



May 2, 2016

Dear Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives:

The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) is a coalition of 35 national Asian American and Pacific Islander organizations that provides a national voice and serves to represent the interests of our communities.

The month of May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM)—a time to recognize the Asian American and Pacific Islander history, diversity and contributions to our nation. This year, NCAPA also is renewing its stand for and with the Muslim, Sikh, Arab and South Asian American communities--many of whom are themselves Asian American. As part of a growing coalition to end hate, NCAPA is deeply concerned about hateful, discriminatory and xenophobic rhetoric and policies directed toward these communities, and we call upon you—as our elected leaders—to condemn this divisive rhetoric and to support our communities when they are faced with bigotry and discrimination.

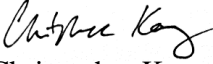
Every day, American Muslims, and those perceived to be Muslim, face fear, suspicion, verbal aggression, and attacks in the country they call home. Hateful rhetoric and bigotry against American Muslims have been on the rise. Policies based on fear have been proposed, including blocking the resettlement of refugees from Syria and Iraq, banning Muslims from entering the United States based solely on their religion, and profiling or “patrolling” American Muslims. Some measures—such as the discriminatory changes to the Visa Waiver Program—have even been enacted.

As we celebrate APAHM, we also reflect on the darker chapters of Asian American history—when our nation succumbed to fear and prejudice, and rhetoric gave way to discriminatory policies against Asian Americans. In 1882, the federal government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first law to exclude a specific ethnic group from immigrating to the United States. During World War II, 120,000 loyal Japanese Americans were incarcerated in detention camps, even though none was ever charged with a crime. And since 9/11, American Muslims have been profiled and placed under government surveillance.

The same arguments used against our communities in the past are being heard again today—some have even positively invoked the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. But such rhetoric is unworthy of our political discourse and policy debate.

NCAPA urges you to join with us in standing against the anti-Muslim hate, xenophobia, and bigotry undermining our nation’s values and ideals. As you commemorate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, we hope that you will not only celebrate Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, but that you also will show your solidarity with those Asian Americans who are Muslim, Sikh, Arab and South Asian American by lifting up the discourse, rejecting the hate, and opposing discriminatory policies.

Sincerely,


Christopher Kang
National Director