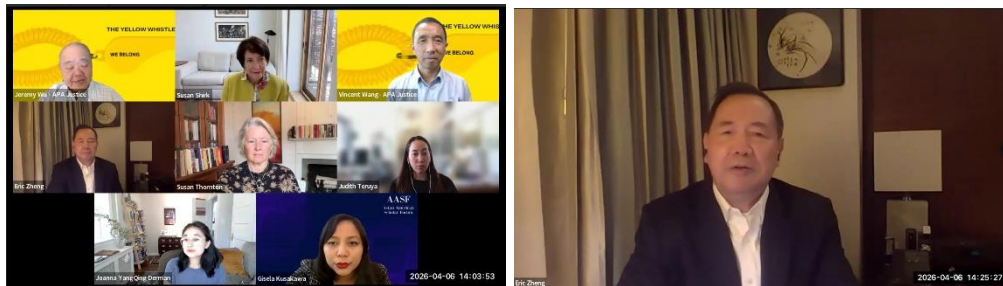


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Remarks by Eric Zheng and Video



During the APA Justice monthly meeting on April 6, 2026, **Eric Zheng**, President of The American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai (AmCham Shanghai 上海美国商会), shared his on-the-ground perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing American companies in China, set against a backdrop of evolving U.S.-China relations.

Prior to his current role with AmCham Shanghai, Eric had a successful career with AIG including serving as President & CEO of AIG China. Eric has been active in several non-profit and charity organizations. He is a member of Committee of 100 and currently serves as Chair of Committee of 100 Greater China Region.

Eric began by noting that 2026 is a consequential year for bilateral ties, with anticipated high-level visits between the United States and China. Within this context, he highlighted the role of

AmCham Shanghai as a longstanding institution supporting commercial engagement and mutual understanding between the two countries.

Eric briefly traced the organization's history, noting that AmCham Shanghai was originally founded in 1915, reflecting an early American business presence in China. It ceased operations in 1950 following the founding of the People's Republic of China, and was reestablished in 1987 after China reopened to the global economy. Today, it represents approximately 1,000 multinational companies, primarily U.S.-headquartered firms, making it one of the largest American chambers of commerce in the Asia-Pacific region.

Turning to the economic relationship, Eric emphasized the scale and depth of U.S.-China commercial ties. He cited roughly \$421 billion in Chinese exports to the U.S. and \$151 billion in U.S. exports to China, along with significant two-way investment flows. However, he underscored that this interdependence is increasingly challenged by policy volatility, particularly fluctuating tariff regimes. At one point, tariffs reached as high as 145% on Chinese goods, and although they have since declined, they remain elevated. As Eric observed, "when you run a company, you need some predictability... it's really hard to plan for the long term" amid shifting policies.

He identified three primary challenges facing American companies in China:

- **Geopolitical tensions**, which he described as the "number one challenge," creating uncertainty in both policy and business environments;
- **Rising domestic competition**, with Chinese firms now highly innovative and competitive—"no longer copycats"—and in many areas outperforming multinational companies;
- **Economic slowdown**, as China's growth moderates and business expectations soften.

Eric noted that American firms now see themselves leading mainly in product quality and development, while falling behind in areas such as speed to market, licensing, digital capabilities, and adoption of emerging technologies. Reflecting these pressures, business confidence has declined sharply, with only about 41% of companies expressing optimism about their five-year outlook in China—down significantly from historical levels near 80%.

Despite these headwinds, Eric emphasized that China remains a critical market. He pointed to continued GDP growth of around 5%, a \$19.6 trillion economy, and a rapidly expanding middle class projected to grow from 400 million to 800 million by 2035. He illustrated this scale by noting that China's annual economic growth is "almost a trillion U.S. dollars," effectively "recreating a Switzerland every year."

