



ON THE FRONT LINES OF HATE:

Regional Anti-AAPI Hate Approaches



TAF

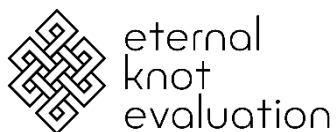
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FOREWORD

Hate is not a new phenomenon in any community, and the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community is no exception. For decades, AAPIs have faced discrimination, racism, and violence in the United States and other parts of the world. From the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, to the hate and violence experienced by Sikh and South Asian Americans following September 11 and the recent surge of anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, the AAPI community has endured a long history of xenophobia and bigotry.

Despite these challenges, the AAPI community has remained resilient and determined to fight against hate and discrimination. Through activism, education, and community building, AAPI leaders and organizations have made significant strides in raising awareness about these issues and advocating for change. However, the recent surge of hate crimes against the AAPI community has highlighted the ongoing need for greater attention and action to address these issues to create a safer and more equitable society for all.

The Asian American Foundation (TAAF) aims to provide a platform for AAPI voices to share their experiences and perspectives on hate and discrimination. By shedding light on these issues, we hope to create a better understanding of the challenges faced by the AAPI community and inspire meaningful action towards greater social justice and equality. In September 2021, we launched an Anti-Hate and Belonging (AHB) initiative. Among TAAF's core AHB investments was a focus on addressing anti-AAPI hate locally through a pilot initiative supporting on-the-ground partner organizations. These pilot "Action Centers" were envisioned to serve as hubs for addressing hate in their respective cities—Chicago, Oakland, and New York.

Building upon a long history of service and support for the AAPI community, a primary focus of each Action Center was to engage with partners in diverse sectors, including local government, media, nonprofit, and business to provide resources and support for communities impacted by anti-Asian AAPI hate, as well as work with TAAF and its Anti-Hate National Network to surface and standardize intervention and prevention measures for future efforts. Given the urgency to distribute resources and support against an escalating backdrop of hate, we continued to iterate on our AAPI Action Center approach in real time.

As part of an early assessment, we engaged our evaluation and learning partners to document progress and illuminate field practices—not only from AAPI Action Centers—but also from the work of other AAPI community-level efforts to combat hate across the country. Our goal was to ensure that we were drawing on decades of experience from the community, lifting up common challenges, and working together to envision a path forward that mobilized resources to strengthen community resilience. This paper is the outcome of the fuller set of interviews conducted by our evaluation and learning team. We are grateful for their efforts, and especially to each organization that participated in interviews with them.

We want to acknowledge and appreciate the passion with which AAPI partners are engaged in this critical work, and their wisdom and insights about what is needed to continue to address challenges and strengthen regional responses. We invite you to engage with the findings in this paper as part of an ongoing, urgent conversation about how to collectively invest in the capacity and resilience of local partners on the front lines of responding to and preventing hate. TAAF is deeply committed to continuing to stand in solidarity and partnership, to ensure that AAPI communities do not only belong, but prosper.

—TAAF Chief Executive Officer Norman Chen & the Anti-Hate team

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, the evaluation team at Eternal Knot Evaluation and Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) want to express our profound gratitude to each of the interview respondents whose insights shape the findings in this paper. Photos used on the cover and throughout this paper are from many of these organization's social media accounts. We have included a full list of respondents at the conclusion of this paper and want to emphasize how sincerely inspired we are by their dedication to the Asian American and Pacific Islander American communities they both represent and serve.

The xenophobic rhetoric accompanying the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a new wave of discrimination and violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) living in the United States. Beyond high-profile mass shootings of AAPIs in the last few years, a national report released in Spring 2022 by #StopAAPIHate documents high levels of hate incidents against AAPIs in all corners of the country. Against a backdrop of centuries of AAPI-targeted violence and oppression, these incidents have cascaded into a sense of fear and vulnerability within AAPI communities across the country.

AAPI communities have sprung forward in response. With urgency, a mosaic of AAPI organizations have been redoubling efforts to support the mental and physical health needs of those bearing the brunt of hateful incidents, mobilizing networks to navigate victims to needed services, and advocating for attention and resources to protect community members from hate incidents. National AAPI organizations, racial justice allies and, in some cases, public sector agencies have also stepped forward in partnership and support.

THIS PAPER

Importantly, this paper is not focused on AAPI hate. Rather, it is focused on the strength, innovation and resiliency of those on the front lines combatting it. How are different partners navigating and responding to AAPI hate in their respective communities? What potentially replicable approaches and resources are emerging? What are we learning about the nuances of cultural and place-based context?

The findings presented in this paper draw upon 34 semi-structured interviews with representatives from such front-line organizations. They were carried out in summer 2022 as part of an evaluation commissioned by The Asian American Foundation (TAAF) as part of its Anti-Hate and Belonging investments.* The interviews were designed to explore and unpack approaches and challenges faced by those deeply engaged in responding to anti-AAPI hate, and to invite community-centered insights about opportunities for strengthening efforts underway.

The collective efforts summarized here offer a rich picture of regional AAPI-centered response and leadership. They also offer a potential framework for AAPI communities, their partners, and their funders to think about meaningfully building community capacity and resilience to respond to and prevent hate in the months and years to come.

This paper is not focused on AAPI hate. Rather, it is focused on the strength, innovation, and resiliency of those on the front lines combatting it.

*Specifically, in 2022, TAAF engaged [Social Policy Research Associates](#) and [Eternal Knot Evaluation](#) to serve as evaluation and learning partners for its investment in three pilot AAPI Action Centers supported through TAAF's Anti-AAPI Hate and Belonging Initiative. The evaluation approach was designed to document action and surface learning, not only from AAPI Action Centers, but also from the work of other AAPI community-level efforts to combat hate across the country. A full list of interview respondents who informed this paper, nominated by TAAF staff and AAPI Action Center grantees, are included in the Appendix.

A Shared Foundation:

Reflections from the Front Lines

AAPAPI hate responses vary widely by region, naturally shaped by the nuances of local context and accompanying challenges faced. In telling the story of their work, however, interview respondents offered some common themes that reflect a shared foundation for anti-AAPAPI hate work.

Resoundingly, the first was simply **the urgency of the moment**. Every single respondent shared examples of horrific acts of anti-AAPAPI violence that had taken place against members of their community in the past two years—in ethnic neighborhoods, at AAPAPI-owned businesses, within schools, at homes, on public transportation, and on the streets.

The impact of these incidents continues to extend far beyond the victims and their families to the broader community. Further, many underscored that—beyond specific hate crimes or acts of violence—a much more prevalent and under-reported category of continuing hate incidents and harassment is eroding a sense of AAPAPI safety and belonging. Some observed new levels of fear affecting the daily living of AAPAPIs, with AAPAPI elders, in particular, communicating a reticence to leave their homes or take public transportation out of concern for their safety.

Another consistent theme, echoed across almost all respondents, centered on the **complex and layered nature of safety and belonging**. “Hate,” emphasized one, “does not live in a silo.” As such, for those engaged in it, “anti-AAPAPI hate work” extends far beyond simply supporting victims and ensuring physical safety of AAPAPI community members. Organizations are simultaneously addressing a range of integrated needs deeply connected to poverty and historical exclusion, attending to limitations in local systems and infrastructure to serve AAPAPI victims, navigating intersectional layers of cultural identity, managing internal and external narratives about AAPAPIs, and fostering a sense of community healing and belonging within and across racial and ethnic groups.

Anti-AAPAPI hate work was not framed, therefore, as a one-time or current moment “intervention” but rather a long-term endeavor to respond to deeply rooted racism and violence that not only affects AAPAPI communities but also a wider universe of oppressed communities.

Anti-AAPAPI hate work is not a one-time or current moment “intervention” but rather a long-term endeavor to respond to a broader tapestry of racism and violence that affect *all* oppressed communities.

Across the board, interview respondents also highlighted that anti-hate responses are not one-size-fits all and emphasized the critical importance of **recognizing diversity in their anti-AAPI hate responses**. The AAPI umbrella itself encompasses a wide range of ethnicities, languages, and histories. Those with whom we spoke are practiced in navigating the nuances of this diversity and embraced the value of a network of ethnic-specific and cultural organizations with deep ties to different subgroups. Each highlighted regional, political, generational, immigrant status, and cultural differences in how members of AAPI communities seek help or the degree to which they feel comfortable providing personal information to the government—all of which shape elements of their organization’s respective anti-AAPI hate responses.

