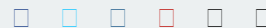


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Stand with the Asian American community against hatred

May 2, 2020 - by Debra Gore-Mann



MGN

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the idea that we are all interconnected and that our success relies heavily on seeing one another's humanity. By acting in love for one another we can shed our scarcity mentality and collectively protect the most vulnerable in our community.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric from people at the highest levels of our government seeks to fuel division by going back to their playbook of hatred and fear.

As a bi-racial person of Asian and African descent, I refuse to allow my fellow Asian Americans to be a convenient scapegoat for this kind of division at a time when our collective cooperation is most needed. It is indecent and unjust for Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), who represent a wide, diverse, diaspora of people, to have to wither under a storm of physical assaults, hostile stares, xenophobia, shunning and dismissive slurs.

To be clear, the coronavirus has no connection to race or ethnicity. The virus does not discriminate, people do.

For too long, the narrative of "yellow peril" and fear-based policies against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been used to justify racist policies from the Chinese Exclusion Act to Japanese internment to the Muslim travel ban. Or, when it's convenient, the AAPI community has been

elevated as the “model minority” to disparage Black and Latino communities and support racist policies to justify inequity.

Now, Asian American communities are being used once again to create an enemy for the current health and economic crisis that plagues us, leading to cases of anti-Asian hate documented every day. All are a grim reminder of the legacy of White supremacy that’s built into American life, that exists to tell me and my family that we do not belong and we—different races—should not work together.

But, I refuse to accept this.

Instead, I choose to look towards the Chinatowns, Little Tokyos, and Little Manilas where AAPIs across the country are actively fueling our economy, providing for one another, and contributing to the cultural fabric of our communities.

I find inspiration from the Chinese American community in Seattle that is actively drawing from its connections in China to help support a health care system that was so ill-prepared for this moment. I support the quick mobilization by Chinese for Affirmative Action, Asian Pacific Planning and Policy Council (known as A3PCON), and San Francisco State University’s Asian American Studies Department to stop AAPI hate.

And most importantly, I draw inspiration from the social movements that came before, that demonstrate to me that when we stand together across communities, we can prevail.

But we must remain vigilant against the insidious nature of fear. This fear that tries to distract us from the incompetence of our federal government and the failure of decades of policies that led to inequities that are now being further magnified by this pandemic. Let us reject this fear that tells us to hold on more tightly to what is ours because we only exist in a zero-sum game. Let us reject this fear that tells us to stay silent!

Let us move well beyond our fear and our silence. Let’s build a fierceness in energizing all our communities to draw close to our AAPI friends, colleagues, and family members and tell others to stop the hate and xenophobia. Let us stand together and reject discrimination and racism against all Communities of Color that pervade our institutions, and that results in African Americans getting infected at alarmingly high rates.

Let’s reject the policies being written today that cut off farmworker communities from safety-net services and prevent Individual Taxpayer Identification Number holders from receiving federal aid.

Racialized structures work because they rely on our buying into the belief that individuals must make it on their own and we are “less than” if we believe otherwise.

I am reminded of Martin Luther King’s saying: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Those four words, “silence of our friends,” hurt us much more deeply than screamed epithets, or senseless acts of our enemies. We can put our guard up against our enemies. We are in some ways prepared when we are disrespected by those who are ignorant and want to create fear. We can rationalize the behavior of our enemies because we know they seek to hurt us. I can be strong in the midst of blatant hatred.

However, the silence of our friends is what we remember and what eventually breaks our hearts.

Debra Gore-Mann is president and CEO of the Greenlining Institute.

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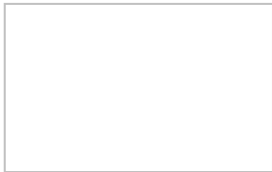
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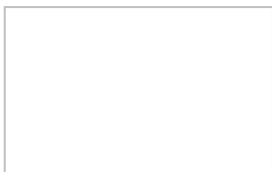
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