



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**STATEMENT OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK
MOURNING THE PASSING OF CORKY LEE**

On Wednesday, January 27, the Asian American Bar Association of New York (AABANY) received the news that Corky Lee succumbed to his battle against COVID-19. We join the community in mourning this iconic and ever-present figure who graced us through his art and advocacy with a deep and unwavering love for Asian Americans in New York and across the country.

The Asian American movement was born at the nexus of the 1965 immigration reforms, Black Power and Vietnam war protests. Corky Lee was there at the Basement Workshop, helping seed the Asian American movement in New York City. The health fair he helped organize in 1971 led to the creation of the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. He was in Detroit to photograph the protest for Vincent Chin in 1983. In the 1990s, he photographed the protest for Ethnic Studies on the East Coast. In the aftermath of 9/11, he documented the backlash against South Asians. More recently, he recreated the Golden Spike photo with descendants of Chinese railroad workers. As Corky was fond of retelling, he became a photographer when he noticed that the original group photo of the transcontinental railroad's completion showed not a single Chinese face, even though countless Chinese workers helped to build it, with some even giving their lives to do so. Corky's very last project was to capture the effort to combat anti-Asian violence that had spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic.

An artist and advocate, he combined both with the passion of someone who had found his life calling. His work spanned five decades. Corky seemed to have been around forever, and then gone all too soon. He was the photographer for the AABANY Annual Dinner, its single largest event, from its earliest days to 2020. In May 2017, during APA Heritage Month, in collaboration with Cleary Gottlieb, AABANY honored him with an achievement award to recognize the invaluable contributions he made to American history on behalf of Asian Americans. Read more at <https://blog.aabany.org/2017/05/30/on-tuesday-may-23rd-aabany-together-with-cleary/>

Corky Lee personified the Asian American movement, and AABANY honors his memory by carrying on his work to combat indifference, injustice and discrimination that Asian Americans face. A forthcoming report by AABANY on anti-Asian violence will be dedicated to his memory.

For more information, please contact Yang Chen, AABANY Executive Director, at (646) 653-2168, or direct any inquiries to main@aabany.org.

The Asian American Bar Association of New York is a professional membership organization of attorneys concerned with issues affecting the Asian Pacific American community. Incorporated in 1989, AABANY seeks not only to encourage the professional growth of its members but also to advocate for the Asian Pacific American community as a whole. AABANY is a New York regional affiliate of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA).

Additional information about AABANY is available at www.aabany.org

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