

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
WEBINAR

THE NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Washington, D.C.  
Wednesday, May 11, 2022

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Panel Discussion:**

JEFFREY A. BADER  
Senior Fellow  
John L. Thornton China Center  
The Brookings Institution

CYNTHIA CHOI  
Co-Executive Director  
Chinese for Affirmative Action  
Co-Founder  
Stop AAPI Hate

ADRIAN DE LEON  
Assistant Professor  
American Studies and Ethnicity  
University of Southern California

JANE HONG  
Associate Professor of History  
Occidental College

RYAN HASS, Moderator  
Senior Fellow, Michael H. Armacost Chair  
Chen-Fu and Cecilia Yen Koo Chair in Taiwan  
Studies  
The Brookings Institution  
Nonresident Fellow  
Paul Tsai China Center  
Yale Law School

**Fireside Chat:**

JOHN R. ALLEN  
President  
The Brookings Institution

THE HON. STEPHANIE MURPHY (D-Fla.)  
U.S. House of Representatives

\* \* \* \* \*

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 600  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HASS: Good morning. My name is Ryan Hass. I'm a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution of the Foreign Policy program. And on behalf of all of us at Brookings, thank you for joining us for today's examination of the national security implications of anti-Asian racism.

Our event this morning will proceed in two parts. In the first part, I will have the honor of moderating a panel of experts until 11:15. Following our panel, Brookings' President John Allen will share his views on the challenges and damages being caused by anti-Asian racism and then invite Representative Stephanie Murphy to join him on the virtual stage for a fireside conversation.

We're convening today's event because we are deeply troubled at Brookings by the trend of rising acts of hate and violence against individuals of Asian descent in the United States. Our goal is to use today's event as a vehicle to help focus attention on the problem and the ramifications for America's national security interests resulting from it.

In our first panel, we plan to begin by examining the roots of today's problems and then diagnosing the scale of the current challenges. And then considering the strategic ramifications for the United States of anti-Asian racism.

After each of our panelists offer brief opening remarks key to these themes, we will have a discussion that will seek to identify and dry out practical steps that could be taken to address the challenges. We also will reserve time for questions from our global virtual audience. You can submit questions at any time by emailing them to [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu) or via Twitter at #AAPI.

Now, we have assembled an all-star group of experts to help us think through these challenges. I'm going to be very brief in introducing them so that we can reserve time for the discussion. In alphabetical order they are Jeffrey Bader who is a Senior

Fellow in the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution. Prior to Brookings, Jeff had a distinguished three-decade career with the U.S. government serving at the highest levels in the National Security Council at the State Department and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Cynthia Choi is the Co-Executive Director of the Chinese for Affirmative Action, a community-based civil rights organization committed to protecting the dignity and fair treatment of all immigrants in fulfilling the promise of a multiracial democracy. Cynthia is also the Co-Founder of Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition addressing anti-Asian racism across the United States.

Adrian De Leon is an Assistant Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California where he serves on the student committee of the Center for Trans-Pacific Studies. Adrian is also the cocreator and cohost of the PBS miniseries, "A People's History of Asia America." It's a digital miniseries that tells the history of Asian Americans in the United States. I highly recommend it.

We also have with us Jane Hong who is an Associate Professor of History at Occidental College. She is a historian of U.S. immigration and engagement with the world with a focus on Asia after World War II. She is the author of "Opening the Gates to Asia: A Trans-Pacific History of How America Repealed Asian Exclusion" and the forthcoming book, "Model Christians: Model Minorities, Asian Americans Race and Politics in the Transformation of U.S. Evangelism."

So with that as introduction, I'd like to now turn the floor to Jane. Jane, take us away.

MS. HONG: Thank you for that wonderful introduction. And good morning, everyone. It's great to be here. It's quite early on the West Coast, but it's a delight to be with you all today. Thank you for the invitation to participate in this important panel.

So as a historian, I'm going to say a little bit about kind of things that are important to understand in situating our current moment of anti-Asian violence in a much broader history. So even a very quick survey of U.S. history reveals that what's happening now is part of a much longer history of anti-Asian violence and scapegoating, which in this country dates back more than a century and arguably even longer.

So one clear antecedent is the anti-Chinese movement of the 19th century. And there are maps online where you can see just how frequent and how wide spread attacks particularly on Chinese were in places like California, Wyoming and far beyond. One of the largest mass lynchings in American history happens just 15 minutes from where I'm sitting in what is now Los Angeles China Town. So the 1871 Chinese massacre resulted in the death of 18 Chinese which at the time made up about 10 percent of LA's entire Chinese population. And no one was ever punished for these murders.

Similar anti-Asian violence today, these anti-Chinese movements, they actually span whole parts of the globe including Canada and other white societies such as Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. So what's happening in the U.S. is actually part of a global story.

In the U.S. case as with the others as violence gave rise to race-based immigration restrictions that targeted Chinese for exclusion. In Australia that soon expanded to it's 1901 white Australia policy which barred all Asian peoples from immigrating on racial grounds. An in the U.S. you see a similar kind of expansion or progression from excluding and targeting Chinese workers to excluding all Asian peoples of all classes from immigration by the 1920s and 1930s.

And I would argue that it is this history of Asian exclusion in the U.S. and globally that's really important to understanding Asian American's racialization through the present day. So today when Asian Americans are most often seen either as perpetual

foreigners or model minorities or both depending on the context.

So for most of American history, Asian Americans or Asians were racially barred from long-term immigration and racially barred from U.S. citizenship. And historians often like to talk about how these legacies don't just go away. And indeed these racial exclusions, they don't end until the 1950s and the 1960s which for historians, at least, is actually not that long ago at all.

So many Americans have heard of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Some folks might have heard of 1875 Page Law in the wake of last year's Atlanta spa shootings, for example. But subsequent laws and state actions restricted Japanese and Koreans in 1907, Indians in 1917, Japanese in 1924 and Filipinos in 1934. And each community faced violence from exclusionists and also resisted their exclusion in various ways.

So by the 1930s, the racial bar and Asian immigration was complete. And again, even those Asians who were able to come and get into the United States could not become citizens on racial grounds. So they were "aliens ineligible to citizenship" and that's actually a term written into U.S. naturalization and immigration law. And it's based on this history that scholars such as Mani (phonetic) have argued that U.S. exclusion laws serve to reinforce perceptions of Asians in America as unassimilable or perpetually foreign.

They point to the fact that the racial category of Asiatic with a category created by U.S. immigration policy. So specifically, the 1917 immigration law creates what's called the Asiatic Barred Zone. So congressional architects literally -- they like draw a big kind of rectangular line around much of the Asian continent lumping together very diverse East Asian, South Asian and Southeast Asian peoples into a common racial group being defined by geography.

So Asiatic which in some ways is the precursor to what we now call Asian American was actually created as a racial category of exclusion. During the '60s, activists in

the Asian American movement would try to redeem and reappropriate this racial grouping as a strategy of Pan-Asian solidarity and liberation. And that's also where the term that we now use Asian Americans comes from. Although, it's meaning has changed dramatically, I would say.

I would also just note that, you know, often times Asian Americans are grouped together with Pacific Islanders, but this history is specific to Asian Americans. Pacific Islanders have a distinct history of racialization. They have a distinct relationship to the U.S. state and U.S. empire. So their histories are interconnected but they are not the same so I will say that.

So for Asian Americans, World War II is another important moment that demonstrates the very real consequences of Asian Americans racialization as extensions of Asia. It also demonstrates the ways that the U.S. state participates in myriad forms of anti-Asian racism and violence. And of course, I'm referring in part to the wartime incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans.

Two thirds of them were U.S. born citizens. And I don't know how many people know this, but the 1940s is actually the first time in American history when U.S. born Asian Americans. So people who have birth right citizenship, people like me. So it's the first time that U.S. born Asian Americans actually outnumber immigrants or foreign born Asian Americans. It hasn't happened since. And it probably won't happen again any time soon because Asian immigration continues at very high rates.

So at a time when the majority of Asian Americans are U.S. born, when the majority are U.S. citizens, this is when the U.S. government incarcerates 120,000 folks based on their racial ancestry and regardless of their citizenship status.

