

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 154

TO: Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Keohokalole, & Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, Grants, Development & Policy Manager

DATE: April 14, 2021 (9:30 AM)

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) **supports** HCR 154, which condemns all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 and urging greater investment in federal, state, and local resources to develop and support community-wide solutions. As the resolution notes, there has been an increase of anti-Asian incidents on the continent. The prior POTUS intentionally stoked anti-Asian sentiment around COVID-19, in part to distract from his inadequate response to the pandemic. The killing of six Asian spa workers in Atlanta last month has sparked a national conversation. [The verbal abuse hurled at Olympic karate athlete Sakura Kokumai in Orange County last week is another example of the uptick in anti-Asian sentiment.](#)

Anti-Asian sentiment and policies are functions of white supremacy with a long history in the United States, dating back to at least the mid-19th Century. The migration of Chinese to participate in the construction of the transcontinental railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains (as well as mining and commerce) was met with considerable backlash, [especially in San Francisco](#). Chinese were subject to a range of discriminatory government actions, including the [Cubic Air Ordinance](#) and the uneven enforcement of laundry regulations at issue in *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, 118 U.S. 356 (1886). Mark Twain's 1870 essay "[Disgraceful Persecution of a Boy](#)" adroitly satirized the prejudices of many in San Francisco at the time. Other notable examples of discrimination against Asians include the Page Act of 1875, [the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882](#) and subsequent legislation, the maltreatment and dislocation of Filipino farm laborers from Stockton's Little Manila, the mass internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII, and stringent quotas that restricted almost all Asian migration to the United States until the Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965.

[Hawai'i also has a history where responses to disease have been tainted by racism. Significant health disparities persist among racial and ethnic lines.](#) For COVID-19, more must be done to ensure that those with limited English proficiency have adequate access to government information and services.

HHRC's mission is to reduce harm, promote health, create wellness, and fight stigma in Hawai'i and the Pacific. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Hawaii
*Holding Power Accountable*Statement Before The
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

9:30 AM

Via Videoconference

in consideration of

HCR 154**CONDEMNING ALL FORMS OF ANTI-ASIAN SENTIMENT AS RELATED TO COVID-19 AND URGING GREATER INVESTMENT IN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL RESOURCES TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY-WIDE SOLUTIONS.**

Chair RHOADS, Vice Chair KEOHOKALOLE, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Common Cause Hawaii supports HCR 154, condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 and urging greater investment in federal, state, and local resources to develop and support community-wide solutions.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to create open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest and promotes equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all.

Being silent in the face of wrongdoing is not an option; it is tacit cooperation and being complicit.

Let us not forget the words of Pastor Martin Neimöller:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

We all need to reject and call out racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, or hate crimes against not only the Asian community but all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), including women.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR 154. If you have questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 11:31:29 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Testifying for Rainbow Family 808	Support	No

Comments:

Rainbow Family 808 supports HCR 154 / HR 130, condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 and urging greater investment in federal, state, and local resources to develop and support community-wide solutions. Please pass this resolution. Thank you.

Mike Golojuch, Sr., Secretary/Board member, Rainbow Family 808

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 1:11:19 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Laurie Field	Testifying for Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates	Support	No

Comments:

Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates supports HCR 154. Thank you!

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 1:30:24 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
amy agbayani	Testifying for Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Amy Agbayani, co-chair of the Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights (HFCR). We strongly support HCR154 and respectfully urge you pass the resolutions.

I am an immigrant Filipina; researcher on Asian Americans; Emeritus UH Manoa director for student diversity; and community advocate for civil rights. I want to express my appreciation to your committee for hearing these resolutions. Your past and continuing attention to issues of discrimination, hate crimes and civil rights are critical to our state and the nation. These resolutions are timely and urgent because of the history and increase in anti-Asian attacks, harassment and discrimination.

