



紐約東華協會

CHINATOWN EAST
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

2023 CENC
JOURNAL



紐約東華協會二零二三年暑期實習雜誌

A COLLECTION OF STORIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

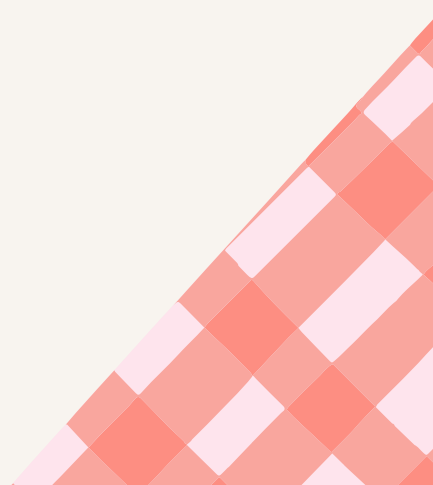
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人心齊，泰山移

Work in solidarity and Mount Tai moves.

Mission Statement

The Chinatown East Neighborhood Council (CENC) is organized by a group of community activists, business entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

The mission of Chinatown East Neighborhood Council (CENC):

1. Revitalize the eastern part of Chinatown, which includes the part of the Chinese American community that is east of Bowery and Oliver Street. Since the pandemic, this part of the neighborhood has been hit most severely by the economic downturn and has received minimum government, state, and federal assistance. Our goal is to concentrate on this area of the Chinese American community's rejuvenation.
2. The East Broadway Mall is an essential part of this revitalization. Since 1988, the mall has been the seed for the economic development of East Chinatown. The mall used to be such a vibrant place, employing hundreds of people (including large sized restaurants and a few dozen smaller shops). Unfortunately, due to the economic impact and some other circumstances with the city government, the once vibrant mall has deteriorated; it lost many jobs and the city lost so many taxes. We would like to see the mall brought back to the condition before Sandy and the pandemic. The mall is, after all, the engine needed to revive East Chinatown, East Broadway, Market street, Madison street, and Henry street back to normal economic activities.
3. CENC puts community safety as its priority. The safety will involve police department protection, DA's Office's cooperation, and self-support by the residents and the businesses of this area. We will work with the drug rehab centers to make sure that the services they provide do not cause any crimes to the community. We will also request the city not to construct anymore shelters in this neighborhood - now and in the future. And we would like to see two of the hotels become a part of New York City's tourist recovery program.
4. We would like to beautify this neighborhood by planting more trees on the sidewalks and most importantly, redesign the traffic islands on Allen street, below Grand. All of the islands above Grand have been transformed beautifully and we would like the city to continue that work below Grand Street.

It is our goal to work together with government agencies, civic organizations, and business entities to work towards the common vision of revitalizing the eastern part of Chinatown. With support and resources, we hope to see Chinatown thrive again.

龍馬精神

A dragon's and horse's spirit.

(A powerful or vigorous spirit/The
Great & Powerful among men)

Supervisor Remarks

Congratulations to the 2023 summer interns of Chinatown East Neighborhood Council! You've all done amazing work, you've all learned a lot, you've learned to interact with your community, helping out, all the while improving your writing and speaking skills. Of the many issues you helped solve in this community, from helping seniors apply for housing to writing letters to politicians concerning congestion pricing, you've all exceeded my expectations. Those seniors that can't understand English were able to apply for housing because of you. Though it's still a work in progress, you contributed to the trees that will soon be planted here in Chinatown as well as the battle against congestion pricing. You volunteered at community events that took place around Confucius Plaza. You've all helped solve a variety of issues ranging big to small throughout this community and for that, I am very proud of you all.

We've had several speakers that generously gave us presentations regarding community issues and how certain offices work. We visited the District Attorney's Office, the Museum Of Chinese in America (MOCA), met with political figures like Mayor Eric Adams, Assemblywoman Grace Lee, and Senator Brian Kavanagh. I hope that these experiences have taught you all something and provide you with an insight of how certain things in this city operate.

Finally, I hope this summer program was an experience that you will never forget. Once again, I'm very proud of you all for the hard work and resilience you put into this internship. As you all graduate, I wish you all well in your future endeavors.

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Justin Chin-Shan Yu

Founder of Chinatown East Neighborhood Council
Democratic District Leader of 65AD

Congratulations to the interns of the 2023 Chinatown East Neighborhood Council! It has been a pleasure working with you guys over the summer. Despite not always being able to be there with you all, I know that all of you guys have worked very hard on numerous projects. From writing letters opposing congestion pricing to advocating for more trees in Chinatown, you all have done a fabulous job no matter what project arose. Over the course of this summer, Justin and I have trained you to write better, speak better, connect to others better, and most importantly, exposed you to valuable experiences that will stay with you for yours to come.

