

**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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> And most recently, a

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<sup>1</sup> “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](http://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/index.html).

<sup>2</sup> “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](http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Anti-China_Rhetoric_Report_6_17_20.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://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.<sup>4</sup>

We appreciate the op-ed the Department placed in the *Washington Examiner* generally stating that hate crimes will be investigated and prosecuted.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.

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<sup>4</sup> *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](http://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2020-04/topline-center-for-public-integrity-042820.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> 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](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/how-the-justice-department-is-standing-up-for-civil-rights-amid-coronavirus-pandemic).

<sup>6</sup> “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>.

<sup>7</sup> 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](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/federal-agencies-are-doing-little-about-rise-anti-asian-hate-n1184766).


<sup>8</sup> 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](http://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](http://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,



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



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Rob Woodall  
Member of Congress



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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



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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  
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Member of Congress

/s/ Frank Pallone, Jr.  
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/s/ Zoe Lofgren  
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/s/ Mark Takano  
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/s/ Peter A. DeFazio  
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/s/ Ted Deutch  
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/s/ Abigail D. Spanberger  
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/s/ Adriano Espaillat  
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/s/ Alan Lowenthal  
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/s/ Alcee L. Hastings  
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/s/ André Carson  
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Kim  
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/s/ Andy Levin  
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/s/ David N. Cicilline  
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/s/ David Trone  
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/s/ Dean Phillips  
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/s/ Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
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/s/ Grace F. Napolitano  
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/s/ Grace Meng  
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/s/ Gregory W. Meeks  
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/s/ Hakeem Jeffries  
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/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  
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/s/ Jahana Hayes  
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/s/ Jamie Raskin  
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/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  
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/s/ Jimmy Panetta  
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Member of Congress

/s/ Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress

/s/ Madeleine Dean  
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/s/ Marc Veasey  
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/s/ Marcia L. Fudge  
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/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  
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/s/ Raja Krishnamoorthi  
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/s/ Ro Khanna  
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/s/ Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress



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

/s/ Scott H. Peters  
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