

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

AAPI HERITAGE MONTH: SAFEGUARDING ASIAN AMERICAN INCLUSION AND BELONGING

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PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction:

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President
The Brookings Institution

Video remarks:

GRACE MENG, (D-N.Y.)
U.S. House of Representatives

ANDY KIM, (D-N.J.)
U.S. House of Representatives

Panel one: Domestic policy

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Panel two: Foreign policy

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. ALLEN: Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. For those of you I have not had the honor of meeting yet, my name is John Allen. I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. And it is a great pleasure to welcome you all today to today's event, "The AAPI Heritage Month: Safeguarding Asian American Inclusion and Belonging." I'll say that again, "AAPI Heritage Month: Safeguarding Asian American Inclusion and Belonging."

Now, on behalf of all of us at Brookings, I'd like to begin by offering my profound thanks to the distinguished members of Congress who have prerecorded remarks and will be featured in a few moments. Representative Andy Kim and Representative Grace Meng both of whom have been esteemed individuals in Congress and have been great champions for our Asian American communities especially amidst the terrible crises that we face today and the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes in America.

In the eve of the passing of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act last week. A very important moment in American history, actually. It seeks to directly confront the scourge of anti-Asian hate in this country. There could hardly be a better moment to celebrate the leadership of the Americans who have been involved in these activities and two of them will be speaking to us today.

And to discuss the many challenges still before us in safeguarding our cherished Asian American communities. Additionally, I would be remised if I didn't offer my sincere thanks to our Brookings staff for pulling together this event today. Uniquely our programming today was organized by a mixture of employees across the entire institution from one department to another and at all levels within the institution.

And I would like thank in particular the Brookings Inclusion and Diversity Committee, but also Adrien Chorn, Suzanne Schaefer and especially Greg Song for their personal leadership in furthering our institution's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

I've said this many times, Brookings is a great place because of our people. And that goes for all of our incredible staff as well. So thank you for your contributions to putting on today's event and we know that everyone will benefit from tuning in today.

Now, as a part of the monthly long celebration of the Asian American, Pacific Islander Heritage Month at our institution, it must be said that today's event also follows a recent national tragedy. Two months ago, we were shaken to the core by the horrific murder of eight individuals, six of whom were Asian women in Atlanta, Georgia.

This terrible incident that which of course occurred amidst so much suffering already in America remains a stark reminder of how systemic racism and xenophobia and harmful rhetoric can impact Asian American families and Asian American communities at large. Recognizing our role as an institution long dedicated to the public good, we saw a pressing need to convene both experts across and outside our organization to discuss the state of Asian America. Importantly, we need to talk about how policymakers can create both domestic and foreign policies that can benefit, not endanger, Asian Americans and the greater Asian diaspora.

Furthermore, made up of more than 23 million individuals, many of whom can directly trace their lineage across the Indo-Pacific region. Asian Americans remain one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. Their perspectives, their history and their rich culture are crucial to the fabric of today's society and the future of our country.

In other words, the story of Asian Americans is the story of America. And while events like these will not solve problems of racism of America alone, these kind of public events. We do remain very hopeful that these kinds of conversations started here can help inform the public discussion happening anywhere from the halls of Congress and all the way to the many dining rooms across America and community centers that have a vested interest in moving together the entire population of the United States and treasuring in that process our Asian American communities.

So with that in mind, I would like to introduce our two guest speakers starting first with Representative Grace Meng. Representative Meng has led the New York Sixth District since 2013 and is the first Asian American to be elected to Congress from the great state of New York and has long been one of our nation's leading advocates for Asian Americans among many other very important issues that she has embraced.

And following Representative Meng's prerecorded remarks we're also honored to have and feature Representative Andy Kim. Since coming into office in 2019, Representative Kim has been one of the greatest leaders on the issues of equality and inclusion for all Americans, but especially for our Asian American communities.

And before his current role representing New Jersey's Third District, Representative Kim served in Afghanistan as a civilian advisor within the U.S. State Department and also served in my headquarters in Afghanistan as dear friend. He would later serve on President Obama's National Security Council.

Once both of our representatives have given their prerecorded remarks, we'll then transition to two great panels. One focusing on domestic policy and the other on foreign policy. So before we move onto our program today, a quick reminder that we're live and we're on the record and audience members are welcome to submit questions via events@brookings.edu, the address again is events@brookings.edu or Twitter using the #AAPIMonth, #AAPIMonth. So with that thank you for joining us today on this very important moment and this very important event as we celebrate the rich heritage of our Asian American community. Thank you so much.

MS. MENG: Good afternoon. I'm Congresswoman Grace Meng from Queens, New York. Thank you, President Allen and to your team for organizing this event during APA Heritage Month.

While I wish I could be with you at your event, Representative Andy Kim and I are actually at the White House right now for a ceremony where the president will be signing my COVID-19 Hates Crimes Act into law making it the law of the land.

This is a momentous moment for our nation. For the past year and a half the Asian American community has been living in sheer terror. May is supposed to be a time of joy, celebration and reflection, but it's been anything but that.

Asian Americans have been spat at, slashed, stomped on, shot and killed. Our businesses have been vandalized. There's been over 6,600 reported acts of such violence with over two-thirds of them to women. And this is just the reported numbers. In New York City alone, there was a

1,900% increase in anti-Asian violence in 2020. Even as two million Asian Americans have been fighting on the front lines of this unprecedented pandemic, a dark shadow of violence, terror and pain was cast over our community, but I believe better days are ahead of us.

On Tuesday, my COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act passed the House of Representatives by 364 to 62. It followed the Senate vote which passed it by 94 to 1. Now today, President Biden is signing it into law.

The bill which I introduced with Senator Hirono will designate an individual at the Department of Justice to expedite review of COVID-19 hate crimes and incidents. It would also address reporting problems at the local level by requiring the attorney general to issue guidance for the creation of online reporting mechanisms. The collection of this aggregated data and expansion of public education campaigns to empower local communities. It would also bring federal agencies together with community-based organizations to raise awareness of hate crimes.

The COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act would also help strengthen hate crimes reporting. We know that hate crimes are severely under accounted. Roughly 18,000 law enforcement agencies report to the FBI, but only about 15,500 report on hate crimes meaning nearly 2,500 don't participate at all in reporting hate crimes. And of those that do report, many fail to report accurately.

Eighty-six percent of all participating police agencies affirmatively reported zero hate crimes to the FBI including at least 71 cities with populations of over 100,000, which would be great if it were true. Ultimately, you can't mend what you don't measure that is why the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act aims to help improve hate crime reporting by creating the infrastructure and oversight to allow more effective reporting.

It would also create state hate crimes hot lines and allow educational classes directly related to the community harmed by the offense. For too long our community has been invisible. But today with the signing of my bill, Congress and our president are taking a stand with the APA community and calling out this shameful anti-Asian hate.

I look forward to a day when our children, our parents, our grandparents can walk safely

again in their neighborhoods without fear of being attacked. We are closer to today than we have been over the last year and a half. Thank you and I wish you all a wonderful event.

MR. KIM: Hi, everyone. I'm Congressman Andy Kim from New Jersey. And I wanted to thank Brookings and I wanted to thank President John Allen for this amazing invitation. I feel honored to be able to be a part of this and to be able to share some onboards with all of you.

President Allen always has been an honor to be able to serve with you in government and to be able to continue this mission alongside you in terms of trying to move our country forward. To try to have the kind of thoughtful engagement that we need and deserve as a democracy, as a society.

And right now, what we're gathering to talk about is about this very moment, about what it means to be Asian American, Pacific-Islander, to be API Heritage Month. I'll be honest with all of you. This heritage month feels different. I've celebrated and observed this month in previous years, but this one feels different.

In the aftermath of the shooting down in Atlanta to the attacks that we see against API elders across our country and the growing discrimination and racism, and frankly, violence that we've seen over this past year, it's a lot. It's a lot to process. And what we've recognized when we take a step back is that we're living through a historic moment.

We're going through a lot as a country. We're going through a lot when it comes to racism at large in our society. But when it comes to the API community, I very much believe that this is a historic moment. I have never seen this level of engagement and outreach and intensity when it comes to the API community in this country nor have I seen this level of attention in our country given towards the API community in our country.

I really do believe that the next few weeks and the next couple of months will really shape the next couple of years if not longer of how APIs are treated in America. Now, the question is what is that going to look like? What are we going to do about this? What actions can each of us take to try to move that in the right direction?

Grace Meng and others that I have been working alongside have doing incredible work in

Congress. And we need to make sure we're keeping that up. But what we recognize as well is that there's no single piece of legislation alone that's going to solve all these problems and get rid of the racism and discrimination that the API community faces as well as the fact that the challenges that we face are not just due to COVID.

That we've experienced discrimination and racism well before COVID and we will continue to experience it after COVID. Certainly, gasoline has been poured on the fire. But what we need to make sure we're doing is seeing and hearing exactly what this discrimination looks like. That starts by understanding that the API community is not monolithic and that's something that we understand different experiences that are out there. Granted, there are some common threads and themes and experiences that are shared across.

And I think that we understand that that's going to be a deep wound in our society. And something that takes a lot to be able to address. I've seen it in my own experiences. I've seen it working even within government. I've shared recently an experience that I had when I worked at the State Department before.

Almost ten years ago probably, I had an experience where I was, you know, I was at the time working on Iraq and Afghanistan issues. I had top secret clearance. I remember I showed up to work one day at Foggy Bottom and I saw an envelope on my keyboard. I opened it up and I read it and it was a letter informing me that I have now been banned from working on issues related to Korea simply because I'm Korean American.

Now, this was a real shock to me. I wasn't even trying to work on issues related to Korea at the time. I wasn't applying for any jobs. This was a preemptive effort and a proactive effort by my government beyond the security clearances that I had already gone through telling me that they didn't trust me. That was how it felt for me that after working in Afghanistan and putting myself in harm's way and doing all these other efforts, this letter told me that my employer, the United States government, didn't think that they could fully trust my loyalty to this country.

That if I was engaged in an issue where I was working on my South Korea, my country of

heritage, that the government worried that I would not be able to represent America fully. And therein lies this question. What does it mean to be American?

What does that mean? For me as someone who was born here in the United States. That honestly, I don't even speak Korean very well. It hurt because this is the only home I know. And I kept growing up hearing this mantra that our diversity is our strength. And that America embraces our diversity. And that's what makes us unique and special in the world. I grew up with that.

But when I have these experiences -- and that was not the only one. But when I have these experiences, it makes me feel like that is not actually true in practice. And that the issue is that diversity is a concern. It's a potential threat. It's something that we have to worry about, we have to observe, we have to monitor. I didn't feel welcomed.

And it comes back to that question that I often hear which is, you don't belong here. I've heard that over and over again in my life. And I've never thought that I would hear that at the State Department. Literally, the place that is the face of America to the rest of the world.

I share with you that story because, first of all, we need to fix this. We need to take steps to show that our diversity is our strength that we mean what we say. That we want to have the kind of diversity within our government. That we want a government that looks a lot more like the rest of America.

But we also want to say is that when it is our strength that it is something that can make us better. That we want to do this not just because it's a right thing to do and that we want to have an equality and that equity reflected across our government, but we also want to make sure that we do this because it will lead to better policies, better laws, better actions for our country to take.

And so much of our foreign policy right now that we're talking about is about what is the United States' relationship with China? What are we going to do with allies and partners in Indo-Pacific, Asia-Pacific area? I want us to think about our diversity as a strength. That maybe it's a good thing for us to be able to have people who have deeper cultural and historic ties or personal ties or language skills that this is something that we can benefit from.

