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**A RECOVERY FOR ALL OF US: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES NATION'S
FIRST EVER RACIAL JUSTICE COMMISSION TO ROOT OUT SYSTEMIC AND
INSTITUTIONAL RACISM**

“The Racial Justice Commission has the power to put forth permanent, transformative ideas for our government and our city. This moment demands nothing less.” – Mayor de Blasio

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced the formation of the New York City Racial Justice Commission, the first commission of its kind in the United States tasked with targeting and dismantling structural and institutional racism across the City. The Racial Justice Commission will simultaneously serve as a charter revision commission.

The Commission fulfills the Mayor’s pledge in the [State of the City](#) to convene a Charter Revision Commission that focuses on racial justice and equity. The Mayor called upon the Commission to produce a formal report and recommendations by December 2021, and to produce a rigorous, community-informed guide toward a more fair, equitable, and just New York City.

“Our mission is to root out systemic racism across New York City. The Racial Justice Commission has the power to put forth permanent, transformative ideas for our government and our city. This moment demands nothing less,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “This undertaking is unprecedented but I believe this extraordinary group of leaders, visionaries, and public servants have the ability to put forth a tangible vision to continue dismantling and obliterating centuries of racial oppression.”

“This is an opportune moment to deconstruct the barriers that have limited opportunity and prevented people of color from fully benefiting from their own labor, the taxes they pay and the sacrifices they have made to have a better life. The Commission will propose tangible actions and structural changes to respond to the questions that too many still refuse to acknowledge,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “Why are underpaid and dying essential workers mostly people of color? Why do Black and Brown New Yorkers have less education and wealth than white New Yorkers? Why have Asian Americans, here and across the country, been harassed, attacked and killed? The answer is that racism has infected every facet of our lives in New York City for generations. If our City is to heal, the Commission must pull the bandages off the ugly truths, using the full powers of government to make right the deeply rooted policies of inequity. Only then will we be able to move forward together.”

“Working on the city’s charter is a rare opportunity,” says **Jennifer Jones Austin, CEO and Executive Director, FPWA**. “Because systemic racism is embedded in our city’s institutions

and structures, we must uproot racism by attacking it at the very core, which is charter revision. This commission is committed to listening to communities throughout New York City and putting forward revisions to end racism and advance true and lasting justice and inclusion for all.”

“This moment, more than any other in recent history, presents the opportunity to create a more equitable and just society,” said **Henry Garrido, Executive Director, DC 37 AFSCME**. “COVID-19 exposed and exasperated inequities that are as old as time. Now we have the chance to rebuild through a racial justice lens, and we would be terribly remiss if we wasted it. I’m honored to take on this responsibility and commit to putting people of color front-and-center in our roadmap to recovery.”

"I am honored to serve as Executive Director for this historic Commission. We have a critical opportunity to identify the systems and structures that uphold racism and injustice, begin to dismantle them, and write a more equitable future for all New Yorkers. The pandemic has brought to the fore longstanding inequities, and with the energy behind the local and national movements for racial justice, there is no better time than now for public dialogue about our collective future. I look forward to working with the Commission to engage communities from across the city in this process,” said **Anusha Venkataraman, Executive Director of the Racial Justice Commission**.

The Commission is primarily tasked with reviewing the City’s Charter and delivering proposals for charter revisions, but may also recommend policy and programmatic changes that don’t require charter revision, or changes to advocate for on a state or federal level. It is expected to focus on significant structural changes to the powers, structures, and processes of New York City government that underlie sources of inequity, rather than narrow procedural changes or superficial policy fixes. Anusha Venkataraman, who currently leads NYC Service as the City’s Chief Service Officer, will serve as the Commission’s Executive Director.

The 11-member commission will include:

- **Jennifer Jones Austin**, CEO and Executive Director, FPWA, Chair
- **Henry Garrido**, Executive Director, DC 37 AFSCME, Vice Chair
- **K. Bain**, Founder and Executive Director, Community Capacity Development
- **Ana M. Bermúdez Esq.**, Commissioner, Department of Probation
- **Rev. Fred Davie**, Executive Vice President, Union Theological Seminary and Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB)
- **Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq.**, Interim Executive Director at the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College
- **Darrick Hamilton**, Founding Director, Institute for the Study of Race, Stratification and Political Economy at The New School and Henry Cohen Professor of Economics and Urban Policy
- **Chris Kui**, former Executive Director, Asian Americans for Equality
- **Yesenia Mata**, Executive Director, La Colmena
- **Phil Thompson**, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives
- **Jo-Ann Yoo**, Executive Director, Asian American Federation

The Commission is informed by the administration's existing and ongoing work, including the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity. Its work is expected to meaningfully incorporate reconciliation and steps toward reparation of harms, including healing, restorative justice, recognition of history, affirmation of cultural memory, and a public apology. This vision should be grounded in the recognition that centuries of slavery, segregation, and anti-Black racism have created structures and informed institutional systems that impact all New Yorkers.

