

ADVANCING EQUITY, JUSTICE,
AND POWER BY DISMANTLING
SYSTEMIC RACISM AND BUILDING

TURNING A **MOMENT** INTO A
MOVEMENT

A MULTIRACIAL MOVEMENT TO
END ANTI-ASIAN AMERICAN AND
PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAPI) HATE.

**STOP
AAPI
HATE**

A Coalition Comes Together

In February 2020, a few weeks after the nation's first reported case of COVID-19, an Asian American middle school student in Los Angeles County was assaulted by a bully on the schoolyard. After accusing the child of spreading COVID-19, the classmate told him to "go back to China." When the child responded he wasn't Chinese, the bully punched him 20 times in the head. Upon learning of the incident, AAPI Equity Alliance – formerly the Asian Pacific Islander Policy and Planning Council – held a press conference with local officials to signal that anti-Asian hate would not be tolerated and began working with the child's family to ensure that their needs were being met.

The assault confirmed fears of community leaders that racism was rapidly spreading alongside COVID-19. "We were following news accounts and social media posts about this deadly virus," says Cynthia Choi, the co-executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), a civil rights nonprofit. "In the early days, even the media referred to COVID-19 as the 'Wuhan virus.' Immediately, we saw news accounts of Asians being verbally harassed and physically attacked, and we thought, 'This is going to get really bad.'"

This foreboding sense that hate incidents were on the rise would compel a small group of Asian American community leaders and activists to start Stop AAPI Hate, a coalition that tracks hate incidents and advocates for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

CAA was already fielding requests from frightened community members and local business owners growing anxious about the recent decline in business. The nonprofit itself was on the receiving end of hate mail sent to its offices in San Francisco Chinatown.

Meanwhile, Dr. Russell Jeung, a professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University (SFSU), had been compiling hundreds of global news accounts of anti-Asian hate. He emailed Choi about it just as she was in the middle of a CAA meeting where staff were discussing how to track the growing number of incidents.

Around the same time, AAPI Equity Alliance created a Google form for people to report hate incidents in an effort to understand what AAPI communities in Los Angeles were experiencing. Within a few days, it received a dozen reports of hate incidents in Los Angeles. Manjusha Kulkarni, AAPI Equity Alliance's executive director, knew Choi from working together on gender-based violence at the Center for the Pacific Asian Family. Soon, Kulkarni, Choi, and Jeung, along with Vincent Pan, CAA's other co-executive director, were putting their heads together to figure out how they could help their communities. To them, the climate felt similar to the racial animosity that followed 9/11 and the SARS outbreak in the early 2000s.

The Stop AAPI Hate Coalition

Stop AAPI Hate was founded by three organizations that share a deep understanding of the problem of anti-AAPI hate and a firm commitment to addressing root causes for systemic change. Our goal from the start was not only to meet the current moment but also to embrace cross-racial solidarity and healing.

[Chinese for Affirmative Action \(CAA\)](#) was founded in 1969 to protect the civil and political rights of Chinese Americans and to advance multiracial democracy in the United States. CAA advocates for systemic change that protects immigrant rights, promotes language diversity, and remedies racial and social injustice. For five decades CAA has challenged systemic discrimination to advance civil rights and equality, created coalitions that bridge traditional boundaries, and prioritized the needs of our community's most marginalized members.

[AAPI Equity Alliance](#) is a coalition of more than 40 community-based organizations that serve and represent the 1.5 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the greater Los Angeles area, with a particular focus on low-income, immigrant, refugee, and other vulnerable populations. Formerly known as the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), the coalition grew out of an organizing process that began in the 1970s.

[The San Francisco State University Asian American Studies Department \(SFSU AAS\)](#) launched in 1968 to provide interdisciplinary approaches in teaching, community service, and research to address the forces that shape the lives of Asian Americans. Building on a legacy of solidarity and resistance, AAS launched the Asian American Research Initiative to (1) analyze relevant social issues; (2) disseminate analyses centering the voices of Asian Americans; (3) empower our students and communities; and (4) promote social change around race relations.

