

SUMMARY OF REMARKS BY BRIAN A. SUN

The history of Asian Americans in the United States, particularly those of Chinese descent, dates back to the nineteenth century. This history is rich with the numerous invaluable contributions made by these immigrant Americans, in fields ranging from the arts to science to technology and business. These contributions were made possible in a nation that has stood for equal opportunity under the rule of law--without regard to race, color or creed. Nonetheless, the Chinese American immigrant experience has been unfortunately fraught with a long history of racial stereotyping and discrimination, and most recently, a wave of sentiment questioning the loyalty of Chinese Americans, particularly those working in the STEM fields. This attitude is reminiscent of the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II, where over 100,000 Japanese Americans, the majority of whom were U.S. citizens, were interned and incarcerated based solely on suspicions due to their ethnic heritage and their perceived susceptibility to subversion by the Japanese government. The loyalty of these Americans was subsequently tested in blood as evidenced by the service and sacrifices of the thousands of Japanese Americans who were honored and decorated for valiantly fighting against the Nazis in Europe.

History seems to be repeating itself. The burgeoning economic, political and military rivalry between the United States and the Peoples Republic of China has created tensions between concerns over national security and fears in the Asian American community that it is witnessing a resurgence of racial profiling and the deprivation of due process. On the one hand, there is no doubt that there have been documented instances of Asian Americans, like other Americans, who have violated the law and who are justly and deservedly investigated and prosecuted for these violations. Yet, the well documented cases of Dr. Wen Ho Lee, some twenty years ago, and more recently, the cases of Sherry Chen and Dr. Xiaoxing Xi, however, illustrate the dangers of governmental authorities rushing to judgment in this highly charged atmosphere. A balance must be struck---between well-founded investigations, backed by a thorough review of the facts, evidence and the law and free of bias and premature conclusions, and the overreaching and broad based targeting of innocent Americans, solely based on their ethnicity.

Chinese Americans, most notably those working in the STEM fields, who are touched by these concerns, must self-educate and become more aware of these realities. They must not and should not engage in actions which could be misperceived by their employers as acts of potential deception when it comes to the handling of sensitive proprietary information—particularly if the individual has professional relationships and ties to PRC based business and academic institutions. Extreme care should be taken to observe the formalities and procedures governing the use and transfer of sensitive technology so as to avoid any undue scrutiny by current or former employers. Obtaining guidance, legal advice and acting with transparency are vital in terms of avoiding possible investigation by the government. Sad that it may be, these are challenging times for Chinese Americans, whose unquestioned contributions towards improving the American way of life are being diluted and threatened by the current state of affairs.