While the history of systemic racism has especially impacted Black New Yorkers, it has also powerfully shaped injustices and inequities that impact other people of color, immigrants, and other marginalized communities. The Commission should seize the transformative potential of this moment in history to identify the structural changes and significant policy reforms that will advance racial justice and equity and begin to dismantle structural racism for all New Yorkers.

"The Racial Justice Commission has been charged with addressing systemic racism and structural inequity in the city of New York. This innovative, and unprecedented commission has legal authority of Charter Revision and is solution driven, grounded in the recognition that centuries of slavery, segregation, and anti-Black racism have created structures and informed institutional systems that impact all New Yorkers. This effort to take on rehabilitating intergenerational trauma and racially-based historical neglect is a worthy attempt to empower communities in the direction of equity and freedom," said **K Bain, Founder and Executive Director of Community Capacity Development**.

"It is an honor to be part of the Racial Justice Commission," says **Commissioner Ana M. Bermúdez Esq.** "We are truly at a turning point in the history of our great city. The disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across our communities requires us to act now. I look forward to listening, learning, and working with my fellow commission members and our community members to ensure a more equitable system and a fair and just future for all New Yorkers."

"As the nation, states and cities continue to reckon with America's original sin of racism and its devastating consequences over the centuries, I am excited that the Mayor is taking this unprecedented and historic step of establishing the Racial Justice Commission: 2021 Charter Revision Commission to look at systemic reforms and tangible reparations to address centuries of overt and implicit oppression and denial of opportunity. I am honored to serve with my fellow commissioners and look forward to proposing measures to reach the goals set before us," said **Rev. Fred Davie, Executive Vice President, Union Theological Seminary**.

"As an attorney focused on racial justice, it is an honor to serve on the commission," said **Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq., Interim Executive Director at the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College**. "I've dedicated most of my career to studying and identifying issues of racial injustice and social inequities, and seeking ways to champion and promote equity that center the needs of the most vulnerable. I look forward to using my background and skills to make New York City more equitable and just as a member of the Commission."

"This city, and this nation, are faced with an unprecedented opportunity to think big – not just about policy changes at the margins of civic life, but about the way government is structured

entirely,” said **Darrick Hamilton, Director, Institute on Race and Political Economy at The New School and Henry Cohen Professor of Economics and Urban Policy**. “I’m proud to join this commission and lend my expertise to this ambitious effort to root out structural racism and steer us towards justice.”

"At the intersection of the Black Lives Matter movement, Anti-Immigrant-and-Asian Violence struggles and equitable COVID 19 Recovery, we have a historic opportunity to reexamine, rectify and reconfigure NYC's Charter, policies, and government operations to meet the needs of its multiracial and multicultural population. I encourage and look forward to the participation of all communities so that the work and recommendations of the Commission can permanently enshrine in the City Charter the commitment to social, political and economic inclusion, opportunity, and equity for all New Yorkers. The Racial Justice Commission can become a national model for how to advance collaboration between the government and the private sector towards a fair, equitable, and just society. This will unleash the full potential of NYC as the greatest city in the world for the century to come,” said **Chris Kui, former Executive Director, Asian Americans for Equality**.

"Communities of color have been the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the inequities in health care and in the economy are issues that the government must address. This is why it is an honor to be appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio to represent Staten Island. Our communities should not be forgotten, that is why I will be serving to ensure that we are not the forgotten borough,” said **Yesenia Mata, Executive Director, La Colmena**.

"As New York City continues to recover from COVID-19, we cannot move forward without confronting this legacy of systemic inequity and racism that has been exposed by the pandemic," said **J. Philip Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives**. "Through the Racial Justice Commission, the City is taking a critical step to build a future that is grounded in equity for all New Yorkers."

“The pandemic laid bare the racial inequalities that have plagued communities of color, immigrants, and low-income New Yorkers. The need to dismantle the systemic and cultural inequities that plague our city, and our nation has never been more urgent. This is an opportunity for all of us to imagine what a truly equitable city can be, and we must be brave enough to take a big step forward in the journey towards that vision. I am truly honored to lend my voice to the task force,” said **Jo-Ann Yoo, Executive Director, Asian American Federation**.

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