

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

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Speaker 1 ([00:16](#)):

Welcome to part two, where we continue our COVID equity and inclusion discussion.

Chinh Pham ([00:21](#)):

You both put out there that you'd like to see more members of our community be involved. What do you see that would encourage more participation from our community, to ensure that we can effectively combat bigotry, discrimination against Asian Americans going forward? Congresswoman May your thoughts?

Grace Meng ([00:48](#)):

Something that the NAACP president Johnson said recently really resonated with me and it was to be a friend before you need a friend. And I thought that that was so amazing where we've literally come together as diverse community members, amongst coalitions to march against antisemitism, to say no to the Muslim ban, to march for Black Lives Matters and now so many people coming together to stand in solidarity with the Asian American. And so I think it's important and there's a wide spectrum of ways that people can help. You have the experts, people who are super involved writing books and op-eds on the topic, to someone who might never have even been to a rally, might never have been in a Zoom like this or registered to vote. And I would suggest, do what you're comfortable with but find opportunities and new ways to better understand whether it's our own community or other communities as well and just try to be there for them, to whatever extent you're comfortable.

Grace Meng ([02:04](#)):

And we can't just assume, even in a diverse city where I'm from like New York, we can't just assume that just because we live in a diverse area, that different communities know and understand each other. And I believe this is a galvanizing moment where we are seeing so many communities come together. We had a local rally in Queens, New York and we had people from JCRC, to Reverend Al Sharpton, people from different community leaders were in our borough, our county of Queens. And I think that we are all making history together here. Just to find unique ways to create space. Creates spaces like this, this is so important. Seems kind of basic to many of you but it's so incredible. So many of us have grown up and never having been a part of events like this one when we were younger. And so it's really impactful to be in this space and to have this conversation.

Chinh Pham ([03:07](#)):

Great.

A.B. Cruz, III ([03:08](#)):

I agree wholeheartedly and this is a great moment where we can build allyship across. And so I'm certainly encouraging AAPIs to put behind them the old model minority attributes and traits of keeping your head down and just working hard behind your desk and the like. I know I'm stereotyping but that's my note, is to step out of that mold and engage. And certainly at NAPABA, through our enterprise of 90

affiliates, we can cover broadly and deeply in virtually any and all communities. And so we're certainly encouraging our members to get engaged, have those dialogues and conversations, having those tough, courageous conversations with those that are willing to open their doors when we knock and answer their phones when we call.

A.B. Cruz, III ([04:09](#)):

This is the time to do it. Certainly at NAPABA, one of our strategic prongs is to have a resonant, compelling, influential voice at both the national level and at the local level. And the good thing about it is because of the events and how things have unfolded, we have not had a difficult time recruiting interest and enthusiasm of many of our members and frankly, beyond because it's not just lawyers. Our community is larger than that and we obviously serve the larger community as well. I think this is an opportune time. Again, where there's challenge, there's always opportunity and we're trying to seize upon that, Chinh.

Chinh Pham ([04:55](#)):

Thank you, A.B. And you both touch on the issue of public service. And I know and I'm sure many in our audience know that public service is not something that many of us growing up in the US think much about nor really was it something that our parents particularly encourage us to entertain. And so I know A.B. you've shared with us a little bit about your pathway to the public service there. And I think Congresswoman Meng there, I think you have a really interesting public service background. Perhaps you can share with us a little bit about your background, what led you to this point and perhaps kind of outline for those in the audience who might be interested in switching career like you from the practice of law into public service.

Grace Meng ([05:59](#)):

Sure. I feel like my path was a little bit unconventional. I was a really shy kid growing up, hated public speaking. Didn't even like to speak in class. I never ever took a political science class. I'd never run for student government or anything like that but I did participate in a lot of internships during college and law school. They were mostly if not all, with government agencies at the state and federal level. And I found government to be really fascinating related to law, of course, but also in so many of these rooms, there weren't a lot of people who looked like me, not a lot of minorities, not a lot of women. And I just thought it was fascinating to be in these spaces where decisions that impact our daily lives were being made.

