

April 7, 2018
Asian American Civic Engagement Alliance
Asian Americans For Equal Rights
Chinese Americans of Lexington (CALex)
Chinese American Association of Andovers
Chinese American Network of Winchester

Honorable Speaker Paul Ryan
1233 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: Census 2020 Race Box – Why Asian Americans Are Treated Differently?

Dear Honorable Speaker Ryan,

We, a coalition of Asian American grassroots organizations, are writing to express our tremendous concerns with the race box in the proposed Census 2020 form currently in front of the congress and ask for your help so Asian Americans can be treated the same as other races.

What is this person's race?
Mark one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

White – *Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.* ↴

Black or African Am. – *Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.* ↴

American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.* ↴

<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian
<input type="checkbox"/> Filipino	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> Samoan
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Chamorro
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian – <i>Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.</i> ↴		<input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander – <i>Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.</i> ↴

Some other race – *Print race or origin.* ↴

Asian Americans are treated differently than White, African Americans and American Indians. Why???

Our request is simple: just make the box for Asian Americans the same as other races.

<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian
<input type="checkbox"/> Filipino	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> Samoan
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Chamorro
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian – <i>Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander – <i>Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.</i>



Asian – *Print, for example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.*

Singling out Asian Americans in the Census brings back painful memories of 60 years of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. It violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, enforcing the harmful stereotype that Asian Americans are perpetual foreigners. Please see Exhibit A for detail.

The Census Bureau almost got it right in a 2017 draft (see Exhibit B). Unfortunately, it was reversed in the version eventually submitted to the congress.

The current format is offensive to many Asian Americans, which will result in low response rate, missing data and higher cost if the census workers have to go door to door.

Your attention is most appreciated. Please feel free to contact us at xxx-xxx-xxxx (cell), yuan.li@asianamericans4equalrights.org, or write to: Name, Address.

Most Sincerely,

Asian American Civic Engagement Alliance
Asian Americans For Equal Rights
Chinese American Association of Andovers
Chinese Americans of Lexington (CALex)
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Exhibit A: The Dangers of Census 2020 Race Box Singling out Asians

1. It continues the legacy of the Chinese/Asian Exclusion Act. The Census first implemented a box for Chinese in 1870, coinciding with the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, which eventually led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1982. Persons of East and Southeast Asian descent were first all called “Chinese,” irrespective of whether they actually came from the Imperial China or not. In later censuses, ethnicities based on country of origin such as Japanese (1890), Filipino (1930), and Korean (1930) were added, with each new category serving a political purpose or used as a tool to practice exclusion. **It is time to end this hurtful legacy.**

2. It enforces the stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. Asians are often considered less American than Black, White, and Native Americans. **But we ARE Americans first and foremost, not Chinese, Vietnamese or Korean. Asian Americans are every bit as American as everyone else. We have to stop this stereotype rather than enforcing it.**

3. It casts the smaller AAPI communities as the “other.” The current census question alienates AAPI community members who do not belong to one of the nine largest groups, implying that some ethnicities are not as important as others. If you are a Cambodian American, a box that says “Asian American” gives you the confidence that you are part of the AAPI community.

4. It hinders self-expression of ethnic and cultural identity. In the current system, the free text box for other races allows for self-expression of ethnic and cultural identity. For example, white people can write in Russian Jewish, South European, or Middle Eastern. However, the AAPI community does not have the luxury. If you are a Vietnamese American of Chinese ancestry, which box would you check? What if you have a Korean American mother and a Japanese American father? We need a box that says “Asian American” for people to confidently check.

5. It insults the intelligence of Asian Americans. The current format seems to suggest that without the extra boxes as guidance, Asian people will not know how to answer the question properly. In fact, some scholars already have expressed concerns that some respondents may click Asian and skip the print details section. However, this assumption is particularly troubling and racist – why is it a concern for Asian Americans only but not the other races? If other racial groups know how to click a box then print, Asians know as well.

Exhibit B: Census Bureau Almost Got It Right in 2017

In this 2017 draft, the Census Bureau treated Asian Americans the same as other races, which was the right thing to do.

Person 1

5. Please provide information for each person living here. If there is someone living here who pays the rent or owns this residence, start by listing him or her as Person 1. If the owner or the person who pays the rent does not live here, start by listing any adult living here as Person 1.

What is Person 1's name? Print name below.

First Name MI

Last Name(s)

6. What is Person 1's sex? Mark ONE box.

Male Female

7. What is Person 1's age and what is Person 1's date of birth? For babies less than 1 year old, do not write the age in months. Write 0 as the age.

Age on April 1, 2018 Print numbers in boxes.

Month

Day

Year of birth

years

8. What is Person 1's race or ethnicity?
Mark all boxes that apply AND print ethnicities in the spaces below. Note, you may report more than one group.

WHITE – Provide details below.

<input type="checkbox"/> German	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> English
<input type="checkbox"/> Italian	<input type="checkbox"/> Polish	<input type="checkbox"/> French

Print, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.

HISPANIC, LATINO, OR SPANISH – Provide details below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Mexican or Mexican American	<input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban
<input type="checkbox"/> Salvadoran	<input type="checkbox"/> Dominican	<input type="checkbox"/> Colombian

Print, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.

BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN – Provide details below.

<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Jamaican	<input type="checkbox"/> Haitian
<input type="checkbox"/> Nigerian	<input type="checkbox"/> Ethiopian	<input type="checkbox"/> Somali

Print, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.

ASIAN – Provide details below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Filipino	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian
<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese

Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.

AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE – Print, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Tlingit, etc.

MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN – Provide details below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Iranian	<input type="checkbox"/> Egyptian
<input type="checkbox"/> Syrian	<input type="checkbox"/> Moroccan	<input type="checkbox"/> Israeli

Print, for example, Algerian, Iraqi, Kurdish, etc.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER – Provide details below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian	<input type="checkbox"/> Samoan	<input type="checkbox"/> Chamorro
<input type="checkbox"/> Tongan	<input type="checkbox"/> Fijian	<input type="checkbox"/> Marshallese

Print, for example, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, etc.

SOME OTHER RACE OR ETHNICITY – Print details.

→ If more people were counted in Question 1 on the front page, continue with Person 2 on the next page.

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