Cathay Bank to host free basic legal considerations workshop for small businesses

By Cody Yiu

Cathay Bank, along with Belin Economic Justice Project (EJP) and Ropes & Gray LLP, will be hosting a free legal workshop for small businesses at 621 Washington Street in Boston, MA on Thursday, September 23rd, from 6 to 8 PM. This workshop is the beginning of what the hosting organizations believe will be a vibrant, ongoing collaboration and of immense benefit to the Asian-American business community.

The workshop will provide an overview of a number of important business legal topics, the understanding of which can help entrepreneurs and small business owners improve their businesses. During the workshop, attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and learn about legal issues that come with starting a small business. Small business clients in the past through this clinic.

Sharon Wee, a partner at Ropes & Gray LLP, who is also a member of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civic Rights, said that the goal of this program is to familiarize aspiring or current entrepreneurs with “the ABCs” of legal issues that come with starting a small business through a series of workshops. The workshop will walk through various ways to protect small business owners when it comes to signing joint contracts, and determining business entity.

Johnny Ip, the Regional Senior Vice President of Cathay Bank’s New England Region, said that the Asian-American community responded well to the first workshop on September 23rd, a series of workshops will be available in the future. Cathay Bank was proud to work with the community.

At the beginning of the evening’s honorees and thanking “dear friend” APIAVote’s Executive Director Leverett Wing for “bringing all this energy and enthusiasm to the table.”

APIAVote’s Chair and Co-founder Daphne Kwook said, “This is one of the best turnouts thus far.”

Chairperson of the Chinese Festival Committee, Natalie Ornell, said, “It’s important to have a voice in the democracy. Nothing is permanent in law place needs to have one’s voice heard.”

The Quincy Mayor’s Asian American Advisory Committee in August to discuss the recent trend in armed robberies in Quincy, a Quincy Chamber of Commerce business outreach survey, and the Asian Business Partnership Outreach meeting.

According to the MBTA, there have been a series of armed robberies in August, a series of armed robberies have taken place in neighborhoods adjacent to both North Quincy and Wollaston train stations in the last couple of months. In four out of five reported incidents last reported in August the victim was an Asian female walking with a bag from the Wollaston train station.

Chairperson of the Quincy Board of Education, Suzanne Lee said, “I don’t know how many of you realize what a victory this is.’’

The Quincy Mayor’s Asian American Advisory Committee met in August to discuss the recent trend in armed robberies in Quincy. (Photo by Natalie Ornell)
Can breast cancer be prevented?

There is no sure way to prevent breast cancer. But there are things all women can do that might reduce their risk and help in- crease the odds of cancer being detected if it does occur; it is found at an early, more treatable stage.

Lowering your risk: You can lower your risk of breast cancer by changing those risk factors that are under your control. If you limit alcohol use, exercise regularly, and stay at a healthy weight, you are decreasing your risk of getting breast cancer. Women who choose to use the pill for at least several months may also reduce their breast cancer risk.

Not using post-menopausal hormone therapy (PHT) can also help avoid raising your risk. Finding breast cancer early: It is also important for women to follow the American Cancer Society’s guidelines for finding breast cancer early (see the section, “How is breast cancer found?”)

For women who are or may be at in- creased risk

If you have a higher risk for breast can- cer or many risk factors, you can do to reduce your chances of getting breast cancer. Before deciding which, if any, of these may be right for you, talk with your doctor.

Genetic testing: There are tests that can tell if a woman has certain (mutated) genes linked to breast cancer. With this information, women can then take steps to decrease their risk. Recently the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force made recommendations for genetic testing. They suggest that only women with a strong family history be offered genetic testing for BRCA mutations. This group is only about 2% of adult women in the United States.

If you are thinking about genetic testing, you should talk to a genetic counselor, nurse, or doctor qualified to explain the process and the results of these tests. It is very im- portant that you know what genetic testing can and can’t tell you, and to carefully weigh the benefits and risks of testing both before these tests are done. Testing costs a lot and may not be covered by some health insurance plans. For more information, see our docu- ment, Genetic Testing: What You Need To Know.