Outside of these population differences, respondents also noted the diversity of different regional contexts—from the size and power of the local AAPI population, to the presence of culturally responsive infrastructure and AAPI networks of support, to the level of public and philanthropic resources and attention to community needs. Mounting a national collective response that is inclusive of regional diversity was seen as a challenge, and many national partners and regional AAPI anchor organizations voiced concern and extended responsibility for AAPIOs in areas of the country where hate may be more intense and regional anti-AAPI hate investments are nonexistent.

A fourth and final universal theme emphasized **the stark reality of limited capacity** and a **scarcity of resources**, where AAPIO partners simultaneously feel the urgency of the moment and yet are constrained from doing more. Some emphasized that historical underinvestment in AAPIO communities is feeding a palpable and pervasive sense of scarcity within and among organizations responding to hate. This was overlaid by the increasing demands being placed on culturally based organizations who are seen as important links to communities, not just as navigators and providers of health and social services, but as trusted messengers on issues as wide ranging as census outreach, COVID response, or “get out the vote” campaigns.

Anti-AAPIO hate work was described as placing additional layers of strain on these organizations, as several described new levels of burnout by virtue of the “vicarious trauma” experienced by staff who directly support victims and their families. As multiple respondents shared, constantly operating in a context of scarcity is a missed opportunity to invest in themselves and a broader movement. As one leader simply stated, “We just don’t have the capacity to do all the things that we want to do.”

Regional, political, generational, immigrant status, and cultural differences all necessarily shape elements of anti-AAPIO hate responses.

Despite the urgency of the moment, a historical underinvestment in AAPIO communities is feeding a pervasive sense of scarcity within and among organizations on the front line.



A Framework for Considering AAPI Hate Responses

In part because of the context described previously, respondents also conveyed the potential for strengthening anti-hate work. Some raised what they described as limited connective tissue behind different efforts currently happening across the country. A few described efforts happening “in parallel” or “in competition” with each other, or that the work was not fully drawing upon learning from decades of South Asian, Middle Eastern, Sikh, and Muslim anti-hate work following 9/11. Almost all expressed curiosity about how others were approaching regional hate responses, sensing that promising models or tools might exist, or that solutions might lie in common challenges being faced. Many agreed that there is an opportunity to foster shared learning and ultimately amplify impact at the local level.

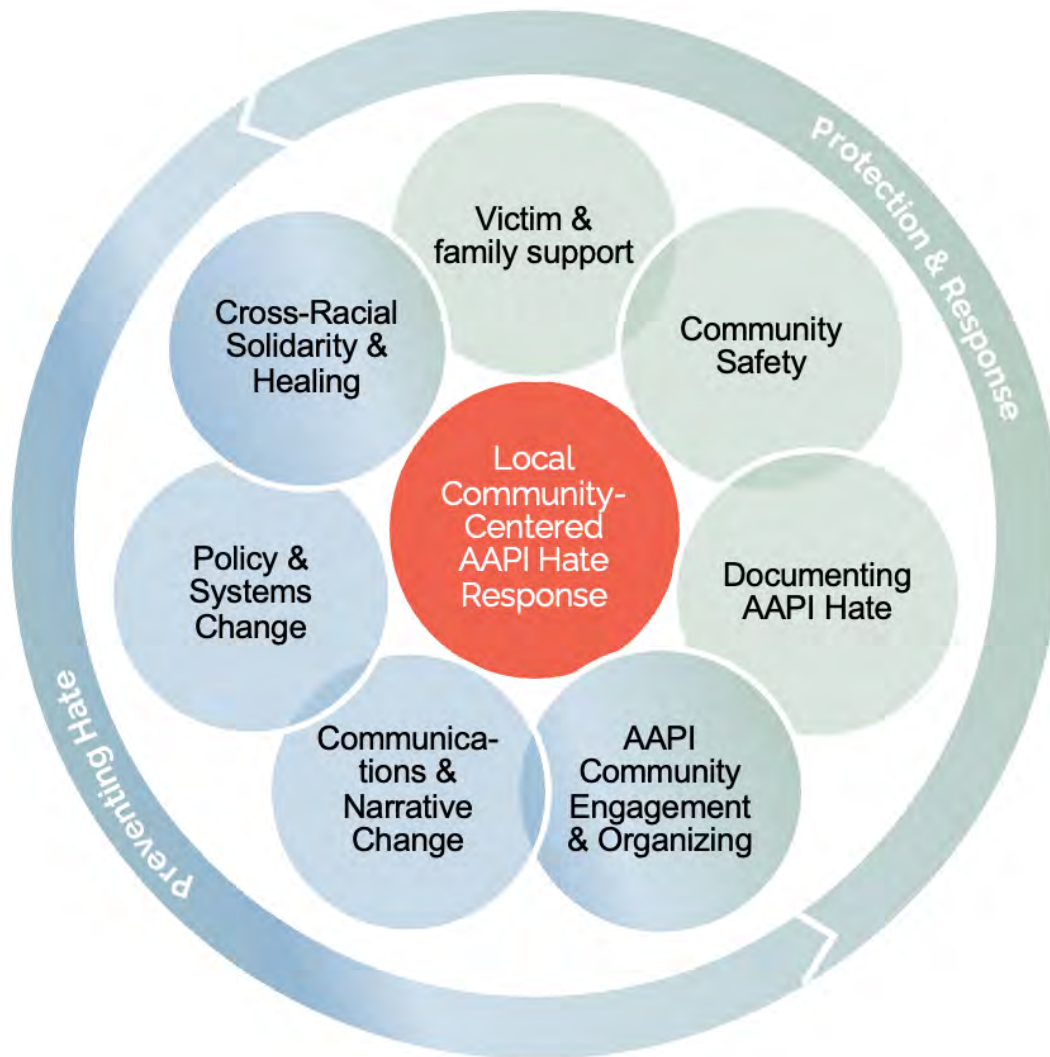
The graphic on the next page offers an emerging framework for organizing and understanding the work—both as a means of telling the collective story of AAPI hate response, and to facilitate exchange and learning across those in the front lines of this work.

As depicted in the outer ring of the framework, all anti-AAPI hate work simultaneously serves a purpose of protection, response, and prevention of hate. AAPI partners, however, characterized certain aspects more as immediate actions being undertaken in direct response to hate (shaded in green), with others framed more as ongoing efforts to transform the broader context of hate fueling the current crisis (shaded in blue). Finally—and most importantly—at the center of all work is a foundational value for centering the victims, their families, and the AAPI community itself.

