NEW YORK CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS, ARABS, AND SOUTH ASIANS IN NEW YORK CITY SINCE 9/11

Summer, 2003

SURVEY OF ANTI-ARAB and MUSLIM DISCRIMINATION

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Patricia L. Gatling, Commissioner
DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST MUSLIMS, ARABS,
AND SOUTH ASIANS IN
NEW YORK CITY SINCE 9/11

Summer, 2003

This project and report received funding support from the New York Community Trust.

For their participation and assistance with the survey, the Commission thanks:

Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs
The Arab-American Family Support Center
CHHAYA Community Development Corporation
The Council of Pakistan Organization
South Asian Youth Action!
South Asian Council for Social Services
The Coney Island Avenue Project

And all the community centers, mosques, churches, and businesses which supported this project, and especially all those individuals who described their experiences since 9/11.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the weeks following the attacks on the World Trade Center, evidence of harassment and violence against Muslims, Arabs and people of South Asian origin in New York City began to emerge. Records from the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force showed a noticeable increase in complaints and anecdotal evidence appeared in community forums and the media. However, discrimination complaints were not being filed at the NYC Commission on Human Rights. With the central office in lower Manhattan closed, phone lines out, and the downtown area inaccessible for months, CCHR was not able to receive these complaints.

The Commission developed the 9/11 Discrimination Project to document instances and types of discrimination that Arabs, South Asians and Muslims believed was taking place in their communities. The Project focused on areas of discrimination covered by the City's Human Rights Law – employment, housing, public accommodations, and bias-related harassment or violence. Through an anonymous bilingual survey in six languages (English with Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, or Punjabi), the Project assessed the types of discrimination that respondents believed they experienced, whether these incidents were reported, and the general effects of 9/11 on the respondents' lives. These reports have not been investigated – they reflect the perceptions of the respondents.

To review, translate, and distribute the survey, the Commission on Human Rights, through its five borough-based field offices, joined with the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs and major Arab and South Asian community organizations: The Arab-American Family Support Center, CHHAYA Community Development Corporation, The Council of Pakistan Organization, The Indian American-Asian Family Service Center, The Pakistani American Community Services Center, The Muslim Affairs Office, The Sikh Community Services of New York, The South Asian Network, The National Federation of Muslim Women, and The South Asian Women’s Center.

DATA PROFILE

RESPONDENTS

NATIONAL ORIGIN

ARAB 47%
SOUTH ASIAN 39%
U.S. 7%
OTHER 7%

RELIGION

MUSLIM 81%
SIKH 6%
HINDU 4%
CHRISTIAN 4%
OTHER 5%

BOROUGH OF RESIDENCE

BROOKLYN 38%
QUEENS 29%
MANHATTAN 6%
BRONX 5%
STATEN ISLAND 3%
UNKNOWN 19%

GENDER

MALE 70%
FEMALE 28%
UNKNOWN 2%
South Asian Youth Action!, South Asian Council for Social Services, and The Coney Island Avenue Project. From over 11,800 surveys distributed, 1,224 responses in 956 completed surveys described perceived discriminatory incidents post-9/11. Surveys were distributed from 10/02 to 04/03. The survey strengthened the Commission’s connections with these communities and will help shape future education, prevention and enforcement efforts.

Highlights of the Findings

REPORTS OF DISCRIMINATION/BIAS HARASSMENT

- One or more incidents of perceived discrimination or bias-related harassment were reported by 69% (659) of the respondents.
- On the other hand, 31% (297) of the respondents said they did not believe that they experienced any discrimination. Some noted that they had developed a higher tolerance, lived and worked within their community, or were advised by community or religious leaders to be patient due to the extraordinary nature of recent events.
- A large majority (79%) felt their lives were negatively affected by 9/11, regardless of whether they believed they had directly experienced any discrimination. They felt more afraid and minimized their contact with the general public or made their religion and ethnicity less evident.

TYPES OF PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION/BIAS HARASSMENT

- The 659 individuals who reported discrimination described 1,224 incidents.
- Bias-related harassment was most frequently reported comprising 37% of the incidents. The majority of these incidents were religious and ethnic insults, but some involved physical assaults.
- Employment discrimination characterized 26% of the incidents. Comments that demeaned an individual’s background were the most common type. In a smaller number of the employment complaints, the respondent was not hired or was fired and believed the cause was either anti-Islam, anti-Arab, or anti-South Asian attitudes.
• Discrimination in public accommodations comprised 25% of the incidents. Individuals detailed negative comments made by persons in authority such as store clerks and teachers about their background, appearance, or clothing. They also described problems receiving services and indicated a belief that their ethnicity or religion was the cause.

• Housing discrimination characterized the remaining 11% of the incidents. Individuals described having difficulty finding apartments or being threatened with eviction.

• Most (29%) of the bias-related harassment/violence incidents, problems in public accommodations (32%) and housing discrimination incidents (30%) occurred in Brooklyn. The majority (22%) of the alleged employment discrimination incidents occurred in Manhattan.

• Few respondents (17%) sought help from anyone in an advocacy organization or government agency because they felt nothing would be done, didn’t know who to contact, were afraid, or thought the incident did not warrant reporting.

Conclusions

The survey revealed that Muslims, Arabs and South Asians believe that discrimination intensified after 9/11/01. Indeed, the publicity about the countries where terrorist organizations originated seems to have alerted people to cultural or religious symbols on which they could pin their fears. In many instances, those fears may have been translated into hostile, vicious, or illegal discriminatory acts that prevented members of these communities from fully participating in education, work, recreation, or finding housing.