"We've seen this happen before. There's historic precedent," Kulkarni says. "We knew that this intersection of U.S.-Asia foreign policy and the pandemic would result in interpersonal attacks."

Together, they wrote a letter to California's attorney general to ask if his office would track anti-Asian hate incidents. When the attorney general's office declined, citing California's policy to obtain data from local law enforcement, they decided to do it themselves.

Stop AAPI Hate launched on March 19, 2020 with a reporting form online in multiple languages. Without any funding for the project, the staff from the organizations in the coalition worked together to create the form, modeled after one at the Southern Poverty Law Center. The activists were not sure if anyone would visit their site, but in the first week, nearly 100 people a day filed reports. Within the first two weeks, more than 1,000 people had reported incidents.

"We were stunned. We knew there was a pattern, but we didn't expect such an overwhelming response," Jeung says. "It really drove home how pervasive this was — and that people wanted their voices heard."



The Power of Data

From the beginning, those working on Stop AAPI Hate aimed to provide a safe space for people — especially those with limited proficiency in English — to share their experiences in their preferred languages. Stop AAPI Hate knew that many people in their communities didn't feel comfortable making reports to the authorities for a number of reasons including language barriers, distrust of the government, and fear of retaliation or of compromising their immigration status.

Combined, the three founding organizations behind Stop AAPI Hate have over 150 years of historic achievements in civil rights advocacy, grassroots movement building, and community service. As trusted organizations, they were well positioned to come together and move quickly to meet the needs of their communities in a time of crisis.

The Stop AAPI Hate team prioritized making its reporting form accessible in many languages. The form is available in English and a dozen Asian languages, including Chinese (both simplified and traditional), Hmong, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese. It is also available in the Pacific Islander languages of Marshallese, Samoan, and Tongan.

Recognizing that some Pacific Islanders feel that the term "AAPI" erases them, the coalition sought out Pacific Islander leaders for their feedback and concerns. While the current wave of hate during the COVID-19 pandemic has primarily been directed at East Asians, Pacific Islanders have also faced discrimination historically as well as during this time. The coalition's intent in using the term AAPI is to be inclusive.

From its launch in March 2020 through the end of September 2021, Stop AAPI Hate received a total of 10,370 self-reported hate incidents against Asian

Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. The collection of this data has enabled the coalition to understand what was happening, where, and to whom, and then to use that information to advocate for resources and change.

"We've received incident reports from all 50 states and the District of Columbia," Kulkarni says. "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are living in fear every day. They're worried about their elderly relatives going to the grocery store, to the pharmacy. They're worried for themselves and for their children and whether they should be going to school because of what has been happening."

Without data and documentation, the leaders of Stop AAPI Hate believed that people outside of AAPI communities would minimize what was happening, and treat them as isolated incidents, not a widespread pattern. Stop AAPI Hate employs the aggregated data it collects to raise awareness with the media, the general public, and lawmakers. Here was proof of what so many Asian Americans suspected was happening based on incidents they heard about anecdotally.

Right away, Stop AAPI Hate began analyzing the data. On March 25, 2020, it issued its first report based on the first week of data. Since then, the coalition has released a total of 20 reports. The reports frame the issue of hate as one of structural racism. Some reports focus on geographic areas while others on specific populations such as [youth](#) or [women and girls](#). The coalition also studied different aspects of hate, including how political rhetoric is tied to anti-Asian hate, and the [mental health implications](#) for victims and survivors. Data analysis quantifies a community's collective experiences while storytelling humanizes individual experiences and drives systems change. Stop AAPI Hate offers both to influence hearts and minds.

As a whole, the data illustrates the sheer magnitude of anti-Asian racism. It also paints a detailed picture of what racism can look like. Hate incidents against women make up nearly two-thirds of the reports submitted to Stop AAPI Hate; children are the victims in 10% of the incident reports; seniors represent 7% of the reports.