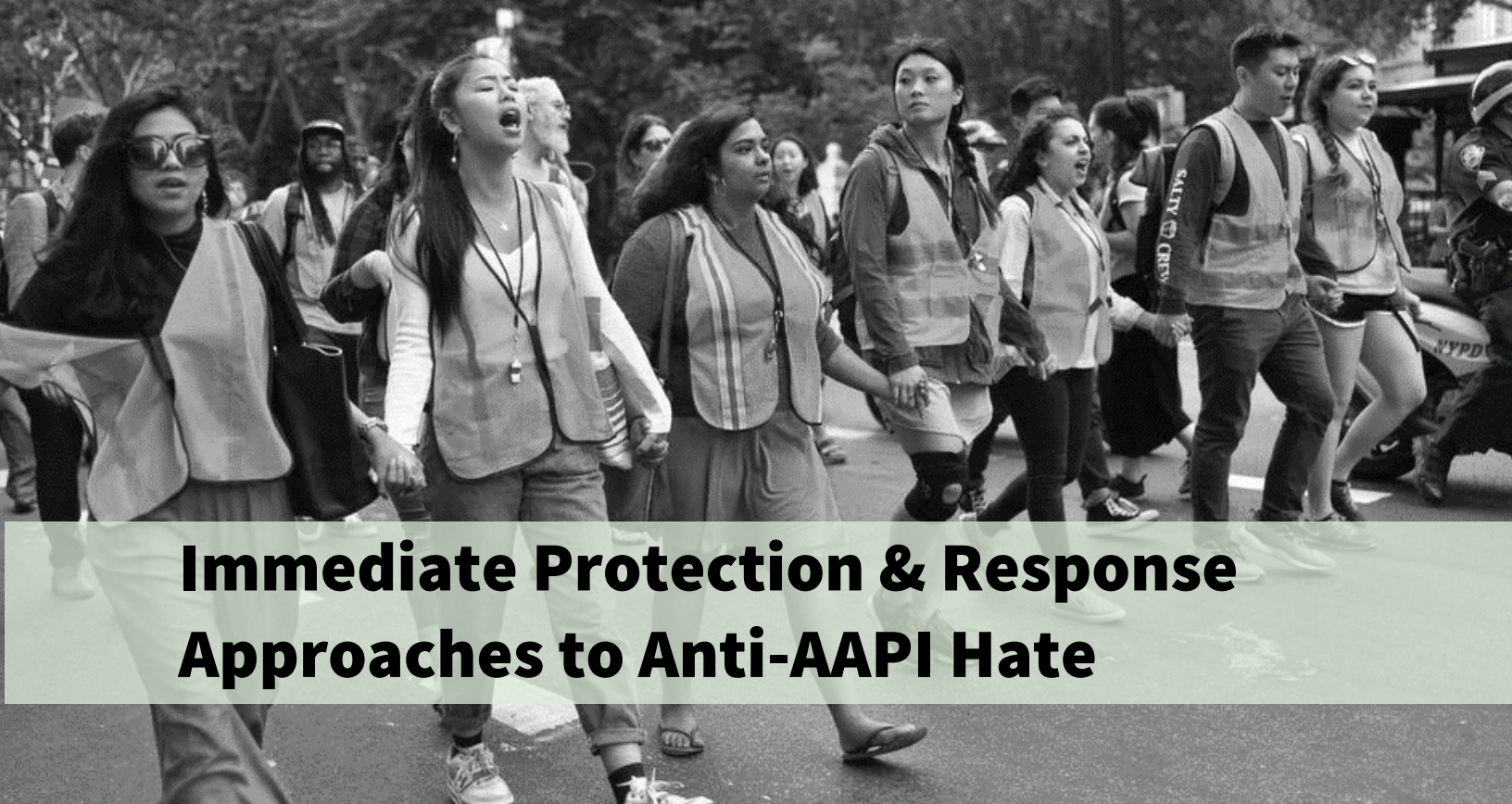
“[Anti-AAPI hate] is absolutely related to the politicization of COVID, but the targeting of ethnic and racial and religious minorities isn't something new. It's part of the American experience.”

— Regional AAPI Organization

Approaches to Addressing Anti-AAPI Hate: An Emerging Framework



The following sections will step through this framework while sharing examples of approaches and learning associated with the topics in each of these circles. Given the depth and expanse of AAPI anti-hate efforts, in many ways, we are just scratching the surface as it relates to fully capturing the rich tapestry of work happening across the country in response to anti-AAPI hate. The goal is to offer an initial framework for conversations that can lead to greater sharing of best practices, shared challenges, and—ultimately—opportunities for collaboration and investment.



Immediate Protection & Response Approaches to Anti-AAPI Hate

In their immediate hate responses, AAPI organizations across the country are actively caring for and protecting the communities that they represent and serve. Respondents shared four main clusters of activities taking place toward this end.

VICTIM & FAMILY SUPPORT

Almost all organizations are providing a range of support for victims and their families. The specific approach to meeting victim needs varies, however, depending on available infrastructure and support. For example, some communities (e.g., Oakland, Atlanta, Chicago) have AAPI-focused federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) and/or large social service agencies with strong capacity serving as a centralized institution conducting intakes, providing case management, and—in many cases—directly providing services. In other communities (e.g., New York City, Los Angeles, New Mexico), an entity is serving as a formal “hub” that coordinates intake and assigns case managers to connect victims to needed services provided by a mix of community-based organizations and public agencies. In still other cases, national AAPI organizations are serving as a point of intake and navigation support, connecting victims to organizations within their extended networks.

The types of victim and family support also vary, but collectively include:

- **Mental health services.** A few direct service organizations offer in-language trauma and mental health services to support victims. This is especially vital given that AAPI victims are less likely to seek out and receive such services, and the shortage of culturally and linguistically

competent provider options available to victims. As spotlighted on the next page, recognizing this reality, the Asian American Federation (AAF) in New York City supports navigation to a wide range of clinical and non-clinical options for those seeking help.

- **Physical health services.** Some community-based organizations directly tend to victims' physical health through direct services, connecting individuals to culturally competent healthcare, or navigating the healthcare system. Asian Health Services (AHS) in Oakland has been turning to non-Western forms of healing for survivors and family members, including yoga and tending to nutrition and diet using Asian healing traditions.
- **Employment support.** Victims of violent hate crimes often have a long road to recovery and may require employment support to meet their basic needs while they tend to their injuries. The Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) in Atlanta continues to support victims of hate incidents dating back over three years, providing employment support for those who continue to struggle to be employed given injuries or trauma related to the incident.
- **Housing assistance.** In some instances, housing assistance may be needed to help victims relocate if they experience a hate crime or incident in their home or neighborhood. To reinforce a sense of safety, some community-based organizations offer support such as emergency rentals and connecting individuals to programs to address housing insecurity.
- **Financial assistance.** Financial support has been an important component of victim support. Community-based organizations such as Coalition for Community Safety and Justice (CCSJ) in San Francisco, Oakland Chinatown Improvement Council (OCIC), and AHS also have coordinated GoFundMe campaigns to raise funds to assist victims with their immediate needs, such as medical bills, essential services (e.g., gas and groceries), burials, and supplementing their wage loss during their recovery.
- **Legal services & systems navigation.** To support victims seeking justice and restitution, some organizations provide interpretation services, connection to legal resources and government services, and in-language support with filing police reports and hate crimes.

Notably, ensuring that the needs of victims and their families are met is highly dependent on the existence of culturally and linguistically responsive services to navigate and meet those needs. Organizations located in regions of the country with limited AAPI infrastructure described a dual challenge of trying to connect victims to services while simultaneously advocating for more resources, or for local public systems to offer the level of cultural responsiveness and sensitivity critical for victims of crime. This reality is exacerbated by the “long arc of support” AAPI partners provide for victims of hate crimes, sometimes spanning multiple years.

“Most places just don't have any sort of culturally appropriate services... there's just no in-language services in a lot of our jurisdictions, and especially areas where a lot of these incidents are happening.”

— National AAPI Partner

SPOTLIGHTS

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS SUPPORT

The Asian American Federation (AAF) is a leadership umbrella organization for 70 nonprofits that serve the pan-Asian community in New York City. Through its Hope Against Hate Campaign, AAF's initiative to combat anti-Asian violence, AAF refers victims to partner organizations for mental health support. To date, AAF has administered over \$3 million to 33 Asian-serving member and partner organizations to provide direct in-language emotional and mental health support services to over 3,700 victims and their families.

Mental health support is one of the most requested services that continues to be under-resourced in New York City. Therefore—alongside a range of anti-hate initiatives—to support victims, AAF has been referring community members to behavioral health partners serving the AAPI community and developed a comprehensive AAPI mental health directory, which allows people to filter for providers, insurance, and types of therapy. The first of its kind, the directory offers both clinical and non-clinical services to meet the mental health needs of the Asian community (e.g., counseling, acupuncture, breathwork, energy healing).

A NETWORK OF LEGAL SERVICES

The National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) is a membership organization representing over 60,000 AAPI attorneys, law students and judges from around the country. The rise in anti-AAPI hate spurred the organization to build an intake process to connect hate crime victims to legal services and support with systems navigation. NAPABA has received over 400 cases through its website, email, phone line, and community-based organizations. The organization has been triaging cases to over 90 affiliated local bar associations, a network of volunteer attorneys, and a consortium of 100 major law firms across the country that are dedicated to combatting anti-AAPI hate and supporting victims through the legal process.



COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SERVICES IN NEW MEXICO

While New Mexico's AAPI population is smaller than many other states, there is a rich history of AAPIs in the area with deep intergenerational culture and roots. Its diverse AAPI community, however, has long faced discrimination and disinvestment, which has resulted in limited resources and services in the region. These gaps were further brought to light in the past couple years with rising hate incidents in New Mexico.

