



**Written Testimony of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance and
the Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership & Advancement**

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**Before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Agency Action,
Federal Rights and Federal Courts**

**Hearing on “Willful Blindness: Consequences of Agency Efforts
To Deemphasize Radical Islam in Combating Terrorism”**

June 27, 2016

The Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA) and the Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership & Advancement (IAPALA) submit this statement about the need to stand up against hateful, bigoted and xenophobic sentiments against Muslims and those who are perceived to be Muslims. The recent shooting in Orlando and the anti-Muslim hate and rhetoric that followed raise serious concerns about future legislation that will target and profile the Muslim community.

APALA is committed to calling out and holding elected officials and candidates for public office accountable at all levels of government. APALA and IAPALA are particularly disgusted by Senator Ted Cruz’s political maneuvering to use the Orlando tragedy as an excuse to attack the Muslim community. Senator Cruz’s hearing today only serves to escalate anti-Muslim hate and profiling and is an attempt to further institutionalize racism and xenophobia in our nation’s laws and policies.

Freedom of religion is a right granted to all Americans under the constitution and should not be used against any individual. We denounce the use of anti-Muslim – and any racist and xenophobic — rhetoric that criminalizes millions of Muslims or people of color that make up the new American majority. The criminalization of Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian American

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communities have already resulted in direct public and policy discrimination that fosters an environment of violence against Muslims.

Muslims and those who are perceived as such are involuntarily forced to live in constant fear of threats, discrimination, and violence in their daily lives. Due to the culture of anti-Muslim hatred right wing conservatives have continued to promote, Muslims are unable to live, work, or even practice their faith freely without living in constant fear.

Furthermore, pitting Americans against each other and victimizing one particular group, Muslim Americans, does not keep America safe. Muslim Americans face the same threat of terror as anybody else in the U.S., and discriminating against their community only creates more acts of hate and terror within our own communities.

For centuries, the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community has faced similar xenophobic rhetoric in America. As seen through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, to the overt discrimination of Muslim, Sikh, Arab, and South Asian American communities in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, AAPIs have a long history of facing discrimination. As a community who has faced similar acts of oppression and hatred, we must stand together and call out anti-Muslim hate, bigotry and racism.

We urge lawmakers and policymakers to refrain from using a bigoted anti-Muslim frame when discussing and creating legislation and, ask that any new legislation protects rights of communities who practice Islam. On behalf of APALA and IAPALA, thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony.

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