That's something that I want us to move towards and get towards. And I hope that I can continue to work with many of you through the work that I'm doing on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Arms Services Committee to try to move that needle forward. Try to find ways to really address that. And fundamentally, be able to discuss and shape that question about what does it mean to be an American?

What does that look like? What is it that we want to show the rest of the world? Now, this is all of the more important right now because of this new era of foreign policy and global politics that we're entering into. I truly believe that the world that we are reentering into is different than the world that we socially distanced from last year. That our goal right now is not to dial back the clock of February 2020, but we are emerging into this new paradigm moment like 9/11, like the fall of the Berlin Wall, this is a new era.

This new era will be hugely shaped by the singular question of what is the United States' relationship with China? And therefore, also looking at the bigger picture across the Asia Pacific. Now, if that is the case here then we need to be careful about how we approach this. When we talk about renewed great power competition that we shouldn't immediately just think of a neo-cold war type scenario.

Something that just kind of dusts off the playbook that we had decades ago. But we try to look through with a new and invigorated lens to see it for what it is. The reason I mention this is that this is not only the challenge of our challenge, but this is also a moment for us to think about how the implications of foreign policy affect us here at home as well.

As an Asian American, what I'm also saying is that I worry that this new era of global dynamics and this competition with China. If done improperly, if discussed and verbalized improperly could lead to a new era of xenophobia here in America. I think about what I saw the Muslim American community, the Arab American community facing after 9/11.

I think about what we understand with the Japanese Internment. And I look at even just my small slice of this, my humble slice of this as an experience where I had my loyalty questioned at the

State Department because of my last name and the color of my skin.

So I just ask us to be thoughtful about this. That we not only think about what we are trying to accomplish, but we think about how we go about doing it and how we treat people along the way. And that's something I want to commit myself to working with all of you with.

Brookings and throughout the broader community, a lot of us are looking at these questions, but I hope that we are doing it in a comprehensive, 360 way. Or looking at how these dynamics are so few. That there is no firewall between foreign policy and domestic policy, that we recognize that we live in a world with that fluidity that goes beyond anything that we have seen before. And that's something that I think we want to be mindful about.

Now, I'll tell you I don't have all the answers. I don't have the perfect vocabulary about how we talk about this, but I want us to work together to strive to do that and be sensitive to that as we talk through it. Try to understand how these dynamics are interlinked and how our words do have repercussions. Good and bad.

So with that I just again think that this is a moment, especially this heritage month. A moment for us to be able to think through what comes next. What I hope is that we pay attention to the issues facing the AAPI community not just through the month of May. Not just through heritage month. Not just when we see murders and violence on the front pages of newspapers. But I hope that we can do this sustained throughout the year, throughout years going forward so that we can continue to lift this up and talk through a way in which we can be, A), proud of Asian Americans in our country, their heritage, our history, our contributions.

But also, talking about how it is fundamental to how we move forward. So with that I'm just grateful again for the invitation to speak with all of you and to be a part of this event to share with you some of my thoughts and words here during this incredibly historic time. Thank you very much and I look forward to working with you all. Take care.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Well, I want to say to those words that I'm actually speechless. I'm going to introduce myself in a moment, but as I listened to the representative and his remarks, I was

reminded of what James Baldwin, the great Black scholar said in the book, "The Price of the Ticket."

That, what is it that you want me to reconcile myself to? And that conversation that we just heard of, what is it for me to be an American? I think is some important words particularly at this time.

So I want to thank both representatives for providing their remarks particularly at a busy time where they were unable to be with us physically. And I want to thank President Allen for allowing us and Brookings to actually express and talk about these issues in a think space and to have all of you join us. So thank you as well for taking the time out of your schedules to participate in this conversation.

As it was mentioned, we will have questions. We ask that you email those to events@brookings.edu, and we also ask that you continue to tweet this event at #AAPIMonth.

I'm Nicol Turner-Lee. I am senior fellow in Governance Studies here at the Brookings Institution and the director of the Center for Technology Innovation. I actually hold, I think, an honorary affiliation with our China center. So my dear friend and colleague, Cheng Li will be moderating the next panel.

And I'm also one of the research scholars that works on Brookings' new racial equity initiative where many of us are trying to delve into these issues in a very granular way to intersect policy with learned experiences of various groups. And with that I'm excited today because this conversation that we're having is off to a really good start.

It's really a conversation that's going to be candid in terms of how do we address not only what's going on today, but how do we address the ongoing historical circumstances that perhaps have led us to where we are today? And so, I'm joined in this first panel, which is primarily going to focus on domestic policy but obviously it's going to have some impact for the geopolitical circumstances between U.S. and China.

But I'm joined today by three distinguished experts and I'm pretty excited to talk to them. For those of you that know me, hopefully, I will talk less and they will talk more because as a sociologist the issues are very near and dear to my heart.

Willow Lung-Amam is a nonresident senior fellow here at the Governance Studies Department in which I work at the Brookings Institution, so I want to welcome her.

Janelle Wong who is the professor of American Studies at the University of Maryland will also be joining us today. And Frank H. Wu who is the president of Queens College and the distinguished author known by many you will also be joining us as well.

So I want to thank the three of them for being with us and I want to pivot to our conversation. So I think that they are on with us. I don't necessarily see their face. I know I have my glasses on so I'm going to take a sign from the Brookings tech people that we will pivot to each of their presentations. I want to start first with Frank.

And, Frank, I know when we talked recently there was a lot of history that you shared and expressed that I knew and some that I did not know. So I want to start this conversation by level setting because I think what we've heard from both representatives is this deepening scar that racism and discrimination leaves.

And I think it comes from one that is, you know, sort of unhealable, right? Because they've not necessarily addressed the real problem that is actually making that scar still open up and those wounds bleed when the salt is poured in. So, Frank, why don't we start with you to provide some historical level setting on the AAPI community.

And what I would also like for you to really talk about, right? Is, what does it mean to be Asian American? Like, I was just struck by what Representative Kim kept saying, because I just remember that as an African American having those same conversations and seeing that historically. So, Frank, we'll pivot to you and I know you got some slides to show us as well.

Mr. WU: All right. Great. Thank you, thank you, thank you so much. An honor to be here and to hear my Congresswoman Grace Meng. I live in her district and I've known Andy Kim ever since his student days at Deep Springs College so it's wonderful to follow the two of them.

I'm going to make three points. I started off as a law professor, and law professors always make three points. So I'm going to talk about the main images that affect Asian Americans

historically. So I'll show a few PowerPoint slides. I know I have only four minutes and 30 seconds left so we're going to move fast through this.

All right. So you should be looking at some PowerPoint slides. Would someone just nod and indicate that you see some PowerPoint slides? All right. Great.

So the first is the Black/White Paradigm. We talked about race as if it's just two boxes. Literally, Black and white that comes from the Kerner Commission Report in 1968 that looked at the long hot summer of 1967 when there were either riots or rebellions depending on your perspective.

The bestselling book "Two Nations" captures this perspective. I think this is just wrong not as an Asian American. I think it's wrong as someone who wants to have a picture of the world that's accurate. It leaves out people who are Latino, people who are Indigenous, people who are mixed and, of course, Asian Americans.

It's not out of ethnic pride that I ask that we be included. And Asian Americans have always been there. The inclusion of Asian Americans should be to help, not harm the historic struggle for a Black equality.

So take a look at this photo from Life Magazine. That's Malcom X when he's assassinated lying on the floor of the Audubon Ballroom in New York City, 1965. Look at who's cradling his head. One of his closest confidantes, colleagues, associates, Yuri Kochiyama, a Japanese American. There she is a few years later giving a black power salute.

She was alongside Malcom X until he drew his last breath. Look at the Japanese American Citizens League and the delegation dressed in their Sunday best out to march with Martin Luther King, Jr. under a hot sun in 1963 when he gives his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Asian Americans have always been there. They've been there in solidarity. Look at Martin Luther King at Selma. He's wearing leis. This is when Hawaii was a brand-new state, having joined the union in 1959. It's pretty easy, air travel before overnight delivery. It was a difficult logistics job to ship fresh lei from Hawaii to the deep south, but it was done because the Hawaiians who knew Dr. King wanted to show their solidarity and Dr. King in turn wanted to show his. And virtually, everyone at the

front of the line is wearing a lei.

All right. So the Black/White Paradigm is simply inaccurate and it's not historically true. Asian Americans have been here since before the Civil War. Hundreds of Asian soldiers fought in the Union and Confederate armies. I'll tell you, I was shocked to learn that myself. There's a whole book on the subject.

All right. I'm going to zip through some of these slides. So the second point is Asian Americans, and I know Willow is going to speak to this, as I characterize as the model minority, which is inaccurate because there's high levels of income inequality. It white washes bias.

Now, of course, those who have achieved, I applaud them. They deserve our respect. But the model minority meant, actually meant ratchets up racial resentment. The idea that Asian Americans are so hard working. They're unfair competition. They're regarded as superior workers, not inferior ones. And therefore, have to be excluded.

But most of all the model minority myth is often false flattery. It's a none too subtle way to send a message to African-Americans and other people of color, hey, look at the Asians. They made it. Why can't you? Using Asian Americans as pawns.

The third image that's important is the perpetual foreigner syndrome that's what Congressman Kim spoke about. It doesn't matter if you're second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation. Yes, they're Asian Americans who are sixth generation. There are Asian Americans whose ancestors came on the Mayflower. Now, when I say that people are puzzled.

Anglo Asians, they're mixed. Senator Tammy Duckworth spoke so movingly when she ran for office, the office she now holds, about how her family had an unbroken record of 13 generations of service in the armed forces of this nation. How her forbearers fought alongside George Washington. To which her opponent promptly mocked her and said, well, he didn't know there were Asians there.

She was speaking of her father's side. She as a Duckworth could be in the Daughters of the American Revolution. On her mother's side, she's Thai-Chinese.

So this has real consequences. The internment when two-thirds of those incarcerated

were U.S. citizens. Two-thirds including veterans of the Great War as World War I was called.

So this is how Asian Americans so often are treated. Either literally legally, formerly excluded during the Jim Crow era with the Chinese Exclusion Act, extended to an Asiatic bar zone denied citizenship through naturalization because they weren't free white people, or figuratively excluded.

So there's one last pair of slides I want to show, but the three main points I wanting to make are the images, the themes that define the Asian American experience are: One, it's a Black/White Paradigm Asian Americans don't fit. Two, the model minority myth suggesting, well, you've got nothing to complain about. We all know you're doing well anyway.

And three, the perpetual foreigner which is you don't even belong. Where are you from? Where are you really from? No, really. I mean where are you really from? As if to say that's where you should go back to.

Where does "Asian American" come from? So one of the things I say is there aren't any Asians in Asia. When I say that people look puzzled. Well, that aren't that many Europeans in Europe or Africans in Africa. Pan-Asian identities associated with Imperialism. It was a euphemism when Japan during World War II said we're going to have an East Asian coprosperity sphere. That was about the annexation of neighboring territories.

So Asians fought total wars against one another one just two generations ago. Stroll down the street in Shanghai, Seoul or Saigon and say to people, what are you? Who are you? None of them are going to say, I'm an Asian. They're identified by national origin, by ethnicity, by faith, by language, by region, by dialect, by clan. They're not Asians. They're Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Pakistanis, Burmese, Filipino, Laotian, Cambodian, Hmong, and so on and so forth. But here, we're told you all look alike.

And so, "Asian American" as a term has two very interesting origins. The first is the Civil Rights Movement and student activism. Two young students, Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee, Japanese American and Chinese American. This is this them much later.

