

Dear Social Work Students,

As you finish this tumultuous academic year and get ready for the summer, we want to acknowledge that Seattle University community members, including our students, have experienced intensified incidents of anti-Asian racism and xenophobia since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. We write this message to you to provide some contexts to these incidents, and also to provide local and national resources for help and advocacy.

Incidents of anti-Asian racism and xenophobia have been increasing sharply both locally and throughout the country since the outbreak. The *Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center* recorded over 1,700 incident reports of physical assault, verbal harassment and threats, and shunning in a six-week period.

We know that many students, faculty, and staff have experienced anti-Asian racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and microaggression before the COVID-19 outbreak. Xenophobia, particularly targeting Asians and Asian-Americans in the United States, is rooted in white supremacy. The othering and the perpetual categorization of Asians as “foreigners” in this country aim both to make people of Asian descent feel inferior and undeserving and to portray them as an “outside threat”. Experiences of Asians and Asian-Americans are often erased and invalidated. We know that experiences of racism and xenophobia often lead to negative mental health consequences (e.g., racism-based trauma) and diminished well-being.

We recognize that xenophobia and anti-Asian racism are weaponized against Asians and Asian Americans by political power structure as well as by white supremacist groups. The current president of the United State fueled anti-Asian racism early on in the pandemic by referring to the coronavirus as the “Chinese virus.” Trump administration’s recent plans to cancel the visas of Chinese graduate students and researchers also fuel xenophobia.

During recent weeks of protests against anti-Black racism and violence, many Asian businesses in the Seattle International District/Chinatown were targeted for destruction by a group that is widely suspected to be white nationalists. This act is a vile attempt to create a false narrative of “Asian victims of Black protests”; this is an age-old divide-and-conquer strategy to pit one community of color against another. This false narrative perpetuates the erasure of history, when activists from both communities have shown up for each other in solidarity, especially in Seattle/King County. We must all condemn such attempts to use Asian Americans to perpetuate anti-Black racism.

As we end this academic year and as cities start to reopen amidst robust protests and righteous civil unrest against anti-Black racism, we know that anti-Asian racism is still escalating. We hope that even when the message is “you don’t belong,” that we can be a louder voice of welcome.

To our Asian and Asian American students, we in the Social Work Department embrace you, and you are *welcome* at Seattle University. You *belong*.

June 8, 2020

And lastly, we acknowledge that this acknowledgement is long overdue. We are providing resources for help and advocacy (see below). We wish you continued good health and spirit as you wrap up this academic year and start your summer.

In solidarity,
Your Social Work Dept faculty

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Resources:

Seattle University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (206-296-6090, caps@seattleu.edu): CAPS can help refer students to the appropriate mental health services in their current locations. (Local.)

Asian Counseling & Referral Service (ACRS) (206-695-7600), <https://acrs.org/services/> ACRS promotes social justice and the well-being and empowerment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities by developing, providing, and advocating for innovative, effective and efficient community-based multilingual and multicultural service. ACRS is located in and serves the greater Seattle/King County area. (Local: Seattle/King County)

International District Health Services (ICHS): <https://www.ichs.com/>ICHS provides culturally and linguistically appropriate health and wellness services and promotes health equity for all. (Local: Seattle/King County)

Asian Mental Health Collective: Asian Pacifica Islander Desi American (APIDA) therapist directory. <http://www.asianmhc.org/apida>

Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAAJ): <https://www.advancingjustice-aaajc.org/covid19>AAAJ's mission is to advance civil and human rights for Asian and Americans to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all. The link above specifically addresses Covid19.

Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center: To report experiences or witnessing of micro-aggressions, bullying, harassment, hate speech, or violence <https://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/stop-aapi-hate/>

National Asian Women's Health Organization (NAWHO): <https://www.healthywomen.org/about-us/consumer-liason-council/national-asian-womens-health-organization> Through research, education, and public advocacy, NAWHO empowers Asian Americans to provide leadership for their communities and build coalitions that address the broader social justice issues impacting all under-served groups in the United States.

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. (NAPAWF): <http://napawf.org/> NAPAWF's mission is to build collective power with AAPI women and girls to gain full agency over our lives, our families, and our communities.