As the largest AAPI-serving organization in the region, New Mexico Asian Family Center (NMAFC) has been actively responding to these hate incidents. NMAFC specializes in in-language, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive care for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. While the organization's focus does not generally include hate crimes, it has been pulled into crisis mobilization due to the lack of providers for anti-hate response and support in New Mexico, especially the lack of linguistically tailored services for AAPI communities. With increasing violence, NMAFC found itself stretching not only to serve as interpreters in homicide investigations, but also to become the de-facto collector of anonymous tips and evidence in ongoing investigations and the public face of these cases to the broader public.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Another core element of most regional hate responses focuses on promoting community safety. Respondents underscored that while the safety and wellbeing of individual community members is of paramount importance, attending to the broader community is equally as critical. Some described the ripple effect of violence that is eroding the economic and cultural fabric of the broader community, as community members stop frequenting shops and restaurants. They described stores in Chinatowns across the country closing early, reinforcing a sense of vulnerability and loss and ultimately contributing to a sense of, as one respondent framed it, “forces closing in, symbolically and literally, on our AAPI communities.”

Across the board, AAPI community demand for safety programming has been high, and the response has been generally positive. Some observed that simply having safety-focused interventions in place has been restorative and healing for community members. Respondents described seeing other AAPIs, non-AAPIs, and public agencies standing together against hate and equipping themselves to ensure the safety of AAPI community members as both moving and empowering. At least one AAPI community leader described this area of work as “a really easy lift” and a missed opportunity given that it has not been adopted more widely, given the action-oriented nature of these efforts. He stated, “I just think they should be happening everywhere.”

Categories of programmatic elements in this arena have taken the form of:

- **Safety trainings for the AAPI community.** Several organizations offer a range of safety trainings to promote situational awareness and self-defense tactics, often in AAPI languages. Most are designed for individual community members, however, in the Atlanta-area, trainings are extended to AAPI businesses that are also targets of hate. Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) is targeting local places of worship to promote safety for congregants.
- **Intervention and de-escalation trainings.** Another category of training being offered by several AAPI organizations focuses on equipping members of the local community to know when and how to intervene in hate incidents. These trainings are being carried out both in-person and virtually, and are offered through local AAPI organizations or through established curriculum provided by organizations such as Nonviolent Peaceforce or Right to Be.
- **Youth-targeted trainings and support.** An important focus of anti-AAPI hate education has been on young people. Community Youth Center of San Francisco (CYC) in collaboration with Beyond Differences, developed an anti-hate curriculum for youth that has been shared with different school districts in San Francisco, the larger Bay Area, and

“I think that [a sense of safety for AAPIs] can be attributed to both the training itself, but more importantly, seeing that community connection, and seeing people who don't look like us come out to support and demonstrate their solidarity and commitment.”

— Regional AAPI Partner

nationally. In partnership with Right to Be, Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC) has produced animated videos to encourage peer intervention in anti-AAPI bullying.

- **Patrol, ambassador, and escort programs.** Another area of intervention has been formation of safety patrols and escort programs designed to ensure that AAPI community members can go about their daily lives with a sense of relative safety. AAF’s Hope Against Hate Campaign operates a volunteer trained ambassador program in three New York boroughs. The Oakland Chinatown area has a fleet of volunteers donning different colored vests to represent the different groups organizing volunteer patrols in the area.
- **Systems-based community safety partnerships.** In some communities, safety programming is being designed and implemented in partnership with public systems partners. This has taken the form of AAPI community organizations serving on an advisory committee for the Chicago Police Department, working with the Oakland Department of Transportation on pedestrian safety, or—in cases where the community desires it—advocating for greater police presence in AAPI communities. Most commonly, AAPI organizations are working with local school systems to ensure safety for AAPI youth, designing anti-bullying curriculum in San Francisco, engaging youth leaders to work with multiple districts across Minnesota, and working with School Resource Officers assigned to Chicago public schools.
- **Safety through environmental design.** A final way that communities work to promote AAPI community safety is by attending to place. Partners in New York are making progress in establishing “safe zones” where local businesses, faith and cultural organizations, and community centers pledge to actively prevent violence and offer physical refuge if needed. In Oakland, City Council members have conducted “walk throughs” of communities to assess and address physical aspects of the environment. They also supported Chinatown to become a business improvement district so that property owners could resource various safety-related activities like street cleaning, fixing storefronts, and graffiti abatement.

Notably, many emphasized that a true sense of community safety cannot be accomplished through one-time events or one-off trainings. Rather, a sense of safety and belonging results from sustainable partnerships and ongoing, reinforcing programming that is rooted in the language and culture of the community. While some AAPI organizations continue to offer what they can, many admit the limitations of both their own capacity and available offerings of AAPI-centered safety curriculum training. Skilled AAPI consultants and partners offering culturally aligned safety programming report that the high demand for services over the past two years has left teams extremely stretched. As a result, community safety efforts are generally still being powered by volunteers who are not always adequately trained or equipped to respond to changing threat environments, or through generically developed training curriculum not optimally tailored to local contexts.

SPOTLIGHTS



PROMOTING SAFETY THROUGH COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

In response to a rise in anti-AAPI hate incidents and crimes during the pandemic, many Oakland Chinatown residents and business owners felt it was important to highlight the vibrancy of the community by investing in physical and environmental changes that promote feelings of safety.

To support the community, Oakland City Council members have been conducting “walk throughs” of communities to assess and address physical aspects of the environment. It also supported Chinatown in its efforts to become a business improvement district so that property owners could resource various safety related activities like street cleaning, fixing storefronts, and graffiti abatement. This led to the formation of the Oakland Chinatown Improvement Council (OCIC), which is now leading efforts beautify the neighborhood, increase safety, and promote economic development. As part of its work, OCIC and its partners have been hosting community events, such as street fairs featuring various local vendors, and organizing volunteer community patrol groups to promote feelings of safety.

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN NEW YORK CITY

To date, thousands of community members have participated in AAF’s Hope Against Hate Campaign community safety programming in New York City and upstate regions. Through this campaign, AAF and Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) have been partnering to build out regional capacity to address violence through an internationally-proven approach of unarmed civilian protection, empowering communities to do everything from practicing situational awareness, upstander intervention, conflict de-escalation, and building localized threat assessments.

New York’s success can be attributed to its culturally sensitive curriculum and training, which are deeply rooted in an understanding of AAPIO culture. Each workshop is further tailored to suit the specific needs of different ethnicities, ages, and neighborhood-based subgroups through language and framing. In 2022, NP engaged a team of five full-time staff on the ground, partnering with over 30 organizations in four boroughs to achieve a level of saturation such that community members could sense the impact of a growing community of AAPIOs and allies equipped to respond to and prevent hate in the city. In less than a year, NP provided over 80 upstander trainings in the New York City area alone and they continue to train organizations within AAF’s network to sustain safety programming across the state.

“Safety is cultivated; security is enforced. Our communities need strategies that are culturally relevant, language accessible and resourced to ensure sustainability.”

-Kalaya’an Mendoza, Director of Mutual Protection at Nonviolent Peaceforce

DOCUMENTING AAPI HATE

A third core area of response centers on AAPI organizations capturing data related to anti-AAPI hate. Across the board, respondents strongly emphasized both the magnitude and the complexity of this endeavor.

On one hand, serious challenges lie in a lack of a cohesive, shared system of tracking, with various organizations and institutions with different levels of capacity gathering different types of data for different purposes. For example, the documenting of anti-AAPI hate can take the form of formal tracking of hate crimes for purposes of federal reporting and prosecution, self-reports of hate incidents to local AAPI agencies and organizations which connect victims with needed services or support, or actively gathering stories and information to inform a fuller understanding of the scope of hate in order to raise community visibility and action.

Complexity around documentation also lies within the AAPI community itself. Almost all talked about the challenges of getting community members to report, due to lack of familiarity or comfort with the process, deep mistrust of law enforcement or government databases, or simply a cultural reticence to draw attention to themselves. Lines of trust that encourage reporting are also not necessarily influenced by proximity; for example, some victims prefer to ask for help from a cultural- or faith-based connection in another state before reporting to local authorities.

As organizations navigate these complexities, their efforts have included:

- **Managing formal websites and hotlines for first-hand community reporting.** Nationally, Stop AAPI Hate, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and NAPABA are gathering stories and data on hate crime and hate incidents through their respective websites and, when appropriate, sharing information with one another. Stop AAPI Hate regularly publishes key data findings to understand the landscape of anti-AAPI hate and NAPABA uses data to track and triage legal support needs. Individual organizations—such as AAF in New York City, Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) in Atlanta, and Chinese American Service League (CASL) in Chicago—are operating web portals or hotlines in multiple Asian languages. Los Angeles County also operates a highly publicized 2-1-1 hotline and website to encourage reporting of hate crimes, hate incidents and acts of harassment.
- **Monitoring informal channels of information sharing.** Some groups shared that—given formal underreporting—they are monitoring hate data through informal means. Some are relying on personal networks or tabling at community events to proactively ask about hate incidents; Oakland partners shared how word-of-mouth networks or social media apps like WeChat are sometimes best for learning about hate incidents. One person described the type of information learned through these

“If someone has figured out the reporting conundrum, I would love to know who that is because we’d love to talk to them because we haven’t figured it out, and I don’t know anyone in our universe who’s figured it out either.”