In 1968, during the student activism when there was a Yellow Power Movement. Yes,

that's right. Yellow Power modeled on Black Power. They came up with this term to bring together Asian Americans to say, yes, your ancestors hated my ancestors but here we have common cause. Let's build bridge. Let's declare we're really American. That term didn't exist before then.

The other origin? Directive 15. You might not have heard of this, but in the mid-1970s, the federal government, the OMB created five racial categories. Although, they've revised it just a little bit. Every time, you fill out a form for the federal government, it uses this classificatory system that was invented in the mid-70s and promulgated formerly in 1977 and Asian or Pacific Islander was one of those categories.

So out of student activism and government bureaucracy, we got Asian Americans. I look forward to our dialogue and I'm honored to be here with good colleagues and friends. Back to you Nicol.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Look, Frank, I was just going all up in your alley because I'm a sociologist who studied collective memory and social movement. I mean that's where I believe it started from. I was starting to feel you on that, right? Because it distinguishes the nature of our ethnicity and our race versus our power grades. I think it's really important.

Now, Willow, I want to come over to you. I'm not going to say that Frank took some of your thunder here because I know you've got a lot to talk about as well. But I want you to sort of debunk this homogenization theory, right? That we heard from both the members of Congress as well as Frank as he was starting to unpack it. Speak to me a little bit about why we got to this model minority, right? And why this is one of those areas that we need to unpack for people if we're going to really get down to some of the reasons why we're having this conversation today and why this model doesn't, you know, feel particularly happy and salutatory.

MS. LUNG-AMAM: Thank you, Nicol and thank you to Brookings for having me here in this forum. It is really a pleasure to be amongst such great company. Frank really did steal my thunder and really laying the groundwork for a fabulous conversation. I actually learned so much from his comments already.

But I just wanted to before I get to your question lay a little bit of groundwork about my

entry point into this conversation. I am an urban planner by training and in my scholarship. And so, I think a lot about issues of adult environment and especially how that impacts public policy.

Most of my work on Asian Americans has happened in the context of suburbia and in the context of neighborhood change. So I've been thinking a lot about how both higher income, upper middle class Asian Americans who are integrating into predominantly white and middle class or upper middle class neighborhoods are welcomed and face the kind of politics particularly around development that happens inside of these communities. And in part debunking some of these ideas about Asian Americans as the new whites.

Those that freely integrate into white communities because of the high rates of homeownership, because of the higher rates of income which as we know is only a selective group of Asian Americans, and there's a whole history behind that. So my first book project really tackled those issues within the context of Silicon Valley thinking about how those who were predominantly middle class, educated, professional immigrants were integrated into these communities.

And when I had talked about in that was sort of the ways in which Asian Americans were often perceived and contested by established white residents, city officials and policymakers as an "other," right? And how this was integrated into the kind of contestations over the physical landscape, over schools, over so-called Asian malls of these retail shopping centers that were predominantly occupied by Asian retailers and over the rebuilding of homes in a form that some called the McMansion or the monster home. Again, suggesting a kind of foreignness to this idea.

And so, I talk about how Asian Americans are really racialized through the built environment and what I mean by that is the ways in which we can see both whiteness reflected in the kind of valued and valuable landscapes of suburbia but also how we can see Asian Americans otherwise through the ways in which they're constructed in their communities and their spaces are marginalized as well.

So that's kind of my entry point into this conversation. I am currently working on a second book project where I'm really thinking about Asian Americans and the context of Black and Latinx

communities and those that are gentrifying in suburbs. I'm not specifically talking about Asian Americans, but Asian Americans are part of my story that is really trying to, as Frank introduced, sort of disrupt some of these Black/White binaries in terms of thinking about issues of redevelopment and gentrification and where it happened and who it happens to.

Decentering out of the urban context but also out of just the Black/White Paradigm that I think is so important. And thinking about how that has affected Asian Americans not only in places like Chinatown and places that have historic ethnic enclaves that they are being pushed out of but also two certain places in suburbs which are now the predominant home of Asian Americans and innerspring suburbs and outer ring suburbs and the kind of struggles and across solidarities that are being built in those kind of environments.

So questions about affordable housing, questions about small businesses and the retention of those environments and questions about organizing. So that's what I've been up to and those are the kind of perspectives that I bring to the conversation.

Now, you've asked me to say a little bit about the model minority myth and its impacts and how it obscures some of the heterogeneity that Frank and others have already spoken to. And what I want to say here is just to remember that the model minority myth is a product of white supremacy, right?

It is a way of justifying racialization and racism in ways that marginalize and oppress all of nonwhite people, right? So it's saying, as Frank has already said, that if Asian Americans can do it, everybody can do it. But it ignores the racial hierarchies and differential power relations, but specifically the anti-Black struggle in the United States and the way that the colonial legacies and settler colonialism in the United States and the ways in which they're sort of always this remixing of the racial hierarchy that, no matter what happens at the bottom always keeps white folks on top.

And importantly, for our conversations today, it undermines solidarity both in with interracial solidarity, with Black and Latinx communities as well as intra-racial solidarity amongst the Asian American communities and those who don't. Which is actually the vast majority of Asian Americans who don't fit the paradigm, right?

So it says in those cases that you're not really Asian, right? Because you don't perform at the same rank. You're not upper class. You're not educated. You're not professional Asians so you are therefore not part of this myth. And therefore, something that binds us as Asian Americans. And so the more that we can bring attention to the ways in which Asian Americans fail to fit this stereotype and the fact that it is a myth born of white supremacy, the more we begin to chip away at its power.

MS. TURNER-LEE: You know, I think it's so interesting. So I'm writing all these notes because when I was in graduate school there was a book on the model minority. You guys might know the author. It's fleeting my memory right now, but part of this whole idea of collective memory and the curation and the devices sort of frameworks that have always been posited because you look at races as a social construction. You realize that it's socially constructed to maintain physical oppression, right, against certain groups.

And so, I think it's so interesting. I talked about it and hopefully we'll get to some time because it's intergenerationally we've seen that collective memory in many respects sort of diluted, which could give the impression that one group's oppression is greater than the others or less than the others which I think is such a fascinating way that you start to breakdown these ordered relationships that you're talking about with us.

Now, Janelle, I want to go to you because in your case -- because we've sort of seen this trail here -- talk about history and level setting. We're talking about the politicization of these terms and these narratives. And now, I want to talk about political power in and of itself, right? Because there is this myth when we start to get more heterogeneous in our understanding that Asian Americans don't fit anywhere in the political realm and that's not what your research says, right?

In fact, and I want to just put the statistics out there. AAPI data suggests that voter turnout increased significantly in this last elected cycle from 51% to 58%. But we're also seeing, and I'll just combine this with for the sake of time, allowed a coalition building and the elections in Georgia, et cetera, where Asian Americans are playing a significant part.

So talk to us a little bit about that in terms of the political side of it so we can also put this

all together.

MS. WONG: Thank you so much, Nicol. Let me just go ahead and share this screen. So I really appreciate my co-panelist's wonderful presentations and hope that we can all come together around these key themes.

I will just echo what you said that our data from AAPI data where I'm a senior researcher show that Asian Americans -- this is the latest data -- show the highest increase in voter turnout. Now, you can see here there's still a ways to go, but this is quite significant in terms of their increase from 49% turning out in 2016 to 60% in 2020. And we know that that was very significant in the Georgia context especially at the runoffs there.

You can see here also that there's some kind of political coalescing. We can sort of say that there might be a kind of adherence to the democratic candidate over the last -- especially 15 years, post-election estimates. This was a pre-election survey, show that about 65 or 67% of Asian Americans voted for Joe Biden. So there's still a lot of heterogeneity, but we're seeing a pretty strong trend over the last decade.

And I just want to pivot to some data that I collected just two days after the attacks in Atlanta with my colleagues. AAPI data and this is also joined with Survey Monkey. And it just really, I think, shows some of the trends that both Frank and Willow have brought up in terms of two stereotypes, the forever foreigner stereotype and the model minority stereotype.

So there is a lot of attention to hate crimes against Asian Americans but over the respondents' lifetimes what you can see is that Black Americans -- and this is important for solidarity -- are the group most likely to report hate crimes.

In 2021, just for the first month of 2021, we see that all racial groups including Black and Latinx and Asian Americans and Native Americans are experiencing hate crimes and this is confirmed by other data that show that Native Americans are especially likely to have experienced hate crimes since the start of the pandemic. But that Black and Asian Americans experienced hate crimes at about the same rate over the pandemic.

To the forever foreigner stereotype many Asian Americans have been encouraged to whiten their names, about one out of five. Pacific Islanders are even more likely to have that be the case. Have people ask where you are from assuming you're not from the U.S. This is something Frank mentioned and here we see it again reflected in these data. Sixty-four percent of Asian Americans.

Again, this was just two months ago. But at the same time, we see that Asian Americans don't experience race in the same way as other groups. So have you been unfairly stopped by the police or experienced police misconduct? Of course, we know this has affected Black Americans more than other groups. Forty percent report yes versus just 14% of Asian Americans.

And have you ever been experiencing housing discrimination? Again, a topic that is critically important. We see that this affects Pacific Islanders who are part of the AAPI community, Black Americans. But Asian Americans are less likely to report this kind of discrimination.

And then if we turn to being unfairly discouraged by a teacher or advisor from continuing your education? You can see the model minority myth kicking in. So it's side by side with the forever foreigner kind of implicit bias. We see that Asian Americans are the least likely to report this kind of discouraging bias, but Black Americans 23%, Pacific Islanders again very high as Native Americans.

So this just helps you to understand I think racial discrimination and the kind of complex experiences of Asian Americans in the larger landscape.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Yeah. You know, I want to just stay on you for just a second because I think that those are really trying statistics that also point to the fact that this is not a homogeneous monolith community. When we see these high rates of numbers among the Pacific Islander community, why would that be the case?

MS. WONG: I think Willow had mentioned it before. Colonialism is a powerful force and Pacific Islanders have experienced, you know, deep colonial relationships with the U.S. where we still have many military bases on Pacific Islands and have, you know, and many Pacific Islanders still fighting for their native rights.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Yeah, yeah. So that speaks to and something we'll hopefully touch

on the panel on the domestic side. Some of the relations between geopolitical circumstances, right, and how that impacts not just, you know, what people's perceptions are of you, but how you live. Your lived experiences here in the United States.

So I want to turn for a minute because I think John Allen talked about it, which is that horrific day where we actually saw, you know, not only the continuing violence that happened with people like George Floyd, but let's go into the post-January 6 insurrection. We see this attack in Atlanta on Asian Americans, right? And it was one, I think that stopped all of us short not because that happened, but we have seen these egregious acts continue to happen.

So I want to open it up to the floor to anyone of you after listening to our members of Congress. I mean is legislation going to help us mitigate those types of acts of violence? And what role does public policy actually play? How will it help us mitigate these circumstances? Frank, why don't I start with you and then we'll go around.

MR. WU: Sure. You know, the issues aren't new, but the awareness is new. Asian Americans have faced systematic violence for the entire time there have been Asian Americans.

In Rock Springs, Wyoming in the 19th century, the entire Asian population was killed or driven out. In downtown Los Angeles in 1871, when Los Angeles was just a frontier settlement, one out of ten of the Chinese immigrants were killed. These were arsons, shootings, lynchings. They were organized. They were carried out by whites, some of whom were themselves immigrants.

Sometimes people say, oh, well this was citizens against foreigners. That's not the case. Many of demagogues who attacked the Asian immigrants were themselves European immigrants such as Denis Kearney from County Cork, Ireland. So none of this is new.

