The Colorado Health Foundation™

Standing in Solidarity with Asian and Pacific Islander Coloradans

In April of last year, we signed Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy's call to take action against racist targeting as the coronavirus began to spread. Nearly a year into living with the impacts of the pandemic, we are still seeing how misinformation and hateful rhetoric can harm Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) people and communities.

In the shadow of another year's Lunar New Year celebration, individuals, journalists and community organizations are reporting increased incidences of discrimination, harassment, hate and violence towards members of the AAPI community throughout the country. Since COVID-19 first made headlines, there have been more than Show phone/" target="_blank">3,000 self-reported incidences of discrimination against AAPIs nationally. Some have occurred in Colorado, in communities across the state, and to people on our staff.

These incidents are not new. AAPI communities in Colorado have faced a long history of xenophobia-fueled discrimination. For example, Denver's LoDo neighborhood was once a thriving Chinatown – until Colorado's first race riot in 1880 decimated the community – and Japanese-Americans from the West Coast were forcibly relocated to concentration camps in Granada, Colorado during World War II.

This time of national strife has simply intensified AAPI communities' longstanding experiences of being othered. The shared suffering brought on by the

coronavirus pandemic is no excuse to frame members of these communities as scapegoats for a public health crisis worsened by our nation's failure to prioritize the basic needs of people over the economic benefits reaped by the few.

We stand in solidarity with our AAPI colleagues to denounce racist-driven behaviors, practices and policies that unfairly target members of AAPI communities.

We agree, unequivocally, with The Center for Effective Philanthropy's call that funders must "interrogate whether their organization is inadvertently perpetuating inequality through erasing AAPI voices and perspectives." We urge funders across Colorado to heed their call.

Additionally, we signed on to The East Bay Community Foundation's Statement, "A Call for Unity: Ending Violence in Asian American Communities," which implores foundations and nonprofits to, "address the fundamental inequities that are built into a system that reinforces institutionalized racism so that we can finally promote understanding, caring, and true community safety."

In June of last year, we answered a call to funders from the Association of Black Foundation Executives for action on anti-Black racism with three things we're doing to bring racial justice into focus within our health equity work. These commitments remain true today as we consider our work with all communities of color:

- **Examine our use of power.** We will share our power with groups that center their efforts on health equity and those that have historically had less power or privilege. We will engage with folks who look and think differently than we do.
- **Invest in organizations led by and/or centered on people of color.** We will continue to identify partners, build relationships and provide organizations with general operating and capacity building support. We will invest in

advocacy efforts that ensure the interests and priorities of people of color – Arab/Middle Eastern, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Indigenous/Native American and multiracial communities – are front and center in shaping policy decisions.
- **Fuel community-led solutions.** We will listen more than we speak. We will continue to solicit input from communities to inform our investment strategies. We will seek out ideas from people with lived experience. We will empower solutions designed by and with communities of color and people living on low incomes.

We are committed to building and deepening relationships with AAPI communities, organizations and leaders working to advance health equity across Colorado. We are engaging in dialogue with our staff, as well as the larger philanthropic sector, about how we can support solutions emerging from AAPI communities.

The challenges and injustices reinforced by the coronavirus pandemic will continue to affect AAPI Coloradans, as well as other under-resourced communities of color, for years to come. Racism is a public health threat, and we have a responsibility to stand in solidarity with communities of color as a means to protect the health and well-being of all Coloradans.

To learn more about how you can stand with Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, view these resources about how to be an effective intervener and ally to help fight the virus of xenophobia, as recommended by The Colorado Health Foundation's Asian Affinity Group:

- Anti-bullying organization: Act To Change
- Storytelling project: Asian Americans Advancing Justice's "Stand Against Hate"
- Webinar: "I'm Not a Virus! Asian Americans' Perspectives on COVID 19" (The Center for Community Health Education Research and Service, Inc.)

- Mental health resource: “Statement on Anti-Asian Violence” (Mental Health Center of Denver)

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