



APABA
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania

Statement Regarding Anti-Asian Racism Associated with the Coronavirus (COVID-19)
(March 12, 2020)

The Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania (APABA-PA) denounces the increase in racist attacks and xenophobic profiling against members of the Asian Pacific American (APA) community in the wake of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Amid public fear and panic about the COVID-19 outbreak, there are increasing reports across the country of attacks targeting APA communities linked to racist assumptions about who has COVID-19. For example, in San Fernando, CA, a 16-year-old APA boy was physically attacked at school after being accused of having COVID-19 because he is an APA. In Plymouth, IN, two Hmong men were denied service at hotels due to the false assumption that they were Chinese and carrying COVID-19. In New York City and in Philadelphia, PA, APAs were physically and verbally assaulted in subway stations or trains, in incidents being investigated as COVID-19-related hate crimes. The fact that COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China has at times led to APAs being stereotyped as infected with the virus, and this racist assumption hurts APA communities all over the country. These and other racist attacks harm APA communities and the larger community by stoking animus between groups when it is important to be as cooperative as possible.

These violent incidents recall past attacks that have remained a permanent stain in U.S. history, including the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin, an American perceived by his killers as being part of the Japanese auto industry that was surging against the U.S. auto industry at that time. We must denounce anti-Asian bias and racial intolerance and stop it from becoming normalized.

As part of this effort, APABA-PA urges the media, elected officials, and community leaders to help stop the spread of xenophobia and misinformation by only sharing confirmed and verifiable information pertaining to COVID-19, how it spreads, and what actions we can take to ensure the best protection for everyone. In addition, APABA-PA encourages providing information about all measures that impact APA communities in multiple languages so that those who are limited English proficient are able to access important information in a timely manner. APABA-PA continues to encourage local efforts to curb xenophobia, such as city officials reminding the public that it is safe to visit their local Chinatown businesses and to support their APA neighbors.

COVID-19 is an important public health challenge that is also causing widespread economic harm. It does not discriminate by race. The harm caused by COVID-19 will be greater if we allow it to divide us, and eradicating the virus will depend on our ability to work together.

APABA-PA encourages anyone who encounters or witnesses attacks or harassment to report it to 911 immediately and request language assistance from law enforcement entities if needed. In Philadelphia, reports can be made to the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR) at 215-686-4670 or leave a voice message at the 24-hour hotline at 215-686-2856. Reports can be made anonymously. In Pennsylvania, reports can also be made to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) at 717-787-4410.

Founded in 1984, APABA-PA represents the interests of the APA law students, lawyers, and judges and the APA community across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by supporting the advancement of APA attorneys and promoting justice, equity, and legal access, especially for all APA communities. Routinely, APABA-PA speaks out on legal issues that affect the APA community in Pennsylvania.