



**Testimony of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC for
United States Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing
“A Threat to Justice Everywhere: Stemming the Tide of Hate Crimes in America”**

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) submits this testimony to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee for its hearing entitled “A Threat to Justice Everywhere: Stemming the Tide of Hate Crimes in America,” held on September 17, 2024. We appreciate the focus of the hearing on the threats facing marginalized communities and how the federal government can better protect the civil rights and safety of Americans, including Jewish, Arab, and Muslim Americans who have been suffering as a result of rising antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Arab hate, and other forms of bigotry.

Two years ago, Advancing Justice | AAJC submitted testimony to this Committee for its hearing on March 8, 2022, “Combating the Rise in Hate Crimes.” In that testimony, we shared some of what Asian Americans in this country had been facing as a result of increased hostility and hatred directed at our communities in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. The warnings we offered then, that the increased discrimination directed at Asian Americans would not abate with the end of the pandemic have, unfortunately, been proven correct. Asian Americans continue to experience heightened levels of hate and harassment. Two years ago, Asian American communities were not alone in being subjected to increased attacks and we recognized then, as we do now, the importance of solidarity and the need to work together to safeguard all communities from harm.

Organizational Background

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) is a national non-profit, non-partisan organization that works through policy advocacy, community education, and litigation to advance the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all. Founded in 1991, Advancing Justice | AAJC is one of the nation’s leading experts on civil rights issues of importance to the Asian American community.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC is a member of Asian Americans Advancing Justice (Advancing Justice), a national affiliation of four civil rights nonprofit organizations that joined together in 2013 to promote a fair and equitable society for all by working for civil and human rights and empowering Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities. The Advancing Justice affiliation is comprised of our nation’s largest Asian American advocacy service organization located in Los Angeles (Advancing Justice | Southern California), the largest national Asian American policy advocacy organization located in Washington D.C. (Advancing Justice | AAJC), the leading Midwest Asian American advocacy organization (Advancing Justice | Chicago), and the Atlanta-based Asian American advocacy organization that serves one of the largest and most rapidly growing Asian American communities in the South (Advancing Justice | Atlanta).

Through our work protecting our communities in the wake of COVID-19, Advancing Justice | AAJC strives to ensure that the civil rights and human rights of Asian Americans are protected. Advancing Justice | AAJC works to advance laws and policies that address anti-Asian hate, including advocating for improvements to hate crimes laws and government data collection, and for increased resources to respond to hate crimes and hate incidents. Advancing Justice | AAJC works with policy makers on the Hill, in the White House, and in executive agencies; with civil rights advocates, including the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Hate Crimes Task Force and the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans Civil Rights Committee; with community leaders, including our Community Partners Network of more than 250 Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)-serving community-based organizations; and with the media to address anti-Asian racism and xenophobia.

Hate Crimes Are at Troubling All-Time Highs and Anti-Asian Hate is a Continuing Problem

While progress has been made, many of the needs of our diverse communities that we raised in the testimony we submitted two years ago persist.

In its 2023 hate crimes data released yesterday, the FBI reported a record high of 11,862 hate crimes.¹ According to analysis from our colleagues with the Arab American Institute, these statistics show significant increases in anti-Jewish incidents, a 63% increase between 2022 and 2023, marking the highest year on record; anti-Muslim incidents, a 49% increase; and anti-Arab incidents, a 34% increase, marking the highest level since the FBI started collecting data in this category in 2015.²

Hate crime incidents based on sexual orientation also reached an all-time high, with a 7% increase, including the highest annual total for hate crime incidents based on gender identity since this category was added in 2013.³

While the 407 hate crime incidents based on anti-Asian bias is a lower total than reported in 2022 and the high of 746 reported in 2021, this total remains significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels.⁴ The number of reported hate crime incidents motivated by anti-Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander bias, 15 in 2023, also has declined from 2022 and from the high of 196 reported in 2021.⁵

While these data are important, hate crimes statistics do not tell the full story of what our communities have experienced and continue to face. The Advancing Justice affiliation continues to hear from members of the Asian American community via our Stand Against Hatred website (www.StandAgainstHatred.org) about the hate and harassment they experience.

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, [FBI Releases 2023 Crime in the Nation Statistics](#), September 23, 2024.

² Arab American Institute, [AAI's Statement on the FBI's 2023 Hate Crime Data Release: Data Shows the Highest Number of Hate Crimes Ever Recorded](#), September 23, 2024.

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Id.

Stop AAPI Hate, which established its community reporting website in March 2020 to capture reports from the Asian American community of hate and harassment connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, received nearly 11,500 individual reports by the end of 2022.⁶ Most of these reports involve hate incidents, the term commonly used to describe bias incidents that may not meet the definition of a hate crime, and further illuminate community experiences of hate, harassment, and discrimination. Details on these reports are accessible via Stop AAPI Hate’s Reporting Center: <https://stopaapihate.org/explore-our-data/>

Furthermore, Stop AAPI Hate will release a national survey later this week that reveals that racism and discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States “continue to be ongoing and widespread, with serious impacts on our everyday lives.”⁷ According to their survey with NORC at the University of Chicago, Stop AAPI Hate reports that half (49%) of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders experienced some form of hate in 2023 due to their race, ethnicity, or nationality.

