



December 16, 2016

For Immediate Release:

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The CA Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus Responds to Offensive *LA Times* Letters

The California Asian and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus is appalled by the *Los Angeles Times*' failure of editorial standards in allowing the publication of racially intolerant letters.

On December 11, the *Los Angeles Times* published two letters from readers making preposterous claims in defense of the internment of Japanese Americans. The letters argued the forced mass removal and incarceration of thousands during World War II was necessary and justified.

"This is not an issue of free speech or free press," said Assemblymember Rob Bonta, chair of the California Asian and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus. "It's about California's largest newspaper amplifying and normalizing hate speech. Public discourse and civic engagement are damaged when a media organization willingly serves as a conduit for offensive assertions wrapped in racial stereotypes."

During a period of xenophobic hysteria following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the federal government interned approximately 117,000 people of Japanese descent, nearly two-thirds of whom were native-born citizens of the United States. In 1988, Congress finally passed legislation that was signed by President Ronald Reagan offering an official apology and the payment of reparation to each surviving internee.

"There is no legitimate debate here," Bonta said. "The internment of these Americans was one of our nation's most shameful moments in history. These Americans were stripped of their civil rights, torn from their homes and their livelihoods and imprisoned for no just cause."

The API Caucus demands the *Los Angeles Times* publicly apologize for publishing these letters and subsequently share a detailed editorial policy as it pertains to hate speech.

"Now more than ever, we all must stand up to fight the surge in hate crimes our nation is experiencing following the presidential election," Bonta said. "We know racial hatred may never fully be eliminated but it must be left to wither and die in the darkest corners of discourse and not be given light and life to poison the public."

The California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus represents and advocates for the interests of the diverse API communities throughout California. It seeks to increase Asian Pacific Islander participation and representation in all levels of government.

Website of the California API Legislative Caucus: <http://apicaucus.legislature.ca.gov>

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