



Written Statement For the Hearing Entitled, “Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans” on March 18, 2021 at 10:00 AM
Testimony from the National Federation of Filipino American Associations

Dear Chairman Cohen, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties of the House Committee on the Judiciary,

The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) is pleased to submit this written statement to the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties of the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary for the March 18, 2021 hearing titled “Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans.”

Since 1997, NaFFAA has promoted the welfare and well-being of the four million Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States. As a non-partisan and non-profit organization, NaFFAA is the largest national affiliation of Filipino American institutions, umbrella organizations, and individuals. NaFFAA’s mission is to promote the welfare and well-being of Filipino Americans throughout the United States by amplifying their voices, advocating on behalf of their interests, and providing resources to facilitate their empowerment.

We thank the subcommittee for conducting this hearing to understand the alarming rise in discrimination, harrassment, and violence against Asian Americans in the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and we welcome the opportunity to share the experiences of the communities that we serve.

Asian Americans have been facing a dual pandemic of the coronavirus and of racism. Our communities have endured not only health disparities and economic hardships but also racism and xenophobia from being unjustly scapegoated for the spread of the coronavirus. We have experienced tremendous grief, mourning both lives lost to the virus and to white supremacist violence.

Attacks against Asian Americans began nearly as soon as COVID-19 arrived in the United States and have not abated since. In March 2020, an Asian American family with two children, ages 2

and 6, was stabbed in Texas. The next month, an Asian American woman in Brooklyn, New York was attacked with a substance that gave her chemical burns.

In January 2021, Vicha Ratanapakdee, an 84-year old Thai American, died after being shoved to the ground while walking in San Francisco. Later in February, Noel Quintana, a 61-year old Filipino American man, was slashed in the face during his morning commute on the New York City subway.

Just this week, six Asian women working at massage parlors in Atlanta, Georgia were killed by a suspected white supremacist. It is painfully clear to us that racist scaremongering and scapegoating is deadly, and it is harming the most vulnerable members of our Asian American communities—elders, women, immigrants, and working-class people.

Over 3,800 hate crimes and hate incidents against Asian Americans were reported to Stand Against Hatred (Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC), OCA - Asian Pacific Advocates, and Stop AAPI Hate from March 2020 to February 2021. Of these almost 4,000 reported incidents, nearly 70% of victims were women. In the past year, offenses legally classified as hate crimes against Asian Americans increased by 150% in major cities like Los Angeles and New York City. All these attacks, hate crimes or not, constitute an abhorrent pattern of violence that must end.

It is crucial to note that violence and discrimination against Asian Americans have been startlingly constant throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It is even more crucial to understand that Asian Americans have experienced structural violence and racism for decades and beyond. Our communities deserve safety and justice and demand an end to racism and white supremacy that endangers all of us.

These attacks on Asian Americans are unjust and unacceptable, and they are not new. Our communities have experienced violence and racism—interpersonal, institutional, and structural—since the beginning of our stories in this nation.

After the United States' victory in World War II and two months after Filipino soldiers completed their wartime service to the United States, Congress passed the first of two Rescission Acts stripping Filipino soldiers of their status as U.S. veterans and effectively denying them their rightful benefits. It was not until October 2017 —over 72 years after World War II ended — when the U.S. Congress finally recognized the service and sacrifice of Filipino American veterans and awarded them and their families their full benefits and Congressional Gold Medals.

NaFFAA thanks the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties for bringing attention to harm that Asian American communities have been experiencing during this pandemic and for holding this hearing. We urge members of this subcommittee to bear in mind that racism and discrimination against Asian Americans did not begin with the start of the pandemic and without decisive, structural change, will persist long after the pandemic's end. Additionally, we hope you will continue to use the power of this subcommittee to address the specific needs of not only Asian Americans but also Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders and all other communities of color that have borne the brunt of the pandemic and of centuries of racism and violence.

Sincerely,

Brendan G. Flores
National Chair and President
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)