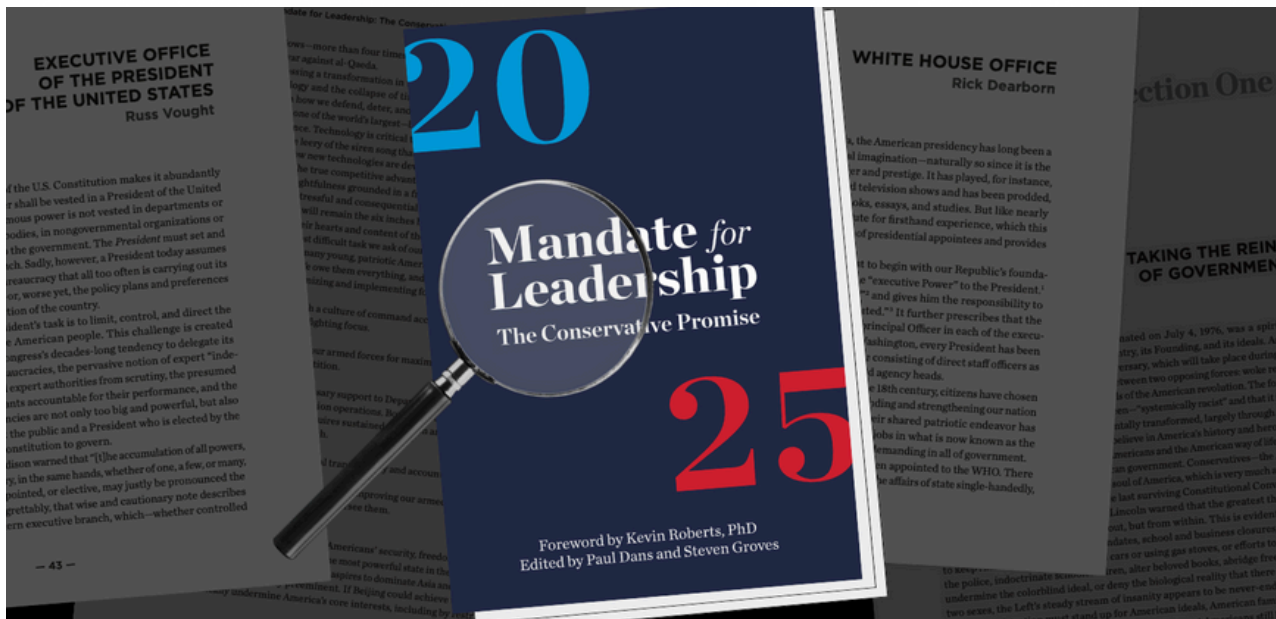


# PROJECT 2025: AN **EXISTENTIAL THREAT** TO ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

August 2024 | Analysis by Stop AAPI Hate



**From the deportation of immigrants to the full-scale attack on our civil rights, here's a rundown of Project 2025 and why it is so dangerous for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) communities.**

Two years ago, when the Heritage Foundation first announced [Project 2025](#), they described it as the opening salvo of the 2025 Presidential Transition Project — an ultra-conservative, ultra-authoritarian blueprint for the remaking of the United States. And it has serious implications for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Nine hundred pages in all, Project 2025 offers hundreds of executive and congressional actions to roll back civil rights protections for marginalized communities; facilitate the surveillance, incarceration, and deportation of millions of immigrants; and make it harder for working families to meet their basic needs.

It also leans into the hateful rhetoric and anti-immigrant fear-mongering that runs rampant in U.S. politics. Throughout the report, the authors of Project 2025 take every chance to demonize and dehumanize Chinese and other immigrant communities — referring to them as “illegal aliens” who “infiltrate” the U.S. and “commit crimes.”

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Whether or not Project 2025 is put into practice, the framing and rhetoric it uses will undoubtedly fan the flames of racism and xenophobia, encourage discrimination in housing, workplaces, and the halls of government, and create a political climate in which none of us feel safe or welcome.

