

Statement of Rep. Michelle Steel
House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights,
and Civil Liberties
March 18, 2021

Chairman Steve Cohen and Ranking Member Chip Roy, thank you for holding this important conversation today.

It has been heartbreaking to see the rise in Anti-Asian American hate and harassment over the last year.

As we will hear today from our witnesses, hate against the Asian American community is not new.

According to Shan Wu, a former federal prosecutor, violence against Asian Americans has been “underscrutinized, underprosecuted and often condoned.”

There is a long, sad history of intolerance and hate directed at our community.

And in the last year, almost 4,000 incidents of verbal harassment, physical assault and discrimination have been reported.

California is at the top of the list, with 44% of all incidents reported happening in my home state.

New York is second on the list, making up 13% of all the incidents reported.

68% of these incidents and crimes were targeted towards Asian American women.

This has to stop.

When I was chair of the OC Board of Supervisors, I introduced a resolution that called for tolerance and compassion towards all

residents, and condemned discrimination against the AAPI community.

I was proud this year to introduce a similar resolution in Congress, with another Orange County Congresswoman Katie Porter.

That's because combating hate is not a partisan issue.

We can all agree that violence against any community should never be tolerated.

As a first-generation Korean American, who is now serving her community in the halls of Congress, this is my American dream.

I want future generations of Americans to know they can achieve anything in this great country.

That's why I'd also like to use some of my time today to talk about the discrimination that the AAPI community is experiencing in our nation's education system.

It's one of the reasons why my colleague Rep. Kim and I joined Ranking Member Jordan and Subcommittee Ranking Member Johnson to request the president of Yale University to testify at today's hearing.

Last year, the Department of Justice filed a case alleging that Yale University was discriminating against Asian American and White applicants.

But the Biden Administration dropped the suit last month.

This is totally wrong and sets a dangerous precedent.

In 1996, I supported and campaigned for California's Proposition 209, which banned racial preferences in public hiring, education and contracting.

It was modeled after the Civil Rights Act.

Before Prop 209 was passed, the four-year graduation rate for underrepresented racial minorities in the University of California system was 31.3%.

By 2014, that had increased to 55.1%.

The six-year graduation rate is even better, increasing from 66.5% in 1998 to 75.1% in 2013.

Last year in California, Democrats introduced Proposition 16 to bring back racial preferences in hiring, contracting and our education system.

Californians overwhelmingly rejected it.

As a new Member of Congress and an immigrant to this country, we should be encouraging all students and young people to succeed, especially in our education system.

Discrimination is against the fundamental values of American culture, and that includes discrimination against the AAPI community in the halls of our schools and universities.

This is wrong.

This type of behavior is only hurting future generations.

We should be working together to stop this discrimination and hate in its tracks, and to encourage the next generation to achieve their own American dream.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to testify and share this with you today. I yield back the remainder of my time.