

**Testimony of Congresswoman Judy Chu (CA-27)  
Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus**

**Before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights,  
and Civil Liberties**

**Hearing on “Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans”**

**March 18, 2021**

Thank you Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Jordan, Subcommittee Chairman Cohen, Ranking Member Johnson, and other distinguished members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is with a heavy heart that we are here today, still shocked and heartbroken about the murder of eight in Georgia, including 6 Asian immigrant women by a gunman in Georgia who targeted 3 Asian American businesses, with the first one named Young’s Asian Massage. Because of crimes like these, I, as Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, or CAPAC, urged the Committee to undertake this hearing because the Asian American community has reached a crisis point that cannot be ignored.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans have been terrified by the alarming surge in anti-Asian bigotry and violence we have witnessed across our nation. In fact, it was over one year ago that CAPAC first began to sound the alarm bells about the anti-Asian discrimination we were beginning to see due to misinformation and stigma that wrongly associated Asian Americans with the coronavirus.

But what started out last January as dirty looks and verbal assaults has escalated to physical attacks and violence against innocent Asian Americans. And these attacks have increasingly become more deadly. Just as many Asian Americans were preparing for the Lunar New Year last month, we saw a surge in anti-Asian violence. Many of the victims have been older and vulnerable, like Vicha Ratanapakdee, an 84-year-old Thai man in San Francisco who was killed in an unprovoked assault while on his morning walk. In New York, 61-year-old Noel Quintana’s face was slashed from ear to ear with a box cutter in the subway. In Oakland’s Chinatown, a camera captured a 91-year-old man being thrown to the ground by an assailant. In my own congressional district, a Chinese American man was attacked at a bus stop in Rosemead, causing him to lose part of his finger. This has become almost a daily tragedy and has had a chilling effect on our community.

Today, we find that there have been nearly 3,800 anti-Asian hate crimes and incidents in just the past year alone. They were stoked by the words of former President Donald Trump who sought to shift blame and anger away from his own flawed response to the coronavirus. He used racial slurs like “Wuhan virus,” “China plague,” and “Kung flu” despite the fact that the CDC and the World Health Organization warned not to associate the virus with a specific ethnicity, country, or geographic region due to the stigma it causes, hence they named it a neutral term, COVID-19.

Immediately, we in CAPAC took Donald Trump on about this racist terminology. We issued statements, held press conferences, and sent letters. But our pleas and the guidance from experts were ignored. Instead, he doubled down on using these slurs, directing more hate and blame at the Asian American community. Over the past year, hostile anti-Asian COVID comments on Twitter increased by 900% and we saw a nearly 150% surge in anti-Asian hate crimes in major U.S. cities. And even though Donald Trump is no longer president, I believe the most recent round of anti-Asian attacks are the aftermath of one year of hateful attacks and four years of ugly comments about immigrants and people of color.

That is why I am so grateful that we have a new President, Joe Biden, who is working to stop these attacks, not incite them. Within his first week in office, President Biden issued a presidential memorandum to combat and condemn xenophobia against AAPIs and ensures the Department of Justice works with our community to address these surging hate crimes.

But Congress must do its part as well. That's why CAPAC pushed for legislation, such as Congresswoman Grace Meng's resolution to condemn anti-Asian sentiment related to COVID-19, which passed the House last fall. And that's why it is important to pass critical legislation like Congressman Beyer's NO HATE Act and Congresswoman Meng's COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act that will help us to better track and respond to hate crimes and incidents against Asian Americans. And we are calling for a National Day to speak out against anti-Asian hate on March 26.

We must continue to push back against xenophobia every time it rears its ugly head. Whether it's the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese American incarceration during World War II, or the surveillance of South Asian, Muslim, and Sikh communities after 9-11, our history has shown us what happens when Asian Americans are used as scapegoats in times of crisis. Lives are at stake, and it is critical that Congress takes bold action to address this pandemic of discrimination and hate.