A majority of our state is of Asian American ancestry with Filipinos as the largest sub group of Asian Americans (AA). At the national level, AA account for 6% of the US population and are the fastest growing major racial/ethnic group in the US. The largest US racial group is White (60%), followed by Hispanics (18%), Black Americans (12%), Native Americans (1%), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (< 1%) (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019). The AA category is diverse and includes 19 ethnic groups. Six groups constitute 86% of all AAs: Chinese (23%), Filipino, (19%), Indian (19%), Vietnamese (9%), Korean (9%), Japanese (7%). Asian Americans make up 28% of immigrants,.

Anti-Asian hate crimes and harassment have increased significantly in schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces during the pandemic. President Trump and other officials referred to COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus" and blamed AAs for the pandemic. AAs were more likely than any other group to report being subjected to slurs or jokes because of their race or ethnicity since the coronavirus outbreak: 31% reported experiencing slurs, compared with 21% of Black adults, 15% of Hispanic adults, and 8% of White adults. Undeniably, in 2020 COVID-19 dominated nearly every aspect of life globally, with the US leading the world in COVID-19 deaths and infections. The pandemic impacted all US ethnic groups with disproportionate numbers of infections and deaths among communities of color. Many AA are essential health workers: 1 in 5 physicians and 1 in 11 nurses. Although only 4% of the nation's nurses are Filipino, 30% of the nurses who died in the pandemic were Filipino. Income inequality only widened during the pandemic because many AA immigrants were frontline low-income workers and small business owners.

American's history of struggles for equality and to "belong" has not been well documented or visible.. Individuals and institutions must do more to address inequality and racism facing Asian Americans. These resolutions are a clear and valuable commitment to inclusiveness, diversity and equality. I respectfully urge you to pass these resolutions.

Amy Agbayani, co-chair Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights.



HCR 154, CONDEMNING ALL FORMS OF ANTI-ASIAN SENTIMENT AS RELATED TO COVID-19 AND URGING GREATER INVESTMENT IN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL RESOURCES TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY-WIDE SOLUTIONS

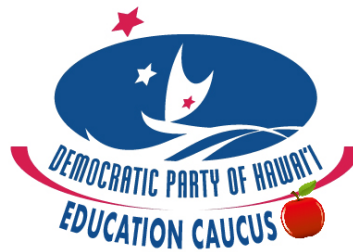
APRIL 14, 2021 · SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ·
CHAIR SEN. KARL RHOADS

POSITION: Strong support.

RATIONALE: Imua Alliance **strongly supports HCR 154**, condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 and urging greater investment in federal, state, and local resources to develop and support community-wide solutions.

Intolerance is an epidemic within the COVID-19 pandemic. As the coronavirus has surged throughout our shores, anti-Asian racism has soared. Stop AAPI Hate tracks reports of violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Since the start of the pandemic, they've received reports of nearly 4,000 hate incidents directed toward Asians and Asian-Americans across the U.S. Similarly, a recent report from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, revealed that hate crimes against Asian-Americans in 16 cities rose by 150 percent in 2020. Anti-Asian xenophobia has frequently resulted in violent acts. Just last month, an armed white male murdered eight people of Asian ancestry in Atlanta, Georgia, in an act of racial terror. We must take a stand against racial discrimination. If we don't, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We will learn very shortly that racism is a sickness unto death."

Kris Coffield · Executive Director, Imua Alliance · (808) 679-7454 · kris@imuaalliance.org



HCR 154, CONDEMNING ALL FORMS OF ANTI-ASIAN SENTIMENT AS RELATED TO COVID-19 AND URGING GREATER INVESTMENT IN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL RESOURCES TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY-WIDE SOLUTIONS.

APRIL 14, 2021 · SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ·
CHAIR SEN. KARL RHOADS

POSITION: Strong support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **strongly supports** HCR 154, condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 and urging greater investment in federal, state, and local resources to develop and support community-wide solutions.