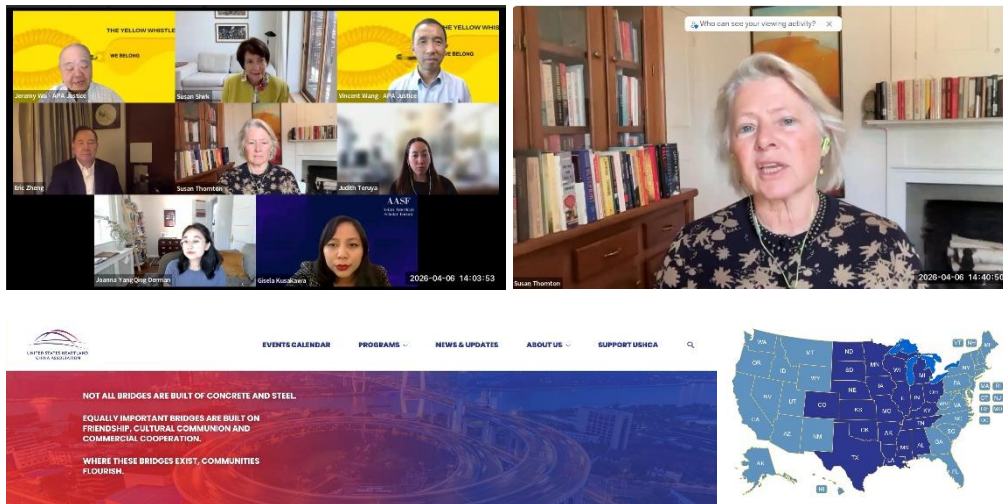
He explained that American companies remain engaged for two main reasons: to serve China's large domestic market ("in China for China") and to support global supply chains ("in China for global").

Eric concluded on a firm and pragmatic note, emphasizing that continued U.S. business engagement in China is not optional but strategically necessary. Despite geopolitical tensions and market challenges, he argued that disengagement would come at a significant cost to U.S. competitiveness, innovation, and global influence. Operating in China, he noted, is essential not only for accessing a critical market but also for learning from increasingly sophisticated competitors and staying at the forefront of global industry trends.

In his view, the stakes extend beyond individual companies to broader national interests. A sustained U.S. commercial presence in China helps preserve economic linkages, supports mutual understanding, and ensures that American firms remain relevant in one of the world's most important markets. As he underscored, maintaining this presence is ultimately “in the best interest of the United States”—not just as a matter of business, but as a matter of long-term strategic positioning in a competitive global landscape.

A summary for the April 6 APA Justice meeting is being prepared. Watch a video of Eric's remarks at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-a03kPRXnU0> (15:14). For more information about AmCham Shanghai, visit <https://www.amcham-shanghai.org/>

Remarks by Susan Thornton and Video



During the APA Justice monthly meeting on April 6, 2026, **Susan Thornton**, Vice Chair of U.S. Heartland China Association (USHCA), remarked on USHCA's work and its subnational and citizen diplomacy including education and other people-to-people exchanges with China.

Susan is a retired senior U.S. diplomat with almost three decades of experience with the U.S. State Department in Eurasia and East Asia. She is currently a Senior Fellow and Visiting

Lecturer in Law at the Yale Law School Paul Tsai China Center. She is also the director of the Forum on Asia-Pacific Security at the National Committee on American Foreign Policy and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Susan highlighted her work with USHCA, which seeks to expand U.S.-China engagement beyond the coasts by focusing on the American heartland. The organization, chaired by former Missouri Governor **Bob Holden**, promotes connectivity in trade, education, and cultural exchange across “the 20-something states in the middle of the country” that often have less exposure to China-related opportunities and policy discussions.

She described a range of initiatives, including agricultural cooperation, health system exchanges, and local government engagement. In agriculture, the group connects U.S. growers, researchers, and industry associations with Chinese counterparts to explore “the future of food systems,” and organizes events such as the annual U.S.-China Agricultural Roundtable in Henan Province. Educational exchanges are another priority, with programs that send American students—particularly from historically Black colleges and universities—to China, providing opportunities that “they would probably otherwise not have.” USHCA also promotes Chinese language learning and cultural education, reflecting concerns about a declining pipeline of U.S. China expertise.

Susan emphasized the strategic importance of broadening national understanding of China, stating that “Americans will need to know more about China in the future, not less,” and that such knowledge “should not be overly concentrated on the two coasts.” She also highlighted local-level exchanges, including forums that bring together U.S. and Chinese municipal leaders to share experiences on issues like climate change, economic development, and public health.

