



**KACF**  
KOREAN AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

PROGRAM TO ADVANCE  
**Inter-Community Relationships**

FINAL REPORT ON  
**Inter-Community Collaborative Forums**  
2006 - 2007

**The New Majority:**  
*Building Relationships and Collaborations in Changing Neighborhoods*

**Different Voices, One Community:**  
*New York City Perspective*

**Flushing Community Leadership Workshop:**  
*Building Bridges for Our Future*

**PREPARED BY TARRY HUM, PH.D.**  
Queens College, City University of New York

MAY 2008

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Korean American Community Foundation (KACF) was established in December 2002 to promote a culture of philanthropy in the Korean American community. Serving the Greater New York metropolitan area, KACF supports organizations that provide vital services to underserved and/or disenfranchised community members. As a funding conduit to support organizational capacity building and expansion of human services, KACF sees its broader role as a catalyst for social change. KACF emphasizes an inter-generational approach to their philanthropic activities and endorses a philosophy that community service and philanthropy not only helps those in need but also provides a meaningful way for Korean Americans to give back to their community. As a community foundation, KACF prioritizes social ventures and initiatives that result in a “double bottom line” in that the programs and/or initiatives are profitable (i.e., economically sustainable) as well as provide a social good.

In its short four year history, KACF has funded numerous community-based organizations and seeded important community building efforts. A central part of KACF’s mission is to serve as a bridge for the Korean American community and according to its website, “As KACF’s financial resources and human capital have grown, we have expanded the scope of our activity to include inter-community outreach”. KACF’s engagement in inter-community building activities includes the BearUSA jacket give away in collaboration with the New York City Housing Authority in 2005 and 2006.<sup>1</sup> KACF’s philanthropic activities promotes an approach to community building that centers on social change and strengthening social ties or bridges, and is exemplified by its Program to Advance Inter-Community Relations and specifically, the three inter-community forums that took place in May and October 2006, and October 2007.

KACF’s 2005 Ford Foundation funding request provided a comprehensive way for the Ford Foundation to expand its engagement with Asian American nonprofit organizations. In addition to several noteworthy initiatives, KACF’s Ford Foundation grant included funding to establish a Program to Advance Inter-Community Relationships (PAIR) which involved organizing three city-wide forums on the state of inter-community relations in New York City. Recognizing the increasing complexity of New York City’s racial and ethnic demography and the central role that race continues to play in shaping social relations in local neighborhoods, work sites, and marketplaces, KACF proactively sought to provide a public space to engage in a dialogue on race and ethnic relations among New York City’s “new majority” especially in transitioning or “shifting sands” neighborhoods.

To determine the specific themes and participants for each forum on inter-community relations, KACF engaged in an inclusive planning process and contracted three consultants to help organize and facilitate the forums. The consultants are Ben Butler, Principal of Community Development Associates, Héctor R. Cordero-Guzmán, Associate Professor and Chair of Black and Hispanic Studies, Baruch College, and Tarry Hum, Associate Professor of Urban Studies at Queens College. Discussion with KACF advisors and board members, the Ford Foundation’s Acting Deputy Director of Community Development, Miguel Garcia, various community experts, and institutional partners helped to formulate the forum objectives, logistics, possible guest speakers and invited participants. Additional meetings with

community stakeholders such as Tito Luna, Queens Borough President Office Director of Youth Services, and Grace Yun, Director of the Inter-Relations Collaborative were held. In the case of the third inter-community forum which focused on the state of race relations in one neighborhood – Flushing, KACF partnered with Flushing stakeholders including City Councilor John Liu and his staff to organize the event.<sup>2</sup> Queens Borough President Helen Marshall also supported the Flushing inter-community forum through the active participation of her Cultural and Community Coordinator, Ms. Susan Tanenbaum and a member of her General Assembly, Ms. Joyce Moy.<sup>3</sup>

KACF’s goals are to provide a public space for robust and sustained dialogue on advancing the state of race relations among multiple community and city stakeholders, recognizing new challenges in mediating the seismic demographic shifts that are transforming NYC’s landscape, and learning from local best practices in addressing both persistent and emergent forms of racial inequality. The Inter-Community Collaborative Forum series provides an important opportunity for improved inter-community relations, informed policy-level discussions and solutions, and engaged collaborative community development agenda setting.

## **II. “SHIFTING SANDS” NEIGHBORHOODS IN A MAJORITY “MINORITY” CITY**

New York City is a majority “minority” city as Blacks, Latinos, and Asians now comprise nearly two-thirds of the city’s population and increasingly, this tremendous racial and ethnic diversity is reflected on the neighborhood level and shapes the daily lived experiences of all New Yorkers. This unprecedented racial diversity has been driven by renewed immigration and now, nearly two in five New Yorkers was born outside the United States. If the children of the foreign born are included, the immigrant population accounts for a full two-thirds of New Yorkers.

According to the Ford Foundation, these accelerated demographic and neighborhood changes underscore a critical juncture in the field and practice of community development. Acting Deputy Director Miguel Garcia describes four new dilemmas posed by “shifting sands” neighborhoods: (1) a balanced approach to development of people and place may require employing a Human Development Overlay District (HDOD) to “track and interface physical changes associated through real estate development with interventions in human achievement for existing and new residents”; (2) support new initiatives that more fully capture economic participation especially where formal and informal economies converge such as in public markets; (3) fund research and reflective practices in shifting sands neighborhoods that advance the relationship between resiliency, social integration, and upward mobility, and engage neighborhood arts and culture institutions as social sculptors and curators of community identity; and (4) advance the Foundation’s work on asset building and community development to pursue cross programming in individual and community based asset building such as in transnational community economic development and transit-oriented development.

The consequences of dramatic demographic shifts are significant and pose new opportunities and challenges in defining community development practices and strategies. Moreover, these

demographic changes are occurring in a period of heightening economic disparities and polarization. A post-industrial, service-based economy has created marginal opportunities for new immigrants, and heightened economic hardships for native-born minorities including African Americans and Puerto Ricans. Crisis intervention or reactive initiatives for mediation typically define approaches to race relations. There is a great need for public venues that proactively engage the multiple communities that make up New York's new majority to preemptively and strategically locate the challenges and potential commonalities that bridge our communities. These dialogues and forums are not only important to help cross boundaries in our social worlds and interactions but moreover, to formalize networks and relationships, and inform the policies and practices of institutions and local organizations in adapting to new and complex demographic realities. Through a series of inter-community collaborative forums, KACF seeks to provide a shared public space to proactively engage in conversation about persistent and new sources of conflict and in turn, new opportunities for collaboration by building on past lessons and successful models (e.g., Los Angeles's New Majority Task Force).

### **III. KACF INTER-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE FORUM I**

#### ***The New Majority: Building Relationships and Collaborations in Changing Neighborhoods, May 1, 2006, Baruch College, CUNY.***

The theme of the first forum "The New Majority: Building Relationships and Collaborations in Changing Neighborhoods" builds on the new demographic realities of a majority "minority" city and locates the mounting challenges and possible opportunities for inter-community relations by using the specific framework of the Korean American community's experience of inter-group interactions described as "sometimes easy, sometimes tension-filled, and always fascinating". By bringing community leaders of color together, the forum sought to build and cultivate the personal networks and social capital that are essential to establishing trust and successful collaborations among multiple race and ethnic groups. Leading voices from academia, community-based organizations, business, and media were invited to help frame the issues affecting NYC's dynamic neighborhoods and demography, and advance our understanding of each other and our collective challenges.