Breast cancer chemoprevention: Chemoprevention is the use of drugs to reduce the risk of breast cancer. Many drugs have been studied for use in lowering breast cancer risk. The drug Tamoxifen® has already been used for many years as a treatment for some types of breast cancer. Studies have shown that women at high risk for breast cancer are less likely to get the disease if they take tamoxi- fen. Another drug, Raloxifene®, has been approved by the FDA to help reduce breast cancer risk in women past menopause who are at high risk for breast cancer. Other drugs (such as aromatase inhibitors) are also being studied.

To learn more about these drugs, please see the American Cancer Society document, Medicines to Reduce Breast Cancer Risk: Preventive surgery for women with very high breast cancer risk.

For the few women who are at a very high risk for breast cancer; preventive sur- gery such as double mastectomy may be an option.

Preventive (prophylactic) double (bi- lateral) mastectomy: For some who are at very high risk for breast cancer, this surgery (a double mastectomy) may be an option. In this operation both breasts are removed before there is any known breast cancer. While this operation removes nearly all of the breast tissue, a small amount remains. This operation greatly reduces the risk of breast cancer, but the disease can still start in the breast tissue that is left.

The reasons for having this type of sur- gery need to be very strong. There is no way to know ahead of time whether this surgery will benefit a particular woman. The American Cancer Society Board of Directors has approved the following very strong clinical and/or pathologic indications warrant doing this type of preventive operation.” A second opinion is strongly recommended before making a decision to have this type of sur- gery.

Preventive ovary removal (prophylactic oophorectomy): Women with a certain gene change (BRCA mutation) who have their ovaries removed may reduce their risk of breast cancer by half or more. This is be- cause taking out the ovaries removes the main sources of estrogen in the body.

Although this document is not about ovarian cancer, it is important that women with this gene also know that they also have a high risk of getting ovarian can- cer. Most doctors recommend that these women have their ovaries removed after they are done having children.

Information provided by the American Cancer Society Article funded through the Asian Health Initiative of Tufts Medical Center
Fifth Annual Films at the Gate maintains The best ways to help these substances through various Lethal Dosage test, subjects the rabbits will scream, and/ to evaluate the damage to stance in the eyes of rabbits animal testing for cosmetics in an experiment. For example, nized shortly after being used brutality inflicted upon them, pit bulls. Pit bulls are fiercely loyal to their owners, even if that very owner has infliction upon them. Or maybe consider the rabbits that go through the pain and agony for the cosmetics products we buy. And if that isn’t enough, how about the dogs that are overbred in tight cages with minimum room, and maximum cages—mates, only to have their pups taken away from them, and relished again? The list of animal cruelty goes on and on, and some are too gruesome to read, but it’s there, and it’s reality for a lot of animals. Donate, adopt, or even raise awareness. Your efforts aren’t futile. Be aware; save animals to the best of your ability.

Animal cruelty

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| Everyone loves animals. You could be a dog lover, cat lover, or even a ferret lover. Although some animals are fortunate enough to have a loving family, most aren’t. In reality, animals are usually abused, neglected, or overbred, and eventually make their way to the animal shelters, and if they’re lucky, death. But even in animal shelters, some people are taken advantage of. Animal shelters go through so much abuse, ranging from rabbits and small mammals in lab testing, dogs in fighting rings, to breeding in poppy mills.

Not much people notice it, but there are other ways that they are used to purchasing could be the very thing that is causing the demise of many animals. Although law does not require scientists to list a number of animal deaths, people have estimated that 90% of those animals are rats and mice. In Britain, the law requires that any new drug must be tested on at least two different species of live mammals. Roughly 2,714,000 different animals were used in the UK in 2000. In most cases, they are eutha- nized shortly after being used in an experiment. For example, animal testing for cosmetics is done by placing the sub- stance in the eyes of rabbits to see if it causes damage to sensitive eye tissues. Usually, the rabbits will scream, and/ or break their necks trying to escape the restraints. In the Lethal Dosage test, subjects are forced to ingest poisonous substances through various methods until half of them die.

The best ways to help these mistreated animals are to buy only the non-tested products and to inform companies of your firm stance on not buying animal tested products.