I would like to take a moment here and thank you for all the work you did for the seniors as well. From helping them with senior home applications to volunteering at Confucius Plaza, you have all exceeded my expectations. Patiently helping the seniors despite the language barrier shows the dedication and commitment you have in giving back to your community. In addition to helping seniors, you have all played an integral part in the fight against congestion pricing. From making posters for a rally to meeting with senator Brian Kavanaugh, you have all done more than enough work to leave your mark in this continuous fight against congestion pricing.

Also, I hope that you all have taken valuable lessons and inspiration from the various speakers that we have had throughout this internship. Dr. Chan, Danny Yang, Jacky Wong, Edward Cuccia, and Pema Genkhang have all shared their experiences and hopefully helped inspire you in deciding your future. They shared their stories with you in hopes of helping you progress through the most important time of your lives. With college applications, majors, and jobs not too far in the future, these speakers have taught you the necessary skills needed for tackling these hurdles in your life.

In addition, we have also visited the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), and met with many representatives such as Mayor Eric Adams, Assemblywoman Grace Lee, and senator Brian Kavanaugh. I hope that your experiences with these political figures will help you blossom and grow into a future leader. Watching and listening to these role models have given you insight into how you can be successful as well. From working with you all this summer, I know everyone here has the qualities and potential to be successful in life. I am sure that you all will contribute to your neighborhoods in a multitude of ways, be it as an outspoken leader or a leader behind the operations.

Lastly, I hope that you all take these experiences and apply it to your future endeavors. As you all graduate high school soon and adulthood finally hits, I wish you well in your future pursuits.

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Kelly Tang

Program Director of Chinatown East Neighborhood Council

Biographies

千軍易得，
一將難求

It is easy to find a thousand soldiers,
but hard to find a good general.



Ivan Chen

**Project Coordinator & Chief Scheduler
Stuyvesant High School Class of 2024**

Hi! My name is Ivan Chen. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York City. I love to read, sketch, design, and program. If you can't tell, I'm a super creative person and love learning and creating new things. Most of my free time is used to continue pursuing my interests and spend tons of time learning, designing, and programming. And I'll confess, I've read many dozens of textbooks and research papers to quench my thirst for knowledge.

I'm a rising senior at Stuyvesant High School, located on Chambers Street near Battery Park. There, I'm involved in our school's award-winning FIRST robotics team as a software engineer. I've been part of the team for 3 years, and have gone to over a dozen competitions all over the US, including the world championships twice in the last two years. I was also the Vice President of Software Engineering for the 2023 season and currently head the Research and Development efforts of the team. I specialize in autonomous robotic systems and computer vision, which I've been heavily integrating into our team's knowledge. I'm currently working on the development of an entirely custom computer vision solution that features a full-field localization solution accurate to within 1 inch of error.

I'm also involved in The Stuyvesant Spectator, a student-run, biweekly publication that writes about the latest news within our school, and almost anything else our journalists can imagine! There, I work on ensuring the electronic publication of our articles on our website. I also spearheaded the development of a new website using the latest web technologies as an update from the previous website which was over 10 years old. I completely overhauled the design of the website and wrote a significant portion of the code powering what you see at www.stuyspec.com.

I've also been involved in Stuyvesant's student government, where I held the position of Director of IT for two years in our student caucuses. There, I modernized the backend Content Management Systems, and heavily worked on optimizing the performance of the website. My philosophy for web design is to develop beautifully interactive and visually aesthetic user experiences that make bold statements.

So, that's me. A creative person who loves aesthetics, design, and nerdy things, striving to learn as much as I can to create more things.



Qiao Jun Lee

**Assistant Project Coordinator
Stuyvesant High School Class of 2025**

My name is Qiao Jun Lee, and I'm currently employed as an intern at the Chinatown East Neighborhood Council for the summer. I'm a rising junior at Stuyvesant High School, and my hobbies are drawing and hiking, though given the opportunity I would prefer to just lounge at home. I am part of the Stuyvesant DnD club and was formerly a Stuyvesant Metis Project member.

Before I can talk about myself, I should highlight my parents, two Chinese natives that emigrated to America in search of a better life. My father is from the city of Hong Kong, and my mother is from the countryside of Hainan. They uprooted their lives to seek opportunities that wouldn't otherwise be present in the slums of Hong Kong and the villages of Hainan, which ultimately brought them together in New York City. They got married, and I was born in the winter of 2007.

