



# APABA-PA

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania

Richard Ting  
President  
412-251-9931  
president@apaba-pa.org

Chi-Ser Tran  
President-Elect  
215-981-3723  
chiser.tran@gmail.com

Susan Lin  
Vice President  
215-915-3147  
slin@krlawphila.com

Yuanyou (Sunny) Yang  
Recording Secretary  
412-235-1484  
yyysunny@gmail.com

Kathleen Chen  
Corresponding Secretary  
215-662-2190  
kcc@upenn.edu

John Encarnacion  
Treasurer  
215-762-9432  
john.p.encarnacion@gmail.com

Helen Mountain  
Assistant Treasurer  
610-701-3269  
hmountain@lambmcerlane.com

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Qiwei Chen  
Mingjie Gan  
John Huh  
Pearl Kim  
Tsiwen Law  
Sophia Lee  
Steve Lee  
Thomas Lee  
Ken Massey  
Michelle Nguyen  
Melissa Pang  
Julia A. Park  
Angela Ruan  
Erica Smith-Klocek  
Aleena Sorathia  
Michael Tang  
Bryan Tham  
Djung Tran  
Rosey Wong  
Carrie Xu  
Su Ming Yeh  
Suzanne J. Young  
Kay Kyungsun Yu  
Winston Yuan

February 16, 2021

### Via email

Superintendent Scott Davidheiser, Ed.D. (sdavidheiser@lmtsd.org)  
Dr. Murray Cohen (mcohen@lmtsd.org)  
Camille Murao Baker (cbaker@lmtsd.org)  
Howard Patent (hpatent@lmtsd.org)  
Alan Steinberg (asteinberg@lmtsd.org)  
Michael Berardi (mberardi@lmtsd.org)  
Steven Geiger (sgeiger@lmtsd.org)  
Eric Kazatsky (ekazatsky@lmtsd.org)  
Carole Natter (cnatter@lmtsd.org)  
Lance Wolbransky (lwolbransky@lmtsd.org)

Lower Moreland Township School District  
2551 Murray Avenue  
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

### **Re: Texts Expressing Violence Against Asian Pacific Americans in Lower Moreland Township School District**

Dear Superintendent Davidheiser and Lower Moreland Township School District Board members:

The Asian Pacific American Bar Association (APABA-PA) writes to express grave concern regarding incidents that involve texts expressing violence against Asian Pacific Americans being sent among a group of Lower Moreland Township high school students. Further, we find the response provided initially by the Lower Moreland Township School District (“School District”) to be inadequate and unacceptable.

We were informed that these texts were sent in March 2020 in a group text among Lower Moreland Township high school students, which stated:

“My dad just gave me a f\*cking facemask to take to states I actually hate asians”  
“Facts like who eats a f\*ckin bat”  
“F\*cking stupid asians shouldn’t be in this country”  
“Every Asian kid i see tomorrow in the halls gets a spear”  
“They should be stoned then lychee [sic]”  
“This is why minorities blow change my mind”

These texts were reported to a hotline, and while the incidents were referred to local law enforcement, the School District failed to inform parents, students, or the school community, nor did it take any other steps. Not until last month, when the issue was forwarded to another group, BlackPhillyStudents, did the issue come to light, and only then did the School District take further action.

We understand that the School District is now in the process of utilizing a consultant to review school curriculum and develop a plan, among other things. These are important steps and we urge the School District to continue moving forward on proactively addressing and dismantling the environment and systems that both permitted these texts to be sent, and that caused the failure by the School District to act immediately to combat the prejudice and hatred underlying the texts.

However, it is unclear whether the consultant has any particular specialty in working on and incorporating Asian Pacific American issues. Due to the specific anti-Asian nature of the texts, it is critical that Asian Pacific American issues be incorporated and considered in developing and implementing the path forward. Moreover, it is vital that the Asian Pacific American community be involved and engaged in this process.

Unfortunately, these texts reflect larger systemic and historic racism against Asian Pacific Americans and people of color that can only be addressed through proactive action with meaningful input from the community. The racist and xenophobic texts stem not only from a long history of discrimination against Asian Pacific Americans, but also reflect current anti-Asian sentiments across the United States, where the transition from hate speech to violent acts can be all too swift.

