

Flatbush impact nationwide

KAGRO convention focuses on Korean/black relations

By **Sophia Kyung Kim** and **Kay Hwangbo**
Korea Times

The black-led Flatbush boycott of two Korean stores is adversely affecting almost every struggling Korean mom-and-pop store in the United States.

Working 14-hour days in the inner cities' battle zones, these urban warriors acknowledge experiencing clashes with customers—similar to the ones that triggered the New York boycotts. They say no one is immune.

Said Ki Pung Chun, president of the Philadelphia Grocery Association: "There is more tension because of New York. Merchants face the same kind of situation. But they are more afraid. When customers steal, you cannot touch them. We smile and tell them to not do it."

The backdrop of the Korean-black tension in Brooklyn provided a sense of urgency as the second annual meeting of the National Korean American Grocers Association (KAGRO) convened over breakfast Oct. 4 at the Rotex Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles Koreatown. About 50 people were present.

In New York, the black boycotters' strength is dwindling, asserts a grocers' association leader. The same leader bristled at the suggestion that the association could have done more to prevent the boycotts.

In Philadelphia and Washington D.C., Korean and black community leaders serve on police advisory councils that work to promote racial harmony.

In Atlanta, the "fragmented" Korean community has "many self-proclaimed leaders." But they are afraid to talk about the issue, so

preventive measures aren't being taken to avert a possible crisis.

In Seattle, the local grocers association worked out a compromise with the African American

community, concerned about the hoodlums hanging out at a Korean grocery store, which allowed the store to remain open.

Leaders from grocers' associations across the nation, as well as Canada, conducted a four-hour dialogue on how to prevent tensions from escalating into boycotts like

"We have to change our attitude. We have to understand black customers."

Kyoung K. Kiel,
general secretary of the Korean American Food Dealer Association of the Greater Washington Area.



State Sen. David Roberti aide **Mel Ilomin** (left) presents legislative commendation to **Yang-II Kim**, president, Korean American Grocers Association of Southern California.



Joon Nam Lee, Atlanta



Kyoung Kiel, Washington D.C.



Myong Yong Juch, New York



Ki Pung Chun, Philadelphia

Some of the findings:

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