Much awareness is raised about dog fighting. Diff- erent powerful breeds, such as bullmats and prosa ca- nines, while they are trained to be guard dogs, are some- times misused for dog fighting. The most notorious dog fighting are genetically called it ‘Bull’. Pit bulls are fiercely loyal to humans, making them the perfect tool for dog fighters because of the cost of the substance upon itself, pit bulls will remain non-aggres- sive toward humans. Dogs are trained to develop ‘gameness’ in their training, such as weights that weigh them down, treadmill, baits that they tear up, and drugs or supplements. When a dog loses, they are usually killed by putting them down, treated, so as to make them useless. Sometimes, even the winning dog can die from wounds. Organizations such as The Humane Society of the United States have reduced large- scale dog fighting operations in recent years. Lemme ask you a question: where do you usually go to the pet store? Although it maybe because you have lost money to the owner, sometimes, and even the winning dog can die from wounds. Organizations such as The Humane Society of the United States have reduced large- scale dog fighting operations in recent years. You want a dog, where do you usually go to the pet store? The answer is usually mainly the pet store. Although it feels you’re saving the dog, you are actually funding a horrible cost; puppy mills. If you’re never heard of it, it’s a puppy mill. If you’re never heard of it, it’s puppies are overbred in small cages to supply pet stores with animals. What’s so bad about puppy mills? The conditions are horrible, the cages are so cramped, they’re usually standing in their own excre- tions, and they’re often bred to such an extent that they can no longer pro- duce. Unlicensed puppy mills usually sell the dogs at the age of 6 weeks old, when the usual age is 8 weeks old. They are cleared to be rid of fees and are forced to accumulate in the small cages and put into whatever package is available. So, to help those dogs in puppy mills, the best way would be to just adopt a dog from animal shelters. That way, you kill two birds with one stone, you save a dog from death in shelters, and you can possibly run a pet store out of business, forcing them to stop funding puppy mills, which will eventually save the dogs.

Animal awareness, to a certain extent, is a simple plan to inform people about animals. All the cruel things done to others and the harsh conditions they’re placed in, animals. Take pit bulls for an example; they are very loyal to their owners, even if that very owner has inflicted pain upon them. Or maybe consider the animals that go through the pain and agony for the cosmetics products we buy. And if that isn’t enough, how about the dogs that are overbred in tight cages with minimum room, and maximum cage—mates, only to have their pups taken away from them, and relished again? The list of animal cruelty goes on and on, and some are too gruesome to read, but it’s there, and it’s reality for a lot of animals.

Donate, adopt, or even raise awareness. Your efforts aren’t futile. Be aware; save animals to the best of your ability.

Fifth Annual Films at the Gate maintains Chinatown tradition, builds community

As a blistering day faded into evening last week, a group of film students sat in folding chairs eating takeout by the Chinatown gate. Nearby, a group of elderly women chatted in Cantonese, disrupted by yells from a raucous game of tag. It was the final night of Films at the Gate, the film series that brings Chinatown locals and kung fu film lovers together from across the city to celebrate and revitalize the area’s history of community through film.

Beginning in cinema’s Depression era heyday, these movie theaters competed for the attention of Chinatown moviegoers: the Pagoda on Washington Street, Star Cinema on Essex, and China Cinema on Beach showed the newest Hong Kong action flicks, often to over- packed houses. Children played in the aisles, and others begged their parents for the return of the VCR in the 1980s, however, this tradi- tion died out.

It’s been five to six years, when Leslie and Sam Davol of the nonprofit Boston Street Lab teamed up with Jean Lukith, a former Chinatown projectivistor, and Jeremy Liu, then with the Asian Community Development Corpora- tion (ACDC). Together they conceived of a film series that would revive the lost tradi- tions, showing kung fu classics in a vacant lot near the Chinatown gate. The series grew by the year and has become a great success, drawing 200-300 viewers a night.

