



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION DIRECTOR OUTLINES RESPONSE TO ANTI-ASIAN HATE CRIMES



0

Posted On MAY 23, 2020

Community News, Politics, Health, Civil Rights

By J.K. YAMAMOTO, Rafu Staff Writer

Los Angeles County is aware of the increase in anti-Asian incidents related to the coronavirus pandemic and is taking steps to address it, according to Robin Toma, executive director of the county's Human Relations Commission.

Toma was among the speakers at a virtual press conference for ethnic media hosted by Supervisor Hilda Solis, who represents the 1st District, on May 14.

Noting that May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Solis

Supervisor Hilda Solis and Human Relations Commission Executive Director Robin Toma

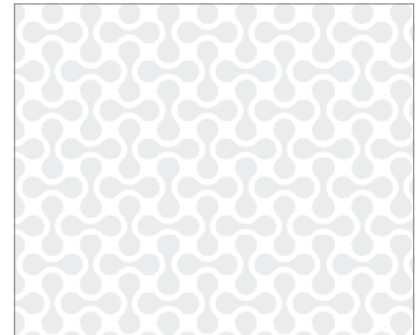
said, "I've been proudly representing a significant portion of the county's Asian Pacific Islander communities for many, many years. My district spans from Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Historic Filipinotown to the San Gabriel Valley. I know that our communities of color, particularly the Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian communities, have been impacted by COVID-19 both in terms of positive cases and death tallies — 30% of COVID-19 deaths in L.A. County are Latinos, 18% among Asian residents and 13% among African Americans.

"That is why I have prioritized setting up COVID testing sites in my own district. We now have 12 testing sites in the 1st District and I encourage everyone who is symptomatic to get tested by visiting <http://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing> or call simply 211 to schedule an appointment,"

After discussing county assistance for small business owners and renters, Solis said, "These, as you know, are very difficult times for all of our communities. Unfortunately, the API communities are also having to deal with the rampant and racist attacks due to COVID-19 ... I call attention to this issue strongly to condemn discrimination."

She introduced Toma, who "has been at the forefront of combating anti-API racism."

Toma's commission issues an annual report on hate crimes committed on the basis of the victims' actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion or sexual orientation. There is always a small percentage of victims



INSTAGRAM



rafushimpo

who are Asian Pacific Islander, but in the last few months that percentage has shot up.

"I'm here today because this is an important opportunity for us to speak to many in the Asian community here in Los Angeles," said Toma, who is also assistant director for the county's Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services Department. "There are 1.5 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders living in the county, and for all of you there is a greater burden that you are carrying in addition to the fear that all of us have ... around being careful about not contracting coronavirus. There is another kind of disease that is spreading, and that is a disease of hate and prejudice and discrimination against Asian Americans at this time ...

"We are concerned because of the stories that many of us have heard about people being targeted for hateful remarks, for threats or discrimination, because they are Asian. We actually know this because of the actual reports that have come in through our partners, through our trusted community agencies, through law enforcement.

"To this date from February through April, this year has seen more than a hundred reports of hate related to COVID-19. Because of that, we have been working for some time now on our three-part strategy for unity and action. Because of Supervisor Solis' motion that was passed unanimously by the Board of Supervisors, we are looking to do three things with our anti-hate initiative.

"One is to unite Los Angeles County against hate. Number two, we want to expose the hate where it is and that means getting it reported to 211 and any other of our trusted community partners and law enforcement. And number three, we want to expand our network to help victims to fight hate and to help us to prevent it from happening."

Toma warned that more needs to be done as the stay-at-home phase gradually ends. "We are now moving into a period when people are returning to common spaces. It's all that much more critical for us to be prepared and vigilant and supportive of one another around these cases of hate and discrimination.

"We have seen the spike in anti-Asian hate and discrimination that has targeted Chinese, but it affects all people who appear to be Chinese ... We know they're vulnerable along with not just Asian people, but also immigrants of all backgrounds, especially the Latino community. And we want to be clear that the vast majority of Angelenos oppose hate and discrimination. You are not alone. We stand with you and so does law enforcement and so does the entire community and county government.