One young Muslim woman from Pakistan summed it up: "I live in fear in the land of freedom." Many who avoided discrimination lived and worked in community settings and, with their culture in the spotlight, altered their behavior and appearance.
The substantial number of unreported incidents indicated that Muslims, Arabs and South Asians do not know about or trust the public agencies that could help them. Furthermore, without formal complaints, the extent of the problems remains uncertain.

**Recommendations**

Based on these findings, the Commission on Human Rights encourages:

- **A climate of tolerance and respect in the City.** Schools should insure that the consideration of respect and human dignity appears in curricular materials and the treatment of all students. Business associations and employers should establish and enforce standards for tolerance and anti-discriminatory practice in the workplace. Religious leaders share a common responsibility to speak out against violence or bigotry toward another faith, community or people. Community organizations and the media can disseminate positive information to the public about the cultures and traditions of Muslims, South Asians, and Arabs and alert them that discrimination based on an individual’s real or perceived nationality or religion is against the law.

- **Interfaith and community integration through activities that involve all members of the community.** Groups that have been isolated from each other and their neighborhood can work together on issues of common interest or need such as street fairs, clean-up and lighting for parks, youth programs and facilities or other community-building projects.

- **The participation of people from the Muslim, South Asian, and Arab communities in civic and political activities** such as Community Boards, Community Police Precinct Councils, Block Associations, community gardens, and School Leadership Teams.

- **Media campaigns to promote understanding and discourage discriminatory behaviors** by promoting respect for religious and cultural practices, such as wearing turbans or hijabs. The campaign should explain the illegality of negative comments, poor service, bans against religious behaviors, and other discriminatory restrictions based on national origin and religion and explain how to file complaints at the NYC Commission on Human Rights.

- **The entrance of South Asians, Arabs, and Muslims into public service positions** such as firefighters, police, and other government jobs. Seeing themselves represented will likely give community members more trust and connection to their government.
BACKGROUND

In the weeks following the attacks on the World Trade Center, evidence of harassment and violence against Muslims, Arabs and people of South Asian origin in New York City began to emerge. But while records from the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force showed a noticeable increase in complaints and anecdotal evidence appeared in community forums and the media, discrimination complaints were not being filed at the NYC Commission on Human Rights [CCHR]. With the central office in lower Manhattan closed, phone lines out, and the downtown area inaccessible for months, CCHR was unable to receive or document these complaints.

In the spring of 2002, Emira Habiby-Browne, the Executive Director of the Arab-American Family Support Center, a social service organization located in Brooklyn, met with Commission officials and described complaints from her clients who believed they experienced a broad range of problems because they were Arabs – including harassment on the street, ostracizing behavior in the schools, and being fired from jobs. Commissioner Gatling heard reports of such incidents during her participation in community-based town halls, public forums and other gatherings. These informal complaints, coupled with inquiries from the press and the public about increased discrimination, prompted CCHR to assess the situation more systematically by distributing a survey to the affected communities.

The Commission received funding assistance for the survey and this report from The New York Community Trust.

INTRODUCTION

Census 2000 was only the second census to specifically track the growing population of Arab peoples in the United States under "Arab ancestry," specifically: Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Palestinian, Syrian, and "Other." In the five boroughs of New York City, nearly 71,000 individuals claimed
Arabs and South Asians in NYC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arabs</th>
<th>South Asians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>3,105</td>
<td>18,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>35,739</td>
<td>39,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>10,619</td>
<td>16,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>16,165</td>
<td>133,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staten Island</td>
<td>5,337</td>
<td>8,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>70,965</td>
<td>216,179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000

2. Finding a Path to South Asian Community Development, Research and Survey by Chhaya, a branch of Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), 2002.

Arabs and South Asians in NYC

Arab ancestry, nearly 20,000 more than in 1990, an increase of 39%. New York City now has the third largest population of Arab-Americans in the United States.

While the first Arab New Yorkers in the late 19th century came primarily from Syria and Lebanon and settled in lower Manhattan, including the South Ferry area, Arab immigrants today come from many Arab countries and regions and can be found in all of New York City’s five boroughs. This survey’s Arab-American respondents identified their ancestry as outlined on page 8.

South Asians in NYC number over 216,000 according to Census 2000, including immigrants from the designated source countries of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. That represents a 111% increase since the previous census in 1990. With industrial and service sector employment patterns, nearly 70% of South Asian-Americans can be found in the urban centers of industrial-urban states like New York.

South Asians, the fastest growing segment of NYC’s Asian-American population, are largely new immigrants (since 1965) representing a wide range of socioeconomic and immigration status. No longer limited to regions of India, these newer immigrants come from many countries, including the Indo-Caribbeans, those who have come to the US through the Caribbean. Queens is home to the largest number of South Asians in the neighborhoods of Flushing, Elmhurst, Forest Hills / Kew Gardens, Astoria, Jackson Heights, Woodside, Richmond Hill, Northern Queens Village, Corona and Jamaica-Hillcrest. As an index of this diversity in Queens, the source countries reveal 67% Bangladeshi, 64% Asian Indian, 47% Pakistanis and 40% Sri Lankans.

The number of Muslims in New York City is estimated at 600,000 based on the commonly held assumption that 1 in 10 of the 6 million US Muslims lives in NYC. Other estimates consider Arab/Middle Eastern Muslims to compose 12.4%, or 74,400. The overwhelming number of
survey respondents were Muslim – 81% – immigrating from many Arab and South Asian countries.

OBJECTIVES

The 9/11 Discrimination Project documents the incidence and types of discrimination Arab, South Asian and Muslim individuals in New York City believe they have experienced since 9/11. Although these communities reported many types of negative treatment, the Project focused on experiences falling within the jurisdiction of the New York City Human Rights Law – discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and bias-related harassment or violence. Public accommodations refer to places where goods or services are provided to the general public such as stores, banks, medical or dental offices, government agencies, hair salons, health clubs, hospitals, hotels, libraries, theatres, restaurants, schools and taxis. Bias-related harassment or violence, also covered under the Human Rights Law, is an actual or perceived discriminatory action that threatens a person’s safety, motivated in whole or part by bias.