— National AAPI Partner

channels, sharing people “on the ground [just] know, ‘oh that’s the person whose Rolex got robbed,’ or ‘that’s the story where someone tried to run someone over with a car.’”

- **Drawing upon secondary data sources.** Some respondents reported leveraging publicly available data to better understand how hate is unfolding. For example, AHS accesses Chinatown-level data from the Oakland Police Department (OPD) to do a deeper dive into a specific incident and analyze the history of similar reported incidents in the area, and one is working with the Anti-Defamation League to collect and track hate-based incidents in their region.
- **Hate crime education and campaigns.** Notably, most efforts to document anti-AAPI hate have a simultaneous focus on outreach and education to encourage reporting. While LA County’s LA vs Hate 2-1-1 campaign represents the most extensive formal outreach campaign, others are working in more informal ways to both educate and assist AAPIs with hate incident and hate crime reporting. Organizations report doing so through ethnic media and community events, as well as directly supporting individuals with navigating and completing the reporting process. New York partners have created a QR code that takes them to AAF’s website to facilitate reporting, and CASL has developed a Hate Crimes 101 training that is available to both staff and community members.

Given the named challenges in this area, multiple respondents highlighted a need going forward to collectively reflect on aligning and clarifying data collection processes, so it is clear what data is being collected and toward what end. For example, some distinguished critical and careful tracking of incidents to ensure that victims are connected with necessary services and support, as separate from gathering and aggregating stories across networks to generally raise external visibility about the pervasiveness of AAPI hate.

Others called out a need for considering even more nuanced approaches for hate crime reporting, which was seen as requiring much deeper investments in community education, trust building, and encouragement to navigate tensions that come with government reporting and opening up victims to potential further investigation. A few also candidly named inherent tensions they often face when involving the justice system, where they are constantly “balancing the immediate needs of a community member who has experienced something traumatic versus our responsibilities as a civil rights organization to not do inadvertent harm to other communities of color in the process.” At least one noted that honestly navigating this tension is an area that the AAPI community has yet to collectively face.

SPOTLIGHTS



CHANGING THE CULTURE OF REPORTING

The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations is spearheading a multi-year, county-wide LA vs. Hate campaign that aims to change the culture of reporting. The county has set up a 211 public hotline that they hope becomes as natural for community members to call as 911. When people call this number, the incident is reported and the caller receives an offer to have a case worker provide free assistance to find help with whatever is needed. To date, they have thousands more reports of hate through 211 than they had been capturing previously.

The county has launched a multilingual outreach campaign that is rooted in the cultural context of LA's diverse communities, working with artists and partners to create their own LA vs. Hate messaging. The website boasts over 400 GIFs and digital messages that people can download and share over social media, while the county also runs messaging on buses and billboards.

"We want victims to feel embraced, empowered ... to know they have a community standing with you. [We] really have to change the way that people think about these acts of hate, that these are not something that you are supposed to just endure on your own. This is something we as a collective community represented by government are against and we stand with you."

– Robin Toma, Executive Director Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission

RAISING AAPI VISIBILITY THROUGH DATA

The Chinese American Service League (CASL) has invested heavily in data infrastructure, with a special focus on documenting social determinants of health and using the data to advocate for positive policy change. However, there has been a persistent lack of data and awareness about anti-AAPI hate in Chicago and the Midwest when compared to large cities on the East and West coasts. To address this shortfall, CASL is leveraging its previous experience in building, maintaining, and scaling data infrastructure to gather data and build awareness about the prevalence of anti-AAPI hate in the region. Victims and witnesses of hate can report the incident to CASL through a hotline and online reporting form.

CASL will use this data, collected by the Anti-Hate Action Center, to inform advocacy efforts and inspire policymakers to take meaningful steps to address anti-AAPI hate. In addition to data collection, CASL's Anti-Hate Action Center has provided Hate Crime 101 trainings in English and Mandarin to various partners, become a certified vendor offering courses on hate for Chicago Public Schools, and worked with the Chicago Police Department's Training Community Advisory Committee to incorporate more comprehensive hate crime training for law enforcement.

AAPI COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ORGANIZING

Across the board in their hate responses, respondents placed a high priority on not only attending to the direct victims of hate, but also engaging and organizing the broader AAPI community. As emphasized by one, “Hate crime affects not just the victim, but the larger community.”

Importantly, when talking about their community engagement and organizing work, “community” was not always defined as a static, place-bound concept. Rather, interviewees evoked notions of community rooted in multiple and intersecting layers of identity, encompassing cultural, ethnic, generational, and faith groups that sometimes stretched across the country. Even when describing their AAPI community in geographic terms, community boundaries sometimes referred to a neighborhood, sometimes a county, a state, and even multiple states on the eastern seaboard.

Respondents described a range of activity in this area, including:

- **Community listening sessions.** At least three organizations have dedicated themselves to engaging in formal listening sessions with the AAPI community. CPACS held deep listening sessions with the Atlanta community after the Atlanta spa shootings, South Asian American Policy and Research Institute (SAAPRI) engaged in targeted listening with the local Chicago AAPI business community, and Coalition for Asian American Leaders (CAAL) spearheaded statewide listening sessions to understand the experiences of AAPIs in outlying areas of Minnesota.
- **Organizing and lifting up AAPI community voice.** Several organizations described flexing AAPI community power through events, such as marches and rallies sponsored by coalitions of AAPI partners. In some cases, these events spontaneously occurred after a local incident; for example, partners in Minneapolis described a rally that drew upwards of over 1,000 after an elder was harmed on the public transit system. In other cases, events were strategically planned; for example, the Asian American Christian Collaborative (AACC) orchestrated 14 simultaneous rallies throughout the country after the Atlanta spa shooting.
- **Community outreach and education.** Various AAPI organizations reported carrying out anti-AAPI hate outreach and education as part of their ongoing programming. For example, AAPI organizations have integrated anti-hate education as part of COVID-testing and vaccinations at a local park, or as part of health fair events. Some underscored the power of giving community members language to talk about the racism that they experience.

“What we need to do is transfer all that energy that people have galvanized around the hate incidents that we've seen, to really getting involved in supporting legislation and policy and being civically engaged.”

— National AAPI Partner

- **Recruiting community volunteers.** A few interviewees talked about the challenges of sustaining interest and energy after the initial financial contribution or protest activity in the aftermath of a crisis. To promote ongoing engagement, some organizations are involving community members as volunteers, recruiting them to serve as safety trainers or ambassadors, or to organize walking groups. A “direct invitation” and “clear routes for participation” were both named as key practices for encouraging people to move beyond “just [social media] posting and signaling.”
- **Engaging community ambassadors.** A subset of activity in this area focused on community and youth leadership development to serve as ambassadors within their schools and the broader community. For example, CAAL youth leaders are working with school district officials on issues of anti-AAPI hate in four Minnesota districts, and a leader from AACC was invited to participate in the City of Chicago’s Commission on Human Relations (CCHR) to speak on anti-AAPI hate. In Chicago, as part of Ramadan, CCHR engaged the Muslim community to hold iftars in police districts as a means of sharing culture and bridging understanding.

The named challenges in this arena were largely related to the difficulties of fully attending to the diversity of the AAPI umbrella. Meeting the language needs for such a wide range of AAPI languages was described as critical for authentic and meaningful engagement, however resources to support translation are scarce. One respondent shared a powerful session with Chinese elders that was held entirely in Cantonese, describing it as a “broader, progressive way to understand community harm and community healing.” Others stressed the importance of sensitively navigating the fears of undocumented AAPIs (e.g., Indonesian community members in the Philadelphia region) about reporting violence against them to local law enforcement. Multiple interview respondents relayed a perception that anti-AAPI hate was largely being framed and addressed—especially at the national level—as an East Asian community issue. Several specifically brought up recent hate incidents in Chicago and New York targeting South Asians, noting that the crisis response in those cases was challenging because existing anti-AAPI networks were not yet inclusive of South Asian partners.