My memories of my early life are hazy; but although I cannot recount the names of my elementary teachers or even my activities during the day, I can still resonate with the warm feeling of contentedness when I think back to those years. There I lived, in a tiny Brooklyn apartment in Bensonhurst, for the first ten years of my life. It was here that I developed a passion for art, which acted as an outlet for what I could not express. We were not particularly well off, but I was happy. Along the way, my brother was born. I was overjoyed to have a companion, though I quickly became disillusioned with him after I was tasked with babysitting and cleaning duties. Nevertheless, the days flowed by like a gentle stream, its waters warm and healing. If I could have drifted in that motionless limbo forever, I think I could consider it heaven.

Slowly, however, there was a change in routine. Starting from third grade, my parents took me and my brother across the city, to open houses. Objectively, the apartment in which we lived was cramped and dirty, and the rent was expensive – it was no place to host a family. But I was unable to let go of it so easily; I had become accustomed to the safety it brought, and I could not bear for it to be ripped away. But time marches on. In February of fifth grade, I moved to Gerritsen Beach. Everything that I so intimately knew had been upheaved.



Qiao Jun Lee

**Assistant Project Coordinator
Stuyvesant High School Class of 2025**

I think this was when it started. It was around this time that I began to repress myself, numbing myself so the days would pass faster. I can no longer attribute my inability to recall my time at my new school to my poor memory, rather, the days blurred into one large mass of time, so that I could only recall it as a vaguely unpleasant chunk of history. Thankfully, my new classmates did not scrutinize me harshly as I feared they would – they only acted as if I were any other chair or desk in the classroom, and treated me as such. Slowly, it became a new routine for me to settle into, although a far less comforting one. The days were one and the same, and months flew away as I devoted myself to something that was my escape from this new enclave: middle school admissions. I had only heard of it in bits and pieces from word of mouth, but suddenly, it stood in front of me as an impenetrable fortress towering above me. I threw myself into working and preparing for the talent exam because if I failed, I would be placed in my zone school, where many of my classmates would be headed. Above all, I could not repeat the past few months. It was not passion, but desperation that drove me to draw so fiercely. I remember ripping over the envelope that contained the news but lacking the courage to unfold the letter that would determine the state of my life for the next three years. Failing was akin to death. I passed the exam with flying colors. I had been admitted into Mark Twain, the highest of achievements that I could comprehend at the time. Thus began a new chapter of my life, where I could shed the few short months I spent in melancholy and be reborn. There were new people to talk to, new sights to see and experience. I drank all of it in, riding a high that lasted until March of seventh grade.

The coronavirus, originating from Wuhan, China, had been slowly creeping around the world until it arrived at the U.S.'s doorstep in 2020. Businesses closed down. People shut themselves in. It was a sweeping change that not only affected me but the entire world. This change, however, was not a wholly unwelcome one, despite the situation that brought about the abrupt shift. I am naturally introverted, and I was glad to have a reason to stay indoors. The isolation was not without its negative effects, however. I began to withdraw into myself, as I had once before. I had all the time in the world to improve myself, but I idled the days away drifting aimlessly, doing nothing in particular.



Qiao Jun Lee

**Assistant Project Coordinator
Stuyvesant High School Class of 2025**

Currently, I had wrapped myself in a cocoon, but instead of hatching into a butterfly, I had regressed back into a lowly caterpillar. The rising death counts and attacks against Asians meant nothing to me if I shut my ears and pretended not to hear anything. In protecting my fragile illusion of happiness and safety, I stagnated and wallowed in ignorance. It was in this manner that I spent the three years of the pandemic, holed up in the little cavity I dug out for myself.

Time marches forward and waits for no one. Thrust upon me was the SHSAT, of even more importance than middle school exams. Feverishly, drowsily, I committed myself to study, even if it initially were only something to keep my hands busy. I became obsessed with it. Looking back on it, I don't know why I chased after Stuyvesant so fanatically – my parents would have been fine with any specialized high school, though slightly less approving of lesser choices. Was it out of a need to prove myself? To show that I was worthy? I cannot answer these questions, even now. Fear had consumed me; I was slowly rotting. Many a night I had lain awake, dreading the day the fated letter would arrive. Only Stuyvesant was acceptable – I would not settle for anything less.

I got into Stuyvesant, which brings me here now, for better or for worse. Initially, I joined because it would look good for college, and I did not want to idle away my summer as I had previously. After working at CENC for a month, though, I have grown to appreciate the work we do. It has opened up a door of possibilities for me, opening the path to people I would have never even dreamed of meeting. Wherever the next phase of my life takes me, I hope I will be able to rise to the occasion.