In addition, in its 2024 STAATUS Index, The Asian American Foundation found that nearly 1 in 3 Asian Americans have been called a racial or ethnic slur in the past year, and nearly 3 in 10 Asian Americans were verbally harassed or abused in the last 12 months because of their race, ethnicity, or religion.⁸ Our communities continue to fear that they will be attacked or face discrimination because of our identities. As detailed in the STAATUS Index, 41% of Asian Americans believe they are likely to be the victim of a physical attack and 59% of Asians Americans think it is likely that they will be a victim of discrimination in the next 5 years because of their race, ethnicity, or religion.⁹ These concerns impact us in other ways too. As reported in the STAATUS Index, only 38% of Asian Americans completely feel that they belong and even fewer feel that they are fully accepted.¹⁰

Recommendations

The recommendations offered by Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC in our testimony two years ago continue to be applicable now:

- Improve Hate Crimes Reporting and Data Collection
- Reach Out To and Invest In Impacted Communities
- Improve Enforcement of Non-Discrimination Laws
- End Profiling and Continue to Address Harms Associated with the “China Initiative”
- Support Anti-Harassment Training and Education in Asian American History

We offer updated information on several of these recommendations:

⁶ Stop AAPI Hate, [Reporting Center Data](#), accessed September 24, 2024.

⁷ Stop AAPI Hate, “The State of Anti-AA/PI Hate: Findings from a March 2024 Stop AAPI Hate/NORC National Survey,” forthcoming data one-pager, on file with Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC.

⁸ The Asian American Foundation, [STAATUS Index 2024](#), May 1, 2024.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id.

Improve Hate Crimes Reporting and Data Collection

Advancing Justice | AAJC supported passage of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act in 2021, including the incorporation of the Jabara Heyer NO HATE Act into the bill. We urge continued effort to complete the transition of hate crime reporting by law enforcement agencies to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). In addition, Advancing Justice | AAJC joined with many civil rights organizations this spring to support passage of the Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act.¹¹ We urge Congress to take action on this bill, which would require local governments to report credible hate crime data to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program in order to be eligible for federal funding under the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as a means to taking the next steps to improving hate crimes reporting and data collection.

Reach Out To and Invest In Impacted Communities

There is no single solution to address hate crimes, harassment, and discrimination. Advancing Justice | AAJC continues to advocate for a holistic approach that incorporates improving access to government programs and services, including funding programs and services that will support community safety and the conditions we need to thrive, and proactive and ongoing outreach and education to vulnerable communities in the languages that they speak, and working with and through organizations that communities know and trust to understand their needs and advocate for the solutions they feel are needed.

End Profiling and Continue to Address Harms Associated with the “China Initiative”

Congress recently concluded a series of activities dubbed as “China Week,” which Advancing Justice | AAJC and other advocates criticized as xenophobic and likely to inflame greater discrimination against people of Chinese descent. Advancing Justice | AAJC has spoken out against the China Initiative and its reinstatement, and we will continue to vehemently oppose anti-Asian scapegoating and efforts to leverage fear and suspicion in the name of national security.¹² While the House of Representatives has voted to pass H.R. 1398, The Protect America's Innovation and Economic Security from CCP Act of 2024, Advancing Justice | AAJC continues to oppose this legislation and related measures. We also urge elected officials and those aspiring to public office to refrain from inflammatory anti-China rhetoric and encourage our leaders to hold accountable colleagues who persist in racist attacks and fear-mongering.

Conclusion

Finally, we cannot close without addressing what took place during the hearing on September 17, 2024. As Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC has asserted many times in the past, it is vital that we address anti-Asian hate, including calling out and putting an end to xenophobic and racist rhetoric and scapegoating of our communities. We recognize that this work cannot happen

¹¹ Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, [Coalition Letter in Support of Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act](#), May 8, 2024.

¹² [Stop AAPI Hate, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, Asian American Scholar Forum Condemn U.S.-China Legislation Rooted in Xenophobia](#), September 12, 2024.

in isolation and that we cannot act only when our own communities are directly impacted. Acts of hate and violence against any community demand a response from all of us.

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on hate crimes should have served as an opportunity to advance discussion of the role that Congress and all Americans can play in protecting one another from harm arising from hate and discrimination. Instead, hate was on display during the hearing as our colleague Maya Berry of the Arab American Institute was subjected to a racist attack. We join with many of our civil rights colleagues¹³ in condemning the vitriol directed at Ms. Berry and urging the Committee to refocus its efforts on understanding hate and building more effective solutions to safeguard all communities – Arab American, Asian American, Black, disabled, Jewish, LGBTQ+, Latino, Muslim or Palestinian Americans – against attack because of their identity.

¹³ Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, [Senate Judiciary Hearing Derailed with Racist Attacks on Civil Rights Leader Maya Berry, Undermining Efforts to Address White Supremacy](#), September 17, 2024.