



January 7, 2022

Dear Dean Ruger and the Faculty Senate Executive Board,

The University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School Asian Pacific American Law Students Association (APALSA) and South Asian Law Students Association (SALSA) write to condemn the racist, xenophobic statements of Professor Amy Wax and demand accountability. During an interview on December 20, 2021, Wax [declared](#), “**this influx of Asian elites is... problematic**” and “**the United States is better off with fewer Asians and less Asian immigration.**” She made countless statements throughout the interview that insult Asian and South Asian people, and her continued affiliation with Penn Carey Law lends credibility to her false, racist beliefs.

Words have power. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community has faced both a deadly virus and an onslaught of hostile, [racist attacks](#). With the former President [referring](#) to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus,” too many people continue to view Asians as perpetual foreigners who threaten American [health](#), [jobs](#), [national security](#), and [way of life](#).<sup>1</sup> Wax’s racist declarations align with this [anti-Asian rhetoric](#), which led to the recent spike in hate crimes against AAPI people. Her statements add to this anti-Asian sentiment and bring it home to Penn Carey Law.

Time and time again, Penn Carey Law fails to hold Wax fully accountable as she insults its student body,<sup>2</sup> the diversity of which Penn Carey Law [proudly touts](#) on public-facing recruitment materials. This attack is the latest iteration of her racist outbursts, which have included Wax declaring that “our country will be better off with [more whites and fewer nonwhites](#),” and that she has “[rarely, rarely](#)” seen black students graduate high in her classes. These generalizations insult the ability and achievements of students of color, entrench white supremacy, and continue to marginalize us in our own school. APALSA and SALSA condemn these statements because they reflect white supremacist views, which [engender violence](#). Moreover, the benefits of diversity for the economy and within professional environments are [well-established](#).

Penn Carey Law’s [reactive statement](#) does not provide current students, alumni, prospective students, and friends of the Penn community with any reassurance that Penn Carey Law is truly committed to [advancing equity and inclusion](#). A statement that equates Wax’s anti-intellectual comments with backed scholarship on discrimination reflects poorly on the University.

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<sup>1</sup> In the interview, Wax said, “It’s just harder to assimilate those people or have confidence that our way of life will continue if we bring a lot of people in... We’ll obviously have fewer people from Africa, we’ll have fewer people from some parts of Asia, and it’ll be more white...”

<sup>2</sup> [40%](#) of the class of 2022, [43%](#) of the class of 2023, and [48%](#) of the class of 2024 identifies as a person of color.



In 2022, immediate action from the administration is well overdue. Continuing to employ Wax contradicts its values and affords her a Penn Carey Law-stamped platform to speak directly against equity and inclusion. Tenure may protect academic freedom, but it can never be a blanket protection against dangerous racist rhetoric.

Given Wax's continued insults and her refusal to acknowledge the problematic nature of her statements, APALSA, SALSA, and co-signing organizations call for immediate further action.

To hold Amy Wax fully accountable, the Law School should:

- Begin an investigation into Wax's continued employment at Penn Carey Law by examining whether her behavior complies with [University Behavioral Standards](#), no later than January 31, 2022. The process should be transparent to students and the results should be available to students in a timely manner. During the investigation, Penn Carey Law must suspend Wax from teaching and prohibit her from socializing with students.
- Provide further transparency into tenure requirements, the University's Behavioral Standards regarding faculty conduct, and the mechanisms by which students and the University can take action against professors who violate these standards in the future. This should occur no later than January 20, 2022.
- Keep to its prior commitment to ensure that alternative professors teach all courses that Wax teaches. This should occur no later than the start of the 2022-23 academic year.

To reaffirm its commitment to diversity and racial justice, the Law School should:

- Form a committee to assess how to reform tenure to ensure consistency with principles of social equity and inclusion, no later than Spring Break 2022. This committee should include students of color as representatives and compensate them for their labor. The committee should consider appropriate sanctions for future instances of such conduct.
- Dedicate physical spaces in the law school for APALSA, SALSA, and other affinity groups to promote community and visibility of students of color on campus and beyond, no later than January 31, 2022.
- Organize more diversity programming from the administration to lessen the burden on student affinity groups to do so. Invite guest speakers of color to share their professional accomplishments and insights, as well as their experiences as people of color in the legal field. The school should make this commitment no later than January 31, 2022.
- Provide regular opportunities for students in affinity groups to gain a direct audience with Dean Ruger and the Law School administration to express suggestions for reforming the status quo at Penn Carey Law towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. The first meetings should occur no later than January 20, 2022.
- Ensure that the faculty hiring committee prioritizes the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion when screening and hiring new faculty members, effective immediately.
- Mandate regular training for faculty about racial justice and bias, effective immediately.



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN  
LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

S A L S A

SOUTH ASIAN LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

- Provide increased financial and institutional support for diverse and first-generation law students by expanding Sadie Alexander scholarships, financial aid, public interest funding, mentorship, and partnerships with groups supporting advocacy for Asian Americans. The school should make this commitment no later than January 31, 2022.

Signed,

**APALSA, SALSA**

**Co-signing Penn Carey Law organizations:**

Black Law Students Association

Latinx Law Students Association

Jewish Law Students Association

Muslim Law Students Association

American Constitution Society

National Lawyers Guild

Lambda

Law Students for a Democratic Society

Internet, Tech, and Society Collaborative

**National Asian Pacific American Law Student Association,**  
on behalf of APALSA organizations across the country