Stanley Lee

Journal Writer/Editor

Brooklyn Technical High School Class of 2025

My name is Stanley Lee, a Chinese-American living in Brooklyn, New York. I am currently 16 years old, and a rising junior in the software engineering major at Brooklyn Technical High School. At Brooklyn Tech, I am part of 2 clubs, the Fencing club and the D&D club. While I am not very athletic outside of gym class, I still enjoy some sports, as seen by my participation in the fencing club and membership in the fencing team from freshman to sophomore. I also have knowledge on how to play golf, volleyball and badminton, although my skills are quite poor. My participation in the D&D club, however, is based on my personal hobbies. I enjoy reading, especially fantasy novels. I've read fantasy novels from Percy Jackson to Harry Potter, and from Cradle to The Wandering Inn. Fantasy is a place filled with imagination, where anything can happen, and in D&D, you can use that imagination to play with other companions in a world of your creation. Fantasy is the genre I enjoy the most, precisely because of this imagination. Whatever can happen in real life and whatever can't, as long as you think it up, it can happen in fantasy. Outside of school, I enjoy listening to music, reading, and playing games occasionally. Regarding music, I enjoy the sound of it, rather than the lyrics, so I have songs in my playlist from English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and even Italian singers. As for reading, as mentioned above, I enjoy reading fantasy novels. Last of all, for games, I enjoy playing mobile games, computer games, card games and even classic board games. Recently, I've been enjoying three games mainly: Cookie Run Kingdom, Honkai Star Rail, and REx: Reincarnation.

Even so, I try my best to balance my hobbies with studying and homework, as my future depends on it. I got into Brooklyn Tech not even 10 points above the cutoff line, so I put in my effort to catch up with the other students who are more intellectual than I am. Regarding the SAT which I will be taking this year, I am aiming to score above 1400, like a score of 1450, maybe 1500, so this calls for more studying. I plan to study by doing practice tests both online and in physical SAT prep books. When school starts again, I plan to cut out some games, in order to make time for schoolwork, which is bound to be harder than sophomore year. My goal for the school year is to stop my procrastination habit, which will be very hard, but I will try my best in doing so. I picked up my procrastination habit during the pandemic, as it came during the second year of middle school.



Stanley Lee

Journal Writer/Editor

Brooklyn Technical High School Class of 2025

The second year of middle school counted as the official transition from elementary school, with even harder classwork, homework, and a need to prepare for the state test and the SHSAT. However, that year, due to the pandemic, we watched as the teachers tried their best to set up google classroom, zoom meetings, and online work, barely doing work of our own. The next year, eighth grade, was also fully remote, so there was little knowledge to be gained, but a lot of time to be spent. This time was spent procrastinating, and I did various things unrelated to school, which deeply impacted my time in high school, as I had gotten used to the lax time schedules of remote learning, as well as the easy work to be done. It wasn't until sophomore year, however, that I learned how badly my procrastination has affected me, since freshman year is considered a transition period from middle school to high school, with mostly easy work. When I suddenly discovered how hard the work was in sophomore year, I knew I had to change my habit of procrastination.

So, this about sums me up. I enjoy reading, playing games, and listening to music, and I have an interest in some sports. Sadly, I still have to do my best to study and learn in school. But that's to be expected for every student anyways.



Harry Lin

Secretary
Brooklyn Technical High School Class of 2025

My name is Harry Lin, I'm a second-generation Chinese American and currently a rising junior in Brooklyn Technical High School. I worked under Justin Yu as an intern in Chinatown East Neighborhood Council for the summer of 2023. My short term goal is to get a score of about 1450 on the SAT. As for future plans, I decide on pursuing a career somewhere in the field of software. I find coding to be pretty fascinating for the time being. Hopefully that interest doesn't fade away when it's too late to turn back. I like to play games and watch TV in my free time. Some of my favorite food & drinks would be boba, sushi, and barbeque. Not very healthy, but whatever.

About my family, I have a mom, a dad, and two siblings, a younger sister and a younger brother. I'm pretty close to my extended family, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins because I was around them during my early childhood. When I was living with my extended family, I was basically treated like the youngest child, special treatment and all, so it was weird trying to adjust to being the oldest child later on.

About my childhood, a few months after I was born I was sent to China and placed under the care of my grandparents. While my grandmother mainly took care of me, I spent a lot of time around my cousins who were about my age. At that time, I was the youngest and all of my cousins were very fond of me. My aunts and uncles would occasionally make plans for all of us to go out; to eat, to shop, have fun at festivals, etc. I did go to preschool in China for like a year, but I came back to America when I was 6 years old to resume education there. That was also when I had my first memory of my parents. Meeting them at first at the airport was very awkward. I had no previous memory of them and in my eyes, they were just two friendly strangers that were supposed to be my parents. I went to PS.105, but transferred to PS.176 when I was in second grade because we moved homes. My younger siblings came one by one to America a couple years after I did. I met one of my good friends, Ming, as he was one of my upstairs neighbors and goes to the same schoolyard to play as me. We would play soccer, tag, and other games along with other friends. He was about 10 years older than me and had a younger brother who he didn't really get along with. That was one of my longest friendships, but unfortunately we no longer see each other because of the pandemic and some other complications.