"But for us to help, we need to know where the hate is happening. So I am going to make the most important ask of my talk to say please, you must report hate — not only hate crimes, but any act of hostility that is based on your race or ethnicity or perceived or assumed race or ethnicity.

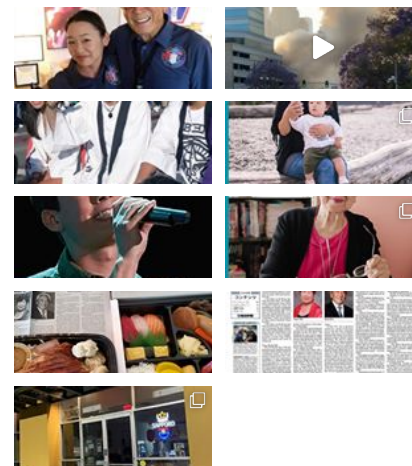
"You have to know that it is a myth that Asians are more likely to have or infect people with coronavirus because of their race. That is just not true. And the CDC has said so; you can look it up on their website.

"The reason you call 211 is because you will get not only free help for whatever you are facing because of hate. You can also get support for you and your community. You can get legal protections of your civil and human rights. It's confidential, so you do not have to worry about any violation of your privacy or any information going beyond where you want it. And the most important thing is you can help prevent it from happening to others.

"I can't stress [enough] for you how important it's been for other people we've assisted ... We've been also able to advocate on their behalf. So the school or the business that has engaged in discriminatory behavior or allowed it to happen, they are going to be taking steps so it's less likely to happen to others. I just want to leave with the message that you are not alone, but only together can we stop coronavirus and stop hate. And there's a toolbox of resources that you can go to on our website to fight COVID-19 hate. And that's going to <http://wdacs.lacounty.gov/commissions/hrc>."

Asked whether a victim needs to have any evidence when reporting a hate incident, Toma responded, "If there is evidence, absolutely collect it, but your word of what happened is often all that you have. For example, you might be walking along the street and somebody might drive by and yell at you, throw something at you, and use racial epithets and tell you to go home or to go back to where you came from. That's certainly a common occurrence. If that happens, you don't have to do anything more than simply [report]. If you do happen to get the description of the car and the license plate, that's fine. But it's sufficient for you to simply report what happened by calling 211."

Other speakers at the press conference were Peter Ng, chief executive officer of the Chinatown Service Center; Rigo Reyes, executive director of the county's Office of Immigrant Affairs; and Azusena Favela, deputy director of the



Load More...

Follow on Instagram

Department of Consumer and Business Affairs. Presentations were given in English, Spanish and Mandarin.

Business owners impacted by the pandemic were reminded that they can call (833) 238-4450 or visit <http://lacountyhelpcenter.org> and that assistance is available in multiple languages, including Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, Armenian and Farsi.

Tags

SHARE.



RELATED POSTS

MAY 25, 2020

0

Webinar on 'Coronavirus and Discrimination Against Asian Americans'

MAY 25, 2020

0

Alight with Gratitude

MAY 25, 2020

0

Virtual Memorial Day Program

LEAVE A REPLY

Your Comment

Your Name

Your Email

Your Website

POST COMMENT

ABOUT RAFU SHIMPO

The Rafu Shimpō has been the nation's leading Japanese American newspaper since its original publication. We are proud to have served the Japanese American community from our Little Tokyo office in Downtown Los Angeles since 1903.

CONNECT WITH US:



RAFU COMMUNITY

[Place an Obituary Notice](#)

[Pick Up a Copy of The Rafu Shimpō](#)

[Subscribe to Rafu Print Newspaper](#)

[Advertise in Rafu Shimpō – Japanese](#)

[Advertise in Rafu Shimpō – English](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cancellation Policy](#)

[Contact us 連絡先](#)

