

March 18, 2021
Congresswoman Grace Meng
Statement to the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties
Hearing: *Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans*

Chairman Cohen, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished members of this Committee, thank you for organizing today's hearing on Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans. For over a year, against the backdrop of a raging COVID-19 virus and an economic crisis, Asian Americans have been fighting an additional pandemic – the virus of hate and bigotry.

Anti-Asian rhetoric like “China-virus” or “Kung-flu,” misinformation, racism, discrimination, and unfounded blame for the spread of COVID-19 have left Asian Americans traumatized and terrorized. Since last year, there has been over 3,800 reported incidents of anti-Asian hate. But we know the majority of incidents go unreported. Just last week, in my district, an Asian mother and baby were spat on three times and told “China-virus, go home.” Also in New York, a 61-year-old Filipino man had his face slashed, and an 83-year-old Korean American woman was punched and knocked unconscious; she was left lying in the street in her own blood.

We also cannot ignore the fact that nearly 70 percent of reported anti-Asian hate incidents have come from Asian American women. In fact, just this week, we saw the terrible news about the six Asian women who were shot and killed in the Atlanta-area. Our community is bleeding. We are in pain, and for the last year, we have been screaming out for help.

Asian American discrimination is not new in this country. From the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to the World War II internment of Japanese Americans; and from the 1975 police brutality in Manhattan's Chinatown to the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin – discrimination against Asian Americans is a shameful part of U.S. History. Unfortunately, so much of this history is not taught in our schools. Excluding Asian Americans from our history books and curriculum renders us invisible and deems us the “perpetual foreigner.”

Chairman Cohen, Ranking Member Thompson, I come before your panel today fearful and furious. Even as schools are re-opening across the country, Asian American parents are scared to send their children back to school. We are forbidding our elderly parents and grandparents from leaving their homes for fear of harassment or – worse – death.

In the 116th Congress, I introduced my resolution to condemn anti-Asian sentiment related to COVID-19. I was grateful my resolution passed the House of Representatives in September 2020 with bipartisan support. It cannot go unnoticed, however, that 164 of our Republican colleagues voted against it – even though some had the audacity to tweet condolences in the aftermath of this tragedy in Atlanta. Where was their support over the past year when we have been telling everyone that the Asian American community is in danger? In light of the recent attacks against elderly Asian Americans, I reintroduced my resolution in February. I am also grateful to President Biden for speaking out so unequivocally and for taking executive action against this hate.

During this last year, it became painfully apparent that we need a comprehensive effort – from local communities to the federal level. That is why I support the No Hate Act and that is why I also introduced the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act. My bill would assign a point person at the Department of Justice to quickly review hate crimes related to COVID-19; direct guidance for online reporting in multiple languages; and expand linguistically appropriate public education campaigns to make our communities more comfortable to report these incidents. My bill also builds on President Biden's January 26th Presidential Memorandum by directing relevant federal agencies to work with community-based organizations to find ways to talk about the COVID-19 virus in a way that is not racist or discriminatory. I urge my colleagues on this committee for swift consideration of this bill. We cannot turn a blind eye to people living in fear.

Thank you again for this opportunity to come before your committee. I hope we can work together to end this hate. After all, this is not an Asian American issue; this is an American issue.