



OCA-ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN ADVOCATES

EMBRACING THE HOPES & ASPIRATIONS
OF ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

January 12, 2022

Dr. Amy Gutmann
President, University of Pennsylvania
1 College Hall, Rm 100/6380
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Subject: Condemnation of Professor Amy Wax's Comments

Dear President Gutmann, Dean Ruger, and Penn Faculty,

We write to you on behalf of OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (“OCA”), a national social justice nonprofit dedicated to empowering Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. As one of the leading voices amongst a coalition of civil rights organizations that work tirelessly to advance the social, political, and economic well-being of AAPIs, we condemn the racist and offensive comments espoused by Professor Amy Wax; and we urge you to consider suspending or terminating her employment as a Penn faculty member.

The comments made by Professor Wax are outright racist and dangerous. Bluntly declaring that “the United States is better off with fewer Asians and less Asian immigration” perpetuates foreign stereotypes of Asian Americans as outsiders and aliens regardless of where they were born or how long they have lived in the United States. And such an inflammatory statement by the professor belies a white fragility threatened by anything and anyone that is not a reflection of her image. Historically, anti-Asian racism and rhetoric—fueled by economic downturn and scapegoating—is what led to discriminatory policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the detention of Japanese Americans in internment camps during WWII, and the killing of Vincent Chin at the hands of white autoworkers in 1982. Professor Wax should understand the serious implications of her words, which further exacerbates the racial animosity and undermines the sense of security and belonging within the AAPI community. We have already witnessed how racist rhetoric used by public figures such as Former President Trump, referring to the coronavirus as “Chinese virus” or the “Kung Flu,” has fueled anti-Asian sentiments and triggered a wave of hate and violence against Asian Americans throughout the past year. And we have seen this most recently in Philadelphia where Asian American students from Central High School were attacked on the SEPTA subway train.

If Professor Wax's views are diametrically opposed to the policies and ethos of your institution as you so stated in your response, then appropriate steps should be taken to ensure her immediate removal from the university—a highly respected institution that extols values of

racial justice and diversity and inclusion, not bigotry and ignorance. Wax's tenured status should not shield her from removal of her position or accountability for her actions. To allow her to hide behind her tenure status without any repercussions is simply unacceptable. We trust in your commitment to advance equity and inclusion for all members of our community.

Sincerely,

OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates
OCA-Greater Philadelphia
OCA Pittsburgh