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November 3, 2017

Mr. Rob Manfred  
Commissioner, Major League Baseball  
245 Park Avenue, 31st Floor  
New York, NY 10167

Dear Commissioner Manfred:

As Chair of the California Asian Pacific Islander (API) Legislative Caucus, I am writing to express my anger and disappointment about the way Major League Baseball (MLB) addressed the racist gesture and insult Yuli Gurriel of the Houston Astros made toward Yu Darvish, who is Iranian-Japanese, of the Los Angeles Dodgers during Game 3 of the World Series.

After hitting a home run off of Darvish, Gurriel pulled at the corner of his eyes to stretch them into “slanted eyes”. Gurriel also called Darvish “Chinito,” a Spanish word widely-regarded as offensive and insulting to Asian Americans. This behavior was caught on camera and seen by millions of television viewers worldwide, including impressionable children who look up to their teams and sports heroes. In spite of public outrage, the MLB made the decision to allow Gurriel to continue playing in the World Series and delay imposition of disciplinary action until the 2018 regular season—a full five months into the distant future—when he would be suspended for five games.

The lack of immediate consequences and accountability shows that the MLB does not take racial insensitivity seriously and that offenses like this can be repeated without severe repercussions. In rendering its decision, the MLB purported to take into account the negative impact that an immediate suspension would likely have on Gurriel’s teammates. But the MLB did not take into consideration the deep hurt this patently offensive act inflicted on Asian Americans and others throughout the nation. This gesture is used to demean and denigrate Asian Americans by reducing these communities to a single physical characteristic.

Additionally, Gurriel is part of a team that relies on him and he let his team down during a time when they needed him most. Yet, this “punishment” permits him to ignore this fact until a time that is more convenient for him. There is no convenient time to confront racism.

Let’s face it—Gurriel’s suspension will be enforced during meaningless games. That is hardly a punishment at all. Major League Baseball experienced a critical moment when it could have stood up strongly and firmly against racism for all the world to see. And the MLB failed.

The MLB’s anemic, “pretend to care” response sends a message that offensive racist acts can be promoted to an audience of millions, cause pain to communities throughout the nation and world, and, at worst, you’ll get your wrist slapped. The MLB’s delay in disciplinary action has

emboldened others to mimic the offending gesture, further ingraining casual racism within our society and marginalizing Asian Americans.

Baseball is “America’s Pastime” and, as such, the MLB ought to put foundational values like inclusion, fairness and diversity before profits and ratings. The MLB must take responsibility and ensure to its fans, who represent diverse backgrounds, all across the United States and the world, that this behavior is not acceptable and that there is no place for it in the game. Period.

The California API Legislative Caucus represents and advocates for the interests of the diverse API communities throughout California. California is the most populous state in the nation with Asian Americans comprising 13.6% of our population, the largest Asian American demographic in the country. As such, we are committed to helping to identify meaningful solutions to issues important to our communities. To prevent incidents like these and other past acts of discrimination and racism in the league, we encourage the MLB to consult with civil rights organizations like Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles who recently offered to educate players and the league regarding racial sensitivity, especially in the Asian and Asian American community. Furthermore, we urge the MLB to take a proactive step by developing a set of clear policies that can be applied consistently to address issues as they occur.

The MLB is an important institution in our country and we want to ensure that all fans and athletes, regardless of background, are treated with dignity and respect. Please consider the California API Legislative Caucus as a resource. If we can be of assistance, now or in the future, please contact us at (916) 319-3686.

With Respect and Hope for the Future,



**Rob Bonta**

Assemblymember, 18<sup>th</sup> District  
Chair, API Legislative Caucus