Grace Meng ([06:53](#)):

And then I realized, as I got through law school that there's so many people in communities where I come from and some of you, where people literally sometimes because of language obstacles, don't really have a way to access government services. And that just really bothered me. Long story short, I got involved. I ran for the state legislature, the state assembly. I didn't make it my first time but I tried again. Within a few years, my Congress member at the time announced pretty suddenly that he was going to retire. I had about 24, 36 hours to decide. I don't recommend that, whether to run for Congress or not. And long story short here I am. But I would encourage people whether you end up running for office or not or whether you are a volunteer, wherever you may fall in the world of politics, it's good to get involved. Everything is local. This is not something that you need to get a PhD about.

Grace Meng ([08:02](#)):

This is the business of human lives and relationships. And so take a gamble on your community, make sure that you are investing however you can in your local community, whether that's just your block or your neighborhood or larger jurisdiction. But there's so many areas where people really need leaders. They really need mentors. And there's so many ways that you can help people. You don't have to be wealthy. You don't have to be powerful with a fancy title to be able to make a difference in people's lives.

Chinh Pham ([08:40](#)):

A.B., I'd like to kind of pose or ask you some of the questions that are being posed by our audience for the remaining few minutes before having you provide your closing remarks. Here's a question by Steven Morose, "Many crimes we're seeing in news reports are specifically against elderly Asians. How would hate crime legislations slash escalation interact with targeting specifically frail victims?" That I would assume is being directed to Congresswoman Meng.

Grace Meng ([09:21](#)):

And so this is where, so this legislation alone is not going to solve all the problem. They will not disappear overnight. Unfortunately we will continue to see this and hopefully it decreases. I will say that I'm really thankful to everyday members of the public who have signed up for various, I think they call it upstander training. Things you can say or do, not necessarily martial arts but things that the everyday person can do to engage, to help protect people around you. There are organizations that have started programs where you can accompany an elderly home or things like that. But in general again, back to what more we need to do is to make sure that our local community organizations which help these everyday Asian Americans, have more support because they really are on the front lines of providing so many of these services.

Grace Meng ([10:24](#)):

NAPABA probably will be very involved with this. But the Attorney General's office Merrick Garland announced initial steps that they are taking to implement the Hate Crimes Act. And know, amongst them was the designation of a person to review these cases, which was part of the law. They are also establishing a full-time language access coordinator within the department, as A.B. talked about the need for that. And also to make sure that there's more coordination at the federal, state and city level, as we're getting information out to hate crime victims and hopefully to help with crime prevention as well. A lot more information will be given out and hopefully that will play a role in mitigating these types of attacks on elderly and anyone else.

Chinh Pham ([11:23](#)):

Great. Thank you.

A.B. Cruz, III ([11:24](#)):

Yeah. I will tell you, Chinh, that it's hard for me not to think of my parents, 88 years old or my sisters when it comes to this. And I have a personal feeling about it is unfortunately, the more feeble and our women, I think they are easy targets if you will, for a perpetrator of cowardly acts, that's more my personal view. It does get me riled up because I care about my parents. I care about our community. I care about my sisters and so forth. And that's what I think about but Congresswoman Meng highlighted an important thing and certainly NAPABA has within its resources, how communities can galvanize and come together and stand up against the types of things. Again, not to engage in sort of any sort of

violence but taking care of the victim and their families and the like. And so I do think that I do encourage people to go there. It's a great resource center. It's a wealth of information. Probably the deepest out there. But there are ways that communities can take care of their own, especially our elders who matter so much to us.

Chinh Pham ([12:49](#)):

Yeah. And I absolutely agree with both of your comments and both of you mentioned allyship earlier. And I think that one of the recommendations by the Asian American Advancing Justice is really to provide bystander training, to educate and empower our allies or allies to the AAPI community. You see something, say something kind of an approach. And I think that's one approach that we can address some of the issues that we're seeing.

A.B. Cruz, III ([13:21](#)):

And Chinh, can I add just one more thing?

Chinh Pham ([13:25](#)):

Sure.

