

Statement of the **Korean American Grassroots Conference**
Submitted to the **U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary**
for hearing on “Combating the Rise in Hate Crimes”

March 8th, 2022

The Korean American Grassroots Conference (KAGC) welcomes the Committee’s hearing on “Combating the Rise in Hate Crimes” as racially charged violence continues to rise across the United States. We at KAGC appreciate the opportunity to share our insights as well as the Committee’s commitment to monitoring, responding to, and stemming the tide of hate crimes.

The largest nationwide network of Korean American voters, KAGC is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization dedicated to uplifting our community through active civic engagement, and in turn, bolstering the U.S.-Korea relations. In partnership with more than 30 organizations across the nation, KAGC assists local community partners develop and implement civic education programs and voter registration initiatives from the grassroots and up. Throughout the year, KAGC publishes resources on the key issues of the Korean American community, relevant legislation, and policy recommendations, in addition to help organizing civic education events in the local communities and on college campuses.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, racially charged attacks against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community rose rapidly. Members of Congress in both chambers have recognized the alarming trend and condemned the violence through bipartisan resolutions in the Senate¹ and the House², following the shooting spree that targeted Asian American women in Atlanta, Georgia, in March 2021. The COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act authored by Senator Hirono and Representative Meng passed Congress with unanimous support shortly thereafter. We deeply appreciate these bipartisan legislative efforts to prevent further pains, in solidarity with all those vulnerable to such harms.

Unfortunately, the streak of attacks has continued since. Between July 1st and December 31st, 2021, at least 1,824 hate incidents³ were reported to Stop AAPI

¹ Congress.gov. “S.Res.133 – 117th Congress (2021-2022): A resolution condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-resolution/133> and “S.Res.200 – 117th Congress (2021-2022): A resolution condemning recent hate crimes committed against Asian American and Pacific Islanders. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-resolution/200>

² Congress.gov. “H.Res.153 – 117th Congress (2021-2022): Condemning recent hate crimes committed against Asian-American and Pacific Islanders.” February 23, 2021. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/153>

³ Aggie eJ. Yellow Horse, et al., “Stop AAPI Hate National Report: 3/19/20-12/31/21,” Stop AAPI Hate, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/22-SAH-NationalReport-3.1.22-v9.pdf>. See also a previous version of the report published on August 12, 2021.



Hate, a coalition that tracks and responds to incidents of hate, violence, harassment, discrimination, shunning, and child bullying against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. In the past two months alone, we have faced the appalling violence that claimed the lives of Michelle Alyssa Go⁴, a 40-year-old Asian American woman pushed in front of an oncoming subway train, and Christina Yuna Lee⁵, a 35-year-old woman whose killer followed her into her apartment and stabbed her more than 40 times. Asian American shopkeepers⁶ have been assaulted unprovokedly, an innocent 89-year-old elderly woman⁷ was set on fire during her stroll, and a family—including children aged two and six—was stabbed at a Sam’s Club for being perceived as “Chinese and infecting people with the coronavirus⁸.”

These shockwaves of violence and the heightened level of fear have become all too familiar to the AAPI community since early 2020 and echo the tragedies that have repeated throughout history. There is no shortage of examples of recent incidents that demonstrate the rapid rise of hate crimes, violence, and discrimination against Asian Americans. It is also alarming that many victims in racially charged violence are senior citizens and women, often with limited English proficiency, making it more difficult to report the incidents or seek assistance. All these incidents may not legally constitute a “hate crime,” but they clearly have something in common—these acts of violence target social, physical, and language minorities, and not just Asian Americans, whether actual or perceived. “I am too afraid to leave the house,” said one elderly woman who called our office in a trembling voice, who shared her concerns with limited English proficiency. “Americans hate us. I don’t know who to ask for help.”

Latest statistics also attest to the fear that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders live with in carrying out what used to be mundane routines. The *Hate Crimes Statistics, 2020* released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in August 2021 reports the highest number of hate crime incidents since 2008⁹, among which anti-Asian hate crimes increased more than 73 percent¹⁰. Likewise, the New York Police Department announced that the number of incidents targeting

⁴ Kimmy Yam, “NYC subway station death of Michelle Go leaves Asian Americans reeling,” *NBC News*, January 19, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/nyc-subway-station-death-michelle-go-leaves-asian-americans-reeling-rcna12650>.

