

July 27, 2020

Dear Colleague,

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, there has been a concerted effort by members of both political parties to place all blame for the virus, its spread, the economic consequences, and the lives lost solely at the feet of China's governing party (the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP). There is absolutely a necessary place in our political conversation to criticize the illiberal and damaging policies implemented by the CCP. But with anti-Asian bigotry on the rise in the United States, I write to urge you to avoid careless or inaccurate rhetoric that conflates the CCP with all Chinese people and unintentionally puts Asian Americans at risk of violence.

Since the start of the coronavirus crisis, there has been an alarming uptick in hate crimes and incidents targeting the Asian American community due to misconceptions that Asian Americans are more likely to carry the virus and should be blamed for its spread. According to data compiled by various Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate crime reporting websites, there have been over 2,300 anti-Asian American hate incidents reported in just the last few months alone. At its height, nearly 100 hate incidents were being reported each day. And, at the end of March, the [FBI warned](#) that, because "a portion of the US public will associate COVID-19 with China and Asian American populations," they expect that "hate crime incidents against Asian Americans likely will surge across the United States... endangering Asian American communities."

What began with dirty looks, insults and misinformation about Asian-owned restaurants and businesses has escalated to spitting, yelling and physical attacks against Asian Americans across the United States. In New York, an Asian American woman was physically assaulted on a subway for wearing a face mask, and in another incident, an Asian American woman suffered second degree burns after a man poured what appears to be acid on her as she was taking out her garbage. In Texas, a man stabbed a family of three Asian Americans (including two young children ages 2 and 6) at a Sam's Club, saying that he wanted to kill Asian Americans. In San Francisco, an elderly Asian man was taunted and attacked by individuals who said they hated Asians. In Los Angeles, a 16-year-old boy was sent to the hospital after being attacked by bullies who accused him of having coronavirus because he is Asian. And Asian American doctors and nurses across the nation have reported a sharp increase in racist verbal and physical attacks even as they risk their lives on the front lines to combat the pandemic.

These sorts of violent incidents saw a marked increase around the time that President Trump and fellow Republicans began encouraging the use of terms like "Chinese virus" or "Wuhan virus," despite guidance issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) urging not to associate a disease with a specific region, country, or ethnicity due to the stigma it creates. In fact, the CDC's coronavirus resource website explicitly warns that "stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger toward ordinary people instead of focusing on the disease that is causing the problem."

In recent weeks, as the coronavirus continues to surge across our nation, President Trump has also resorted to using the racist term “kung flu” to refer to the virus, which we in the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) find reprehensible. Our constituents are looking to us for leadership and guidance during these difficult times. As Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to provide both, with the assurance that we are being accurate and responsible in sharing only verified information and facts. Inserting political rhetoric and conspiracy theories into a conversation on public health, however, is dangerous and will only stoke xenophobia that puts Asian Americans at risk.

As such, my office has put together a toolkit that includes messaging guidance and resources for congressional offices to ensure that we use responsible language and do not make generalizations that broadly target those who are ethnically Chinese. I encourage you to utilize these resources and reach out to my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Chu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Judy Chu
Member of Congress
CAPAC Chair

Member Toolkit

On Combating Xenophobia Amidst the Coronavirus Pandemic

Prepared by Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) Chair Rep. Judy Chu

Examples of Anti-Asian Bigotry Due to COVID-19

- [Pandemic of Hate: Anti-Asian Racism During COVID-19](#)
- [Stop AAPI Hate Report: Anti-Chinese Rhetoric Tied to Racism against Asian Americans](#)
- [FBI says Texas stabbing that targeted Asian-American family was hate crime fueled by coronavirus fears](#)
- [Asian American doctors and nurses are fighting racism and the coronavirus](#)
- [Rise in hate incidents toward Asian Americans during coronavirus crisis, officials say](#)
- [Coronavirus News: NYPD report shows bias crimes against Asian Americans on the rise](#)
- [31% of Asian Americans say they've been subject to racist slurs or jokes since the coronavirus pandemic began](#)
- [NBC Virtual Town Hall on Rise of Anti-Asian Bigotry](#)
- ['We just want to be safe': Hate crimes, harassment of Asian Americans rise amid coronavirus pandemic](#)
- [Smashed windows and racist graffiti: Vandals target Asian Americans amid coronavirus](#)
- [Teen Student In LA Assaulted As Coronavirus Fears Stoke 'Racial Backlash'](#)
- ['Where's your \(expletive\) mask?': Asian woman attacked in Manhattan hate crime](#)

Messaging Guidance on China

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a surge in reports of discrimination and violent attacks against Asian Americans across the United States. Many of these attacks have been inspired and fueled by misinformation, including misconceptions that Asians are more likely to carry and spread the virus, or conspiracy theories that China created COVID-19 in a lab. During this time, we have also seen a spike in Cold War-style rhetoric against China that has fueled xenophobia and put innocent Asian Americans at risk. As such, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus encourages you to keep the following in mind when discussing coronavirus.