I would say that World War II also shows how anti-Asian violence operates. So it does not distinguish. So East Asia scholars might remember this, but during World

War II, U.S. officials and mainstream media, they take painstaking care to distinguish between Chinese friends and allies like Chiang Kai-shek, right? And China who is a wartime ally during World War II and Japanese enemies. And by extension, they also try to distinguish between Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans who are seen as direct extensions of Asian enemies and allies.

But on the ground, non-Japanese Asian Americans, they face the vigilante violence throughout the war and even after so. And this is also during a time when Japanese Americans have been incarcerated so they're literally not there in places like California. And so, during the war stories abound of Chinese, Korean, Filipino Americans being targeted for resembling the Japanese enemy. So much so that you have Chinese wearing buttons saying, I am Chinese. Korean Americans start wearing badges displaying Korean flags to distinguish themselves from the Japanese enemy.

So one clear lesson is that no matter how much you might try to distinguish between Asian groups, anti-Asian racism and racialization, they don't work that way. And indeed, when you look at the sheer number and the diversity of Asian Americans who have been targeted during this pandemic. So I'm thinking about Thai Americans, Burmese families, Filipinas, Koreans as well as Chinese Americans and others, you see a very similar dynamic. And how anti-Asian racism actually operates.

And I have to say and I think we'll talk more about this later. Most importantly, it's often those who are already most vulnerable. So women, the elderly, working class and the poor who disproportionately suffer the harms of this kind of violence.

So to wrap up. So as I mentioned, you know, Asian exclusion in the U.S., it does end. In 1952, Asians become racially eligible to U.S. citizenship for the first time as part of an otherwise draconian Cold War security measure, the '52 McCarran Walter Act. In the 1965 Immigration Act is what completely revamps the immigration symptom allowing

meaningful Asian immigration again for the first time in U.S. history.

And so, my first book charts what I call a Trans-Pacific movement to repeal Asian exclusion which happens between about 1943 and 1965. And it argues that repeal is part of the price of U.S. empire in a decolonizing Cold War Asia. And so, even as the U.S., you know, expands its power over Asian peoples, the pressures and demands of building and sustaining in Asia compels U.S. officials to respond to the demands of nonwhite peoples. If only in the most symbolic ways. And so, this is just one example of how in countless ways, U.S. empire essential to understanding these histories.

Ultimately then repeal is about what the U.S. is trying to do in post-war Asia. So even this history of how exclusion gets repealed is actually quite ambivalent. So I would not say this is a triumphful story. The '65 Immigration Act is a milestone law that flips U.S. immigration from more than 80 percent European to majority Asian and Latinx.

And people often celebrate this law for creating the diverse nation we have today. And in fact, my own parents immigrated under this law. The majority of Asian Americans living in the U.S. can trace some connection back to this law. But for many lawmakers and others, this demographic shift was actually an unintended and for some an undesirable outcome. And scholars have documented this time and again.

And so, it also suggests how U.S. imperial interests whether related to the Cold War, the decolonization, World War II or other really provides unstable grounds for Asian Americans inclusion. And in moments like the past two years, you can see just how contingent and ephemeral this inclusion can be. So I can say more, but I'll stop here for now. Thank you.

MR. HASS: Thank you, Jane. Adrian, would you like to pick it up from here?

MR. DE LEON: Absolutely. First, I want to thank the Brookings Institution



for bringing me on not just as a little bit of an outsider as a Canadian maybe studying Asian Americans history. But also, for framing the question of anti-Asian violence as one that is inherently transnational, and that's what I would like to speak about today.

So as many of us note, celebrating Asian Americans heritage during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a pyrrhic effort at best. It seems every few weeks Asian women and elders are attacked in the streets of big cities like New York and San Francisco.

And in the face of this chronic and normalized violence, it is certainly important to highlight the positive impacts the Asian Americans have made in this country in an effort to steer public perceptions away from the denigrating narratives at the heart of anti-Asian violence.

Yet, as a historian of U.S. Philippine relations myself, it gives me pause to not only consider the contributions of Asian migrants of the U.S. When the return on investment has not yielded acceptance but rather has given rise to even more violence and discrimination. What we now call anti-Asian racism whether it be on the level of the micro aggression or the direct attack on the street or to scale it up, the hostile immigration policies of the last few years is rooted in that oldest American foreign policy itself which is overseas imperialism.

To supplement the remarks of my colleague, Jane Hong, and expert in the relationship between empire and immigration, I will briefly speak about the relationship between anti-Asian violence, foreign military intervention and imperial occupation.

Unlike the familiar messaging of diversity and equity initiatives which we might be familiar with in the workplace. I want to pause it that anti-Asian hate and racism at large does not begin with every day macro aggressions locally. It begins with colonial occupation. Itself a technology and an effort of anti-Asian hate. A prototypical form of racial violence continuous with the dangers Asian Americans face today in the 21st century.

In today's brief remarks, I want to specifically highlight how empire produces the racist ideologies that has framed Asian communities as undesirable, foreign, invasive, suspicious, expendable. For example, we might follow cultural historians in the proliferation of anti-stereotypes in racist language.

The word gook, for example, a common racist slur is especially prolific after the Vietnam war is an example of imperial anti-Asian racism. Its original form can be traced back to 1898 during the brutal Spanish American and Philippine American wars and the subsequent colonization of Archipelago as the U.S.'s first overseas colony. This war for people who are familiar with this history saw the U.S. military kill 20,000 Filipino combatants and over 200,000 civilians over the course of four years between 1898 and 1902. The formal end of the war itself.

Among American GIs, the word became a shorthand for native insurgents fighting for the freedom against Spanish and eventually against American occupation. The word would reemerge in the Pacific front during World War II and then in the 1950s during the Korean War. And again, during the Vietnam war after which according to historian Kathleen Belew, veterans brought back this imperial articulation of anti-Asian hate back with them into domestic American life.

We see these transits of global anti-Asian violence to rebound into the domestic sphere with other communities such as (inaudible), Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai and other Southeast Asian migrants all of whom were impacted deeply and intimately by Cold War era military violence and proxy wars abroad.

As a derogatory signifier used to dehumanize Asian people in times of imperial occupation and violence, this word is a testament to the lasting cultural power of imperial and military occupation in the 19th century all the way to today. Likewise the discourses of yellow peril which produce many anti-Asian images familiar to us can be

traced back not only to the age of Chinese exclusion but also to the rise of Japan as computing imperial power in the Pacific during the 1930s and 1940s.

During this time, American newspapers proliferated with propaganda in political cartoons, opinion pieces and other multimedia that depicted Japanese people as monsters and invasive aliens who threatened American prosperity and peace. And we know what happened in this story. As this country entered the Pacific war after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed an executive order 9066 incarcerating about 120,000 Japanese Americans into concentration camps across the inland United States.

And with the rise of China in today's global economy and the related magnification of anti-Chinese violence across America today, the histories of yellow peril and U.S./Japan relations might prove to be an instructive warning. The points of the relationship between lived realities of racist violence and what we might call national security.

I recount these histories of U.S. imperialism not just to highlight how much better the conditions might be today. It's definitely not bad, but it's to emphasize that we have a long way to go. The legacies of American empire across the Pacific are not separate from what we call anti-Asian violence in the domestic U.S.

Once understood in the kinds of national context, we might follow the sinew of anti-Asian hate outside of American shores into Asia itself and where the United States violent impact is felt in every-day life in military camp towns, in former colonies and organized territories. For example, in Guam and Samoa and Hawaii, in the Philippines still. Only then can we reckon with violence against Asians not just as the domestic effort for social justice but as a project of racial justice around the world. And I'll stop there and leave some room for conversation. Thank you.

MR. HASS: Thank you, Adrian. Cynthia, may we turn to you next?

MS. CHOI: Yes. Thank you so much for inviting me. And it's wonderful to

be flanked by scholars and experts in our history. Usually, I have to cover that issue in like 10 minutes so it's really wonderful.

