



NEWS RELEASE

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Free Self-Defense Class Offered to Empower New Yorkers Against Racially-Biased Attacks

New York, NY – [The Alicia and Jason Lee Foundation](#) will partner with [University Settlement](#) to provide free self-defense classes for their neighbors, many of whom are Asian, on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Responding to the rise in unprovoked violent assaults on Asian New Yorkers and other minority groups, the free classes seek to empower participants with the skills needed to protect themselves if attacked. The classes will primarily be geared toward older people, who are often targets of racially motivated violence.

"No one should be afraid to leave their house or live in constant fear of being assaulted because of what they look like," said founders **Alicia Lee and Jason Lee** in a joint statement. "We hope that the skills that these classes teach will help our community members to feel secure in walking down the street and confident in the event of an unprovoked attack."

"As racist violence directed toward the diverse Asian communities of New York City has increased over the last 18 months, we've stood in solidarity, rage, and grief with our neighbors targeted by xenophobia," said **Melissa Aase**, CEO of University Settlement. "We are grateful to partner with the Alicia and Jason Lee Foundation to offer self-defense classes to interested community members. This resource meaningfully contributes to our efforts to build community strength."

The curriculum for the self-defense classes has been created by New York City-based fitness expert [Lamar McKay](#) in conjunction with wellness expert Pam Rosenberg and trainer/artist [Sammy Yuen](#).

Classes will be taught in English and Chinese and will begin in October 2021. Initially, two classes will be offered, each taking place across five weeks – one for all interested participants, and one more appropriate for adults over 60. Registration will be limited to University Settlement program participants.

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About University Settlement

University Settlement partners with 40,000 New Yorkers on the Lower East Side and in Brooklyn every year to build on their strengths as they achieve healthy, stable, and remarkable lives. For 135 years, we've collaborated with our neighbors to pioneer highly effective programs that fight poverty and systemic inequality. Established in 1886 as the first Settlement House in the United States, we bring the values of that movement into the 21st century by meeting New Yorkers where they live, listening deeply to all perspectives, engaging with every individual holistically, and creating space for people to organize. Joining together with our neighbors to advocate for justice and equality, we help build community strength.

We work with New Yorkers of all ages. We infuse a commitment to civic engagement, equity, and communal action into each of our programs, which include early childhood education, mental health and wellness, benefits assistance and eviction prevention, adult literacy and education, healthy aging, community and recreation centers, performing and visual arts, and youth development.

Learn more at www.universitysettlement.org.

About The Alicia and Jason Lee Foundation

The Alicia and Jason Lee Foundation was founded in 2020 by Alicia and Jason Lee. Alicia and Jason Lee formed the New York City-based foundation to support a wide range of philanthropic endeavors relating to criminal justice reform, financial literacy, and community initiatives.

Learn more at www.aliciaandjasonleefoundation.org/