These numbers are shocking, but they represent a small fraction of the incidents that occur. "This is just the tip of the iceberg. For every incident that gets reported, many more go unreported. We know that the true numbers are higher," says Aggie Yellow Horse, a professor of Asian Pacific American Studies at Arizona State University and Stop AAPI Hate's director of data and research.

The data also shows a clear correlation between the rhetoric of politicians and elected officials and the rise in hate incidents. A quarter of the incidents included a perpetrator using language similar to President Trump's, like "Wuhan virus," "China Virus," or "Kung Flu."

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"The president's insistence on the term 'Chinese virus' demonstrates how words matter," Jeung says. "The term racializes the disease so that it's not simply biological but Chinese in nature, and stigmatizes the people so that Chinese are viewed as the disease carriers and the ones infecting others."

"People understand the cues," adds Kulkarni. "It's not a dog whistle. It's a megaphone."

National Report Data (through September 30, 2021)

**1 in 5
Asian Americans
have experienced
hate in the last
twelve months.**



Hate incidents reported by women make up 62.0% of all reports.



Public streets (31.2%) and businesses (26.8%) remain the top sites of anti-AAPI hate.



Chinese report the most hate incidents (42.7%) followed by Koreans (16.1%), Filipinx (9.0%), Japanese (8.2%), and Vietnamese (7.8%)



Asian Americans with a high school education or less experienced hate at twice the rate of college graduates.

Another insight from the data: the majority of incidents taking place are not hate crimes. A hate crime is narrowly defined as a crime for which one can be arrested, and where bias was observed. In discussing anti-Asian hate, news outlets and social media posts too often focus on the most extreme acts of violence. But over 90% of the incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate don't qualify as hate crimes.

