

Joint Statement Against Asian American Hate

We, the Minority and other volunteer Bar Associations in the State of Washington, join together to condemn the attacks on the Asian American community here and across the country.

These attacks stem from the same racism that has been directed at Asian Americans since they first came to this country—a xenophobia that has viewed them as people separate and apart, unassimilable, threatening, and forever foreign. That racism limited and then barred their immigration to this country; it denied them citizenship; it denied them the ability to marry who they wished; it led to the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans; it motivated the brutal murder of Vincent Chin; and it underlies the recent blame levied against Asian Americans for the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that, while the slurs and violence against Asian Americans are frighteningly more visible now, they grow from the same prejudice that has always existed.

Our hearts go out to the families of the mothers, sisters, and daughters killed in Georgia, as well as other Asian Americans who have been verbally assaulted, physically attacked, and killed during this resurgence of hate. These attacks result in more than bodily harm; they demean and seek to strip their victims of their basic humanity.

We stand with the Asian American community because we want them to know that they do not stand alone against these attacks. The violence directed at them derives from the same “othering” that has always and continues to subordinate communities of color, immigrant communities, and other marginalized communities. Many of us who are members of those communities have been the targets of hate and insults because of how we look, the color of our skin, the spelling of our names, and the sound of our native languages and accents.

We also support the national conversation that has begun on how women of color are particularly vulnerable in this country. Asian American women live daily subject to stereotypes and assumptions that combine in ways that are different from being Asian American or a woman. Over history, they have been presumed to be quiet and subservient, and they have been exoticized. They, Latinas, Black and Native women, and other women of color are diminished at first glance and viewed as easy prey for attacks and exploitation based on their race and gender combined.

We join each other and ask others to join us in the often difficult work of challenging racism and educating others to help change a culture deeply steeped in racism. And, as lawyers, we ask others to join us in dismantling laws and systems that perpetuate injustice.

Educate: We ask that individuals educate themselves on the history of racism in this country and what they can do to be part of the change, and to educate others through conversation, social media, and by organizing programs in their firms and communities.

Advocate: We ask that individuals and organizations speak out against hate and that they work to dismantle systems and practices that harm communities of color. Write letters to the editor or op-ed pieces, engage in pro bono work, and testify in support of change-making legislation. Silence can be powerful complicity, as it was during the World War II Japanese American incarceration.

Support: We ask that individuals support, through donations of money or time, others who are working to challenge racism, such as grassroots advocacy and social service agencies working with immigrant communities and communities of color, as well as civil rights organizations, commissions, and other non-profits doing the same.

For resources on anti-Asian hate crimes, including reporting and responding to them, see <https://www.napaba.org/page/HateCrimeResources>.