Kurtis Luo

Photographer

Brooklyn Technical High School Class of 2025

Hi, I'm Kurtis and I am the photographer and one of the editors of this journal. I am 15 currently, a rising junior in Brooklyn Tech, and a Mechanical Engineering major. I have a passion for photography (as you can tell), and I am apart of Brooklyn Tech's Student Media, where I have photographed many events such as Graduation, Future World Vision: Stem Pathways Program, the Spring and Winter Concerts at Tech, as well as many sports games like the PSAL Table Tennis City Championships (which our team brought home the chip for 5 years in a row now), and also many Basketball Games. I also try to go to parks when I can, to improve my wildlife photography, and I'm pretty grateful to have a backyard where I am able to photograph many species of birds without leaving my house. I am one of the Managers for Tech's Volleyball Team, and will be the manager, photographer, and social media manager for the Boy's Table Tennis Team next year as well! I'm also heavily involved in the Student Government at Tech, mainly being an Executive for the Club Team Council, which manages all of the 200+ clubs at Tech. My favorite class at Tech so far has been my science classes, like Physics and Chemistry, as I've found a greater connection with my teachers in those subjects, and I'm pretty interested in furthering my education, especially in science.

I wanted to join this program to get more involved with my community, serve my community, learn about various aspects of Chinatown, as well as learning more about the local and state government. At first, I thought this would be quite boring, just doing random stuff, but as I've gone through it, I found it's actually quite interesting. I've also been introduced to many elected officials and made many connections with the local leaders here in Chinatown while being able to advocate for ideas that the population here in Chinatown wants. I'm grateful to have been apart of this program and hope that I can hopefully return in the future to mentor the next round of interns.

But, my work when I leave will not be done for sure. I will hopefully continue to advocate for the community alongside Justin in the coming months. I also hope to be able to do that when I leave for college, which I hope to be able to attend the prestigious United States Naval Academy and commission as a Pilot for the United States Navy. The work of advocating for your community is never over, and new issues will arise soon, and I hope that if you read this, you yourself can start volunteering and changing the community one step at a time. Change will not be swift, but it will happen and we need to embrace it. Eventually you will develop the skills of Leadership and Communication, which you can then use to do bigger things to not just benefit 1 person, but thousands of people.



Benjamin Nicolay

Special Project Assistant

Francis Lewis High School Class of 2026

My name is Benjamin. I am 14. I am becoming a sophomore next year at Francis Lewis High School. My hobbies are playing games, playing sports such as going to car meets or playing basketball, or football, and going to the gym with friends. I often like hanging out with my friends because of the random things we do. I am good at sports and math. I don't like English or science because I find them challenging. I am good at selling things, and I have a big passion for starting my own business one day and creating my dream car garage with my friends.

I also love playing games such as Valorant, Rust, Call of Duty, Modern Warfare 2, and Roblox. I have a lot of experience in football and basketball because I play a lot of sports with my friends. I was on a basketball team with my friends and we almost won a championship medal in my basketball league but we lost our final game to an elite team. The things I do illustrate my competitive nature and my ability to work within a team.



Weihao Wu

Journal Writer/Editor

Brooklyn Technical High School Class of 2025

My name is Weihao Wu, a 16 year old Chinese-American living in Brooklyn. I am a rising junior in the software engineering major at Brooklyn Technical High School. I was born on August 31, 2007 in Canton, China. The first 2 years of my life were spent in China with my mother before I finally immigrated to America and moved in with the rest of my family. Growing up as a first generation Chinese-American, I was forced to study a lot in order to get into a prestigious college. One of my hobbies growing up was playing basketball. I would go to McAuliffe Middle School everyday after dinner and play basketball for hours with my friends. Basketball was always the thing that let me relax from schoolwork ever since I started watching it on TV at a young age. My first experience with basketball is watching the 2014 NBA finals with my father. Ever since, I have loved playing the sport in my free time. In addition to basketball, I have recently been interested in getting better at Chess. I started playing freshman year of high school and I would say that I have improved greatly since then. I started to learn more about openings, tactics, and memorized common patterns. My rating has since gone from low 500s to around 1100 currently.

