



The primary mission of the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) is to advance the mental health and well-being of Asian American communities through research, professional practice, education, and policy. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US and worldwide, individuals and communities of Asian descent have increasingly become targets of discrimination driven by xenophobia and racism. In the last few weeks alone, the consequences of anti-Asian discrimination have also escalated dramatically as evidenced by declining sales at Chinese/Asian-owned restaurants and nearly-deserted Chinatown districts, [reports of increased bullying in schools](#), and [verbal](#) and [physical](#) violence that target those perceived to be of Chinese descent—and, per more recent accounts, against anyone perceived to be of Asian origin. A [report](#) by the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council on March 25, 2020 stated that nearly 100 reports were made to their incident reporting platform each day; the majority being from non-Chinese Asian Americans and women (who were three times more likely to report harassment compared to men).

Mislabeling of COVID-19--a virus that does not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or citizenship--as the “Chinese virus” or “Kung flu” is a blatant misrepresentation and does nothing to stop or slow down this pandemic; rather, this language only contributes to anti-Asian and anti-Asian American stigma. As evidenced throughout history, e.g., “Yellow Peril” xenophobic ideology justifying the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, LGBT discrimination during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and discrimination against Africans and African Americans during the Ebola epidemic, distinguishing certain groups of people as the sources of disease easily lends to acts of social injustice against these communities which includes social exclusion, violence, and economic disenfranchisement. In 2015, the [World Health Organization](#) specifically advised against linking geographic locations or people to disease names and issued new naming guidelines “to minimize unnecessary negative impact of disease names and avoid causing offense to any cultural, social, national, regional, professional or ethnic groups.”

All of us--regardless of our race, ethnicity, national origin, or citizenship--are striving to cope with anxiety and fear brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the social isolation precautions needed to reduce its spread. As an organization whose mission is to advance the mental health and well-being of Asian American communities, we draw attention to the additional stressors faced by our communities who are contending with increased stigma, racism, and xenophobia. Psychological research demonstrates that stigma and discrimination can have serious negative and long-term consequences on mental and physical health. In Bellevue, Washington, there is a 178% increase in the number of applications for firearm transfers and a significant number of applicants appeared to have last names consistent with Chinese heritage. Harassment and other bias-related incidents have “put enough fear into them that they felt like they needed to arm themselves to protect themselves and their families,” said the police chief. This occurrence may also indicate that victims may be hesitant, if not fearful, to report these incidents to law enforcement. Moreover, stereotype threat research suggests that, in an effort to avoid confirming stereotypes that link people of Asian descent to the source of

COVID-19, Asian Americans may be less inclined to seek appropriate medical attention when needed. Resistance to go to the police or seek medical attention may also be further complicated by legal status, especially if one is undocumented, for fear of being detained or deported.

We denounce all forms of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia and stand with the especially vulnerable in our communities, such as those with limited English proficiency and those who are undocumented. We offer these suggestions for action:

- **Correct** anyone who mislabels the virus and pandemic and encourage them to instead use the terms COVID-19 or coronavirus.
- **Educate** our colleagues, students, and others in our networks about the historical and structural factors that have seeded the racism and xenophobia Asian Americans are currently facing; the interconnectedness of current anti-Asian racism with historical and current oppression experienced by other marginalized communities; and the impact of racism and xenophobia on mental health and well-being.
- **Report** incidents of hate through the Asian American and Pacific Islander Planning Council's online incident report portal (available in English, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Korean, Thai, Japanese, Korean, and Khmer): <http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/stop-aapi-hate/?emci=e56b7667-966f-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&emdi=eb9981ed-af6f-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&ceid=2476624>
- **Resist** attempts to divide Asian American communities from other communities who also face racism and discrimination. This is an opportune time for us to ally with other communities and recognize our shared struggles for liberation.
- **Engage in self-care and radical healing**, following [suggestions](#) offered by our colleagues in American Psychological Association's Division 45:
  - *Take care of yourself.* In order for us to be able to care for others, we must shore up our psychological and emotional resources and engage in self-care. The American Psychological Association has offered some [suggestions](#), such as maintaining good health habits, exercising, connecting with loved ones, and practicing mindful breathing. We also encourage our members to use culturally salient coping strategies.
  - *Seek out and create joy.* In this time of great fear and disruption, we must find ways to fill our lives with joy. We encourage you to engage in activities you enjoy, such as art, writing, working out at home, or taking an academic or fun course online.

- *Reach out to and strengthen your sources of support.* Now, although we are forced to be physically distant from our family, friends, and colleagues, we encourage you to reach out virtually and stay connected.
- *Get involved in community-based, grassroots efforts* to support folks who are struggling financially due to the pandemic, to call out incidents of racism and xenophobia, to support policy changes that would provide resources to all vulnerable individuals and communities. The access to care and impact of COVID-19 magnify existing health disparities, in this critical moment, we support struggles for health justice.
- **Access trustworthy resources** on mental health and response to racism and xenophobia, as compiled by AAPA.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GrseILJIOFiNOzeQT3X3aizokL-M4NvXp7vCP4W-jm8/edit?usp=sharing>