The forum featured keynote speaker, BongHwan "BH" Kim, Executive Director of the Pasadena Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. To help contextualize these issues in New York City was Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs Guillermo Linares. The framing panel for the break out sessions was moderated by Ford Foundation Acting Deputy Director of Community Development Miguel Garcia and featured the following distinguished speakers: Darwin M. Davis, President and CEO of the New York Urban League, Lillian Rodríguez-López, President of the Hispanic Federation, and Cao K. O, Executive Director of the Asian American Federation of New York.

BH Kim's address was titled, "Reflections on the Los Angeles 1992 Civil Unrest: A Perfect Storm for Racialized Conflict", and he spoke of the conditions that culminated in the "perfect storm" of racial conflict in Los Angeles. The 1992 rebellion was an outcome of a confluence of

multiple factors including weak electoral leadership, a strong police chief, and the widespread and uneven effects of economic and demographic restructurings that served as the context for rising tensions between immigrant Korean shop owners and their increasingly marginalized Black customers. These conditions represented new fault lines in urban race relations beyond the civil rights paradigm of white and black relations. The new complexity and persistence of racial inequality resulted in a “perfect storm”. The Los Angeles response to the 1992 crisis was informed by inter-ethnic, inter-racial community networks and personal relationships that were established prior to April 1992 crisis. The community leadership that responded to the Los Angeles rebellion was cultivated through the formation of a Multicultural Collaborative (which later evolved into the New Majority Task Force). This initiative created opportunities for community stakeholders to build trusting personal relationships and social ties; and discuss a shared vision of Los Angeles, and how to build political power as a new majority of racialized peoples.

Commissioner Linares emphasized the “ties that bind us” which include a history of migration, contributions of innovation and resourcefulness, and a desire to make the city a better place. He spoke of the role of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs in working with new immigrant groups such as Mexicans, West Africans, Bangladeshis, Ecuadorians, and Haitians to cultivate “home grown” strategies in terms of social services and community improvement. Commissioner Linares promoted a “culture of engagement and inclusion” and described how his office is helping to make all city agencies culturally competent and provide language accessible materials and services. He concluded with three priorities for New Yorkers: (1) denouncing prejudice and racism; (2) funding programs to build inter-ethnic alliances; and (3) expanding the civil rights agenda to include immigration reform.

Miguel Garcia began the panel by asking the audience for their reactions to the following statement, “There goes the neighborhood.” Audiences responses included “downturn”, “new immigrant groups moving in,” “persons of color moving in,” “gentrification,” “loss of culture”, and “diminishing economy”. Audience responses illustrated how neighborhood change is perceived differently. Leaders of community revitalization and development are astute on how neighborhoods are constantly changing, and that change can be positive. Miguel noted how BH Kim’s address described how in 1992, we were in a “reactive” mode and Commissioner Linare’s description of New York City described how we may now be in a “proactive” mode and working to establish democratic institutions and practices.

The panelists offered their reflections, observations, and outlooks on how to adapt to the changing landscape. The highlights from their presentations include Lillian’s reminder that broad racial groups are diverse in terms of ethnicity, class, etc., and one challenge is cultivating group cohesiveness. She described how in shifting sands neighborhoods, tensions are present because of the competition for social services funding and when “dollars go to different groups, people don’t like that because it affects their bottom line.” Lillian noted that in addition to different perspectives on neighborhood change and reactions to “there goes the neighborhood”, Lillian pointed out a similar dynamic with social services and a perception of “there goes the sector” when new and different groups emerge and seek funding. Lillian concluded by emphasizing the need for collaborative projects around a common agenda and that these collaborations or coalitions must be based on meaningful and equal partnerships.

Darwin Davis's presentation noted how people of color may be a numerical majority but they are not a majority in terms of economic, political and cultural status, and will not obtain this status until they have institutional control. With the persistence of racial inequality, Darwin Davis highlighted three areas that need attention. First, is the ability to define our own needs and solutions, and the ability to implement these solutions. Otherwise, Darwin cautioned, we will always be engaged in this conversation but in another forum and among another generation. Secondly, he noted an important distinction between a majority and plurality. Although our society adheres to a majority rules principle, in diverse neighborhoods, elected officials need to be mindful that they represent all sectors of a community. Finally, Darwin Davis noted that the day was May 1st, a day of solidarity. And he concluded that civil disobedience has been played down. An example is the Winter 2006 MTA strike which was portrayed as an "illegal" strike when, in fact, Darwin argued it symbolized the "righteous demands of working people", and we should exercise our collective ability to organize people to demonstrate. Darwin Davis concluded by noting two examples of building economic, political, and cultural leadership. In 1999, a collaborative was formed by 100 Black Men, the National Puerto Rican Council, and Asian American Business Development Center to create business opportunities for international trade, and to promote marketing and outreaching. The second is an Urban League initiative which is coming to NYC, Economic Empowerment Centers that will provide comprehensive services to help businesses grow.

Cao O reminded us of the history of collaborative efforts in New York City to address race and ethnic tensions especially in the aftermath of the 1990 boycott of two Korean owned grocery stores in Brooklyn. One example of an inter-community collaboration was a 1993 commissioned report for the Asian American Federation of New York, Associated Black Charities, and Hispanic Federation of New York City, and Minority Rights Group (USA), Inc. The report titled *Intergroup Cooperation in Cities: African, Asian, and Hispanic American Communities* was prepared by Grace Yun, Director of the Inter-Relations Collaborative. In addition to a review of the contextual factors that lead to minority inter- group conflict such as demographic changes, residential concentration, economic decline as well as contributing perceptual factors including prejudice; Yun's report documented several community oriented programs and public policy coalitions that sought to promote inter-group cooperation. As the report was completed nearly 15 years ago, KACF's inter-community collaborative forum provided a timely opportunity to discuss the unprecedented levels of ethnoracial diversity, and the need for new institutional and policy responses to more complex demographic and economic conditions and challenges.

## KACF INTER-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE FORUM I

### *The New Majority: Building Relationships and Collaborations in Changing Neighborhoods*

#### BREAK OUT SESSIONS

Following the formal panel presentations, the forum agenda was to break up into three small groups or break out sessions to engage in more detailed discussion on the following three topics:

#### **1. Examples of Models and Services (Best Practices) to Multi-cultural/Diverse Populations**

The objective of this break out session is to share and learn about local and/or grassroots initiatives in service provision, programs and events, community intervention, staff orientations and training, and/or outreach strategies to multiple publics. We will build on a discussion of common concerns and interests among multiple publics in ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood and community settings. This break out session will examine the conditions that create both opportunities and challenges for social services, and community building and development among multi-ethnic, multi-racial populations. By learning about specific initiatives that bring multiple publics together, we will discuss how to sustain and replicate these best practices.

- (1) What are the common concerns, social service needs, or community development issues among multiple publics in racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood and community settings?
- (2) How have community organizations, leaders and advocates addressed these common concerns through service provision, program design, staff trainings, outreach and organizing strategies?
- (3) In some cases, conflict arises among multiple publics, what are examples of successful interventions in racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods?
- (4) What are the opportunities and challenges to social service provision and community building in diverse neighborhoods?
- (5) What resources and leadership are necessary to sustain and replicate best practices?