The specific objectives of the Project were:

• To develop and distribute a survey assessing the prevalence and types of discrimination believed to have been experienced by the Arab, South Asian, and Muslim communities in NYC since September 11, 2001 and learn whether that discrimination was reported to any community or city agency;
• To inquire about the effect of 9/11 on the respondents’ lives and whether or not they believed they had experienced discriminatory incidents;
• To strengthen connections with these communities through survey activities and responses;
• To introduce members of these communities to the Commission and the City’s Human Rights Law and encourage them to file formal complaints of discrimination; and,
• To shape future education and prevention efforts.
SURVEY DESIGN

The Commission on Human Rights designed the survey with review and comment from the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, The Arab-American Family Support Center, CHHAYA Community Development Corporation, The Council of Pakistan Organization, South Asian Youth Action!, South Asian Council for Social Services, and The Coney Island Avenue Project. These participating groups were listed on the survey. (See Appendix A for a brief description of community groups.)

Participants were instructed not to include their names on the survey (See Appendix B for survey.) The survey was bilingual, with English on one side and either Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, or Punjabi on the other. Staff and volunteers from the participating community organizations translated it from English into the other languages. The selection of languages most commonly spoken by South Asians was based upon statistics from Chhaya: English 31.6%, Urdu 21.1%, Bengali 11.6%, Punjabi 10.2% and Hindi 8.5%. From this community analysis, the report noted that about 77% of South Asians live in a household where at least two languages were spoken.

The survey contained 11 questions covering personal data, information about discriminatory incidents, and whether the incidents were reported – specifically in the following areas.

• Demographics: Respondents were asked their age, sex, zip code, how long they had lived in the United States, their country of origin, and their religion.

• Types of discrimination experienced and boroughs where discrimination occurred: Respondents were asked whether they believed they had experienced discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, or bias-related harassment or violence and to describe the incidents and indicate where they happened.

• Reporting: Respondents were asked if they had reported any of the incidents, where they had reported them or why they had not reported them.

• General effects: Respondents were asked if the events of September 11, 2001 had affected their lives in any way and, if so, to describe how.

Target Populations

CCHR designed the questionnaire for Arab-Americans, South Asian-Americans, and Muslims of any ethnicity in New York City.
Methods of Distribution
CCHR’s field office staff in each borough distributed the survey with assistance from the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, The Arab-American Family Support Center, CHHAYA Community Development Corporation, The Council of Pakistan Organization, South Asian Youth Action!, South Asian Council for Social Services, and The Coney Island Avenue Project. The Commission met several times with all of the participating groups to develop a distribution plan. The goal was to reach the communities of Arabs and South Asians and Muslims in all five boroughs of New York City.

When a group or person indicated an interest in the survey, staff met directly with them or called them on the phone and asked them to fill out the survey at that time. If in-person contact was not possible, surveys were left with organizational directors to hand out, and survey staff returned to collect them. Surveys were also mailed and printed in newspapers and on websites.

City Agencies
The Commission has a field office staff in each of the five boroughs that conducts community education, mediation, and intervention related to human rights and intergroup relations. For the survey project, staff members relied both on groups that they had worked with previously (Community Boards, schools, community centers, business associations, houses of worship, senior centers, etc.) and reached out to new groups serving the targeted communities. Select staff members from

The survey was publicized by:
- Notifying people who use the services of the community organizations (e.g. ESL classes, legal clinics);
- Contacting groups that work with the city agencies and community organizations;
- Sending information to a large number of businesses, religious institutions (mosques, temples, churches), schools, and advocacy organizations;
- Visiting commercial areas and distributing copies of the survey to stores and restaurants that serve these communities;
- Tabling in selected areas and at selected events;
- Printing the survey in newspapers and placing it on websites; and,
- Alerting people to the existence of the survey through announcements at community meetings, newspaper articles and list serves.
each office, 22 altogether, participated in the distribution process.

Each field office maintained lists of the hundreds of organizations or other places where they dropped off or mailed the survey. In some cases, field staff arranged to make a presentation on the NYC Human Rights Law to the group and distribute surveys at the same time. The Commission made special efforts to reach South Asian, Muslim, and Arab groups in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island where the six community survey partners were not as active as they were in Queens and Brooklyn where their organizations are located.

The Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs mailed surveys to groups with whom they have regular contact.

The Commission and the Office of Immigrant Affairs reached out to 35 community newspapers to encourage them to print copies of the survey or run short articles about the survey project. The survey was printed in three newspapers: *Aramica* (twice), *The Indian Express*, and *Sada-e-Pakistan*.

The Commission on Human Rights posted the surveys on its web site.

**Community Organizations**

The six community groups concentrated on their own members or clients and on other organizations they worked with. They handed surveys out to people who participated in their ESL classes and legal clinics, or came in for other types of assistance. The groups also distributed surveys to religious and advocacy organizations, business associations, and schools. The Arab-American Family Support Center, The Council of Pakistan Organization, and The Coney Island Project are located in Brooklyn. Chhaya CDC, the South Asian Council for Social Services, and South Asian Youth Action! are located in Queens.

The community organizations did much of their outreach in the boroughs where they are located, but in many instances they reached beyond their home boroughs.

For example, the Arab-American Family Support Center took survey forms to the Immigration and Naturalization Service offices when they were assisting people with the INS Special Registration. The Council of Pakistan Organization made a number of trips to an Islamic center in Queens.

