



May 8, 2020

## Open Letter to Community About the Recent Incident on the Green Line LRT

Dear Community,

We are reaching out in a moment where we see anti-Asian discrimination and violence on the rise. Amidst our current environment where every person has been impacted by COVID-19, the President, along with some of our nation's leaders, began using language that stigmatized the Asian community. The history of branding Asian Americans as a diseased foreign group isn't new to this country, but in this moment, it has led to increased racist and xenophobic acts targeting Asian communities across the country, including here in Minnesota. As others have said, we are in the same storm but we are not in the same boat; and, in this moment, those of us who identify as or appear Chinese have become visible targets for Americans' collective pain.

We believe all people have a right to live free of violence, and as Asian Minnesotan organizations, we do our work with the understanding that systemic racism and inequities are deeply embedded in the fabric of our society and affect all of us. When we internalize the stereotypes of each other's communities, we strengthen systems embedded in white supremacy that do not serve us, and it is our communities that suffer. We also recognize that racist policies push Black communities, Indigenous communities and communities of color into poorer neighborhoods with scarce resources, where we are further pitted against each other.

A video has surfaced this week showing an unprovoked Asian woman kicked by a Black teen while waiting for a train on the Green Line in St. Paul. Since then, the video has been shared many times and investigations have led to arrest. Although those involved were people of color, we don't know the context of the incident; since the video has been publicly shared, however, there have been many assumptions made that the attack was racially motivated or related to COVID-19.

While we oppose violence perpetrated against Asians and anyone else, we also stand firmly against anti-Blackness. We ask our community members to stop using anti-Black language and condemn any and all anti-Black behaviors. We know all too well that when Black communities, Indigenous communities and communities of color are portrayed in any acts of violence, that image then becomes the stereotypical narrative for our whole communities, and serves as a distraction from our ability to collectively address systemic racism and institutional violence. We also know that Asian communities have been used throughout history as an excuse to further surveil, criminalize and harm other communities, especially Black and Muslim communities.

Let us be clear through this pandemic—while our oppressions are connected, our oppressions are not the same. Black bodies are systemically and historically dehumanized in this country in

ways we will never face. This pandemic is the perfect example. COVID-19 does not discriminate, anyone can get it—and still, because of historical oppression, Black folks are disproportionately impacted with the highest infection and fatality rate of any group.

In this moment, we must all show solidarity and reach deeper into each other's communities to make sure that those who are most vulnerable are seen and supported. Each of our respective communities knows the pain of what racism and xenophobia has done to exclude, harm, and pivot us against one another. We see this as an opportunity to learn from one another and unite in opposition to racialized violence. To truly transform Minnesota into a state where all communities are safe, respected, and included, we must remember that the well-being of our communities is tied together.

**In community,**

Asian American Organizing Project (AAOP)

CAPI USA

Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL)

Cultural Society of Filipino-Americans (CSFA)

Filipinx for Immigrant Rights & Racial Justice MN (FIRM)

Hmong Museum

Japanese American Citizens League (JAACL)

Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota

ManForward

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) - St. Cloud chapter

National Association of Asian American Professionals - Minnesota (NAAAP MN)

Pan-Asian Voices for Equity (PAVE-MN)

Release MN8

Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment (RISE)

Siengkane Lao MN (SKLM)

Theater Mu

The SEAD Project

Transforming Generations

Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota

Wat Promwachirayan (Wat Thai of MN)