



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT HONORS CHICAGO'S ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY LEADERS**

*Virtual event will highlight industry leaders who have gone above and beyond in advocating for Chicagoans through these unprecedented times*

**CHICAGO** – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot will join other City and community leaders today for a celebratory virtual event to commemorate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month by honoring 12 community leaders for their commitment to supporting and advocating for their communities and the entire City of Chicago.

"For centuries, our AAPI communities have contributed to the vibrant cultural and economic landscape of Chicago and have remained resilient in the face of a new wave of racism, xenophobia, and misogyny," said Mayor Lightfoot. "That's why it has become all the more important to highlight and uplift their contributions through events like these, which prove just how deeply rooted the accomplishments of our AAPI communities are within Chicago. It is my distinct honor to recognize the many AAPI individuals and organizations who have and continue to give so much to our great city."

Recipients were selected based on their leadership and contribution to Chicago through various industries including, art and culture, health and medicine, technology, business, community empowerment, civil and immigration rights, education, and youth outreach.

While the work of these individuals has always been important, their dedication has been vital in overcoming challenges facing all communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including Filipino nurses who have significantly borne the burden of the virus within the medical profession. Additionally, the increased incidents of violence and harassment aimed at the AAPI community are indications of the need to appreciate those who offer their support.

Among the extraordinary leaders honored tonight is the legacy recipient Tereza Lee— an immigration advocate who helped inspire the DREAM Act. Lee learned that she was undocumented as a child. After winning a piano competition and



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performing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as a teenager, her teachers at Merit School of Music helped her contact, Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, to ask for help with her immigration status. Senator Durbin began drafting a bill which would come to be known as the DREAM Act, that would help Tereza and many others like her to have a path to citizenship. Decades later, the federal DREAM Act has still not been passed, but Tereza and many other immigration activists are hopeful that the current Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill in Congress, which includes the DREAM Act, has a chance.

"Celebrating our AAPI heritage is vitally important to ensure our stories are told and the contributions to our communities are recognized. I am honored to receive this award from Mayor Lightfoot and to share my story with others. And I hope those who are facing similar immigration struggles remember that despite how helpless it may seem our determination must overshadow the fear." Said Lee.

#### **Accessibility Advocacy**

Jae Jin Pak, Advocate

#### **Arts and Culture**

Chantala Kommanivanh, Artist & Professor

#### **Business**

Eddie Duly, Star of Siam

#### **Civil and Immigrant Rights**

Andy Kang, Asian American Advancing Justice

#### **Community Builder**

Jennifer Pham, Haibayô Events

#### **Community Healer**

Dr. Ishaq Lat

Florence Palmaira, Philippine Nurses Association of Illinois

#### **Economic Empowerment**

Rebecca Shi, American Business Immigrant Coalition

#### **Environmental**

Dr. Rohany Nayan, Chicago Muslims Green Team

#### **LGBTQ+ Activism**

Kim Fountain, Center on Halsted



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**Youth**

Mimi Rodman, Stand for Children - Illinois

**Legacy Award**

Tereza Lee, New York Manhattan School of Music

The City of Chicago will provide a livestream feed of the event on Mayor Lightfoot's social media channels including [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). It will also debut a [PSA Against Asian Hate created by FCBChicago](#) on the [Mayor's YouTube Channel](#).



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