



**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION  
March 1, 2017**

**ASIAN AMERICANS ADVANCING JUSTICE RESPONDS TO THE PRESIDENT'S JOINT  
ADDRESS TO CONGRESS**

**LOS ANGELES** - Last night, President Trump addressed a joint session of Congress in which he professed to call for unity, only to do the opposite in his remarks to the nation regarding immigration and immigrants.

**Asian Americans Advancing Justice, an affiliation of five civil rights organizations, responded to his speech with the following statement:**

“Last night, President Trump purported to provide a message of unity, but instead continued his tireless condemnation of immigrants. He divided the room with more anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies that seek to scapegoat and subjugate Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), among other communities of color.

In finally acknowledging the shooting in Olathe, Kansas, the president asserted that ‘we are a country that stands for condemning hate and evil in all its forms.’ However, he still failed to explicitly denounce the rising anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim violence that spurred the attack and took the life of Indian immigrant Srinivas Kuchibhotla. We will continue to demand that the president condemn the rising tide of violence committed against Muslims, South Asians, and immigrants, before another innocent life is lost.

Rather than take the opportunity to speak up for immigrant and Muslim families, he used the family members of victims of tragic but rare events to vilify immigrants and stir fear and hatred. He described the creation of the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE) office within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which will list immigrants who have committed crimes. This plan serves no other purpose than to demonize immigrants and fuel racist propaganda, despite the reality that the true face of immigrants consists of peaceful families, workers, neighbors, and community members.

We also have grave concerns with the president’s call for a merit-based immigration system in place of the current system, which includes the family-based immigration processes through which the vast majority of Asian immigrants come to the United States. A proposal that would dismantle the family-based immigration system that is responsible for the diversity we have in America today is a direct attack on our communities, keeping families separated and preventing immigrant communities from taking root.

Despite the fact that we are predominantly a nation of immigrants, the president continues to use our communities as scapegoats for systemic issues that will not be solved by policies that repudiate the values and ideals upon which our nation was founded. The idea that immigrants are to blame for declining wages, or unsafe communities, is unfounded and fosters an offensive race-baiting and xenophobic narrative.

It is unconscionable for a president to stoke fear and spout intolerance while claiming a message of unity, to talk about the safety of Americans while tearing families apart, and to cause families to fear calling the police or sending their children to school and risk undeserved scrutiny because of their skin color or ethnicity.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice will continue fighting for the rights of immigrants in the halls of Congress, state legislatures, and city halls; in the courts; and in our communities. We also call on all Americans to reject the fear-mongering that drives wedges between our communities, and to demand protection for the civil and human rights of immigrants who have come to live the American dream as so many have before them.”

**CONTACT:**

Jessica Jinn, (213) 241-8817, [jjinn@advancingjustice-la.org](mailto:jjinn@advancingjustice-la.org)

Michelle Boykins, (202) 296-2300 x144, [mboykins@advancingjustice-aajc.org](mailto:mboykins@advancingjustice-aajc.org)

Brandon Lee, (773) 271-0899 x200, [blee@advancingjustice-chicago.org](mailto:blee@advancingjustice-chicago.org)

James Woo, (404) 585-8446, [jwoo@advancingjustice-atlanta.org](mailto:jwoo@advancingjustice-atlanta.org)

Tejal Mankad, (415) 848 -7736, [tejalm@advancingjustice-alc.org](mailto:tejalm@advancingjustice-alc.org)

###

*Asian Americans Advancing Justice is a national affiliation of five leading organizations advocating for the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and other underserved communities to promote a fair and equitable society for all. The affiliation's members are: Advancing Justice - AAJC (Washington, D.C.), Advancing Justice - Los Angeles, Advancing Justice - Atlanta, Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus (San Francisco), and Advancing Justice - Chicago.*