Intolerance is an epidemic within the COVID-19 pandemic. As the coronavirus has surged throughout our shores, anti-Asian racism has soared. Stop AAPI Hate tracks reports of violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Since the start of the pandemic, they've received reports of nearly 4,000 hate incidents directed toward Asians and Asian-Americans across the U.S. Similarly, a recent report from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, revealed that hate crimes against Asian-Americans in 16 cities rose by 150 percent in 2020. Anti-Asian xenophobia has frequently resulted in violent acts. Just last month, an armed white male murdered eight people of Asian ancestry in Atlanta, Georgia, in an act of racial terror. We must take a stand against racial discrimination. If we don't, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We will learn very shortly that racism is a sickness unto death."

**Kris Coffield · Chairperson, Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus ·
(808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com**

Kris Coffield, Chair · David Negaard, Vice Chair · Jun Shin, Secretary · Amber Adjuja, Treasurer ·
Amy Perruso, Non-Male SCC Representative · Justin Hughey, Non-Female SCC Representative

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 11:13:13 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl B.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support

timely resolution

and address the murder of a 16 year old for whom by the intent of this bill is all of our responsibility.

We have to do better and more police is not the answer.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 2:17:09 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Victoria Anderson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please pass this important resolution.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 9:33:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

The only problem is the Government not the people of Hawaii. Most of us are related to every nationality. Witch includes Chines and Japanes and many others. In Hawaii we are one Big Happy Family. Only the Government is against this Not the People!

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 10:44:38 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
tlaloc tokuda	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear JDC Chair, Vice Chair and committee members,

My mother and father's family were put in concentration camps during the war, my father didn't go to 'camp' because he was already in the 442. Almost no one spoke up for the Japanese American's. Not even the ACLU (only one field officer from the San Francisco office did), though the Quakers did...

- Being silent in the face of wrongdoing is not an option; it is tacit cooperation and being complicit.
- We need to dismantle all forms of racism at all levels and its impacts.
- Let us not forget the words of Pastor Martin Neimöller:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

- We all need to reject and call out racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, or hate crimes against all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), including women.

Please pass this bill out of committee.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Tlaloc Tokuda

Kailua Kona HI 96740

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 10:53:50 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

support

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 12:55:46 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Being silent is complicitous. We need to reject intolerance

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 2:47:34 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Edward B Hanel Jr	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Concer with Common Cause Hawaii comments in support of HCR154. As the Rainbow State of the Pacific. Hawaii hould be the leader against anti-Assian treatment and rascist attitudes. Support passage of HCR154.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 6:26:49 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
laurie boyle	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I support hcr154 for the simple reason that a certain race should never take the blame for a virus pandemic. This lie was perpetuated at the highest levels and many believers have decided to incite violence upon the Asian community. This needs to be resolved ASAP.

Mahalo for your attention.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 7:21:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole and Committee on Judiciary,

Please support HCR 154.

The State of Hawaii is unique given it high percentage of Asian and Pacific Islander people. As a fourth generation Japanese American, it frightens me that there are people who are bold enough to commit violent crimes against unarmed, non-threatening Asian and Pacific Islander people.

I don't believe that remaining silent will protect other innocent and vulnerable people across the nation. Which minority group will be the next target?

People do not need to live in fear of one another. It is important to distinguish between fear of the pandemic and fear of "other minorities." There are proven public health measures to reduce the risk of infection from COVID-19. Minorities are already at a disadvantage given their smaller population numbers compared to the total national population. Physical and verbal forms of violence will only incite more violence.

We all need to reject and call out racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, or hate crimes against not only the Asian community but all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), including women.

Thank you for taking the time to review this issue. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of his issue.

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 8:13:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Yvonne Lau	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Chair Rhodes, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Committee, I write in STRONG SUPPORT of this resolution condemning and denouncing all forms of anti-Asian sentiment and all acts of racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, hate crime, and hate speech against Asian Americans and Asian individuals in the United States.

While the Aloha spirit guides our state in how we treat and respect each other, acts of racism in Hawaii and across the nation are on the rise and we must collectively reject these acts and behaviors. The adoption of this resolution would send a strong message to stand against such hateful and unacceptable acts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 6:06:37 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Linda Morgan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support HCR154. Racism against people of Asian heritage is a destructive hold-over from the Trump administration that must be squelched! Please support HCR154.

