

AFL-CIO

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties
HEARING: Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans
Thursday, March 18, 2021

The entire labor movement is shocked and outraged by another racist attack on Asian women in Atlanta on the eve of this hearing. Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workers are a vital part of our labor movement and we will not stand by while members of our family are targeted. The murders in Atlanta are a horrific part of the surging violence Asian Americans have faced over the past year, and reinforce that we all must continue to fight against anti-Asian racism in all forms.

The anti-Asian racism that has skyrocketed during the coronavirus pandemic is a stain on our nation. The labor movement condemns this vile behavior and will continue to fight these injustices. Acts of physical violence, yelling of racial slurs and intimidation tactics used against our Asian American friends, family and communities must be called out, punished and stopped.

Recent events are the tragic extension of a long history of violence against Asian Americans that includes the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, lynchings and white mob violence on Asian ethnic communities, denaturalization of Indian American citizens, and Islamophobia against Muslim, Arab and Middle Eastern communities.

As our nation continues to roil in response to state-sanctioned violence and a pandemic that has disproportionately harmed communities of color, we must acknowledge that the structural injustices brought to light by these crises are deep and multi-layered.

Lessons from other recent tragedies make clear just how important it is for social justice movements to prioritize authentic community safety. Securing the ability for people to live and work safely requires us to ensure that everyone has adequate access to housing, food, health care and other basic necessities. By working together to ensure we meet each other's needs, we learn valuable lessons on how we can keep each other safe and take community safety back into our hands.

Instead of providing real solutions to address the pressing needs of workers and communities, President Trump and too many of his followers intentionally stoked racism, xenophobia, and anti-Asian sentiment—which has led directly to violence. Now we must all take responsibility to turn this dangerous tide and ensure that no one is excluded, targeted, harassed or otherwise harmed because of their ethnicity

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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We know that strong communities, families and unions are what will bring us through the COVID-19 crisis and help spur just and lasting recovery. We commit to solidarity with all of our AAPI siblings during this time—those on the frontlines, those who have been laid off, those who are not receiving federal or local relief because of language or immigration status barriers, those held in detention centers and prisons, those who are separated from their families, and those who are afraid of being torn away from their families. We will continue to work closely with the Asia Pacific American Labor Alliance in addressing anti-Asian racism and advancing an inclusive and restorative policy agenda.

Only through unity will we recover from this crisis and begin to mend the wounds caused by physical and structural violence and racism.

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