#### **2. Actual and Potential NGO/CBO Collaborations**

In this session we will examine the factors related to the development of inter-ethnic collaborations and networks among Community Based Organizations (CBOs). We will discuss two related topics:

- (1) Why do CBOs enter into networks with each other?  
We will focus on some of the internal and external reasons why CBOs seek to collaborate with each other;
- (2) What are some of the main factors associated with the formation and management of successful inter-ethnic organizational networks between CBOs engaged in various community initiatives?

We will discuss examples from research and practice that suggest some of the key factors related to the success of CBO networks and inter-ethnic alliances. We will then discuss how it takes a significant amount of time, effort, and resources to design, develop, build, manage, and maintain inter-ethnic networks, but the payoffs can be substantial in terms of additional services for community residents, more access to information, the prevention of conflicts and additional resources for CBOs as they play a key role in community-building and maintenance.

### **3. “Working Across Boundaries: Using Community Economic Development as a Tool.”**

This session will seek to engage participants in an examination and discussion of the challenges and opportunities for using community economic development strategies (i.e. affordable housing, small business development, job development and training, commercial development, etc.) as a means of working across existing ethnic, racial, or neighborhood boundaries.

The session will include presentation of a few past examples and discussion of the following questions:

- (1) What have are the key “lessons” that can be taken away from these examples?
- (2) Given the intense and often narrow interest — i.e. better jobs, housing, businesses for “my people” — that motivate most community economic develop, is it unrealistic to expect communities (ethnic, racial, geographic, etc) to find common ground on this battle field?
- (3) What opportunities exist now or are likely in the foreseeable future that could promote working across existing boundaries? What must happen to make these opportunities happen?

However, due to time constraints, the three planned break out sessions were merged into a town hall style discussion. After the three consultants reviewed the short description and discussion questions for each break out session, the floor was opened for exchange and dialogue. Some highlights of the lively discussion included personal experiences in building coalitions such as Darwin Davis’s Harlem coalition in real estate development that continues to create jobs and opportunities. Tom Finkelppearl, Executive Director of the Queens Museum of Art, gave examples of the museum’s collaborations and noted the importance of a mutual vocabulary and organizational scale in successful collaborative relationships. Black Equity Alliance President and CEO, Karen Phillips, added another example of a collaboration to increase economic competitiveness in the case of East Harlem where her organization is helping a group of supermarket owners to be more competitive against large chain stores such as Pathmark.

KACF Director of Program Development, J. Robin Moon, noted that KACF seeks to be a change agent and will continue to organize and provide venues for multiple publics to engage in dialogue. She then introduced Thomas Hong of BearUSA who shared the experience of his family's store which was damaged and looted during the 1992 civil disturbance in Crown Heights. In the aftermath, his family received donations from people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to help them rebuild. Tom Hong and his family have never forgotten these acts of generosity and support, and have made community reinvestment and philanthropy an important component of his work at BearUSA. Lisa Hasagawa of National CAPACD posed a question, given all the multiple layers of complexity in working across cultural, linguistic, historic, racial, religious, age, and generational boundaries and barriers, what are the next steps to building a new majority coalition? She asked how do we move forward? Hector Cordero-Guzman responded that an objective of the inter-community collaborative forum was to commence a conversation and begin building the necessary relationships to establish the social infrastructure for continued and sustained inter-community dialogue on shared concerns and interests. KACF's first of three inter-community forums then concluded with an announcement by KACF President Sung Chul Whang about the Request for Proposal (RFP) to provide seed funding for new initiatives that promote inter-community collaborations.

An evaluation form was included in the package of materials distributed to participants of KACF's Inter-Community Collaborative Forum I which requested participant feedback and suggestions. Overall, participants enjoyed the forum and thought the topics covered were very relevant and that the forum met their expectations. Specific comments include, "Facilitator's interaction of panel was excellent", "Great subjects. Hope to go deeper next time"; "shifting sands communities discussion was good." One participant was disappointed that the break out sessions were merged and wrote, "I would have liked to talk in a smaller group as originally planned, and get a chance to pose more questions and challenges to the group for their ideas. Instead of a discussion, the 'combined' breakout sessions fostered mostly testimonials from participants who had already shared a lot in the Q & A with the panelists." Other suggestions to improve the forum underscored the desire for more audience interaction and exchange especially on sharing solutions and challenges.

#### **IV. KACF INTER-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND RFP**

##### ***Stage I Finalist Award Press Conference, COLORS, November 8, 2006***

KACF partnered with several organizations to evaluate submissions and select the awardees of the first Inter-Community Collaborative Fund RFP. Working with partners Chris Cardona, Hispanics in Philanthropy, Peter Qinares, New York Urban League, and Jose Calderon, the Hispanic Federation, the KACF management team conducted a July 31 conference call which included the Ford Foundation to explain the Inter-Community Development Fund goals and to answer any questions regarding proposal submissions. This mentoring of inter-community collaborative initiatives during the RFP process will continue with planned activities regarding future funding opportunities and strategies to sustain and grow inter-community collaborations.

On November 8, 2006, KACF held a press conference to announce the finalists of the KACF Inter-Community Development Fund RFP at Colors Restaurant. Representatives from the four winning initiatives were present to accept the grant awards and describe their initiatives. In addition to receiving a seed grant, the four finalists will be given the opportunity to enter Stage II of the RFP process which would enable them to further develop their Stage I proposals for presentation at a Funders' Panel to be held in the future. The November 8th reception recognized the four finalist organizations and their winning inter-community collaborative initiative proposals. The two 1st place awardees are Loisaida, Inc., and the Immigrant Financial Justice Project, and the two 2nd place awardees are Latin American Integration Center, and the Sunset Park Coalition for New Immigrants. Representatives of the organizations accepted the checks, made short statements on their funded initiative and thanked KACF. Speakers included Hector Rivera (Loisaida, Inc.), Deyanira Del Rio (Immigrant Financial Justice Project), Erynn de Casanova (Latin American Integration Center), and Michelle de la Uz (Sunset Park Coalition for New Immigrants). KACF executive director Bomsinae Kim, program development director J. Robin Moon, and Sarah Chung, KACF Board member and chair of the Evaluation Committee spoke and congratulated the awardees. A brief description of the inter-community collaborative initiatives by the four finalist organizations/coalitions follows.

**1. Loisaida, Inc. – First Place \$10,000**

**Targeting: Asian, Hispanic & African American Youth (Lower East Side, Manhattan)**

Loisaida, Inc. is a community based organization founded in 1979 to address the problem of social and economic disenfranchisement of poor and low income residents of the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The mission of Loisaida, Inc. is to facilitate access to education, training and employment opportunities that ensure the overall improvement and economic development of the community, concentrating its efforts in human development through comprehensive youth and family support programs. Loisaida will organize a youth development project that uses oral history, community narratives, art and technology to bring into focus the common themes in the history and life of the Hispanic, Asian-American and African-American communities living together in public housing in the Lower East Side. The project will help to identify and understand the common threads in the experience of these ethnic groups through the narratives of its elders and the impressions of its youth. Using a number of creative methods and tools such as still and digital photography; video, computer and voice recording, the project participants will record the life histories of their ethnic neighbors and research the community to identify common goals, aspirations and experiences.

