

2025/02/03 APA Justice Monthly Meeting

APA Justice Meeting – Monday, 2025/02/03
1:55 pm Eastern Time / 10:55 am Pacific Time

1. CAPAC Updates

Speaker: Judith Teruya, Executive Director, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. Judith.Teruya@mail.house.gov

[not on record]

2. Update from Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Speaker: Joanna YangQing Derman, Director, Anti-Profiling, Civil Rights & National Security Program, Advancing Justice | AAJC

Joanna provided an update on AAJC's response to the numerous executive orders issued by President Trump since January 20. She stated that these orders aim to militarize borders, expand deportation and detention, punish immigrant advocacy groups and local governments, and misinterpret constitutional and immigration laws. In addition to the ongoing litigation over birthright citizenship, AAJC has partnered with the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and OCA to file a lawsuit challenging Trump's authority to strip citizenship from babies born in the U.S. to parents on temporary visas or who are undocumented. The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, argues that the executive order violates the 14th Amendment and the Administrative Procedure Act.

AAJC is also monitoring nearly a dozen new immigration-related laws in Texas, conducting a threat assessment to categorize them from problematic to extremely harmful. The organization is working closely with local partners to equip them with the necessary resources to oppose these laws effectively. These legislative measures are seen as a continuation of policies that restrict immigrant rights and increase enforcement actions at the state level.

AAJC has been tracking Trump's nominations for key government positions and has taken public stances opposing several appointees. The organization has actively opposed Kash Patel for FBI Director, Pam Bondi for Attorney General, and Russell Vought for Director of OMB. Despite their efforts, Pete Hegseth and Kristi Noem have already been confirmed as Secretary of Defense and DHS Secretary, respectively, though AAJC also opposed their nominations.

AAJC remains deeply engaged in legal, legislative, and political advocacy efforts to counter policies they view as harmful to immigrant communities. They continue to collaborate with legal

groups, assess the impact of new laws, and push back against controversial government appointments, ensuring that communities affected by these decisions have the support and representation they need.

3. Update from Asian American Scholar Forum

Speaker: Kai Li, Vice President, Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF)

Kai provided an update on key concerns and ongoing efforts. He highlighted worries about the Senate hearing on malign foreign influence, particularly remarks by Senator Risch suggesting that every Chinese student could be a spy. Kai noted that Cornell's recent survey on international students with respect to transnational aggression disagreed with the remarks. He warned that restricting student visas from China, especially for AI graduate students, could harm U.S. leadership in science and technology. He suggested conducting more surveys or studies to assess the actual prevalence of transnational aggression among Chinese students.

AASF continues to work with federal agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF) to address concerns about potential biases in new policies that may disproportionately affect Asian American faculty. This initiative, which began before January 20, remains active as long as agencies are engaged. The organization is helping facilitate outreach efforts to ensure fair treatment in research funding and academic policies.

AASF remains focused on both protecting Chinese students from unjust scrutiny and advocating for Asian American faculty in federal policy decisions. They emphasize the need for data-driven approaches to better understand these issues and prevent discriminatory practices.

4. Remarks by Governor/Secretary/Ambassador Gary Locke

Speaker: Gary Locke, Chair, Committee of 100; former U.S. Ambassador to China; former Secretary of Commerce; former Governor, State of Washington

Ambassador/Secretary/Governor Gary Locke expresses deep concern over the increasing challenges faced by the Asian American community, particularly Chinese Americans, under the current political climate. The worsening U.S.-China relationship has fueled harmful rhetoric, reminiscent of the first Trump administration, with terms like "Wuhan virus" and "Kung flu" leading to a surge in anti-Asian violence. While the U.S. may have legitimate policy disputes with China, Gary emphasizes that such conflicts should not extend to Chinese Americans, who have made significant contributions to the nation for centuries. From building the transcontinental railroad to serving in the military, Chinese Americans have long played an integral role in shaping the country.

Despite these contributions, Chinese Americans continue to be treated as perpetual foreigners and unfairly associated with the Chinese government. The Trump administration's "China Initiative," which targeted Chinese American scientists under the guise of national security concerns, reinforced harmful stereotypes and subjected many to wrongful prosecution. Although the Biden administration sought to focus on restricting high-tech exports to China for security reasons, Trump's recent policies suggest a return to broad anti-China rhetoric that unfairly affects Chinese Americans. This includes policies such as banning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, suspending foreign aid, and halting humanitarian relief efforts.