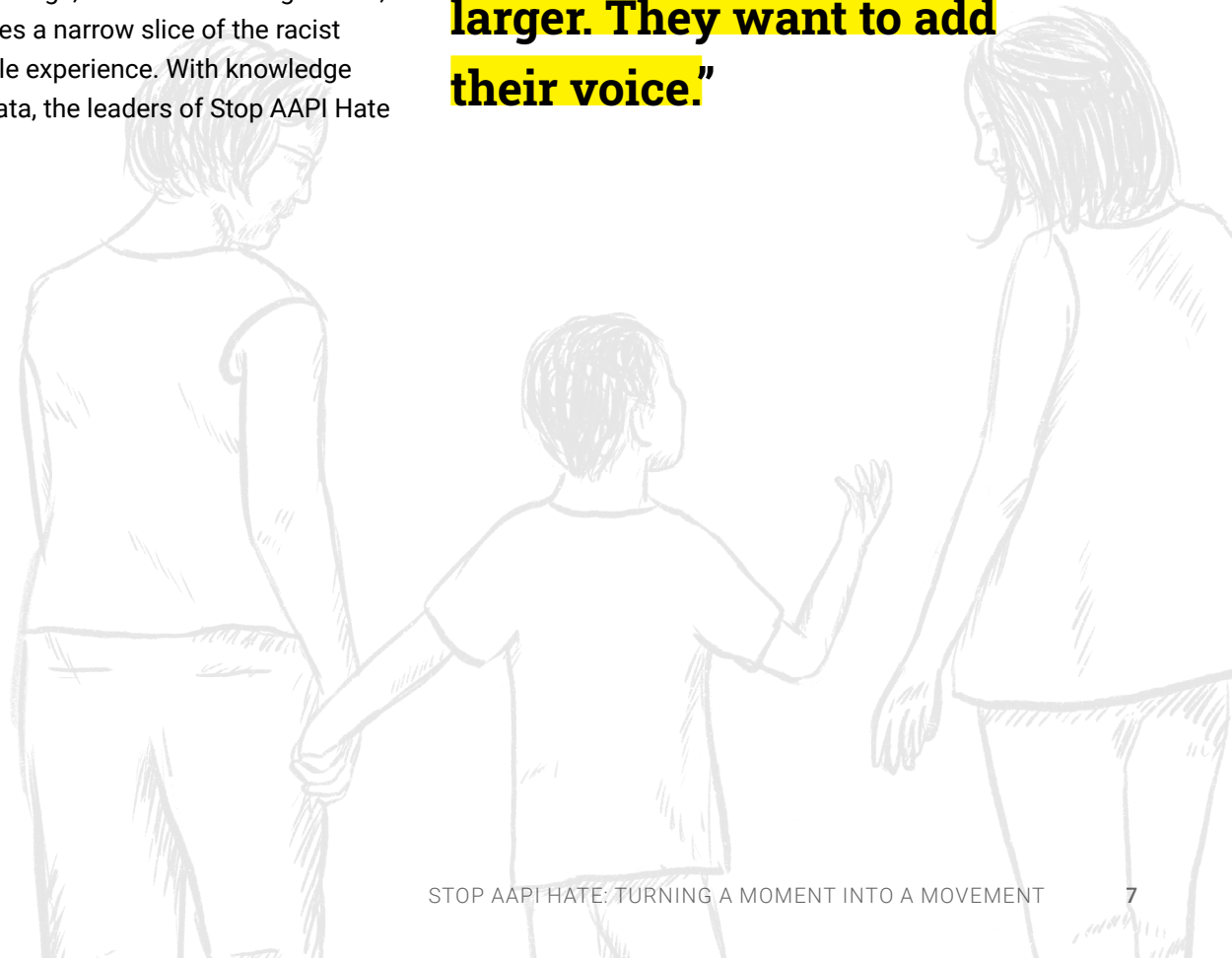
The data shows that everyday acts of racism — like verbal harassment and shunning — are frequent and pervasive. Most of them take place in public spaces: inside businesses such as grocery stores and restaurants, on public transit, in workplaces, or on streets and sidewalks. Even though these incidents are not crimes, they can still be traumatizing to victims and survivors and their loved ones, and to their communities at large. One out of five Stop AAPI Hate respondents display signs of racial trauma, which involves three or more long-term symptoms such as anxiety or hypervigilance.

This fact informed the coalition's decision to press for broader, systemic change, not hate crime legislation, which only addresses a narrow slice of the racist incidents that people experience. With knowledge gleaned from the data, the leaders of Stop AAPI Hate

set out to bring attention to the issue, and advocate for community resources, education, and civil rights measures.

"People's individual stories matter," Choi says. "Community members tell us that one reason that they report to us is that they want to be part of something larger. They want to add their voice. There is a sense among AAPI communities that we've been invisible and unheard. And collectively, we are coming together and finding ways to challenge the systems that have made us invisible for so long."

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Changing the Narrative & Advocating for Civil Rights

As Stop AAPI Hate began appearing in the media, the coalition quickly became the go-to source of information for mainstream and Asian language media outlets covering COVID-19-related incidents of anti-Asian hate. The leaders have done hundreds of interviews with local, national, and international outlets including Time, NBC News, PBS NewsHour, and ABC News. Through June 2021, Stop AAPI Hate has been mentioned over 40,500 times in the news. The leaders and other staff have also spoken at more than 120 workplace programs, community webinars, and public events.

When speaking, Stop AAPI Hate makes sure to provide historical and political context for what is happening. In this way, it has shifted attitudes in the general public to acknowledge that not only is anti-AAPI hate a problem, it's a long-standing one.

"We countered the idea that racism is limited to random incidents of hate. The pandemic and racist rhetoric associated with it surfaced and escalated new levels of hate and violence, but the challenges are longstanding, deeper, and systemic," Jeung says. "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have always faced systemic racism and systemic inequities."

For example, the racialization of U.S. foreign policy has consequences for AAPIs. This includes the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II; the war on terror on Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities; and colonialism in the Pacific Islands.