But of course, I have to start there as well because this year is particularly important as we recognize the 140th anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which as shared earlier, you know, where Chinese were specifically banned as being filthy, diseased carries stealing jobs and unassimilable.

And of course, it's particularly poignant to note that actually even before that, as Jane had shared, that Chinese women were specifically banned under the pretext as being prostitutes. Forty years ago, two white men brutally beat and killed Vincent Chin because they thought he was Japanese in a period when Japan was being scapegoated in an economic recession and high unemployment.

Today, we have elected officials largely Republican as we've documented in our 2020 report that have created the same dangerous environment for Asian Americans. But let's also be honest that Democrats have also engaged in an us versus them as a winning political strategy as well so this is a bipartisan issue.

The connection between anti-Chinese rhetoric and the anti-Asian hate has been confirmed by our data that our organization with our partners though Stop AAPI Hate has documented. So the meteoric rise of nearly 11,000 incidents specifically demonstrate how China and Chinese people have been invoked in attacks against Asians.

Our reports reveal the consistent parroting of the anti-China rhetoric. How animus is tied to beliefs about Chinese as the source and spread of the Corona virus and the pervasive use of orientalist stereotypes about Chinese earlier as was around diet and hygiene. But today in a recent poll by a peer organization named that a third of Americans believe that Asians are partly to blame for this pandemic.

So our history tells us that race systemic augury has always been used to

deny Asian Americans full social and political rights. And of course, we're not unfamiliar with confronting using phobic rhetoric and anti-immigrant policies under these false guises of national interest. But let's be clear that it's not just the rhetoric alone that's the problem.

The rhetoric is matched with an entire policy agenda built upon otherizing immigrants and people of color. Punishing immigrants and protecting white supremacy. And in addition, unrelenting attacks on those who are undocumented. These anti-immigrant policies include bans, restrictions on the silent seekers, Chinese students and academics, high skilled visa, green card holders and many others.

A reminder that the racism even though this is what we've been able to document is interpersonal. Is actually systemic. And for the first time in my, you know, recent memory in doing this work. Asian Americans are finally being understood in terms of our experience. And again, I'm really delighted to be on this panel and to talk further about what we can do.

MR. HASS: Thank you, Cynthia for helping us situate this current moment. Jeff, I was hoping I could turn to you to help us think through these strategic ramifications of the dynamics that have been described.

MR. BADER: Thanks very much, Ryan. And I appreciate the comments by the other panelists. I look forward to hearing questions and interchanges among when we get to the question period.

I'm going to talk about the national security implications of our outbreak of anti-Asian violence. The principal reason why the United States prevailed in the Cold War was the quality of our political economic and social system and the admiration by peoples of the world for the way of life it enabled.

The U.S. presented a society that was multiracial and multiethnic not based on blood and soil. No small part of that vision was American openness to immigrants. Many

of whom came from different parts of the world and integrated into our country. Our better angels viewed them as 100 percent American not as invited guests, but rather deserving legal and social acceptance as full as their compatriots living here for centuries.

We all know and the panelists have made clear that we have fallen egregiously short of living up to these ideals, but they served as our lone star, and non-Americans associated them with our country. It's hard to overestimate the benefits U.S. foreign policy derived from this message of welcome and openness to different ethnicities and nationalities.

Around the world in Asia, Africa, Europe or Latin America people identified with the United States in a way they could not with other countries, notably including our global adversaries that we were seen as ethnically homogenous. Individuals around the world want to become Americans and thanks to an immigration system that after the 1960s was at the same time generous and regulated by law, many succeeded.

Foreign governments admired our system, criticizing its imperfections but choosing to identify a lie or partner with a country emphasizing the ideals of freedom, equality, opportunity and universality of rights. Shared values became a basis of shared interests and magnified American influence.

So what is the message we are now conveying abroad? A society that is polarized unseeingly every issue of consequence. A government that seems unable to deal with any issue more complicated than naming a post office. Continuing racial discrimination, racial and ethnic tensions and a breakdown in the confidence and the value of assimilation and integration.

A broken immigration system that has not been reformed since 1986, '87 characterized by sharp reductions in immigration and refugee admissions. And at the same time, intense polarization because of understandable resentment over illegal immigration

sometimes leading to generalized gynophobia. And finally, rising incidents of hate crimes and racially motivated attacks.

What happens in Vegas may stay there, but what happens in the U.S. does not. In today's interconnected viral world an attack on the Chinese/American in Yonkers or Boston will be viewed within minutes by millions throughout the Chinese speaking world. If as a Biden administration that serves the competition between the U.S. and China will be the definitive challenge of the 21st century. It does not take much imagination to figure out how such events play out abroad even before propaganda agencies had their spin.

Chinese and other Asian students and researchers who want to go abroad for educational opportunities, but they have alternatives such as Australia, Canada, England and Continental Europe. The result costs us money, but more importantly brainpower and the enrichment that comes from the drive of people who have made huge sacrifices and want to be here.

I'd like to cite one antidote that made me think long and hard about the kind of beating our image abroad has taken. I recently got a phone call from a prominent Asian, a former official who lived for many years in the United States. Knows us as well as we know ourselves and is vociferously pro-American.

This ex-official visiting the United States for the first time since COVID began and fearful about the rash of anti-Asian physical attacks asked the embassy to provide personal security throughout the visit. I thought this was an overreaction, but frankly what I think doesn't matter. What does matter is what like minded and well deposed Asians think. Whether our best friends think this way.

Can we expect Asian governments and peoples to think of us as a friend to whom they naturally gravitate? No less a model to emulate? Behind the headlines are some enduring positive trends that we rightly celebrate. Asians represent the fastest

growing minority in the United States. They continue to come here and to thrive as demonstrated by GDP per capital figures.

Most believe in and many achieve the American dream through education, hard work, entrepreneurial spirit and characteristic immigrants and first-generation drive. There are over a million foreign students in the U.S. and the majority are from China and India. They come and many stay despite our shortcomings. And they contribute mightily towards our achievements as a nation and tell our story to their countries of origin.

I have flashed some warning signals here. They need not define our future or the perceptions of the U.S. and Asia. It is too soon to draw meaningful conclusions, for example, from negative numerical trends in U.S. travel exchanges in lesser years. Because of the massive disruption of international travel occasioned by COVID and particularly by the draconian Chinese quarantine measures that make foreign travel and study to and from China an insurmountable challenge.

But if we are serious about our concern that democracy advance against autocracy, our belief that the 21st century is the age of specifically century and our intention to be a leader in the region. We need to take these warnings seriously that means getting our house in order and not just saying we're doing so but proving it in deeds.

The plague of anti-Asian attacks physical and rhetorical has to be stamped out for us to have a fighting chance. Thank you all very much. I look forward to your questions.

MR. HASS: Thank you very much, Jeff. I think the four of you have very clearly and articulately framed the challenge that we face at the moment. I want to spend the next half hour talking about how to address it.

Jane, if I might start with you. You mentioned the term model minority. Now, in your opening comments can you just help our viewers understand what that term



means and how it effects Asian Americans race relations with other minority groups in the United States?

MS. HONG: Of course. I mean this is something that I think anyone who studies Asian American communities has to contend with all the time even if they don't want to. It's a word that just haunts all of us because it's so -- I think today as I mentioned earlier. When you think about Asian Americans in this country they are seen as potential foreigners and/or model minorities. Literally, sometimes both at the same time in some cases.

So the model minority is a historical construction, right, that gains traction in the mid to late 1960s. Really at the height of black power. So historian Ellen Wu has written an excellent book tracing the history of the model minority as it applied to Asian Americans.

So it gains traction really in the mid to late '60s at the height of black power. And what's really important to understand about this idea, right? So the model minority of course is the idea that Asian Americans -- so in the case of the '60s, it was primarily applied to Japanese and Chinese Americans. You can see it in mainstream media. The New York Times runs articles. And U.S. News and World Report run articles talking about Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans as success stories.

And the idea is that, you know, these minority groups have overcome all kinds of barriers including in the case of Japanese Americans wartime internment, right? So the idea is that through hard work, not complaining, relying on each other and not the state that Asian Americans have kind of exemplified kind of the possibilities of the American dream, middle class professional success. They also prove the promise of America and, you know, these kinds of narratives that I think remain very prevalent today.

