

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND
KATHRYN BARGER

May 4, 2021

Stemming Anti-Asian Hate During AAPI Heritage Month

Chinese nationals were the first Asian immigrants to arrive on American soil in significant numbers in the middle of the 19th century. Since then, from helping build the transcontinental railroad to protecting the nation during times of war, Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) have played critical roles in shaping our modern history. AAPIs' contributions can be found in every aspect of society. AAPIs are leaders in industry, politics, entertainment and culture, civic activism, education, and much more. Los Angeles County is proud to be home to more than 1.5 million AAPIs, who collectively speak more than 15 different languages. That is why the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (the Board) join in the celebration of AAPI Heritage Month every year during the month of May.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, fear-mongering, discrimination, and hate incidents and crimes against AAPIs have once again resurfaced. This scapegoating will have lasting repercussions, and, unfortunately, it is not the first AAPIs have experienced

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BARGER	_____
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a dangerous rise in hateful sentiments and physical violence. The history of AAPIs in America has been marked by rampant xenophobia, with the 19th century purges of Chinese Americans across the Pacific Northwest, the 20th century “Yellow Peril” rhetoric and Japanese American incarceration, and more recently the post-September 11 surge of Islamophobic sentiments and hate crimes. In 1982, Vincent Jen Chin was celebrating his upcoming wedding when he was murdered by white supremacists in Detroit, Michigan. In 1999, Joseph Santos Ileto, a Filipino American postal worker, was delivering mail when a self-professed white supremacist shot and killed him. In the past several months, brazen attacks and harassment of AAPIs in Los Angeles County have also been reported. In March 2021, a Buddhist temple in Little Tokyo was vandalized. In February 2021, a Chinese man in Rosemead was beaten with his own cane while at a bus stop, and ended up losing part of his finger from the injury. Asian, Latinx and immigrant residents in West Covina have been enduring multiple acts of hate and harassment over the past several months. During the same month, a 27-year-old Korean American man was physically assaulted by two men who yelled racial slurs during the attack. Hate incidents and attacks against AAPIs have occurred in Oakland, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and numerous other large and small cities, particularly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Acts of hate – crimes and incidents – are generally on the rise countywide and nationally, targeting other groups such as African Americans, Latinx, immigrants, LGBTQ+ and the Jewish community.

A common thread among many attacks has been the unwillingness or inability of bystanders to intervene. During an attack in New York City, an Asian woman was beaten in broad daylight on the sidewalk outside an apartment building without any assistance

or intervention. In fact, the security guard of the building closed the door on her. However, given that some of these attacks are life-threatening to the victim and potentially to any intervener, we should not ask bystanders to intervene without proper training. There are national and local community-based organizations who provide valuable, effective, and safe bystander intervention trainings during hate incidents and attacks. Studies have shown that bystander intervention training is effective in providing people with the skills to intervene in cases of sexual harassment and assault. As organizations like Hollaback! and Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles have demonstrated, the same concept could apply to various forms of discrimination and incidents of hate.

This Board is committed to stemming the tide of anti-Asian and all other hate acts in the County. Through a motion by Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Janice Hahn in 2019, the County established the Anti-Hate Initiative, otherwise known as the LA vs. Hate program. The program has successfully reached many victims of hate to provide them with counseling and various services. However, more must be done to aid people during or even before an attack escalates. Bystanders can intervene safely and effectively if they receive the proper training, and early intervention may help reduce the severity of attacks. Los Angeles County government has over 110,000 employees who could benefit from the bystander intervention trainings. County employees should be provided with accessible bystander intervention trainings in the unfortunate event that they encounter incidents of hate outside of the workplace and in their daily lives.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Proclaim May 2021 as “Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month” in Los

Angeles County; and

2. Direct the Director of the Department of Human Resources, in collaboration with labor partners, relevant County departments and County employee associations, to work with subject-matter experts and community organizations to explore the feasibility of providing anti-hate bystander intervention training to all Los Angeles County employees, and report back within 60 days. The report should include but is not limited to:

- a. Any potential cost associated with implementation of an online training module, accessible to all employees;
- b. A proposed timeline of implementation;
- c. Whether the training should be mandatory, in consultation with labor partners and County Counsel.

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