Shining a light on patterns and sources of anti-AAPI racism is just a first step in the path to long-term change. Stop AAPI Hate also advocates for solutions at the government level to strengthen civil rights and address systemic racism and inequities.

Major Achievements

- Shifted attitudes and knowledge in the U.S. population that anti-AAPI hate is a problem.
- Helped lead the passage of \$166.5 million API Equity Budget in California to support all communities affected by hate.
- Released 50-state survey documenting hundreds of state, federal, county, and municipal resolutions passed in opposition to anti-AAPI racism.
- Issued 20 reports focused on mental health, women, youth, specific geographic areas, and national trends.
- Testified to Congress, the White House, United Nations, and World Bank.
- Provided analysis and policy recommendations to the federal government.
- Directed funding and resources to victims and survivors of hate throughout the U.S.
- Organized youth through the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Campaign to bring attention to school safety measures.

The coalition leaders have provided expert consultation to government officials and elected leaders at all levels, pushing for policies and practices that recognize and support the needs of AAPI communities. They have testified to Congress, and shared their data with the White House, United Nations officials, and the World Bank. Prominent elected officials, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (CA-12), Senator Chuck Schumer (NY), California Governor Gavin Newsom, Congresswoman Judy Chu (CA-27) who chairs the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), Congresswoman Grace Meng (NY-6), Congressman Ted Lieu (CA-33), as well as other members of CAPAC have all cited and promoted Stop AAPI Hate.

In late 2020, Stop AAPI Hate advised the Biden presidential transition team on the issue of anti-Asian hate. Shortly after taking office in January 2021,

President Biden issued a memorandum condemning anti-Asian racist rhetoric and directed the Department of Justice to work with community organizations. He also reinstated the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Since then, Stop AAPI Hate has continued to meet with the U.S. attorney general, the secretary of homeland security, the secretary of health and human services, and U.S. Department of Justice senior staff and to provide analysis and policy recommendations to the White House, Domestic Policy Council, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. State Department, the Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Transportation.

Stop AAPI Hate has urged the federal government to:

1

Strengthen federal civil rights laws that address discrimination in public places.

2

Dedicate resources to local communities, including community safety programs and in-language support for those in need of mental health, legal, and immigration services.

3

Prioritize language justice across the federal government, which would address language access barriers.

4

Pause the Department of Justice's China Initiative, which subjects Chinese American scientists and others to racial profiling, surveillance, and wrongful prosecutions.

In California, Stop AAPI Hate provided recommendations on proposed legislation and new policies. The leaders have held meetings and press conferences with Governor Newsom to call attention to the sharp rise in anti-Asian hate incidents and to discuss its impact on AAPI communities. They have advised California state leaders, including Attorney General Rob Bonta and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, on how to approach and address the issue of anti-AAPI racism.

Stop AAPI Hate also partnered with other organizations across California to advocate for community-based solutions. This advocacy led to Governor Newsom signing the API Equity Budget in July 2021, a historic three-year investment of \$166.5 million to address AAPI hate incidents. The majority of the funding – \$110 million – will go to community organizations providing victim services and violence prevention programs in AAPI languages. The passage

of the API Equity Budget was a major success, with Stop AAPI Hate working closely with state leadership including Assembly member Phil Ting, the California API Legislative Caucus and its chair State Senator Richard Pan, and the California Commission on APIA Affairs.

“This funding is essential in addressing both the pandemic-related hate our community is facing and the racial inequities that have too long shaped the lives of California’s AAPI communities,” says Vincent Pan, co-executive director of CAA.

As this is a huge milestone for California, the coalition sees it as a model for all levels of government, as well as the philanthropic community, which have not typically provided this type of needed support to AAPI communities.

