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In Show of Solidarity, AAPI Equity Alliance and Local AAPI Leaders Denounce ICE Raids

Citing Fear and Trauma, Leaders Call for ICE to Leave LA County

LOS ANGELES – As immigrant families in Los Angeles are torn apart amid ongoing ICE raids, and people live in fear of detention, deportation or disappearing, a cadre of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) leaders stood together in Little Tokyo today to denounce the Federal immigration actions they say are terrorizing neighborhoods.

“AAPI Equity Alliance stands in solidarity with the Latino community, who have borne the brunt of these kidnappings,” said Manjusha Kulkarni, executive director of AAPI Equity Alliance, the organization that led today’s press conference, at which community leaders and elected officials denounced ICE raids in Los Angeles.

“The images and videos are bone-chilling,” Kulkarni added. “Men in masks, refusing to identify themselves, snatching up street vendors, chasing down innocent people, raiding businesses, disrupting graduation ceremonies, all under the guise of keeping us safe. Well, my question is – does Los Angeles feel safer to you now? The answer is no. Entire neighborhoods have been homebound as people live in fear. People are struggling, scared to go to work, to even go grocery shopping or to their religious services out of fear of being targeted by ICE.”

Kulkarni said AAPI community members are among those being kidnapped and disappearing as a result of increased Federal immigration actions, including raids and sudden detention at their regular immigration hearings. She added that due to language barriers (more than 50 languages are spoken in Los Angeles’ AAPI communities), as well as stigma and fear, many AAPI families are not sharing their stories publicly.

“These senseless acts of aggression tear apart our families and inflict deep trauma on our communities,” said Assemblymember Mike Fong (49th District), Chair of the California Asian & Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus. “They have resulted in unjust targeting of our neighbors, violated constitutional rights and stoked fear for all. California’s strength is rooted in our diversity. Immigrants have made and continue to make great contributions to our state and to our nation, and we must stand together against the federal administration’s targeting of workplaces, schools, hospitals, and protect the Constitutional rights of all people in the United States regardless of immigration status.”

Oscar Zarate, director of external affairs for the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), thanked AAPI leaders for their support and solidarity and shared his organization's rallying cry against federal immigration actions.

"Today as we stand together, I want to repeat CHIRLA's key demands: Stop the warrantless illegal raids, free our families from cruel detention and end the military takeover of our communities. Let's keep showing up for each other," Zarate said.

Speakers at today's news conference reminded Angelenos to remain vigilant and to report any ICE activity in their neighborhoods, workplaces and communities to the Rapid Response hotline at 888-624-4752. In-language assistance is available.

Participants in today's press conference were: Assemblymember Mike Fong (49th District), Chair of the California Asian & Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus; Los Angeles City Councilmember Ysabel Jurado (14th District); Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman (4th District); Oscar Zarate, Director of External Affairs, CHIRLA; John Kim, President & CEO, Catalyst California; Connie Chung Joe, Chief Executive Officer, Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (AJSOCAL); Chanchanit (Chancee) Martorell, Founder & Executive Director, Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC); Peter Gee, Co-Executive Director, Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), and Cynthia Choi, Co-Founder, Stop AAPI Hate.

According to AAPI Equity Alliance, 1.6 million AAPI people live in Los Angeles County, reflecting roughly 16% of the population.

Here are select quotes from today's press conference:

"We call for an immediate cease to the raids and we call for ICE to leave Los Angeles immediately. What makes Los Angeles a beautiful city is that AAPIs and Latinos live, work and play side by side with one another, and so when ICE comes for one of us, they are coming for all of us."

Manjusha Kulkarni, Executive Director, AAPI Equity Alliance

"We know the past few years have been challenging to combat anti-Asian hate through the pandemic and uplifting our communities during the times of xenophobia and violence and racism. And while the current actions by immigration officials are unprecedented, we are inspired by each and all the leaders up here today ... to uplift our diverse communities" ... "Our community is strong and we're going to continue to stand in solidarity with each and every one of you to denounce the violence and denounce unlawful abductions and to really push back against these raids that harm our immigrant communities."

**Assemblymember Mike Fong (49th District),
Chair of the California Asian & Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus**

"Make no mistake, this isn't just a Latino issue. This is an AAPI issue and this is an LA issue. Our undocumented neighbors are not strangers, they're coworkers, classmates, neighbors, family members and friends. My dad, a naturalized citizen, witnessed a (car wash employee) get detained illegally. He saw him chased at the car wash, kneeled down and pinned down by a

federal agent, no badge, a mask, and no warrant. He worries now about driving long distances and now carries his passport with him daily and worries about his citizenship.”

