

Let Us Be Heard  
By Fiona Luo, 8th Grade

Dear Senator Harris,

An individual voice is beautiful, but a chorus is powerful. In this free nation, the ability to articulate one's thoughts and opinions is not limited, nor is it prohibited. When people rally together and express their synonymous thoughts, change happens. With such an influential weapon, people are empowered against prejudice as well as false accusations. Asian and Pacific Islanders need to raise their voices in order to reach their full potential as a community.

Asians are often viewed as the "Model Minority," hardworking and always law-abiding. Some people consider Asians superior compared to the other minority groups. Even though that is not the case, we are constantly working hard to keep up our public facade. When insults are directed at us, we tend to be nonverbal. If someone were to retaliate against a tormentor with any sign of hostility, our reputation of being docile, honorable citizens would be soiled. This is the thought process of countless Asian Americans across the United States. Because of these frequently reinforced expectations within our community, we do not speak up for ourselves.

To make the problem worse, a large number of the API population in America do not speak English as their primary language. This is particularly true among recent immigrants and the elderly. In the U.S., English is used in daily life and on the political scene. As a result, those in our community who aren't fluent in English can't express their thoughts on many issues.

For those who do speak up, the API community is rarely taken seriously. On October 3, 2016, a controversial segment of the "The O'Reilly Factor" show aired on the Fox News Channel, with interviewer Jesse Watters stopping people on the street to talk about the presidential election. Mr. Watters ridiculed respondents who had little to no English ability, and several stereotypical Chinese jokes were inserted throughout the segment. Incidents like this demonstrate that even on issues that have the potential to influence our entire nation, our opinions are treated as insignificant.

It may seem gloomy now, but there is hope. Asian and Pacific Islanders must join with all the individual and community groups who are working hard on local, state, and national levels to break barriers. To solve this issue of silence, we have to give more support to people like you, who speak for those who are unwilling or unable to. Like others in this nation, Asian and Pacific Islanders must participate in movements that provide the power of a chorus to spark real change. If we don't speak up, we will never be heard.

Regards,  
Fiona Luo