This year’s iteration incorporated familiar elements and experiments alike. Thursday and Friday nights featured kung fu hits on the customary lot—’1978 clas- sic: ’Drunken Master’ with a young Jackie Chan and ’Bodyguards and Assassins’; the 2009 action romp featuring famous Bos- tonian Donnie Yen. In contrast, Saturday’s animated classic “Hare in Heaven” and Sunday’s “Children of Invention” - a 2009 English-language indie darling shot largely in Quincy and Chinatown, were shown at a new site on the Rose Kennedy Greenway and took the series in a different direction cinematically.

This year’s series featured additional cultural performances before the films, including tai chi and kung fu performances by the Bow Sim Mark and Wah Lum Kung Fu associations and a lion dance by Gund Kwok, the only women’s lion and dragon dance troop in the US. Walking tours led by teams from AVOYCE, a youth offshoot of the ACDC, offered visitors a glimpse into the history and everyday culture of Chinatown.

Lukith, who curates Films at the Gate, is optimistic about the reception of these changes. "[Sunday] night I was sitting near the entry of one of the oldest women, and don’t think any of them spoke English. But they came to me with ‘Children of Invention’, any- way. They got excited when they saw the scene on 93 South, the bits in Chinatown and Downtown Crossing. They were really intent on the movie, although I’m not sure how much of the dialogue they understood. That part of the community will still come and see a movie and enjoy it, even if it’s an American Chinese entertainment. One third to one half of our audience is people who live within a couple blocks.”

For Lukith and her partners, Films at the Gate is more than just a few movies once a year. According to the organization’s website, the minds behind the series hope to “improve awareness of Boston’s Chinatown as a site of cultural activity” and strengthen Chinatown bonds by restoring “a tradition of shared, public experience of Chinese language films.” It’s working. “There are a lot of older people that seem to really enjoy doing some- thing that’s right within walking distance and where they live. They can hang out with their friends, it’s all free, and they get to see great movies,” Lukith said.
MBTA 2010/2011 Service Plan Outreach Meetings

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority invites you to attend a public meeting and bring your ideas for short-range transit improvements to guide the 2010/2011 Service Plan. Information about the Service Plan can be found on the MBTA’s web site at http://www.mbta.com/serviceplan.

Written comments should be sent to MBTA Service Planning Unit, 45 High Street, Boston, MA 02110, by e-mail to serviceplanning@mbta.com, or with an online form at www.mbta.com. Written comments will be accepted through Friday, October 15, 2010. Comments from the public will be considered equally whether they are received in writing or in person.

The community workshops will consist of a brief presentation followed by an informal discussion with the public.

Monday, September 20, 2010  6:00-7:30 PM Dudley Branch Library, 65 Warren St, Roxbury
Transit nearby: SL4, SL5, 1, 8, 15, 23, 28, 41, 42, 44, 45, 47, 66

Tuesday, September 21, 2010  6:30-8:00 PM Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Mass Ave, Cambridge
Transit nearby: Red Line - Central 1, 47, 64, 70/70A, 83, 91

Monday, September 27, 2010  6:30-8:00 PM Watertown Public Library, 123 Main St, Watertown
Transit nearby: 57, 70, 71

Tuesday, September 28, 2010  6:30-8:00 PM Chelsea Collaborative, 318 Broadway, Chelsea
Transit nearby: Commuter Rail - Chelsea, 111, 112, 114, 116, 117

Thursday, September 30, 2010  6:30-8:00 PM Quincy City Hall, 2nd Floor, 1305 Hancock St, Quincy
Transit nearby: Commuter Rail/Red Line - Quincy Ctr, 215, 216, 220, 222, 225, 230, 238

Monday, October 4, 2010  6:30-8:00 PM Lynn Police Dept, Community Room, 300 Washington St, Lynn
Transit nearby: Commuter Rail - Lynn, 426, 429, 435, 441, 442, 455

Wednesday, October 6, 2010  6:30-8:00 PM Medford City Hall, Council Chambers, 85 George P Hassett Dr, Medford
Transit nearby: 94, 95, 96, 101, 134

Tuesday, October 12, 2010  6:00-7:30 PM State Transportation Bldg, Conference Rm 2 & 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston
Transit nearby: Green Line-Boylston, Orange Line-Chinatown, SL5, 43, 55

Requests for translators or other accommodations should be made at least one week in advance by email to serviceplanning@mbta.com or by phone at (617) 222-5184. For our deaf and hard of hearing customers, please use a relay operator. Assistive listening devices will be provided.
Five years after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, small-business owners in the region are embracing the notion that good can come from devastation. Grateful that people all around the world are helping to rebuild and revive the region, one surviving company is reminding the world that New Orleans is open for business.