**2. Immigrant Financial Justice Project – First Place \$10,000**

**Targeting Latino, S/E Asian & Caribbean (Queens, Brooklyn, SI)**

The Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project (NEDAP) is a resource and advocacy center that works with community groups to promote economic justice in NYC neighborhoods. Founded in 1995, NEDAP strengthens local groups' capacity to press for community economic justice, through organizing support, community education, advocacy, corporate accountability, and coalition organizing. The proposed project by NEDAP and

its coalition partners (Erasmus Neighborhood Federation, New Immigrant Community Empowerment and the Immigrant Outreach Project at St. Mary of Assumption Church) will support inter-ethnic economic development initiatives in three immigrant neighborhoods that address international money transfers (remittances) sent by immigrants to their home countries. The project will bring local groups together to develop strategies that result in reduced costs to send money, community reinvestment by banks and money transfer companies, and/or the creation of community-controlled alternative financial services.

### **3. Latin American Integration Center – Second Place \$6,500**

#### **Targeting: Asian & Latino Youth (Northwest Queens)**

In 1992, LAIC was born from the leadership of its founding executive director, an immigrant woman from Colombia, and a visionary group of Latin Americans from Queens, committed to highlighting the experiences, needs and contributions of immigrant women, men and children to New York City. LAIC works to advance social and economic justice for Latin American and other immigrant families in New York City by providing educational programs and support services that strengthen the capacity of community members to achieve self-reliance and integrate into U.S. society, and engaging in strategic grassroots advocacy and community organizing campaigns that address systemic barriers at the root of existing inequities. LAIC proposes a youth leadership development program to address the issue of interethnic cooperation between Latino and Asian youth in Queens. This service-learning program will engage youth in learning, researching, and improving the communities in which they live.

### **4. The Sunset Park Coalition for New Immigrants – Second Place \$6,500**

#### **Targeting: Mexican & Chinese American (Sunset Park, Brooklyn)**

The Sunset Park Coalition for New Immigrants is a partnership of Center for Family Life, Chinese-American Planning Council, Fifth Avenue Committee, Lutheran Medical Center's Family Support Center and Turning Point. There is currently no inter-community entity that nurtures emerging leadership from, and engages in strategic planning and advocacy broadly across, the Chinese and Latino communities in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, nor is there integrated local representation on our Community Board (CB 7). The Sunset Park Coalition for New Immigrants has undertaken a plan that will directly address intercommunity relations and communication between and among immigrant groups in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. The proposal calls for the development of 25 potential local leaders, to be known as the New Immigrant Leadership Council, through a community activism and strategic planning Leadership Academy.

## V. KACF INTER-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE FORUM II

*Different Voices, One Community: New York City Perspective,*  
October 21, 2006, Queens Museum of Art.

KACF engaged a partner, the Queens Museum of Art (QMA), to sponsor the second inter-community collaborative forum that focused on youth relations and art as a venue to promote social interaction and inclusion among young people. Similar to the planning for the first Inter-Community Collaborative Forum, KACF brought together multiple stakeholders including the QMA, KACF consultants, Tito Luna, Director of Youth Services for the Queens Borough President, Thomas Hong of Bear USA, and the Ford Foundation's Miguel Garcia to organize inter-community forum II on youth and brainstorm potential keynote speakers who exemplify the forum's theme that artistic expressions can be a form of community development in terms of entrepreneurial endeavors (as in filmmaking, fashion, music, etc.) as well as facilitate cultural exchanges across various social divides of age, race, gender, religion, class, sexuality, etc. The target population for the inter-community forum II is New York City students and youth ages 17-22 years old. To help promote youth participation, KACF outreached to numerous youth organizations and provided reimbursement for transportation to the QMA.

The keynote address was a lively exchange between Elisa Miranda, Founder and Board of Director, Chica Luna Productions, and Thomas Hong, President of Bear USA. Elisha and Tom engaged in a dynamic conversation about identity and home, community support and cross-cultural exchanges in daily contexts, and the implications of globalization for valuing ethnoracial diversity and perspectives. The keynote began with each speaker introducing themselves and his/her personal history. Thomas Hong grew up in an immigrant Asian family. His parents sought their economic livelihood by opening a small retail store, KP Original Sporting Goods, in upper Manhattan. Typical of small immigrant businesses, it was dependent on the contributions of all family members, and Tom and his brothers worked at his parents' store after school and during the weekends. In July 1992, during a neighborhood disturbance that started after a police officer shot and killed a local resident, Tom's family store was looted and his family lost much of their inventory. In response to the family's devastation, many New Yorkers donated small amounts of \$5 to \$10. This generosity in addition to an anonymous contribution of \$25,000 enabled the Hong family to rebuild their economic livelihood. The significance of this experience continues to resonate for Tom and his family, and shapes their approach to running their Bear U.S.A. clothing company.

Elisha Miranda described herself as a "Puerto Rican in exile" because she is a second generation Puerto Rican "conscious of immigration and borders" who grew up in San Francisco's Mission District which Elisha described as a pre-gentrified Lower East Side and El Barrio. Elisha continues to have great affinity with these neighborhoods, and her film production company, Chica Luna, recently opened an office in El Barrio. Both keynotes described rich and at times, challenging personal journeys from working class roots to achieving their dreams. Elisha's experience also reflected a struggle against the systematic lowered expectations for students of color particularly for Latino and Black students. Elisha recounted how her high school guidance counselor responded to her inquiry about Harvard and Yale by advising her that she didn't need to worry about these schools because beauty school was more appropriate. Elisha's defiant "who are you to tell me?" response marked the beginning of

her journey of resistance, self-definition, and persistence in overcoming numerous obstacles to achieve her dreams. In addition to lowered expectations, the lack of positive role models was another challenge. She noted how the media portrays Latino and African American young women as sexy but not necessarily intelligent. While hip hop was initially a form of positive self-expression that emanated from urban street culture, she noted that it has changed a lot. In Elisha's personal journey as an artist, novelist, and filmmaker, she didn't see many representations of young women of color in these roles.

The power of hearing Tom's history led Elisha to share her observation about organizing in African American and Latino communities where these communities are often pitted against Asians. She noted how interaction between these racial groups was limited and that the spatial communities are often segregated, and Asians are thought of as a "model minority". Elisha described the founding of Chica Luna as initially a support group for women making movies. Conscious of creating a supportive and creative space for women in the community, Chica Luna has been based in El Barrio for two years. Chica Luna provides numerous programs to support established and aspiring women of color in various aspects of film production.

Tom's exposure to business began early when his father asked his children for help in composing letters. The family store was economically viable due to family sweat equity as Tom and his two brothers spent much of their free time outside of school helping out. After college, Tom did a short stint at Wall Street but he didn't like the 9 to 5 routine. He sought more control and autonomy in his work and became self-employed. As a businessman, Tom views a social agenda not as an afterthought to foster good will but as a development strategy to grow one's business. He gives the example of the Toyota Prius in recognizing the geopolitical conditions of oil consumption and the need for sustainable development. In addressing these social and political concerns, the company created a responsible product and engaged in good business practices. Tom spoke about the significance of contemporary globalization which means that distinct geographical boundaries are disappearing due to technology such as the internet. The incredible transformation in creating a global marketplace requires that individuals cultivate an ability to embrace and appreciate diversity. As Tom noted, society is no longer homogenous and in order to succeed in any field, one needs to foster relationships and partnerships and the ability to communicate is essential.

