

April 21, 2020

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Ashley Moody
Office of the Attorney General
State of Florida
PL-01 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

Dear Attorney General Moody:



On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Florida, I write to express our grave concern over the increasing incidents of hate, discrimination, and violence against Asian Americans—a community of all immigration statuses. We urge your office to send a public message that attacks against Asian American communities and the scapegoating of Chinese American community members, in particular, is unacceptable and that Asians are an integral part of U.S. communities.

4343 W. Flagler St.
Miami, FL
(786) 363-2700
acluf.org

Micah W. Kubic, Ph.D.
Executive Director

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take an increasing toll on our country, Asians in America have experienced alarming levels of harassment as well as physical attacks. In the timespan of two weeks, Asian Americans reported experiencing over 1,100 racist acts. Reports of physical violence against Asians—and those perceived to be Asian—in the United States have exponentially increased. In Davie, FL, on March 15th, an Asian woman who works as a musician received harassing and racist text messages saying that she would not be hired anymore until she surrenders her "Chinese passport and renounce your Chinese citizenship." Around March 13th, in Miami, FL, a video shows an elderly Asian woman being chased with a bottle of Purell and a man yelling, "Come here! You need some hand sanitizer. Sanitize your ass!" These stories and many more like them nation-wide reflect an alarming trend that shows no signs of slowing.

This is not the first time that marginalized communities—including people of Asian descent—have faced increasing harassment and violence in the face of a national emergency. After a wave of immigration from China to California in the late 1800s, Asians in the United States were targeted using racist stereotypes that developed into policies and laws, such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which was not fully repealed until national quotas were eliminated in 1952. During World War II, the U.S. government actively fabricated smears against Japanese people in the United States, including in filings before the Supreme Court, resulting in the mass incarceration of people of Japanese descent, including U.S. citizens, in internment camps. Just days after September 11, Muslim, Arab, Iranian, Middle Eastern, and South Asian communities faced a spike of hate crimes, including some homicides; the numbers have never actually subsided and discriminatory policies followed. With the rise of COVID-19, fear is once again driving racism and creating an environment rampant with acts of hate and violence in which many Asians in America are afraid to go out to seek basic necessities.

COVID-19 is devastating communities all over the United States. Fear and anxiety are a constant, which is why it is so important that people don't have to fear being targets of racist attacks on top of the pandemic. It is the duty of public officials to uphold the civil

and constitutional rights of all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, income, or any other protected characteristic. As in past moments of national crisis, the leadership of our elected officials will shape not only the impact of the moment itself, but also the ongoing impacts of racism in our communities. The silence of our elected officials, or worse, their tacit support of those engaged in harassment and violence, contributes to this environment and emboldens these attacks. No one should be afraid to seek out their basic necessities, let alone be harassed or attacked.

We urge you to issue statements declaring that hate, racism, harassment, and discrimination are unacceptable and send the message that you will not tolerate the singling out of anyone based on ethnicity and scapegoating. In these times, your leadership is crucial to the treatment of your community members and their safety and security. Those engaged in such racist, hateful behavior must know that their actions will not be tolerated, and those impacted must know that as individuals, families, and communities, they will be supported and protected.



In order to prevent the mistakes of the past, we urge your office to use the tools at its disposal to denounce the spread of xenophobia and racism and the misinformation driving them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Micah W. Kubic". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Micah W. Kubic, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Cc: Governor Ron DeSantis