

# PRO BONO CRISIS LAWYERING: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

**Program Description:** The program will examine how members of AABANY, consisting of lawyers and volunteers, unite for justice and equity in times of crisis to deploy their legal skills for communities in need. During the COVID-19 pandemic, attorneys and law students became crisis solvers and spearheaded numerous projects to support and provide legal access to low-income APA and LEP communities. These projects, aimed at helping indigent individuals, working-class families, and small businesses, included: (1) community education through know-your-rights materials and presentations, (2) legal information and referrals to address particular legal needs, (3) pro bono services, (4) scholarly work and reporting on anti-Asian violence, and (5) advocacy to combat anti-Asian violence.

## Timed Outline

4:00pm - 4:10pm – introduction of Speakers (10 mins)

4:20pm - 5:50pm - Questions from Beatrice Leong (70 mins)

Theme logic for questioning – Past, present, future

1) What is your definition of crisis lawyering?

2) What has your program/committee done during the pandemic? [Looking at the past.]  
PPT slides of what PBCS, HEART, SOC, and LRIS have done.

3) How did crisis lawyering play a role in your practice of law? [Looking at the present.]

4) Have you noticed how other organizations in the pro bono space adjusted their practices during the pandemic/Anti Asian crisis?

5) What do you personally believe needs to be achieved to ensure that the communities on the brink are able to receive the resources needed during this pandemic? [Looking into the future.] 6) Are there any programs that need to be created at this point to answer any other issues of the community?

7) What can a lawyer who has not provided pro bono services do to contribute to the active efforts?

8) What can a non-lawyer do to help with pro bono services?

5:20pm - 5:30pm - Q&As and Thank Yous (10mins)

## MODERATOR



Beatrice Leong is a top-rated solo practitioner who specializes in Matrimonial and Family Law, with her firm, the Law Office of Beatrice Leong. She has practiced exclusively in the field of divorce and family law since her admittance to the New York State bar in 2014.

She received her law degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law, and her bachelor's degree in English Literature & Rhetoric and Asian & Asian American Studies from SUNY Binghamton. At UConn Law, she was a volunteer at the local Family Court, helping low income persons obtain pro se divorces, requests for child support and other family matters. She was also President of the

UConn Law chapter of the Asian Pacific American Law Students Association and the Arts, Entertainment and Sports Law Society.

Beatrice is an active member of AABANY and frequently volunteers at pro bono events. She previously served as a Co-Chair for the GSPI Committee for three years. She was named the "Member of the Year" by AABANY for fiscal year 2019-2020 for her work as Membership Director. Along with Christopher Bae, Beatrice and the Membership Committee won AABANY "Program of the Year" for their 2020-2021 Weekly Online Member Mixers during the pandemic.

Beatrice frequently speaks and lectures on the topic of Divorce and Family Law to college and law students, and presents CLEs to other lawyers.

## SPEAKERS



Karen Lin is a co-chair of AABANY's Pro Bono and Community Service Committee. She created and managed the remote clinic prior to its transition to the Legal Information Referral Service Clinic, and supervised law students in drafting and translating the COVID-19 Resource page into Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. She organized virtual presentation clinics that provide "Know-Your-Rights" information and referrals to limited-English-proficient communities.

Karen currently works as a Court Attorney Referee in Kings County Surrogate's Court. She has been part of the New York State court system since 1999, having served as a principal law clerk in the New York County Supreme Court, Civil Division, and as a former judge on the New York City Civil Court's Housing Part bench. Prior to the judicial branch, Karen served in the New York State legislature as District Counsel to State Senator Catherine Abate in the 27th district. She is a former litigation associate at Lansner & Kubitschek representing indigent families in civil rights actions against the Administration for Children's Services. She has taught at Queens College and frequently presents on Article 17-A guardianships of developmentally disabled individuals and the administration of estates.

She is a strong advocate of Asian-American history as found in her blog article "Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month" featured in the Historical Society of the New York Courts. See <https://history.nycourts.gov/aapi-heritage-month/>. She is a graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo where she developed curricula and student-taught a seminar course on Asian-American history through the Department of American Studies, co-founded the Asian American Student Union, and founded Delta Phi Omega, a multi-ethnic service-oriented sorority. Karen received her J.D. from Brooklyn Law School where she was active in the minority law students associations and a recipient of the AALSA Alumni Award. She is active in her local church in Queens and is endeavoring to raise three teenage sons.



Kwok Kei Ng is a co-chair of AABANY's Pro Bono and Community Service Committee and the secretary of the Legal Referral and Information Service Committee. He has moderated and spoken at many community presentations on Anti-Asian Violence in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

Kwok is the Assistant Law Clerk to Hon. Carolyn E. Wade in Kings County Supreme Court, Civil Term. A former court interpreter in the New York State Unified Court System and federal court system, he was appointed by Chief Administrative Judge Hon. Lawrence Marks to serve as a member of the state court's Advisory Committee on Language Access. Additionally, he is an arbitrator

for the Kings County Small Claims Court.

As an avid guitarist, he performed at AABANY's Talent Show on July 17.



Eugene Love Kim is a vice-chair of AABANY's Pro Bono and Community Service Committee. At PBCS, he volunteers at the pro bono clinics to provide legal information and referral to the API community. On May 13, 2020, he moderated the webinar, "Anti-Asian Violence and Hate Arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic," which addressed the increase in violent incidents against the Asian American community, and the relevant State and Federal laws for victims and witnesses of these hate crimes who seek to report them.

He received his law degree with a concentration in Criminal Law and Justice at Northeastern University School of Law. He was also the

President of Northeastern Law's branch of the Asian Pacific American Law Student's Association. As a law student, Eugene was recognized for his commitment to the public interest and the API community by the National Asian Pacific American Bar Associations (NAPABA) Law Fund, the Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts (AALAM), and the Harry H. Dow Memorial Legal Assistance Fund.

Eugene works as a Public Defender in the Criminal Defense Practice at the Legal Aid Society where he represents indigent New Yorkers. He is also a representative of the Attorneys of Color at the Legal Aid Society and serves Legal Aid's AAPI Heritage Committee. He is the Vice President of Mentoring for the Asian Mentoring Committee for Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York and a Big Brother for an API New York City high school student.

He is also one of the editors of the recently published book *50 People. 50 Stories. I AM ASIAN.* by Asian & Loud, Kevin Wang (Editor), and Loretta M. Cheung (Editor). The book is a collection of 50 uncensored life stories written by 50 Asian authors from around the world representing different ages, careers, and perspectives. To view the book on Goodreads, click [here](#).



Nicholas Loh is the Pro Bono Director at the Student Outreach Committee.

He is currently a 3L at Fordham Law School and former co-Vice President of Fordham's APALSA. Prior to law school, he worked at a supportive housing non-profit and the economic justice non-profit, New Economy Project, where he helped provide know your rights workshops and staffed the NYC Financial Justice Hotline. Last year, he assisted with an in person rental clinic organized by PBCS and he co-led a two-week hotline [Covid Rent Relief 2.0 Project] to help limited English proficient applicants apply for the government rent subsidy. In that time, he connected over 85

callers with Chinese-speaking volunteers. He also took charge in recruiting and implementing a flyer campaign to let communities know of the services provided by PBCS.