




United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND CIVIL RIGHTS
Washington, DC 20240

Memorandum

To: Bureau EEO Directors
DOI EEO Community
DOI Diversity Partners

From: Erica D. White-Dunston, Esq. 
Director, Office of Diversity Inclusion and Civil Rights
Chief Diversity Officer

Date: March 18, 2021

Subject: **Statement on Violence and Discrimination against Asian American and Pacific Islander Americans and Communities**

On Tuesday, our Nation witnessed heinous acts of violence against eight people, six of whom were of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent. While the motivation of the shootings remains under investigation, the fear, sadness, and anger unleashed by these atrocities are undeniable. This violent act highlights the continued injustices experienced by the AAPI community and other Americans of color across the United States. It pains me to write again about the ill treatment endured by minority populations while going about their daily lives, especially when there is an inherent right to safety in both our personal and professional lives. Yet again, we are faced with this right being tragically stripped away from our friends, families and colleagues. We see your hurt. We understand your tears. We acknowledge the pain and disbelief the recent surge of violence has specifically caused the AAPI community and all others who abhor violence. We want you to know that you are not alone. The leaders and employees of DOI care.

Crises like COVID-19 can bring out the best and worst in people. Since the global pandemic began, Asian American and Pacific Islander Americans have been singled out and subjected to racism, harassment and xenophobia around the world. There are countless stories and examples shared in the news and on social media about the harassment and violence unnecessarily and unfairly leveled at this community of people and ethnicities. Our society's deep-rooted history of anti-Asian harassment, racism and violence is now at the forefront of our collective experience.

As a Department which values dignity, respect, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and equal opportunity for all people, we stand against any acts of harassment, racism and violence perpetuated in the larger community or our DOI workplaces, national parks and public lands.

DOI has offices across all fifty states and U.S. territories, and we celebrate the vast diversity of the nation. American culture is unique and incredible because of the richness in the many different cultures that comprise it. AAPI culture is American culture; AAPI communities are American communities. Whether or not we have personally experienced bias, harassment or racism, the Department seeks to disrupt any behaviors that marginalizes, discriminates, harasses, and/or excludes any person within our professional and community networks. Extending dignity, respect, equity and fairness to all is at the foundation of who we are as trusted partners to the American people. We would be remiss if we did not open ourselves to deep reflection and to seek “continuing revelation” to understand the impact these atrocities have on the effectiveness of our workforces in the accomplishment of our mission objectives, and the role we can all play in disrupting unwelcome, diminishing behaviors that erodes unity and our ability to create and sustain an inclusive and welcoming workplace throughout the Department.

To help prepare our workforce to engage in healthy and relevant dialogue that leads to sustained working relationships, the Department’s [Intergenerational Sensitivity and Bystander Intervention \(ISBI\) training](#) provides a model for disrupting these behaviors by taking specific actions:

1. **Express Concern** - When you witness harassing conduct or hear an inappropriate or discriminatory remark, intervene and share your concerns about what has been said or done.
2. **Ask for Understanding** - Use questions and brainstorming to gain clarity and understanding about what was said or done.
3. **Offer Support** - Explain to the person why what they said or did needs to be rethought and why it was inappropriate and harmful. Recommend alternative ways to reframe the message and/or action in a way that is not hurtful or offensive to others. Express your support for the victim and affirm they did nothing wrong.

4. **Echo** - When you witness other people standing up against uncivil behaviors, discrimination or harassing conduct, show your support by amplifying their message.

I invite and encourage everyone to be an ally and stand against discrimination, harassment, racism and xenophobia by taking the EDI Pledge: [Take the EDI Pledge](#). Each of us has the power and responsibility to promote and advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in our workplace and community. Each of us has the opportunity and power to be active allies to those with less access, and to take responsibility for making changes that will help others be successful. To learn more about allyship, visit the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights (ODICR) SharePoint site: [ODICR SharePoint](#).