These hobbies are fun and all, but my number one priority is still doing good in school and getting into a top college. I picked the software engineering major because I am very interested in computers and the jobs in that field pay pretty well. Coding was relatively new to me in sophomore year, but the AP CSP course attracted me to learn more coding languages and understand how computers/networks work. I also find coding to be really enjoyable and satisfying, especially after you finish writing a big program. The current coding languages that I know are Python and Java.

My short term goals for school as of now is to get a 1500+ on SAT and maintain a 4.0 GPA. These grades along with extracurriculars will be necessary in order to get into my dream college, MIT. Long term, I want to graduate college and get a job as an IT or developer. I hope to work for big companies in the future like Google and Microsoft, which would be a dream come true. Another one of my goals after college is to get my parents a house first. My parents are the main reason why I am here today and taught me many important lessons that will stay with me for a lifetime.



Calvin Yang

Special Project Assistant

Francis Lewis High School Class of 2025

My name is Calvin and I am 16 years old, as I grew up from living in New Jersey (Atlantic City), and now I live in New York, Queens. I am a rising junior in Francis Lewis High School, and I am slowly going into college, I do plan on some future jobs that I might be interested in. Like Architecture, I want to understand the structure of a building big or small, tall or short, I want to build house or building designs that can caught someone's interest, into building that building or house, that we can also print out a 3d model as we can see the structure of a building at a small scale, and 3d printing would allow architectures to be more innovative structures, and also reduce the amount of construction waste that might be left behind when a building is getting destroyed/demolition. In high school I am sometimes or mostly quite, as I do not talk as much as I do now in 2023, as I was able to express myself and allow myself talk loud, to have others be able to hear me, as back then I was so quiet that sometimes teachers would not hear me, during a presentation or a project. I slowly started to make decisions on my own, but sometimes I make stupid ones, but I am able to make decisions, as of before I only say yes, and I realized that I do not have to say yes for everything, but I can say no. I slowly, but surely hone skills that will allow me to live alone and independently in the future.

I want to be independent but I know independent people need to learn how to cook, and take care of chores, as these things should become a habit to do. Because in life your parents won't be with you forever, as in the future once becoming a adult, it becomes a different world from being a teenager of the past, because from what I know from a adult, you have your own responsibilities, and also these responsibilities are bigger, as you have carry heavy weight, because you have to do your job, constantly, work hard everyday. As a teenager I do not know much about the adult world, but carrying a big responsibility can be a big burden.

I went to some volunteer programs such as CENC in Chinatown for my summer break for 2023. This program allowed me to experience life work, as I got to do many projects, and learn many things that I didn't even know were happening. We went to many events and many meetings. My friends, who are similar ages, met many important people like lawyers, senators, and representatives of New York. It was honestly a crazy experience.

Reflections

I was prepared for my summer to be completely dull. I had been planning to be spending the time sleeping, reading, consuming endless YouTube videos and episodes of TV shows, and doing whatever else came to my mind. I didn't know what to expect when I had signed up for the CENC internship and when I attended the orientation, I was still unsure I actually wanted to stay at this program. But as the first week of the internship had come to an end, I was actually pretty much sold that I wanted to be working with Justin for the rest of the summer. Sure, all my other schoolmates were either working and actually earning money, or doing internships and summer programs to attuned to their interests.

But this program is special. There are very few chances in life to be doing what I've been doing this summer under the guidance of Justin. Whether it be writing letters to city officials, preparing for press conferences without any knowledge of its existence 2 hours prior, meeting with community leaders and attending community meetings, or working with others on issues that deeply impact the greater community, this program didn't give us a chance to stop. Because community issues don't just suddenly stop. A community advocate's job is never finished. You think you've wrapped up one issue with a nice bow tie on top, and 3 more pops up in its place.

There's something special about being involved in your community. Previously, I was only one among the many, meekly accepting all the issues that the community faced as something I would just have to live with. But after being exposed to everything that I did this summer, advocating for my community and making my voice heard, I look at this community differently. Publicly speaking about my concerns for the community is something I would have thought impossible for me previously. Previously, I was not involved in the intricate community affairs. I was not worrying about my community, looking for solutions to problems impacting them, and working to get solutions implemented. But Justin has opened my eyes to these issues, provided a platform for me and the other interns to voice our opinions and support him in his fight alongside the Chinatown community against these issues.

Even though this program has been a little nerve-racking at times, I've learned a lot about myself, about getting my voice heard, and about the reality of how the government works and how we can influence the government as long as we reach out. I've learned a lot this summer from Justin, and he's made my summer much more interesting than I had originally planned. I hope to continue working with him and the Chinatown community in the future. To better Chinatown, and eventually, the world.