In December 2009, growing racial tensions culminated in almost thirty (30) Asian immigrant students from South Philadelphia High School being beaten up by fellow students, where several had to be hospitalized. In the investigations afterwards, it became clear that the school's failure to act contributed to the escalation of violence against Asian Pacific American students. APABA-PA became involved in denouncing the violence, advocating on behalf of the community, providing resources to Asian Pacific American students and their families, and building bridges between the students, community, school, and resources.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Pacific Americans have faced increased discrimination, harassment, and violence.<sup>1</sup> Tragic examples include a 91-year-old Asian man who was attacked in Oakland, California and an 84-year-old Asian man who died after being assaulted in San Francisco, both in broad daylight.<sup>2</sup> In this region, an Asian Pacific American pregnant mother and her 12-year-old

---

<sup>1</sup> See Madeleine Aggeler, *The U.S. Is Seeing a Massive Spike in Anti-Asian Hate Crimes*, Feb. 10, 2021, *The Cut*, [The U.S. Is Seeing a Massive Spike in Anti-Asian Hate Crimes \(thecut.com\)](https://thecut.com); Ron Southwick, *In Coronavirus Crisis, Asians in Pa. are Facing More Discrimination and Harassment*, March 28, 2020, *Patriot-News*, <https://www.pennlive.com/news/2020/03/in-coronavirus-crisis-asians-in-pa-are-facing-more-discrimination-and-harassment.html>

<sup>2</sup> See Dion Lim, *Shocking Video Shows 91-Year-Old Man Senselessly Pushed to Ground in Oakland's Chinatown*, February 4, 2021, *ABC7*, [Shocking video shows man senselessly pushed to ground in](https://abc7.com/news/shocking-video-shows-man-senselessly-pushed-to-ground-in-oakland-chinatown/)

daughter were attacked in downtown Philadelphia in August 2020, with the assailant calling the mother a “Chinese b\*tch.”<sup>3</sup>

In recognition of the spike of bullying, harassment, and hate crimes against Asian Pacific Americans, on January 26, 2021, President Biden issued a Memorandum Condemning and Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Intolerance Against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. The Memorandum condemns such acts, and makes clear that governmental bodies should take all appropriate steps to ensure that official actions do not exhibit or contribute to racism, xenophobia, and intolerance against Asian Pacific Americans.<sup>4</sup>

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 require public schools to ensure that educational opportunities are provided on a non-discriminatory basis. School districts can and must both protect students’ First Amendment rights and prevent harassment, and ensure the right to freedom of expression and the right to be free from harassment are compatible.

**We urge the Lower Moreland Township School District to take all appropriate steps to foster an environment where all children can thrive and learn, including Asian Pacific American students.**

APABA-PA, an affiliate of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, represents the interests of the Asian Pacific American law students, lawyers, and judges and the Asian Pacific American community across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by supporting the advancement of Asian Pacific American attorneys and promoting justice, equity, and legal access, especially for all Asian Pacific American communities.

APABA-PA is available as a resource to community members and to the School District. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me at [president@apaba-pa.org](mailto:president@apaba-pa.org) or 412-251-9931. Thank you.

---

[Oakland's Chinatown, community on high alert - ABC7 San Francisco \(abc7news.com\)](#); Dion Lim, *84-Year-Old Killed After Horrific Daytime Attack Caught On Video in San Francisco*, February 1, 2021, ABC7, [84-year-old killed after horrific daytime attack caught on video in San Francisco, 2 suspects arrested - ABC7 San Francisco \(abc7news.com\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> See Christie Iletto, *Woman arrested following attack on Asian-American pregnant woman in Philadelphia*, August 13, 2020, 6ABC, <https://6abc.com/asian-woman-attack-philly-attacked-philadelphia/6369568/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/26/memorandum-condemning-and-combating-racism-xenophobia-and-intolerance-against-asian-americans-and-pacific-islanders-in-the-united-states/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Ting", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Ting  
President, Asian Pacific American Bar Association of  
Pennsylvania

Cc: Stephanie Sun, Executive Director, Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific  
American Affairs (*via email*)  
Chad Lassiter, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (*via email*)