



April 21, 2021

Ms. Erika L. Moritsugu
Deputy Assistant to the President
Asian American and Pacific Islander Senior Liaison
White House

Re: Amnesty International calls on Biden administration to end “China Initiative”

Ms. Moritsugu:

On behalf of Amnesty International and our 10 million members, activists, and supporters worldwide, we commend President Biden’s multiple executive actions to counter Anti-Asian Violence, Xenophobia, and Bias. We thank the President for his emphatic denunciation of racism, xenophobia, and intolerance against Asian Americans and Pacific Islander (“AAPI”) individuals. Amnesty International appreciates the administration’s leadership in establishing a cross-agency initiative to address anti-AAPI violence, and calling on Congress to pass the [COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act](#) (S. 937). Our organization and membership are actively lobbying all Senators to pass this critical legislation along with the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act (S. 2043).

As the administration undertakes a whole-of-government approach to racial justice for AAPI communities, it is essential that the administration combat racial profiling within the federal government. Specifically, the administration should immediately end the “China Initiative,” which has led to the federal government’s racial profiling and targeting of Asian American and Asian immigrant scientists, researchers, and scholars, particularly by the Justice Department (“DOJ”), the National Institutes of Health (“NIH”), and the National Science Foundation (“NSF”).

In Nov. 2018, then-Attorney General Sessions launched the “China Initiative” to allegedly combat economic espionage for the Chinese government. While the prosecutions of Asian American and Asian immigrant scientists did not begin with the prior administration’s “China Initiative,” the Trump administration mandate increased pressure on the DOJ, NIH, and Federal Bureau of Investigation to scrutinize Asian Americans and Asian immigrants based on their ethnicity.

Earlier this month on Apr. 9 [Asian Americans Advancing Justice/AAJC](#) sent to the White House a petition signed by 29,318 directly impacted individuals calling for an end to the federal government’s racial profiling of Asian Americans and Asian immigrants, and

an end to the government's "China Initiative." These individuals describe how they have been targeted and scapegoated by the federal government and law enforcement.

According to the AAJC petition, [NIH has sent letters to over 10,000 institutions](#) in regard to the threat of intellectual property theft, and conducted investigations that have led to the dismissals, resignations, and terminations of Asian American scientists. NIH's head of extramural research has stated that [82 percent of those under investigation are Asian](#).

Even after finding no evidence of economic espionage, federal prosecutors are charging many Asian Americans and Asian immigrants with federal crimes based on administrative errors or minor offenses. These were previously handled by universities as part of the administrative process but are now being criminalized, resulting in ruined careers and lives in shambles.

Throughout U.S. history, AAPI communities have been repeatedly scapegoated and targeted based on race, ethnicity, or ancestry. The ongoing targeting and profiling of Asian American and Asian immigrant scientists follow a long history of criminalizing immigrants and treating Asian Americans as "perpetual foreigners." This racism has manifested itself at many points in our history including the Chinese Exclusion and Asian exclusion laws, the incarceration of Japanese American families and children during World War II, and the registration, detention, and deportation of Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian individuals in the aftermath of 9/11.

Furthermore, the use of generalizations based on impermissible grounds such as race, ethnicity, religion or national origin - rather than individual behavior or objective evidence - as the basis for suspicion in directing discretionary law enforcement actions is not only a counter-productive and ineffective form of policing, but also violates human rights. The right to be free from discrimination, including discriminatory policing, is enshrined in human rights treaties which the U.S. has signed and ratified.¹ As such, the U.S. government has an obligation to address such practices wherever they occur.

Amnesty International calls on the President to fulfill his executive order to bring a whole-of-government approach to racial justice for AAPI communities. Terminating the Trump-era "China Initiative" is an essential step and is consistent with President Biden's commitment to "build back better" by creating an inclusive, diverse, welcoming, and safe country for all AAPI individuals.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent human rights crisis.

Sincerely,



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ⁱ Arts. 2 & 26, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, G.A. Res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 999 U.N.T.S. 171, entered into force March 23, 1976; Art. 1, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 660 U.N.T.S. 195, entered into force Jan. 4, 1969.