Although they have shifted over time in terms of how they're applied and where they're applied. I think today you can see them a lot in affirmative action debates that are currently happening.

The thing that's most important to understand about this model minority narrative is that it is inherently anti-black. So if you look at these pieces describing Japanese and Chinese Americans what you actually notice pretty quickly is that they're not really about Japanese and Chinese Americans. You see that they kind of used Japanese and Chinese Americans to critique and pathologize black communities. So what, you know, Chinese and Japanese are doing.

So they're working hard. They are not asking the U.S. government for state sponsored help. They're not being militant. They're relying on each other. So all these are actually juxtaposed, right, they're counterpoints to kind of help black communities are seen and are being critiqued during this period. And again, the 1960s context is really important because that really is the context in which these ideas gain traction.

And so, when scholars talk about the model minority, we often describe it as it's an anti-black strategy of using Asian Americans against black Americans. So it's a strategy of white supremacy. And it's also connected to political economy. A book I've been reading recently is by Jonathan Tran. It's called *Asian Americans and the Spirit of Racial Capitalism*.

I mean when you think about these questions often, you know, they're framed in terms of, you know, kind of just racial identities. But these are deeply connected to political economy and so Jonathan Tran argues that the model minority, it's a strategy of racial capitalism. And the thing that he points to that I think is really interesting is that people today, you know, we often think of the model minority just in terms of Asian Americans here in the U.S. Like I feel like people don't realize that similar kinds of discourses were used to describe African-Americans during the reconstruction period.

And to use African-Americans basically to argue against Chinese American immigration and inclusion, right? So it's actually just a strategy. It's a strategy of political

economy that has been used at various times to refer to different groups. It's just that in the U.S. context, it's really -- it's stickiest. And it's really, right, endured with reference to Asian Americans.

The last thing I'll say is that, you know, the reason I think the model minority is so important to think about today in our current moment is that, you know, I'm a fellow this year for PRRI, which is a polling firm in Washington, D.C. And one of the polls that they did showed that of all kind of polled racial and religious groups, there are particular groups that had a really hard time believing that Asians faced "significant discrimination in the United States."

So different groups were asked, do you agree with this statement. Do Asians face significant discrimination in the United States? This poll was taken, I think in the first year of the pandemic in 2020. Ninety-two percent of Asian Americans said yes, they do believe that Asians face significant discriminated in the United States. And you can imagine why.

But then at the very bottom, and this is a group I've been studying in great detail. White Angelical Protestants were the least likely to agree with this statement. I think it was 35 percent of this group agreed with the statement that the Asians face significant discriminated.

And a lot of the reason I think why it's so difficult for some groups in America to believe that anti-Asian violence and racism is real is because there is still the model minority image and kind of view of Asian Americans is still so strong. And the model minority, it basically, you know, it kind of leads people to believe that Asians have never really faced significant discrimination in the United States. Or if they have, they've overcome it because, you know, it's not that bad anyway.

But those kinds of ideas, I mean they're dangerous in our current moment.

You know, and I think the work that Cynthia has been doing in Stop AAPI Hate and documenting just the sheer number of incidents has been incredibly important to kind of showing folks that, you know, this isn't just something folks are imagining.

But again, I would really highlight the dangerous kind of dimensions of model minority thinking to kind of downplay and silence. You know, and kind of erase the realities of the racism and violence that Asian Americans continue to face today.

MR. HASS: Thank you, Jane. Cynthia, one of the things that has really come through in your writing and speaking is the sense that policing has been used as a tool of first response for some of the rise in racism that we've seen.

But this isn't necessarily what leaders of the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are most interested in as a response. What do you think are more effective tools or solutions? And why is policing not seen as the response of first choice?

MS. CHOI: Yeah. Well, first I wanted to just thank Jane for that excellent description of the model minority myth and how it's harmful to our community. Specifically, that it has led to an underinvestment in our communities and particularly groups that are working on the frontlines to address hate, harm and discrimination.

So yes. Well, we can only speak to our data. And I think that what we have been able to establish that this is systemic and pervasive. We're receiving reports from all over the country. And, Adrian, also from different parts of the world too. And we've been talking with scholars and advocates in Canada and different parts of the world.

And what we are seeing from our data because we started it not just to track and to study, but to develop responses. We're not data scientists. We're actually first responders. People who work on critical issues around racial equity. And what we found is that a majority of the incidents are actually not criminal. They are not as we define it in the United States as hate crimes. So it is a crime where there is some evidence that it was

motivated by bias towards a protected class.

But it doesn't mean that it's not -- we shouldn't take this seriously. That it hasn't caused trauma. That it hasn't hurt our community. And so, what we saw is that again majority are not actually defined by hate crimes. They're largely verbal harassment. We did see some levels of physical attacks as well, of course, which are very alarming. And that we have groups that are more vulnerable.

So we've reported that women reported, you know, over 60 percent of the respondents were women. We don't want to suggest that men, Asian men, do not experience racism. We think that there might be some issues around women being more comfortable reporting these types of experiences. But we have to face the fact that women in vulnerable communities including those working-class community members, community members who didn't have the luxury to work from home. That had to show up to work like the women in Atlanta, the workers in Atlanta.

So I think that this is something that we've looked at. And if you look at the data, who is being impacted and the nature of hate. Policing and law enforcement is not a case strategy for us. So especially if we acknowledge the fact that this is systemic and recognizing also that our law enforcement and our criminal justice system has been demonstrated to be racially bias. And the fact that we have a history of our community members not reporting, not feeling comfortable seeking services because of institutional violence.

That they have lived through an environment where our own government and law enforcement has caused harms. We have multiple incidents where we have community members who have called 911 during a mental health crisis and ended up being killed instead of helped.

So we have also experienced violence, institutional state violence. And so,

it does obviously speak to the fact that it also wouldn't address the majority of the incidents. And which is why we have really focused on community-based safety solutions, which means supporting community organizations that are really on the frontlines. Our organization is part of a coalition in San Francisco that recognized that victims and survivors were not getting support. They don't even know what their rights are. What access to resources. We have a key issue around language access.

And so, this is a gap that we're trying to fill. We also know that many violence prevention programs don't actually meet the needs of the diverse Asian community. Many of the programs are actually focused on street violence, gang prevention as their called. And it's just not the ways in which our communities experience violence.

And we also have to recognize that because of the model minority myth, the perpetual foreign. We do have racial tensions between groups especially in low-income communities where people's basic needs are not being met. So we have to get to the drivers of inequality. We have to get to the drivers of violence and crime. And the other realization that is fueling these types of racial tensions.

So the other third component which we believe is equally important is cross communities racial solidarity because quite frankly the data shows that hate against blacks are at an all time high. The Latinx community as well. Other immigrants, Muslims who are under attack. So we have to work in coalition and in solidarity. And those are the three prongs that our local worker has engaged in.

For Stop AAPI Hate, our focus has also been around community-based interventions. Also, enforcing basic civil rights and in some cases expanding that. And finally, it's really through our educational equity efforts. So the promotion of ethnic studies and a true collective understanding of our experiences, which includes anti-Asian discrimination. And in fact, as our scholars noted here defines our experience.

MR. HASS: Well, thank you very much, Cynthia. One of the things that I've taken away from our conversation thus far is the need to embed our understanding of what's going on in this current moment in a broader context.

And with that in mind, are there any lessons from previous periods in American history of race relations? Either positive or negative that could help inform how we should be addressing this current moment? Adrian or Jeff, I want to give each of you the rights of first refusal to weigh in on this and, Cynthia and Jane, you're welcome to follow.

MR. DE LEON: Yeah, I'm happy to jump in. I want to kind of piggy back on Cynthia's point about the importance of political education, accessible political and public education and particular ethnic studies.

You know, I teach in a private university and a really, you know, widely acclaimed ethics study program but our class sizes are small. And as beneficial as that is for us professors and teachers who want to do the anti-racist work. So much of this work happens beyond the ivory towers. So much of this work happens beyond the think tank, beyond the Congress, right?

