusal to address harassment and violence against Asian immigrant youth at South Philadelphia High School. She has led campaigns to win language access at the polls, to establish Philadelphia as a Sanctuary City, and, as National Campaign Director with the Southeast Asian Freedom Network, to fight against the unjust deportations of Southeast Asian immigrants and their involvement in the criminal justice system. Nancy most recently co-founded the Asian Pacific American Political Alliance, Pennsylvania's first state-wide 501(c)4 electoral organization, which she current leads as co-Executive Director; and

WHEREAS, Su Ming Yeh is the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project <https://pailp.org/> (PILP), which is dedicated to safeguarding the rights of one of the most vulnerable communities in society through legal representation and advocacy, and has successfully litigated dozens of individual cases and class actions in her more than 15 years at the helm. She is the first and only Asian American to serve as an executive director of an organization within the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network. Prior to joining the PILP, Su Ming led a mentoring organization for Asian American youth in New York City and worked as a community organizer with the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families. Su Ming Yeh also served as the President of the Pennsylvania chapter of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Adjunct Professor of Civil Practice at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Co-Chair of the Philadelphia Bar Association's Civil Rights Committee and Public Interest Section, and currently serves as a Board Member of the Defender Association of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Chef Chris Cho hails from a line of heralded Korean American culinary masters. His father, Kye Cheol Cho, and uncle, Gyu Hun Cho, founded the renowned Seorabol Restaurant in Olney, which has been a dining destination for authentic Korean cuisine as well as the site of countless community celebrations and gatherings. Born in Korea, Chef Chris Cho grew up in Philadelphia's Northeast and describes himself as inextricably Philly *and* Korean. He founded Seorabol Center City in 2019 with the intent to bring Koreatown to the City. With more than half a million social media followers, Chef Chris Cho has shared Korean cuisine, culture, pride, and attitude, winning over the hearts of Philadelphians and viewers across the globe; and

WHEREAS, Wei Chen is the Civic Engagement Director at Asian Americans United and a transformative leader for immigrant youth and communities. As a high school student, he led dozens of immigrant youth in a boycott of South Philadelphia High School and became the lead voice in winning a landmark federal civil rights settlement that affirmed the responsibility of school districts to establish safe schools free of bias for all students as a right. This case would dramatically impact the rights of students of color and LGBTQ youth around the nation, and Wei Chen would go on to become the youngest commissioner on Philadelphia's Commission on Human Relations. As an organizer with Asian Americans United, Wei Chen launched Chinatown Vote, which has registered, educated, and engaged thousands of Asian American voters and trained immigrant youth to become bilingual organizers. Wei Chen's work to engage on voting rights and the 2020 census also helped ensure that tens of thousands of new and recent Chinese speaking residents completed their census applications, resulting in Philadelphia registering five percent of its population as Chinese speaking households for the first time ever and guaranteeing that Chinese would become an official language of the

ballot in the City. In 2020, Wei Chen co-founded Pennsylvania's first state-wide 501(c)4 electoral organization, the Asian Pacific American Political Alliance, and he has served on the boards of Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia and the national Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance; and

WHEREAS, Le-Quyen Vu is the Executive Director of the Indochinese American Council, and has been an advocate for equal educational opportunities for children and adults in Philadelphia for over 34 years. Through her many partnership projects, she has actively worked to develop a literacy-rich neighborhood for families in the Logan-Olney area, particularly those with limited English proficiency. Le-Quyen Vu has served on the Board of Directors of Girls Coalition Inc., Rising Sun Health Center, Philadelphia Informal Science Education Consortium, Workforce Solution Coalition, Early Childhood Education Consortium, Mentoring Our Youth Through The Arts, Olney Cultural Lab, Jay Cooke Elementary School Advisory Committee, and the Visitation Community Center. She also served on Mayor-Elect James Kenney’s transition team, and the Executive Advisory Committee to the President of LaSalle University; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is a better, healthier and more vibrant city thanks to the accomplishments of these twelve trailblazing Asian American leaders; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby honor Lily Yeh, Aisha Khan, Ali Zakar and Nanjeen Kabita, Hor Chou, Pastor Aldo Siahaan, Anna Perng, Nancy Nguyen, Su Ming Yeh, Chef Chris Cho, Wei Chen, and Le-Quyen Vu for their transformative work in building community, expanding educational opportunity, preserving culture and the arts, investing in youth leadership, and upholding civil rights on the occasion of Asian American and Pacific Islander History Month.

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