

A Statement from the Progressive Democrats for Delaware Steering Committee Opposing Bigotry within the Democratic Party

Hate crimes [against Asian-Americans](#) have spiked during the coronavirus outbreak, and unfortunately Donald Trump isn't the only one to blame. As Democrats, it is our responsibility to speak up whenever we see racism and xenophobia, even if it comes from members and leaders of our own party. This is why it is disheartening that in 2020 we feel the need to call upon our fellow Democrats to denounce racism, xenophobia, and other forms of bigotry coming from our side of the political spectrum.

We were dismayed this week to see James Maravelias, the president of the Delaware AFL-CIO and a fellow Democrat, post a video of an Asian woman eating snapper soup with the caption, "China already working on COVID-20." We were even more disappointed to see his anti-Chinese statements continue when fellow union members and union organizers—including one of our steering committee members—argued that his post was xenophobic and racist. This is not acceptable.

To make matters worse, after initially participating in the comment thread of said post with a vague emoji that didn't specify whether his disgust was with the video or the meaning behind it, the Chairman of the Delaware Democratic Party issued a statement entitled "A Teachable Moment." In this statement he called the video "horrific" and falsely claimed that it depicted a woman "biting the head off of a live turtle." He then went on to praise the man who posted the video for his "commitment to diversity, inclusion, and opportunity for all through his work at the AFL-CIO and Delaware Building Trades and through what's in his heart." We wish the Chairman of the Delaware Democratic Party would have treated the union organizer who questioned his emoji response with the same compassion and empathy he showed the union president, who has a decade-long history of equally hateful public posts on his personal Facebook page.

As progressives, we believe that a strong labor movement is necessary for a better, more just society. That is why we oppose the neoliberal policies that have reduced union density and decimated working class communities, and why we fight for legislation like [card check](#) that will make it easier for workers to form unions. But we can not have a strong labor movement if we alienate many of the workers that are going to be needed to rebuild it. Whether it's the United Farm Workers, the United Auto Workers, United Students Against Sweatshops, or the Delaware Longshoremens, the American labor movement teaches us that an injury to one is an injury to all, and that we are always stronger together.

Likewise, if Democrats expect to defeat Trump and the GOP in November, we have to confront bigotry in all forms within our party. Focusing exclusively on Republicans' transgressions and bigotry while refusing to acknowledge our own does a grave disservice to the Democratic Party's diverse membership and alienates the very people we claim to represent. Engaging in or permitting attacks on each other based on race, nationality, or culture only serves to weaken our party and our movement.