Dealing with a rise in hate-based violence against Asian Americans

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, news headlines have reported an increase in hate-based violence targeting Asian Americans across the country. Highly charged rhetoric blaming Asian people for the spread of the coronavirus is cited as a primary cause behind the increase.

Hate-based violence—such as assault or vandalism—is an extreme form of prejudice that's often exacerbated by social and political change or uncertainty. When people face a crisis or feel as if their way of life is threatened, some look for a scapegoat to blame. With China cited as the origin of the COVID-19 virus, Asian Americans have found themselves the target of racially motivated discrimination, bias, ethnic intimidation, and attacks. In late 2020, the United Nations issued a report detailing the "alarming level" of violence and hate incidents against Asian Americans.

The impact of hate-based violence

Survivors of hate-based attacks often experience anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), along with a general sense of anger and fear. In addition, the implications of hate-based violence reach beyond their victims. The broader community also experiences distrust, fear, and anxiety. A study published in Ethnic and Racial Studies found that Asian Americans dealing with COVID-19-related discrimination experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression. Additional studies show that youths who experience discrimination are more likely to

develop chronic mental health problems. Youths are also at greater risk for self-injurious behaviors, which can then become a risk factor for suicide.

If you or someone you know is the victim of hate-based violence, here are some actions to take:

- **Report what happened.** Hate-based violence and other bias incidents are significantly underreported. Depending on the situation, call 911 for immediate assistance or write down as much detail as you can and file a police report.
- **Accept help.** Lean on trusted family and friends for support. Express your needs and emotions clearly and honestly, ask for and accept help.
- **Reach out to an advocate.** Seek out local, state, or national groups that offer information, resources, and assistance.
- **Don't bottle things up.** Allow your feelings to come out—talk, cry, share thoughts, or write them in a journal. Don't attempt to numb the pain with drugs or alcohol.
- **Seek help.** Don't hesitate to reach out for help. Resources include your physician, a clergy person, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and local support groups.

How to fight hate in your community

Hate-based violence can make people feel helpless. But there are things individuals can do to stand up against hate and promote inclusion and tolerance.

- **Learn more.** Educate yourself about the definition of hate crimes, the statutes in your area, and the community resources available.
- **Get involved.** Participate in your community's dialogue on race and bias. Join diverse community organizations and make an extra effort to meet people you don't know.
- **Take action.** Don't stay on the sidelines. Be a part of the solution by signing a petition, getting to know your neighbors, speaking up in church, attending a vigil, or repairing acts of vandalism in your community.
- **Teach tolerance.** Model inclusive language and behaviors, especially for your children. Expose your kids to multicultural experiences and talk openly about examples of intolerance or hate-based violence in the news.