A central theme for both keynote speakers was the importance of giving back to the community through products, monetary contributions, mentorship, and sharing experiences and wisdom – as Elisha described, "standing here today talking with you". The dynamic keynote address concluded with each presenter offering a few "pearls of wisdom". Tom Hong noted self-sacrifice, commitment, passion and belief in what you do and taking pride in one's work. When Tom travels to Finland or China and he sees someone wearing a BearUSA jacket, it gives him great pride and satisfaction. One of Elisha Miranda's pearls of wisdom centered on the concept of freedom and an example is economic freedom (to go to college). She advised that freedom is when true creativity comes out and this is relevant to all disciplines whether it's business or art. Elisha also advised to love oneself enough to make things happen in spite of obstacles even those obstacles presented by ourselves. Elisha emphasized how persistence encapsulated her life. In addition to persistence, she emphasized being true to oneself, be honest and say what you mean, and be reflective because mistakes help us learn and improve.

Finally, Elisha reminded us of the need to celebrate. She noted that she works hard and only gets five hours of sleep but she fell in love with her partner while dancing so remember to laugh, celebrate, and eat!

Two wonderful and inspiring cultural performances were part of the KACF inter-community youth forum. Following the keynote addresses, artists in the Mahina Movement which included Erica DeLaRosa, a Queens Museum of Art staff member and facilitator for the Leadership Through the Arts Program, performed. Tap dancer Parker Hall also gave an energetic and inspiring performance.

## **KACF INTER-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE FORUM II**

### ***Different Voices, One Community: New York City Perspective***

#### **BREAK OUT SESSIONS**

##### **1. Youth Activism and Organizing**

The presenters in the Youth Activism and Organizing break out session included several Dan Than Fellows with the National Alliance of Vietnamese American Service Agencies (NAVASA) who are involved in post-Katrina New Orleans, the Latin American Integration Center's Growing Up in Queens Project, and Teens for Racial and Ethnic Awakening (TREA), a project of the Renaissance Charter School which is described as a "microcosm" of the ethnic and racial diversity of Jackson Heights, Queens. The key questions presenters addressed in this break out session were: why do young people organize, what are young people's concerns, what resources are necessary to support and sustain youth activism, what are challenges you have faced and overcome as youth activists, and how does youth activism promote intra and inter-community understanding and relations.

NAVASA Dân Thân Fellows Mary Tran, Uyen Le, Mai Dang, and Leo Escalamado, and Father Luke Nguyen, a pastor at Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church which serves a small East New Orleans area called Village de L'Est, presented a powerpoint presentation on the impacts of Hurricane Katrina on the Vietnamese population in Louisiana. Their presentation included an overview of current community rebuilding efforts and challenges including a landfill project. Dân Thân, pronounced "zhun thun" means in Vietnamese "be the change" and the Dân Thân Fellows and Father Luke presented on the rebuilding efforts of the Vietnamese American community in Louisiana one year after Hurricane Katrina. Before Hurricane Katrina, about 25,000 Vietnamese resided in Louisiana with nearly half in New Orleans East. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was slow to respond to the crisis, for example, East Biloxi residents waited six weeks before FEMA set up a disaster relief site. Churches such as Father Luke's Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church responded immediately to provide basic necessities such as clean drinking water to all community residents including Vietnamese and African American residents, helped reunite family members, and provided assistance in securing disaster relief. NAVASA's Dân Thân Fellows have been working with Father Luke to provide information and tools to assist Katrina families, and participate in the rebuilding planning process which included organizing multiple communities to protest the dumping of post-Katrina debris at the East New Orleans

landfill, less than two miles from surrounding neighborhoods. Through inter-generational and cross-community organizing, Mayor Ron Nagin was forced to shut down the East New Orleans landfill in August 2006.

Numerous youth members of TREA and Growing Up in Queens Project were introduced by their adult advisors – Yumeris Morel, a teacher at the Renaissance Charter School and with Susan Tanenbaum, serve as the adult advisors for TREA, and Natalia Aristizabal, coordinator of the Growing Up in Queens Project which also has an affiliation with the Renaissance Charter School. Youth members and leaders of the two organizations presented and spoke about their personal reasons for becoming youth activists. Their presentations elaborated on the democratic practices in deciding the topics and issues they want to discuss including difficult but relevant topics such as sexual identity and racism. The youth members organize the meetings, conduct outreach, and help facilitate the meetings. Adult coordinators and advisors assist the youth members decide topics, do outreach, and create a safe school environment to deal with difficult and relevant youth issues. A TREA youth leader described their work as “a virus” to spread truth about youth issues.

The presentations by these youth leaders in school based organizations illustrated the importance of public schools as sites to cultivate the bridging social capital necessary to build inter-group understanding and relations in shifting sands neighborhoods. With the support of visionary and committed adult advisors, public schools in Jackson Heights are critical sites for multi-cultural interactions and exchanges. Through programs such as TREA and Growing Up in Queens Project, young people gain skills to present their ideas, engage in productive discussion on difficult and contentious issues, and develop the capacity for future urban leadership. Along with the work of NAVASA Dân Thân Fellows, the presentations illustrated the inspirational work of youth and young adults in addressing community needs throughout the country. These young people resist conformity to popular media images of youth as mere consumers and promote active youth involvement in addressing the daily lived conditions in “shifting sands” neighborhoods. Through their involvement in these programs, young people exercise their power to learn and express their own voices.

## **2. Career and Advancement**

Karly Beaumont and Ana Trinidad of Chica Luna described the founding of this non profit organization to promote the development young women of color as activist artists to produce popular media within a social change framework. Central to the mission of Chica Luna is to counter the negative images that we consume, internalize, and perpetuate. Their goal is to empower women of color to be editors, writers, filmmakers, and directors to tell our stories. Chica Luna provides several different programs including art exhibits, workshops, and internships; and is releasing an anthology of writings that celebrate women of color. Jose Rodriguez is an artist and one of his sculptures — a shrine with Buddha figures – is currently on exhibition at the QMA. Jose spoke about the difference between a career and a job in terms of his approach to making ends meet as an artist. Jose said that his career is to be an artist but his job is doing whatever allows him to pursue his career. He also described how he relies on community support to pursue his artwork. Jose shared the story of how the wood for his sculpture was brought to him by Buddhist monks and his landlord who is Sri Lankan

accommodates his needs as an artist. He encouraged pursuing higher education regardless of career choice because a college education should teach one how to learn which is a life pursuit.

Judith Lerner described her personal experience which lacked family support but was compensated for by the tremendous support and mentorship of her high school teachers. Judith founded a nonprofit organization with her husband and their documentary work has been aired on National Public Radio. Judith presented some of her work from the Crossing the Blvd project which depicts personal stories from immigrant Queens residents which she described as the crossroads of the world due to the 1965 Immigration Act which was part of the historic civil rights legislation. Judith described how the Crossing the Blvd exhibit occupied 250 feet of wall space when it was displayed at the QMA which her and her husband produced in a small 2 bedroom apartment. She also underscored Jose's experience about community support. Themes that resonate in Judith's work centers on questioning what is art, who defines art, and who makes art?