- 1) **Do not associate the coronavirus with a country, region, or ethnicity**

Both the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) warn that usage of terms like “Chinese coronavirus” and “Wuhan virus” are inaccurate,

unhelpful, and actually make it harder for them to do their jobs and contain the disease. The medically accurate name is coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19.

2) **Do not conflate the Chinese Communist Party with all Chinese people or the broader Chinese diaspora**

China is a country of 1.4 billion people, with an additional 60 million people of Chinese descent around the world, including nearly 4 million Chinese Americans living in the United States. Because the word “Chinese” can refer to nationality, race, language, and culture, these ambiguities are often exploited by the CCP when they claim to be the voice of all Chinese people throughout the world, even though this is not true.

Unfortunately, we have seen in recent months how saying “the Chinese” are responsible for this virus has led to misconceptions that all people of Chinese ancestry are to blame for the global pandemic we are now facing. Instead, when we disagree with an action taken by China’s government, it is helpful to be as specific as possible, pointing to a particular policy or decision and explicitly naming the CCP, or a specific CCP leader. Speaking about the problem in specific terms helps you to be more accurate and responsible, while simultaneously providing better clarity to constituents about your concerns with the CCP and its policies. Expressing vague anger at China or “the Chinese”, on the other hand, assigns blame in ways that negatively impact those who are ethnically Chinese or perceived to be Chinese, even if they have nothing to do with the Chinese government. In addition to being inaccurate and dangerous, this language is also counterproductive and feeds into CCP propaganda.

3) **Do not use Cold War-style rhetoric**

Intentionally vague criticisms against a whole country of over 1 billion people reinforce outdated and dangerous Cold War mentalities that the entire country is an enemy. This is bolstered by unfounded claims that the virus was engineered in a Chinese lab and intentionally unleashed on the world. Spreading conspiracy theories like this without evidence incites violence against Asian Americans who have increasingly become the targets of hate crimes and incidents.

Already, the imprecise Cold War rhetoric is having an impact. According to one survey, the percentage of U.S. voters who say China is an “enemy” has risen 11 percentage points to 31 percent since January.¹ In World War II, this kind of fear mongering and xenophobia ultimately led to the shameful incarceration of innocent Japanese Americans who were stripped of their civil liberties and imprisoned in desolate internment camps simply because of their ethnicity. We should not repeat the mistakes of World War II and the Cold War by fomenting fear of an entire nation again today.

¹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/20/anti-china-sentiment-coronavirus-poll-269373?nname=playbook&nid=000014f-1646-d88f-a1cf-5f46b7bd0000&nrid=000014c-2413-d9dd-a5ec-34bf0f030005&nlid=630318>

Additionally, attempts to make it easier to sue the country of China contribute to the idea that the entire country is deliberately responsible for all of the deaths and suffering caused by COVID-19 in the United States and around the world. That is not only an inaccurate approach to resolving a pandemic, it also encourages anger and blame. And it impedes our ability to work with the Chinese government in areas where our interests overlap. For instance, Americans still overwhelmingly support cooperating with China on responding to the coronavirus.²

Messaging Guidance on Anti-Asian Xenophobia

The following information is provided courtesy of Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC, the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council (A3PCON) and Chinese for Affirmative Action – which are the three main Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations who have been tracking anti-Asian hate incidents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Issue: COVID-19 has resulted in the spread of hate, racism and xenophobia throughout the country that has been directed at the Asian American community.

These messages are intended to:

- Dispel false and dangerous myths
- Ensure leaders refrain from encouraging racism or xenophobia by educating them about the extent and seriousness of the harassment
- Warn against the dangers of racial scapegoating during crises

Messages:

- Widespread racism against Asian Americans during the pandemic — fueled by President Trump and leadership for political gain — is a serious and devastating issue that is impacting the lives of millions in our country every day.
 - Between March 15, 2020, and May 15, 2020, over 2000 incidents of anti-Asian racism from 45 states and the District of Columbia have been reported all while mostly sheltering in place. This number undoubtedly understates the number of actual incidents taking place nationwide.
 - In an [Ipsos survey](#) conducted by the Center for Public Integrity, 60% of Asian Americans have heard someone blaming Asians for the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - A [Harris poll](#) found that 75% of Asian Americans are concerned about hate and discrimination against Asian Americans relating to COVID-19.