But until Atlanta, there's been such denial. I can't tell you how many frustrating conversations I had with people who said, well, how do you know it's racial? Even though people are shouting things like go back to where you came from or the disease is your fault or they're using those slurs, "chink," "jap," "gook." And I use those words deliberately to show they have no power over me.

But even in those cases, friends of mine would say, well, oh, come on. We don't know

that that's a hate crime. Well, all right. As a lawyer, I can say, am I sure that technically it meets the evidence standard? Well, maybe not. So I don't know if the person is a racist, but I can say the effect is racial. The effect that each instance and cumulatively certainly. And when you have all these violent videos, you realize, all right. This is not random. These people are being targeted.

In Atlanta, it is not random. You don't kill six Asian women unless you go looking for Asian women. And then shockingly, the law enforcement officer in charge after the perpetrator confessed said, well, he was having a bad day. I thought that's got to be fake news when I saw that. But no, he actually said that as if not only to deny that it was a hate crime, but to dismiss that it was a crime at all. And then, of course, the officer himself was discovered to have been propagating the "China virus" meme on social media.

This happened in a toxic environment. And the videos that we see of people being spit -- so it starts with just slurs, all right? People saying, "oh, come on. Don't be politically correct. They're just calling you names." Right, but it escalates. And you don't know when it will go from there to spitting, to shoving people to the ground so hard their bones are broken or they're put into a coma, to stabbing them, to shooting them. And these are all mistaken identity twice over.

Don't get me wrong. It's not right if you find a Chinese foreign national beat them up. That is wrong. But the people who perpetrate this, they don't pause and say, may I check your passport? I'll leave you alone if you're actually a U.S. citizen. So they get the ethnicity wrong because people are Burmese, Korean, Filipina.

In Los Angeles, a Chicano woman was called a chink and then brutally beaten. And of course, it's U.S. citizens and immigrants to this nation. They've got nothing to do with the virus, but it's all come back to the forefront. Not microaggression, explicit in your face, "I'm going to stab you because I think you caused this virus and it's why I have to wear a mask." That's what's going on.

MS. TURNER-LEE: But let's talk about it. And Janelle or, you know. What is this in terms of the policy though? And then I'm going to come over to Willow. I mean is policy going to be a mitigator for this? We have the anti-Asian hate crime bill and then we also see this push towards Asian

American education, which I think is a response to this reputation of critical race theory.

How can legislation play a role in sort of to quell what Frank has outlined?

MS. WONG: Legislation is symbolically important and there are elements of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act that, you know, lead to better data collection. And also, to some restorative practices. I do think it's important to note that many Asian American organizations have been very cautious in terms of supporting any kinds of policies that will lead to additional policing and surveillance of Black and Brown people. And I'll let Willow continue on.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Willow, do you want to jump in?

MS. LUNG-AMAM: Yeah. I agree that it's symbolically important. I would also say that it is important substantively to some extent, but certainly not comprehensive enough.

I mean just the fact that it's labeled a COVID bill suggests that this is something unique without historical grounding as opposed to part of what Frank is saying, which is of long history of anti-Asian discrimination that has been built into the fundamental bones of this country. And built into it not through individual hate and bias, which I think is why some people don't like the term Asian hate because that implies that it's not systemic in nature. That it's interpersonal in nature.

And I think these problems stem out of the white supremacist, not only the culture, but actually the bones of policy particularly around immigration policy, but also domestic policy as well. That has really focused around civil right issues, and housing as Janelle has introduced and other issues as well.

So we need this right now as Representative Meng suggested in accounting, right? You can't mend what you can't measure is what I think what she said. But you also can't reduce Asian American hate incidents to a measurement at this point in time when we know that there's so much underreporting and we know that this has such long and broad implications.

So it is a step towards a more restorative or reparative framework, but it is certainly not comprehensive enough to be part of a fuller conversation about what the implications of this moment and where and how we got here.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Yeah. I like this. And I'm going to keep push this panel just a little bit if you don't mind because I think part of this goes to this revelation among the Asian American community that racism exists, right? And I think you all have laid out that for years it has sort of been this ordering of systems of oppression and in particular African-Americans or Black Americans have been most affected.

With that being the case, before we go into coalition building, it's important for us to address that too, right? Because in the scope of a model minority there has also been sort of this discriminatory model where there's been, you know, some Asian anti-Blackness that has come. Or some non-alignment between goals so I'm curious. I'll start with you, Frank. You know, how do we address that? Because what we're seeing is, you know, for example, Black Lives Matter has been out there. We see Stop Asian Hate. You know, but at the end of the day shouldn't we be saying stop hate for everybody, right?

But there also has been a fundamental undercurrent that we have not always that addressed when we try to talk about coalition bills.

MR. WU: Yeah. So I'm going to take this on directly. And I'm going to say something that might upset some folks, but that's okay. I think it's important to say, which is we've got to call out anti-Blackness among Asian Americans.

I'll give you a specific example. Even after Atlanta, and if you aren't aware the perpetrator in Atlanta was white. Even after Atlanta, people have contacted me and they've said, hey, Wu, when are you going to stand up for Asian Americans against Black people?

Now, I need to emphasize. It's not any victim. And I'm not going to criticize anyone who is a victim of violence. These are demagogues, right? And they know that I do talks. They know that I've been a civil rights activist for my entire life, but they want me specifically to emphasize Black criminality and reinforce that stereotype.

And I'm just so troubled by this because I explained. I'm not going to rise up against Black people. And yes, there are perpetrators. There's no question. There are perpetrators of this

violence who are Black and Brown. They are persons, individuals, who happen to be Black. They are not Black people, right? It's not -- they're not representatives. And it's just going to make everything worse if we frame it that way.

There's something else that some of them do that is not helpful. I've heard people say, "you know, Americans had better respect the Chinese diaspora. China is rising. China is going to be powerful and they're going to be answering to us soon." I think to myself, uh, geez. You know, that's just going to make it worse. You're just reinforcing. You are spreading the yellow peril message as if you believe it. You know, and it's a misunderstanding of people who are a majority where they are or coming from who don't understand what it's like to be a domestic minority here.

What will work is bridge building and emphasis of American ideals that Asian Americans want what other Americans want, which is to be able to walk down the street. And when you say that you can't help but catch yourself and then realize, wait a minute. African-Americans can't walk down the street in safety either. They can be jogging and hunted down and murdered in a video that people film because they feel that they can get away with it.

They can be bird watching and Central Park. And if you're going to generalize, you know, I'm going to generalize. Bird watching is probably a pretty peaceful pass time. And I'm thinking bird watchers are not really a threatening group, but people can call because they think you're a thug.

There was a rally in Flushing, Queens. One of the most diverse places in America just a couple of weekends ago, and I was honored to speak. I looked at the crowd. There's all these Asian Americans and I said something truthful. I've never seen this. I've never seen so many Asian Americans protesting with signs. Standing up and speaking out, but I've also never seen something else.

On the podium, Senator Chuck Schumer, Major Bill de Blasio, State Attorney General James, the borough president who is African-American, Congresswoman Meng, civil rights activist Al Sharpton.

There were people who were Black. There were people who were Latinx. There were people who were Jewish alongside Asian Americans. I've never seen that either so this gives me hope.

Asian Americans are finally standing up and speaking out. Embracing the diverse democracy and their role in it and then others are joining them. I've never seen that happen and it gives me hope. The legislation that passed, President Biden's statements, all of that is unprecedented in a good way.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Yeah. I mean, I want to drill down and want Willow to respond to this. I have to tell you just a little secret. So I'm one of the surrogates that goes with Cheng Li to China. You know, I've been going for the last four years.

And I felt racialized for a minute when I was in China because apparently there's not a lot of Black people going around China, you know. So there were a lot of people who wanted to take my picture. But I told somebody what wonderful experience I did have is that I had a lot of people stop me.

A lot of people stare, take my picture. And then one time, I turned around, I told people, if you're going to take my picture of me -- and I don't speak Chinese so I had to use my hands and stuff. I had to take a picture of you. And when we realized that the two of us had to take pictures together, I'm on WeChat, they're on Facebook, but guess what? We were smiling all the same. It goes back to what you've said. We have to recognize what these vulnerabilities are if we're actually going to mend them.

But Willow, when you think about what Frank said, right? Part of what we're seeing today is deliberate pitting of our groups against one another. How do we get to the coalition building that you spoke about? How do we begin to erase white supremacy as a core theme for why we need voting rights? You know, to prosecute the person in Atlanta quickly? Or why we need to have these coalitions for policy changes?

MS. LUNG-AMAM: Yeah. So I'll just say at the outset that my father is a Chinese immigrant. My mother is African-American so live this in my body. I live this in my own family and I see the ways in which these groups that are actually so intertwined in their histories and their experiences often then rendered as opposites on the spectrum of racialization and of experiences in ways that don't serve anybody other than the white supremacists' framework under which we live.

So, you know, I think how we get to coalition building is by, you know, coming out in solidarity together and understanding our shared histories. I mean part of what Frank sort of started us

with is talking about the Yellow Power movement. These are not isolated incidents in our history. These are quite shared histories, you know, parts of our history.

Racial zoning that has been so much a part of the African-American experience is that which created Chinatowns, right? Or Japan-towns. These were racially restrictive areas by racial convenience, by zoning, by redlining. The histories of groups standing up together during the civil rights movement, the Japanese American Civic Leagues.

Those groups that were inspired by the NAACP and worked in solidarity with them as well as the Black Power Movement. That was part of the civil rights movement, but it's just not part of what we hear about the civil rights movement. So I think part of creating space is also understanding that we have always worked to some degree in solidarity because we have always had shared and similar experiences.

And I think when lose that thread is when we lose the grounds for solidarity. And so, I am inspired in this moment by seeing more Asian Americans coming out in solidarity over Black Lives Matter and on the other side in Stop Asian American Hate campaigns. You know, that you see African-Americans and Latino Americans and Indigenous Americans really coming out.

And so, I think that we are at a moment where a lot of these histories are needing to be retaught. But also, there's a generation that's not quite buying in to the old narratives about the ways in which we are separated. And I think there are many people like myself that embody these shared narratives and we need to be speaking more to the ways in which that is a lived experience for many people.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Yeah. I mean, Jack Lord, who's out there somewhere, just sent this note. I can't phrase it as a question, Jack, because I've run out of time. I want to hear from Janelle to take up more questions.

But he says, we need to really start with commonality, right, because we do use Asian American, Black American. But I would say to you, Jack, though but sometimes you've got to recognize that our diversity as actually all American, right?

But, you know, I don't like ending panels because what we're talking about is, as John Allen said, is domestic terrorism that we need to get a handle on. Gun violence, the type of collective activism that respects our ability to protest and that covenant surveillance. But I want to ask you one thing because I would be remised. And for those of you who are listening, I've got a set of questions. If you have any that I think I can answer, events@brookings.edu.

Janelle, let's talk about resiliency. In all of this, Representative Kim, Meng, come on now. We haven't seen that in Congress in terms of historical. How do we take that lesson of resiliency, who we're seeing appointed in the Biden administration, and run with that so that people recognize that the glass is overflowing versus being half empty?

MS. WONG: Yeah. I think we have a very important opportunity here. And Representative Meng and Representative Kim, I think also they're on the policy side. And what we have to shift to now is not only the shared protest but also shared support of policies.

And so, I think we are seeing more support for addressing anti-Asian violence and Black Lives Matter issues through investment in communities, in anti-poverty programs, in understanding that policing can be dangerous for all of our communities if it is executed in the wrong way, right?

