

Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR)

Background

As COVID-19 reached New York City, Asian and Pacific Islander (API) New Yorkers were subjected to heightened levels of bias, discrimination, and harassment due to fear and misinformation about the virus. From February 2020 to July 2020, the NYC Commission on Human Rights recorded 184 incidents of anti-Asian bias and discrimination, representing a nearly seven-fold increase over the same time period in 2019.

During this same time, millions of Americans from all backgrounds engaged in demonstrations in response to the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and API New Yorkers joined in mourning and in solidarity with the movement for Black lives. Atlantic Avenue was the site of an egregious incident of anti-Asian bias. At the peak of the uprisings in New York City, Atlantic Avenue was also a meeting place for Black, Asian, and Brown activists to gather and protest police violence.

Objective

To bring attention to this unique moment, the Commission partnered with Public Artist in Residence, Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, on “I Still Believe in Our City,” a public awareness campaign and art series that educated New Yorkers about COVID-19-related discrimination facing the API New Yorkers, affirmed that they are a vital part of New York City, and that API communities stand with the Black Lives Matter movement. The objective was to ensure awareness, if they faced discrimination related to COVID-19 stigma or harassment, of the many resources available and to direct viewers to a campaign page with resource information. Another objective was to educate non-Asian audiences by showing the stark contrast between the scapegoating of Asians with the realities of the struggles they are facing due to COVID-19 stigma.

Strategy

As the community most vulnerable to harassment and violence, this campaign targeted Asian and Pacific Islander (API) New Yorkers, including Asian front-line workers and elders. As a secondary target, the Commission identified non-Asian audiences as a key demographic. It was imperative the campaign elevated the unique impact of COVID-19 on young Asian people, Asian business owners, and frontline essential workers through statistics and anecdotes. Because of its relevance with both recent crime and protests, the Commission chose a subway station domination at the Atlantic Avenue-Barclays Center station. The goal was to bring public art to a space that was once a site of violence, and to convert a place of fear to a place where Asian and Black New Yorkers can draw strength, resilience, and pride. Additional subway placements were placed in Sunset Park and Jackson Heights, which are predominantly Asian neighborhoods in New York City, and secured bus shelter and kiosks across all five boroughs for maximum reach. The campaign sought to ensure public understanding of protections under the NYC Human Rights Law, and to honor and recognize the experiences of Asian and Black New Yorkers at an historic time.



Plan Details

Market: New York, NY

Flight Dates: November 2, 2020 - January 10, 2021

OOH Formats: Subway Domination, Kiosks, Bus Shelters, Billboards

Budget: \$10,000 and over

Results

“I Still Believe in Our City” campaign generated 11 earned media stories, including two in the New York Times, resulting in an estimated reach of 347.8 million (based on each publication’s unique visitors per month). The news coverage reached over 77,000 journalists via syndicated platforms such as MuckRack. The campaign also generated over 2,200 visits to the Commission’s website and 10,000 visits to Amanda’s campaign website, istillbelieve.nyc, resulting in over 100 submissions from New Yorkers stating why they still believe in New York City. Additionally, the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) campaign page became a hub for both city and community-based resources made available in a variety of Asian languages on health and mental health resources, and services and programs for API-owned businesses impacted by COVID-19.