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Protests Against Discriminatory Texas Senate Bill 147



The Asian American community in Texas is mobilizing and organizing rallies and protests against the discriminatory Texas Senate Bill 147.

On January 20, 2023, a rally was held at Fort Bend County Justice Center, in Richmond, Texas. It received wide local media coverage.

"Injustice for one is injustice for all," Fort Bend County Judge **KP George** said. "It's unfathomable that our state leaders, who are elected to serve in the best interest of all of their constituents, would target groups of people from different nations and prohibit them from their right to own property. It's blatant discrimination."

Judge George said the bill should concern everyone because additional countries could be added to the list at any point. He also stated that he believed it could have a negative economic impact on the state.

Asian American community members who attended the rally held signs that called the bill discriminatory. They said they fear that they will be unable to purchase homes if the bill passes.

"Anyone who is in this country from North Korea is here as a lawful refugee fleeing an oppressive government," State Representative **Gene Wu** 吴元之 said at the rally. "They are now being punished again for the actions of that oppressive government simply because they come from the same place."

Judge George held a rally on the steps of the Fort Bend County Justice Center in Richmond, Texas. Dozens of people, mainly from Fort Bend County's Asian population, were in attendance. State Representative **Gene Wu**, Representative **Ron Reynolds**, Representative **Sulemam Lalani** and U.S. Congresswoman **Sheila Jackson Lee** were also present.

"This blatantly racist and xenophobic piece of legislation is exactly what we expect coming from what is anticipated to be the most conservative session we've seen in Texas," said Harris County Democratic Party Chair, **Odus Evbagaru**. "The Senator claims she wants Texans to control Texas land while being elected to serve some of the most diverse places in not only the state but the country. Bills like this only seek to further alienate groups of people and promote fear-mongering."

On January 23, 2023, a rally will be held at the Houston City Hall. For more information, contact Professor Steven Pei at PeiUH4@gmail.com

On January 29, 2023, an Anti-Asian Bill Rally will be held in Austin, Texas. Read more at <https://bit.ly/3QXjiFx> (in Chinese language)

As part of the expansion of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, California enacted the Alien Land Law, barring Asian immigrants from owning land in 1913. Other states followed with their discriminatory laws restricting Asians' rights to hold land in America. These laws remained in place until the 1950s, some even longer.

APA Justice has created a new webpage to monitor the continuing development of Texas SB147, community responses, media reports, and the 1913 Alien Land Law: <http://bit.ly/3QXNPTr>

Know Your Rights on Airport Enforcement and Border Harassment

AASF
Asian American
Scholar Forum

Seminar speakers will include ACLU,
criminal & immigration legal experts

Know Your Rights!

on Airport Enforcement
and Border Harassment

January 26th,
8:00 PM EST

Register Here (Zoom)

Icons: gavel, airplane, QR code

On January 26, 2023, the Asian American Scholar Forum will host a webinar on "Know Your Rights on Airport Enforcement and Border Harassment" as part of its series on Know Your Rights. ACLU, criminal, and immigration legal experts will be speaking.

Register to attend: <http://bit.ly/3ZMVUhX>

Options for Nonimmigrant Workers Following Termination of Employment

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website. It includes the CIS logo, a search bar, and a 'Sign In' dropdown menu. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Newsroom > All News > Alerts > Options for Nonimmigrant Workers Following Termination of Employment. A left-hand sidebar lists 'Newsroom' with sub-items: All News, Fact Sheets, News Releases, and Alerts. The main content area displays the title 'Options for Nonimmigrant Workers Following Termination of Employment'.

According to a report by *the Washington Post* on January 20, 2023, Google's parent company Alphabet was cutting 12,000 jobs, estimated at 6 percent of the workforce. It is cutting the most jobs in its history, spanning the company's product areas and regions. The cuts are the latest in an industry that has shed more than 200,000 workers last year and so far this year. While the company is reportedly refocusing its priorities, which includes investments in artificial intelligence (AI), some of the workers who were cut were working on AI-focused teams.

On January 19, 2023, **Mark Zuckerberg**, chief executive of Meta, warned employees that more positions could be eliminated — after Facebook's parent company already slashed 11,000 workers, or 13 percent of its workforce, in November.

Microsoft recently announced the layoffs of 10,000 employees. Earlier in January, Amazon said it was eliminating 18,000 workers. Salesforce also announced it was cutting around 10 percent of its 80,000 workers.

It is unclear how many nonimmigrant workers are impacted by these massive layoffs. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) provides information for nonimmigrant workers whose employment has terminated, either voluntarily or involuntarily. These workers may have several options for remaining in the United States in a period of authorized stay based on existing rules and regulations for up to one year.

The CIS notice is posted here: <http://bit.ly/3HnuCYo>. Please help to spread the word to your

circles, especially for those who may be impacted.

Regrettably, APA Justice does not offer legal advice or assistance.

Judge Robinson Lectures; Professor Tao Appeals



According to Science on January 20, 2023, a sentencing hearing is a forum to mete out justice for someone convicted of a crime. But this week, U.S. District Court Senior Judge **Julie Robinson** used the sentencing of **Franklin Tao** 陶丰, a chemical engineer formerly at the University of Kansas (KU), Lawrence, to also talk at length about what motivates academic researchers—and how the U.S. government appeared to misunderstand that culture in pursuing criminal charges against Tao.

Her remarks are a rare example of a federal judge speaking in public about the U.S. academic enterprise and its pursuit of knowledge. Tao was convicted last year of failing to accurately report his interactions with a Chinese university to KU, which said this week he is no longer a faculty member. But Robinson, who was appointed by then-President **George W. Bush** in 2001, says the government wrongly portrayed Tao's exploration of an academic job in China as a

malicious attempt to share the fruits of federally funded research with the Chinese government.

