

We are all Americans

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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, dear fellow Americans, my name is Yiguang Ju, and I am a scientist here at Princeton University. I came from China 20 years ago as an immigrant. I am not a Virus. I am an American.

Today, we stand here in solidarity to remember the victims of Atlanta and call for an end to anti-Asian hate crime. Hate crimes are un-American.

Like you and your ancestors, we came to this land for freedom.

We came to pursue the American dream. We are grateful for the liberties and opportunities that America has offered us. We work hard to realize our dream. We contribute our talents to reward and serve this nation. We love this country. We are also Americans.

However, every time America is in crisis, there are those who would seize the opportunity to advance their own political agendas. They divide the country by spreading hateful rhetoric, playing nationalist politics, and pointing fingers at immigrants.

America's history shows many examples of this ploy at work. Our African American friends, colleagues, and fellow citizens have suffered for centuries. In the 1850s, Irish Americans were targeted by anti-Irish hate groups. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed to suspend Chinese immigration. In the 1930s great depression, again, immigrants were blamed and anti-Italian hate crimes soared. During 1940s World War II, Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps. In the 1950s, the Red Scare sent many innocent Americans to prison. Every time, Americans are hurt. America becomes weaker. Racism and anti-immigrant hate crimes are un-American.

Now, as before, history repeats itself. Today, America faces the dual challenges of the pandemic and technological competition from abroad. Again, opportunists have taken the stage. Instead of using science to unite Americans to fight the virus and overcome the challenges we face, they fall back on the same old ploy: using racism, misinformation, and scapegoating to divide the country and pit Americans against each other. They call Covid-19 the "China virus" and the "Kung flu." They harass Asian immigrants and demand that we go back to our own country. This is our country! They are Racists. They are un-American.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Asian Americans have worked hard to donate PPE to hospitals, police offices, and schools. We have worked hard to save lives in ICUs and accelerate vaccine development in laboratories. Yet, even

as we are on the front lines fighting the pandemic, we were the ones being blamed. They have accused Asian American scientists of espionage. They have attacked our elders. They have bullied our families and our children. But that was not enough. Just last week in Atlanta, they killed eight people, including six Asian American women. Yet, they defended the killer, not the victims, by making the excuse that “he had a bad day.” Who are they? They are Racists. They are un-American!

Our silence is interpreted as weakness. Silence enables violence. Silence is an advocacy of injustice. We are Americans. We should be proud to say we are loyal to this country, just as loyal as any other ethnic citizens. Our loyalty and contribution should not be questioned and we should not be discriminated against. We are not a virus. We are not the Kung flu. Hate is a virus. Violence is a pandemic. Racism and scapegoating are un-American.

Dear friends, we are all Americans. We should use our constitutional rights of liberty, equality, and freedom to stop racism and violence against Asian Americans and all other ethnic Americans. We will continue to stand up together with our African Americans brothers and sisters to support George Floyd. We will protest against the violence that killed ten Americans in Colorado. No one in this country should be subject to intimidation from racism, prejudice, ideology, or partisanship of any kind.

Fellow Americans, today, America is facing a number of challenges and choices: solidarity vs. division, love vs. hate, strength vs. weakness. What is our choice?

In the 1930s, when the U.K. was under threat from a rising Nazi Germany, Albert Einstein told the people in England that, “without liberty, there would be no Shakespeare, no Goethe, and no Newton.” Here in America, without liberty and diversity, we would not be the first country to send humans to the Moon and land spacecrafts on Mars. There would be no Google, no SpaceX, no Moderna, and no Zoom. There would be no Yo Yo Ma, no Albert Einstein, no Elon Musk, no Steve Jobs, and no Martin Luther King Jr.

This is a land of immigrants. This is a land for white, yellow, brown, red, and black Americans. This is a land for freedom, liberty and equality. This is a land of innovation and inspiration because we are all Americans. With solidarity, diversity, and liberty, America will always be first.

My fellow Americans, let us stand in solidarity and fight against hate crimes and racism. Together, we will heal the pain and rebuild our community. Together, we can be strong and face any adversity. Together we will build a greater America and a brighter future for our next generations.

Thank you and God bless America!