## **Project 2025 targets AA/PI and other immigrants for arrest, incarceration, and deportation.**

**The plan would give Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents broad access to detain and deport immigrants without a warrant, wherever and whenever they choose.**

- If put into practice, ICE agents could claim the right to enter private homes, school grounds, places of business, and houses of worship in the pursuit of undocumented immigrants, without getting a warrant from a judge (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*. 142).



- To keep up with the rising number of arrests, Project 2025 also calls for the expansion of detention spaces, including tents, increasing the number of available beds to 100,000 daily (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 143).
- Detention centers are often managed by private contractors whose facilities have been the subject of allegations of sexual assault and human rights violations. Detained immigrants, including children, have limited access to health care, and suffer from malnutrition, tuberculosis, and mental health conditions.
- ICE could also force states and localities into joining their federal detention and deportation project. To pull this off, Project 2025 recommends withholding federal funding, including disaster funding, from states and localities that choose not to cooperate with immigration officers (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 566).
  - This will put sanctuary cities, like Chicago, or sanctuary states, like New Jersey, in the impossible position of choosing between federal funding and protecting immigrant communities.

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- **Zooming out:** This anti-immigrant witch hunt will also have broader implications for public safety. If local law enforcement is compelled to share information with ICE, research shows that [immigrant families will think twice](#) before reporting a crime – regardless of their immigration status.
- For states like California, with a large immigrant workforce, it will also [devastate the economy](#) and create worker shortages in various industries.
- Project 2025 also supports the termination of the [DACA Program](#), which offers relief from deportation for children who were brought to the United States without documentation (or “Dreamers”). Since 2012, this program has allowed more than 800,000 people – including [14,000 Asian Americans and 150 Pacific Islanders](#) – to attend school, find work, and contribute to public life without fear of deportation (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 145).
  - **Some background:** In 2020, [the Supreme Court blocked](#) the Trump administration’s efforts to terminate DACA, but on process grounds. What this means is, a future administration could succeed at terminating the program and facilitate deportation of hundreds of thousands of Dreamers – so long as they follow the right administrative process.

**It would add a citizenship question to the U.S. Census, discouraging citizens and non-citizens alike from responding – leading to decreased federal funding and political representation for immigrant-rich communities (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 680).**

- The point of the U.S. Census is to count every person living in the United States – regardless of immigration status. The federal government relies on census data to make important decisions – for example, how much federal funding each state will receive or how many seats they will get in the House of Representatives.
  - The citizenship question could have dire consequences for immigrant-rich cities like San Francisco, New York, and Atlanta – which also have large AA/PI populations.

Is this person a citizen of the United States?

☐ Yes, born in the United States

☐ Yes, born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or Northern Marianas

☐ Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents

☐ Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization – Print year of naturalization →

☐ No, not a U.S. citizen

**The citizenship question Trump proposed ahead of the 2020 Census.**

**This isn’t a novel idea:**

In 2018, President Trump called for the revival of the citizenship question on the U.S. Census. Though [the Supreme Court blocked his administration’s efforts](#), Project 2025 reminds us that future attempts could be made to weaponize the U.S. Census against immigrant communities.

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**The project would eliminate family-based immigration and other immigration categories that have allowed generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to immigrate to the United States (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 145).**

- Family-based immigration allows the families of U.S. citizens and permanent residents to immigrate to the United States. It is the most common pathway for Asian immigrants hoping to resettle in the United States.
  - Eliminating family-based immigration will have serious consequences for AA/PI communities and separate thousands of mixed-status families in the process.
  - Eliminating other immigration categories would have serious implications for many immigrants, including families searching for a better life, immigrant parents of U.S.-born children, and refugees fleeing violence and persecution abroad.
- Project 2025 also calls for downsizing the H-1B visa program, which helps college graduates remain in the U.S. after completing their degrees (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 150). Some of our nation's brightest minds in artificial intelligence, electrical engineering, and computer science hold H-1B visas.
  - The majority of H-1B visas (at least 69%) are [awarded to Asian immigrants](#) — most prominently, Indian immigrants, who from 2001-2015, received 50.5% of H-1B visas for first-time employment. Chinese (9.7%), Filipino (3.0%), and South Korean workers (2.8%) are also frequent holders of H-1B visas.
  - The H-1B visa program is an important immigration pipeline for AA/PI college students and graduates alike. It does not reduce economic opportunities for U.S. workers — as Project 2025 will have you believe — but rather, reinforces our position as a global hub for science and innovation.
- **Zooming out:** Immigration is an important issue for AA/PI communities because many AA/PI people are immigrants themselves. [6 in 10 Asians in America and 1 in 5 Pacific Islanders](#) were born outside of the United States. At the same time, most of us are U.S. citizens — if not by birth then through naturalization.
  - On top of its anti-immigrant policies, Project 2025 also dedicates pages upon pages to the dehumanization of immigrants, referring to them as “illegal aliens” who “commit crimes” and have “nefarious purposes.”
    - This kind of rhetoric is textbook anti-immigrant fear-mongering, which is shown to [fuel hate and violence against AA/PI and other immigrant communities](#) — as well as communities of color in general.

