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POST EVENT RELEASE

**LACC HOSTS SPECIAL SCREENING AND PANEL DISCUSSION OF
FREE CHOL SOO LEE FILM**

(March 23, 2023) – Los Angeles City College (LACC) hosted a special screening and panel discussion of *Free Chol Soo Lee* on Wednesday, March 22 on the LACC campus.

Korean immigrant Choi Soo Lee was wrongly convicted of a Chinatown gang murder in the 1970s in San Francisco. After years of fighting to survive, journalist K.W. Lee takes an interest in his case, igniting an unprecedented social movement.

The event included a panel discussion with *Free Chol Soo Lee* directors and producers Julia Ha and Eugene Yi and was moderated by Do Kim, President, K.W. Lee Center for Leadership.

In 1973, Chol Soo Lee was arrested for the gang-related murder of Yip Yee Tak, a Chinese American man who had been shot to death in San Francisco's Chinatown. Following a flawed investigation, which leaned on the eyewitness testimony of three white tourists, and no interviews with members of the local Chinatown community, Lee was wrongfully convicted of the murder and sentenced to life in prison. Four years into serving his sentence in Tracy, California, Lee got into an altercation with another inmate, Morrison Needham, that ended with Lee killing him in what he claimed was an act of self-defense.

Around this time, a Korean American journalist named K.W. Lee began investigating the case and wrote a series of stories that revealed the police investigation's missteps and the racism that was evident throughout the process in their racial profiling and stereotyping of Lee. The articles helped spark a nationwide grassroots movement among numerous Asian American groups, leading to the formation of a Pan-Asian

American defense committee, and a national and global coalition of activists and allies rallying for Lee's release. As the documentary captures, the movement marked a seminal moment for a historic, national pan-Asian coalition that brought together immigrant and American-born Asians in a common cause for justice and freedom for Chol Soo Lee.

Thanks to their mobilization efforts, the activists were able to raise funds to hire defense attorneys for Lee and a retrial of the Chinatown murder was held in 1982, resulting in Lee's acquittal. The following year, Lee's death sentence for the Needham stabbing was also nullified, and he was ultimately released from prison in March of 1983.

The documentary continues to trace Lee's life after his release, chronicling his struggles with unemployment and addiction, which culminated in an arson job in 1991 which went awry, leaving Lee with third-degree burns on his body. Following his injury, he started speaking at schools and youth centers on the issues of mass incarceration, and the importance of extending humanity and compassion to others—as people did for him. At the age of 62, Lee passed away in San Francisco in 2014, from complications related to his arson injuries.

“Free Chol Soo Lee” is part of a five-year pipeline of stories centering criminal justice issues, presented by INDEPENDENT LENS under its Stories for Justice public media partnership. Through a groundswell of more than 20 documentary films and docuseries, the initiative aims to increase awareness of racial inequities within the criminal justice system and inspire local communities to support reform efforts.

The film makes its broadcast debut on PBS's INDEPENDENT LENS, April 24, 2023, at 10:00 p.m. ET (check local listings), and will also be available to stream on the PBS Video app.

Please see attached photos.