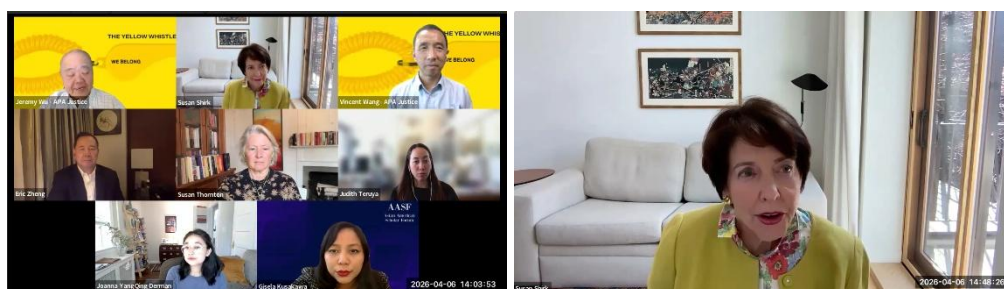
At the same time, she noted that this work has become increasingly difficult. Visa restrictions, travel uncertainties, and rising geopolitical tensions are complicating exchanges on both sides. She observed that “exchanges between the U.S. and China are becoming more fraught,” with students and scholars facing growing obstacles. Susan also pointed to a lack of clarity in U.S. policy, noting that agencies often operate without clear guidance, leading to actions that can appear “arbitrary” or “politicized.” She warned that China-related issues are increasingly “ripe for fear-mongering and weaponization” in the current political climate, including through state-level legislation.

Despite these challenges, Susan stressed that the risks should not outweigh the benefits of engagement. She underscored that her organization takes a careful, independent approach, including not accepting funding from China, and remains committed to its mission.

Concluding on a forward-looking note, she emphasized that engagement with China is not optional for the United States—particularly for the heartland—and expressed hope that upcoming high-level meetings could help reinforce the importance of sustained exchanges and mutual understanding.

Watch a video of Susan's remarks at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9LqzT_PcfY (8:29). For more information about the U.S. Heartland China Association, visit <https://usheartlandchina.org/>

Remarks by Susan Shirk and Video



During the APA Justice monthly meeting on April 6, 2026, **Susan Shirk**, Research Professor; Director Emerita, 21st Century China Center, University of California (UC), San Diego, shared her insights into the current state of US-China relations, especially the upcoming Trump-Xi summit.

As former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs and lifetime experiences, she is one of the most influential experts working on U.S.-China relations and Chinese politics. She is also Director Emerita of the UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC).

Susan offered a candid and notably pessimistic assessment of the upcoming U.S.–China leader engagement between **Donald Trump** and **Xi Jinping**. While she acknowledged that leader-level diplomacy can create openings—what **Joseph Nye** has called the “funnel of choice”—she stressed that success depends on intensive groundwork that is currently lacking.

Drawing on her experience in the State Department, she noted that past progress came only after extensive staff-level negotiations: “Professionals... put in hours of diplomatic efforts... before the leaders meet,” allowing both sides to define priorities, understand each other, and prepare deliverables. These preparations, she emphasized, are essential to making summits productive rather than symbolic.

Susan had initially hoped the spring meeting could launch a sustained diplomatic process, but now sees more limited prospects.

At best, she expects continuity rather than breakthroughs—likely preserving the existing “Busan truce” on tariffs, export controls, and rare earths. There may be incremental progress on trade

and investment, such as movement on Phase 1 commitments or narrowly scoped Chinese investment in the U.S. However, she sees little chance of progress on harder issues.

Susan warned that failure to address national security and people-to-people exchanges—including academic, journalist, and student flows—would be “tragic” and potentially dangerous. Taiwan is a particular concern, noting the absence of a clear U.S. strategy, raising the risk of improvised decisions during leader talks that could undermine regional stability.

Her strongest criticism focused on the lack of preparation, which she described bluntly as “really diplomatic malpractice.”

She pointed to weakened U.S. interagency capacity, limited sub-cabinet engagement, and a hollowed-out policy process: “Almost nothing at the sub-cabinet level... the National Security Council Asia staff is thinned out to almost no one.”

At the same time, decision-making has become highly centralized. “The U.S. system has become almost as centralized... as China’s,” Susan said, leaving officials uncertain about objectives and reluctant to act proactively.

In summary, Susan believes the absence of serious diplomatic preparation severely limits the potential of upcoming leader meetings. At best, they may stabilize tensions; at worst, they risk unstructured, leader-driven outcomes that could increase strategic instability.

Watch a video of Susan’s remarks at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAoe5F8Emfl> (11:21).

More on Birthright Citizenship



The screenshot shows the top portion of a New York Times article. The header includes the New York Times logo and a navigation menu with options like 'Takeaways', 'What Happens Next', and 'Public Opini'. The article title is 'In the Birthright Citizenship Hearing, a Story of Asians Fighting for Rights'. The sub-headline reads: 'In the Supreme Court’s oral arguments, lawyers and justices cited a litany of cases reflecting how long it took for Asians to win the right to be American.'



Demonstrators in support of birthright citizenship on Wednesday at the Supreme Court. Anna Rose Layden for The New York Times

According to the *New York Times*, while the Supreme Court hearing on birthright citizenship on April 1, 2026, anchored in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, it has also renewed attention to a broader body of lesser-known cases involving Asian immigrants that helped define U.S. immigration and constitutional law.