The final presenters were Tom Hong of BearUSA and his associate, Graham Wong of Urban Media Services based in Toronto, Canada. Based on the experience of his clothing design and production company, Tom emphasized the importance of the commercial viability and marketability of art and artistic products. Tom underscored the need for art designs that address clients/customers preferences – in short, as Tom posed, “can we sell this product?” Tom sees tremendous creative talent emerging from the streets but he also notes the limited opportunities for young people to translate their creative energies in the marketplace. Graham has owned his advertising agency for five years but he shared that he did not get an education in advertising but he had a passion for advertising and he never gave up on this so his key message was if you have the passion and ability to translate your creativity to a viable business product, be professional and persistent, and you will be able to get paid doing what you love. Graham advised, at the end of the day, you have to eat and live so passion, professionalism, and persistence will help translate creativity to make ends meet.

In synthesizing the break out session, Karen asked the panelists to address how artistic productions in the urban marketplace can translate into jobs and careers for urban youth. Panelists shared three key strategies to pursuing art as a career: (1) **branding** as a statement about what you and/or your product stand for. Tom noted the business side of artistic endeavors is the ability to sell one's ideas. As he advised, be the first to do it because we always remember the first of something or someone's accomplishments; (2) **research what others are doing**. Chica Luna shared they are not the only media organization but they created their niche by focusing on their unique contribution to media. While it's important not to reinvent the wheel, it's also important to determine what makes you unique or different; (3) **the importance of collaboration**. Based on Karen's experience in economic development in Harlem, she emphasized the strength of joining together with others to bring your own vision to fruition. For example, it takes a great deal of work to build community institutions so while you work on establishing nonprofit status through a 501 C 3 application and putting together a board of directors, you can collaborate with others to get ahead. Karen also noted that there are important lessons from a private sector model and approach. Nonprofit does not mean no profit but reinvested profits in your organization and/or community rather than one's private pocket.

### **3. Opportunities for Higher Learning**

Although the session was to address opportunities for higher learning and Hector Cordero-Guzman gave an overview of CUNY and the admissions process, and participants included representatives from various youth organizations that provide educational mentoring services including South Asian Youth Action, Public Allies, and the Queens Borough President's Office Youth Services; the break out session evolved into a much richer discussion on issues ranging from social networks to racial identity. Themes discussed pertain to the lived experiences of college youth in diverse cities in terms of negotiating their identities in an increasingly complex educational venue where most youth are outside their own national and/or cultural settings and environment for the first time.

One of the themes was the importance of social networks especially in the context of promoting inter-community relations. Social networks are known to be important for employment opportunities however, for some youth, their social networks or personal connections are limited. College is one site where expansive social networks are built and some participants spoke about the importance of maintaining alumni ties. Some expressed tension in balancing the importance of crossing social boundaries and at the same time, not losing track of individual identities. In other words, how does one hold on to their cultural or social identity while building bridging social capital. Participants talked about college events and club activities as providing opportunities to cross social boundaries and the need to take advantage of these resources. Resonating with a theme in the youth organizing and activism break out session, public institutions such as schools provide a critical cultural space for building social capital and expanding personal networks. A discussion of pan-ethnic identities as unique to the migration experience to the United States followed. As the group discussed, we don't come as Asians or Latinos but eventually, we evolve into identifying as one.

Tom Finkelpearl brought up a comparison with respect to institutions, specifically, the Queens Museum of Art. As an arts institutions, QMA frequently has ethnic specific shows (e.g., Mexican art exhibits, African American art exhibits) but a challenge for the museum is to foster and promote cross-cultural information, knowledge sharing, and social capital. One participant noted that bridging happens after finding commonalities in personal histories and then, global histories. Tito Hernandez concluded the break out session with the reminder that race is a social construction. With the increasing diversity and growing numbers of biracial children, racial categories and boundaries become blurred and are limiting in capturing social experiences and identities. A participant noted that the majority of Black New Yorkers are immigrants; hence the immigrant experience also becomes central to shaping Black racial identity and experiences.

## VI. KACF INTER-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE FORUM III

### *Flushing Community Leadership Seminar Workshop: Building Bridges*

*for Our Future, October 23, 2007, Sheraton LaGuardia East Hotel, Flushing, Queens*

KACF's third inter-community collaborative forum was distinct from the prior forums in two important ways. First, rather than a city-wide focus, the third forum was centered on a "shifting sands" neighborhood – Flushing, Queens. Second, since this inter-community forum was neighborhood based, KACF partnered with local elected officials – City Councilor John Liu and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall – in addition to other neighborhood stakeholders to plan and facilitate the inter-community forum. The planning team included KACF's Director of Program Development and consultant, three members of City Councilor Liu's staff including his chief of staff, John Choe and Community Liaison Barbara Baruch, a Queens Community Board 7 former chairperson and active member, Lynda Spielman, who is also an expert and educator on corporate race relations, Queens Borough President Marshall's Community and Cultural Coordinator, Susan Tanenbaum, and a member of her Queens General Assembly, Joyce Moy. Additional members of the General Assembly were later recruited to serve as discussion facilitators at the October 2007 Flushing Community Leadership Seminar Workshop. This inter-community forum was held as part of the 350th anniversary of the Flushing Remonstrance, a historic document that upheld religious tolerance in the 1650s and is considered to be the basis for the United States Constitution's provision on freedom of religion in the Bill of Rights.<sup>4</sup>

As in many local neighborhoods during the 1970s fiscal crisis, downtown Flushing's economy declined as anchor retail stores such as Caldor's abandoned the neighborhood. The influx of Asian immigrants infused the area with new sources of human and financial capital that both revitalized and transformed Flushing's Main Street.<sup>5</sup> Asian immigrant settlement in Flushing was distinct from Manhattan Chinatown and Brooklyn's Sunset Park in terms of class and ethnic composition.<sup>6</sup> Flushing's economic revitalization was driven by Taiwanese and Korean immigrants who established numerous small businesses and ethnic banks, and invested in real estate holdings that they marketed to overseas compatriots.<sup>7</sup> The influx of transnational capital and high rates of business and homeownership lead one researcher to title his book on Flushing, *Chinatown No More*.<sup>8</sup>

Flushing, Queens made history as part of New York City's Council District 20 which elected the first Asian American – John Liu – to public office in the city and state at large in 2001. The density of ethnic banks, retail and commercial businesses, and public transportation venues underscores Flushing's status as a regional financial, commercial, and transportation center. Flushing, however, is also distinguished by a suburban residential quality marked by leafy streets with detached single family homes. As many metropolitan neighborhoods, Flushing's demography has been transformed by post-1965 immigration. However, in contrast to a dominant characterization of Flushing as one of New York City's satellite Chinatowns, Flushing is racially and ethnically diverse with a pan-Asian population comprised of Chinese, Koreans, South Asians, and a notable number of Afghans.<sup>9</sup> In addition to a sizable non Hispanic white population, Flushing is also home to a long-time African American community anchored by institutions such as the AME Macedonia Church. Less known is Flushing's diverse new immigrant Latino population that includes growing numbers of Mexicans and Central Americans.

