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## Delaware's top labor leader apologizes for anti-Asian coronavirus posts

by [Juliana Feliciano Reyes](#), Updated: April 27, 2020



The Chinese Friendship Gate is the focal point of Chinatown where new restaurants are changing the look of the venerable Chinese community.  
MICHAEL BRYANT / Staff Photographer

#### Editor's Note

News about the coronavirus is changing quickly. The latest information can be found at [inquirer.com/coronavirus](https://www.inquirer.com/coronavirus)

A Delaware labor leader who made anti-Asian coronavirus social media posts has apologized for his “hurtful and offensive” posts.

“In the past I occasionally used [coarse] and sometimes unacceptable language to make a point,” James Maravelias, president of the Delaware AFL-CIO, posted Saturday on Facebook. “I now realize that on a handful of instances, my social media posts were hurtful and offensive. However, I am sorry if they offended anyone or any group of people.”

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The apology came a day after Politico [reported](#) on the posts by Maravelias, whose state AFL-CIO counts at least 16 unions as members.

Maravelias, who is also president of the Delaware Building Trades and an official at Laborers Local 199, deleted [a meme he posted](#) on March 30 that showed Adam and Eve as two Chinese people eating a snake — an image fueling anti-Chinese sentiment and referring to suggestions that Chinese culture [is to blame for the coronavirus](#). “Here you go come on you know it’s funny,” he wrote, according to a screenshot.

In another now-deleted post that appears to feature a video of people eating wild animals, he wrote: “Hey snowflakes...See no nationality to insult your feelings...BUT eating this [expletive] is why the virus COVID-19 has killed a couple of hundred thousand people so far.”

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» **ASK US:** [Do you have a question about the coronavirus and how it affects your health, work and life? Ask our reporters.](#)

Maravelias' posts, which were [condemned by the Anti-Defamation League](#), come out of a [long tradition](#) of [racism](#) and anti-immigrant sentiment in the American labor movement. Some say posts like these continue to threaten the fight for workers' rights.

"This is a point in labor history where we need strong community organizing more than ever," said Jeeva Muhil, a bartender and member of the Philadelphia chapter of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA). "On top of unemployment and health issues, [Asian Americans] are experiencing a spike in hate crimes. These racist Facebook posts hold back the entire labor movement from organizing."

Building trades leaders in Philadelphia, too, have long fended off accusations of racism and [anti-immigrant sentiment](#): Most recently, the Carpenters union [denounced the actions](#) of a union official who wore blackface during the Mummers Parade. But Maravelias' apology, like the Carpenters' distancing itself from their member who wore blackface, suggests there's less tolerance for these kinds of sentiments among labor leaders.

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Maravelias did not respond on Monday to a request for comment, but last week [told Politico](#): "Approximately 15,000 residents of New Castle County have been infected and you are hassling me about a Facebook post — unemployment is over 30% in Delaware and my personal Facebook reposts are news? No wonder there is no real media presence.... This is politically motivated by a far-left-wing faction to drive a wedge with radical political theatrics."

Politico's Daniel Lippman noted that "Delaware's official unemployment rate in March was actually 5.1%, although it's certainly risen significantly since then, and there are fewer than 1,400 cases in New Castle County."

» **READ MORE:** [Asian Americans already face a mental health crisis. Coronavirus racism could make it worse.](#)

Kristine Yang, a music teacher who is a member of APALA, said anti-Asian racism is often seen as "funny" and "not real racism" because it's in the form of cartoons, jokes, or catcalls.

"However," she said, "it perpetuates the idea that Asian people are somehow inferior and deserve ridicule, and causes the victims to feel hurt and shame."

Asian Americans have reported [facing increased racism and hate speech](#) during the pandemic. President Donald Trump has called the coronavirus "the Chinese virus," despite the World Health Organization's recommendation that viruses not be named by geographic location because such shorthand has sparked a backlash in the past.



Posted: April 27, 2020 - 6:01 PM

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## Situation 'Better in Several Ways'

**JOBLESS:** New claims subside in Pa., N.J.; financial pressure mounts.

By Andrew McLaughlin  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

Close to 3.3 million Americans filed new unemployment claims last week, federal figures showed Thursday, as the economic devastation from the coronavirus pandemic has now surpassed 100 million jobs nationwide in seven weeks, and states are struggling to pay out jobless benefits.

The numbers of new claims have subsided in Philadelphia.

and New Jersey from the start of the pandemic in the first weeks after COVID-19 took hold, according to the economic data available. More than 1.7 million Philadelphia-area jobs have been lost, or 10% of the workforce, since the start of the pandemic, according to the weekly report from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Government reports that weekly jobless unemployment claims in the Philadelphia area for the week ending May 3, 2020, were 11,844.

• **COVID GUIDANCE** PHILADELPHIA: Mayor Kenney said on Thursday that the city will continue to enforce the stay-at-home order, but will allow some businesses to open up to outdoor dining.

• **PHILADELPHIA** PHOTOS: A man in a plaid shirt takes a photo of a city skyline from a rooftop in Philadelphia.

**REGION:** New-case numbers fall in Pa. In N.J., hospitalizations drop.

By Andrew McLaughlin  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

The coronavirus epidemic in Philadelphia is getting "better in several ways," officials said Thursday, the number of new cases near zero in monitoring to go down in Philadelphia, and New Jersey is seeing the lowest hospitalization rates since health officials began publicly reporting those numbers in early April.

where we are safely seeing," said Philadelphia Health Commissioner Dennis Pate, "we need to just keep doing what we're doing."

As it continues to monitor and monitor Philadelphia over the first reporting phase, Pate said, Gov. Tom Wolf said he would announce additional measures to keep the state in place to protect the state's health.

PHILADELPHIA: A man in a plaid shirt takes a photo of a city skyline from a rooftop in Philadelphia.



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