While *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* affirmed that children born in the United States are citizens regardless of their parents' nationality, the justices also referenced cases such as **Yick Wo v. Hopkins**, **Fong Yue Ting v. United States**, and *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*. Together, these cases reflect a period when U.S. immigration law was explicitly designed to exclude Asians.

Beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act, federal policy severely restricted Asian immigration and barred naturalization. In response, Chinese and other Asian communities organized extensive legal challenges—filing over 10,000 lawsuits—often supported by groups like the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. These efforts were not only defensive but strategic, helping to establish enduring legal principles. As one historian explained: “High-quality U.S. citizen lawyers were hired to litigate cases large and small.”

Some cases expanded rights. In *Yick Wo*, the Court ruled that a neutral law applied discriminatorily violated the Constitution, extending equal protection to noncitizens. Others reinforced federal power or racial exclusion. In *Fong Yue Ting*, the Court upheld broad deportation authority. In *Thind* and earlier in *Ozawa v. United States*, the Court denied citizenship based on shifting and often contradictory definitions of “whiteness,” even stripping citizenship retroactively.

Although Congress later dismantled racial barriers—especially with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—these earlier rulings remain foundational. *Wong Kim Ark*, in particular, continues to underpin modern interpretations of birthright citizenship.

Today, Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States, largely due to post-1965 immigration. Yet awareness of this legal history remains limited. Advocates warn that weakening birthright citizenship could have disproportionate consequences, even for lawful residents.

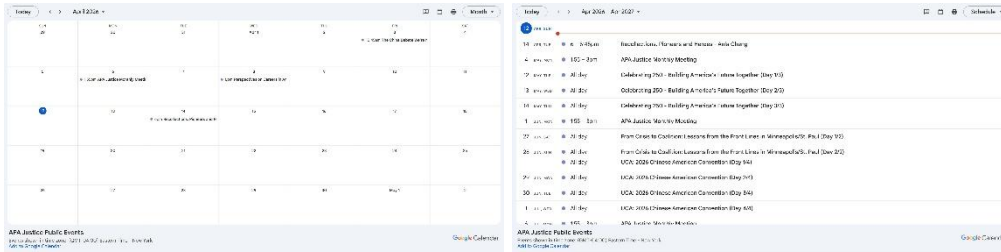
The report also highlights a broader challenge: many Asian Americans are unfamiliar with the history of exclusion laws and civil rights struggles that shaped their status today. As one lawmaker observed after educating constituents about this past: “They had no idea.”

The fight over birthright citizenship is not just about one case, but about a long legacy of Asian American legal challenges that helped define constitutional rights in the United States—making today's debate both historically grounded and deeply consequential.

Read the *New York Times* report: <https://nyti.ms/4cdMPpn>

News and Activities for the Communities

1. APA Justice Community Calendar



Upcoming Events:

- 2026/04/14 Recollections, Pioneers and Heroes - Anla Cheng
- 2026/05/04 APA Justice Monthly Meeting
- 2026/05/12-14 Celebrating 250 - Building America’s Future Together

Visit <https://bit.ly/3XD61qV> for event details.

2. APA Justice January Monthly Meeting Summary Posted



Summary for the January 2026 APA Justice monthly meeting has been posted at <https://bit.ly/4sqZPxV>. We thank these distinguished speakers for sharing their insightful remarks and updates:

- **Judith Teruya**, Executive Director, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus
- **Joanna YangQing Derman**, Director, Anti-Profilng, Civil Rights & National Security Program, Advancing Justice | AAJC
- **Gisela Perez Kusakawa**, Executive Director, Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF)
- **Deborah Frankel**, Counsel, Bloch & White LLP

- **Kyle Bigley**, Associate, Bloch & White LLP
- **Baimadajie Angwang** 昂旺, former NYPD Officer
- **Paul Cheung** 鄭文耀, President, Committee of 100
- **Hua Wang** 王华, Chair, United Chinese Americans
- **Haipei Shue** 薛海培, President, United Chinese Americans
- **Sharon Wong**, National Chair, OCA National Center
- **Thu Nguyen**, Executive Director, OCA National Center

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APA Justice Task Force is a non-partisan platform to build a sustainable ecosystem that addresses racial profiling concerns and to facilitate, inform, and advocate on selected issues related to justice and fairness for the Asian Pacific American community. For more information, please refer to the new APA Justice website under development at www.apajusticetaskforce.org. We value your feedback. Please send your comments to contact@apajustice.org.

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