



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Community Leaders Work to Bridge the Racial Divide

*Leaders suggest economic inclusion and improving education outcomes to lift Black communities.*

**Seattle, WA, July 14, 2020** – Civil rights and community leaders discussed how we can come together as one people to make a positive impact in communities of color, especially Black communities, during a virtual town hall meeting hosted by the Alliance for Persecuted Peoples Worldwide (APPWW), Sunday evening.

Dr. Bharath Gopalaswamy, senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, moderated the town hall with panelists Eddie Rye Jr., Debadutta Dash and Maia Espinoza.

The thought-provoking exchange was watched live by over 16,000 viewers across the United States.

Topics included the racial challenges communities are facing, the effectiveness of affirmative action, reducing funding for police and the role of media in community building. Most wanted to know what actions they could take to improve race relations in their communities.

Eddie Rye Jr., civil rights leader and recipient of the Martin Luther King Medal of Distinguished Service, reminded everyone that “the United States is not just a nation of immigrants but a nation of Native Americans, African descendants of the United States enslaved, and immigrants.” He emphasized the need for more education about Black history and the civil rights movement.

Maia Espinoza, a business owner, educator, and executive director of the Center for Latino Leadership, expressed the need to bring more technical skills into classrooms. Maia spoke in support of choice schools as one of the ways to improve education outcomes for all students but especially for students of color.

Debadutta Dash, a community leader, ex-commissioner for WA State Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs and founder co-chair WA State and India Trade Action Committee (WASITRAC), repeatedly emphasized the role of youth in stepping up to drive change. “The next generation should ask elected representatives bold questions on why something is the way it is and how we can change it. We cannot just rely on the government to pass bills and policies. Communities need to come together, like [we are] today and drive change,” said Dash while addressing a question from Shiksha, one of the many students who attended the town hall.

Students from across the country participated in this discussion and posed incisive questions to the panel.

APPWW, supported by Indian American organizations nationwide, will work with the community leaders to focus on creating opportunities for economic inclusion and improving education outcomes for Black and other communities of color.

“There is a time for talk and a time for action. Now is the time for action. We need to come together as a community, listen to each other, learn from one another and work with each other to make a difference” said Ram Dixit, one of the founding directors of APPWW.



View the entire recorded event at <https://tinyurl.com/appwwlive>

APPWW's mission is to be a voice for the voiceless from around the world who are in our local communities and have experienced or seen persecution of their friends and family due to their skin color, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. APPWW's directors operate on the principles and belief that all beings are divine, and it is the responsibility of every one of us to speak up for those who are discriminated, oppressed, or denied their fundamental human rights. Even a single person who is oppressed or persecuted is one too many.

Alliance for Persecuted Peoples Worldwide is a registered 501c(3) non-profit in the state of Washington.

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