Los Angeles City Councilmember Ysabel Jurado (14th District)

“This is such an important moment to speak out and to ensure that the Latino community does not feel alone at this moment.” ... “The raids that we’ve seen across Los Angeles are not just disruptive, they’re cruel and they’re unconstitutional. People who have been detained have not been given legal counsel. They’re being placed in locations that are not meant for human detention to be there. It is heartbreaking and it is unacceptable and it violates the Constitution, the bedrock of America.”

Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman (4th District)

“I’m here in deep solidarity with our AAPI siblings working to build a Los Angeles rooted in justice and unconditional belonging for all. At CHIRLA, we believe deeply in the power of alliance and community, not just as values we hold, but as daily commitments. Commitments to show up for one another, especially in moments of fear, violence, and persecution. These past three weeks have been deeply challenging and scary to say the least, as masked heavily armed agents have invaded our neighborhoods and torn families apart. But as Angelenos do in challenging moments, we’ve met this unprecedented siege with an incredible sense of solidarity and care.”

**Oscar Zarate, Director of External Affairs,
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)**

“As Asian American Pacific Islanders, we are very familiar with what it means to be invisible in America until we’re not. We know what it means to blend into the background, to not raise the flags, to quietly go about our day to provide for our families. We know what it means to be ignored as contributors to this society, as members of families and communities to be ignored as whole human beings until we’re not. As Asian Americans, we are also familiar, tragically very familiar, with that moment when the spotlight and heat turns on us, when all of a sudden we are the enemy. When politicians intentionally divert attention and anger in our direction and while it’s just politics for them, we know what it means for our families and our loved ones to suffer at the hands of this country’s anger.”

John Kim, President & CEO, Catalyst California

“Our AAPI community members and our immigrants are too being taken. They’re being taken in a way that is less public yet it continues to be just as urgent and devastating as it is for any other community.” ... “When they go into (required annual immigration) check-ins with our attorneys, more often than not they get detained. And for those we see in the courthouses who don’t have an attorney, those numbers are far, far higher, but it is silent and it’s not been seen in the news in as much of a way. But keep in mind that our community members are also facing language access barriers. There are more than 50 languages spoken within the AAPI community, and I can guarantee you those federal enforcement agents do not speak our languages.” ... “We are so scared of ICE and federal enforcement agencies taking our staff and our clients and our community members. We are not scared about protestors even though the protests are happening right in our neighborhood. So let us speak clearly. There is no danger from federal protestors. We do not need federal agents here to protect our city. We can protect

our city. What we need protection from is from you: Federal agents who are terrorizing our communities, separating our communities, taking us.”

**Connie Chung Joe, Chief Executive Officer,
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (AJSOCAL)**

“The fear is greater and even more palpable as immigrants, lawful residents, and even US citizens are practically being ‘hunted down’ in a scorched earth campaign performed by a militarized force of the federal government.” ... “We have been distributing ‘Know Your Rights’ cards in Spanish and Thai throughout Thai town and beyond, holding community resource fairs, conducting ‘Know Your Rights’ workshops for churches, temples, healthcare providers, businesses and workers. We are now engaged in mutual aid to provide food and financial assistance to families too fearful to leave their homes or whose main wage earner has been detained or disappeared, causing not just great agony and grief, but looming food and housing insecurities.” ... “We will not rest until there’s a return to the rule of law and we will continue to resist all forms of tyranny, authoritarianism, and despotism.”

**Chanchanit (Chancee) Martorell, Founder & Executive Director,
Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC)**

“I stand here just blocks away in Little Tokyo where tens of thousands of families were forcibly removed and detained without due process. That history lives with us. And today we’re seeing the same forces at play, fear, racial scapegoating and unchecked government power.” ... “Little Tokyo remembers what happens when governments act from fear, not justice. We won’t be silent and we won’t let history repeat itself.”

Peter Gee, Co-Executive Director, Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)

“Let us be clear that what we are witnessing in California and across the country—the escalation of ICE raids, aggressive and inhumane immigration enforcement, challenges to birthright citizenship and the efforts to revive the Alien Enemies Act—are not isolated policies. They are part of a coordinated multi-pronged assault on immigrant communities that fuel anti-Asian hate.”

**Cynthia Choi, Co-Executive Director of Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA)
CAA is a co-founder with AAPI Equity Alliance of Stop AAPI Hate.**

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About AAPI Equity Alliance:

AAPI Equity Alliance (AAPI Equity) is a coalition of more than 50 community-based organizations serving the diverse needs of the 1.6 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County and beyond. It is dedicated to improving the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through civic engagement, capacity building, and policy advocacy.

Editor’s Note:

Select photos for the day are available [here](#). For an audio recording or to arrange any interviews with the speakers, please contact media@nakatomipr.com.