Between the City agencies and the community groups, the survey was publicized and distributed to over 400 organizations, announced on at least nine list-serves and websites, such as the Mosaic Project Digest and NY Center for Interpersonal Development, and published in three newspapers with a total estimated
circulation of over 25,000.

**Time and Numbers of Distribution**


Approximately 6,000 surveys were distributed in English/Arabic, 3,000 in English/Urdu, 800 in English/Hindi, 1,300 in English/Bengali, and 700 in English/Punjabi for an approximate total of 11,800.

The Commission and the community organizations prepared letters to introduce the survey to the larger community and instructed people on how to file formal complaints. Organizational mailing lists were used. When Commission staff visited schools, mosques, and other organizations, they brought literature explaining the discrimination complaint process and explained how to file discrimination complaints. Community organizations also used the Project to boost community recognition and publicize their community services.

**Response Rate**

Respondents completed 956 surveys — about 8% of the surveys distributed. The response rate was difficult to measure because the methods of distribution did not allow for an exact count. While return rates of self-completion surveys vary widely, this was a good response considering the nature of self completion surveys and the absence of completion incentives such as monetary or gift promises. The anonymous survey also did not allow for follow-up or pre-notification, techniques that increase response rates. Many of the respondents are relatively new immigrants likely to avoid material from a government agency because of conditions in their countries of origin and fears based on their status in this country. Additionally, their mistrust of government, the tension and crisis atmosphere in the city, and a lack of familiarity with the Commission may have caused some to question whether answering the survey would help in any way.

On the other hand, the return rate may indicate that the broader target population does not experience the extensive discrimination reported to the advocacy groups or that community members may not understand what constitutes an illegal act. Members of these communities may also be more concerned with their treatment by federal agencies and/or the police and do not feel that a survey of discrimination in employment, housing, and public accom-
modations is as relevant or important.

**RESPONDENTS**

The largest percentage of the respondents, 47%, identified themselves as Arab, 39% as South Asian, and 7% listed the United States as their country of origin. Another 7% were either from another country or did not list one.

Half of the respondents (53%) have lived in the United States for less than 13 years. The large majority of the respondents (81%) were Muslim; 6% were Sikh, 4% Hindu, and 4% Christian (including Coptic, Maronite, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox). Finally, 4% indicated another religion or left this section blank.

More than half of the respondents (56%) were between the ages of 18 and 40 and 15% were between 12 and 18. The large majority, 688 of the surveys or 72% were answered in English; 155 or 16% were in Arabic, 42 in Urdu, and fewer than 25 each were answered in Hindi, Bengali, and Punjabi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANCESTRY OF PARTICIPANTS (SELF-IDENTIFIED)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARAB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemeni</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisian</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algerian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahraini</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudani</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emirati</td>
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<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritanian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH ASIAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITED STATES</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER COUNTRIES</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRY UNKNOWN</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boroughs of Residence

Brooklyn was home to 38% of the respondents, Queens 29%, Manhattan 6%, Bronx 5%, and Staten Island 3%. Ten percent resided outside New York City, and 9% did not indicate where they lived.

Gender of Respondents

More than twice as many men responded as women, a difference perhaps influenced by the distribution done at seminars advising people about the INS Special Registration which applied only to males. Additionally, only men attended some of the meetings at mosques where Commission staff was present. Other cultural issues such as educational level may also have limited women's participation.

FINDINGS

- **69% of the respondents who believed they experienced discrimination reported one or more incidents since 9/11.**

- **31% of the respondents reported no incidents.**

While over two thirds (659) of those responding to the survey described one or more incidents of perceived discrimination – one third (297) of the respondents said they did not believe they had experienced any discrimination.

Some noted that they had developed a higher tolerance, lived and worked within their community or were advised by community or religious leaders to be patient due to the extraordinary nature of recent events.

- **Respondents reported a total number of 1,224 discrimination incidents with some respondents reporting more than one incident.**

Bias-related harassment or violence characterized 37% of these incidents; Employment 26%; Public Accommodations
25%; and Housing 11%. These reports have not been investigated or verified in any way – they reflect the perceptions of the respondents. When respondents described an incident as recurring but did not specify a number, the incident was counted as having occurred twice.

- Bias-related harassment or violence was the most frequently mentioned problem – comprising 37% of the total incidents reported.

Verbal harassment was most frequently described in the written descriptions from the respondents.

- I have been called "sand nigger" when I was wearing a traditional scarf.
- At school they wrote, "go back home" on the walls.
- People talking to Arabs I know: 'you should die, you should be arrested.'
- I saw a truck painted on back 'f* them all, send them back to Mecca, nuke them into oblivion,' also going over the Verrazano bridge I saw three youth holding signs reading 'honk if you hate Arabs, bomb the towel heads.'
- I got yelled at in the subway, 'Why do you have to kill me and my children.'

Other incidents were more menacing and included reported threats and physical contact. Several people were spat upon and a number of women stated that they had their hijabs pulled off. Others described their neighbors putting garbage in front of doors and damaging cars by scratching or burning them, breaking the windows or slashing the tires. One person reportedly was assaulted on a train for reading an Arabic newspaper.

- Once my daughter, a teacher, was walking home from school. Five older kids started swearing at her 'go back to your country' 'terrorist' throwing garbage and empty soda cans at her. She was scared. There was 5 of them but she talked back to them 'Don't play with me, I was born here too.' Then she slipped into the store for shelter.
- He went so far as to spit on my pregnant sister and my car, he also said. 'Don't worry, I'll be back at this house to make sure I slit your throats open.'
- An older woman saw a woman in front of Muslim Youth Center and said, 'We are going to bomb you.'
- Punched by other students in the nose and nose was broken. One student said,' we should burn all Muslims.'
- One time someone put a fake gun at me and pulled the trigger a few times.
I actually had a gun pointed at my head.