Many emphasized the importance of continuing to grow networks and capacity to navigate AAPI diversity at the local level. Inclusive outreach and engagement were described as fundamental because *perpetrators* of hate do not discriminate between the different layers of AAPI identity. As noted by one, “People are targeted all the time for anti-Chinese, anti-pandemic sentiment and all manner of folks are being targeted in the AAPI community. Even Latinos, we’ve gotten reports of Latinos who were being targeted because they look kind of Asian ... an older [Latina] was viciously attacked in a public bus because they were thought to be Asian. There is that stereotyping coming out of stupidity, sort of the assumption that all people are the same.”

SPOTLIGHTS

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

For the past 20 years, the Coalition for A Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) has been engaging and organizing the Chinese American community in Chicago on a variety of issues including redistricting, voter registration, the census, and protesting the development of a casino near Chinatown. At the beginning of the pandemic, CBCAC convened community leaders for weekly COVID response and coordination meetings.

As anti-AAPI hate incidents started rising across the country, CBCAC began to advocate for more safety resources to uplift AAPI voice and visibility. In March 2021, CBCAC held a large rally in the Chinatown square that centered its message on keeping the community safe, reducing barriers to reporting hate crimes, and pushing for teaching AAPI history in schools. They invited different stakeholders to speak to these issues at the event, including several CBO partners, the District Attorney, Attorney General, and the Chicago Human Rights Commission, who then spoke about reporting and other efforts to address anti-AAPI hate.



COMMUNITY LISTENING

Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) had completed three community listening sessions about anti-AAPI hate in March 2021, when a gunman killed eight people, including six Asian women, in three Atlanta spas. The original goal of the sessions was to better understand how hate incidents taking place across the country were affecting them. After the shooting, however, there was such pain and fear and need to talk and share in the community, that plans grew and ultimately CPACS ultimately held 26 listening sessions with about 220 people.

"There were a lot of tears, shared a lot of stories of how our communities were dealing with a lot of discrimination ... just sweeping it under the rug, and putting their heads down and continuing work or continuing to put their kids in schools that didn't support or didn't welcome them."

- Victoria Huynh, Senior Vice President/
Chief Officer of External Affairs, CPACS

There was an outpouring of financial support after the March shootings, and CPACS ultimately granted \$250,000 to a local anti-AAPI hate coalition, who in turn regranted funds to support various community-driven responses. The listening sessions provided insights into what group eventually did with their resources, resulting in community-centered interventions rooted in authentic community needs. Examples of funded response activities included: in-language gun safety trainings, business-focused safety trainings, self-defense classes, and reinstatement of a Georgia Asian Peace Officer program.



Ongoing Prevention and Response Approaches to Anti-AAPI Hate

Aligned and integrated with immediate AAPI hate community protection and response strategies described in the previous section, national and regional AAPI organizations also report actively engaging in three additional clusters of ongoing activities intended to shift the broader context of hate fueling the current crisis.

COMMUNICATIONS & NARRATIVE CHANGE

In addition to engaging in media response and advocacy directly following a high-profile hate incident or crisis event, most interview respondents emphasized the importance of long-term investments in information sharing and narrative change to counteract a historic lack of visibility of AAPI communities and issues.

The need to focus on communications and narrative change was especially underscored in certain regions of the country, where partners operate in communities characterized by deep strains of extremism and fear mongering, or where policymakers are genuinely ignorant that AAPIs faced any form of racism prior to COVID-19. Some noted the importance of building media and communications capacity across the country, noting news interest in anti-AAPI

hate even in smaller media markets, particularly after national events like the Atlanta spa shootings.

Activities focused on communications and narrative change include:

- **Advocacy to ensure anti-AAPI hate continues to be covered by local media.** AAPI organizations are working to ensure that local mainstream media are not only reporting on incidents of violence toward AAPIs, but also connecting that reporting to a larger trend of AAPI hate affecting the community. While acknowledging the natural reticence of victims to come forward, several emphasized the importance of leading with first-hand accounts to humanize the impact of hate and the subsequent importance of AAPI organizational capacity to sensitively support media relations on behalf of those that they represent.
- **Lifting up AAPI community issues and narratives more broadly.** As part of their hate response, many described the importance of more broadly elevating community stories to disrupt stereotypes and offer more nuanced insights about AAPIs. While acknowledging that mainstream media outlets can be reactionary and narrow in their focus, some are still working to bring media attention to related issues of workers' rights, immigration and family separation, and health disparities. Others have chosen to work outside of media and have been sponsoring community and cultural events to promote AAPI visibility. As one creative example, as part of the hate response in Atlanta, a Korean American organization was funded to host a youth-led play about students' experiences that was attended by school system representatives.
- **AAPI community outreach and information sharing through ethnic media.** Another area of activity focuses on efforts to engage ethnic media as a critical means of in-language outreach to AAPI community members to inform them of their rights and available help. A few organizations are also using ethnic media to combat disinformation being shared by conservative, right-wing media catching fire within some ethnic groups. As part of the effort spotlighted on the next page, for example, Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) works with Chinese language media to "provide accurate and factual information on fast changing policies and improve understanding on critical and often divisive issues."

This was an area where some saw the importance of national AAPI organizations in advancing a narrative that not only continues to shine a light on anti-AAPI hate but connects anti-AAPI hate work to a broader, more inclusive narrative of racial justice that brings others along. As one respondent shared, "I will tell you that there was a lot of frustration early on with some of the responses, again, coming in the wake of some of the anti-AAPI attacks, right? Because some of the messaging, Black organizations and Muslim, South Asian and Sikh organizations felt like it was too siloed, the messaging that seemed to describe the violence in isolation. And while COVID absolutely was a trigger, there have been [many] organizations working on anti-hate issues for generations in this country."

SPOTLIGHTS

COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

Strategic communication is a key area of focus for Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA). Through its Stop AAPI Hate efforts, first-hand accounts and stories are lifted up to shape the narrative from the perspective of AAPI community members and ultimately serve as a collective voice that calls for policy and systems change.

Over the last two years, CAA has grown its efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation within the AAPI community. To that end, it increased its communications staff and capacity, set up a fact checking site, and developed narrative content to combat conservative, rightwing information that has been gaining traction. CAA reports they now have well over a dozen native speakers developing fact-based, multi-media digital content toward this end.

CAA also offered guidance and support to The Asian American Disinformation Table's *Power, Platforms, & Politics: Asian Americans & Disinformation Landscape Report (2022)*.

CENTERING AAPI STORIES & EXPERIENCES

In 2017, Asian Americans Advancing Justice created the Stand Against Hatred website to gather stories about hate incidents and violence to “tell a more complete story about racism and xenophobia directed toward Asian Americans.” Its hate incident reporting form includes a checkbox asking respondents if they would like a response or assistance. In many instances, AAPI community members primarily want to share their story and feel heard.

“Even when we talk to them because they checked that box, they [often] just wanted to tell their story. They want to sort of make sure that someone heard them, make sure that it was real, and that people recognize that it was real for them.”

- John Yang, President of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

In March 2021, John Yang testified before Congress for a scheduled hearing on anti-AAPI violence, which was coincidentally held two days after the Atlanta shooting. At the hearing, he shared some of the stories collected through the Stand Against Hatred website to show the correlation between ongoing anti-AAPI rhetoric and hate incidents experienced by AAPI community members across the country.

TELL YOUR STORY
HELP US TRACK HATE

standagainsthate.org



POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

Another element of regional hate prevention efforts focused on shaping policy and systems to be better accountable to the safety and wellbeing of AAPIs. Notably, while we heard strong consensus about the role of policy and systems change within anti-AAPI hate responses, probably one of the clearest tensions we heard through our interviews centered on the degree to which AAPI communities should be working in partnership with or separate from public systems. On one hand, some strongly felt that government has a fundamental responsibility to keep its citizens safe and has the power and taxpayer resources that could be mobilized toward that end. On the other hand, public systems are one of the perpetrators of systemic violence against AAPIs and other communities of color, and therefore some respondents preferred exclusively community-driven and -centered solutions to care, support, and protection.