Economic policies under Trump are also raising concerns, particularly the reintroduction of tariffs on goods from Canada, Mexico, and China. While Trump claims these tariffs will hold foreign governments accountable, in reality, they function as a tax on American businesses and consumers. Companies like Costco, Target, and Macy's are forced to absorb these costs, which are then passed on to everyday Americans. Gary highlights that nearly 60% of all shoes sold in the U.S. are imported from China, meaning the financial burden of tariffs disproportionately affects consumers and small businesses. The uncertainty surrounding these economic policies only adds to the challenges faced by Asian American communities.

In addition to economic pressures, there is a troubling resurgence of discriminatory policies at the state level. Many states are now passing laws restricting land ownership by Chinese nationals, a clear throwback to the alien land laws of the early 20th century, which were designed to prevent Asian immigrants from owning property. Coupled with new restrictions on immigration, these policies evoke the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act, reinforcing systemic barriers against Chinese Americans. Gary warns that such actions represent a dangerous regression in civil rights, undermining decades of progress toward equality and inclusion.

Given these mounting challenges, Gary calls for stronger, more explicit support from government leaders. Elected officials, from governors to members of Congress, must send a clear message that policy disagreements with China do not justify discrimination against Chinese Americans. The community should not have to bear the consequences of geopolitical conflicts between the U.S. and China. Gary stresses that public figures must actively reject xenophobic narratives and affirm the invaluable contributions of Asian Americans across all sectors of society.

To combat these growing threats, Gary urges increased vigilance, organization, and collaboration among advocacy groups. Despite past achievements, the fight for equality is far from over, and Asian Americans cannot afford complacency. Gary commends APA Justice for its efforts in documenting and addressing these injustices, emphasizing the need for a unified, strategic approach to advocacy. Without coordination and collective action, the Asian American community risks being marginalized and targeted once again. By working together, organizations can strengthen their influence and ensure that the rights and dignity of Asian Americans are protected.

5. Remarks by Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch

Speaker: Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch 張之香, Founder and Executive Chair, US-China Education Trust (USCET)

Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch highlights the urgent need to address the impact of U.S.-China competition on Chinese and Asian American communities. She acknowledges the work of APA Justice and its advocacy efforts while emphasizing the necessity of a new initiative that brings together racial justice and foreign policy concerns. Julia notes that discussions on U.S.-China relations often overlook the lived experiences of Chinese and Asian Americans, who face increasing discrimination and scrutiny. By forming broader coalitions, she hopes to bridge the gap between national security concerns and racial justice efforts.

Julia references historical instances of racial profiling, such as the Cox Report of 1999 and the wrongful prosecution of Wen Ho Lee, to illustrate how Chinese Americans have long been caught in the crosshairs of U.S.-China tensions. The China Initiative, initially launched under the Trump administration, further exacerbated fears by disproportionately targeting Chinese American academics and researchers. Despite past failures, Julia warns that Congress may seek to revive similar policies, reinforcing a dangerous precedent that equates ethnicity with suspicion.

Julia also highlights Beijing's efforts to exert influence on Chinese diasporas through United Front operations, which seek to blur distinctions between PRC citizens, diaspora Chinese, and Chinese Americans. These tactics, she argues, create further complications for Chinese Americans, who are unfairly perceived as foreign agents or political pawns. The result is an atmosphere of fear, scrutiny, and exclusion, where Chinese Americans must constantly prove their loyalty to the United States.

The rise in anti-Asian hate during the pandemic has further deepened the community's vulnerability. Many Chinese Americans have distanced themselves from U.S.-China policy discussions out of fear, choosing self-preservation over engagement. Julia stresses that this silence weakens the ability of Chinese and Asian Americans to advocate for their rights and contribute meaningfully to shaping U.S.-China relations. Without their voices, the United States risks losing a critical perspective that could help navigate this complex geopolitical rivalry in a way that upholds American values of inclusion and justice.

Julia draws a direct link between historical and present-day discrimination, citing the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin as a tragic reminder of the consequences of racial scapegoating. Chin, a Chinese American, was beaten to death with a baseball bat by two white auto workers who blamed Japan for the decline of the U.S. auto industry. His murder, and the lack of justice that followed, underscore the persistent view of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. Julia also highlights the case of Sherry Chen, a Chinese American scientist wrongfully accused of espionage and fired from her job at the National Weather Service in 2014. Despite being

exonerated, Chen's case exemplifies how racial profiling continues to damage lives and careers. Her legal victory, including nearly \$2 million in damages, was a rare but important step toward accountability. However, Julia warns that similar injustices will persist if structural biases are not addressed.