Other references to incidents in surrounding areas illustrated a spread of a 'climate of violence and fear' often described in respondents' statements. Someone threw kerosene in the eyes of my friend in Yonkers or my cousin got attacked in a deli with pepper spray for looking Arabic in Scarsdale. Many respondents also referred to harassment by the police or Federal government officials, areas not covered by the NYC Human Rights Law.

- Employment discrimination characterized 26% of the reported incidents.

Supervisors and co-workers were reported to have called respondents names such as 'Bin Laden,' 'terrorist,' or 'Taliban.' Several women said that they were told by supervisors not to wear traditional head-dresses, such as hijabs or burkas, at work. One respondent's supervisor said, "They should kill all Muslims." One person said he was told he could not have visits from any "Arabs" at work.

A large number of respondents say they have had difficulty finding a job. Many said they observed negative reactions by potential employers to their ethnicity or religion.

- The lady at the temp agency was cordial at first. When she heard my accent and found out I spoke Arabic, she said there were no positions.
- When applying for work, the first question they ask is 'Where are you from?' then their response is, 'There is no work.'
- I find that because of my name - Arabic - people often do not call me in for interviews even though I have the qualifications. People are more apt to accept me if they see me first because I look American.

Many complaints from respondents told of getting harassed, fired or laid off. In many of the cases these individuals suspected that prejudice was the reason and, in some cases, direct comments about respondents' ethnicity or religion were made.

- As I watched the WTC fall from my office window, employees yelled at me and stared at me asking why my people would do this.
- I always hear comments like 'destroy the Muslim country,' 'bomb them,' 'this is a religious war,' in my workplace.
- My boss fired me after 9/11 and said if he saw me again, he would kill me.
- I got fired and, before that, my boss used to call me Osama Bin Laden.

Customers were reported to have subjected a noticeable number of respondents to epithets, often in stores or cabs where they were working. One self-employed
respondent felt he had lost business contracts as a result of clients' prejudice. Another respondent, who wears a hijab, claims she was laid off because customers would not go to her.

- Discrimination in public accommodations comprised 25% of the reported incidents.

Most commonly mentioned incidents occurred in schools and restaurants, followed by medical facilities and stores.

Respondents quoted a number of negative comments and behaviors of teachers and school administrators.

~The teacher stood in front of the class and out of the blue said "Palestinians are bad."
~I had my scarf on. I was going to my classroom, a black girl pulls it down, and a boy was with her, so the boy saw my hair.
~I complained about being beaten up to the school administration and they didn't help.
~Me and my child and husband went to a Turkish restaurant, there were two men sitting in outside the restaurant. The man came in and asked the waiters if my husband was Arab and then asked him. He said yes I am Arab and Palestinian. They punched him in the face. So my husband held his hand and tried to get the manager to call 911.
~I was threatened and physically beaten at the sport club for the reason that I came from Yemen.

~I went to Italian restaurant to eat, but the restaurant manager asked me to leave because of my Arabic background.

People felt they were made to wait unnecessarily in restaurants, medical facilities, and stores. In some cases, proprietors made demeaning comments. For example, one restaurant owner was reported to have told some other customers "Arabs are so stupid." A store-owner allegedly said the respondents had to speak English with their friends while they were in the store.

- Discrimination in housing comprised 11% of the reported incidents.

The most common complaint was the belief that rental agents or prospective landlords refused to rent to them.

The following examples are typical:

~The landlady was friendly on the phone, but when I went over and she saw me, she said the apartment was not available.
~I tried to buy a house in Bensonhurst and the broker saw my wife, who is covered, and said 'I don't think you should buy a house in that neighborhood.'
~Some of the building owners said we don't want Muslims to live in our buildings. So we asked the reason, but they just said 'because you are a Muslim.'

A number of people described being told to move out of their apartments by
landlords or roommates.

- Someone left a paper at my door to leave the building and find somewhere else to live.
- Landlord locked door and put everything outside. Landlord didn't accept rent.

Others alleged that their services had been reduced or that the building owners or their representatives were harassing them in other ways. Some chose secrecy to avoid harassment. A Tunisian Muslim man reflected, *Where I live they don't know I am Arab. And I don't want them to know.*

- **Incidents reported were often found in the boroughs where the respondents lived and worked.**

In a large number of instances, however, boroughs where incidents allegedly took place were not indicated. Brooklyn was the location of 29% of the claimed incidences of bias-related harassment/violence, Queens 15% and Manhattan 13%. The high number of claimed incidents in Brooklyn is probably due to the large number of Arab and South Asian Americans living in Brooklyn.

Where a location was specified, 22% of the employment discrimination incidents occurred in Manhattan. This finding is probably due to the concentration of NYC employers in Manhattan. Nineteen percent of the incidents occurred in Brooklyn and 12% in Queens.

Twenty percent of the alleged problems in public accommodations took place in Brooklyn, 15% in Queens, and 11% in Manhattan.

Brooklyn was the location of 32% of the alleged housing discrimination incidents, corresponding to the residence of 60% of survey respondents living in Brooklyn; 39% in Manhattan and 38% in Queens.
the largest number of respondents. Queens followed with 22% of the incidents.

- Only 17%, or 115 individuals, of the 659 respondents reporting discrimination turned to any organization for help, usually to the police.

Of the 256 who explained their failure to notify any organization, 37% felt nothing would be done, 14% were afraid or uncomfortable, and 11% said they did not know where to report their problem. Only one person indicated that they had made a complaint to the Human Rights Commission and another contacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

“Why bother when everyone is against you, even the press and news.

“Look at these people beating Bengali people in the Bronx. They beat him and he died. No one does anything.