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Judiciary
April 14, 2021 at 9:30 am

By
Doris Ching
Emeritus Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Hawai'i System

RE: HCR 154 CONDEMNING ALL FORMS OF ANTI-ASIAN SENTIMENT AS RELATED TO COVID-19 AND URGING GREATER INVESTMENT IN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL RESOURCES TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT COMMUNITYWIDE SOLUTIONS.

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, Members of the Committee: I am testifying as a private citizen in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 154 which condemns all forms of Anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 and urges greater investment in federal, state, and local resources to develop and support community-wide solutions. In June 2020, Dr. Amy Agbayani and I conducted a survey Re Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). The survey respondents included Senator Mazie Hirono who stated, "Reports of violence against Asian Americans nearly tripled – people were spit on, punched, and even stabbed . . ." New York Congresswoman Grace Meng reported, "Since January 2020, we have seen another pandemic—that of hate and injustice against Asian American communities—fueled by misinformation and scapegoating against Asian Americans for the spread of COVID-19." Congresswoman Meng's resolution condemning anti-Asian sentiment was endorsed by over 500 organizations across the nation.

The recent surge of aggressive anti-Asian bullying and racial assaults across the continent in times of the pandemic is disconcerting and especially troubling that unrelenting attacks are escalating fear among Asian Americans in areas of smaller Asian American populations and scarce advocacy in states other than Hawai'i. A Southeast Asian American higher education professional who responded to the survey stated, "I am fearful for the safety of my family and myself. I witness stares and brace for potential altercations in public spaces. I fear for my Chinese American partner who sometimes leaves home unaccompanied. I don't believe this fear will subside soon or ever."

We concur with our survey respondents' call to address racism, including anti-Asian racism. We also believe Asian Americans must be strong to protest racism in solidarity with other racial/ethnic groups. With the surge of racial violence against persons of Asian descent, we see an urgency for Asian Americans to come together and join forces in unity to support and empower persons of Asian descent across all regions of the nation. Understanding the power of strength in numbers, an internally strong and united Asian American community can create a powerful force for equity and justice for all racial/ethnic groups.

I thank the Senate Judiciary Committee for your insightful and compassionate commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, and equality for persons of Asian descent in the United States. HCR 154 deserves strong support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HCR 154.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 7:38:13 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
David Anderson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Being silent in the face of wrongdoing is not an option; it is tacit cooperation and being complicit.

We need to dismantle all forms of racism at all levels and its impacts.

We all need to reject and call out racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, or hate crimes against all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), including women.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this resolution.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 8:38:48 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Andrea Staley	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support HCR 154 which condemns all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 and urging greater investment in federal, state, and local resources to develop and support community-wide solutions. [Hawaii, ʻĀi has a history where responses to disease have been tainted by racism. Significant health disparities persist among racial and ethnic lines.](#) For COVID-19, more must be done to ensure that those with limited English proficiency have adequate access to government information and services. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HCR-154

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 8:52:05 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Allen Freese	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

There is a long history of anti-Asian sentiment in the United States, which has taken many forms over time. From legislation like the Page Act and the Chinese exclusion act in the 19th century, to the Japanese internment camps and stringent quotas restricting Asian immigration (ended by the Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965) in the mid-20th century, to the anti-Asian hate crimes that have proliferated in the wake of COVID-19, anti-Asian sentiment has been a pervasive issue throughout the nation's history. With these hate crimes on the rise, it is time to state definitively that our government condemns all forms of anti-Asian sentiment and stands with the impacted communities. Further, it is imperative to invest greater resources into supporting these communities and developing solutions which address their needs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

LATE



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: 586-8636 FAX: 586-8655 TDD: 568-8692

April 14, 2021
9:30 a.m.
via Videoconference

To: Hon. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Hon. Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Liann Ebesugawa, Chair
Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.C.R. No. 154

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services (on the basis of disability). The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

