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Entertainment 81

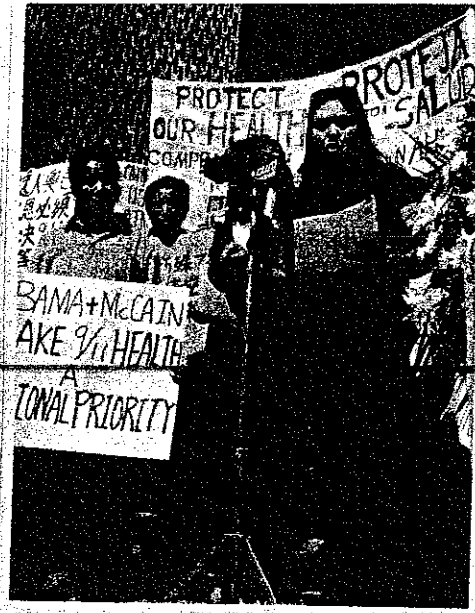
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**HEAR US:** Downtown Manhattan residents call on presidential candidates to pay attention to post-9/11 health effects. Many who work and live south of 14th St. suffer some of the same symptoms as firefighters present at 9/11. CHRISTINE LIN/THE EPOCH TIMES

## Seven Years On, Downtown Still Feels 9/11

Residents want medical care for attack-related symptoms

By CHRISTINE LIN  
Epoch Times Staff

NEW YORK—First responders, volunteers, cleanup workers, and those who live and work in Downtown Manhattan are still feeling the effects of 9/11. They feel it in their lungs, on their skin, and in their pocketbooks, doling out money to treat post-9/11 health problems.

Caier Guo, who was working as a babysitter in Chinatown at the time, told her story during a press conference at Foley Square on Sunday, Sept. 7. It was not long into her speech when she broke into tears.

Two years after the attack, she began experiencing a chronic cough. She couldn't maintain sleep for more than three hours a night. Medicine didn't help and she had no health insurance. In 2006, she got medical help from the Chinese Staff and Workers Association, but the problems continued to complicate, and her stomach began to swell in 2007, signaling severe gastrointestinal problems.

"A lot of New Yorkers are sick because of toxic air," Guo said through a translator.

The cloud of dust resulting from the Twin Towers' collapse contained substances such as benzene, lead, asbestos, and glass and concrete dust.

In 2003, Bush refused to assess the pollution from 9/11, calling the air "safe to breathe." A 2003 report by the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of the Inspector General concluded that the White House told the EPA to release misleading information "when it convinced EPA to add reassuring statements and delete

"cautionary ones," the report read.

The Bush administration "is trying to deny that people are sick here," said Lea Geronimo, a member of Beyond Ground Zero (BGZ), a community group formed to address post-9/11 health issues. "There has not been a comprehensive study. What we want is some recognition."

Geronimo, who resumed regular work at her Downtown office the week after 9/11, suffers from chronic bronchitis, asthma, and heavy bleeding resulting from cervical polyps. She's insured, but it's not enough, she said.

Findings from a symptom-prevalence study by Gouverneur Healthcare Services, a public hospital on the Lower East Side, found that Downtown Manhattan patients experience many of the same symptoms as on-scene firefighters.

The report took a convenience sample of 1,430 primary care patients at GHS between April 2007 and June 2008. A survey asking patients to list their symptoms and their duration was administered by trained bilingual study staff. Most survey respondents are Chinese or Hispanic and nearly half live in the area while over a third work there.

Data showed that among those sampled, 14.9% have the cough, 16.7% have heartburn, and 15.5% have itchy, watery eyes.

The study was funded by New York Community Trust. Initially GHS intended to survey 5,000 individuals but due to the cost of such an endeavor, settled for a smaller sample, according to Tosh Anderson of BGZ.