“I am afraid of getting killed.

“I may lose my visa.

“I have no idea how to report.

On the other hand, 14% said their problem was not serious enough, that they didn’t have time to report, or that they had handled the problem on their own.

- 79% of the respondents felt the events of 9/11 had affected their lives regardless of whether they believed they had experienced discrimination.

A large number of individuals noted that they had altered their behavior or manner of dress so as not to attract notice. For example, they would speak only English in public, cut their hair, shave their beards, wear hats instead of the hijab, or Americanize their names. Many said they were afraid to be in public places, and some said they no longer go out as much or only go out with friends and relatives. Women commented that they would only go out with men present or with their husbands.

Many spoke of being scared, stared at, intimidated, fearful, alienated, depressed, uncomfortable, cautious, hurt, uneasy, ridiculed, shamed, misunderstood, sad, blamed, insecure, scrutinized, and emotionally stressed.

One Muslim man from Yemen commented: “We are living on our nerve and we are scared. INS registration was often described as discriminatory and variously characterized—from 'bothersome' to 'criminal' to 'racist.' And while some reported a fear of deportation or detention, others spoke of returning 'home'.

An Egyptian Muslim woman expressed her alienation, ‘I used to love America very much
but now because of some stupid people I want to return home as soon as possible. And, many others felt an anti-Arab or Muslim bias in the media fueled the negative responses they were experiencing.

Another group said they were resisting the pressure to change and were prouder than ever of their country or religion. A Muslim mother remarked: People look at you like you are a terrorist, but let them look because I know who I am. They are the ones with the problem.

Some resented that their country had been linked in the minds of others with a horrible act such as the 9/11 attacks. A few expressed sadness over the loss of friends or acquaintances in the attacks. And others experienced the loss of friendships in their neighborhood, school, workplace, or personal life.

A young Palestinian Muslim woman observed, You realize who your friends really are – people you thought were cool, reasonable, sane are exposed for their racism and ignorance. This is especially obvious to me as a person who doesn't 'look Arab.' I am privy to conversations that are 'not about me' but those others.

Some were embarrassed or defensive. And while some respondents were willing to be patient with people who associate them with the terrorists, others felt victimized by ignorance. A teenage Hindu woman expressed her stark realization, September 11 has been one of the scariest days of my life. But the worst thing is that after my city and country was hit, the people of my country began to discriminate against me because the color of my skin is similar to the terrorists and they began to discriminate against others because of their religious faith. The events of September 11th did not only affect me on that day but they still affect me today because of the ignorance of so many Americans.

Proprietors frequently mentioned financial hardships and business losses. They attribute this, in part, to non-Arab and non-South Asian and non-Muslim patrons taking their business elsewhere. Additionally, they reported that the family incomes of their potential customers from the Middle East have been reduced by job loss and deportation.

Finally, instances of support from strangers or casual acquaintances were rarely mentioned, but poignant. A Jordanian Christian man described one such incident. In a café in NYC I was harassed by one of the attendees with verbal diatribes against Arabs and Middle Easterners. The owner of the café was responsible enough to ask the guy to leave. It was in the night and all the people around us in the place, Americans and other ethnicities, acted against the intruder and asked him to leave and I believe this is the best response that I can imagine.
CONCLUSIONS

The survey results appear to confirm the concerns voiced by advocacy groups that their constituents believe discrimination intensified since 9/11. More than two-thirds of the respondents reported some form of perceived bias-related harassment or discrimination. Consistent with media stories, the main problem alleged by respondents was bias-related harassment (37%). Slightly more than one quarter of the alleged incidents were employment discrimination, and another quarter was alleged discrimination in public accommodations. Housing discrimination was reported least frequently.

Allegations of alleged bias acts ranged from personal injury or threats of personal injury and destruction of property to comments on the street or other public places.

The alleged employment discrimination ranged from job loss or failure to be hired, to harassment on the job.

In public accommodations, respondents reported experiencing a variety of problems from negative or hostile comments to being denied services.

People reporting housing discrimination described difficulty renting an apartment and landlords who harassed them.

The epithets and actions used against those describing feelings of discrimination were frequently vicious or violent, even those against women and young children. One instance was vividly described by a teenage Hindu woman born in this country. Me and my baby niece were taking a walk and a man in a car came and started screaming 'you terrorist' and said 'you better run or I'm coming out with a bat.' We ran but we did not report it. I told my father and he said don't go outside right now. The worst part is that my niece is 5 years old. That man was threatening a 5-year-old child because of his prejudice and racist beliefs.

Publicity surrounding the countries and religion of the 9/11 terrorists may have caused alleged perpetrators to become aware of dress, appearance, and behaviors associated with people from the Middle East. A Hindu woman from India described it this way: It put our culture in the spotlight. We have to now constantly explain ourselves to curious people. An Indian man commented, I hate the increased scrutiny. Terrorism and names such as 'Osama Bin Ladin' were often invoked, as if justified by recent events.

The Commission could have investigated many of the incidents recounted in the survey, but most of them were not reported to any advocacy or government organization. In many cases, respondents stated that they felt nothing would be done or they didn’t know where to report them. The target
groups clearly need more information about their rights and considerable encourage-
ment to exercise them.

The objectives of this Project also included educating these communities about the Human Rights Law and the protections it provides. That education began with the planning and distribution of the survey. Through new and renewed contacts with scores of mosques, churches, schools, organizations, and community centers, the Commission alerted groups to its role in addressing, and preventing discrimination.

Mailings and meetings introduced not only the survey, but also the services of the Commission and information on how to file complaints. Staff distributed literature along with surveys at various gatherings and made presentations at others.