H.C.R. No. 154 condemns all forms of anti-Asian sentiment related to COVID-19, and urges all public officials to denounce anti-Asian sentiment in any form. The concurrent resolution also recognizes that the safety of all Americans must be a priority, and condemns all expressions of racism, xenophobia, discrimination, anti-Asian sentiment, scapegoating, and ethnic or religious intolerance. And, H.C.R. No. 154 urges all federal law enforcement officials, working with state and local officials, to investigate and document all reports of anti-Asian threats and hate crimes, hold perpetrators of racially motivated crimes accountable and bring such perpetrators to justice. **The HCRC supports H.C.R. No. 154.**

In the wake of the horrific mass shooting in Georgia on Tuesday, March 16, in which six of eight who were killed were Asian women, and an escalating spate of anti-Asian hate speech and hate violence attacks on Asians nationwide over the past year, we share in the sense of loss, sadness and mourning for the

victims of these senseless acts, join the broader civil rights community in outrage over the toll that racism continues to rip from the lives of communities of color, and call for justice and protection from continuing racist attacks. It has to stop.

While much has been made of the spike in incidents of anti-Asian harassment and violent attacks on Asians attributed to the escalation of anti-Asian xenophobia and scapegoating during the COVID-19 pandemic, these are not an aberration, but consistent with anti-Asian racism that has been an integral element of American history, society, politics, and culture going back to the 19th century.

Our History of Anti-Asian Racism

The history of racism and discrimination against Asian Pacific Islanders in America is well documented – including immigration policy based on racial quotas, the Chinese Exclusion Act and Gentlemen’s Agreement (barring Japanese immigration), bar to naturalization for Asian immigrants (until after WWII), portrayal as the “Yellow Peril,” alien land laws, contract labor (a form of indentured servitude), Japanese American internment, the broken promise of U.S. citizenship for Filipino veterans who served under U.S. command during WWII, anti-miscegenation laws, and selective enforcement of race-neutral laws. Against this backdrop, Asian Pacific Islander Americans fought back against discrimination and exclusion – the Chinese took seventeen cases to the United States Supreme Court between 1881 and 1896. Some of these established important civil rights precedents.

The Vincent Chin Case – Lessons for Us Four Decades Later

On June 19, 1982, a 27 year old Chinese man was beaten to death in Detroit after an altercation in a strip bar, where he was celebrating his bachelor party a week before his wedding. Vincent Chin was a second generation Chinese American. His attackers were two white men, Ronald Ebens, a Chrysler plant superintendent and his stepson Michael Nitz, a laid-off autoworker. Ebens used racial epithets “Chink” and “Nip” and said, “It’s because of motherf***ers like you that we’re out of work.” A scuffle ensued and everyone was thrown out of the bar.

Ebens and Nitz paid a third man to help them “get the Chinese.” They found him in front of a

crowded McDonald's. Nitz held Chin down while his stepfather swung his Louisville Slugger baseball bat, hitting Vincent Chin's head four times. Vincent Chin died four days later.

In March 1993, Ebens and Nitz plead guilty and no contest to beating Vincent Chin to death, and were sentenced to three years probation. The Chinese community in Detroit and then APA communities nationwide were outraged. They organized and demanded justice for Vincent Chin, eventually convincing the Department of Justice to prosecute Ebens and Nitz for violating Vincent Chin's civil rights. Ebens was convicted and sentenced to twenty-five years imprisonment, but that conviction was reversed on appeal. On retrial, Ebens was acquitted. Neither Ebens nor Nitz served a day in prison for admittedly killing Vincent Chin.

Now, in 2021, Asian Pacific Islander Americans are still being targeted for racial harassment and violence. At first it was labeled as particularly despicable because the elderly were being targeted, but attackers have targeted women and men of all ages all across the nation. *No one should feel unsafe in their own communities* – this is not just an issue for Asian Pacific Islander Americans. It is not enough to mourn or to be outraged. We have to confront racism and work toward reconciliation with and for those who have been and continue to be harmed. Only then can we begin to heal.

The HCRC supports H.C.R. No. 154.