And so, one of the things I just would like to emphasize here is that, you know, we have seen actually one of the calls for solidarity and investment in our communities. We have seen Black Americans with institutional power again and again stand with Asian Americans. This starts with Fredrick Douglas and the Chinese Exclusion Act, right?

And then for Asian Americans, I want to press a little bit harder. Are we seeing that among Asian Americans with affirmative action? With a protest against the integration of magnet schools? And I really think that those are areas where we need -- you know, Asian Americans should not be at the forefront of dismantling those equity programs. That's not solidarity.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Wow. I wanted to ask you about that but I didn't have a whole lot of time so I'm glad you brought it up.

I have a question I do want to ask all of you, which I think is going to be a question that I

wanted to ask you before, but I'm glad that this audience member has asked it. Escalating tensions with China may continue to put a target on the backs of the AAPI community at whole. How do we prevent tensions with China from becoming racialized here in the United States? So any of you can answer. And there's a panel after this, for those of you who are watching that will deal with this, but I would like to the domestic policy panel to sort of address this directly.

MS. WONG: I'll say quickly that we, you know, the history we relayed out shows that in times of economic vulnerability, in times of national anxiety, there will be often a scapegoating that happens when China is the focus.

At the same time, we do need to hold China accountable for human rights violations, and we need to make that distinction. Pressing China on human rights violations does not lead to backlash against Asian Americans in the U.S. It's really the Yellow Peril narrative that is connected to backlash.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Anybody else want to comment? Okay, because I have a whole list of questions I can go to. All right. I want to ask this question because this is not a normal question we actually get in this conversation. And it's not something we've talked about so far.

How do we lead safe space conversations for AAPI employees in the workplace?

MR. WU: The last question was a great question. This is a great question. I'm going to say something gentle provocative.

You know, Asian Americans face explicit in your face bias. They face implicit bias. The macroaggressions including compliments like, my, you speak English so well. But there's a tiny germ of truth in some images. And I don't want to generalize, but I am going to say something.

There is something Asian Americans do that is not helpful. And I say this with the most utmost respect for my parents. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the standards they set and the sacrifices they made that I need to appreciate more.

But every East Asian culture has a sentiment, an attitude similar to the Japanese proverb. The nail that sticks up is pounded down. What's that about? It's about fitting in. It's about not making a fuss. It's about deferring to one's elders, a fidelity to tradition. It's about being compliant.

There's a Chinese phrase, the loudest duck is shot first by the hunter, right?

If you're a Mandarin speaking, *bu yao zhao ma fan* (不要找麻烦), which translates as, you know, don't go looking for trouble. Don't go looking for complications. Don't get involved. Stay out of things.

Compare that to the American adage, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. In all the discussions of hate crimes, everyone underreports, but Asian Americans in particular grossly underreport because of language issues. They're worried about sympathy, but also because it's embarrassing. You don't want to bring shame to the family.

And one of the most difficult parts of these conversations is understanding the traditional Asian cultural aversion to saying you were a victim. To just talking about stuff, you know, mental health issues, any of these things. When I was young and I wanted to get involved, my parents would say, "No, no. We're Asian. We don't do that kind of thing. We don't protest. You know, that's for other people. Not for Asians."

Well, with due respect to my parents, what worked for a different generation in a different era maybe in a different place. It might not be the best strategy for a diverse democracy.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Willow, I have a question here that I want to ask you that is also coming from one of our listeners. I mean at the heart of many of the conversations we've been having this afternoon, it's class, right? And class as it is related to ethnicity and background.

How do we speak for, you know, groups like the Vietnamese and the Laotian or others who have so different experiences than Chinese Americans based on class? Do you see these wholesaler policies working to protect them as well? Or do we need to start thinking about how we address these systemic economic inequalities that exist within the Asian community but also binds them to the, you know, the issues that affect other groups of color?

MS. LUNG-AMAM: Yeah. I mean, I always think when we address those who are most marginalized in any group, we uplift everybody who is a part of that group. So if we start with economic marginalization, if we start with conversations about colorism and we start with conversations about

gender and inequality within the Asian American communities and try to legislate from that perspective, you know, learning from ideas about critical race theory and intersectionality then we end up making policy that helps everyone.

And so, I think a lot of these conversations are sort of starting as if there is a middle ground amongst Asian America as opposed to really trying to reach to those who are most desperately affected and trying to build policy from there. And so, I suggest that we really look at whether these, you know, these class tensions, these colorism tensions, these gendered and nationality is really addressed. And I don't think that is often the starting point for our policy conversations.

MS. TURNER-LEE: I'm going to close with this question. Look, I have a couple of questions I want to ask, but I'm looking at the time and I don't want our dear moderator and my friend who is cohosting this, Cheng Li, to jump out of his screen to tell me to get off because then we have another panel to go through.

But I would like all of you to answer this last question if you can quite briefly in our last three minutes. And this actually is a question that comes from one of our listeners here.

What is our concrete plan to ensure that the daily safety of the AAPI community? Because I think at the end of this conversation, we really wrapped our heads about the need for legislature policy, the need for our re-narration, a better understanding of Asian American history, but people are not safe right now. And so, I would ask each of you sort of to respond to that. Maybe add your last closing thoughts, but this question right here. Any concrete plan that we can do to ensure the safety of the AAPI community every day in daily life? Janelle, I'll start with you.

MS. WONG: Yeah. I mean I think the data I shared shows that, you know, most communities of color are experiencing high rates of racialized violence right now. And reporting high rates of racialized violence. And this is not something that's solved immediately. This is long-term difficult investments in community safety through anti-poverty programs, through mental health programs and through other kinds of community engaged policies like K-12 education.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Frank?

MR. WU: So Asian Americans themselves are getting organized that's great to see, but we need allies. We need every bystander to be an upstander. And there are a couple of things that I think won't work that are also being promoted.

One, is there's a movement, you might not know about this, but on WeChat of Asian Americans going out and buying firearms. That's probably a bad idea and someone is going to get shot sooner or later unnecessarily.

And overreliance on law enforcement to have a greater police presence might not actually produce the result that people think it will produce. And so, what we need is to get organized and to have allies.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Willow?

MS. LUNG-AMAM: Yeah. I'd echo everything that has already been said. I think Asian Americans are not safe as long as other communities are not safe too. So recognizing that you cannot isolate -- just like you can't isolate the virus and say that the United States is safe from COVID when there's high rates of infection in India or Africa.

We are not safe unless other communities are safe. So it is absolutely essential that we build in solidarity with other communities and that we support, because we know that we are also victims of police violence, right? So as Janelle is saying, the anti-poverty programs, the education, the police, the defund the police movement is just as much about supporting AAPI communities as it is about supporting Black communities.

MS. TURNER-LEE: That's right. And I would say, you know, I didn't really talk a lot about it because I deal with tech. That what that 14-year-old girl did in Minnesota to capture on record through her smart phone, the killing of George Floyd, is the same thing that we need to continue to do in our allyship to ensure that we see these acts of violence. That we report it so people can see it and we can do something about it expeditiously.

I tell you, I could be here for another hour, but I'm not going to do that because Cheng Li is next. I want to thank all of you for actually participating in this conversation. I hope that everybody who

was listening to this conversation, it did a couple of things.

It sort of debunked your own stereotypes and made you think about a few things. But it also connected not just the domestic policy with the geopolitical relationships but the fact that we've got to do something about really level setting what these struggles are and how there's hope at the end of the tunnel.

I'm going to introduce Cheng Li. You're up next, my friend, he is the distinguished director of the John Thornton China Center and a senior fellow in Foreign Policy here at Brookings. And my last name is Lee, L-e-e, he's L-i, and we often say that we're siblings by somebody's birth. (Laughter) Thank you very much.

MR. LI: Well, thank you so much, Nicol. I want to stay to continue to hear the conversation, really, thank you for moderating that fantastic panel discussion. It was so rich in term of historical content, new ideas and data, and the thoughtful policy recommendation that I want to watch the video again later on when it gets posted at the Brookings website.

Now I certainly remember our time together, Nicol, in China, not only one trip, but two trips. You were such an American goodwill ambassador and a wonderful educator of multiculturalism along with many other things. And thank you again, Nicol.

Now also thank you to all of the speakers in our keynote session and also domestic policy panel for an engaging, illuminating, and forward-looking discussion. Now it is my pleasure to moderate the second panel which I anticipate will be just as enlightening as the first.

The second panel focuses on the implications and impact of the recent rise of anti-Asian racism on U.S.-foreign policy. One does not need to be a rocket scientist to recognize the close linkage between the rigor surrounding COVID-19 along with the current foreign policy perception of the China threat and the growing number of cases of violent hate incidents against AAPI community, especially in light of the ongoing prevalence of Sinophobia in the United States.

There is a history of directing blame toward certain vulnerable group for the spread of disease, dehumanizing people whether it be based on ethnicity, religion, culture, or country of origin,

especially from an enemy country is not a new phenomenon in U.S. history.

We don't need to look further than major historical moments to find these cases: Japanese and Japanese-Americans of the Pearl Harbor attack; Russians and the Eastern Europeans during the Cold War; Japanese again in the 1980s when Japan merged to challenge U.S. economic supremacy, you know, and actually Frank Wu wrote a book on this Chinese-American was mistaken as a Japanese-American and was killed, murdered; and also Arabs and Muslims after 9-11.

Today, both the pandemic and the drastic deterioration of the U.S.-China relationship have brought discrimination and hate crimes against the Asian-American community to the forefront. This epidemic of anti-AAPI bigotry does not align with the conscience and constitution of our country. It also damages American reputation and the soft power influence abroad.

We need to develop a thoughtful approach to protect American security in confronting a global China and its assertive foreign policy, on one hand, and upholding American values in a diverse, multiethnic democracy, on the other, as the previous panelists -- emphasized.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to hear from three young, but already well-accomplished Asian-Americans, scholars, to address this daunting challenge:

Diana Fu, both Chinese-American and Chinese-Canadian, is an associate professor of political science at the University of Toronto, a Rhodes scholar, award-winning book author, and a public intellectual affiliated with several U.S. think tanks including Brookings. Diana has lately been on the frontlines of public discourse denouncing xenophobia and the racist attacks in North America.

Russell Hsiao is executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute. A lawyer by training, Russell has had broad work experience such as an editor of China Brief and the senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, and a fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy. Russell is an important addition to this panel, as he will provide a distinctive perspective as a Taiwanese-American.

Last, but certainly not least, Jessica Lee, a Korean-American, is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute. Jessica previously led the Council of Korean-Americans, a national non-profit organization that supports Korean-American leadership development. Jessica worked for many years on

Capitol Hill, including serving as a staff member on House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Welcome you all. With their different ethnic backgrounds and foreign policy perspectives they will provide multifaceted analysis and policy recommendations. Each of them will offer five-minute introductory remark as the previous panel, and then we will have a Q&A discussion.

Over to you, Diana, you are the first.

MS. FU: Thank you very much, Cheng, for that generous introduction. And after hearing the first panel, I'm just so jazzed up to keep talking about some of these issues. But, hopefully, with this panel we'll also sort of fill in the slight silence that we saw there when the moderator previously posed a question about how, you know, the anti-China, anti-China threat narrative really feeds into the experiences of Asian-Americans here.

So I want to speak very briefly from my own positionality. As Cheng mentioned, I am both a Canadian, I'm an Asian-American, as well as an Asian-Canadian, and I'm also Chinese. I was born there, so I'm a first-generation immigrant from China. And so I'm calling in, joining in today from Toronto. I wanted to first start off by giving you a little bit of a comparative perspective.

