



March 23, 2020

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Attorney General William Barr
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Director Christopher Wray
Federal Bureau of Investigations
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear President Donald Trump, Attorney General William Barr, and FBI Director Christopher Wray:

On behalf of OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates, and the undersigned organizations, we urge you to publicly recognize and denounce the increasing racist attacks and discrimination against the Asian American community, in the wake of rising concerns over the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19). While we understand that all levels of government are suffering from lack of resources during this serious pandemic, we cannot allow Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to become scapegoats.

Specifically, we call upon the President to issue an Executive Order to establish a Task Force for the purpose of investigating and protecting the civil rights of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Justice (DOJ). We urge the FBI to prioritize and expand data collection of hate crimes against AAPIs, with particular attention to ethnic and geographic disaggregation, to better inform our communities' response to this pressing issue. We further ask the DOJ to reaffirm its commitment to AAPI survivors by making a public statement and prioritizing the investigation of anti-AAPI hate crimes. Finally, we ask the White House, Secretary of State, and other elected officials to cease using terms like "Chinese Virus", "Wuhan Virus", and "Kung Flu," which falsely and harmfully associate COVID-19 with the Chinese ethnicity.

With increasing alarm, we have witnessed incidents across the country targeting AAPIs in



connection to COVID-19. For example, on March 14th, a 47-year-old father and his 10-year-old son were followed and attacked in Queens, NY at a bus stop.¹ The assailant struck the father on the head in front of his son. On the same day, an Asian American family fell victim to a knife attack while shopping at a Sam's Club in Midland, TX.² In the San Fernando Valley, CA, a 16-year old Asian American boy was physically assaulted at school because he was accused of having the coronavirus.³ And at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, two Chinese international students were attacked with raw eggs thrown from a moving vehicle.⁴ We know these incidents to be merely the tip of the iceberg, as hate crimes have long been severely under-reported and inadequately defined. As these racially-motivated attacks accelerate in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, it becomes increasingly imperative that this nation's leadership ensures the safety of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

There is a stigma associated with COVID-19 (as it originated in Hubei Province, China) which leads some to assume that anybody with perceived Asian ancestry might carry the disease. However, *the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) maintain that ethnicity is not a risk factor for transmission of COVID-19.* For this reason, the CDC and World Health Organization (WHO) discourage associating diseases with geographic locations, or "cultural, population, industry or occupational references."⁵ Naming Asian ethnicities in reference to COVID-19 only strengthens this false association, and harms Asian American and Asian-perceived communities across the country. Perpetuating age-old stereotypes of Chinese people and culture being "dirty" and "diseased" directly enables further attacks on Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans. Elected officials have been proactive in combating misinformation by reminding their constituents that it is safe to visit their local Chinatown,⁶ but recent attacks on AAPIs prove that more needs to be done.

On February 26th, the members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC)

¹ New York Post. (2020, March 14). Victim of possible coronavirus hate crime in Queens speaks out. Retrieved from <https://nypost.com/2020/03/14/victim-of-possible-coronavirus-hate-crime-in-queens-speaks-out/>

² News West 9. (2020, March 14). Teen charged in 'racially motivated' Sam's club stabbing. Retrieved from <https://www.newswest9.com/article/news/stabbing-at-sams-club/513-da08cae7-b407-491a-9c24-dcec22ee5dd3>

³ CBS News. (2020, February 14). Bullies attack Asian American teen at school, accusing him of having coronavirus. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-bullies-attack-asian-teen-los-angeles-accusing-himof-having-coronavirus/>

⁴ Cavalier Daily. (2020, March 12). Chinese international student reports attempted assault at U.Va. Retrieved from <https://www.cavalierdaily.com/article/2020/03/chinese-international-student-reports-attempted-assault-at-u-va>

⁵ World Health Organization. (2015, May). World Health Organization Best Practices for the Naming of New Human Infectious Diseases. Retrieved from https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/163636/WHO_HSE_FOS_15.1_eng.pdf;jsessionid=B646C7585BC8F003CBD121B8C513B0F7?sequence=1

⁶ Nancy Pelosi. (2020, February 24). Pelosi Remarks at Media Availability Following Visit to San Francisco's Chinatown and Meetings with Local Business Owners. Retrieved from <https://www.speaker.gov/newsroom/22420>

circulated a letter to Members of Congress, urging them to help stop the spread of xenophobia and misinformation by only sharing verified information pertaining to COVID-19, how it spreads, and how Americans should protect themselves. We call on you to do the same; In the face of this growing threat, the American people need to hear from their leaders that Asian Americans are not to blame.

We therefore call upon the White House to issue a public statement condemning these increasing racist attacks, and to establish an investigative Task Force via Executive Order to protect the civil rights of AAPIs. This might draw inspiration from the largely successful AAPI Bullying Prevention Task Force, established in 2014. The body conducted research and provided federal resources to AAPI victims of classroom bullying. This new Task Force should include offices of the FBI and DOJ to facilitate their collaboration on this urgent matter.

To the FBI and DOJ, we ask Director Wray and Attorney General Barr to make the investigation of anti-AAPI hate crimes a top priority, as AAPI communities are particularly vulnerable at present time. Jamie Raskin, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, wrote to Director Wray in February asking the FBI to improve its hate crimes data collection.⁷ We echo those concerns. Options such as improved law enforcement officer training, improved quality assurance for data collection, and incentives for local law enforcement agencies to report hate crimes to the FBI should all be explored. We request the collection and publication of comprehensive, quantitative data that is disaggregated by ethnicity and geographic location, and we urge the FBI and DOJ to allocate more resources to address this priority. These actions are necessary for the safety and peace of mind of AAPI communities nationwide.