Within that divergent context, interview respondents shared specific ways in which they engaged in this work:

- **Securing public sector support.** Beyond getting public statements condemning hate from various elected officials, some AAPI organizations reported establishing useful public sector relationships to support their anti-AAPI hate response efforts. For example, some Oakland partners have found advocates in city council who led efforts to increase funding and city agency support for Oakland’s AAPI community. Atlanta-area AAPI organizations are working closely with the Federal Executive Board of Region IV to tap into Department of Justice and Homeland Security support and resources.
- **Advocacy for public investments in responding to anti-AAPI hate.** Partners in California and New York advocated for successful passage of state legislation and resources targeting hate—ultimately securing over \$180 million between both states. Partners in Minnesota are currently advocating for passage of the Combatting Hate legislation to generate resources for local AAPI nonprofits, which continues to meet resistance within the state’s Republican-led senate.
- **Advocacy for culturally responsive systems and accountability.** AAPI organizations are also advocating for local policy and systems change, looking at language access ordinances, promoting a more seamless local coordination system. In Oakland, a specific victim liaison is now embedded in the Oakland Police Department so that the person can work directly with victims of crime, as an outgrowth of the city’s Collective Healing Initiative. Minnesota’s Combatting Hate legislation also includes a component that focuses on increasing language capacity of Department of Human Rights investigators, and San Francisco partners are advocating for public safety infrastructure with local transit, police, workforce development, and victim services agencies.

- **Civil rights enforcement.** Another way that AAPI community partners are influencing systems change is in the civil rights arena. In hate incidents where legal action might not be possible because a specific crime did not take place, civil rights organizations are giving tools to workplaces or places of businesses, like restaurants, so that they understand their rights and roles in responding to hate when it happens. For example, after an AAPI female customer was harassed at a local Los Angeles restaurant, the restaurant now posts signage that says, “Bigotry and discrimination is not tolerated” and trains employees on how to handle hate incidents in the future.

While moving with urgency, most respondents recognized the long game of policy and systems change that meaningfully changes the landscape of anti-AAPI hate. As they talked about what was needed in this area, many named broader investments necessary for continuing to build on-the-ground service infrastructure (especially in pockets of the country where little infrastructure exists currently), as well as fostering AAPI leaders, growing AAPI political representation, and growing AAPI power in conjunction with a broader racial justice movement.

SPOTLIGHT: COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY & JUSTICE

The Coalition for Community Safety and Justice (CCSJ) was formed in 2019 as a regional acknowledgement of the increase in hate violence against the AAPI community in the San Francisco Bay Area. Organizations that make up the CCSJ include Chinese for Affirmative Action, Chinese Progressive Association, Chinese Community Development Center, and the Community Youth Center – all of which have credibility in the community and long-standing histories of being on the front lines of Asian American civil rights and service provision.

One key component of CCSJ’s multi-pronged approach to addressing anti-AAPI hate and violence is systems change work. The strategy centers on ensuring that “current public safety infrastructure is living up to the ideals in order to be able to represent and support AAPI communities.” To date, this has included advocating for better safety infrastructure through multiple public agencies, such as the San Francisco District Attorney’s Victim Services Division, San Francisco Police Department, the Office of Economic Workforce Development, as well as the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, which has a Muni Transit Ambassador Training program that promotes the safety of all transit riders.



CROSS-RACIAL SOLIDARITY & HEALING

Finally, in discussing ongoing anti-AAPI hate responses, the importance of attending to cross-racial solidarity and healing was also named by most respondents. Various respondents brought up the challenge of ethnic enclaves and cultural conservatism within different generations and ethnic subgroups of AAPIs, which translates to different levels of urgency being felt and expressed. Further complicating hate responses are racial narratives about perpetrators of violence, and a painful reality that using law enforcement as a means of combatting hate, or even prosecuting perpetrators, often does greater harm to those with whom AAPIs should be standing in solidarity to combat a larger system of racism. Ultimately, we heard consensus that intentional investments in this arena are key to long-term, transformative change. Activities here encompassed:

- **Combatting racial biases within the AAPI community.** Many respondents emphasized the importance of starting within the AAPI community itself. For example, the Chinese Progressive Association in San Francisco holds monthly in-language political education sessions to unpack racial biases when harm occurs. Others are stepping back to offer important context and education around racism in America, and their implications for the current context of anti-AAPI hate. Some named the importance of addressing anti-Blackness or fear of unhoused community members in real time as it comes up, and importance then of creating trusting, safe spaces to call people in on their biases.
- **Building relationships with other communities experiencing hate.** Some are intentionally investing efforts to build relationships with other communities of color. This is happening in formal and informal ways. For example, AHS has created a formal partnership with West Oakland Health Council, a historically Black Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), to develop a potential replicable model for racial healing using a patient health center perspective. Others are taking a more informal approach, organizing cross-racial neighborhood events, sharing food, music, and culture “in a joyful, celebratory way.” Many also named joint advocacy as a powerful vehicle for bringing different communities together around shared interests.
- **Addressing trauma and prioritizing healing.** A few are explicitly taking a healing lens to their anti-AAPI hate work, creating safe spaces to talk about the hurt and pain that has come from being targeted as AAPIs, and, in some cases, facilitating conversations with victims from other communities of color. One noted that civil rights organizations are well-positioned to facilitate these types of connections, observing, “It’s always very healing for people who have been targets or have lost somebody due

to hate violence to meet others who have experienced that and have that sense that they're not alone, and share the things that might help each other.”

- **Leaning on “bridgers.”** Notably, several respondents named specific AAPI subgroups that they saw as important bridgers in fostering cross-racial solidarity. For example, the youth movement was described as a critical force to tap into, as they bring a different relationship to racial justice and are typically active in social media spaces where a lot of hate is playing out. Multiple respondents also named the faith community as being an important bridge that “can clearly tie a lot of our different communities together.”
- **Attending to the wellbeing of those on the front lines.** Universally, there was great acknowledgment about the toll that is being taken on by the organizations and staff on the front lines of responding to hate. While respondents described the effects of “vicarious trauma” and “burnout” as pervasive, only a couple named explicit self-care checks or staff-focused healing sessions with AAPI mental health providers in their coalition. Self-care and staff-focused healing were named by a few as critical within the nonprofit social justice space where the needs are immediate and urgent, and the capacity to attend to them so strained.

Given the layers of harm that hate inflicts, it is not surprising that a key learning from our interviews is how healing must also be attended to at multiple levels—at the level of the victim and their families, within the immediate AAPI community, and among the broader universe of communities of color affected by the larger forces of racism that lie behind acts of hate.

As respondents relayed the activities described above, they described a level of intention behind curating distinct spaces for healing both within and across communities, as well as for building internal and cross-racial solidarity. As one explained, “We found that, in some cases, town halls can be helpful. Sometimes, the town halls need to be closed, not open, because when they’re open, they can be usurped a little bit and they can be exercises in solidarity, when in fact you’re not trying to actually build solidarity in those moments, you’re trying to create a space for community healing.”

SPOTLIGHTS

AAPI COMMUNITY HEALING

Deeply imbedded in the Oakland community, Asian Health Services (AHS) is a federally qualified health center that provides health, social, and advocacy services to a range of clients, the majority of whom fall below the federal poverty line and experience linguistic isolation. The organization jumped into rapid response mode when the pandemic hit and anti-AAPI hate incidents grew.

AHS has been providing victim support services and growing a foundation for learning around cross-racial solidarity and healing as part of its core work. To bridge these efforts, AHS has also been supporting healing within the AAPI community by promoting non-Western forms of healing for survivors and family members. These include teaching yoga classes in multiple languages, promoting healing rooted in changing nutrition and diet, practicing mindfulness and meditation after experiencing trauma, and sharing other forms of Asian healing traditions. They are also working to build community among survivors and to implement a peer support system.

BUILDING CROSS-RACIAL SOLIDARITY

Building cross-racial solidarity has been a central to the Asian American Christian Collaborative's (AACC) work on uplifting AAPI issues since its founding in 2020. Early in the pandemic, anti-AAPI rhetoric began to emerge in houses of worship. Asian American Christians grew concerned these sentiments would lead to overt anti-AAPI violence. Pastor Raymond Chang worked with a group of Asian American Christian leaders to put together the AACC "Statement on Anti-Asian Violence in the Time of Covid-19," condemning anti-AAPI hate and violence which garnered multiracial and multi denominational support following its release.

