

Guest Commentary

Opinion | Hate has no home in Michigan, especially in coronavirus crisis

 Posted on: April 5, 2020 Written by: [Padma Kuppa](#), [Stephanie Chang](#) Topic: [Guest Commentary](#) Tags: [Coronavirus Michigan](#)

Padma Kuppa is the state representative for District 41: Clawson and Troy; Stephanie Chang is the state senator for District 1: Detroit and Downriver

We have been concerned [hearing reports](#) of harassment, discrimination, and attacks on Asian Americans around the country since the coronavirus outbreak began, even before the first reported case in Michigan. Since then, there have been reports of harassment in Michigan and many of our residents are truly worried about the growing hate.

Sen Chang: I remember when I first learned about what happened to Vincent Chin right here in Michigan 38 years ago; this had a huge impact on me. Chin, a Chinese American, was brutally beaten by two men during the time when the American auto industry was struggling and many Americans felt animosity toward Japanese auto companies. Chin died a few days after he was beaten. The resulting court case and activism left a huge impact on the broader Asian-American and civil rights community. We are worried that we could see another Vincent Chin-like hate crime during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Rep. Kuppa: Already involved in the public schools and the faith community, I got involved in the civic arena immediately after 9/11, when a turbaned Sikh, an immigrant from India, was killed, blamed for the terrorist attacks that fateful day. I joined the Ethnic Issues Advisory Board in Troy—the most diverse city in Michigan—to actively engage this diversity and build relationships across our differences. I met Stephanie Chang as we encouraged immigrant communities to advocate on the issues they care about, like public education to ensure our kids have a strong future, and entrepreneurship and small business to ensure we have a strong economy, to participate fully in our democracy.

We came together as legislators in 2019, and co-chair the bipartisan, bicameral APA Caucus, working with the Michigan Asian Pacific Affairs Commission and various organizations. We were looking forward to recognizing Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and holding the [Annual Asian Pacific American Advocacy Day](#) at the State Capitol in May, where we and our colleagues usually welcome Asian Americans from across the state for a day of celebration. That won't be happening this year.

We held a press call on March 26 with Attorney General Dana Nessel and Asian American community organizations, united with one message. We are grateful for the partnership with the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, Bharatiya Temple, Chinese Association of Greater Detroit, Healthy Asian Americans Project, Michigan Chinese American Coalition, Michigan Chinese Conservatives Alliance, National Association of Asian American Professionals, North American Chinese Coalition, Rising Voices of Asian American Families, South Asian American Voices for Impact, West Michigan Asian American Association, and others.

Many of our Asian-American community members are health care professionals and critical infrastructure workers, risking their lives to serve and protect all of us right now. A lead researcher working to develop a COVID-19 vaccine is Asian American.

We urge our fellow Michiganders to be respectful of each other during this pandemic. We must stand together against hate crimes, discrimination, and bias incidents. The virus is a virus. It does not have a race or ethnicity. We cannot let fear during this uncertain time turn people toward prejudice and hate.

We are in this fight against coronavirus together. We must all work to combat the pandemic and hate at the same time.

If you experienced a hate crime or have credible information about a hate crime, call the Attorney General's hate crimes hotline at 313-456-0180. If you have experienced discrimination that is not a hate crime, call the Michigan Department of Civil Rights at 1-800-482-3604, or email MDCR-INFO@michigan.gov. There is a national [Stop AAPI Hate](#) online form to submit information as well.

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Coronavirus came to Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois at about the same time. All states adopted similar distancing measures, but Michigan by that time had far more coronavirus cases than its neighbors. Bridge explains in charts.

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