Silk Road Collection, a New Orleans–based seller of antique Chinese furniture, lost most of its customer base when Hurricane Katrina shattered tourism in the region. They needed to find new sources of clients and revenue. Then Yahoo! Small Business sent a team of volunteers to the region to help Gulf Coast businesses get back on their feet. The team built 150 online stores for free in one day, including an online store for Silk Road Collection. Today, online sales account for 80 percent of overall sales for this Asian antiques company.

"The anniversary of Hurricane Katrina is an ideal time to remind people that New Orleans is back in business," said Donald St. Pierre, co-owner of Silk Road Collection. "With the spotlight back on our beloved city, we want to remind the world that it can still support New Orleans in its revitalization by visiting us and by shopping with local online merchants."

Lessons learned

Even five years after Hurricane Katrina, Silk Road Collection will never forget the volunteers from Yahoo! Small Business who created its online store and helped put it back in business. "We are thankful to everyone who helped New Orleans over the last five years, so we want to share the business lessons we’ve learned since opening our online store," said Robert Turner, co-owner of Silk Road Collection. Tips include:

• Pursue your passion. Whether you’re starting a new business or looking to fine-tune your existing one, you’ll be more successful if you sell products and services you love. The enthusiasm will be contagious!
• Seek trusted advisers and partners. From your website to your accounting services, seek the help of trusted brands and trusted advisers.
• If you’re starting a new business, consider minimizing the startup costs. Online storefronts can cost as little as $40/month to start up.
• Communicate with your customers. Make sure you capture e-mail and physical addresses, when possible, to enable you to develop long-term relationships with your customers. Should disaster strike, as it did for Silk Road, having e-mail addresses would still allow you to communicate with your customers, even if they moved, as did many residents after Hurricane Katrina destroyed their homes.
• Make sure customers can find you. Today, having a website and being listed on local online sites is a must for businesses whose customers want to be able to research them online.

Learn more at smallbusiness.yahoo.com and SilkRoadCollection.com.

Caregiver Homes is a community-based care option for nursing home-eligible seniors and disabled adults. We are growing and have opportunities with Part-Time, flexible hours providing case management & support to our Cantonese and Mandarin speaking clients throughout the South Shore. Minimum of two years experience in case management, care planning and assessment for elders/disabled adults in a health care, long-term care, social service or community setting. Care Managers must have a Bachelor’s Degree and license in social work, or an equivalent combination of education and experience in these or related fields. Fluency in English/Cantonese or English/Mandarin required. We offer a competitive salary and excellent benefits including Health, Dental, Vision, Life/LTD, 401k w/company match and generous Paid Time Off and holidays.

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Household Size 1 Person 2 Persons 3 Persons 4 Persons 5 Persons 6 Persons

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100% Area Median $38,580 $41,100 $49,620 $55,080 $59,520 $63,900

Household Size

1 Person 2 Persons 3 Persons 4 Persons 5 Persons 6 Persons

MAXIMUM INCOME LIMITS FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH GROSS INCOME

Not Exceeding 60% of Average Median Income

Applicants for 7 Section 8 Project-Based Apartments will not be entered into the lottery.

Applications must be postmarked by October 28, 2010

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Milton-OPEN HOUSE, Sun. 9/12/10, 2:00-4:00.
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Milton- OPEN HOUSE, Sun. 9/12/10, 1:00-3:00.
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Interview with Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz

By Cody Yiu

In November, 2008, Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz won the general election to represent the Second Suffolk District, which consists of Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Roslindale, Back Bay, Fenway, and a small portion of Dorchester. As a State Senator, Chang-Díaz has stood out in the past two years, and her following interview, Senator Chang-Díaz talks to the Sampan about what stood out in the past two years, and what lies ahead.