So I can tell you that despite Canada being one of the, you know, countries with the most friendly reputation, the friendly neighbor up north, we are actually experiencing an epidemic of Asian hate here in Canada as well. So this Asian hate is not an American phenomenon, it is a global phenomenon.

And one of the statistics that really shocked me when I found out about it recently was a report that was put out by the Chinese-Canadian National Council which found that during the period of the pandemic there were more instances of anti-Asian racism reported per capita in Canada than in the U.S. alone, so that in itself sort of shocked me.

But I also wanted to, without delving into the comparative element there, I also wanted to just echo the first panel in saying that this has been posed and been framed as a pandemic issue. But, really, this is a historical problem that goes way back before this crown-shaped virus hit our society, right. It goes back to the Chinese Exclusion Act in the U.S., which was first signed into law in 1882 and renewed in 1992 that prohibited Chinese people from coming over just on the pure basis of race.

And this was also parallel to Canada which had a very similar act that was called the Chinese Exclusion Act, or the Chinese Immigration Act, as it was called, that actually prohibited Chinese people from coming over to Canada for 24 years because of this yellow peril that we have been talking about that, you know, white Canadians, white Americans really felt that the rush from China to join -- rush of Chinese workers coming to North America for the Gold Rush and also to construct our very own railway was really posing a threat to societies.

And in the neighborhood that where I work, where I worked and lived in Toronto there is actually a sculpture commemorating the 17,000 Chinese railroad workers who had come from China to actually help build and construct the Canadian Pacific Railway and thousands of them perished. And it wasn't until 2006, so very, very recently, that the Canadian, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized for the Canadian Chinese Immigration Acts.

So that's the first point. And the second point that I wanted to raise, which is in direct parallel with the discussion we had earlier, was that Asians -- we, Asians, are both the victim, as well as perpetrators, the agents of racism. And you already heard a lot about the model minority myth.

But I wanted to give you a personal perspective because I'm a first-generation immigrant having moved to the United States, moved to both Canada, and then subsequently to Minnesota, a very white suburb that I grew up in.

Hearing this Chinese community discourse around race, you just grow up internalizing and embodying the Asian model minority which is that you keep your head down, you work 10 times as much as your white peers, and then when you look at other people on TV, or when you look at other peers that aren't as successful as you, maybe African-Americans or other types of Asians who aren't as successful, you internalize the model minority myth and you think, well, it's because they're not working hard enough. They don't have the same cultural values that we have.

It's because of that work ethic that they lack that they're not getting to where we are getting to. And so what I wanted to emphasize was that this kind of internalization of Asians, especially first generation immigrants of the model minority myth is actually a huge stumbling block to establishing

the kind of coalition politics that the former panelists talk about.

And I wanted to draw the connection to China using a very brief example. Some of you may have -- and, Cheng, I'm sure you have followed this incident where a year ago, when the George Floyd issue happened, when the tragedy actually unfolded there was a Chinese-American student from Yale University who wrote an open letter to the Chinese-American community saying that, hey, we should really be standing in solidarity with BLM protestors.

So that's a really good thing. However, the response from the first generation, the parent generation, as we call it, of Chinese people, both abroad and that was very widely circulated among Chinese social media was that us second generation Asian-Americans were being brainwashed by liberal American professors and really -- and there was actually a letter that was written in Chinese in response to the Yale student's letter saying that really, you know, this kind of -- Asians don't share much experiences with black people, with the black community, and therefore, you know, don't fall into the trap of standing in solidarity with BLM protestors because there is not much there.

And so what I wanted to highlight was that there is a very real tension in terms of first generation and second generation sort of ideas and opinions about these racial issues. But as a sort of in between, I guess, I'm first gen, second gen, somewhere in between the two, I find it very hopeful that there is a generation of Asians who are speaking out about this.

So I just want to stop there. I probably already overstepped my time, but I'll leave it to the rest of the panelists.

MR. LI: Diana, I mean it's really excellent. You are within five minutes I think so. You know two things that one is you really bring a Canadian experience, you know, broaden our horizon.

So it's not just a major power competition, you know, this fact that there is kind of a tensions, but also in country like Canada also you see this phenomenon. And this is very important, actually you're right that to some extent it's universal, it's a global issue and in many parts of the world.

Secondly, you also raise an issue about the generational differences about the immigrants. That's a very important perspective. I think it's very, very important that younger generation

that be more aware about racial injustice and also more sensitive about all of these kind of stereotypical views. I mean for Asian-Americans certainly there are a lot of things we need to learn and thank you for sharing these insights.

So next one, my friend, Russell.

MR. HSIAO: Well, thank you very much, Cheng and Greg, as well as Brookings for putting together this very timely conference and for inviting me to speak alongside such a distinguished group of foreign policy experts. Now I know that you have asked me to focus on being Asian-American in our foreign policy discourse, so I will try to do just that.

I want to basically make three points. The first is, we should acknowledge the progress made on Asian-American inclusion, but we must clearly recognize that problems remain. The second point is that the problem has transcends one political party or leader. And my third point is that we must be mindful that, while foreign policy can have domestic implications, the inverse is also true.

So what do I mean by my first point? We are at a far better place than in the 1880s or the 1940s, but we must recognize that there is a long stain from hate crimes and racism in this country and those did not wash away with the legislative corrections in the 1960s and the 1980s, which were covered in the previous panel.

What those laws provided were to simply put boundaries around behaviors that we, as a society, decided to prescribe. But even if legally prohibited they do not eradicate or prevent them from actually occurring.

Now, as an American of Taiwanese -- and I'm sure Jessica may be please to know -- of Korean descent, as well, I am deeply troubled by the tone and the nature of the events that have transpired over the recent years and in particular the rise in hate crimes against Asians in this country.

We know that reported hate crimes are rising, but I honestly don't think we know exactly what caused those sharp rises. Now, according to the Pew survey conducted in early April, asking Asian-Americans what we thought were the cause of the spike the response generated a long list, that cited among others: Donald Trump, racism, COVID-19, scapegoating, ignorance, China's rise,

misinformation, the news media, among many other reasons for the rise in violence against Asian-Americans. It could also be that they are now finally being reported on by the mainstream media and investigated.

Now we should bear in mind that the issue of invisibility or not being heard has long afflicted the Asian-American community. Anyone who has been concerned about hate crimes against Asians in America know that this has been happening long before the recent sharp rise, as the prior panel has clearly already indicated.

Although, as I noted, that I don't think we can honestly attribute a specific cause for this trend. I think we can confidently say that we do know that hate crimes stem from racism and ignorance. And that's what I think we need to focus on.

And this brings me to my second point. The problem transcends one political party or leader. There is a tendency in our hyper-partisan media environment to always try to place the blame for an issue on the other political party. When the media and when we ourselves carry those narratives and demonize the other because of their political party affiliation or ascribing malice and hate as their motivation, we don't help solve the problem, in fact we're contributing to the problem by creating even more polarization in our politics in our society.

And it is hard to know what determines how one thinks, but we can certainly judge on one's actions and hate crimes and racism really strikes at the heart of the idea of America and if effects all of us, even if we are not personally targeted by the attacks and it effects our foreign policy.

And this brings me to my third and final point that is perhaps the most relevant to our focus of this panel. We must be mindful that foreign policy can have serious domestic implications. The inverse is also true. Domestic policy can also have serious foreign policy implications.

There is a real and serious issue with the threats and challenges posed by the People's Republic of China, it's military, economic and political. And there is more than ever a bipartisan agreement that China is the facing threat over the United States. This is true in both Republican and Democratic administration.

I think to avoid confronting this reality and dealing with China with what we hope China to be cannot be part of the solution. But the solution to resolve a foreign policy challenge should not create more problems especially at home. But with the proper focus -- and I want to emphasize -- proper focus, I do think we can overcome these challenges.

The first step is how we talk about the problem. And it goes back to what I saying earlier about the media and our own discourse. Alternatively, how we, as a society, treat African-Americans, Latino-Americans, and all other Americans, can and do have foreign implications as well.

We need to be cognizant of that. We do have control over how we talk about the problem, but we also be aware that there will be foreign governments attempting to exploit tragic incidents for their own national interests. In essence, we have to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time.

We have to put as much emphasis as we do in communicating our policy priorities abroad, as we do in explain with equal vigor the issues at home and that Asian-American inclusion and belonging must be at the heart of those efforts.

And I'll just conclude at one single point, racism, and by extension, hate crimes, feed off ignorance, and education is a necessary but insufficient part of the solutions. I'll just end there. Thank you.

MR. LI: Russell, thank you so much for your very clear, coherent, and also comprehensive, you know, points. And, you know, refer to your first one, talk about the progress and also problem. It's really paradox for hope and fear. Today is a very, very important day that two Congress representative could not attend in-person because they are in White House to celebrate the signing of the COVID-19 Hate Crime Act. That's a landmark, you know, document.

I actually wanted to ask Diana whether Canada also will have this kind of legislation bill or in other country. I hope that this send a good example. But, at the same time, that we do not see the hate crime jumped and that there are some concern about the future.

And so, again, and Russell, for your very candid and, you know, points and really your perspective I said early on is very, very important for this discussion.

Jessica, the floor is yours.

MS. LEE: Thank you. Thank you so much, Dr. Li, and thank you to my fellow panelists. This is just like a dream come true to be able to talk about this issue with such colleagues, who are so well-informed on so many issues, but also happen to be Asian-American like me and understand how deeply personal this issue is for all of us and that it just take a little bit of courage to come out and talk about these issues in ways that directly connect to our work on foreign policy.

So I want to commend my colleagues for their remarks, and Dr. Li, for your leadership in organizing this with your colleagues at Brookings. You know, like Russell, our try to make some brief remarks because I know you have questions for us.

But I wanted to start off with some personal reflections, you know. When I started writing about this issue last March, I remember feeling a bit frustrated because I had served, as you said, for four years as a community organizer with the Korean-American community. And there was a lot of resistance among Korean-Americans I worked with to speak out on issues related to foreign policy.

This was during the fire and fury period, mind you, back in 2017, when, you know, the media really wanted to hear from Korean-Americans about how they were, you know, viewing potential preemptive strike by the United States on North Korea. There was a lot of resistance.

And I think, you know, to Diana's point, you know, the fact that we're able to have these kinds of cross-cutting discussions that, you know, bring in both the domestic perspective, as the earlier panel did, and foreign policy I think is a sign of progress.

And I remember when I was a staff member, you know, at the House Foreign Affairs Committee, it took me a very long time to get TSSCI clearance and I remember getting picked on experiencing micro-aggression from my co-workers. Like Diana, I was born abroad. I was born in South Korea and it just took a long time for the investigators to, you know, get through the clearance process, as some of you who have done it will know.

It took me a year-and-a-half. And during that time it was painful, you know, to hear the comments, you know, my colleagues would make, you know, jokingly, but in ways that clearly, you know,

was meant to, you know, to say maybe I don't belong there, maybe something is wrong.

And so I bring that up because, again, I think this issue really is something that, you know, we need to not just be wearing our Asian-American hat or foreign policy hat, but it really behooves us to look at it in a multidimensional way because it does have direct impact on people's livelihoods and jobs.

In the early days of the pandemic, President Trump, you know, had crossed out the term, you know, corona and put China in a flashcard before a speech, and this photo of that, card, you know, went viral. And I remember looking at the photo and feeling really strange and afraid.

I didn't know what was happening and what this meant for me and my family. And, you know, so I remember, you know, kind of at that moment really wanting to shine light on how such racialized language, you know, might be connected to this over-the-top hyper-militarized U.S. policy toward China.