-- ***Ivan Chen***

I did not join the Chinatown East Neighborhood Council of my own volition; instead, it was from my parent's insistence and the need to preoccupy myself for the summer that I agreed to the job. Kurtis's parents had called my parents to talk about a volunteer opportunity over the summer, after hearing about how I could not secure a spot for myself in the SYEP roster. They sent over the infographic containing the basic details: volunteer work, seven hours, Monday to Friday. Despite unclear details, I skimmed over it and decided to try it. To say I was shocked on the first day was an understatement; I had circled around the empty, grimy mall countless times looking for suite 153, fearful I had entered the wrong building. A Justin beckoned me in instead of a Kelly. Unfamiliar faces huddled around folding tables, staring into laptop screens. That same day, we worked from noon to dusk at a food line, which was never mentioned in the contract. When I got home, I thought to myself: should I quit? I decided to persevere – after all, it was only the first day. I would get used to it eventually. I am eternally thankful for this decision, since because of it I experienced things completely unimaginable to me two months ago. I had conferences with city officials and attended community events in hopes of bettering Chinatown. To the me in June who was stumbling along, desperate for anything to occupy myself with, I think this was a one in a million chance. I hope we will cross paths again, and when we do, I hope I will be even more accomplished by then.

-- Qiao Jun Lee

During this summer, I decided to participate in volunteer work, interning at a non-profit organization, CENC, to help the citizens of Chinatown, and learn of their troubles, in order to speak up for them, as many do not know English and can't talk about their problems without an interpreter. While in this program as an intern, I have learned many things. I have observed and met public speakers and politicians within Chinatown, helped seniors apply for affordable housing, and participated in the community effort to bring trees into Chinatown and go against congestion tax. Reflecting back on everything that happened during this summer, I really enjoyed the time I spent here at CENC. At first, I was in it for the volunteer hours, but now, I've made friends with the other interns volunteering at CENC, and I generally enjoy the office atmosphere. I also enjoyed the meetings with various speakers during my time at CENC, including witnessing Mayor Eric Adams, Senator Brian Kavanagh, Lawyer Edward J. Cuccia, Dr. Thomas Chan, Jacky Wong, and of course, Justin Yu speaking on different occasions.

-- Stanley Lee

What first began as a last minute opportunity to do something productive over the summer turned into an experience I will never forget. I'll start by saying that all the new and unique people that I got to meet and work with were amazing. I've learned plenty, how to give speeches, write essays, letters, deal with community issues, contact our representatives, etc. Justin was a great supervisor/mentor as well as Kelly. They took us to community events like the Queensborough Community College performance and the fair outside of Confucius Plaza. We've also had a handful of people give us presentations about their respective areas of expertise. We helped with different problems throughout this community, contacting and informing the right people to come solve the issues. This internship definitely opened my eyes to certain aspects of the real world and I'm more than sure that I would want to look for another internship like this in the future. Thanks to Kelly, Justin, Mr. Yi and everyone we've worked with for this special opportunity to learn and experience something new.

-- **Harry Lin**

This internship has been by far one of the best summers that I've ever had. I learned from Justin, a highly respected leader, but also from Dr. Chan, and Edward Cuccia and Jacky Wong, all prominent leaders here in Chinatown. It's been a huge pleasure to be in this internship, but also to work with some people that I hadn't met before. It's been a long 8 weeks, but I'm proud of what we've accomplished with Justin and Kelly, and I look forward to seeing the effects of our changes go out into the world. I would like to thank all of our speakers for giving us such lovely speeches and getting us more into the field of public service. I'd like to thank Chief Peter Tse as well for allowing us to tour the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, that was truly one of the best experiences I have had in my life, and I look forward to being able to hopefully work with the DA's office in the future!

-- **Kurtis Luo**

My name is Benjamin and During the summer at CENC, I helped the community helped fight certain problems within the community. Such as helping with senior housing, helping get the city to plant more trees because of the lack of trees in the area, and most of all helping to fight against congestion pricing. At Cenc we email the governor and various other influential people to help fight against congestion pricing. Every morning people will come in and ask us to help them with the NYC housing lottery and help them apply for different senior homes. One day the senior apartment had some sewer issues and it was not their pipes but the city so we had to email the city to ask them to clean their pipes. Recently we have been going to lots of meetings with the mayor to talk about the community concerns and what the city can do better to fix the concerns that the people have with Manhattan.