⁵ Liam Reilly and Laura Studley, “Woman found dead in Manhattan apartment after being followed home, police say,” *CNN*, February 19, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/15/us/new-york-woman-stabbed-chinatown/index.html>.

⁶ Jill Konopka, *WNYT*, June 14, 2020, <https://wnyt.com/news/albany-shop-employee-says-he-was-attacked-for-trying-to-enforce-social-distancing/5759718/>.

⁷ CeFaan Kim, *WABC*, July 24, 2020, <https://abc7ny.com/woman-set-on-fire-elderly-attack-89-year-old-attacked-bensonhurst-crime/6333749/>.

⁸ JuYeon Kim, *KXAN*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.kxan.com/news/crime/report-sams-club-stabbing-suspect-thought-family-was-chinese-infecting-people-with-coronavirus/>.

⁹ “FBI Releases 2020 Hate Crime Statistics,” FBI National Press Office, last modified October 25, 2021, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-2020-hate-crime-statistics>.

¹⁰ Sakshi Venkatraman, “Anti-Asian hate crimes rose 73% last year, updated FBI data says,” *NBC News*, October 25, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-rose-73-last-year-updated-fbi-data-says-rcna3741>.

Asians in New York City rose by 361 in 2021 alone¹¹, with several cities across the U.S. reporting an unprecedented levels of hate crimes¹² and bias incidents¹³.

While we recognize that change cannot take place overnight, we ask that Congress act with urgency. Next steps must take into account all bias incidents and not be confined to one-off punishment of perpetrators—rather, all Americans vulnerable to various forms of violence must be protected, and further incidents must be prevented.

In the face of the sharp surge of racially charged violence against the AAPI community, the limited focus on hate crimes does not adequately protect those vulnerable to violence, ranging from verbal harassment to vandalism, and from discrimination to physical assaults that lead to injuries and deaths. It requires an immense amount of legal resources for a criminal act to be recognized as a hate crime, because its central motive has to be proven as bias. It shifts the focus on the perpetrator, leads to sensationalization of hurtful incidents, and even confounds the core of the issue. Instead of intent, we must focus on the impact. It starts with recognizing that racial violence—or any form of violence stemming from bias against a certain gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, disability, or any other demographic category—must be addressed beyond hate crimes.

If the protection calls for our immediate attention, prevention would be the long-term goal. Congress should build on the relevant provisions in the COVID-19 Hate Crimes act and further lower the barriers holding back the communities vulnerable to racially charged violence from seeking assistance. In addition to the public education campaigns recommended by the law, law enforcement agencies and public entities should provide further language assistance and culturally competent policing all around, such as hiring police officers with the cultural and linguistic proficiency necessary in the community in service.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that most of the solutions that combat anti-Asian hate crimes and racial violence would also address bias incidents targeting other demographics. Our communities are not, and shall not be, in competition of each other in a zero-sum game. Our needs may vary, but our goals are the same: an America where we all feel safe to be who we are. A rising tide can certainly lift all boats in our collective efforts towards that goal, if we work together in solidarity and recognize the differing needs we all require.

¹¹ Kimmy Yam, “NYPD reports 361 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes since last year,” *NBC News*, December 10, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/nypd-reports-361-percent-increase-anti-asian-hate-crimes-last-year-rcna8427>.

¹² Richard Winton, “Hate crimes in L.A. and other U.S. cities jump to levels not seen in decades, study finds,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-02-01/los-angeles-leads-the-nation-in-hate-crimes-in-big-cities-for-2021-numbers-soar-past>.

¹³ “Bias Incident Reports,” Office of The Attorney General, Department of Law & Public Safety, State of New Jersey, <https://nj.gov/njsp/ucr/bias-incident-reports.shtml>.



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Thank you for holding this hearing and for committing to continued actions through policy and everyday practice. We look forward to working with you on this important issue. If you have questions about this statement or need additional information, please contact us by email at info@kagc.us or by phone at (202) 450-4252.

Sincerely,

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