



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations
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Statement on COVID-19

With its origins in the widespread racial violence known as the Zoot Suit Riots, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations has worked to transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace. We achieve our mission through public and community education on hate crime, youth training in human relations leadership, and the promotion of positive intergroup relations in Los Angeles County, one of the most culturally diverse communities in the United States.

Amidst this COVID-19 pandemic – a health and economic crisis for all Americans -- we have observed and documented a disturbing rise in reports of violence, discrimination, and harassment against Asian immigrants, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in our Los Angeles County communities. The Commission is not alone in observing this dramatic rise in anti-Asian violence. Similar trends have been reported in other parts of the United States. The language and actions of those perpetrating this violence leave no doubt: fearmongering, scapegoating, and stigmatizing are inciting this violence.

In this moment of crisis, it is unconscionable that some in our community must not only fear COVID-19 and its economic and health impacts, but also fear for their own safety. Asians and Asian Americans are no more likely a vector for transmitting COVID-19 than any other person, and those that say otherwise are simply wrong.

The pandemic has also exposed Los Angeles County to another invidious bias. Black, Latinx and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian and Indigenous communities, as well as low-income people of all races and backgrounds, are more likely to test positive for the virus, to experience serious complications, and to die. The crisis has made the effects of structural racism and economic inequality even more obvious with the United States' long history of inequitable and inadequate access to quality health care and related needs for housing, education, employment, and community safety contributing to these outcomes.

If we are to address bias and violence, as well as inequities in health outcomes, it is critical that the short- and long-term responses to the COVID pandemic in Los Angeles include tracking and assessing the equity impacts in all facets of our response. This goal is consistent with the Countywide Equity Initiative, which we co-lead. Understanding root causes for hate crime and health inequities through this assessment will be essential if we are to transform the systems we rely on to support our entire, diverse community.

Our ability to recover from this crisis is directly connected to our ability to learn the lessons of our history, and to act on them with greater sense of urgency and equity than ever before.