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**Key takeaways:** Where immigration reform is concerned, Project 2025 has two main goals. The first is to target, imprison, and deport immigrants — no matter who they are or where they live. The second is to punish immigrant-rich and allied communities.

If put into practice, their cold-blooded policy agenda would succeed on both counts. While the mass deportation project would lead to the incarceration and deportation of tens of millions of immigrants, shutting down pathways to immigration would separate thousands of families, and changes to the U.S. Census would deprive immigrant-rich communities of much-needed federal funding and political representation.

**Project 2025 will fuel the racial profiling of scientists, researchers, and international students, threatening our civil rights and technological leadership.**



*Dr. Franklin Tao was one of more than one hundred Chinese scientists wrongly accused and arrested under the China Initiative.*

It would revive the “China Initiative,” leading to a second wave of racist witch hunts targeting Chinese scientists and researchers (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 556).

- A cornerstone of Project 2025 is the [revival of the China Initiative](#): a Trump-era program designed to prosecute American scientists for alleged economic espionage and trade theft in service of the Chinese government.
- As part of the initiative, [the U.S. Department of Justice investigated at least 150 scientists](#) — 90% of whom were Chinese American. The warrantless surveillance and false accusations destroyed the careers and livelihoods of many innocent people.
- **The impact:** One survey of 2,000 U.S. scientists suggests that [the China Initiative has created a chilling effect on scientific research](#) in which fear of government surveillance keeps American scientists from collaborating with Chinese scientists. This stunts scientific progress in the U.S.
- Though the Biden Administration ended the China Initiative in 2021, Project 2025 supports the full reinstatement of this program in service of our national security interests — even if it means a racist witch hunt against the scientists and researchers who make the U.S. a global leader in innovation (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 556).

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It would lead to the discontinuation of visas for Chinese students and researchers, hampering progress in critical fields (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 790).

- Every year, [close to 300,000 Chinese students](#) enroll in U.S. colleges and universities. Their scholarship supports U.S. advancement in science, engineering, and other fields. Project 2025 wants them gone.
  - To rationalize its immigration ban, the report cites the Chinese threat to U.S. national security. This is classic anti-Asian scapegoating, or the act of holding everyday immigrants accountable for the actions of a foreign government.
  - While it will have a devastating impact on the hundreds of thousands of students and researchers who immigrate to the U.S. in search of an education, there is no evidence that an immigration ban will protect our national interests.
  - As a matter of fact, this immigration ban is a serious threat to the U.S. Without Chinese students and researchers, we run the risk of losing our competitive edge, as the world's brightest minds decide to seek opportunities in other countries instead.



- **The fallout could be dire:** declining technological progress, reduced economic competitiveness, and a serious blow to our strength and aptitude as far as confronting critical challenges and maintaining our leadership on the world stage.
- This kind of immigration ban is a direct descendent of the [Chinese Exclusion Act](#), which barred generations of Chinese immigrants from settling in the United States — just because of where they came from.
  - Until it was eradicated in 1943, this racist and xenophobic legislation tore families apart and fueled a national rise of anti-Asian sentiment, including racial discrimination and hate-fueled violence.

