

Motion: Support and recognise East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) communities and heritage in Lewisham and nationally

Proposer: Cllr Edison Huynh

Seconder: Cllr Hau-Yu Tam

This council:

a. notes that:

1. East and Southeast Asian (hereafter ESEA) communities have been settling in the UK as far back as the 19th century.
2. According to 2021 census data and community research, there are about 1 million people who identify as ESEA (1.5% of the UK population). About a third live in London. Lewisham, namely Deptford, is one of the most populous areas of settlement.
3. Lewisham has had a long history of migration, which has made our Borough into the vibrant place it is today. We settled Vietnamese boat refugees in the 80s and are now a committed Borough of Sanctuary. Successive generations of ESEA communities and waves of immigration have in multitudes of ways, influenced British society.
4. However, ESEA communities remain underrepresented in politics, arts and culture, policy-making and senior levels of leadership, although the picture is improving all the time. There is a historical paucity of data in research and understanding of ESEA histories and communities' experiences, especially those told from below
5. Since 2021, ESEA Heritage Month has been commemorated by grassroots groups as a way not only to foster cohesion among ESEA communities themselves, but to include ESEA culture and heritage within the narratives around a diverse modern Britain, alongside other communities such as Black, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT), South Asian, and LGBTQIA+ groups, who also celebrate annual history and heritage months.
6. Lewisham has a history of ESEA pioneers and local community organising. Cllr Mee Ling Ng represented the Evelyn area for 4 terms between 1986 and 2002 and served as Deputy Leader. The Lewisham Indochinese Centre in Deptford ward has one of the very few and possibly the largest bilingual Chinese-English nursery as well as having elder care and youth activities. Vietnamese Family Partnership in Evelyn ward is currently undertaking work to commemorate ESEA heritage across Deptford.

(b) believes that:

1. ESEA communities should be better understood and supported through joined-up policy-making, advocacy and public services - ideally working closely with those community groups.
2. The Council, as part of its pledge to "tackle all forms of violence, racism and harassment; should work with partners to follow an anti-racist and intersectional approach to prevent identity-based discrimination", and ensure ESEA communities are considered and their voices heard.

(c) resolves to:

1. Formally recognise ESEA Heritage Month in September as a Council, annually.
2. Support and/or host at least one annual event to mark ESEA Heritage Month.
3. Write to the Government department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to support the official campaign to establish an annual observance celebrating the history, heritage and social contributions of ESEA communities in the UK.

4. Support culturally-responsive services such as [On Your Side](#), a free 24/7 racism and hate support and reporting service for ESEA communities operating nationwide.
5. Undertake a review of how underrepresented and 'hard to reach' (as noted in our last local democracy review) ESEA communities can better participate in civic society.