Shortly after that time, the racial justice movement ignited across the country to protest systemic violence against the Black community and advocate for change. Pastor Chang and others from AACC marched with Black pastors in the Chicago region to protest the murder of George Floyd. He later brought together a historic Chinese church and historic Black church to march for Black lives and dignity, as well as organized a panel with prominent Black and Asian pastors and Christian leaders to discuss how the two communities can combat racism together. Since then, AACC has continued strengthening its relationship and building trust with Black and brown communities, within and outside the Christian faith, by speaking out on injustices and bringing together Black, Latinx, and Asian leaders to discuss issues that each community is facing. At the same time, AACC is modeling how Asian American Christians can participate in civic engagement in solidarity with other racial groups.



Supporting Anti-AAPI Hate Responses

Considerations for Investment

In addition to generously sharing their experiences responding to and preventing anti-AAPI hate, AAPI partners also offered their insights into what is needed to better support this critical work. Emphasizing a documented, historical under-investment in AAPI communities, respondents called out a straight-forward need for private and corporate philanthropy to make deep and long-term investments that can begin to shift a pervasive sense of scarcity on the ground. As shared by one leader, “Communities already have knowledge and experience and the wherewithal. They just have not been invested in.”

The following offers recommendations in key areas where anti-AAPI hate efforts might benefit from additional attention and resources:

Increase investment in AAPI organizations engaged in hate responses.

Overwhelmingly, many emphasized the need for multi-year, general operating support that allows AAPI organizations to extend their capacity to meet urgent needs in their regions. Meaningful response requires engaging in authentic listening to shape responses to community needs, staffing to navigate and support long-term victim needs, brokering partnerships and deepening networks of expertise and support, building effective infrastructure to support and serve, and ultimately fostering a sense of safety and belonging across diverse cultural and ethnic groups that may call a region home. Building this capacity, however, has been deeply challenging as those on the front lines have engaged in what one described as the “hamster wheel of providing rapid response services to community members who experience hate crimes, doing our level best to get that person to a point where they maybe have a fighting chance of accessing services that exist outside of the services we provide, but then not having the long-term capacity to ensure that that happens.”

Strengthen connective tissue. As reported previously, multiple respondents also noted a general lack of “connective tissue” across different anti-AAPI hate efforts at the regional level. Those who expressed curiosity about other anti-AAPI hate efforts shared that they found the very process of our interviews and affirmation of common challenges valuable to them. Some called out national organizations as being especially well-positioned with a bird’s eye view of what is happening around the country, and encouraged continued sharing of toolkits, curricula, funding opportunities, and other resources so that those on the ground might be able to adapt and use them for their own needs. This network weaving function could be most valuable in areas of the country that might otherwise be isolated in thinking about their approach to responding to and preventing anti-AAPI hate. Some respondents also noted an opportunity to

“When really awful things happen in our community... it puts so much excess pressure and stress on the people who are at the forefront. That doesn't necessarily lead to long term change. [We need] more energy and capacity to plan in advance so that we don't have to be reactionary in the long run.”

— Regional AAPI Organization

strengthen connections with government and public sector resources and power outside the AAPI community as well.

Resource different models of regional AAPI hate response. Big cities with large AAPI populations, particularly on the East and West coast, often receive the most attention when anti-AAPI hate incidents occur as well as more private and public resources to address hate. As respondents emphasized, however, hate knows no geographic bounds. AAPI victims from communities that are not well set up to serve them are among the most vulnerable. Philanthropic investment in areas such as Minnesota, New Mexico, and Atlanta would help build regional capacity to expand anti-AAPI hate prevention and response efforts that are currently underway, as well as offer an opportunity for incubating models of response that might be more easily replicated in other regions with smaller AAPI populations and/or limited AAPI infrastructure for response.

Grow the AAPI infrastructure of change and support. Expert knowledge deeply rooted in AAPI culture—in areas of communications and narrative change, community safety, legal and civil rights support—exists and is growing. As demand continues to grow, an opportunity exists for funders to explicitly and meaningfully support the extension and expansion of this expertise among AAPI technical assistance providers and consultants. This might also take the form of deeper investments in various AAPI national organizations to be the touchpoints on the ground that they aspire to be. As one national partner shared, “I think that our national organizations have the potential to really do a lot of great work when it comes to coordinating field capacity and have relationships with CBOs. If they had larger community engagement staff, [anti-AAPI hate approaches] could benefit from economies of scale [versus each community reinventing the wheel].”

Promote AAPI narratives. Despite progress, there is still work to do in continuing to strengthen awareness and understanding about AAPIs broadly and sustain public attention to the ongoing crisis of hate facing AAPIs. Some also emphasized the importance of more closely linking anti-AAPI hate response and prevention efforts to the larger arc of addressing systemic violence as a means of building cross-racial solidarity and marshalling greater interest and investments from social justice funders. Importantly, going forward, some acknowledged the importance of allowing different narratives to take root and for the growing AAPI community to feel comfortable with disagreement and tension. As one leader elaborated, “We need to generally sing from the same songbook, and sing the same song, but it’s absolutely critical and necessary that we sing different parts, right? Our traditional thinking is if we’re singing different parts, our voices won’t be loud enough ... we don’t need to overly manage some of those differences.”

“There’s a robust Pacific Islander community in Arkansas, there are Burmese refugees in Iowa. Those groups are facing hate, bias, discrimination of all sorts. But they don’t have the same capacity or resources.”

— National AAPI Organization

“If there was a path for folks [investing in this work] to see community safety training as not just a volunteer or part-time thing, but to see this as a full-time area of work, we’d be able to have much more sustainable growth.”

— Regional AAPI Partner

Invest in upstream issues. A final category of recommendations—viewed as an interconnected and foundational element of AAPI hate response and prevention—focused on more upstream, long-term investments. These included, for example, recommendations for continued investments in leadership development (attending specifically to the next generation of AAPI movement leaders) and in strengthening youth voice and youth-led campaigns. Others named a strategic focus on increasing AAPI political representation as particularly important in regions of the country where AAPIs do not yet have a voice, as well as strengthening on-the-ground infrastructure through sustained support for building the pipeline of bilingual and bicultural workers that are equipped to serve the diverse needs of AAPI victims.



In Closing

It has been three years since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and AAPI hate remains an urgent concern. With the goal of offering a means to think about supporting AAPI community capacity and resilience, this paper shared a vast array of important efforts unfolding in local communities to address anti-AAPI hate and support AAPIs who are a part of this country's rich tapestry. We hope that the findings present useful points of reflection for supporting and strengthening the critical work underway.

List of Interviewees

Wanda Ferguson, Jenny Wang, Lily Wang,
Thuy-Chau Bui & Froilan Luna Romero

Neha Gill

John C. Yang

Pastor Raymond Chang

Jo-Ann Yoo & Janice Song

Ben Wang & Julia Liou

Nkauj Iab Yang

Michelle La Place-Watts

Victoria Huynh

Abbey Eusebio, Elizabeth Stigler & Jered Pruitt

Norman White

Grace Chan McKibben

Janice Li

ThaoMee Xiong

Sarah Wan

Tiffany Kang

Swati Narayan

Jenan Mohajir

Robin Toma

Priya Purandare & Navdeep Singh

Isra Pananon

Sachi Watase

Kalaya'an Mendoza

Jennifer Li

Brigitte Cook

Pastor Aldo Siahaan

Karen Chiu

Arjun Sethi

Sharan Singh & Kiran Kaur Gill

Shobhana Verma

Cynthia Choi

Mark Reading-Smith

Nicky MacCallum

Alameda County Care Partners & Getting the Most Out of Life

Apna Ghar

Asian Americans Advancing Justice

Asian American Christian Collaborative

Asian American Federation

Asian Health Services

California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs

Catholic Charities of the East Bay

Center for Pan Asian Community Services

Chinese American Service League

City of Chicago' Commission on Human Relations

Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community

Coalition for Community Safety and Justice

Coalition of Asian American Leaders

Community Youth Center of San Francisco

Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas' office

Houston Coalition Against Hate

Interfaith America

Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, LA vs Hate

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

New Mexico Asian Family Center

Nonviolent Peaceforce

Oakland Chinatown Improvement Council

Oakland Police Department

Philadelphia Praise Center

Project: VISION

RISE Together Fund

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund

South Asian American Policy & Research Institute

Stop AAPI Hate & Chinese for Affirmative Action

The Sikh Coalition

Youth Alive!

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Page 22, SOMA Summer Safety Fair flier, taken from Coalition for Community Safety and Justice Facebook page

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