For example, a workshop was conducted for the congregation of a mosque in Astoria, Queens. After a presentation on the Human Rights Law while questions were being answered, people returned surveys the imam had distributed earlier in the week. One imam in Staten Island told the religion reporter of the Staten Island Advance that contact from the Commission had made his congregation feel more secure in the face of the then impending war with Iraq.

Now the Commission more comprehensively includes these groups in announcements of its regular workshops on immigration and other human rights issues, such as gaining accessibility in housing and public accommodations for the disabled, peer mediation programs in the schools, community mediation and housing counseling.

In late April, for example, members of several of the community groups attended the Commission’s program on “Immigrants and Employment Rights” which included presenters from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and the New York State Attorney General’s Office.

A coalition of Muslim clergy in the Bronx is seeking the Commission’s assistance as they join with other mosques and other faiths to create projects addressing community concerns and quality of life issues. Through these activities they hope to connect their congregation with life in the borough and develop greater civic participation. The 30 mosques in the Bronx represent many nationalities such as Gambian, Ghanaian, Nigerian, Bangladeshi, Albanian, Senegalese, and African-American. These mosques have previously operated in isolation from each other and from congregations of other faiths.
Discrimination toward these communities reflects general characteristics of discrimination toward members of minority groups – those more visible are more victimized. That visibility may be due to certain kinds of work, known neighborhoods of business or residence, community leadership, or those whose religion or ethnicity is most evident in names, dress or appearance.

Indeed some of those expressing a lack of discriminatory action against them noted that they live, work and socialize in Middle Eastern neighborhoods or that they did not go out or stayed with friends. While isolation and segregation increase a community’s vulnerability, ironically they provided a temporary measure of safety for some.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on these findings, the Commission on Human Rights encourages the following for government agencies and community organizations:

- **A climate of tolerance and respect in the City.** Schools should ensure the consideration of tolerance and human dignity in curricular materials and the treatment of all students. Business associations and employers should establish and enforce standards for tolerance and anti-discriminatory practice in the workplace. Religious leaders share a common responsibility to speak out against violence or bigotry toward another faith, community or people. Community organizations and the media can disseminate positive information to the public about the cultures and traditions of Muslims, South Asians, and Arabs and alert them that discrimination on the bases of nationality and religion is against the law.

- **Interfaith and community integration through activities that involve all members of the community.** Groups that have been isolated from each other and their neighborhood community can work together on issues of common interest or need such as street fairs, clean-up and lighting for parks, youth programs and facilities or other community-building projects.

- **The participation of people from the Muslim, South Asian, and Arab communities in civic and political activities** such as Community Boards, Community Police Precinct Councils, Block Associations, community gardens, and School Leadership Teams.
• **Media campaigns to promote understanding and discourage discriminatory behaviors** by encouraging respect for religious and cultural practices such as wearing turbans or hijabs. The campaign should explain the illegality of negative comments, poor service, bans against religious behaviors, and other discriminatory restrictions based on national origin and religion and explain how to file complaints at the NYC Commission on Human Rights.

• **The entrance of South Asians, Arabs, and Muslims into public service positions** such as firefighters, police, and other government jobs with visibility. Seeing themselves represented will likely give those communities more trust and connection to their government.
APPENDIX A
DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY GROUPS

THE ARAB AMERICAN FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER, INC.
150 Court Street/3rd Floor
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

The Arab American Family Support Center (AAFSC) serves the Arabic speaking community living in the New York City area. Its goal is to strengthen families and help them adapt to life in the U.S. The Center is non-sectarian and staffed by Arabic speaking professionals who are sensitive to the religious, cultural and language needs of families of Arabic speaking backgrounds.

The Center helps the families to share more fully in the life of their communities through: 1) addressing issues such as immigration and cultural assimilation, health and safety, education and language problems, and discrimination and community acceptance and 2) providing information and referral services, counseling, crisis intervention, advocacy and interpretation/translation services, parenting classes and support groups, domestic violence intervention, English language and citizenship classes, Arabic language and culture classes for children, after-school homework help and tutoring, and youth activities.

CHHAYA CDC
40-34 Main Street/2nd Floor
Flushing, N.Y. 11354

Chhaya CDC focuses on increasing access to housing opportunities, resources and information for South Asian Americans throughout New York City and the Metropolitan Area. They are an affiliate of Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), an organization that has 27 years of experience in serving immigrant communities. Chhaya’s mission is to support and advocate for housing and community development needs of the South Asian American community regardless of class, caste, country of origin, or religious affiliation.

Chhaya seeks to leverage existing resources by working with mainstream organizations to establish equal access to support systems and to promote civic participation. Chhaya also seeks to collaborate with other ethnic and minority populations to further understanding within these communities. Chhaya provides basic services including housing and home ownership seminars, housing counseling, discrimination or harassment referrals, referrals to mortgage counseling and ESL classes.

CONEY ISLAND AVENUE PROJECT
1117 Coney Island Avenue #1R
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230

The Coney Island Avenue Project was formed to aid the Pakistani community in protecting their rights in the wake of events following 9/11, 2001. They work with individuals who have been detained by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services and make referrals for legal and financial assistance.

COUNCIL OF PAKISTAN ORGANIZATION
1081 Coney Island Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230

COPO was conceived in the aftermath of 9/11 when Central Brooklyn community members recognized the crisis faced by the low-income South Asian community, particularly the Muslim community. COPO opened its doors on February 1, 2002. Prior to 9/11, the South Asian community in Central Brooklyn was already isolated
and poverty stricken. People of the community worked at sub-minimum wage jobs, lived in sub-standard housing, had limited access to health care, and had low levels of English proficiency. Events following 9/11 added to the difficulties of the South Asian population.

