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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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A Campaign Advocating for Anti-Asian Hate Crime Legislation

ALEX AWAD

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# Introduction

Over the past year, and amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as a group has soared. At our organization, Amnesty International, we take injustice personally and work to combat such acts by campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. It is for this reason that we know federal legislation must be enacted to protect the rights and lives of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in the United States. The proposed COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act coupled with the NO HATE ACT ensure that the U.S. justice system is able to provide both justice and accountability for anti-Asian hate crimes.

For someone to live in fear of violence and harassment for their ethnicity or simply who they are is unacceptable, especially in this country. The United States government must protect its citizens with this legislation. The COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act addresses the surge in violence against Asian Americans by assigning a point person in the Justice Department to review COVID-19 hate crimes reported to law enforcement, while providing guidance on reporting of hate crimes, in multiple languages with a comprehensive national database. The NO HATE ACT would require the Justice Department to conduct research on hate crime reporting and data collection, as this data is of great importance.

Senators need to vote yes on the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act and the NO HATE ACT on behalf of individuals and communities throughout the country that deserve justice and accountability for hate crimes.



# Key Audiences

## **United States Senators**

We will engage United States Senators, both Republican and Democrat, in an honest conversation about the need for anti-hate legislation and the right of all citizens, no matter their heritage, to feel safe. Federal officials must be educated on the recent spike of violence and what it means for these communities to be living in fear. Messaging directed towards this audience will heavily focus on statistics and stories from their constituents.

## **Urban Communities**

Asian-American-directed hate crimes increased in all but two among some of the largest U.S. cities, in which these crimes more than doubled from 2019 to 2020. Targeting these major cities will not only spread awareness to locals about the violence occurring around them but will also make them more passionate about this legislation which will force their legislators to take action.

## **Rural Communities**

Anti-Asian violence has always been present in many rural communities, but it has been intensified due to the pandemic. It is important to education members of this community on the current situation and raise awareness for this violence so they can begin to combat it. Targeting messaging towards this group can pave the way for more resources for people of the AAPI community there and influence legislation.

## **Moderate Republicans**

Targeting voters, specifically moderate Republicans, will be a huge goal for this campaign. Conservative leaders must see that voters on their side can also see the importance of such legislation, they will be more inclined to vote in favor of the bills.

## Key Messages

### **The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in anti-Asian violence.**

- From 2019 to 2020, the overall hate crime rate declined, while hate crimes targeting Asians increased, from three to 28 in New York and seven to 15 in Los Angeles.
- The first spike in anti-Asian hate crimes occurred in March and April last year alongside a rise in Covid-19 cases and ongoing negative associations of Asian Americans with the virus.
- Stop AAPI Hate said it received nearly 3,800 reports of attacks nationwide between March 19, 2020, and February 28, 2021. About 68% were verbal harassment, 21% were shunning (deliberate avoidance), and 11% were physical assaults.

### **Hate crime data can't capture the scope of anti-Asian violence.**

- Hate crime and bias incident data released by police departments and federal agencies is just a fraction of actual incidents.
- Deficiencies in hate-crime reporting have led organizers and activists to take it upon themselves to collect data on their own, which poses the issue of differing definitions of

hate crimes, leaving policymakers with competing datasets that don't capture the scope of the problem.

- The Justice Department and FBI are required by called the Hate Crime Statistics Act to publish an annual report on hate crime statistics, though the statistics are likely a vast undercount because law enforcement agencies are not required to submit their data to the FBI for their annual crime report.
- There are more than 18,000 agencies in the United States and more than 3,000 did not submit their crime statistics in 2019. Of the almost 16,000 agencies that did submit data, about 1 in 7 reported any instances of a hate crime.
- Without dedicated resources, law enforcement agencies might not be trained to spot and report hate crimes accurately, creating the impression that hate crimes may be occurring with far less frequency than is accurate.
- The FBI's data may also be incomplete because in some jurisdictions, local prosecutors, not police, decide what is charged as a hate crime and the federal government does not collect hate crime statistics from local prosecutors or courts.

**President Trump's use of racist language had a profound impact on how people behave toward marginalized groups.**

- A 2020 study that examined Trump's comments about Mexican immigrants during his presidential campaign — when he referred to them as “rapists” and declared that “when Mexico sends its people, they're not sending the best” — found that the inflammatory remarks emboldened certain members of the American public and gave them license to express deeply held prejudices.
- A separate study revealed that the use of “China virus” language to refer to the coronavirus, particularly by GOP officials and conservative outlets, has already resulted in a shift in how many people in the U.S. perceive Asian Americans.
- Experts point to a number of factors behind the violence surge, including the use of stigmatizing language like “Kung flu” and “China virus” during the pandemic.
- In March 2020, then-President Trump tweeted the phrase “China virus” more than 20 times.
- Spikes in Google keyword searches for “China virus” appeared as recently as this January, the same month Trump used it in a tweet condemning the COVID-19 case and death data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as “fake news”.

# Campaign Objectives and Strategic Approach

## Objectives

<b>Raise Awareness</b>	<b>Increase Understanding</b>	<b>Develop Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase awareness among urban areas of the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help people to recognize what a hate crime is and how to help victims of these violent crimes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage hate crime reporting among people of the AAPI community by providing resources for both the reporting and recovery process</li></ul>

## Strategy

<b>Depoliticize</b>	<b>Heighten the sense of urgency</b>	<b>Show public support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on "depoliticizing" the issue and increasing understanding of the bill's proposed reforms</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use communications to portray the urgency of the situation and encourage individuals to get involved in the fight to stop AAPI hate</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage outreach to legislators through communications and petitions to push the proposed bills through the federal government more quickly</li></ul>

# Campaign Tactics

## Research

Polling in the initial phase of our campaign will provide a clear look into peoples' views in different areas on anti-Asian hate and will provide information as to which areas we will need to focus more heavily on. Breaking up our polling into different age groups will also help determine the voice and content of messaging. Data points will be collected after results from both national and local surveys are returned and will be passed along to legislators and volunteers. If there is any group or area that does not view this issue of importance, this research will also help us to figure out why that is.

## Earned Media

For written earned media pieces, we will use individuals both within and outside of our campaign. A series of op-eds and LTEs will be published with the intent to educate the public on the facts of anti-Asian hate crimes and what needs to be done to combat it. We will also publish writings in the press and on our website on the specifics of the proposed legislation and why we so badly need it to be passed. In addition to written pieces, a series of protests will be employed to garner media coverage and online media placements. Nonviolent direct action will be key in making these demonstrations successful and we will use a variety of individuals in these events. Everyone involved must be trained beforehand in how to handle themselves and what they are to do. We will use students, members of the AAPI community, etc. to spread our message and garner content for digital and social media.

## Advertising

Advertising will be an essential part of the campaign, as it will be our key message of spreading our message and sharing communications with a mass audience. We will utilize various types of advertising, including tv commercials, print ads, infographics, and social and digital advertising. We will be sure to employ strong visuals and facts/figures when putting together advertisements. Tv ads will take a more emotional approach and we will have victims of hate crimes as well as other members of the AAPI community share their stories. Print ads will simple but eye-catching visual components that will grab the attention of our audience while getting our message across clearly. Social media platforms and websites will allow us to reach the greatest audience, so it will be our greatest advertising focus.

## Grassroots

A major part of our campaign will be grassroots outreach and mobilization. Organizing this effort will mean engaging members of the community to volunteer with the campaign and recruit

others to join our fight. There also many other groups that work to protect human rights and some that specifically focus on protecting those within the AAPI community. These organizations will be a great help when it comes to reaching a wider range of people and finding volunteers. They have the power to add a lot of value to our front-line efforts and could make this campaign even more of a success.

## Social and Digital Media

Having engaging social media accounts and producing eye catching, high-quality content across platforms will allow for greater visibility for the campaign and will greatly increase audience engagement. Our social media will all remain very consistent with our website in both aesthetic and communication We will employ a hashtag campaign that will encourage social media users to participate in the conversation surrounding the issue and encourage them to spread awareness of our campaign. Not only will it get the conversation going, but this social media campaign can be used to better educate individuals and share statistics regarding the recent spike in anti-Asian violence. Our social accounts will all lead back to our website where there will be a call-to-action page giving users the opportunity to volunteer, donate money, sign a petition, or contact their legislators. We will also release a filter for Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook so users can show their support for the campaign.

## Campaign Activities and Timeline

August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public opinion research</li> <li>- Case studies and polls</li> <li>- Grassroots outreach</li> <li>- Solidify national campaign team and local volunteer groups</li> <li>- Produce graphics with data points</li> <li>- Distribute messaging to team members</li> </ul>
September Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publish website and social media accounts</li> <li>- Press release</li> <li>- Continue grassroots outreach</li> <li>- Earned media placement</li> </ul>
September Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public demonstration</li> <li>- Grassroots check-in</li> <li>- Begin hashtag campaign across social media</li> </ul>
September Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteer check-in</li> <li>- Public demonstration</li> <li>- Earned media placement</li> <li>- Start tv advertising</li> </ul>



September Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grassroots check-in</li> <li>- In-depth budget analysis</li> <li>- Earned media placement</li> <li>- Fundraising effort using local volunteer groups</li> </ul>
October Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteer check-in</li> <li>- End of hashtag campaign</li> <li>- Social media evaluation</li> <li>- Evaluation of timeline (extend if necessary)</li> </ul>
October Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grassroots check-in</li> <li>- Earned media</li> <li>- Education forum on hate crime definition and reporting process</li> <li>- Publish petition on website and begin promoting for signatures</li> </ul>
October Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public demonstration</li> <li>- In-depth budget analysis</li> <li>- Volunteer and grassroots effort getting signatures for petition</li> <li>- Increase tv and digital advertising</li> </ul>
October Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final push for signatures</li> <li>- Community engagement with local volunteers</li> <li>- Follow-up polling</li> <li>- Promote outreach to legislators</li> <li>- Public demonstration</li> </ul>
November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- End of campaign (tentative)</li> <li>- Campaign evaluation and debrief</li> <li>- Thank you event for donors, volunteers, and supporters</li> </ul>

# Budget and Resources

To account for budget adjustments that will need to be made throughout the duration of the campaign there will be weekly evaluations of internal and external campaign needs, as well as scheduled in-depth budget analysis to assess our financial goals. We anticipate spending the majority of our funds on advertising but will either raise or lower the amount of capital devoted to that category after evaluating whether it is reaching or falling short of our initial expectations.

Campaign Element	Estimated Cost
Research	\$200,000
Earned Media	\$50,000
Advertising Social Ads                 \$100,000 Print Ads                 \$50,000 Television Ads         \$250,000	\$400,000
Consulting Fees	\$175,000
Other Travel Cost                 \$50,000 Fundraising efforts       \$175,000	\$225,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,050,000</b>

# Exhibit: Op-Ed

## Swelling Anti-Asian Violence Must be Stopped

By: **Mazie Hirono** – *Mazie Hirono is an American lawyer and politician serving as the junior U.S. Senator from Hawaii since 2013. Hirono lived on her grandparents' rice farm in Fukushima, Japan as a child until her mother decided to take her and her brother to America to escape difficult family circumstances. She has since worked to give back to the country that she now calls home.*

There is no way around it, the Asian American community is in danger. I myself am no stranger to the hate and violence that the people of our community are facing. This is unacceptable and we cannot sit idly by as this happens.

As an immigrant and Asian American myself, this issue affects me as much as any other member of our community. I no longer feel comfortable taking a walk with my headphones because of the attacks on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. For the past year, our community has been fighting both the COVID-19 pandemic and perilous anti-Asian hate. President Biden issued a memorandum in his first week in office condemning coronavirus-related racism, but these assaults have continued without any concrete solutions. It is because of this that Grace Meng and I have taken it upon ourselves to coauthor the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act and introduce it to both the House and Senate.

This bill presents a substantive congressional response to the alarming rise in racist sentiment against Asian Americans that has been fueled in part by derogatory language about the virus's origins in China. If passed, this would assign a Justice Department official to expedite reviews of potential Covid-19-related hate crimes, help state and local law enforcement establish online hate incident reporting in multiple languages, and release guidance on avoiding discriminatory language to describe COVID-19.

In a survey of police departments of sixteen major cities across the country, it was found that anti-Asian hate crimes had more than doubled between 2019 and 2020. The series of episodes carry clear racial animosity as people of Asian descent have been pushed, beaten, kicked, spit on, and called slurs while their homes and businesses have been vandalized. Nearly half of these assaults have included a reference to the coronavirus, with language such as, "You are the virus," "Go back to China," and "You're the one who brought the virus here." These episodes especially grew in number after President Trump began synonymizing the coronavirus with China.

The shooting in Atlanta came a year after President Trump's first "Chinese Virus" tweet in March of 2020. Six of the victims were Asian women in what appeared to be a culmination of a year's worth of hatred and bias towards the Asian American community. The fact that the charge against this community came from the very top of our country's government only made it more dangerous. Trump's tweet catalyzed a major spike in anti-Asian posts on social media. The attacks allude to earlier eras of racism against Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and other individuals of Asian heritage in this country.

Regardless of the community that is in danger, it is the job of the US Senate and Congress to make sure that our country's citizens are safe. An attack on one group in our country is truly an attack on all of us which is why combating hate should not be a partisan issue.