Sampan: How has your experience been as a State Senator?

Chang-Díaz: My experience as the state senator for the past year and a half has been an extraordinary privilege. To have it be my job to get up every morning and go fight for the things my community needs and the values we believe in is incredibly challenging, incredibly trying work, but also deeply fulfilling work. And it’s a challenge I still believe in. It has been an action packed 20 months. I have had the pleasure of forging new relationships with dozens of new colleagues in the Senate and House of Representatives. I’ve learned the ins and outs of being a legislative committee chairwoman, as well as working on five other legislative committees. My staff team and I have responded to countless inquiries and requests, individually and personally. I’ve attended events and worked with constituents and coalition groups in all eleven of the neighborhoods I represent. After years of community organizing, we finally got CORI Reform and Bilingual Ballots over the finish line! And we were able to secure a significant forelosure protection bill this year that will help protect thousands of families from eviction from their homes and help keep our neighborhood fabric intact. It has been a whirlwind 20 months for me. When I look back at what we have accomplished together, it seems like it should have been three or four years, not 20 months.

Sampan: What have you learned about Chinatown for the past two years?

Chang-Díaz: I think the thing that stands out for me the most is the incredible tenacity that the Chinatown residents and elders have shown over the years in fighting for bilingual ballots and full voting rights. And the dignity they have embodied all the way through, even as they have been denied rights — coming back again and again, knock on the door of democracy and insist that they wanted it. They’ve really given the rest of our state a lesson in what true citizenship looks like. This is something the Senate Chairman of the Election Law Committee also remarked to me about, after meeting with and seeing so many Chinatown residents in action. And it’s a lesson our state and our country really need to see right now, as we go through such ugly debates about the role of immigrant communities in our society. This is something that has made me so deeply proud to represent Chinatown.

Sampan: Describe some memorable moments on the job?

Chang-Díaz: Wow! There are so many. As the legislative session has unfolded there really have been a lot of moments that are memorable. I’ll highlight a few that I have had specifically with the Asian-American community.

First: the moment Bilingual ballots passed the Senate with the Asian-American Voting Rights Coalition members in the Senate chamber. The Senate President — who has been a great supporter of the bill — allowed me to get up on the Senate rostrum and recognize the Coalition members after the vote had been tallied and announced. As I looked down at them and as the Senate cheered, I thought that was a moment I will never forget as a Senator.

The day the Governor signed the legislation was a proud moment, as well. Getting to see Mr. Yee shake the Governor’s hand and receive one of the pens that had been used to sign the bill was really fun. Also, that day happened to be Governor Patrick’s birthday! So it was a special twist that he was giving a gift, of sorts, to the community on his birthday.

Visiting the Josiah Quincy School and “swearing in” a group of students in a mock citizenship ceremony after they had been studying immigration also tops the list. And, of course, the New Year’s banquet!

Sampan: What can be done to help immigrants for jobs in MA?

Chang-Díaz: One of my top budget priorities since coming into office this year has been to fight for Adult Basic Education programs in the budget. These programs really give immigrants opportunities to gain English proficiency and other skills that they need to access better employment and better opportunities. These programs help with language barriers, computer skills, and job skills to help make our immigrant populations successful in the job market. I know this has been a very difficult budget year for every program, but rest assured I will continue to fight hard for these programs.

Sampan: Going forward, what are major issues facing the Second Suffolk District that you would like to tackle?

Chang-Díaz: There are so many here too. There are the effects of this current economic downturn that people are suffering — the job losses and the cuts to core public services in our community. So fighting to restore those and build an economic recovery that benefits everyone is of course a top priority. And make no mistake: that’s going to take a lot of work.

Next year’s state budget debate is likely to be even more difficult than this year’s. The Commonwealth is still trying to close a billion dollar deficit, and the federal stimulus funds are going to run out.