² Ibid.

- COVID-19 is a public health crisis, not an immigration issue or an issue specific to one community.
- Words matter. Wrongly stated names for COVID-19 like Chinese Virus, Wuhan Flu, and Kung-flu stigmatize individuals of Asian ethnicity, which results in the racial profiling and attacks on Asian Americans in the U.S.
- The prejudice against Asian Americans distracts against finding real solutions to the pandemic at a time when they are critically needed.
- There are devastating real-world consequences when leaders scapegoat individuals for political gain and spread racist and xenophobic language.
 - President Trump has a long history of encouraging white supremacist and nationalist views as a tool for political gain. Catalyzed by Trump's attacks on Mexican and Latinx immigrants, violence against the community has risen since immigration has replaced terrorism as a top concern in the U.S.
 - Unless we address the misinformation and prejudice, it will result in deeply entrenched hate and profiling that will cause unimaginable harm and suffering and take decades to unwind.
- Asian Americans are a marginalized group with a long history of being scapegoated amid public health and other crises.
 - This dates back to the mid-1800's, when leading politicians and leaders labeled Chinese immigrants as "uncivilized and unclean" and they were blamed for a smallpox outbreak.
 - During World War II, innocent Japanese Americans were stripped of their civil liberties and placed in internment camps simply because of their ethnicity.
 - In the 1980s, during a period of strong anti-Asian sentiment in Detroit, Michigan due to the rise of the Japanese automotive industry, Chinese American Vincent Chin was murdered by two white autoworkers who thought he was Japanese and blamed him for the loss of their jobs.

Actions to Take

1. Do not use racist or xenophobic rhetoric to refer to COVID-19
2. Denounce anti-Asian bigotry
 - [CAPAC Leaders Condemn Use of Racist Term "Kung Flu" that Deliberately Endangers Asian Americans](#)

- [Chairman Jeffries on Coronavirus-Related Attacks on Asian Americans](#)
 - [Democratic Leaders of Color: Trump’s Use of “Chinese Virus” Endangers Lives”](#)
3. Co-sponsor H.Res.908/S.Res.580 - Condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment Related to COVID-19
 4. Host a virtual event with Asian American constituents
 - Please click on the links below for examples of virtual events that Members have held with their constituents:
 - [Rep. Gil Cisneros](#)
 - [Rep. Sean Casten](#)
 - [Rep. Judy Chu](#)

Resources for Constituents

1. Where Do I Report A Hate Crime?

The Department of Justice recommends that hate crime victims report directly to local law enforcement and call 911 if emergency services are needed. Victims should also contact their local FBI field office to report a hate crime to ensure this data is captured in the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Hate Crime Statistics. More information on how to report a hate crime to the FBI can be found [here](#).

2. Where Do I Report A Hate Incident?

Individuals who have witnessed or experienced a hate incident (including hate speech, bullying, or violence) are encouraged to report to one of the following sites, where they can safely document their incident and seek additional resources:

- [Stop AAPI Hate](#): The vast majority of anti-Asian hate incidents that we know about have been reported through this site, which was launched jointly by the Asian Pacific Planning and Policy Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), and San Francisco State University. The incident report form is available in English, as well as in 10 non-English languages.
- [Stand Against Hatred](#): This hate incident reporting site launched by Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC, one of the largest Asian American civil rights organizations in the nation, was created prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but continues to remain relevant today. It is also available in multiple Asian languages.

3. What Should I Do If I Witness a Hate Crime or Incident?

- If it is safe to do so, bystanders are encouraged to speak out if they witness a hate crime or incident taking place. To learn more about ways to safely intervene, you can register for a virtual bystander intervention training [here](#). Additional bystander intervention resources are available [here](#).

4. Additional Resources

- [CDC Guidance on Reducing Stigma](#)
- [World Health Organization Guidance on Preventing and Addressing Social Stigma](#)

Where should I direct questions?

- **Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC)**
Krystal Ka'ai (Executive Director) and Ben Suarato (Communications Director)
Krystal.Kaai@mail.house.gov and Ben.Suarato@mail.house.gov
- **Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC**
John C. Yang
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