

IMC Speaks Out Against Anti-Asian Violence

We are heartbroken by the horrific surge in relentless, unprovoked harassment and violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. Since March 2020, the Stop AAPI Hate organization reports nearly 4,000 incidents of anti-Asian hate, of which nearly 44 percent occurred in California—and many more cases go unreported.

The Insight Meditation Center (IMC) and its community open our hearts to the pain of anti-Asian hate, bearing witness to the suffering and heartache that result from hatred, fear and ignorance. We hold all who experience such hate and violence in our hearts with compassion, expressing sorrow and offering condolence. We sit, walk, and stand in solidarity with Asian immigrants, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders who are targets of discrimination and violence. We aim to be a community opposed to racism everywhere, including in our own midst and in our own minds.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Experiences

The spike in COVID-19 related anti-Asian violence are not simply isolated incidents. The recent national attention to people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and their plight is embedded within a long history of anti-Asian harm, racism, violence, and denial of experience. Historically, people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent have been treated as unwelcomed outsiders and perpetual foreigners and are made scapegoats of existing problems in the United States. Recent political, racialized rhetoric labeling COVID-19 as “kung flu” or “Chinese virus” ignites this latent and pervasive bigotry, fueling and exacerbating harm.

The recent anti-Asian violence brings long overdue attention to this harm. People of Asian and Pacific Islander descent have endured targeted exclusion, xenophobia, systemic racism, and violence over nearly two centuries. Examples include the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, mass lynchings of Asian Americans in the 19th century, internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and post-9/11 hostility towards Asian Muslims. Asian forebearers have resiliently preserved and transmitted the lineages of Buddhism in the United States in spite of religious bigotry. The prevailing stereotype of the “Asian American model minority” ignores the diversity of communities, downplays racism and, ultimately, pits people of color against one another in a racial hierarchy.

The Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences with exclusion, discrimination, and violence are part of a broader American reality of systemic racism and oppression. Looking at past conditions helps us to frame and understand what has come to be. This helps us to see and realize possibility: we can be part of the effort to end racism.

Buddhist Practice to Meet the Moment

As Buddhist practitioners, we cultivate our capacity to bear witness to the cumulative pain of racism by educating our minds, cultivating our hearts, and having the courage to take action. By becoming informed about racism and its impact on people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent, as well as all people of color, we begin to understand the depth of the suffering it

creates, and we begin to see many of the patterns that infuse racism are also hidden in our own hearts and minds. We learn to stretch our hearts to hold and to meet the suffering without denying it or turning away from it by cultivating compassion. This is what it means to bear witness. Compassion is not only an inner feeling but also an active expression, so we also cultivate compassion by finding ways to practice non-silence and by offering support to people affected directly and indirectly by harmful acts.

As students of the Dharma, we understand suffering arises from greed, hatred, and delusion. Dharma practice encourages us to look at our own hearts and minds, and how we engage with our fellow human beings. We can turn a light of awareness on emotions of separation: anger, hostility, animosity, fear, anxiety, confusion, to name a few. We can start to recognize hidden patterns of prejudice and bias and see how we unconsciously separate from those we perceive as different from us. Even the seemingly innocent question “Where are you from?” posed to someone who looks different from us might be connected to an unconscious separation, and may well be experienced as othering. With awareness and curiosity we can look directly at our own participation in perpetuating the suffering of racism, individually and as a community.

When one hurts, it affects us all, and yet we need to cultivate compassion for those who perpetuate harm. We remember the Buddha’s teaching with this verse from the Dhammapada: *Hatred never ends through hatred. By non-hate alone does it end.* Putting this teaching into practice is not simple or easy: while non-hatred can be supported by cultivating compassion for others, compassion is also cultivated, not by suppressing hatred, but by bringing an allowing, friendly awareness to hatred when it arises in our own hearts.

Our Commitment

We commit and recommit to the ongoing inner and outer work that leads to ending the harm of racism and oppression. We practice to discover, connect and bring forth the common humanity in all of us. We practice to share this world with all human beings, where everyone can feel safe and be safe from harm.

~ The IMC Board and Guiding Teachers Gil Fronsdal and Andrea Fella

RESOURCES

How to report and take action

- [Stop AAPI Hate](#) - Report and read stories. Donate.
- [Stand Against Hatred](#) . Read and report stories.
- [Hollaback! Free bystander intervention training](#) to stop anti-Asian/American and xenophobic harassment

Buddhist perspectives

- [Overcoming Hate with Non-Hate](#) (by Dharma talk by Gil Fronsdal, April 4, 2021)

- [Why Did Six Asian Women Have to Die in Order to be Seen?](#) By Butterfly Tony Pham, Lion's Roar
- [Anti-Asian Violence Is an Attack on Us All](#) by Cristina Moon, Lion's Roar
- [We've Been Here All Along](#) by Funie Hsu, Lion's Roar

Asian American history and current events

- [Anti-Asian violence has surged since COVID-19. But it didn't start there](#) - Today News
- [We Need to Talk About Anti-Asian Hate](#) - Video by The Try Guys on YouTube
- [Asian Americans](#) PBS Video Series