



STOP  
AAPI  
HATE

August 19, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington DC, 20050

Dear Mr. President,

Earlier this year, addressing the surge in violence, racism, and hate against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, you said, “We have to speak out. We have to act.” Today, we are asking you to do more of both.

We appreciate that you have been an ally to AAPI communities — not just as President, but throughout your career. In March, we [commended](#) your Administration’s *Additional Actions to Respond to Anti-Asian Violence, Xenophobia, and Bias* as an important step in the right direction. Now it’s time to build upon that foundation, because the threat to our communities is ongoing and elevated yet again.

In the coming weeks, your Administration is set to report out on its 90-day investigation into the origins of COVID-19. The sad but undeniable truth is that the simple existence of that report will put our communities at risk. We recognize your Administration’s legitimate interest in identifying the source of this pandemic for the purpose of preventing future outbreaks. At the same time, perception matters. And when your review was announced, many interpreted it as a validation of the so-called “lab leak” theory.

As you well know, while [most scientists agree](#) that transmission via natural origins is a more likely explanation, the hypothesis that COVID originated from Chinese laboratory experiments has sparked a flurry of conspiracy theories that have been weaponized by politicians and pundits resulting in a false scapegoating of Asian Americans as somehow to blame for the pandemic.

The chief purveyors of these conspiracy theories are not interested in getting to the bottom of whether an accidental outbreak could have occurred in a laboratory setting. Instead, they aim to deflect criticism about the early U.S. response to the pandemic and direct blame at China and, by extension, Asian Americans. They are frequently the same people who use racist monikers for the virus and demonize immigrants.

The United States’ relationship with China has long influenced how other Americans have treated those of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. Throughout the pandemic, rhetoric about China’s role in COVID-19’s origins has inspired hate, racism, and violence towards our Asian American and Pacific

Islander communities. For example, the [latest report](#) indicates that of the over 9,000 hate incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate, nearly half included statements regarding anti-Chinese or anti-immigrant rhetoric with the plurality involving scapegoating of China or Chinese people as the source of the novel coronavirus. A plurality of individuals relating these incidents self-reported their ethnicity as Chinese, though individuals from other ethnic groups, such as Koreans, Pacific Islanders, and Vietnamese, also reported being impacted.

Your election, thankfully, ended the barrage of racist, anti-AAPI hate speech from the Oval Office. But it did not halt the epidemic of hatred, violence, and discrimination. Stop AAPI Hate received as many reports of hate incidents in the first 6 months of 2021 as it did in the final 9 months of 2020. Disturbingly, the percentage of those incidents that involved physical violence also increased. AAPI women continue to experience a great deal of violence and discrimination at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender, among other factors. According to a [recent report](#) from NAPAWF (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum) and Stop AAPI Hate, Asian American women reported hate incidents two times as often as Asian American men, and more than half of the Pacific Islander women nationally surveyed reported that anti-AAPI racism had affected their lives in 2020 and 2021.

And so, despite the good intentions of your Administration's forthcoming report, its release will require you to redouble your efforts to combat anti-AAPI hate and violence — to speak out and to act.

First, it is critical that you and your Administration use precise language in all of your public statements about the investigation and about the pandemic more broadly. Understand, for example, that when speaking of the actions of the Chinese government, it's necessary to be specific, rather than simply saying "Chinese" — which can exacerbate racial animus in the United States. Further, we need you to take extra care not to inflame wild conspiracy theories, modeling and demanding precise attention to established facts. And we need you to forcefully and repeatedly condemn anti-China and anti-AAPI rhetoric each and every time this topic comes up, recognizing America's history of translating geopolitical tension into acts of racism and hate at home.

Second, we need more than statements. We need substantive policy change.