Economic growth, downtown development, and increasing population diversity serves as the local context for current neighbor relations and in some cases, has contributed to heightening tensions regarding neighborhood change and quality of life. In May 2006, an attorney representing an Asian developer appeared before the Queens Community Board 7 to seek a zoning variance for a proposed three story Korean spa in a mixed use area. The proposed “physical culture establishment” served as a flashpoint in simmering anxieties about immigrant-driven development and neighborhood transformation. Although Korean spas are common for health treatments, the community board reaction was hostile and concerns about prostitution and degradation of neighborhood life abounded. Public records noted concerns with parking and traffic generation although news coverage alluded to community apprehension about “unsavory” activities.<sup>10</sup> According to City Councilor John Liu’s staff, race and ethnic relations had reached a “crisis point” indicated by the number of complaints received by their office. With the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the Flushing Remonstrance, Councilor John Liu thought it opportune to reaffirm tolerance and sought to organize a community forum on inter-group relations and consider the possibility of a series of neighborhood dialogues.

KACF partnered with Councilor Liu’s office to provide resources and consultation on promoting an inclusive public space or venue to engage in a necessary but difficult discussion among multiple community leaders on the state of race relations in Flushing. The objective of the inter-community forum was to bring together a diverse and representative group of neighborhood stakeholders and leaders including members of Community Board 7, civic associations, religious institutions, social service agencies and nonprofit organizations. In other words, “opinion leaders” defined as those in a position to influence the attitudes and views of constituents and policymakers. A key goal of the forum was to lead the group in an in-depth discussion to differentiate between *real* (i.e., actionable policy and legislative) issues and individual *misperceptions*. A goal was to generate and prioritize a list of actionable steps – specific policy, legislative actions and/or community programs to mediate conflictual issues and promote positive inter-community relations in Flushing. KACF sponsorship of the Flushing inter-community form helped not only to provide a “neutral” public space to air concerns but to advance inter-community dialogue to identify a set of concrete actions that can reconcile deep-seated concerns and differences.

To help organize the format for the Flushing Community Leadership Workshop: Building Bridges for our Future, a questionnaire was prepared and mailed with the invitation from City Councilor John Liu and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall. Invited participants were asked to return the questionnaire with their RSVP. A total of 29 questionnaires were received from approximately 90 mailed invitations and these responses were instrumental in framing the topics for the inter-community forum. The short questionnaire asked four basic questions on the: (1) main issues that influence neighbor relations in Flushing for better or worst; (2) frequency and venue of interactions with Flushing residents of a different and of the same ethnic background; (3) forum expectations, and (4) optional demographic questions on race and age. Among those that responded to the optional demographic questions – 11 were men and 13 women; the average age was 58 years old; and 7 indicated they were White; 7 indicated they were Black or African American; and 5 indicated they were Asian (including South Asian, Korean, and Taiwanese).

The top issues that influence Flushing neighborhood relations were grouped into broader categories such as language, culture, community, and diversity. Although the issues were not surprising and there was significant overlap, it was notable that Whites expressed the greatest concern with language noting it more frequently than Black or Asian respondents. The perception that lack of English language proficiency hinders communication was elaborated by one respondent who wrote, “Businesses using limited or no English leads to a hostile environment.” For Black respondents, the issues that influence Flushing relations were wide ranging but centered on themes of respect, tolerance, fairness (“fair housing accommodations for all”), and obeying laws. The issue of law enforcement was also raised by a White respondent who wrote, “Why the Department of Buildings cannot enforce any laws on the multiple dwellings. Flushing is drowning with overpopulation and inadequate services and schools to accommodate all the people.” On the other hand, Asian respondents listed need for services, concerns regarding discrimination, and lack of interaction among ethnic based organizations as the main issues that shaped Flushing relations.

Based on the questionnaire responses, the Flushing Community Leadership Workshop was planned around five tables (with 10 or so participants) each focused on a topic: (1) Language and Communication, (2) Community: Interactions and Organizations, (3) Living in a Multi-cultural Society, (4) Issues of Diversity, Discrimination, and Stereotyping, or (5) Housing and Development. Each table discussion was facilitated by a volunteer around a set of prepared questions intended to help frame descriptions and elaboration of participants’ concerns regarding language, community interactions, diversity, discrimination or development in Flushing. Several of the prepared questions sought to engage participants in a critical and analytical discussion to differentiate substantive concerns (i.e., policy issues) from misperceptions or misunderstandings (i.e., individual biases). These questions include: (1) How can you describe or recognize the issue? Provide examples, (2) What is the impact of this issue for you and your constituents? (3) What are your feelings about the issue? (4) What do you know about how others approach the issue? (5) What are the challenges to understanding differences or conflict on this issue? (6) What are the common aspects?

Since the forum goals emphasized identifying actionable steps to help mediate conflict and tension, participants were also instructed to brainstorm on the following: (1) What components of a vision for the future might represent a resolution to the issue? (2) What concrete or action steps can you suggest to realize your vision? After approximately 90 minutes of table discussion, all participants reconvened in a large group to share two or three components of a shared future vision and some actionable steps to help realize that vision of Flushing’s future.

Attendance at the October 23, 2007 Flushing Community Leadership Seminar Workshop: Building Bridges for Our Future exceeded expectations. In addition to Flushing community leaders, attending guests or observers included Miguel Garcia of the Ford Foundation, KACF Board members, Executive Director and staff members, and academics including Dr. Scott Hansen and QC faculty Madhulika Khandelwal. The number of Flushing community leaders participating at each discussion table exceeded 10 individuals, for example, there were at least 16 participants at the Issues of Diversity, Discrimination, and Stereotyping discussion. Participants represented key Flushing leaders and included members of Community Board 7, civic associations, religious institutions, social service agencies, advocacy and nonprofit organizations.

Opening statements by City Councilor John Liu and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall underscored the need for honest and open discussion while affirming their embrace and celebration of Queens' unprecedented racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. To help frame the goals for the evening's workshop, Lynda Spielman presented on demographic patterns and change by comparing the two great waves of immigration at the end of the 19th century and during the post-1965 period; and its local impacts on the demography of Queens and Flushing. Ms. Spielman's presentation also established the forum's ground rules and objectives based on the questionnaire responses received in advance from the participants. These objectives were (1) to respect our different opinions and backgrounds, (2) to develop a stronger sense of community, (3) to find a common and neutral basis for communicating and getting along, (4) to strengthen our community, churches, and businesses, (5) to learn of each others needs, and (6) to foster interactions and understanding among different groups. Ms. Spielman then led the participants in several "ice breaker" exercises that set a light-hearted tone and underscored everyday commonalities among a very diverse group of community leaders.

Following Ms. Spielman's presentation, participants proceeded to one of the five tables to begin the evening's work. Although the table discussions were indeed difficult and at times, contentious, Flushing community leaders were earnest in discussing their concerns and issues, and while it was not always possible to agree on what were substantive issues versus cultural misperceptions, participants were actively engaged and contributed to identifying actionable steps towards building a united and harmonious Flushing community. Reiterating the concerns expressed in the questionnaire responses, the five discussion groups emphasized the "public responsibility" of a common language for residents and storeowners who should be able to communicate in English, the need to improve the quality of life for all people in Flushing, and provide jobs and housing for long time Flushing residents (including Flushing's African American population), and the urgency of controlling overdevelopment by enforcing laws that govern housing construction and protection of green spaces.