COPO’s mission is to assist low-income community members – particularly South Asians – to develop to their full capacity, and to build understanding and cooperation between diverse communities of Central Brooklyn. To these ends, COPO provides services aimed at educating, empowering and building relationships among community members through such programs as ESL classes, computer classes, community education workshops, legal clinics, and youth programs. COPO serves primarily the residents of Central Brooklyn, including the neighborhoods of Midwood, Flatbush and Crown Heights.

SOUTH ASIAN COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICES (SACSS)
140-15 Holly Avenue
Flushing, N.Y. 11365

The South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS) was founded in May 2000 in response to the critical issues raised at a conference organized by the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) and other organizations, around the tremendous barriers to social services in the growing South Asian immigrant community in New York City.

SACSS seeks to accomplish its mission by undertaking community organizing initiatives that inform and mobilize the planning efforts of the community, building the capacity and leadership of existing organizations, coalitions, and community-based service providers, and providing or seeding new programs where dire need is not being met. Current programs are: 1) emergency relief and counseling and other services for South Asian and other immigrant families affected by 9/11; 2) coalition/capacity building within the South Asian community, through organizational development workshops and community meetings; and 3) collaboration with other service, advocacy, and community based organizations.

SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH ACTION!
(SAYA!)
54-05 Seabury Street
Elmhurst, NY 11373

SAYA! is a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to empowering South Asian youth. Based in Queens, SAYA! offers programs at its drop-in center in Elmhurst, and five public high schools in Queens and Manhattan. SAYA!’s mission is to promote self esteem, provide opportunities for growth and development, and build cultural, social and political awareness among young people of South Asian background.

SAYA! was founded in 1996 in response to the concern about the lack of support services for South Asian youth. A grass roots campaign fueled by youth involvement created a youth center that has become a vital community resource.

SAYA! offers the following services: 1) academic support including tutoring, college guidance, SAT test preparation, and encouragement of the completion of high school; 2) youth drop-in activities such as basketball and a comic book workshop; 3) a girls’ program to facilitate discussions and workshops in which young women explore issues and express themselves through video-making and a newsletter; 4) organizing to train young South Asians to address youth and community concerns; and 5) school-based services such as peer mentoring, an ESL program, advocacy for youth and their families, translation, and workshops about the needs of South Asian youth and their families.
The NYC Commission on Human Rights, The Arab-American Family Support Center and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs are asking Arab Americans and Muslims in NYC to describe any incidents of discrimination they have experienced since September 11th, 2001. Do not sign your name.

1. Age  2. Sex  Male  Female
3. Zip Code  4. Year you came to the USA
5. Country of origin
6. Religion

7. Please check off the types of discrimination below that happened to you and describe why the actions were discriminatory, such as comments regarding your clothes, name, religion, or accent:
   - [ ] EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION - for example, being fired from a job, problems in applying for a job, or harassment on a job. Please describe:
   - [ ] HOUSING DISCRIMINATION - for example, difficulty renting an apartment or getting services from your landlord, difficulty getting a mortgage, or buying a house. Please describe:
   - [ ] DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS - for example, difficulty getting served in a restaurant or store or helped in a doctor’s office or other medical facility. Please describe:
   - [ ] BIAS-RELATED HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE - for example, someone threatens you or verbally or physically assaults you in locations such as your home, a street, store, office, train, or bus or defaces your property. Please describe:

8. Did you report any of the incidents?
   - [ ] Yes  [ ] No
9. If yes, where did you report them?
10. If no, why did you not report them?
11. Have the events of September 11th, 2001 affected your life in any way? If yes, please describe:
   - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

For more information, call the Center at 718.643.8000.

THANK YOU FOR FILLING OUT THIS FORM.
PLEASE FOLD OR PLACE IN AN ENVELOPE AND MAIL TO:
SURVEY PROJECT  NYC Commission on Human Rights
40 Rector Street/New York, NY 10006

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Patricia L. Gatling, Commissioner/Chair, Human Rights
Sayy V. Bhojwani, Commissioner, Immigrant Affairs
Emira Habiby Browne, Director, The Arab-American Family Support Center

Funding provided by New York Community Trust
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Emira Habiby Browne, Director, Arab American Family Support Center

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SURVEY OF ANTI-ARAB and MUSLIM DISCRIMINATION

Arabic
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40 Rector Street New York, NY 10006
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Patricia L. Gatling, Commissioner/Chair, Human Rights
Sayu V. Bhojwani, Commissioner, Immigrant Affairs
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
Chhaya CDC, Coney Island Avenue Project,
Council of Pakistan Organization, South Asian Council for Social Services and
South Asian Youth Action
Funding provided by New York Community Trust

SURVEY OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST MUSLIMS AND OTHER SOUTHASIANS

Bengali
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Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, Chhaya Community Development Corporation, Coney Island Avenue Project, Council of Pakistan Organization, South Asian Council for Social Services, and South Asian Youth Action

26

The NYC Commission on Human Rights,
Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs,
Chhaya Community Development
Corporation, Coney Island Avenue Project,
Council of Pakistan Organization, South
Asian Council for Social Services, and South
Asian Youth Action

26

2001

Grammer

40 Rector Street
New York, NY 10006

Mayor’s Office
of Immigrant Affairs

212.788.7654

Chhaya CDC
Coney Island Avenue Project
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New York, NY 10006

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Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs
Chhaya CDC, Coney Island Avenue Project
Council of Pakistan Organization, South Asian Council for Social Services, South Asian Youth Action

Funding provided by New York Community Trust

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### Survey of Discrimination Against Muslims and Other South Asian

**Urdu**

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**New York City**
Commission on Human Rights
212.306.7427

Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs
212.788.7654

Chhaya CDC
Coney Island Avenue Project
Council of Pakistan Organization
South Asian Council for Social Services
South Asian Youth Action

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