Like it happens in first and foremost the ways in which we can make anti-racist education accessible in K to 12, accessible in communities, accessible for working class communities especially. And this is really the spirit I think of a moment that I come back to in my teaching which is the late 1960s and the 1970s, the moment of not just a civil rights movement, but, you know, it's trans-nationalization. And the emergence of this cross racial solidarity movement which, you know, has since been called a third world liberation front at San Francisco State, at the University of California at Berkely.

And I think we can learn. I think we still have a lot of lessons to learn from the kinds of organizing that Filipino American students, Asian Americans students, black American students, Latinx students and faculty did at that time because at once they were

fighting for, you know, mutually the self-defense of their communities, cross-racial solidarity, accessible public education from K to 12 to college in their communities.

But they also advocated for these domestic issues against, you know, racial violence at that period with an internationalist perspective in mind, right? Like they saw, you know, predatory recruiting and working-class communities for the Vietnam war as part of the larger effort to promote racial and economic equity in working class and racialized communities at that time.

They saw how important it was that, you know, for those of us who have studied and have backgrounds in Asian studies and area studies, which is the Cold War from information as well. They saw how important it was to supplement the study of, you know, "peoples and cultures over there with peoples and cultures over here" as they make those transits, as they make those migrations. And often as they make those migrations in the wake of imperial violence, right?

And so, I think today especially at this point where, you know, public political education, anti-racist education, anti-racist organizing is so deeply and institutionally and systemically under attack both within and outside the political institutions that we have inherited.

I want us to kind of -- I really emphasize that we look to that period, those periods of cross-racial organizing in our histories whether that be, you know, earlier in the 20th century or even the late 19th century. But especially, during that civil rights third liberation front moment as, you know, possibly having the sort of tools that we can leverage to promote the sort of like global anti-racist education that we have been talking about today.

MR. HASS: Yes?

MR. BADER: Thanks, Ryan. I recall in the 1950s that there was a period when many African states were achieving their independence. And they were sending



delegations to the United States and embassies in Washington had delegations in New York at the United Nations.

And their delegates would drive up and down I95 between New York and Washington. And they would try to stop for a meal at the wonderful Howard Johnson's along the highway there, and they would be told that they were not welcomed because of segregation that prevailed there. This caused a stink on the international media. Reports going back to Africa of how they were being treated.

And there's a counterpressure to build -- that basically forced the Maryland house and other rest stops along the way to integrate. That's an interesting illustration of the way in which our foreign policy objectives at the time included trying to develop relations with new African states in the wake of the colonial era. So fed back to our own domestic sins and produce a movement to correct some bad practices.

Bringing up to date with anti-Asian violence in the U.S. The U.S. State Department comes out every year with a human rights report. We judge every country in the world for their human rights behavior based on congressional mandates. And this year, I think it took about 24 hours after our report to denounce China in a variety of ways as usually and as they deserve, frankly. The Chinese responded in detail in citing instances of anti-Asian violence in the United States as demonstration of how hypocritical we were in talking in applying the superiority of our protection of human rights.

The bottom line of what they were writing was who was the United States to criticize our treatment of the Uyghurs when we're having all these problems at home. And by the same token, you recall when the resolutions about Chinese treatment of the Uyghurs first began arising within the U.N. Human Rights Council with the U.N. We would support such resolutions. The Europeans would support such resolutions and no one else would. Other Islamic countries wouldn't. Other Asian countries wouldn't.

And a lot of people put it down to Chinese economic power. I don't think that was right. I think that's a factor but I think equally important was the sense of American hypocrisy. You know, we more demonstrated through our own behavior a particularly strong fondness of protection of Muslims in the United States or for that matter our foreign policy, but suddenly we were seized with Chinese treatment of Uyghurs as something where everyone should follow. And we simply didn't get any support outside of Europe.

I think that this kind of illustrations of the linkage between our shortcomings at home and our ability to protect our values and our interests abroad.

MR. HASS: Thank you, Jeff. Jane and Cynthia, I want to give you an opportunity to weigh in on this question before we wrap up in the next four minutes.

MS. HONG: I could add something. I mean this is something I study very much in my work. And I appreciate how Jeffrey outlined the connection between kind of the treatment of minorities in the United States and America's image in the world.

And I do think that history shows that concerns about America's international image has sometimes created opportunities for racial reform. Usually very limited racial reform but still it's a step, right? It gets some folks onboard. You know, in history and actually in many fields, you know, scholars have explored how the embarrassment of Soviet propaganda, decriming American racism during the early Cold War particular as African-Americans help drive limit civil rights reforms including Brown v. Board initial rights act in the 1960s.

And so, a number of historians, law professors, sociologists have done that work. In my own work, I trace a parallel. But what I would argue is a distinct dynamic that basically, right, you see a similar dynamic kind of compelling or propelling Asian exclusion. And it brings folks onboard that normally might not be onboard to liberalize immigration policies.

So very famously Southern Democrats, right? Who generally speaking support segregation and generally speaking do not want any kind of immigration liberalization at all. They don't even want Southern, Eastern Europeans much less Asians. But, you know, during particular moments, during the '40s, '50s and '60s, particularly during the Cold War, you know, they get onboard. So there is an interest convergence, right, that does create opportunities at least for some legislation to pass to dismantle Asian exclusion very gradually.

And so, again, I think, you know, this is -- it's an interesting kind of question to think about in the ways that, you know, if these national security concerns, these foreign policy concerns can get folks onboard, I don't think it gets us all the way there in terms of the more meaningful racial reform that I think many of us want. It doesn't get us all the way there, but it can get folks kind of to the table to think about ways kind of to move forward then I would say that that's a positive development.

MS. CHOI: Yeah. I mean what I would like to add is that, one, is that our movement is really about making sure that we understand the historical connections, right? That we're connecting the dots. That this is certainly unprecedented in terms of the documentation. That this is certainly what was happening in the 1800s.

You know, I think it's important to recognize that since our first arrival, you know, to the United States that we have been otherwise, and our status is conditional. So as we see so many young people speaking out, you know, showing up, wanting to really understand why this is happening in a time where they are fearful for themselves, their family members, their grandparents.

We all -- part of what we're doing is really making sure that people understand the historical context. And today, we do have to recognize that this effort to really scapegoat us. That racial profiling particularly in more recent years of Chinese

scientists. Again, painting China as -- and singling out China as the existential threat to the United States has led to serious consequences and harm to our community.

I also want to point out that it's really important to recognize that disparate treatment of Asian Americans including like Southeast Asians who are experiencing mass deportation, family separation. That we have policies including the Competes Act that again is really painting a broad brushstroke that it's us versus them. This is the kind of rhetoric historically that has led to direct harm to our community. And so, we do have to connect the dots of why is it that fellow Americans feel licensed to attack verbally, to discriminate against Asian Americans and some Pacific Islanders.

Our data is showing that while in this particular moment the intended person that they believe that they are attacking is Chinese. It's a reminder that all of us have been affected by the discrimination and hate and we have to make sure it's understood within this historical context.

MR. HASS: Cynthia, we're going to have to leave it there. I want to thank you and Jane and Adrian and Jeff for a very rich conversation.

In the last hour we have explored the roots of the current problem, diagnosed the scales, the current challenge and also talked about strategic ramifications for the United States national security of allowing this pernicious trend to continue.

There are a few themes that really stood out in our conversation. One is that upticks in anti-Asian racism have coincided with rising geopolitical competition and this trend appears to be repeating itself now.

Cynthia, had talked about research showing the direct link between anti-Asian rhetoric and the rise in anti-Asian hate and violence. It came through very clearly that we need to understand the current moment with an awareness of the history of race relations and of the path that Asian Americans have traveled in the United States. And that

we will need a more holistic approach for tackling this problem than relying upon policing and law enforcement alone.

Lastly, I think Jeff was very persuasive in suggesting that allowing the trend lines of anti-Asian racism to continue will only erode America's national security.

With that I'm privileged to turn the floor over to President John Allen. Thank you.