While there were no expectations that these entrenched issues could be resolved in one meeting, the high level of participation and enthusiasm underscored the necessity of a space and time separate from Community Board meetings to engage in discussions that would "strengthen the relationships between diverse community leaders through increased communication and identify steps that would further negotiation and bridging of differences within the community".<sup>11</sup> Several actionable steps were identified as a result of the Flushing Community Leadership Workshop – establish a summer Youth Employment Program between LaGuardia Community College and Councilor Liu's office that would match Flushing youth with local businesses that need summer help; facilitate meeting outstanding community needs with existing resources – an example is to help establish collaborative relationships among community groups with space that they can lend to over-enrolled English Language Programs; and organize a follow up event centered on the topic of youth and community development.

KACF's sponsorship was essential in providing the "neutral" public space to bring together elected and community leaders and stakeholders. Participants were asked to fill out an evaluation form at the end of the evening and of the 35 collected, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding the relevance of topics discussed and the representation of community leadership present. In response to an open ended question that asked why the workshop was helpful or not, the majority responded that the workshop was helpful because it provided an environment for frank conversation which "allowed everyone to speak freely...with respect." Another respondent wrote, "broad participation contributed to engaging discussion; everyone seemed to share common goals".

By setting aside time and space for constructive engagement in the difficult topics of race, immigration, and neighborhood change, the event helped to defuse escalating tensions in Flushing. As one participant wrote, "People have strong opinions...there is hope for community." Responses to suggestions to improve future seminars were particularly encouraging with numerous comments to maintain the format and hold more frequent sessions. The Flushing Community Leadership Seminar Workshop affirmed the commitment of community leadership to engage in tough discussions about neighborhood change and their ongoing efforts to build bridges and promote new perspectives necessary for sustaining a peaceful co-existence in a "shifting sands" neighborhood defined by unprecedented diversity in religions, cultures, and racial groups.

## VII. SYNTHESIS

Korean American Community Foundation's leadership and philanthropic support has contributed towards building the community infrastructure necessary to promote bridging social capital among the diverse populations of New York City. Each forum helped identify policy and/or programmatic areas, possible partners and in the case of the first forum, funding resources to support inter-community collaborations. Moreover, each forum served to locate persistent "fault lines" that continue to shape racial discord and as a result, points to future dialogues and interventions that need to take place. Through its sponsorship and leadership in three inter-community forums, KACF has helped advance the state of race relations by promoting individual and institutional networks (i.e., trust and social ties) among city-wide and community stakeholders that are essential to laying the groundwork for a multi-racial democracy.

KACF's goals for its Program to Advance Inter-Community Relationships (PAIR) are to provide a public space for robust and sustained dialogue among multiple community and city stakeholders; identify new challenges in mediating the seismic demographic shifts that are transforming NYC's demographic landscape; and to learn from local best practices in addressing both persistent and emergent forms of racial inequality. Each inter-community forum has signified a proactive and inclusive effort to promote relationship building across social boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, nativity, and gender. KACF viewed each forum as a step towards cultivating and strengthening the bridging social capital necessary to advance New York City's "New Majority".

In conclusion, a few key lessons from these forums are highlighted:

- Promote strong community-based nonprofit institutions including community foundations to support local initiatives and capacity building to engage in bridging social capital, in other words, inter-community collaborations;
- Recognize the “linked fates” of our diverse communities. As keynote speaker of the first forum, BongHwan Kim advised, to counter the conditions that formed a “perfect storm” of racial conflict represented by Los Angeles’s 1992 rebellion, it is critical to establish personal relationships and social ties among diverse community leaders and stakeholders. While common concerns, a shared social history and/or neighborhood geography helps to establish the linked fates of our respective communities, building relationships of understanding and trust are essential to advancing our communities in times of crisis and calm;
- Support public space and venues for structured engagement in difficult but frank discussions about neighborhood change and quality of life, and to strategize policies and actions to ensure equity in economic growth and development;
- Promote youth development and new urban leadership through mentorship, educational resources, and employment opportunities. Youth development is essential for sustaining the health of our local neighborhoods. Community building in “shifting sands” neighborhoods requires investments in our most important asset – our young people.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Media coverage of this event includes James Barron's article, "Sneakers Once Looted; Down Jackets Now Donated" in *New York Times*, November 29, 2005, and available online at: <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F10812F83F550C7A8EDDA80994DD404482>
- 2 Deferring to local leadership and stakeholders, Miguel Garcia did not participate in the organizing meetings but did attend the October 2007 Flushing Community Leadership Workshop. The KACF Director of Program Development involved with the organizing of the Flushing forum was Ms. Amy Ahn. Two of the consultants – Ben Butler and Héctor R. Cordero-Guzmán – were not involved in this third forum.
- 3 For more information about Queens Borough President Helen Marshall's General Assembly, refer to [http://www.queensbp.org/content\\_web/immigrant/queens\\_general\\_assembly.shtml](http://www.queensbp.org/content_web/immigrant/queens_general_assembly.shtml).
- 4 The website for the 350th Anniversary of the Flushing Remonstrance is <http://flushingremonstrance.info/> which lists the numerous commemorative events including the Flushing Community Leadership Workshop.
- 5 Refer to Christopher J. Smith and John R. Logan, 2006. "Flushing 2000: Geographic Explorations in Asian New York," in *From Urban Enclave to Ethnic Suburb*, ed., Wei Li, University of Hawaii Press, and Christopher J. Smith, 1995, "Asian New York: The Geography and Politics of Diversity," *International Migration Review*.
- 6 Refer to Min Zhou, 2001. "Chinese: Divergent Destinies in Immigrant New York," in *New Immigrants in New York*, ed., Nancy Foner, Columbia University Press.
- 7 Refer to 1984 *New York Times* article "Asians Galvanize Sales Activity in Flushing," by Kirk Johnson, July 29.
- 8 The full citation is *Chinatown No More: Taiwan Immigrants in Contemporary New York*, by Hsiang-Shui Chen, 1992, Cornell University Press.
- 9 Refer to *New York Times* article, "The Melting Pot on a High Boil in Flushing," by John Strausbaugh, May 2.
- 10 Refer to *Times Ledger* article, "Korean day spa set to open despite lawsuit from Avella," by Stephen Stirling, May 10, 2007.
- 11 Citation from the 350th Anniversary of Flushing Remonstrance website description of the Flushing Community Leadership Workshop – <http://flushingremonstrance.info/>

## KACF INTER-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE FORUMS PANELISTS, SPEAKERS AND FACILITATORS

Daniel Abreu	Tito Luna
Natalia Aristizabal	Helen Marshall
Karly Beaumont	Elisha Miranda
Ben Butler	J. Robin Moon
Hector Cordero-Guzman	Yumeris Morel
Mai Dang	Joyce Moy
Darwin Davis	Father Luke Nguyen
Bess DeBetham	Cao O
Erica DeLaRosa	Arthur O’Mealley
Leo Escalamado	Karen Philips
Tom Finkelparl	Jose Rodriguez
Miguel Garcia	Lillian Rodríguez-López
Thomas Hong	Judith Sloan
Tarry Hum	Lynda Spielman
BongHwan “BH” Kim	Mary Tran
Uyen Le	Ana Trinidad
Guillermo Linares	Graham Wong
John Liu	



**KACF**

KOREAN AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**PREPARED BY TARRY HUM, PH.D.**  
Queens College, City University of New York

MAY 2008