USCET aims to create a dialogue that not only acknowledges Beijing's actions but also holds Washington accountable for policies that harm Asian Americans. The initiative seeks to educate policymakers on the consequences of targeting Chinese Americans, encourage open discussions within the community, and guide the media in reporting on U.S.-China relations responsibly. Julia calls for collaboration between national security and racial justice advocates to tackle both the symptoms and root causes of discrimination against Asian Americans.

In closing, she urges APA Justice and other advocacy groups to unite in a powerful coalition that demands the U.S. government address security concerns without endangering Chinese and Asian American lives. The United States, she insists, must meet the challenge of China without sacrificing the rights and dignity of its own citizens.

6. Update from the Asian American Legal Defense Education Fund

Speaker: Bethany Li, Executive Director, Asian American Legal Defense Education Fund (AALDEF)

- 2024/02/01 AALDEF: [Appeals court halts enforcement of Florida's anti-Chinese alien land law](#)

Bethany Li highlighted AALDEF's commitment to protecting Asian American rights through education, advocacy, and litigation. She emphasized ongoing work on alien land laws and broader issues such as economic justice, immigrant rights, voting rights, and anti-Asian violence.

Recent victories include stopping the construction of a 76ers arena near Philadelphia's Chinatown, securing a redistricting win in New York to strengthen Asian American representation, and obtaining a \$580,000 settlement for Chinese warehouse workers. AALDEF also helped reunite a Cambodian man with his family by securing his release from detention.

Looking ahead, AALDEF is focusing on three key areas: expanding litigation and advocacy teams, strengthening partnerships in key regions, and launching a training institute for young Asian American attorneys. With the new administration, AALDEF anticipates significant challenges, particularly in immigration policy, including potential mass deportations under the Alien Enemies Act and increased deportations of Southeast Asians.

AALDEF is actively involved in legal efforts to counter restrictive immigration policies and has partnered with NAPABA to file amicus briefs against attacks on birthright citizenship. AALDEF also provides resources, such as immigrant rights toolkits, to help communities understand and protect themselves from expedited removal and deportation threats.

AALDEF is monitoring surveillance and racial profiling, drawing connections between post-9/11 policies targeting Muslims and recent anti-China measures. It aims to leverage lessons from past civil rights struggles to counter discrimination against Asian Americans under current U.S.-China tensions.

Bethany also raised concerns about threats to grassroots organizations, particularly through legislation like H.R. 9495, which could restrict nonprofit activities. To support advocacy groups, AALDEF is hosting a webinar on IRS compliance and nonprofit protections. She called for collective action to safeguard both organizations and the communities they serve.

7. Update from the National Fair Housing Alliance

Speaker: Scott Chang, Senior Counsel, National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA)

- 2024/05/06 [National Fair Housing Alliance, Inc. v. Secretary of Commerce \(1:24-cv-21749\)](#)

Scott Chang provided an update on the lawsuit *National Fair Housing Alliance v. Kelly*, which challenges Florida's SB 264, a law restricting property ownership by individuals from China and six other countries. Filed in May 2024, the lawsuit alleges that SB 264 violates the Fair Housing Act by discriminating on the basis of national origin. Unlike *Shen v. Simpson*, which focuses on constitutional arguments, this lawsuit emphasizes how SB 264 disproportionately affects individuals from targeted countries and was enacted with discriminatory intent, as evidenced by Governor DeSantis's statements.

NFHA filed the lawsuit in the Southern District of Florida. It was joined by the Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA), two Florida-based fair housing organizations, and an Asian American-owned real estate company. The plaintiffs are represented by civil rights law firms and advocacy groups, including the Asian American Justice Center. Florida officials initially sought to transfer the case to the Northern District, where *Shen v. Simpson* is being heard, but the judge denied the request. However, the case has been stayed pending the Eleventh Circuit's decision in *Shen v. Simpson*.

Scott highlighted the broader implications of SB 264, emphasizing that such restrictive land ownership laws reflect a troubling trend of targeting immigrant communities, particularly those of Asian descent. The lawsuit aims to set a legal precedent to prevent similar discriminatory policies from undermining fair housing protections across the United States.

Civil rights groups are closely monitoring similar legislative efforts in other states, assessing potential legal challenges. Scott reiterated the importance of holding lawmakers accountable for policies that perpetuate discrimination and reaffirmed the commitment of advocacy organizations to ensuring housing equity and protecting the rights of immigrant communities.

8. Q&A and Discussions

9. Next Meeting

The next monthly meeting will be held on March 3, 2025, starting at 1:55 pm ET/10:55 am PT