

A Note to our Community:

Anti-Asian racism and violent attacks on people of Asian descent have dramatically [increased](#) over the last year. While it is true that the [scapegoating](#) of Asians (for our purposes, “Asians” includes Asians, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders) in the United States is nothing new, and that anti-Asian sentiment has [always](#) existed in the United States, studies have shown that in the past year there has been a marked [increase](#) in violence against members of the Asian diaspora. In other words, belonging for Asian Americans is very complicated.

A [recent study](#) revealed that while hate crimes in 2020 decreased overall by 7 percent, those targeting Asian people rose by nearly 150 percent. And while Black Americans and Asian Americans are more likely than their white and Latinx and/or Hispanic counterparts to say they have been [subject to slurs or jokes](#) because of their race or ethnicity, Asian adults are the [most likely](#) to say they have experienced increased [harassment](#) since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak. Many attacks are gendered (white supremacy and misogyny are best friends) and/or focused on the elderly or disabled, and include verbal threats, spitting, sexual assault, stabbing/punching, face slashing, online doxxing, or business boycotts. East Asians [have reported less](#) direct discrimination (online and in person) compared to Southeast Asians and South Asians, despite the stigmatizing rhetoric which focused on China and later extended to other Asian countries. Available data on how COVID-19 is affecting indigenous people in the United States is an [ongoing disgrace](#), despite clear [disproportionate impacts](#) and demands for the full and ethical inclusion of American Indians and Alaska Natives in public health data.

In this challenging Covid-landscape, we ask our community to **stand together** against racism and [xenophobia](#). We need to develop lenses which include but extend beyond Black-white binaries and beyond assumptions that Asians are always newly arrived immigrants. We ask all members of our community to do their part, including with our young people, to communicate that Covid-19 was *first discovered* in Wuhan -- but that it is not a “Chinese” virus. We must fight to reframe the [narrative](#) which locates Covid as a racialized phenomenon. We must understand that violence is directed not only at those of east Asian descent, and that the [Asian diaspora](#) in our communities covers an entire continent. We must remember that in the United States, anti-Asian violence is fundamentally tied to mutually reinforcing histories of [white supremacy](#), [anti-blackness](#) and [colonization](#). These overlapping realities require our vigilance and action.

We need your help - everyone in our community has an active role to play!

- Commit to studying each other’s racial [histories](#) (including with your [kids](#)) -- pursue due diligence with [Asian scholars](#) who have been doing this work;
- Interrogate your [understanding](#) of white supremacy and [white supremacy cultures](#);

- [Read](#) extensively to better understand how the exclusion of Asians from racial discourse leads to people dismissing their relevance in racial justice agendas and Asians questioning their own legitimacy engaging in these efforts;
- Step up and explore how/if [internalized racism](#) may play a role in your consciousness;
- Delegitimize the deeply harmful "[model minority](#)" myth and listen to [Asian youth](#);
- Engage in *empowering and transformative bystander* [education](#) and [training](#) opportunities;
- [Donate](#) to important causes and [sign petitions](#) to show support;
- Reject simplistic [Black-Asian problem](#) tropes which absolve state violence, by [studying](#) how we have [historically come together](#), need each other, and [stand up for each other](#);
- Understand violent [anti-blackness in media](#) together with the casual concealing of [Christian nationalism](#) - the strongest predictor of xenophobic views

We believe that [Beloved Community](#) requires solidarity, deep [coalition-building](#), and relentless focus. The safety we want for the Asian community is the same safety we want for the Black community and for all marginalized communities. This letter is an opening and an invitation; it is written in a spirit of *radical love, with an awareness that we are grieving and traumatized at the same time that we joyfully resist ongoing violence. Please join us. Tell us what you would like to work on -- we are here and ready to partner with you. Several of our local community-based organizations are in the early process of planning a series of events and projects to begin in the near future -- please let us know if you would like to be involved. In the meantime, please click on the many hyperlinks/underlined words embedded throughout this note, deepen your knowledge base, and commit to taking action.

In solidarity,

SOMAsian
 SOMA Justice*
 Ilisia Kissner, Kol Rina
 MAPSO Youth Coalition
 SOMA Cross Cultural Works
 Kim Chan, local SOMA resident
 Tracy Sham, local SOMA resident
 SOMA Action Executive Committee
 Frank McGehee, Mayor, Maplewood
 Dean Dafis, Deputy Mayor, Maplewood
 Rachel Fisher, Member of SOMA Action
 Rabbi Jesse Olitzky, Congregation Beth El
 Sheena Collum, South Orange Village President
 Rabbi Mark Cooper, Oheb Shalom Congregation
 Barbara Velazquez, SOMA Against Hate Collective

Marcia Bloomberg, SOMA Action Religious Justice
Reverend Rick Boyer, Prospect Presbyterian Church
Rabbi Daniel M Cohen, DMin, Temple Sharey Tefilo-Israel
South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race
Ulrich Kremer, Devyani Guha, Rohan and Zubin Kremer Guha

**This note was written by Mia Charlene White (a Black woman of African American and Korean descent who is Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies @ The New School and who organizes with SOMA Justice in Northern NJ) with feedback from our community.*