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**Key takeaways:** In conflating everyday Chinese people with the Chinese government, Project 2025 encourages the racial profiling of Chinese Americans and casts suspicion on Chinese and other immigrant communities who have done nothing wrong — just because of what they look like or where they come from.

It is no coincidence that anti-immigrant fear-mongering is a defining feature of Project 2025. It is there to set a foundation for future racist policies that roll back our civil rights and threaten the safety and welfare of all Asians in America.

How do we know? Because it's already happening. Racist rhetoric during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., "China Virus") incited acts of hate against not just Chinese people but also other Asian communities. And more recently, anti-China policies — including Florida's SB 264 land ban — are [fueling racial discrimination](#) against both Chinese and Asian American home buyers more broadly.

### **Project 2025 will make it next to impossible for working families to thrive.**

**The plan would dramatically expand tariffs to "levels that will block out 'Made in China' products," worsening US-China trade relations and driving across-the-board inflation and job losses (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 789).**

- It will place additional financial pressure on American families — including millions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders — by reducing their disposable income. At the same time, price inflation will make household products less affordable.

### **It would drastically cut food assistance and other critical social benefits, plunging millions of working families below the poverty line.**

- Of the 24 million Asian Americans living in the United States, [at least 2.3 million \(10%\)](#) live in poverty. Additionally, 16.4% of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders live in poverty. Cuts to food assistance programs like SNAP and WIC will make it harder for many families to put food on the table and worsen child hunger at a time when [1 in 5 kids](#) in America are already not getting the food they need.
  - Budget cuts would have an even greater impact on [certain AA/PI communities](#) that count on SNAP benefits. In 2020, 60% of Bhutanese Americans and 46% of Marshallese Americans received benefits.
  - *Not to mention:* language access, immigration status, and other challenges will make it even more complicated for Asians and Asian Americans to access the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Project 2025 also reverses a rule that allows certain K-12 schools in low-income communities to offer free meals, letting thousands of school children go hungry. This will also increase stigma against free school meals and decrease food quality.

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**It would impose sweeping reforms to K-12 and higher education, making it harder for low and middle income students to access education opportunities.**

- [Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders as well as Southeast Asian refugees](#) face the greatest challenges with respect to college attainment. Project 2025 will put additional barriers between these communities and access to higher education.
  - Barriers to college access include the privatization of federal student loan programs and the elimination of student loan forgiveness programs (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 353-354).
- Project 2025 would also decrease access to early childhood education by eliminating Head Start: a federal program that provides services and preschool to low-income families with children ages 0-5, including foster and unhoused children (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 482).
- Project 2025 will censor public school teachers and educators with broad restrictions on what public schools can or cannot teach.
  - **What kind of restrictions?** The agenda calls for the immediate expulsion of critical race theory (CRT) and gender identity from public schools (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 4-5, 342-343).
    - This would make it harder for public school students to learn fundamental concepts like systemic racism and gender non-binary representation.
    - **To make things worse:** Project 2025 spouts a never-ending stream of misinformation and propaganda — comparing CRT to a noxious poison and reinforcing the myth of the gender binary. This kind of hateful rhetoric will incite racism and homophobia against students of color and LGBTQ+ students — and marginalized communities at large.

**The project would put new restrictions on reproductive rights and let politicians make life-altering decisions about our bodies.**

- Project 2025 changes the definition of healthcare to exclude abortion, criminalizes medication abortion care, and makes abortion and contraception harder to access (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 450).
  - [One-third of AA/PI pregnancies](#) end in abortion. This is in spite of the significant barriers our communities face in accessing reproductive health care.
  - At the same time, [three-quarters of Asian American adults](#) support legal abortion — the highest level among all racial groups.

