

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4309

April 1, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

Over the last few weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 1,000 hate crimes have been reported against Asian Americans. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Houston office has reported that it anticipates a surge in incidents of coronavirus-related hate crimes against Asian Americans across the nation.¹ In Texas, a family of three—including two small children—were stabbed by an attacker who believed they were carrying the coronavirus.² In California, a 16-year old boy was assaulted and hospitalized by his peers at school who claimed he had the coronavirus.³ In New York, a woman who wore a face mask in a Chinatown subway was brutally attacked and called a “diseased b---h.”⁴

We urge you to immediately denounce and cease your use of the term “Chinese virus” in reference to COVID-19 and condemn other public officials’ association of the coronavirus with persons of Asian descent—including “Wuhan virus” and “Kung-flu.” Such racially charged characterizations of this virus are not only deeply hurtful; they are contributing to a rise in anti-Asian discrimination and violence amid this global public health crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned against using language that associates viruses with a geographic location or ethnic group.⁵ The stigma of being unfairly associated with the COVID-19 outbreak simply due to one’s appearance will only hinder virus response efforts, as people will avoid seeking care and practicing healthy behaviors out of fear of discrimination.

A recent study by the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council has noted daily reports of coronavirus-linked discrimination, with AAPI women being three times more likely to report

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/fbi-warns-potential-surge-hate-crimes-asian-americans/story?id=69831920>

² <https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/3/25/21190655/trump-coronavirus-racist-asian-americans>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/us/chinese-coronavirus-racist-attacks.html>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid19-stigma-guide.pdf>

instances of harassment than men.⁶ These incidents of discrimination vary in form and severity—from racial slurs to being barred from businesses to cases of physical abuse.

The widespread portrayal of Asian Americans as the “model minority” has distorted the highly racialized experience of these communities, who are also perpetually perceived as foreigners. From the Chinese Exclusion Act to the internment of Japanese Americans, the history of our nation reveals shameful and inhumane treatment of Americans that we must never again allow to manifest.

At this critical juncture in this historic national crisis, we must protect and support those who are unfairly targeted and endangered by harmful stereotypes. We should be combatting the uptick in racism and xenophobia experienced by Asian Americans at this time by increasing access to resources for those communities who are limited-English proficient (LEP) as well as direct assistance to Asian-owned businesses. Anti-Asian sentiment and ignorance surrounding this disease has caused a significant financial decline in Asian establishments and Chinatowns across the nation.

Words matter. There is simply no defense for encouraging scapegoating and targeting of immigrants and minorities for spreading a disease that has no borders. This inflammatory rhetoric serves only to justify discrimination and exclusionary laws. Asian Americans do not deserve to be scapegoated at a time when our focus as public servants should be entirely on combatting our common enemy, which is this virus.

In addition to condemning anti-Asian rhetoric during this pandemic, we also request that you work together with communities in coordination with the FBI and Department of Justice to investigate hate crimes against AAPI as expeditiously as possible. With the massive waves of social and economic instability caused by this unprecedented national emergency, we must work together to mitigate the harm to these communities and prevent future incidents of anti-Asian violence. As such, we urge you to act quickly and with the full force of your office to protect the health and safety of all Americans.

Sincerely,



AL GREEN
Member of Congress

⁶ http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/A3PCON_Public_Weekly_Report_3.pdf

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