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Contact: Yang Chen, Executive Director
(646) 653-2168

ASIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK APPLAUDS ADOPTION OF A COURSE ON ASIAN AMERICANS AND THE LAW AT FOUR TRI-STATE AREA LAW SCHOOLS

NEW YORK - May 27, 2022. The Asian American Bar Association of New York ("AABANY") commends Columbia Law School, Cornell Law School, New York Law School and Rutgers Law School for their adoption of a course on Asian Americans and the Law. During this time of resurgent anti-Asian violence, law schools have the opportunity to fill gaps in the legal curriculum and advance the understanding of the contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) people to American society by offering a course on their impact and influence on the legal, social, and political history of the United States.

In November of 2021, AABANY sent proposals to seventeen New York and New Jersey law schools requesting that they offer a course on Asian Americans and the Law. To date, Columbia Law School, Cornell Law School, New York Law School, and Rutgers Law School have taken action by introducing such a course at their institutions. CUNY School of Law, New York University School of Law, Syracuse School of Law, and Fordham Law School already offer such a course.

The proposals were sponsored by AABANY’s Anti-Asian Violence Task Force. The Task Force engages in advocacy, community assistance, and public education. It has identified the deep ignorance of Asian American history, culture, and contributions as one of the root causes of violence against Asian Americans. The concepts of perpetual foreignness and invisibility, which foster anti-Asian violence, are addressable by long-term research, scholarship, and teaching.

AABANY thanks the Honorable Denny Chin, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and former AABANY President, and Thomas H. Lee, Leitner Family Professor of Law at Fordham Law School, who kindly provided a sample syllabus from their Asian Americans and the Law course taught at Fordham Law School as a reference in the AABANY proposal. Judge Chin has taught a similar course at Harvard and Yale law schools.

“We take the opportunity this May, during AAPI Heritage Month, to highlight the importance of educating future lawyers about the important part played by AAPI Americans in shaping American constitutional jurisprudence and civil rights. Sadly, most law students know little to nothing about these cases,” says William Ng, President of AABANY. “A course on Asian
Americans and the Law would help law students develop a fuller understanding and appreciation of the formative role played by Asian Americans in the social, legal and political history of the United States. We thank Judge Chin and Professor Lee for their work in raising the visibility of Asian Americans in legal history, and we hope many other law schools will follow their example.”

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 not-for-profit 501(c)(6) professional membership organization of attorneys concerned with issues affecting the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Incorporated in 1989, AABANY seeks not only to encourage the professional growth of its members but also to advocate for the AAPI community as a whole. AABANY is a New York regional affiliate of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA).

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