MR. ALLEN: Ryan, thank you very much for how you ran this panel. I want to thank the panelists sincerely for a very, very important conversation. It was stimulating. It was insightful. It was moving.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, it's an honor to welcome you to this session, this Brookings gathering. As Ryan said, my name is John Allen. And I'm the president of this institution. On behalf of Brookings, I want to thank you for joining us for a very important session today in a very important moment where we honor our Asia, Pacific American heritage month.

This month is a time to commemorate and to honor the contributions of the Asian Americans and Pacific Islander. Their full communities to the history and the culture and the politics of the United States. It's also a time to reflect on the struggles that this community faces in American society every day.

These struggles have intensified over the past few years due to xenophobic and anti-Asian rhetoric spread by politicians and public figures in response to geopolitical frictions and global pandemics. As a result, hate incidents targeting the AAPI community have risen dramatically in the United States. The organization of Stop AAPI Hate which was represented by Co-Founder Cynthia Choi on our first panel just a moment ago reports that from March of 2020 through December of 2021 nearly 11,000 hate incidents occurred against AAPI persons that were reported. How many weren't reported, we don't know.

The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism have shown that anti-Asian hate crime increased by 339 percent in 2021 compared to 2020. With New York and San Francisco and LA and other of our large cities surpassing their record numbers in 2020. These acts of violence are only the latest of a long history of racism and violence targeting Asian Americans.

This history runs well before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II to the killing of Vincent Chin in 1982. Today, Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in the United States having increased by 81 percent between 2000 and 2019. Their perspectives, their history and their rich culture are crucial to the fabric of today's society and the future of America.

Anti-Asian racism not only presents a threat to the AAPI community, but also a threat to overall security of the United States and the very prosperity and the stability of our country. Recognizing our role as an institution long dedicated to the public good, we at Brookings view it as critical to advance the discussion on what actions our leaders can take to create both domestic and foreign policies that can support and uplift Asian Americans.

And given what you've just heard during this terrific panel this morning among individuals who dedicated their lives to helping our Asian Americans communities and Pacific Islander communities. We hope that hosting these kinds of conversations can help inform the public discussion about what's really happening in America and how we can address it.

So with that in mind, let's transition to a fireside chat. It's my great honor and privilege this morning to introduce the Honorable Stephanie Murphy representatives from the great Florida Seventh District and the first Vietnamese American woman elected to the Congress in our history.

Representative Murphy is a former educator, business woman, national security specialist and she's focused on jobs and security and opportunities for every American. But advocating as well for Asian Americans is among just one of the many important issues that she has embraced. I'm also proud to say that Representative Murphy and I worked together when she was a national security specialist in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. And I served as the principal director for Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

So Representative Murphy, it's an honor to welcome you to Brookings. And it's wonderful to see you again. And given that our time together is limited sadly about 30 minutes or so. What I would like to do if I may is move straight into questions if that's okay with you?

MS. MURPHY: That's great. It's great to see you, General Allen. And if I could just point a personal privilege and show you this. That's you there and that's me after the work that we did together on the tsunami. So it's just great to be with you and thank you at Brookings for hosting an incredibly important conversation today.

MR. ALLEN: Well, thank you again for joining us and that work that we did together on the tsunami was just incredible given the enormity of that crisis and the suffering that the United States was able to help to delay and to prevent. And your role in that was really very, very important. And I have to say, seeing myself in your picture, you clearly overcome your early influence from me. So congratulations to you.

We're so proud to have you with us today. And let me, if I may, go to some questions. And this will be an opportunity for me to learn from you and for our audience to learn as well.

Now, growing up as a Vietnamese American woman and as an immigrant in this great American country. How has that experience influenced your efforts to shape

policy today on behalf of Asians in general and of course Vietnamese Americans going forward?

MS. MURPHY: You know, I mean my family and I came here as refugees not just as (inaudible). We were escaping Communist Vietnam when our boat ran out of fuel and a U.S. navy ship found us and provide us with food, fuel and water and allowed us to make it to a refugee camp. And then a Lutheran church sponsored my family and relocated us to Virginia.

And so, my experience was that the American people welcomed my family. They rescued us at sea demonstrating both power and generosity that defines this country. And then welcomed us in a small town in Virginia. And allowed me to basically live the American dream. I through a good public school education I became the first woman in my family to go to college. Had a chance to work in national defense and in the private sector. And so, that experience shapes my perspective in the halls of Congress today because first and foremost I am patriotic.

While I recognize that America has shortcomings and we are not perfect, but we are ever evolving. I'm hopeful. And I'm hopeful because I know our democratic system is one in which voices like the ones that we've heard can have an impact in creating a better country and a better nation.

And then I think also because I grew up very much working class, immigrant family. I didn't have the luxury for the big policy debates because, you know, it was only the things that became law that could help families like mine. You know, Pell grants, the ability to get a good education, those types of things.

And so, that makes me very pragmatic here in Congress because I know that for the American people I'm trying to serve, the things that will help them and continue to create the opportunities for an American dream are the things that we can actually get



through a very divided Congress and get signed into law. And so, those are sort of my framing values that I bring to my work every day here.

MR. ALLEN: Well, thank you for that. And not only are they your framing values. We hope that those values will extend to all the members of Congress as well.

You know, I just said a moment ago that the Asian segment of the American population is the fastest growing segment. If I could ask? What are your thoughts about Asian Americans representation in government and politics today? And what can we do to increase that representation, please?

MS. MURPHY: I think it's so critically important that Asian Americans are represented in our house of Congress and in our government at all levels. I always say that, you know, our elected government should reflect the great diversity of this country.

And as you mentioned, the Asian American community is growing rapidly. And we have seen -- I'll point to Georgia, the senate races. We have seen the impact when Asian Americans turn out. And I think in that election with the backdrop of anti-Asian hate crimes, we saw a community realize that their vote was their voice and they used it. And so, if you've got the community voting and, you know, it's also important that we have Asian Americans who are running for public office.

We have some work to do in that space because while, you know, to think about what makes successful campaigns and get people actually elected, we always talk about money, message and machine. And, you know, you leave the message up to the individual candidates, but the money and machine is really important. And unlike some of the other groups that isn't as well developed for the Asian American community. And I'll just take that terms for example.

There are great veterans organizations that support veterans who are running for public office and provide them with the network and how do you do this? And I

think -- so there's more work there that the Asian American community can do to support those who decide to put their hat in the ring so to speak.

And I think the last thing I'll say is that it's really important that we look to and provide platforms for those Asian Americans who have achieved elective office because if you can see in yourself -- or you can see yourself in someone then you can aspire to do that as well.

And I'll never forget. I took my kids and some of their school mates to the House floor and this little boy had curly red hair. He just happened to be there when Joe Kenny who was serving at that time walks in and his eyes opened really big. But here was somebody that looked just like him. And this was a person who's in Congress.

And this little boy, some five years on, still talks about how he wants to be a member of Congress. And I think that's true for Asian American youth who look at people who look like that and who are serving.

MR. ALLEN: Well, that's very important. I hope we are all listening very closely to that because increasing that population among our elected representatives at all levels of government has got to be a crucial outcome of this conversation and others that we'll hold in the future.

Now, to some extent and I know Stephanie, we've all suffered from this in some form or another. During the pandemic, you know, we heard these terms, the China virus and other just crass formulations that senior political leaders were using undoubtedly as one of the panelists in the previous gathering and conversation said intended to otherwise Asian Americans and to stoke Asian American hate. Which then created radicalization, extremism and, of course, then the hate crimes themselves.

In your mind, how do we hold these people? These policymakers accountable for their actions when it comes to weaponizing the irresponsible and dangerous

and harmful use of radicalized language? And let me just interject before you answer.

When this sort of language arose, we inside the Brookings Institution took the time to reach out to our community, our precious Asian and Pacific Islander community inside the institution to assure them of our support and our fraternal support to all of them in this moment of this hateful language that was generating so much difficulty for that precious part of our population.

How do we hold these people accountable in your mind?

MS. MURPHY: You know, I'm glad you asked this question because it really is quite a personal challenge. And one that I take very seriously. And let me just share a little story with you.