Although Robinson was only speaking about Tao, her comments also raise questions about how the government has prosecuted some two dozen U.S. scientists, most of them born in China, under an effort by the administration of former President **Donald Trump** to stop Chinese economic espionage. Human rights groups have said the campaign, called the "China Initiative" before it was renamed last year to target all nation-state threats to U.S. economic and national security, engaged in racial profiling and had a chilling effect on international scientific collaborations.

In sentencing Tao, Robinson rejected the government's request that he spend 30 months in prison and pay a fine of \$100,000. Instead, she decreed no fine and no additional jail time beyond the 1 week he spent behind bars after his arrest in August 2019. She did order 2 years of supervision for the 52-year-old Tao, who has worn a monitoring device on his ankle since his arrest.

Read the *Science* report: <https://bit.ly/3J1euNi>. Read the transcript of the sentencing hearing: <https://bit.ly/3D2C2NT>. Read Professor Tao's case at <https://bit.ly/3fZWJvK>

On January 20, 2023, Hong Peng, wife of Franklin Tao, made an appeal in the GoFundMe at <https://bit.ly/2Uj7Z19> that they will fight the lone count of conviction until Tao's name is cleared completely.

Fear of House China Panel will Fuel Bigotry

According to *Roll Call* on January 20, 2023, the newly established bipartisan House select committee tasked with studying strategic challenges coming from the Chinese government has aroused concerns in the Asian American community that lawmakers may wind up fueling anti-Chinese bigotry and broader anti-Asian discrimination in the United States.

The committee's membership list has not yet been announced, nor have initial topics for public hearings been described. Still, the sheer formation of the panel has sparked fresh concerns among some Democrats who voted against its establishment, as well as some within the Asian American community, about how the panel could potentially be used to spread anti-Chinese and anti-Asian paranoia and discrimination.

"I have concerns with the potential direction that Republicans could take this select committee, including using this platform to promote policies and language that endanger Chinese Americans and people of Asian descent living in the U.S.," Rep. **Grace Meng** 孟昭文, D-N.Y., who is the vice chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, said in a statement.

In the last Congress, Meng saw her COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act become law. The measure is aimed at combating xenophobia and violence against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders.

"Unfortunately, as we have seen in targeted attacks, some aren't distinguishing between the

CCP and Asian-Americans who are simply going about their daily lives,” said Meng, who is Taiwanese American. “Careless rhetoric can give way to dangerous assumptions which people can, and sadly, have acted upon as we witnessed in Indiana.”

Meng was referring to the incident earlier this month in which an 18-year-old Indiana University student, who is Asian, was stabbed repeatedly in her head as she rode a public bus. The student’s accused attacker reportedly told authorities she did it because it “would be one less person to blow up our country.”

“We have two years of solid evidence during the pandemic when people got really mad at random Asian Americans and even Latinos who had the misfortune of looking Asian and beat them to a pulp or shoved them into subways shouting, ‘Go back to where you came from. This virus is your fault,’” said **Frank Wu** 吴华扬, a prominent member of Chinese American civic organizations.

Wu, who in 2020 became the first Asian American to be appointed president of Queens College in New York, doesn’t think the new select committee is needed or likely to be helpful. He pointed to recent failed efforts during the Trump administration to weed out and crack down on instances of illicit Chinese government-linked economic espionage.

“You could not have a better example of a total waste of taxpayer money,” Wu said.

John Yang 杨重远, the executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice, a civil rights organization, said given the committee’s full name and remarks made by McCarthy and others, he is cautiously optimistic that House leaders will be careful not to platform anti-Chinese xenophobia and anti-Asian bias.

Read the Roll Call report: <http://bit.ly/3J520UN>

Update on the Indiana University Student Stabbing Incident. On January 19, 2023, *NBC News* reported that Asian Americans at Indiana University Bloomington are reeling after an 18-year-old student was stabbed on a city transit bus last Wednesday, allegedly because of her identity. But they don’t feel that they’ve received sufficient support.

Since the incident, a sense of shock has rippled through the school’s Asian community. The suspect, **Billie Davis**, told the Bloomington Police Department that she targeted the student, who survived the incident, for “being Chinese,” adding “it would be one less person to blow up our country,” court documents show. With fears around their safety amplified, Asian American students who spoke to *NBC News* said they’ve been disappointed in the response from both those outside the Asian community and the school administration, who made their first statements around the attack two days afterward.

The students say that conversations around the incident have been active among the Asian Americans on campus. But they admit that when stepping outside of their safe spaces, they often feel a sense of loneliness.

“There’s not really any advocacy group in the community that makes Asian issues very visible. I

think the administration should make that more of a priority, just expanding their own diversity and inclusion efforts to the community, because the students can't do that alone," a student said.

In the 1920s, an estimated 1 in 3 white protestant males in the state were dues-paying members of the Ku Klux Klan, according to the Washington Post. Over a century later, the Southern Poverty Law Center tracked 15 active hate groups throughout Indiana.

Race-related violence against Asian students also lives in the city's not-so distant past as former IU student **Benjamin Smith**, a vocal white supremacist who had disseminated white power pamphlets on campus and across the city, murdered 26-year-old doctoral student **Won-Joon Yoon** in 1999 outside the Korean United Methodist Church. Smith, who had previously been sought in a series of shootings earlier that year that targeted Black, Jewish and Asian people, fatally shot himself the same night.

Read the *NBS News* report: <https://nbcnews.to/3Wr0QWD>

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