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May 26, 2021

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Sent via U.S. mail and electronic mail

Dear President Harris, Provost Baker, and Dean Schapiro:

The San Diego County Bar Association stands in solidarity with the students of USD School of Law—our future colleagues—who have been negatively impacted by questionable and insensitive statements recently made by a USD School of Law professor.

Since learning the details of the professor's offensive post in March 2021, hundreds of members of the San Diego legal community have spent a significant amount of time focused on the mental health, well-being, and support of the students at USD School of Law. We in the legal community feel USD needs to do better in focusing on the safety, health, and welfare of the students.

The May 4, 2021 Statement from the Provost failed to address the safety and health of the Law School's students, some of whom received racist and threatening emails for simply trying to speak with the professor. During finals, all students, but especially those recently<sup>1</sup> targeted by the USD professor, were provided information centered on "academic freedom" rather than addressing an environment where concerns of community safety, a hostile learning environment, blatant disrespect, and racism should be acknowledged.

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<sup>1</sup> This professor has a history of targeting women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and now Chinese, Jews, and Muslims.



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As of March 4, 2021—just six days before the professor published the first blog—there were 42 reported racist incidents against Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in San Diego County.<sup>2</sup> By May 4, 2021—the same day as the Statement from the Provost—that number had more than doubled.<sup>3</sup> Researchers believe that these numbers are grossly underreported.<sup>4</sup> Nationally, over 6,603 (as of March 31, 2021)<sup>5</sup> incidents against the AAPI community have been reported. Hate crimes against AAPI rose by 145% in 2020 even though overall reported hate crimes dropped by 6%.<sup>6</sup>

Many alumni from USD School of Law, including from our membership and leadership, have come forward in the last few months citing multiple incidents by professors targeting women and LGBTQ+ individuals, in addition to the recent attacks made on Chinese and now Jews and Muslims. The fallout is a systemic problem that USD is failing to address and impacts how these students will learn, their interest in the profession, and their feelings of inclusion in the profession. At a local, state, and national level, we in the legal profession devote time and resources to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, embracing the unique contributions each individual brings to the table. If this vision is not shared at the entrance to the profession, in education, it undermines our ability to diversify and better the profession. The SDCBA, specifically, has adopted “Community” and “Inclusion” as two of our Core Values. To us, this means that we welcome everyone, and everyone belongs.

We applaud Dean Schapiro for his willingness to engage with our community and his sensitivity to the concerns raised. We urge him to continue in his efforts to support the students. While we also applaud the effort to create The Horizon Project, and look forward to seeing its impact, this project does not help the students who have been, and are being, impacted now.

We encourage USD to take action demonstrating its commitment to an educational environment that honors the dignity of every individual and we stand ready to support your efforts to develop future members of our profession.

Sincerely,



Renee N. G. Stackhouse, Esq.  
San Diego County Bar Association  
2021 President

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kpbs.org/news/2021/mar/04/nationwide-rise-hate-incidents-against-asian-ameri/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/columnists/story/2021-05-04/column-fears-mount-that-anti-asian-hate-crimes-are-being-understated-heres-why-some-may-not-be-reported>

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-incident-reports-nearly-doubled-march-new-data-n1266980>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/FACT%20SHEET-%20Anti-Asian%20Hate%202020%20rev%203.21.21.pdf>