But if I'm being totally honest with you, I didn't want to be out there writing about this initially because I know there would be backlash and I knew there would be folks who questioned. There would already be questions about, you know, anyone who challenges the dominant view and narrative about U.S. policy toward China.

I also didn't want to draw attention to myself, as an Asian-American, saying these things. But the more I dug into the research, you know, and kind of the history of Asian-American racism and also other minority communities that have undergone systemic racism and discrimination at the height of foreign policy, you know, decisions and wars, and so forth, the more I saw the connections between foreign policy and domestic policy, as Russell just noted, you know, whether it's in the form of promoting a more militarized foreign policy or other types of connections.

And, in fact, the article that I wrote last May, you know, I cited a study that was conducted by the Government Accountability Office that looked at various branches of the U.S. Executive Branch, you know, in the lead up to 2001, and saw that these agencies lacked diplomats and intelligence specialists in hard to learn languages from the Middle East which, "weakened the fight against

international terrorism," and likely led to blind spots in the lead up to the Iraq invasion.

A few minutes ago, Dr. Li, as you noted, President Biden signed the COVID Hate Crimes Act, and he touted it as a very important tool for the Justice Department to strengthen its partnership with the Asian-American community to prevent, you know, hate crimes going forward. And he noted, you know, to his credit, language and cultural barriers that victims are often faced with when trying to report these incidents.

President Biden also, you know, rightly implored that we have to change the hearts of the American people and that hate can be, you know, "given no safe harbor in the United States." And I think these words are powerful and these steps, like the legislation, is useful, but I think a lot more can be done.

So I'll go ahead and make my three points. I think, first, we have to recognize that a hostile relationship with China would make the United States less safe not more. It would lead to expensive arms racing, economic and cultural decoupling, as well as less cooperation to combat urgent transnational issues, like climate change and pandemics.

Constantly bashing China for every problem that we're faced with here in America will only make conflict more likely, even if the United States government claims that it has no interest in seeking confrontation with Beijing.

On top of that, this harsh rhetoric has a direct impact on peace and stability of our society by othering Chinese-Americans and by extension all Asian-Americans like me. This fear mongering subjects Asian-Americans to hostility and anger. It also, you know, puts blame on us indirectly for the half a million lives lost through the pandemic.

So it's very dangerous. People are already angry in this country as it is. They're angry that they can't send their kids to school, or hold a job, or have to risk their job and their health when they go out. Scapegoating an entire community is like throwing gasoline into the fire in a situation like this. So it's incredibly damaging and dangerous.

Finally, I think we need policy strategies on China that won't lead to fear, anxiety, or

hatred toward Asian-Americans. And I think this will require work. I think it will require not just laws and executive orders that are part of the solution but not the whole solution. They won't, as President Biden said, necessarily change the hearts of Americans.

So we're going to have to look for a creative solution similar to what the first panel discussed in terms of cross-racial, you know, community organizing, response, and really elevating this issue at the highest level and not just looking at it primarily through law enforcement or a data collection angle, which is what the U.S. government has done to date.

So I'll stop there and look forward to your questions.

MR. LI: Well, thank you so much, Jessica, and not only well-said, but also I'm particularly enlightened by your courage to say these could be very provocative for many, and especially touched the centerpiece of the current policy towards China in Washington.

So, again, thank you, you know, Jessica, Russell, and Diana, for sharing your insights and perspectives. Now I would like to first ask a question for all of you, then one specific question for each of you before opening to the audience question.

Now here is the general question. As some of you discussed in your opening remark, particularly also in the first panel mentioned, the U.S. Congress has recently initiated and is likely going to pass a few bills definitely to counter China's influence such as the Endless Frontier Act, which actually passed in Senate I believe today or yesterday, right, and also the Strategic Competition Act, which is still on the floor, the Senate floor.

Now a few lawmakers express their reservations with these bills. Representative Ilhan Omar from Minnesota, for example, said a couple of days ago, I quote here, she said, I quote, "We need to distinguish between justified criticism of the Chinese government's human rights record and a Cold War mentality that uses China as a scapegoat for our own domestic problems and demonizing Chinese-Americans."

Now some analysts and activist groups -- I believe that the Quincy House probably participated in that, as a group, to raise some concern, Quincy Institute -- worry that these bills will lead to

three outcomes: 1) risking destructive consequences with Beijing; 2) inflaming racism against Asian-Americans at home; and 3) undermining American alliances, relationships, and people-to-people ties with Asian countries.

Do you hear these worries? So who will like to first, or is there any way we can stop these kind of things that these things not happening? You know, again --

MR. HSIAO: I'll jump on this grenade. But, you know, so I do think it's very important to put this in perspective because in my view I think these legislative efforts were developed in response to Beijing's aggressive actions.

So, you know, sort of the notion that somehow that these legislative efforts would lead us into a more destructive relationship with China suggesting that maybe that, you know, the U.S. Congress is sort of to blame is I think, you know, it's not that way. It's the other way around.

In my view, I think they really represent a long overdue course correction. From the previous approach of engagement in the hopes of changing Beijing's behavior really arguably led us to this point where that necessitated such a change in our approach to, you know, in China policy. I mean we're clearly now in the state of strategic competition with China, the People's Republic of China.

But I don't think that that competition needs necessarily to lead to conflict and to expect that somehow this will inevitably lead to conflict is I think a huge assumption. I think given the state of the situation we should get used to a more persistent level of friction, open-ended friction perhaps with Beijing.

And I personally think that Beijing knows this as much as well and perhaps they are a bit better equipped to deal with this given how they're able to effectively censor information that reaches their population.

You know, as for, you know, inflaming racism against Asian-Americans, I certainly hope not. But I do think that there are things that we can do and I noted that in my opening comments. I think that we need to put as much emphasis in how we communicate our policy priorities to our allies and partners as we also communicate to our domestic population about the nature of the challenge. And I

completely subscribe to Jessica's earlier point that we need to minimize the fear and anxiety towards Asian-Americans as we pursue this policy approach.

And I think the third part of this was undermining American alliances or relationship with Asian countries. I actually don't think that it would. I think that allies and partners are largely in support of a more competitive approach to People's Republic of China and that there will be no way in which these countries, allies and partners, in particular, could take on Beijing, or confront Beijing without U.S. leadership.

So those are my -- (crosstalk)

MR. LI: Well, thank you for providing your perspective.

MR. HSIAO: Yeah.

MR. LI: Jessica or Diana? Yeah, Diana, first.

MS. FU: Yeah, if I might just jump in really quickly. I know, Jessica, you have written quite a bit about this. I look forward to hearing your comment about that. But I wanted to respond very quickly to Russell.

I hear what you're saying, Russell, in terms of the fact that, you know, it's not really fair to say that D.C. policymakers are the one to cast the first stone in terms of deciding this kind of aggressive confrontational tone. Because, you know, Beijing's been on wolf warrior diplomacy for quite some time now, and so I hear, I think that's a very fair point that I share.

However, I think the point is not who is the provocateur here but rather what is the consequence of this, especially for Asian-Americans. And here I do think that this kind of rhetoric that is escalating to this kind of Cold War, neo-Cold War rhetoric it will.

And maybe I'm being a pessimist but I think it will in fact inflame racism against Asian-Americans for the very simple fact that when policymakers say something, whether it be, you know, the Asian virus, or Chinese influence, or the China threat, or whatever it might be, that is retweeted, it is parroted, it is echoed very, very quickly through social media to society.

And so policymakers sort of, in a way, kind of set the tone, set the terminologies with

which we come to engage in a public discourse about some of these issues. And so I was just looking up, you know, reading up a little bit about it and I wanted to, you know, sort of quote Chuck Schumer's comment about the bill.

He says, "We can either have a world where the Chinese communist party determines the rules of the road for 5G artificial intelligence and quantum computing, or we can make sure the United States gets there first."

This kind of rhetoric is kind of zero sum game, either China wins or the U.S. wins, either it's, you know, you're with us or against us. I think this kind of discourse does not help the situation with Asian, you know, anti-Asian racism. And I think that there is going to be also a sort of knock on effect in terms of policymaking in other places that America considers to be its allies, right.

Already we're seeing the rise of hawkish attitudes towards China in Canada led by the conservative leader, Erin O'Toole. So you might be seeing that there is a ripple effect in terms of these kinds of bills that they have in other countries starting to pass those bills.

And also I think it does invite further backlash from Beijing. We have already seen that Beijing has voiced very, very strong opposition to the bills. I was just looking up some op-eds that were, you know, that are sort of official party news. And they were saying that in America the political will to crush China's rise is bipartisan, right. So you're seeing this, like, uptake and escalation of this rhetoric.

And, lastly, I'll say from the perspective of American allies, in Canada it's also not going to help with the situation in Canada. Because, as some of you might know, the biggest problem that the Canadian government faces and has faced for a long time has been the detainment of the two Michaels, you know, as a result of the 5G, sort of as the result of the Meng Wenzhou affair. And so bills like these, you know, that sort of confront China, sort of in a very direct way kind of lessens the space for negotiation for some of these other kind of diplomatic efforts that are very pressing for even America's allies.

MR. LI: Well, both Russell and Diana really make a good point that downward spiral, of course, there are some logical reasons that, Russell, you answered right that we can have a long list about the Chinese conducts with, you know, kind of aggressive approach to Taiwan and also domestic,

you know, kind of like tighter control and the economic front, we are critical about some of the mercantilist policies, and et cetera, and also target some other countries, you know, so there is a long list.

But the point is, as Diana said later on, the result is leading in that direction but maybe we, both sides, just come to mutually reinforce fear, you know, accelerated the process on the action-reaction downward spiral. Jessica, what do you think?

MS. LEE: Yeah. I mean I know we're running out of time. But, you know, I think, Russell and Diana make really good points. I think this is the kind of nuance conversation we need, frankly, rather than accusing each other of, you know, overlooking the issue or under examining certain dimensions.

I mean, of course, you know, I think, as Russell alluded to, fault is not entirely or solely on U.S. government. As Diana said, you know, articulately there are also folks on the conspiracy theory side who are latching on to these on baseless accusations or, you know, thoughts about Asian-Americans. And then, of course, China and its behavior, you know, I think there are a lot of dimensions to this challenge for sure.

But the point I want to make is, you know, as I have written about and looked into this, you know, I have seen, you know, the fact that politicians, American politicians, you know, starting at the top, during the Trump administration, but particularly in Congress, you know, this issue of demonizing China has become sort of a cost-free exercise that people are doing much more, just regularly, it's just now commonplace.

You know, Congressman Rob Wittman, for example, had tweeted that, "China's goal is nothing less than the complete destruction of the United States." He said this in response to the defense spending reduction caucuses call to cut some portion of the defense budget in order to channel more money toward global health.

Now tell me that is not outlandish, over-the-top language, right. And what will, you know, how could that be interpreted by an average American? How could that be exploited? I mean that really I think gets to sort of the heart of the issue.

Now keep in mind that some of the members of Congress who are most vocal about this full, you know, spectrum, you know, competition with China for decades to come, some of them are among the most, the highest recipient of arms control and defense manufacturing companies. So there is money to be made when there is war and threat of war looming in every corner.

I mean we have to be honest about how power and influence in Washington works, right. And so these are the other dynamics that I think we need to be clear-eyed about. Who benefits from maximum threat and, you know, exaggerated concerns about China taking over the United States tomorrow and who loses?