Is that when COVID first happened and the rhetoric anti-Asian rhetoric was increasing and we were starting to see reports about anti-Asian hate crimes, I was called back to Washington in order to take another vote on a COVID relief package. And I remember being personally concerned about my physical safety. Being able to get from where I would park in the garage to the airport and to my gate to travel back to do what I thought was the right thing for this country. To provide relief to these fires.

And it was stunning to me that in all my years living in the United States I had never felt that kind of insecurity or fear for my safety before until this moment where we had folks, my colleagues, some of my colleagues using rhetoric that now made people who looked like me, Asian Americans, unsafe.

And so, when we were really starting to see that I wrote an op ed in the U.S. Today about this. And it seemed clear to me that the irresponsible comments from these politicians, you know, things calling COVID the China virus or the Kung flu like really contributed to creating a hostile atmosphere and it made it easier for people to rationalize or justify their attacks on Asian Americans.

And, you know, I have to also note that obviously it didn't help that the Chinese Communist Party had concealed the origins of the virus and had retaliated against countries that were trying to learn the truth about the virus' origin. And kind of inhibited world health organization's ability to prepare and prevent future pandemics.

But unfortunately, too many Americans with legitimate grievances with the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government morphed into resentment towards not just the 1.4 billion Chinese people, but it even metastasized into antagonism here at home against Asian Americans as a group.

But I guess, how do we fix this? It might sound simplistic but I think we need to start by electing people of character to public office who realize the power of their words and the privilege of their platform. And they need to be more careful and choose their words so that people don't get hurt.

And then I think the other piece is that our free and independent press has a really critical role to play here. Reporting on holding leaders accountable. You know, using our free press, which is a unique distinguishing factor of our democratic system. We can use that to hold people accountable. And I think we need to see more of that.

And then, of course, what you did, which is within your organization, leaders in the business world and in the nonprofit world showing allyship. Being good allies. Recognizing and speaking out when they see this sort of inappropriate behavior and checking into make sure that their communities are doing okay.

MR. ALLEN: Well, you said something really important a moment ago. And that is that leaders have to recognize the power of their words and the privilege of their platform. And that's a blade that can cut both ways.

And when we have individuals who are seeking to stoke racial discrimination or even racist violence that can cut in one direction. But as you say, we have

to elect people of character who recognize that the power of their words and the privilege of their platforms can extend so broadly across the American population that it can have an enormous influence on resolving these kinds of issues or at least addressing them in a manner where we can resolve them over time.

Now, Representative Murphy, you've got an extensive defense background beyond that which you obviously achieved on the Hill as a representative. As you think about the defense and the national security of the United States. How do you see this rising racism and hostility towards members of the Asian American community affecting U.S. national security perspectives? And just the defense of America and our allies?

MS. MURPHY: Well, let me start by just acknowledging that, you know, anti-Asian violence is wrong in its own right. It does not represent the best of America. It cannot be tolerated or excused regardless of any foreign policy national security implications. I think the United States and our citizens have a moral and ethical obligation to combat racism towards Asian Americans or any other racial or ethnic group.

But to answer your question specifically, I would argue that anti-Asian violence does make our country weaker on the global stage at least in two key ways. The first is anti-Asian acts at home undermine our national security because it undermines our moral authority so to speak. You know, we are currently, I believe, engaged in an ideological competition with China, Russia and other autocratic governments where we have competing ideologies, a democratic versus autocracy. Free markets versus government-controlled markets.

And in order to prevail in this macro competition, it's important that we show that our system can deliver better economic and social results than their system. And obviously, when things like this happen in our country, the CCP latches onto it and uses it to diminish or make their argument that our system doesn't lead to a better quality of life and

that their system is somehow better.

And so, it's important that, you know, I think it's also why January 6th, the George Floyd murder and its aftermath and anti-Asian acts, they're not just internal problems for us but they're also external problems. They're foreign policy national security problems because they are gifts to our adversary.

And then I think the second way that anti-Asian acts at home compromise our national security is that it introduces friction and distrust into the relationships that we have with Asian allies and partners like Japan and South Korea and the Asian nations. I mean, you know, I open this by reminding you of, you know, the work that we did in Southeast Asia tsunami.

You know, it takes a lot of effort to build good will. And I think when folks in these countries see anti-Asian actions in the United States, their people notice, their governments notice and their space to cooperate more with the U.S. maybe it narrows a bit.

And I'm not trying to overstate this point, but I think, you know, just imagine if you are seeing Americans assaulted or harassed when they're living in other countries or in the streets of Tokyo or Sol or Manila. It inevitably does have an impact on our relationships and that's really problematic because this is a moment when we need to have deeper ties especially with our Asian Pacific allies.

It's really our best weapon in our competition with China is to have closer relationships. And that's hard to do if they are seeing their diaspora discriminated against in the United States.

MR. ALLEN: Well, let me come to a similar question, I think. And this goes to the time you and I spent time together. And, you know, Asean is an extraordinary important organization. Our treaty relationships in East Asia with South Korea and Japan, with Thailand and with the Philippines and of course with Australia.

But these treaty relationships that are deep relationships that are -- they're actually blood deep. You know, Americans have shed their blood on behalf of all of these people. And America's blood runs thick with the heritage of all of these peoples as well.

And so, as we think about the future of the United States on the world stage, virtually all conversations these days end up in some kind of a conversation about the -- as you said, the competition between what the United States stands for and what China stands for.

And the Chinese have been pretty clear that they have an alternative model to that of the United States. And that that model is in competition with ours. And how do we in this country, a country that stands for the rule of law and humanity and compassion. How do we compete with the CCP, the Chinese Communist Party and its ideology and its conviction of the superiority of its model? How do we compete with that without creating in that competition inherently an anti-Asian backlash inside this country? How do we do that? And I think I've got my views, but I would love to hear how you think about that.

MS. MURPHY: Well, I think that we have to be a better version of ourselves when it comes to our -- yeah, that make our democracy great, right? And all the things that you mentioned, rule of law and a government ruled by the people for the people. It's so important that we do our best to live into the vision of our founding fathers.

I also think it's important that policymakers make a real distinction when they talk about competition with China. And that distinction is that our competitor is the Chinese Communist Party. It's not the 1.4 billion Chinese people. They're industrious. Their heirs a rich cultural and historical tradition and we should respect that.

It's not about the Chinese people. It's about the Chinese Communist Party, the CCP. And too often I don't hear my colleagues making a distinction. And then furthermore, you know, it's about the CCP. It's not about the Chinese people and it's

certainly not about the Asian Americans or the Chinese Americans or other Asian Americans who are here in this country who are as patriotic as any American can be and who contribute a lot to our economy and our country and our national identity.

But I don't think we should shy away from confronting the CCP out of the fear that the CCP will argue that such confrontations are racist. They're fond of saying that and they'll probably clip stuff out of this event to promote their narrative but it's false. You know, we are not anti-Chinese. We are competing against an authoritarian system and an authoritarian government. And we have to be more clear when we talk about this.

MR. ALLEN: Well, and your point is really important. And you say we have to be a better version of ourselves. We have to know what that better version is. And understanding what we stand for as a democracy. What we stand for in the context of what the principles of our constitution call upon us to represent.

And what it calls upon us to represent has nothing to do in the end with our origins or our race or ethnicity. It calls upon us to be Americans and that is a very important version of ourselves. And when we stand for that then we can have the conversation that competes with the CCP. And there we can win that conversation and we can win that competition.

Let me ask this though. This is related, I think Jeff Bader mentioned it in I thought, you know, pretty painful remanences. And that is as we seek to stand for something in the world. As we seek to be a beacon, if you will, of equality and human rights internationally. How do we do that? And recognize our own domestic shortcomings?

MS. MURPHY: I actually think that is one of those key characteristics of being a democracy is that we can publicly acknowledge our own challenges and our own shortcomings. You do not have that opportunity when you're in an authoritarian government. They suppress any sort of criticism of government.



But in order to be better, you have to be able to acknowledge your challenges and shortcomings. And that's a key element of our constant effort to perfect our union. It makes it -- I actually think that if we can acknowledge these challenges and shortcomings, we can actually go about fixing them. And it makes it easier, not harder for us to promote equality and human rights not just at home but abroad.

