



ASIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
C H I C A G O



April 6, 2020

The Honorable Kwame Raoul
Attorney General of the State of Illinois
100 W. Randolph Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Ms. Nathalina Hudson
Deputy Attorney General—Criminal Justice, State of Illinois
100 W. Randolph Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601
Via electronic mail: nhudson@atg.state.il.us

Dear Honorable Attorney General Raoul and Deputy Attorney General Hudson:

On behalf of the Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago (AABA), the Chinese American Bar Association of Greater Chicago (CABA), the South Asian Bar Association (SABA), the Filipino American Lawyers Association of Chicago (FALA), and the Korean American Bar Association (KABA), we urge you to publicly recognize and denounce the increasing racist attacks and discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in the wake of rising concerns over the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19). While we generally applaud your efforts to protect the safety and wellbeing of Illinoisans during this pandemic, we have taken note of your silence on this issue. We are witnessing a rising tide of xenophobic acts against AAPIs nationally and in Illinois, and we do not expect these acts to subside without a firm response from the government at every level. As our community's leaders and as those who carry the mandate to prosecute such acts in our community, we call upon you to take action now to protect the safety and wellbeing of AAPIs in our community.

Specifically, we urge you to do the following:

1. Meet with representatives of the undersigned organizations via video or teleconference to discuss the rise of hate crimes and discrimination against AAPIs and how we can work together to reduce these xenophobic acts, including through the following;
2. Issue a statement recognizing the surge of racist attacks against AAPIs nationally and in Illinois, condemning these attacks, and affirming your commitment to be vigilant and to be ready to prosecute hate crimes;
3. Launch a hotline for Illinoisans to report hate crimes and discrimination in connection with COVID-19 or AAPI ancestry; and
4. Establish a multi-agency task force to investigate and protect the civil rights of AAPIs.

We ask you to take these steps because we have seen a surge of incidents across the country targeting AAPIs in connection to COVID-19. They include [verbal assaults at a Pasadena, CA grocery store](#), [aggravated harassment on the streets of New York City](#), [stabbing of a 2 year-old and 6 year-old at a Midland, TX Sam's Club](#), and [hate spewed and defended on traditional and social media](#). Illinois is not immune to the spread of xenophobia against AAPIs. Examples include an [AAPI Illinoisan being yelled at \("F--- China!"\) and spat on as he headed towards the Red Line station](#) and an [AAPI Illinoisan having a log thrown at him while being yelled at to "go back to China" on his jog](#). Members of our organizations have also personally experienced or have heard from family and friends who have experienced racist attacks during the current pandemic. Several organizations that represent or advocate for the AAPI community across the nation have begun to collect [accounts of COVID-19 related discrimination](#). For example, the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council recently launched a "[Stop AAPI Hate](#)" [website](#) to collect information on incidents of COVID-19 discrimination. Even with limited publicity for their initiative, within the first week of the website's launch from March 19-25, 2020, they already received [673 reports of COVID-19 discrimination](#), including reports from Illinois. AAPIs in our country and in our community have become scapegoats for the fear, anxiety, and uncertainties of the current pandemic.

In response to this recent rise of racist acts against AAPIs, nearly 200 AAPI organizations and national human rights groups across the country, including many of the undersigned organizations, together sent [a letter to President Donald Trump and other elected officials](#) calling on them to publicly denounce the increase in racist attacks against AAPIs. As this letter states, "We know these incidents to be merely the tip of the iceberg, as hate crimes have long been severely under-reported and inadequately defined. As these racially-motivated attacks accelerate in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, it becomes increasingly imperative that this nation's leadership ensures the safety of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders." For the same reason, we the undersigned organizations now turn to you to take the steps necessary to protect the wellbeing and safety of AAPIs in our community.

There is already a precedent of local and state government leaders taking action to respond to the rising racism against AAPIs. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio have [condemned coronavirus-related discrimination against AAPIs](#), and New York State Attorney General Letitia James [launched a hotline for people to report discrimination related to COVID-19](#). We ask that you to take these steps as well. We also urge you to establish a statewide task force to investigate and protect the civil rights of AAPIs in

collaboration with your offices, local and state law enforcement, representatives from the undersigned organizations, and other agencies and community organizations as needed. Only by working together can we take quick and powerful steps to stem racist attacks against AAPIs before such acts and complacency towards these acts irreparably harm our citizens and deeply fracture our community.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, our whole community is facing a crisis. This is a time when we need to come together and set aside our differences and biases so that we can overcome this crisis as a community. This is a time for quick action by our community's leaders to take on racism and xenophobia directly. We hope that we can count on you as our champions and our allies, as we the undersigned organizations are here to do our part to fight against racism, bigotry, and xenophobia in our community.

Sincerely,



Gary Zhao

President
Asian American Bar Association of Greater
Chicago

s/Jean Liu

President
Chinese American Bar Association of
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s/Janice Dantes

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Filipino American Lawyers Association of
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Korean American Bar Association