

Testimony of A Better Balance
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties
Committee on the Judiciary

Hearing on Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans

March 22, 2021

To Chairman Cohen, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We submit this testimony regarding the violence and discrimination faced by Asian Americans, and particularly Asian American women. A Better Balance is dedicated to advancing justice for workers and ensuring that all people can care for themselves and their families without sacrificing their economic security. That goal cannot be realized if Asian Americans, especially Asian American women, are unable to go to work without fearing that they, or their loved ones, will be victims of violence or other oppression due to systemic racism and sexism.

Anti-Asian violence and discrimination have been persistent stains on the conscience of this nation since before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The rising levels of anti-Asian violence amidst the Trump administration's scapegoating of Chinese Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic this past year, and especially the deadly shootings in Atlanta on March 16th, 2021 which killed six Asian American women, are brutal reminders of the urgently necessary work this country must do to rid ourselves of white supremacy, anti-Asian racism, and misogyny, and to create a country in which everyone can feel safe.

Women of Asian descent in America are disproportionately impacted by anti-Asian racism and violence because of the interacting operation of racism and misogyny. The horrific shootings in Georgia on March 16th make this inescapably clear, but it was also clear well before that. Asian American women have had disproportionately high jobless rates during the pandemic—with forty-four percent of Asian American women finding themselves out of work for six months or more as of January 2021—a trend that is attributable largely to the concentration of Asian

American women in low-paying service industry jobs and to anti-Asian racism. And in polling from the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, nearly half of the Asian American and Pacific Islander women respondents were affected by anti-Asian racism in the last two years alone. The shootings on March 16th, then, not only make inescapably clear the workings of anti-Asian racism and misogyny; they make clear how unacceptably far those in power in this country have been willing to allow anti-Asian racism and misogyny to go before acting. We are appalled but not surprised, given this country's history, that the level of anti-Asian racism and misogyny were allowed to continue unchecked up to this point, costing us the lives of those lost on March 16th and many more lives in the last year alone. A response was necessary long ago, but in the absence of that, a response is needed now.

Elected officials must prioritize the needs of the Asian American community and respond to the horrible tragedy in Georgia, the wide-spread anti-Asian racism and violence throughout the country, and the systemic and pernicious anti-Asian racism that enabled both. Asian American women and elders have been disproportionately impacted by systemic and individual instances of anti-Asian racism, and their needs must be at the center of the response. Instead of increasing the involvement of a criminal justice system that is built on anti-Black racism and violence, elected officials should respond to anti-Asian racism and violence by prioritizing community needs and community aid. At the same time, elected officials should prioritize responses that address the systemic white supremacy that has plagued our nation since its founding. We should all be able to feel safe while going to work, living our lives, and caring for ourselves and loved ones.

We call on Congress to take immediate action to address the white supremacy at the root of anti-Asian racism, misogyny, and violence and to support the Asian American community in Georgia and throughout the country.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance