

Legislation Text

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Calling on the School District of Philadelphia to help combat anti-Asian hate by providing Asian American history lessons during Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) heritage month in May to further educate and inform students of the rich history and contributions of Asian Americans.

WHEREAS, Hate crimes against the Asian-American Pacific Islanders (APPI) community have increased 150% nationwide in the last year according to an analysis released by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino; and

WHEREAS, Hate crimes against the AAPI community is not a new phenomenon, but the recent spike and increased media spotlight has given Asian Americans a platform to share their stories and lived experiences with the nation; and

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia, the past year has been particularly difficult for AAPI residents. Reports of hate crimes against Asian residents tripled between 2019-2020, and the looting and violence that unraveled in the summer and fall of 2020 devastated many Asian-owned businesses; and

WHEREAS, Some AAPI residents have reported avoiding public transit out of fear of a verbal or physical attack. Two Indonesian teenagers were recently assaulted at the City Hall SEPTA station on March 25, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Hate is largely borne out of ignorance and a lack of education. Many Americans see Asians as “foreign,” regardless if they are American citizens and despite the many contributions made by the AAPI community throughout American history; and

WHEREAS, AAPIs have a rich history of service to the U.S. in the armed forces and led the legal efforts to secure civil rights for veterans and immigrants. Landmark decisions include: 1) *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* (1886) a Supreme Court decision that overturned a discriminatory ordinance that appeared race neutral on its face but in practice selectively targeted Chinese laundry owners and violated the 14th Amendment that guarantees equal protection of the law. This decision has been cited over 150 times to strike down other discriminatory laws. 2) *Tape v. Hurley* (1885) and *Lum v. Rice* (1927) paved the way for school desegregation by arguing for the enrollment of Chinese girls in white schools. The courts decided against such integration at the time, but these case decisions set “separate but equal” precedents later to be overturned by *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). 3) *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898) that secured birthright citizenship for all U.S born Americans; and

WHEREAS, Until the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and the passage of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act of 1952, Asian immigrants were legally excluded from becoming U.S. citizens and faced a long history of immigration and socioeconomic restrictions based on race. In addition, Asian Americans were the victims of acts of violence that included beatings, murder, and arson. Japanese Americans were also targeted with unwarranted incarceration and expulsion. Extreme examples of Anti-Asian hostility included: the 1871 Los Angeles Massacre, the 1880 Denver Anti-Chinese Riot, the 1885 Rock Springs Massacre, and the

1887 Snake River Massacre among countless others from history that have been forgotten; and

WHEREAS, During the entire history of the U.S., tens of thousands of AAPI veterans, both men and women, served with honor and distinction. Filipinos were the first recorded Asians in the U.S. military, having served during the War of 1812. AAPIs continued to serve the U.S. military in significant numbers during the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, and the Vietnam Conflict; and

WHEREAS, Notably, Hidemitsu Toyota, an Issei, and Bhaghat Singh Thind, a Sikh, served in WWI and petitioned the Supreme Court for citizenship. Sergeant Major Tokutaro Nishimura Slocum, an Issei, who also served in WWI in the 328th Infantry Regiment, 82nd Division, later lobbied for naturalization of alien veterans as provided in the 1935 Nye-Lea Act (1935). Additionally, the Japanese American WWII 100th Infantry Battalion (442nd Regimental Combat Team) became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for size and length of service. After their service, many of these veterans made significant contributions to society both in their civilian lives and in politics; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is home to nearly 110,000 Asians and over 3,100 Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. A large population of Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants resettled in Philadelphia in the 1970s and 1980s following political upheaval in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Between 2000 and 2010, both Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations grew significantly in the City, increasing 43 percent and 32 percent, respectively; and

WHEREAS, The Asian American and Pacific Islander community in Philadelphia is a diverse and dynamic group consisting of 25 different ethnicities that impact all facets of our great City. It is important that we recognize and celebrate these communities and their contributions; and

WHEREAS, Section 102 of Title 36, United States Code, officially designates May as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and authorizes the President to issue an annual proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe this special month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities; and

WHEREAS, Preventing hate and discrimination starts with education and understanding. The school district should utilize the month of May to educate students of the rich history, struggles, and contributions of the APPI community in Philadelphia and the United States at-large; and

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on the School District of Philadelphia to help combat anti-Asian hate by providing Asian American history lessons during Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) heritage month in May to further educate and inform students of the rich history and contributions of Asian Americans; now, therefore, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Philadelphia Asian Pacific American (APA) Empowerment Coalition, further evidencing the sincere respect and admiration of this legislative body.