It is imperative that our nation comes together in these uncertain times. We need leadership that is grounded in truth, equity and compassion, and is committed to taking on racism and xenophobia directly. We urge you to call on elected and appointed officials in all levels of government to demonstrate their commitment to keeping ALL communities safe and healthy. OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates stands ready to do our part in fighting against racism, bigotry, and xenophobia.

Sincerely,
Rita Pin Ahrens
Executive Director, OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates

⁷ Committee on Oversight and Reform. (2020, February 12). Letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qhy8O2iRR-Zipeb4QQ0xTWPffk7WX2X/view?usp=sharing>



OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates

ADVOCATE EMBRACING THE HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS

cc: The Honorable Judy Chu, Member of Congress, Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus

343 E 81st Association LLC

AACC

AAPI Progressive Action

Act To Change

African American Ministers In Action

Alabama Justice Initiative

Alief Art House

All Access Interpreters

Amaanah Refugee Services

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

Apex for Youth

Arab American Association of New York

Arab American Institute

Arizona Asian American Bar Association

Arizona Women Lawyers Association

Asian American Action Fund

Asian American Arts Alliance

Asian American Bar Association of Chicago

Asian American Bar Association of Houston

Asian American Bar Association of New York

Asian American Chamber of Commerce

Asian American Federation

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

Asian American Prosecutors Association

Asian Leaders Alliance

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Colorado

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of South Florida

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Tampa Bay

Asian Pacific American Heritage Association

Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS)

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey

Asian Pacific American Lawyers of the Inland Empire (APALIE)

Asian Pacific American Women Lawyers Alliance (APAWLA)

Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)

Asian Real Estate Association of America

Asian/Pacific Bar Association of Sacramento (ABAS)

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)



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Association of Chinese Americans, Inc.
Border Angels
Bread & Roses Missouri
Brooklyn Chinese-American Association
California Asian Pacific American Bar Association
Center for Asian American Media
Chhaya CDC
Chinese American Council of Sacramento
Chinese Community Center, Houston
Chinese Culture Education and Services
Chinese Methodist Center Corporation
Chinese Progressive Association
Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association
Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)
CMP (Chinatown Manpower Project)
Coalition of Asian-American IPA
Communities United Against Hate
Community Partners Advocate of Little Saigon Sacramento (cPALsS)
Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association
Council of Korean Americans
Council Of Peoples Organization
Crossings TV
Dallas Asian-American Bar Association
Daya Inc
Decarcerate Tompkins County
Development (National CAPACD)
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Dr. Michael Hutchins Impact on Wildlife Fund
EARLY MO
East Coast Asian American Student Union (ECAASU)
Emgage-TX
Enero LLC
Equality California
Equality Labs
Filipino American Lawyers of San Diego
Filipino American National Historical Society - Houston (FANHS)
Filipino Lawyers of Washington (FLOW)
Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPRO)
Filipinx Artists of Houston
Florin Road Partnership
Girls Inc.
Greater Orlando Asian American Bar Association
Hamilton-Madison House



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Hindu American Foundation
Hispanic Federation
Hmong American Partnership
Hmong National Development
Houston Coalition Against Hate
Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
Huaxia Chinese Academy of Greater New York
Human Rights Campaign
Intec Industries
Interfaith Alliance
International Institute of Buffalo
International Institute of Los Angeles
International Institute of New England
International Institute of St. Louis
IntuitiveX
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
Japanese American Social Services, Inc.
Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
KAACCH
Korean American Bar Association of Northern California
Korean American Bar Association of Washington
Korean American Voters League
Korean Community Lawyers Association
Korean-American Bar Association of Washington, DC
Lambda Legal
Laotian American National Alliance
League of Women Voters of the United States
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Metro Theater Company
Mi Familia Vota
Migrant Clinicians Network
Minnesota Asian Pacific American Bar Association
MotivAsians for Cleveland
Muslim Advocates
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
NALEO Educational Fund
NASTAD
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP)
National Association of Social Workers (NASA)



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National Center for Farmworker Health
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community
National Council of Jewish Women
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NAFFAA)
National Filipino American Lawyers Association (NFALA)
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Indian Education Association
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
National Women's Law Center
OCA - Central Virginia Chapter
OCA - Fairfield County
OCA - Greater Chicago
OCA - Greater Houston
OCA - Greater Los Angeles
OCA - Greater Washington, DC Chapter (OCA-DC)
OCA - Las Vegas
OCA - New Jersey
OCA - New York Chapter
OCA - Pittsburgh
OCA - Sacramento
OCA - San Francisco
OCA - St. Louis Chapter
OCA - Westchester Hudson Valley
Orange County Asian American Bar Association
Orange County Korean American Bar Association (OCKABA)
Pan Asian Lawyers of San Diego
People For the American Way
Philippine American Bar Association (PABA)
Philippine American Chamber of Commerce (PACC)
Pilipino American Unity for Progress Inc. - Texas Chapter
Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA)
RAISE
Sakhi for South Asian Women
Salesforce Asiapacforce
Sampreshan Inc
San Diego Chinese Attorneys Association
Sikh Coalition
Silver State Equality - Nevada
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Bar Association - Southern California
South Asian Bar Association of Chicago
South Asian Bar Association of San Diego



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South Asian Youth Action
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association
St. Francis Community Services, Catholic Legal Assistance Ministry
St. Louis Chapter of JACL
Thai American Samakkee Coalition
The Korean-American Family Service Center
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Witness to Witness program
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Uptown Studios
VN TeamWork, Inc.
Washington Chinese Youth Club
Washington University Undergraduate and Graduate Workers Union
Westchester Association of Chinese Americans
Western States Center