



**Statement by Lucy Shaw, MSW, Research and Policy Initiative
of the Community Development Project, Urban Justice Center and
Hyun Lee, Director of Chinatown Justice Project, CAAAV
to the City Council of the City of New York,
Select Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment
June 30, 2004**

The Urban Justice Center Community Development Project provides legal, research and policy assistance to community-based organizations in New York City. In partnership with CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, a community-based organization that organizes poor, working-class Chinese immigrants to fight against displacement and gentrification in Chinatown, we are working to promote the sustainable development of the Chinatown community, particularly one that respects and includes the interests and voice of lower-income residents and workers. Clearly, the spending of Community Development Block Grant Funds controlled by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) and the use of Liberty Bonds by Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg are of great interest to us, and we are seriously concerned that the current priorities governing redevelopment will have grave implications for the well-being of the Chinatown residents and workers, promoting a type of development that does not include lower-income residents and workers, thus resulting in their further marginalization and displacement from their community.

As you know, Chinatown was seriously impacted by the aftermath of the devastating events that took place on September 11th, 2001. However, this Lower Manhattan community, primarily made up of lower-income and immigrant residents and workers, has consistently been neglected and overlooked in the distribution of the billions of dollars that were allocated to address the short- and long-term impacts of that disaster. We saw how this played out in the distribution of FEMA disaster assistance funds. For example, the Below Ground Zero Network obtained data through a Freedom of Information Act request showing that 41 times more households from affluent areas in Lower Manhattan (Soho, Tribeca) were approved for Mortgage and Rental Assistance relief compared to low-income areas (Chinatown and Lower East Side). Similar data exists for other FEMA programs including the Individual Family Grant Program. We are now witnessing this again in the longer-term redevelopment plans that are being implemented through the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the issuing of Liberty Bonds.

To preface, CAAAV's members have long identified low-income housing and sustainable employment development as the critical needs in their community. Even the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative (RCI) sponsored by Asian Americans for Equality, clearly says that the 3,000 people they interviewed in Chinatown identified affordable housing, employment and income generation, and sanitation as the top three issues in their community that must be prioritized in any development effort.