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## California study tracks hate crimes against Asian Americans amid COVID-19 outbreak

'It feels like nowhere is safe right now,' NorCal woman says about racism against Asian Americans



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**Marlei Martinez**

Reporter

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** — Across the country, reports of racism and hate crimes against Asian Americans because of the coronavirus outbreak are on the rise.

In March, an Asian American family in Fresno contacted police after they found graffiti on their SUV spelling out a hateful message mentioning COVID-19.

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This week in New York, police released a [surveillance video](#) of a woman being attacked. CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, is calling for a [hate crime investigation](#) in what they

say is an alleged acid attack of an Asian American woman. The motive is unknown, but according to CAIR, this is the latest in a frightening string of bias against the Asian community.

On Wednesday, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti sounded off.

“There is absolutely no place for the discrimination and hate crimes that we are seeing across this country and even this region against members of our Asian and Pacific Islander community,” he said during a coronavirus news conference. “There is no excuse for that and it will be dealt with and prosecuted.”

How widespread is Asian American discrimination because of COVID-19? That is what the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) based out of Los Angeles, San Francisco State University and Chinese for Affirmative Action are [tracking now](#).

Courtesy: Anna Chandy

The organizations launched the [STOP AAPI HATE reporting website](#). In the first two weeks following its launch, they received over 1,100 reports of physical assault, verbal harassment and shunning.

“It means that this is a widespread issue that individuals all across our land are being impacted by hate, by xenophobia, by implicit and explicit racial bias,” said Manju Kulkarni, executive director of A3PCON.

The organizations launched the initiative March 19 following a reported physical attack of a 12-year-old boy at his LA middle school.

“He was accused of having the coronavirus simply because he was Asian American. The perpetrator told him to ‘Go back to China.’ And when the child responded that he was not Chinese, the perpetrator then punched him in the head 20 times,” Kulkarni said.

LA County’s Public Health Department joined hands with the organization shortly after to dispel those myths. The CDC has also tried to quell the stigma with its own [guidance](#).

Kulkarni said they are receiving reports from students, teachers and even doctors.

“A teacher at a school reported that a small group of students in her 4th-grade class yelled, ‘Kill the Chinese, Kill the Chinese!’” she said. “Even as they’re trying to save lives, one doctor was punched in the parking lot. Another physician had received racially derogatory comments from patients who he was trying to help.”

### Jessica Seto

**Jessica Seto carries pepper spray and a stun gun now for protection in wake of attacks against Asian Americans**

It's examples like those that worry Jessica Seto, who lives in Fremont, an area with a high population of Chinese Americans.

"I grew more afraid of getting attacked than getting the virus itself," said Seto. "It feels like nowhere is safe right now."

Amid the growing number of attacks, Seto decided to start carrying pepper spray and a stun gun with her.

“I would take the BART from the East Bay going into the city and I was afraid that something would happen to me on there,” she said. “I’ve been afraid for my family members who go out just to purchase groceries.”

Kulkarni said the point of the new study is not just to track hate crimes, but to take action.

“To see if there needs to be a change in the law or there needs to be a reminder to businesses that they are not allowed to discriminate, whether it’s in public accommodations like grocery stores and pharmacies, whether it’s in the workplace or housing,” she said.

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