

OPINION

'Chinese flu' is a distraction. We need to keep making leaders aware of their ignorance

Greg Moore, Arizona Republic Published 6:00 a.m. MT March 26, 2020

Opinion: Calling out oblivious leaders like Donald Trump and Guy Phillips is the right thing to do in a time of global pandemic.

This isn't the time for ignorance.

We have to be the best versions of ourselves in the face of a global pandemic that has disrupted life all over the globe.

That means calling out oblivious leaders for being slow to educate themselves and failing to focus on the greatest good.

That means Asian Americans were right to check U.S. President Donald Trump over calling COVID-19 the "Chinese Flu."

It was a pointless distraction.

Trump later backtracked

At a time like this, the U.S. president should be talking about the best practices to save lives, not posturing over a name or emboldening those behind racist behavior toward Asian Americans.

People were outraged and took to social media to explain just how dangerous the sideshow could become.

As a public service, The Arizona Republic is offering coronavirus coverage relating to public safety free of charge. Support The Republic by subscribing to azcentral.com. (https://fullaccess.azcentral.com/newstart/specialoffer?gps-source=CPDIGARTICLE&utm_medium=onsite&utm_source=article&utm_campaign=DIGITALARTICLE&utm_content=CPDIGARTICLE%22)

The Asian American Journalists Association, meanwhile, urged everyone to remember World Health Organization guidelines "discouraging the use of geographic locations when naming illnesses" (https://www.aja.org/guidance_on_coronavirus_coverage?fbclid=IwAR08leeN9nG3X7QdZKInjYatSynkl5XO_XBF_40s0biNTDuiYIP27-ANF0U) because it could stigmatize the people living there.

Trump backtracked.

"It is very important that we totally protect our Asian American community in the United States, and all around the world," he said on Twitter. "They are amazing people and the spreading of the Virus is NOT their fault" (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1242202290393677829>) in any way, shape, or form. They are working closely with us to get rid of it. WE WILL PREVAIL TOGETHER!

It played out similarly in Arizona

We saw it play out the same way in Arizona.

A Scottsdale councilman, Guy Phillips, shared a Facebook post that erroneously connected the "C" in "COVID-19" to "China." COVID-19 is an acronym for "coronavirus disease 2019" (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>).

People called him out for spreading false information in a time where the masses needed facts and sober guidance more than ever.

Phillips deleted the post and apologized, realizing that sharing bad information does more harm than good.

"I have been made aware of my ignorance," Phillips wrote to *The Arizona Republic* in [an apology letter \(/story/opinion/op-ed/2020/03/24/scottsdale-councilman-guy-phillips-apologizes-reckless-act-covid-19/2908350001/\)](#). "I hope and pray others will also take a moment and think before they post or repost any exchange of information to make sure it is not only accurate but promotes healing and goodwill."

Athletes pushed back on the Olympics

We've seen how it's played out in the sports world.

Olympic organizers were dawdling, putting off a decision on whether to delay the 2020 Tokyo Games.

Athletes pushed back.

Competitors from the worlds of U.S. track, gymnastics and swimming explained how worried they were about participating, afraid of creating a COVID-19 incubation center in Olympic Village. Canada's athlete delegation pulled out entirely.

Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, saw it all and [called for a postponement \(/story/sports/olympics/2020/03/23/tokyo-games-usa-gymnastics-joins-chorus-lobbying-postponement/2903652001/\)](#), faster than you could blow out the Olympic torch.

'It's about healing, right?'

If our leaders won't lead us, then we have to lead them.

If they get distracted over names or memes, then we have to write letters and make phone calls and have conversations and use social media to make it clear that this is not a time for ignorance. Â

If they refuse to listen to doctors as they make decisions, then we have to write letters and make phone calls and have conversations and use social media to make it clear that this is not a time for ignorance.

We're seeing rational thought and caution win out over hate and panic.



- [The CDC recommends grocery delivery. But will that work for everyone?](https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/joannaallhands/2020/04/10/cdc-recommends-grocery-delivery-but-work-everyone/5129328002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=3153569002)
(https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/joannaallhands/2020/04/10/cdc-recommends-grocery-delivery-but-work-everyone/5129328002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=3153569002).
- [Throwing more money at a coronavirus shutdown won't accomplish much](https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/robertrobb/2020/04/09/throwing-more-cash-paycheck-protection-program-wont-help-small-businesses/5124842002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=3153569002)
(https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/robertrobb/2020/04/09/throwing-more-cash-paycheck-protection-program-wont-help-small-businesses/5124842002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=3153569002).
- [If grocery clerks are essential to state operations, why aren't lawmakers?](https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/laurieroberts/2020/04/09/arizona-legislature-has-unfinished-business-get-back-work/5125034002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=3153569002)
(https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/laurieroberts/2020/04/09/arizona-legislature-has-unfinished-business-get-back-work/5125034002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=3153569002).

James Park, head of 4A (the [Arizona Asian American Association](https://aaaa-az.org/) (<https://aaaa-az.org/>)), sees the recent developments in how leaders are responding to people in the fight against coronavirus as reasons for optimism.

“It’s all about healing, right?” Park said.

“I’m not one to attack somebody or go after somebody, but if our leaders are willing to come back to the table and be helpful in joining everybody together—then that’s a good thing, he said.

The fight against the spread of coronavirus “is a fight for everybody, for all humanity. “I think we will beat it,” he said. “It’s just a matter of time, but we will beat it. I’m very happy to see our leaders changing the tone, instead of “you” and “I,” it’s more like “we,” together.”

That’s a smart approach.

This isn’t the time for ignorance.”

Reach Moore at gmoore@azcentral.com (<mailto:gmoore@azcentral.com>), or 602-444-2236. Follow him on Instagram and Twitter @WritingMoore (<https://twitter.com/writingmoore?lang=en>).

There's plenty Moore where this came from. **Subscribe** (https://offers.azcentral.com/specialoffer?gps-source=CPNEWS&utm_medium=onsite&utm_source=TAGLINE&utm_campaign=NEWSROOM&utm_content=GREGMOORE) for videos, columns, opinions and analysis from The Arizona Republic’s award-winning sports team.