You know, I know no country likes to be breached to and I think that when we are defending democracy abroad, folks are more likely to listen to us and absorb our points if we openly state that we're far from perfect ourselves, but we are working hard to continue to evolve.

I also, you know, as I said. It's a mark of a good healthy, self-confident nation when you can engage in a fulsome self-examination and self-improvement. And then, you know, I think there's an imperative to fix our domestic shortcomings so that we can have more credibility on the global stage. You can imagine how some countries feel when we talk to them about free and fair elections after they watched January 6th happen here at the Capitol.

But I think the silver lining of January 6th is that we can point out that our institutions held strong. And that the effort to try to overturn the election failed and that we are engaged in a process to learn from our mistakes and assure it never happens again. And, you know, it makes me think of something that President Bill Clinton used to say which is that there's nothing wrong with America that can't be cured by what is right with America. And we have it in our DNA to keep improving, keep working towards that better nation that we aspire to being.

MR. ALLEN: There's nothing wrong with America that can't be solved by what's right with America. Thank you for reminding us of that.

Last year, you were cosponsor of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act. I'm not

one of your constituents, but let me as an American thank you for sponsoring that. Thank you sincerely. That's a start.

Now that you've laid the ground work in that regard what other things can we do to continue to dismantle this anti-Asian racism that we find in America today?

MS. MURPHY: Well, I was really proud to sponsor this bill. It was an incredibly important bill because it gave police and prosecutors more tools to prevent and punish hate crimes and it also increased the reporting mechanisms. And I think, you know, you have to have good data and fact and then provide your judicial system with the tools to respond to and prevent and punish these hate crimes.

But again, I have to say at this basic level, we can't underestimate the power that leaders and regular citizens have when they simply speak out against instances of anti-Asian hate. And I think it's really important for non-Asians to speak out. You know, I kind of view it in the same way that when I serve here in Congress and I see there are hate crimes or injustices against the Jewish community or the black community or the Hispanic community. It's almost more important for me not as a member of those communities to speak out to say it is not acceptable.

And so, I would call upon our allies, the Asian American communities' allies to also speak out and make sure that it's understood that as Americans we won't tolerate this no matter what community these hate crimes are targeted at.

MR. ALLEN: So with that as context, you're now serving on the bipartisan select committee to investigate the January 6th attack on the United States' Capitol. I won't ask you to comment specifically on the investigation itself, but not a day goes by that with the many different media entities to which I subscribe that I see article after article after article that predicts or is concerned about the potential death of American democracy. And the democracy is genuinely under a lot of pressure today. Those sacred principles that we,

you, I, others, many others swore to support and defend and to serve.

As you have watched the investigation unfold before your eyes. As you think about this democracy that you serve and you serve so well what are your sense? What is your sense of the prospects given the current trajectory of radicalization and extremism in the country as you see this investigation unfold?

MS. MURPHY: Yeah. So just on a personal note. Let me just say that, you know, I was in the Capitol on January 6th. And so, serving on this committee means a lot to me because, you know, working as we did with other mason democracies overseas, coming from a country that was, you know, wasn't a communist country until it became one. I know how fragile democracy can be.

I think it's critically important that we understand exactly what happened on that day. I found it incredibly distressing that the Vietnamese, the republic flag, the former Vietnamese government flag was flown on that day amidst all of these violent, you know, extremist groups. And so, we have a whole lane that is dedicated to understanding domestic violence extremism and its role in January 6th.

I would say that what I think is happening all over the world is that liberal democracies are being challenged. There is a question going on right now where, you know, is this 20th century system of governance capable of dealing with the 21st century challenges? And we have inflation and, you know, a political gridlock. And a lot of these elements that are creating a disaffected citizenry.

So citizens who feel disaffected because they don't -- they may or may not feel like their government is serving their particular needs and challenges in this moment. And it's opening the door to nationalism. And you're seeing it in Europe. You're seeing these nationalist parties and their affiliated extremist groups gaining momentum and it's deeply, deeply worrying.

And I think while as a democracy, we cannot police the words and the thoughts of these organizations nor should we, right? They can hold these extremist values, but they cannot act on them in a way that is violent or harmful to their fellow citizens. And I think that's the piece that we have to -- that's a place where you can police this is when those words and thoughts become actions that are illegal. And it's really important for us to us a nation and as the community of liberal democracies to understand the threat from within.

And to pushback against that. Not just protect our communities of color, which are often the target of these extremist groups, but also to protect our democracy more broadly.

MR. ALLEN: And I think to that point, a very important point, all those points. All roads in the conversation in the end have to lead back to the inherent value of our constitution to what it is that defines us again as Americans.

I had an opportunity the other night to watch a movie where the people were in dispute about an issue on what they were calling patriotism, which really is what you call a moment ago nationalism. Someone spoke up and said, yes, we come from all different backgrounds. Someone is this heritage and someone is that race, and someone is that faith and those are differences. But what makes us all the same is our commitment to the principles of the rule of law and humanity and compassion that are enshrined in the constitution, which you've dedicated your life to serving. And that conversation has to be at the center of how we get healed as a country.

And you have served our country so well for so many years and you have been on the Hill as a representative in Congress for three terms, and I understand you are retiring. And as you look back across those terms to which the American people have sent you to Congress, what are your reflections now, Representative Murphy, as you think back

upon those terms? And as you think about the future our Congress and our democracy?

MS. MURPHY: Yeah. So I have to say, it's just been a real honor to have been able to serve. I would have never imagined that a refugee and immigrant, a young girl who grew up in a trailer park in rural Virginia who, you know, whose parents worked multiple jobs just to make ends meet would ever be sitting in the U.S. Congress.

And I think the fact that I am is a reflection of how great this country is. And it is why I am a self-professed patriot. I love this country. And I feel an obligation and a commitment to continuing to make it better.

But that means that -- and for me, my contributions have been at times in public service. And my mentor and graduation speaker, General Brent Zocuff, who in the past last year, he had said, you know, how -- and I'm going to bungle the quote, but more or less he had said, you know, how well the future of this country fairs depends on the hands that are at the helm of state.

And I'm so proud that I had an opportunity to be one of those hands at the helm of state trying to bring pragmatism and bipartisanship to my work in Congress to be effective and proud to say that I was often named one of the most effective members and one of the most bipartisan. And I think those two things go hand in hand.

And the partisan nature of our Congress worries me because in order for us to deliver for the American people, we have to find common ground. We have to move forward together. And so, I also, you know, I think about what Secretary Albright used to say about the future of American democracy. She said she was an optimist who worries a lot.

And so, I find myself in that similar position. I worry a lot. I worry about the erosion of public trust, the erosion of trust in our institutions. But at the end of the day, I look at what we have here in the United States and I know while it is an imperfect model, it is better than any other model out there and that it is up to citizens no matter, you know, what

level of service they're involved in to contribute to the continued improvement and evolution of this democratic experiment.

And I'm glad to have found an opportunity to do that in Congress. And I look forward to ways in which I can do that after my term is over.

MR. ALLEN: Well, Representative Stephanie Murphy speaking as an American. I'm very happy you've had your hands on the helm of state. We are an infinitely better country because of your patriotism, your sense of responsibility and what you brought to the Congress and what I know you'll continue to bring to our country because there's a lot of run way still ahead for you to exert your leadership, your positive leadership for all of us and for this country.

And we know that your extraordinarily busy and we can't thank you enough for having joined us today and helping us to address this difficult subject on how we can end this racist dimension in the victimization of Asian and Pacific Islanders of our American population. Of how we can make this country even better.

So on behalf of the John L. Thornton China Center here at Brookings, thank you. And I want to thank everyone who joined us today for this very important conversation. And on behalf of all of us at the Brookings Institution, I wish you a very happy Asian and Pacific American heritage month and I ask you all to please be well. Thank you, very much and good day.

MS. MURPHY: Thank you. So great to be with you.

MR. ALLEN: Wonderful to see you again. Bye-bye.

\* \* \* \* \*

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2024

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 600  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190