You know, what do American taxpayers think? Do they even have a seat at the table in these discussions? I mean those are the types of things we should also take into account rather than just have an abstract foreign policy conversation: well, China did this; well, U.S. is doing that.

Well, that's great. But let's also think about how this has been politicized, racialized, and then put in a domestic frame that in a place, you know, like Washington, where there are very few Asian lawmakers, very few Asian policymakers at the table, we're literally invisible in most of these conversations.

So I think that creates the perfect storm that we're seeing now, where our community is just, really just collateral damaged. And I think this is something that we need to look at very closely rather than say, you know, let's just kind of think about it as a civil rights issue and pass some laws that, you know, collect data more adequately. I mean I think that the problem is much bigger and systemic than, you know, folks, I think, in the civil liberties community think.

MR. LI: Well, Jessica, you certainly raise that important issue which has not been, you know, in our debate at the moment that really put aside. We constantly talk about the rhetoric about China's threat, but now to look at some other issues and the cost and benefits and how to regionalize U.S. foreign policy.

Now let me ask you, you know, probably first, Jessica. Now you co-authored the article earlier this week on the chilling effects of the anti-China bills that you made a strong critique about the

media bias in the U.S., mainstream media coverage of China under the pressure of the containing the so-called, "maligned influence of the Chinese community party."

You wrote, I quote, "The approach in these bills risk threatening the integrity of free media or free press. This critique has been shared by some, maybe even many, of the people in the Chinese-American community. They were not so much covered in the mainstream media." So would you please elaborate on your critique?

MS. LEE: Sure. Yeah, 10 minutes left, so I'll try to be brief so my colleagues can clean up, yeah, absolutely. Thank you for that, Dr. Li.

You know, as you noted in the beginning, the Strategic Competition Act that's now moving its way, as well as the Endless Frontier Act, is part of this now omnibus China mega bill that leader Schumer is actively trying to pass into law as quickly as possible.

And I note, you know, as part of a series of articles that my colleagues and I wrote on responsible statecraft that there are a number of very problematic provisions in the SCA. But we don't have time to go over all of them, so I'll just stick to one.

You know, you mentioned the term, "maligned inference of CCP." And this appears repeatedly in the SCA bill. This is a very broad term. It is very broad. It will deliberately stoke fear and suspicion and blame on not just Asian-Americans who might have any connections or affiliation with China, but to non-Asian-Americans as well.

It's a generalized and fear-based language that normalizing discourse about China that is alarmist and McCarthy-ist in nature. And I think it risks tainting people of Chinese descent or anyone with, you know, connections, like I said, to Chinese universities, or businesses, et cetera, to be subject to baseless accusations of being associated as agents of the Chinese government.

As the legal scholar, Margaret Lewis, writes, "This leads to criminalization of China-ness." I am not even Chinese-American, but I am very worried about this kind of language. I am married to a Chinese-American. I'm Asian-American. Nobody cares once I walk out, you know, my house if I'm Korean or not.

I mean, you know, these are the types of broad kind of suspicion-raising language that, you know, is being, you know, quickly expeditiously passed in the Congress without proper and adequate public debate.

And so, you know, I think that is one of many examples in which there is this rush to lock the United States and China into permanency of enmity with the Asian-American community sort of, you know, as collateral damage. And I think this is very dangerous and it needs to be pushed back.

So I'll stop there in the interest of time. Thank you.

MR. LI: Thank you. Yeah, let me move to, again, we certainly can talk a lot about the role of media and also how to maintain the integrity at this difficult time, right, dangerous time.

Now a question for Russell, you know, as we know, that China is currently one of the very few topics on which Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Congress could reach bipartisan agreement. So in your presentation you also discuss the problem with anti-Asian hate crimes transcending one particular party and leader. These are excellent point. And, certainly, it's not just by one party or one leader, you know. It's not fair to blame everything to one leader.

Now but it's also interesting to see that in the bill that just passed despite the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act passing the House, I mean, Tuesday by an overwhelming 364 to 62 vote, but of all 62 votes against the bill were cast by Republican members of the Congress.

Now you also see the early presentation there are some differences, but also survey after survey show usually Republican just, in general, Republican members just think China's threat is like a 10 to 20% points more than Democrats.

So do you see any kind of a partisan difference in that framework? Again, I acknowledge your overall, you know, assessment. It's very much on the mark. But could you comment on that?

MR. HSIAO: Yeah, thanks for that easy question, Cheng. You know, I won't pretend to know what the motivations or the calculations are for the members who voted against the Hate Crimes Act. I think politics is a messy and complicated process, but I'll admit that the optics are not good for Republicans, in general, on this issue. And I think that there are many Republicans out there who would

also agree with me. I think that's really all I would say about that.

MR. LI: Okay. That's fair enough. Diana, your research focuses on civil society, popular protests, state repression, and also authoritarian citizenship in the PRC. Now I have a question about how the Cold War stalled confrontation, the term we may use, with China?

And also anti-Asian racism is perceived by and affect Chinese intellectuals and the general public in China. Do you agree with the view that these recent developments here in the United States often play in favor of the Chinese authoritarian government, provide the ammunition for anti-American sentiment as to nationalism, and further marginalize liberal intellectuals in Chinese society?

Because this is a relevant very important thing near the U.S. leverage should also reach the Chinese, you know, people that we supposed to, you know, help, right, but the end result is just the opposite -- your views, your take on this?

MS. FU: Right. This is a really important question, Cheng. And here I want to offer a bit of a corollary perhaps to what Jessica stated earlier, which is that I think there is an interesting parallel in the way that policymakers in D.C. tap into popular sentiments such as the China threat to advance their own interest.

Just as American politicians are doing that, Chinese politicians are doing the same thing with every time that racism comes up or any sort of social ills or social problems come up in the U.S., Beijing is very clever to jump on it right away to point to the flaws in American society and especially to what they see or what the propaganda says is that the inherent flaws of democracy as America, as is exhibited in the storming of the Capitol and in the #BLM Movement.

And so, in terms of the anti-Asian race hate surge and in terms of the social movement that is going on, I think Beijing has again been very clever to tap into that kind of discourse in order to really demonize American society and democracy as well and to say that, you know, racism is just an inherent and unfixable part of American democracy.

There is an op-ed in the Global Times newspaper in March of 2021, so just a couple of months ago, that says, "Asian-American racism stems from deep racial hatred in the U.S. melting pot."

And if you go to this op-ed it shows a cartoon that depicts a white guy in a suit, you know, it could be any number of D.C. policymakers trying to douse, using a small vase of water, trying to douse these ravaging flames that are labeled racism, right. And the point of the op-ed is that racism is so endemic to this fabric of American society that basically, you know, that the Beijing model is superior to the American model.

So what you're seeing from both sides is the utilization by politician, really, of various parties, of various strips, of various agendas to use and to tap into these kind of populous sentiments, and as well as the force of social movement to advance their own agendas.

MR. LI: Okay, Diana, that's good. And this is a related audience question. I think it's a very good one, I think, and I wanted to share with you two questions from the audience. I'm sorry that we cannot share too many.

Now what is the endgame in the U.S.-China strategy competition that Washington policymakers have in mind which can advance American security in civil liberties? You know, that question caught my attention that I wish you would answer. This is one, I mean, I welcome your comments or your answer to this question.

And now the second one is from Waqar Ahmad, editor of Asian Think Tank. The question is: Can Asians shape U.S. foreign policy? Now let's discuss as a discourse written by Fareed Zakaria and the business tycoons of Asia has a great influence in U.S. politics.

Again, we talk about the maligned influence of the Chinese community party, but there is a real influence probably through money side, maybe it's combined together. So, of course, it's still a -- so these are two questions. We still have roughly three minutes, so one for each. Who would like to pick which one?

MS. LEE: Well, I can try to tackle the first. But, like you said, it's a difficult one. So I'm not sure I can do justice. But, you know, I guess it goes to, you know, the question of, you know, is the United States going to seek primacy and dominance in Asia, and will that lead to conflict with China, is that inevitable, you know, or is the United States willing to take a more humble restrained approach to

foreign policy in Asia?

I think that's the central question. And depending on where you land, you're going to have very different answers to how to, you know, how you would kind of define success in terms of a U.S. foreign policy toward China that's more stabilizing, less, you know, confrontational, zero sum.

And so, you know, I, and two of my colleagues wrote a full report on what that vision looks like, back in January. I encourage folks to check it out at Quincy Institute's website. But, yeah, it's a really difficult issue, particularly in this moment of extreme domestic upheaval and suffering.

You know, I think the question of, what is the United States willing to do and what are the, you know, areas that it's willing to compromise, it becomes much more salient than ever before? So I think that conversation needs to be had.

MR. LI: Yeah, it's partially probably related with what Diana said earlier, it's more to do with domestic politics in both sides, in this case, certainly it's the U.S. domestic politics, you know, and politicians so they both thought they want their votes, so usually play tougher on China will win the votes. So that's kind of explain that.

But it really serves American interests that's a different matter of this, but I think this is essence of the question. Anyone for the other, or this question, or?

MR. HSIAO: I mean I'll quickly just jump in the first question. I think the key principle should be reciprocity, right. And I think that should be the basis upon which the U.S.-China relationship should, you know, move forward. And that's I think all that we should expect and can expect.

And, you know, basing it on stability, or basing it on, you know, on mutual beneficial, you know, interests, I think those are too vague of terms that are not useful in the context of the strategic competition.

Secondly, I mean, if I were to just answer that -- I know we have got limited time, but answer the question differently, is to say that I think Asian-Americans can and should have a great deal of positive influence on U.S. foreign policy towards Asia, I mean, period, right there.

MR. LI: Good, good. Diana?

MS. FU: Okay, very quickly. So I don't know that either side has an endgame in mind. I think right now what you're seeing is the politics of reaction.

It's the politics of escalation and that cycle needs to be broken and responsibility for breaking that cycle rests not only in the policymakers and at the elite level, but also on the responsibility of civic institutions, such as Brookings, such as universities, such as religious institutions, such as social movement institutions, that there needs to be what Cheng has beautifully written about in his book, a lot more people-to-people exchange because it's a lot of times at the subnational level, at the community level that dialogues about very real issues such as racism ought to be had.

And, unfortunately, we're not in a political environment where that's encouraged. But as soon as the political opportunity opens, I think that's really where that reciprocity that you were talking about, Russell, ought to happen, not just at the elite level, but really at the ground level.

Because at the moment neither government can claim moral superiority in addressing any of these deeply embedded issues such as racism. China has its own racism issue. The United States has its own racism issues. Both need to recognize, you know, the limits and constraints of what their government can do and there is a lot of mutual learning that needs to go on in that infrastructure of mutual learning is what we need to build.

MR. LI: Well, reciprocal and empathy and also that people to communication, you know, these other good words that we hear. Now, unfortunately, the time has come to bring this important discussion to a close.

I would like to offer my deepest appreciation to our distinguished panelists and especially early on, the Representatives Kim and Meng, for joining us on this momentous week for AAPI, and also for the all of the panelists in this one and also previous one, you did a fantastic job.

Now this event has helped illuminate both challenges facing the AAPI community and our efforts to recognize and overcome these challenges in both domestic and foreign policy domains.

Now I also wanted to thank Brookings colleagues, President John Allen, my dear friend, Dr. Nicol Turner Lee, members of the Inclusion and the Diversity Committee, including Greg Song,

Suzanne Schaefer, and Adrien Chorn, for your leadership and input, not only for this event but also other activities and dialogue celebrating Asian-Pacific-American Heritage month.

With that, I wish all viewers a happy Asian-Pacific-American Heritage month. Thank you very much. We conclude here.

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