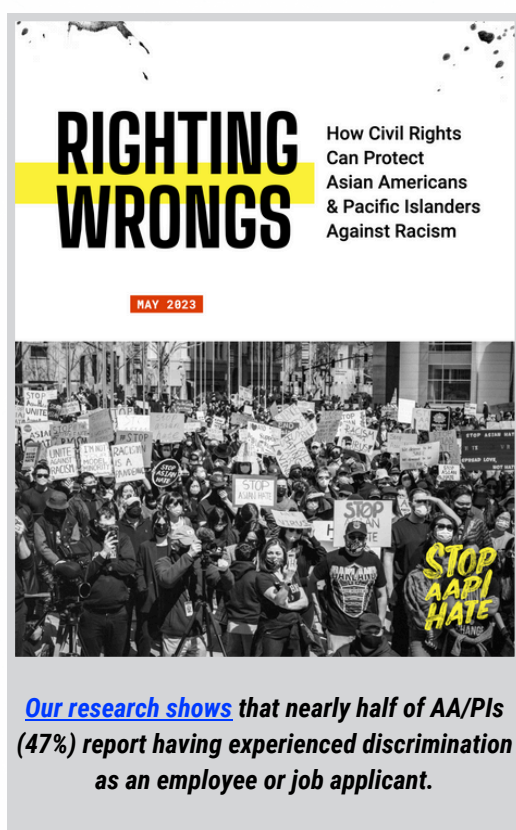
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- Restricting abortion access is not just an affront to our reproductive freedoms, it also goes against what our communities actually want.
- It will also undermine access to sex education, in-vitro fertilization (IVF), and gender-affirming care (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg. 461, 477).

**It would reduce worker protections against race- or gender-based discrimination.**

- Not only does Project 2025 advocate for the immediate suspension of federally-funded diversity, equity, and inclusion programming, it also takes issue with the principle of a diverse workplace — calling it a “wrongful and burdensome ideological project” (Project 2025, *Mandate for Leadership*, pg.582).



- **Fact check:** The central purpose of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is to ensure that all Americans have a fair shot at success. DEI initiatives do not take opportunities from white communities, but rather help underserved communities gain access to opportunities that historically speaking, have been systematically placed out of their reach.
- **AA/Pis and DEI:** Feeling unrecognized and underrepresented in the workplace, many AA/PI workers seek out employee resource groups — a common feature of DEI initiatives — to find connection.
  - In fact: AA/PI workers join ERGs at [twice the rate of U.S. workers](#) overall. Should the federal government ban DEI initiatives, it would have a disproportionate impact AA/PI communities.

**Key takeaways:** By increasing tariffs on Made in China products, the Project 2025 political agenda will increase the price of everyday necessities, making it difficult for AA/PI working families to meet their basic needs.

And by making dramatic cuts to education, food assistance, and other social programs, it will also erode the pathway to prosperity for AA/PI communities — making it even more difficult for us to thrive.

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**If Project 2025 is a remaking of the United States, then it is also the undoing of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.** This authoritarian political agenda strikes at the very heart of our democracy. It's a blueprint for using racist fear-mongering to fuel hate and violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, to undermine our civil rights, to detain and deport us with impunity, and to drag us back to the darkest chapters of U.S. history.

**Stop AAPI Hate conducted this analysis of Project 2025 for two reasons:**

1. To show AA/PI communities the enormous threat that Project 2025 presents to AA/PI immigrants and refugees, students and researchers, and to tens of millions of everyday families.
2. And to remind our communities what we are up against. Whether Project 2025 is implemented or not, it is the latest example of past and present-day efforts to systematically diminish the freedoms and prosperity of our AA/PI communities.

**As a nationwide coalition dedicated to advancing racial justice and equity, we wholly condemn this sinister vision for the future of the United States.**

We also recognize that we have the power to stop the assault on our safety, our livelihoods, and our civil rights — but only if we continue our consistent and collective action.

Stop AAPI Hate remains committed in the fight to defeat racist and anti-immigrant policies, advocate for AA/PI communities, and hold accountable the politicians and political commentators who scapegoat us for political gain.

Disclaimer: Stop AAPI Hate does not endorse or oppose candidates for elected office. We recognize that the policies proposed by Project 2025 have immense implications for the future of our communities and our democracy.



**Stop AAPI Hate** is a U.S.-based coalition addressing racism and racial injustice across Asian American and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) communities. Started amid the rise of COVID-19-related anti-Asian racism, Stop AAPI Hate has since joined a nationwide movement for a safer, more equitable future — for AA/PIs and for all marginalized communities. **You can visit [StopAAPIHate.org](https://stopaapihate.org) to learn more.**