

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

Thank you for featuring the quote “Coronavirus is no excuse for hate” on the Department of Justice’s hate crimes website. The COVID-19 pandemic affects all Americans and has wrought enormous pain in the United States.¹ Some Americans are facing increased discrimination as a result of the pandemic. We write to draw particular attention to an increase in verbal and physical attacks as well as discrimination towards Asian Americans who have been wrongly blamed for the virus’ spread. We respectfully request that you publicly condemn acts of anti-Asian bias, and provide us with regular status updates regarding the steps the Department of Justice is taking and will take going forward to combat this behavior.

Asian Americans are not responsible for the spread of coronavirus in the United States; yet, since the start of the pandemic they have experienced continued harassment, violence, and discrimination. As of June 3, the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council reported 2,066 incidents of coronavirus-related discrimination.² These and numerous news reports have documented cases ranging from the denial of services at stores to verbal harassment on the subway to physical assaults.

In one particularly egregious instance, an individual in Texas stabbed three Asian Americans, two of whom were children, because he thought they were infecting others with COVID-19. In March, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Houston field office acknowledged the likelihood of a surge in hate crime incidents against Asian Americans.³ And most recently, a

¹ “United States COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by State.” *CDC COVID Data Tracker*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/index.html.

² “Anti-Chinese Rhetoric Tied to Racism against Asian Americans.” Borja, Melissa, et al. *Stop AAPI Hate Report*. Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council, 17 June 2020, http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Anti-China_Rhetoric_Report_6_17_20.pdf.

³ Margolin, Josh. “FBI Warns of Potential Surge in Hate Crimes against Asian Americans amid Coronavirus.” *ABC News*, ABC News Network, 27 Mar. 2020, abcnews.go.com/US/fbi-warns-potential-surge-hate-crimes-asian-americans/story?id=69831920.

new Ipsos survey conducted for the Center for Public Integrity found that more than 30 percent of Americans have witnessed someone blaming Asian people for the coronavirus pandemic.⁴

We appreciate the op-ed the Department placed in the *Washington Examiner* generally stating that hate crimes will be investigated and prosecuted.⁵ However, the dangers faced by the Asian American community today are very real and deserve a strong and specific response by our government. In fact, on May 8, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights acknowledged its concerns “over the increase in xenophobic animosity toward Asian Americans (and perceived Asian Americans) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic” and unanimously issued recommendations urging federal agencies reduce this sentiment.⁶

We note that in the early 2000s during the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak, the Bush Administration immediately took steps to prevent discrimination against Asian Americans by creating a community outreach team to monitor and document acts of anti-Asian bias and engage with the community.

Two years earlier following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Administration had similarly sought to prevent attacks against Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian American communities by engaging with community leaders, conducting coordinated civil rights enforcement, and speaking out forcefully.⁷ While these prior responses were not perfect, they represented an important effort to acknowledge and address the specific discrimination.

Despite the fear present within the community, each and every day Asian Americans help to combat COVID-19. While Asian Americans comprise 7 percent of the U.S. population, 17.1 percent of active medical physicians are Asian American.⁸ Similarly, Asian Americans are serving our country by working as nurses, health aides, and in many other essential occupations. Asian Americans are just as American as any other group of people in our country.

⁴ *New Center for Public Integrity/Ipsos Poll Finds Most Americans Say the Coronavirus Pandemic Is a Natural Disaster*. Center for Public Integrity, Ipsos, 28 Apr. 2020, www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2020-04/topline-center-for-public-integrity-042820.pdf.

⁵ Dreiband, Eric. *How the Justice Department Is Standing up for Civil Rights amid Coronavirus Pandemic*. *Washington Examiner*, 9 Apr. 2020, www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/how-the-justice-department-is-standing-up-for-civil-rights-amid-coronavirus-pandemic.

⁶ “U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Unanimously Issues Recommendations to Secure Nondiscrimination in the COVID-19 Pandemic Context, and Specifically to Address Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia.” U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 8 May 2020, <https://www.usccr.gov/press/2020/05-08-Anti-Asian-Discrimination.pdf>.

⁷ Campbell, Alexia Fernández, and Alex Ellerbeck. “Federal Agencies Are Doing Little about the Rise in Anti-Asian Hate.” *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 16 Apr. 2020, www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/federal-agencies-are-doing-little-about-rise-anti-asian-hate-n1184766.

⁸ Bureau, US Census. “Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: May 2020.” The United States Census Bureau, 30 Apr. 2020, www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2020/aian.html.

“Figure 18. Percentage of All Active Physicians by Race/Ethnicity, 2018.” *Diversity in Medicine: Facts and Figures 2019*, Association of American Medical Colleges, www.aamc.org/data-reports/workforce/interactive-data/figure-18-percentage-all-active-physicians-race/ethnicity-2018.

We respectfully request that you, as head of the Department of Justice, forcefully condemn anti-Asian bias to send an unambiguous message to all Americans that discrimination against this community is un-American and will not be tolerated. Further, we would ask that you update us regularly as to what steps the Department has taken to address our concerns. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

Rob Woodall
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Pete Olson
Member of Congress

/s/ Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/ Karen Bass
Member of Congress

/s/ Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

/s/ Ted S. Yoho
Member of Congress

/s/ Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

/s/ Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/ Adam Smith
Member of Congress

/s/ Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress

/s/ Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/ Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

/s/ Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

/s/ Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

/s/ Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/ Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

/s/ John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Takano
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/ Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

/s/ Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

/s/ Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/ Al Green
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/ Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Kim
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Levin
Member of Congress

/s/ Angie Craig
Member of Congress

/s/ Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

/s/ Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

/s/ Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/ Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/ Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/ Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

/s/ Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

/s/ Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

/s/ Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

/s/ Cedric L. Richmond
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/s/ Chellie Pingree
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/s/ Cheri Bustos
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/s/ Colin Z. Allred
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/s/ Danny K. Davis
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/s/ Darren Soto
Member of Congress

/s/ David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/ David Trone
Member of Congress

/s/ Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

/s/ Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

/s/ Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

/s/ Denny Heck
Member of Congress

/s/ Dina Titus
Member of Congress

/s/ Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress

/s/ Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

/s/ Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/ Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/ Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/ Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

/s/ Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

/s/ Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

/s/ Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
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/s/ Grace F. Napolitano
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/s/ Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/ Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

/s/ Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/ Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

/s/ Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

/s/ Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

/s/ J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

/s/ Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/ Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/ Jason Crow
Member of Congress

/s/ Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

/s/ Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

/s/ Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

/s/ John B. Larson
Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

/s/ Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

/s/ Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/ Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress

/s/ Katie Porter
Member of Congress

/s/ Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

/s/ Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

/s/ Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

/s/ Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

/s/ Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

/s/ Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

/s/ Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

/s/ Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/ Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

/s/ Max Rose
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter Welch
Member of Congress

/s/ Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/ Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

/s/ Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

/s/ Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/ Ron Kind
Member of Congress

/s/ Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

/s/ Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

/s/ Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

/s/ Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

/s/ Sean Casten
Member of Congress

/s/ Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/ Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

/s/ Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Stephanie Murphy
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Member of Congress

/s/ Susie Lee
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/s/ Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

/s/ Suzanne Bonamici
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/s/ Sylvia R. Garcia
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/s/ Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/ TJ Cox
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/s/ Tony Cárdenas
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/s/ Tulsi Gabbard
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/s/ Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

/s/ Vicente Gonzalez
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/s/ William R. Keating
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/s/ Yvette D. Clarke
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/s/ Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress