

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Department of Ethnic Studies

Statement on Anti-Asian/Chinese Racism in the time of COVID-19

April 2, 2020, for immediate release. [pdf]

The spread of the COVID-19/novel coronavirus pandemic has revealed the persistence of racism in America with the rise of renewed **anti-Asian/Asian American (and especially anti-Chinese/Chinese American)**

discrimination. Hawai‘i is in no way immune to these **dynamics**.

The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM)

Department of Ethnic Studies, as a center

for the critical study of race, ethnicity, indigeneity, inequality, and social

justice that also teaches courses on Chinese in Hawai‘i and the US,

condemns all acts of harassment, bigotry, and prejudice directed at Asians and Asian Americans.

The labeling of COVID-19 as the “**Chinese virus**” by President Trump and others propels **hate crimes** based on old stereotypes of Chinese people as part of an imagined disease-carrying “**Yellow Peril**.” Throughout history and in the present, yellow peril rationalizes and justifies the US approach to China as an economic and global threat that must be contained with military might. Anti-Asian xenophobia will fail to mitigate COVID-19. The scapegoating of Asians distracts from the US government’s failure to mobilize the aggressive public health measures needed to meet the challenge of this pandemic. In the face of this crisis, it is imperative that we stand in solidarity with people throughout the world and collaborate on an international level.

Locally, our houseless and unsheltered population in Hawai‘i – already the highest per capita in the nation and comprised largely of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders – suffers disproportionately from state actions carried out during the emergency, as was revealed during the temporary **closure of park and harbor bathrooms** that defied federal guidelines and violated



basic human rights. Initiatives such as an end to homeless sweeps, universal health care, basic workers rights such as paid sick leave, and the release of prisoners living in dangerous conditions would begin to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities.

We also need to follow basic public health recommendations, including following the [Centers for Disease Control](#) guidelines on frequent handwashing and social distancing. The motto of the University of Hawai'i, "Ma luna a'e o nā lāhui a pau ke ola o ke kanaka / Above all nations is humanity," is perhaps more meaningful than ever at a time when we must come together as a global community to overcome an unprecedented threat to the health of our bodies and our societies. Our state motto "Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono / The life and sovereignty of the land is perpetuated through justice" reminds us that when we act in ways that are just, we ensure the continuity not only of humankind but also the earth itself. Grounded in our long history of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian cultural and political connection, our university is poised to offer uniquely Oceanic answers to the present crisis and those that will come after.

Further Resources :

Sign on to: STOP ANTI-ASIAN AND ANTI-ASIAN AMERICAN BIGOTRY!

<https://aaari.info/sign-on-to-stop-anti-asian-and-anti-asian-american-bigotry/>

Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) Update and statement on Anti-Asian Harassment:

https://mailchi.mp/aaastudies/update_regarding_covid19

Office of Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity (SEED) at UHM:

<http://www.hawaii.edu/diversity/>

Equal Employment Office and Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) Office of UH Mānoa and System: <https://www.hawaii.edu/offices/eo/>

For more information, contact [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Department of Ethnic Studies](#).