-- ***Benjamin Nicolay***

Over the summer, I have worked for the Chinatown East Neighborhood Council, a non-profit organization in Chinatown founded by Justin Yu. My experience in CENC so far has been full of fun and memories that I will hold onto for years to come. We have worked on many projects such as congestion pricing, planting more trees in Chinatown, and advocating for an immigrant shelter over a homeless shelter. We also helped seniors with applying for affordable housing. This allowed me to hone in on improving my Mandarin skills, which will benefit me later in life. In addition, we attended meetings with people such as senator Brian Kavanaugh to discuss these matters. I have learned a lot about contributing back to our communities and public speaking. We were trained to write better and be more comfortable speaking to an audience. Before this internship, I was really bad at public speech; now I am a little more comfortable when speaking in front of a crowd. I also really enjoyed all the unique places we were able to go to and the people that we met there. We were able to visit many places such as the Manhattan District Attorney's office and City Hall; we met assembly members, senators, lawyers, assistant district attorneys, etc. Overall, the internship was a remarkable experience that I shared with the 7 other interns.

-- ***Weihao Wu***

It's been an interesting summer as I got to learn a lot from Kelly, but mostly from Justin, because of this internship program I was able to learn a lot of things. As I learn these things I got to learn things that I never knew, and done before. We went to many meetings and met with many important people, such as the mayor, doctors and lawyers. And at the start I did not really know much about the program, and what we would do in it. I got used to what we do, come in the morning and say good morning and we would usually do housing which I did not know at first, but I started to get better. And after a few weeks we started to do projects, such as planting trees, and lower or stop congestion prices. I got to learn many of the Chinatown communities are hurt, and are carrying a burden for congestion prices and homeless and shelters that are mentally ill. I got to witness actual meetings and how they kinda work, to see important people to debate. I learned a lot from this experience this summer, and I really hope I may come back to this internship group next year.

-- ***Calvin Yang***

Events



Meeting with NYS Senator Brian Kavanaugh

We met to discuss community issues like congestion pricing and the housing crisis with NYS Senator Brian Kavanaugh.



Museum of Chinese in America Visit

We visited the Museum of Chinese in America to learn more about the various stories of Chinese people in America.



Speaker Event: Dr. Thomas K. Chan

Dr. Chan spoke with us on his views of congestion pricing and gave us advice on our career paths after talking about his own career.



Meeting with NYS Assemblymember Grace Lee

We met to discuss community issues like congestion pricing and the housing crisis with NYS Assemblymember Grace Lee.



Speaker Event: Jacky Wong

Jacky Wong came to speak with us all about the housing crisis in NYC.



Second Week at CENC Office

Celebrating Kelly Tang's Birthday along with past member Danny Yang.



Senior Housing Applications

We helped seniors with filling out their digital and physical senior housing applications throughout the summer.



Congestion Pricing Rally with NYS Senator Iwen Chu

We attended a rally against congestion pricing hosted by NYS Senator Iwen Chu in Brooklyn, despite the hot weather.



DOT Workshop & Survey Event

We met to discuss on Park Row; what the community wants, as well as their goals for the future and how to achieve said goals.



Congestion Pricing Rally at MTA HQ

We attended the first Chinatown/Little Italy rally against congestion pricing in front of the MTA HQ on July 19th.



Speaker Event: Lawyer Edward J. Cuccia

Edward J. Cuccia, his wife, and two lawyers from his law office came to our office at CENC to speak with us about the role of lawyers and their impacts.



Congestion Pricing Meeting at the CCBA

We attended the first meeting of the Chinatown & Little Italy Coalition for No Congestion Tax meeting at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.



CENC Makes Signs of Upcoming Rally

We made over 30 signs to prepare for the rally against congestion pricing on July 19th. These signs were to be used in the congestion pricing rally outside of the MTA HQ.



Community Conversation with Mayor Eric Adams

We attended a community conversation with Mayor Eric Adams at P.S. 2 in Chinatown. We discussed various community issues including congestion pricing and trees for Chinatown.



Manhattan District Attorney Office Visit

We visited the District Attorney's office to learn about the "Arrest to Disposition" process and watch arraignments. We learned about the three types of crimes- violation, misdemeanor, and felony, and many other interesting tidbits of information relating to the District Attorney's area of work.



Speaker Event: Pema Genkhang (Queens Regional Director - Intergovernmental and Community Affairs)

Pema visited our office and gave us a talk about her job in the office of the State Comptroller and the importance of such a role.

We would like to extend a thank you to the following parties for contributing to our experiences this summer at CENC.

Dr. Thomas K. Chan, MD.

Jacky Wong

Lawyer Edward J. Cuccia & Company

Pema Genkhang

Chinatown Consolidated Benevolent Association

Nancy Kong

Rosa Chang

Assemblymember Grace Lee

Senator Brian Kavanaugh

Senator Iwen Chu

Museum of Chinese in America

DOT / NYPD

NYC Mayor's Office (Jasper Diaz,
Winnie Greco, Gilbert Hoe)

Danny Yang

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Thank you for an amazing summer!