But there are also issues I want to tackle that have long preceded this recession. Improving our K-12 education system across the board, ensuring everyone has access to affordable, quality health care; affordable housing in the city; bringing a brand new library back to Chinatown; reducing illegal guns and youth violence in our neighborhoods; continuing to fight for improvements in our education system, combating environmental justice, so that low-income neighborhoods and neighbors of color don’t continue to suffer disproportionate pollution and health impacts. You can see the list is long! But that’s exactly why I hope voters will send me back to the legislature; because there is so much more work to get done.

Sampan: What are your thoughts on in-state tuition for undocumented immigrant students in MA?

Chang-Díaz: I am proud to be the lead sponsor of the in-state tuition bill in the Senate and I plan to refile this bill next legislative session (should voters be willing to send me back for a second term on September 14th!).

This legislation will have such an enormous impact for many young people in our state who are already here, paying taxes, and who have been attending public schools for years. It’s about access to the American Dream, and it’s about strengthening our economy for everyone in Massachusetts by developing our workforce. That’s why the business community in the state generally supports it. My father came to this country as an immigrant — with $50 in his pocket and very little English. But because he had access to affordable public higher education after graduating from high school, he was able to go on to major success and years of economic and scientific contribution to this country. This issue is personal for me as well as good public policy. Everyone reading this article can count on me to be a leading voice on this issue until we make it law!

Sampan: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

Chang-Díaz: I just want to thank everyone in the Asian-American community for their support and unbelievable advocacy this year. Since I took office in 2009, the Asian-American community has been such a strong, persistent voice at the State House and in our neighborhoods. I want to thank residents for giving me the charge I need to fight for their priorities on Beacon Hill. I also would like to note what a great partner Rep. Aaron Michlewitz has been in fighting for the needs of Chinatown with me up on Beacon Hill. The Chinatown community has a good representative in him.

Finally, I want to ask the Asian-American community to continue to stay active through the fall elections. We are experiencing big challenges in our economy right now. Please make sure you make your voice heard and vote this fall. As a part of that, I really encourage everyone to vote “No” on ballot questions 1, 2, and 3 on this November. If these questions were to pass they would be extremely damaging for affordable housing in the state, and would decimate our ability to fund core public services, like schools, health care, and public safety.
By Cody Yiu

Hassan Williams is running for the State Senate seat of the 2nd Suffolk District against incumbent candidate Sonia Chang-Diaz on the Democratic Primary on Tuesday, September 14. (Photo courtesy of Hassan Williams)

Hassan Williams is running for the State Senate seat of the 2nd Suffolk District against incumbent candidate Sonia Chang-Diaz on the Democratic Primary on Tuesday, September 14. This former at-risk youth from Roxbury shares with the Sampan why he wants to run for office.

Sampan: Please tell our readers about yourself.

Williams: My name is Hassan A. Williams and I am an educator, attorney and community advocate. As a child, I was a troubled youth. Born and raised in Roxbury, I resorted to hustling and fighting to survive. I attended Boston Latin School and graduated from Boston Technical High School (currently known as the John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science). Despite those troubled years, I knew that education would be the key to my success.

At the age of 20, my parents told me “It was time for me to make my own way.” Forced to move out, I was determined to be successful. For six years I tried my hand at different odd jobs and took classes at local community colleges. Many nights I found myself homeless, hunching around from hallway to stairwell and from house to house. It was during this time that my Christian faith was established and tested. It was these life experiences that would spur me to something greater as I kept my eye on education being my pathway to success.

At 26, I attended the prestigious Morehouse College, “the Harvard of the South,” paying my own way through school. By the time I was 30 years old, I had graduated with a Finance Degree and a 3.4 GPA. Multi-lingual, I studied Japanese at Reitaku University in Chiba, Japan and Mandarin Chinese at Beijing Normal University in Beijing, China. Upon graduation, I worked as a street vendor, as a cleaner, and took classes at local community colleges.

I offered pro bono legal services to help people who were in need. I went on to obtain a Law Degree from Boston College School of Law. With a Finance Degree and a Law Degree, I believe that my education and life experiences have prepared me to be an effective advocate for the constituents throughout the State of Massachusetts.

