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White supremacists hack Fil-Am community virtual town hall meeting, use Nazi salute (<https://www.asianjournal.com/usa/southerncalifornia/white-supremacists-hack-fil-am-community-virtual-town-hall-meeting-use-nazi-salute/>).

by [RAE ANN VARONA \(HTTPS://WWW.ASIANJOURNAL.COM/AUTHOR/RAEANNVARONA/\)](https://www.asianjournal.com/author/raeannvarona/)

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The meeting covered COVID-19 resources and community updates with community members and staffers in their 20s to their 60s listening in.

One young white man wearing sunglasses spoke into a microphone using profanity and said things like, “All immigrants should be deported. That’s why you have a home. That’s why you have a computer. Because the white man built it, you [expletive].”

Off the camera and microphone, the “Zoom bombers” taunted the virtual town hall attendees by typing the Nazi salute, “Seig Heil” in the Zoom chatbox.



#RacismIsAVirus

Pilipino Workers Center (PWC) • [Follow](#)



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om Vitor Hugo Alves To All Panelists : wtf
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WATCH: On Monday, May 11, 2020, during PWC's Town Hall, our Zoom feed was hacked by [#WhiteSupremacists](#) who verbally attacked our members and viewers with racial slurs and anti-immigrant remarks. We strongly believe in the fair treatment of immigrants and people of color, regardless of their immigration status. And we will make every effort to ensure that PWC (and our Town Hall), is a safe space for all individuals, where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

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Pro-Trump messages were also made with one of the Zoom bombers asking the others to “click hand to support Trump.”

The racial attack went on for about three minutes, but felt longer to those who witnessed it.

“It made it a not very safe space, and that’s why it was also very alarming,” PWC Executive Director Aquilina Soriano-Versoza told the *Asian Journal*.



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The Pilipino Workers Center in Los Angeles' Historic Filipinotown is a non-profit organization addressing the needs of workers and their families. | ☐ AJPress file photo

She added that she's heard of other communities of color experiencing similar attacks, including the Chinese Progressive Association in the Bay Area.

Hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been on the rise across the United States with the STOP AAPI Hate Center, a project by Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), and San Francisco State University's Asian American Studies Department, receiving over 1,700 of COVID-19 related hate reports since mid-March.

In LA, where over 1.5 million AAPIs live, concerns over anti-Asian hate crimes and discrimination have also been on the rise with county officials saying they know of over 100 incidents between February and April.

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Alex De Ocampo of the [Filipino Voter Empowerment Project \(https://fvep.org/\)](https://fvep.org/), an organization that works closely with PWC to promote civic engagement in the Filipino American community, said he's seen discrimination hit those close to him.

"In my family, a lot of them are nurses and they've mentioned that even after their shifts, that people have said some very harsh rhetoric to them that have been borderline racist," De Ocampo told the *Asian Journal*.

He added that it hasn't been uncommon for people to see borderline or outright racist comments or posts on social media platforms like Facebook.

"It's not the algorithm that is bringing up these instances onto your feed," said De Ocampo. "Asian Americans — Filipino, Indonesian, Chinese, among others — have seen or heard some type of remark from backhanded comments to extreme violence, and it's an epidemic that is spreading like a virus."

While attacks on Asian Americans aren't new with incidents tracing back to the 19th century, many have found the lack of federal concern on the issue alarming given the increase in attacks during the current pandemic.

As one NBC article reported, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Justice have before worked together to prevent bias incidents and hate crimes during the SARS outbreak and 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, no such efforts have been made during the current pandemic despite the growing reports.

In March, the FBI even warned about a possible increase in hate crimes against AAPI during coronavirus and predicted that a "portion of the U.S. public will associate COVID-19 with China and Asian American populations."

"This is a virus and for anyone to tie it to any Asian American or any specific group and start pushing conspiracy theories is definitely wrong," said De Ocampo. "This is not some political game we're playing. These are people's lives and livelihoods."

President Donald Trump received criticism for referring to the virus as the "China virus," despite it being named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization, which put rules in place in 2015 to avoid using names of people, places, and animals when naming diseases to avoid problematic stigmas.

“It really matters who is in leadership and what framework has been coming from the top and from the president’s own words,” said Soriano-Versoza. The DOJ’s lack of concern, she added, is reflective of the current administration.

The attack was reported to authorities as well as to Zoom, but PWC is asking people to help fight hate crimes by signing a petition addressed to the Attorney General Bill Barr to hold perpetrators of hate crimes against the AAPI community accountable.

The petition can be found on www.change.org/no-API-hate (<https://www.change.org/no-API-hate>).

They’re also asking that people share the YouTube video that shows portions of the attack along with the hashtag #RacismIsAVirus to help raise awareness of what’s happening and to join in solidarity. The video can be found on PWC’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PWCSC (<https://www.facebook.com/PWCSC>).

“People are being exposed right now — front line workers, caregivers, [and] delivery people. And there are many other vulnerable people in our community like those with underlying chronic illnesses and seniors,” said Soriano-Versoza. “We don’t want [the attackers] to win by scaring us, so it’s important we get together and be able to address all these different tissues and make sure that no one in our community is falling through the cracks and suffering needlessly.”

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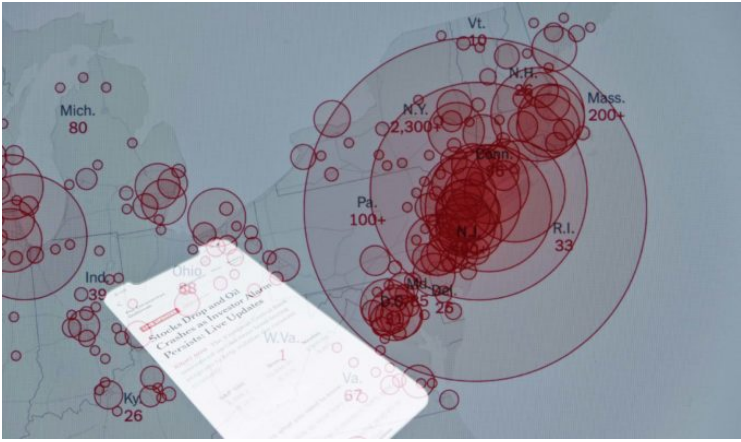
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