Stop AAPI Hate's Reach

40,500
mentions in
online news

(through June 2021)

6.6 million
engagements across
online news

(from January 2020 to May 2021)

2.3 million
mentions on
social media

(through May 2021)

Mapping the Way Forward

As Stop AAPI Hate presses forward, the group has thoughtfully mapped out a longer-term vision for societal change. Building off the legacies of prior generations of AAPI activists, and seizing on the unprecedented attention from policymakers,

corporations, and the media in this moment, Stop AAPI Hate strives to make visible and address the problems that have largely been invisible outside of AAPI communities.

Stop AAPI Hate has identified core issues to drive change:

Education Equity · Civil Rights · Community Safety

It will achieve this through the core strategies of:

Data and Research · Policy and Advocacy

Capacity Building, rooted in movement building · Narrative Change

Building a more just and equitable future starts with our education system. In the summer of 2020, Stop AAPI Hate started a youth campaign, working with high school students across the country to understand how anti-AAPI racism has affected them and to propose new ways to protect students from racial prejudice with protocols that address bullying in schools.

The Stop AAPI Hate Youth Campaign has helped author a [report](#); organized conferences for youth; and sent a [letter](#), which was endorsed by California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, to every school district in California asking for educators to keep AAPI students safe from

bullying and hate incidents. The youth recommended that districts implement school-based multilingual anonymous reporting systems, provide training for teachers and staff, and utilize restorative practices. They have also pushed for ethnic studies.

In building a movement for equity and justice, education equity demands the centering of AAPI and BIPOC issues, histories, and voices in the classroom — ensuring that all students learn about the shared and unique experiences of AAPIs. Stop AAPI Hate sees ethnic studies as a preventative way to address racism.

Mission Statement

Stop AAPI Hate advances equity, justice, and power by dismantling systemic racism and building a multiracial movement to end anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate.

“Ethnic studies provides a way for young people to unlearn racism,” Jeung says. “Everyone, including people of color, hold implicit biases. Learning about the histories and experiences of different communities helps young people develop empathy and cultural competency. And for AAPI youth, it builds pride and confidence. We need to hear about our experiences.”

In the area of community safety, the coalition envisions building a strong network of culturally-competent organizations across AAPI communities and supporting local leaders to take on systems change work. When people experience hate, they need support, both rapid response and ongoing, and local organizations are best positioned to provide it.

“It’s really important to lift up community-based organizations who understand AAPI communities, who work in these communities, and who are from these communities. They need to be part of addressing these solutions that are specific to their communities,” Choi says.



Stop AAPI Hate will provide technical assistance to support grassroots organizations leading the response across the country, helping them build their capacity. It will share data with them, along with multilingual educational resources, guidance on discussing anti-AAPI racism and its history; “know your rights” materials on public accommodation laws; and other information about legislation and policies that affect civil rights.

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As part of this theory of change, Stop AAPI Hate will continue to meet with members of other national organizations and collaboratives such as the Asian American National Table, the [Racial Equity Alliance](#), and the [Shared Liberation Network](#), to identify and promote shared priorities. The coalition has also conducted listening sessions with Pacific Islander organizations and leaders and will continue to engage with them to forge meaningful strategic partnerships with communities that have historically been under-resourced.

Countering racism and racial trauma requires investments in grassroots community safety and social service infrastructure; culturally-competent and holistic victim services; violence prevention programs; and other non-carceral solutions that address the root causes of racism and misogyny. A restorative justice framework is key to building cross-racial solidarity and shared understanding across differences. In order to effectively address anti-Asian and anti-Pacific Islander racism, Stop AAPI Hate recognizes that it must work to end all forms of systemic racism leveled at Black, Indigenous, and all communities of color.

“We need a whole societal approach to this issue. This includes making sure that we provide support for victims and survivors, but also that we advocate for systems that humanize and protect the safety of all people,” Kulkarni says.

“Anti-AAPI racism is just one part of a whole system and society that fuels hate against not just us, but against other communities. We must forge a diverse democracy that builds power, equity, and justice for all.”

Acknowledgments

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Contact

For more information about Stop AAPI Hate, please visit our website at stopaapihate.org.

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