A.B. Cruz, III ([13:25](#)):

I'm remiss in mentioning it because it's really about also supporting the victims and their families. The one thing that NAPABA has really done that I'm very proud of, we are very proud of, is that we have worked diligently with partners and we have this partnership called The Alliance and these are GCs from top corporations working hand in hand with leading law firms and attorneys within these law firms to provide pro bono legal services, full range legal services on a pro bono basis to victims and their families. We do the intake, certainly at NAPABA and we pass this along to that Alliance, that group who are willing to do this. And I will tell you, if you look at the list of law firms and attorneys, they're very recognizable names, very powerful people and have people that can make positive things happen in the wake of tragedy or something bad having happened. I did want to point that out and it is a big resource and I know that the law firms who are involved in that are very much engaged and very helpful to victims and their families.

Chinh Pham ([14:39](#)):

With just a couple of minutes left, I want to thank both of you but I want to see if Congresswoman Meng has any parting words.

Grace Meng ([14:51](#)):

Well, thank you so much for having me. This was really such a special opportunity. And look, I hope that this is not just the one off, one time event. What will make our efforts successful is it's going to be teamwork. It's going to be a very long road ahead. We're not going to solve all these problems with just one event but I'm really thankful for this space and for Greenberg for providing this opportunity for us to have this conversation. As an Asian American, it's really meaningful to be here with all of you. And please keep in touch with us. We want to hear what you are seeing and hearing on the ground. That is literally what makes our work more constructive and effective. The legislation that we put together, it was literally from feedback from everyday community leaders. It's not like we sat in Washington and came up with the language ourselves.

Grace Meng ([15:56](#)):

The feedback from our community is really important and I just want to encourage our community to engage in these opportunities, to have these sometimes tough and challenging conversations and find ways where we can be even more strategic and effective. And at the same time, find ways to work with other communities as well. When we're talking about discrimination and racism, it's important that we all stand united to address racism at its roots. And that means encouraging people to see us, to include us. And when things aren't going right, we need to call it out and call it out not only when it's happening to our own community but call it out when it's happening to any community as well. But I'm incredibly thankful for this opportunity. I hope you all keep in touch. We have a long road ahead and we need to make sure we're working together. And thank you NAPABA, A.B., for the work that you do as well.

Chinh Pham ([17:00](#)):

Thank you, Congresswoman.

A.B. Cruz, III ([17:02](#)):

Chinh I'll be quick. It's really extending my gratefulness on behalf of NAPABA and its members and its affiliates. This is a great opportunity and I do think this is a continuing dialogue that needs to happen. I feel confident that it will happen. This group, most people who are probably in attendance are indeed lawyers, attorneys. Those are special talents that if applied correctly, can bring about great good. And so I encourage those to spread the word on the work that still needs to go on. In the military, we often talk about long wars. This may be one of them. There's some near term battles that we need to fight and win and there's just so much other things to do on multiple fronts to find frankly, a higher plane, a better America for everyone, not just a AAPIs but everyone. And I endeavor certainly to do what I can to keep that train moving forward and upward and onward. Thanks again for this opportunity to convene and to have a great, meaningful conversation.

Chinh Pham ([18:18](#)):

Oh no, thank you both to you Congresswoman Meng and A.B. for really joining us today to discuss this important topic. And as we all have been witnessing across the US, not only within the AAPI community but with many of the other underrepresented communities, there's just still a lot of work that needs to be done. And the work that Congresswoman Meng and her colleagues in the House and the Senate are doing, as well as you A.B. and the NAPABA organization are doing. This is only the first step, as Congresswoman Meng mentioned, if we as a community would like to stem the tide against anti-Asian hate and violence, we all must step up and do our part.

Chinh Pham ([19:05](#)):

And I'm sure that many of us have joined in a number of conversations over the last several months on the rising violence against the Asian community. And it's important for us to work together, to take some positive action where appropriate and then work to build allyship and relationship with our colleagues in other affinity groups. No matter how smart our work might be, it's important, it'll be critical if it were to wipe out the current anti-Asian sentiment that we're witnessing. And as Congresswoman Meng mentioned, she would welcome our involvement. Please feel free to reach out to her and her staff as well as to NAPABA and A.B. and the important work that they're doing.