

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Mike Honda issued the following statement in response to the L.A. Times story (October 19, 2007), “ [An unlikely treasure-trove of donors for Clinton](#) ”:

“I am appalled by the irresponsible and biased portrayal of the Asian American immigrant community, published by the L.A. Times today. The reporting unfairly attributes selected individual cases to an entire ethnic community in a major metropolitan area. Such an unfair, sweeping, and negative portrayal has a significant chilling effect on the civic participation by all Asian Americans, who merely want their fair chance to participate in the American political process.

“This story has already spawned a barrage of racist reactions in the blogosphere and the airwaves and is sending chilling shockwaves through immigrant communities that are making commendable efforts to integrate into American life. There is no shortage of bigots chomping at the bit to trample over those who do not look, sound or act like them and it is a shame when a respectable publication such as the L.A. Times provides them with the fodder to do so.

“While I sincerely hope the reporting is airtight, the story lacked responsible sensitivity and, at times, even strained to turn the commonplace into the mysterious. For example, the story describes “...a woman named Chung Seto, who came to this country as a child from Canton province...” Anyone who has ever spoken with Ms. Seto, who I’ve known for many years, knows that she’s as New York as one can get. The story, however, paints her as a mysterious foreign figure, when in fact she has been a longtime established leader within the New York Democratic Party and is well respected in Democratic circles nationally.

“Drawing a connection between the emerging political involvement of Asian Americans and individual cases of possibly suspect donations sends a strong message that the political participation of minority communities is undesired. Minority communities in America have been shut out of the political process through poll taxes, literacy tests, and other tactics throughout our country’s history. As leaders, we should be encouraging, not chilling, the legitimate involvement of underrepresented communities in our democracy.

“Many times it is not so much what a story says, but what it insinuates, such as a link between Asian Americans and organized crime. The aftertaste of this story is that campaign financing is an Asian problem. If this was about fundraising, I failed to see anything about Mitt Romney’s campaign co-chair Alan Fabian, or other non-Asian American incidents. Why are Asian Americans being singled out? Unquestionably, there is room for improvement in campaign finance and the vetting process in this country and we should address this issue. However, this is a bi-partisan, American problem, not an Asian American problem. To characterize it as such does injustice to our democracy.

“Where I grew up, some people would call allegations without proof slander. And if such allegations are made solely because the community is Asian American, it begins to feel a lot like racism.”