Interview

Former homeless, at-risk youth running for State Senate

Williams: I believe leadership is needed in the district. With unemployment as high as 27% in certain areas, foreclosures at an all-time high, “expiring use” housing threatening to displace even more people, crime appears to be uncontrollably rising, and education in the Boston Public Schools is unequal across the system, I believe leadership and change are needed. That is why I am running.

Sampan: What are the issues facing the 2nd Suffolk District and how are you hoping to address them?

Williams: I believe the most pressing issues facing the 2nd Suffolk District are Jobs/Economic Development, Education, Public Safety, and Housing. For Jobs/Economic Development, I believe if we create trade schools that train our students in the areas of Health Care, Green Economy, and Bio Sciences with a goal to license students in these growth areas, our students will be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities presented in these areas. One way to do this quickly would be to convert underperforming schools that are targeted to be closed and changing them to trade schools. Also, adult residents can be trained in these areas as well after school hours end, creating trade school community centers.

Next, I wish to write legislation that removes all external security gates from the outside of businesses across the state. These security gates are found mostly in communities of color and depress the value of the properties and businesses in the areas. By removing all external security gates, we will have the opportunity to protect the residents property values across the state, drive more traffic flow to the businesses in the 2nd Suffolk District which drives traffic flow to those businesses, removes the negative psychological effect on the residents by removing blight and replacing it with attractiveness. It will also create more drive in business owners to maintain the upkeep of the outside of their businesses creating a cleaner more user friendly appeal. Lastly, business owners that find a strict need to maintain security gates will be required to have them installed inside of the windows and doors of the businesses to maintain the external attractiveness of the business and commercial district.

Education: I believe our public school system needs to be equally funded and educationally balanced in the 2nd Suffolk District. We need to increase support systems for autistic children, children with special needs, and English Language Learners. The funding for the school system needs to be fully funded thus finding a cleaner more user friendly approach. Lastly, business owners that find a strict need to maintain security gates will be required to have them installed inside of the windows and doors of the businesses to maintain the external attractiveness of the business and commercial district.

Public Safety: I believe that community policing and visibility are critical to problem solving on our streets. I would increase police walking patrols. I wish to increase funding for youth programs throughout the district. I also wish to bring male and female mentoring programs together to advocate for funding as a community group and not as separate entities. I believe a cooperative approach is better to get public funding than a competitive approach.

Housing: I believe that more affordable housing is needed in most areas throughout the city. Our city is fast becoming a have or have not city with our current policies. More and long-term residents are being forced to move out of our city due to shortages of affordable housing, short home health care for seniors and wish to cap property taxes for seniors who owned their homes for more than fifteen years and are sixty-five years old or older.

Sampan: What are your thoughts on in-state tuition for undocumented immigrant students in MA?

Williams: I believe that all students who fully attend (all four years) and graduate from public schools should be eligible to attend public institutions of higher learning at in-state tuition rates.

Sampan: What can be done to help immigrants acquire jobs in MA?

Williams: I believe that eligible immigrants should have access to jobs the same as any citizen has access. Immigrants should be entitled to receive training on Green Economy, Bio Science, and Health Care related fields through the adult training programs at any newly created trade school.

Sampan: How do you plan to reach out to the Asian-American voters in the District?

Williams: The ability to communicate is exceptionally important. Having attended school in Beijing to learn Mandarin Chinese, I plan to learn Cantonese also to be better at communicating with all residents whether they speak English or not. By doing this, my ability to address issues that are presented by residents will be greatly improved. I plan to attend local events and forums to address the needs of the citizens across the district including Chinatown. At least once a year, I will have a Town Hall meeting in Chinatown where residents can meet me and directly convey their concerns.

Sampan: Affordable housing has been a long-standing issue in Chinatown. How do you plan to address it?

Williams: As stated earlier, I believe that more affordable housing is needed to maintain long-term residents’ ability to continue living in this city. My plan would be to target city and state owned vacant land in Chinatown to build affordable housing. I will look to convert blighted and unused buildings in Chinatown into affordable housing. Additionally, I will protect those whose tenancy is being jeopardized under the “expiring use” category by writing legislation to extend the lease on the properties.

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Interview

Toddler Lead Teacher, Infant and Pre-School Teachers

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