As we said at the time, the measures your Administration announced in March were a step forward. But there is much more the federal government can do to protect Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, starting with the following initial actions:

- **Invest in civil rights and human rights initiatives at the state and local levels.** A majority of incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate are not hate crimes — but they are racist acts that require serious and systemic solutions. State and local governments and community leaders have launched innovative efforts to address the harassment, discrimination, and bullying of AAPIs. We urge you to direct federal agencies, like the Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services, to identify and make accessible funding opportunities, such as grants, to support, evaluate, and scale these initiatives.
- **Increase federal funding for, and coordination with, community partners to deliver in-language, culturally competent mental health services.** Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are experiencing unprecedented mental health challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-AAPI hate. The Secretary of Health and Human Services should work with community groups serving AAPIs to develop an outreach and education strategy

for delivering mental health services, as called for in H.R. 3373, that provide for language access at all points of the patient's experience. We urge you to provide the funding needed to implement this strategy, and also to increase funding to the community-based providers and federally-qualified health centers that deliver the bulk of these services in our communities.

- **Prioritize language justice across the federal government.** More than six million Asian Americans and 100,000 Pacific Islanders are limited English proficient (LEP). This impacts their ability to access victim assistance and other services provided by federal agencies and to know and understand their rights under federal civil rights laws. Beyond LEP, impacted AAPIs should be able to communicate, and be communicated with, in their preferred language, especially at a time when they are already vulnerable. Your Administration should update and fully enforce Executive Order 13166 (2000), which provides important protections for LEP AAPIs, and address language barriers in implementing [Executive Order 13985 \(2021\)](#), to advance your whole-of-government agenda on racial equity.
- **Pause the Department of Justice's China Initiative.** The Initiative ostensibly aims to investigate and prosecute economic espionage and the theft of trade secrets. However, in practical effect, the Initiative, which formally began under the previous Administration, subjects Asian American and Asian immigrant scientists and others – particularly those of Chinese descent – to racial profiling, surveillance and wrongful prosecutions, where no evidence of economic espionage or trade secret theft exists. Individuals and their families who have been unjustly targeted have experienced irreparable personal and professional harm. Particularly given your Administration's commitment to racial equity as evidenced by EO 13985, we believe you should pause the Initiative's work, pending the results of an independent review to determine whether it unfairly targeted individuals based on their race, ethnicity, or ancestry.

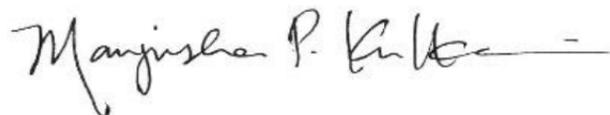
We have appreciated the chance to interact with your staff, and some of our coalition have met with you and Vice President Harris in the past. As the events of this moment make clear, continued engagement is essential; we request the opportunity to meet directly with you and/or the Vice President to discuss these concerns and proposals and to receive an update on the progress of your previously-announced initiatives.

Mr. President, it's no exaggeration to say that your words and actions in the weeks ahead can save AAPI lives. Please help us do that once again.

Sincerely,



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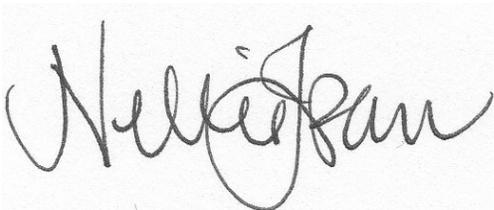
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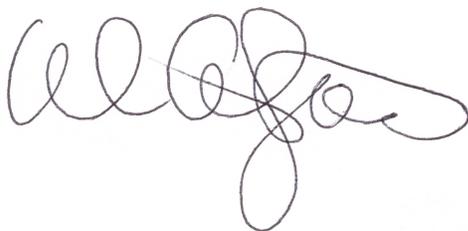
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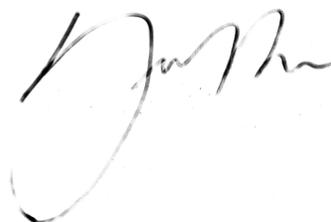
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