

Guide

Addressing Escalating Violence Against Asian Americans in the Workplace

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#StopAsianHate. Since the start of the Coronavirus outbreak last March, there have been unprecedented attacks on the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) people. These attacks have been triggered by racist rhetoric fueled by anti-Asian sentiments. With the [recent upsurge in attacks](#), President Joe Biden has released a [memorandum](#) condemning these hate crimes and has signed an executive order to combat the racism the AAPI population is encountering.

Corporate leaders are voicing support internally and publicly for the Asian-American community and turning to their Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DE&I) practitioners to learn what other companies are doing. "How do we support our AAPI employees?" "How do we make statements that convey truth and hold weight?" "What if we get pushback or backlash?"

At Working Mother Media's Diversity Best Practices, we understand that taking a stand and encouraging open and honest workplace conversations on topics of racial violence and discrimination can be challenging. However, change and progress requires action. One such action we recommend is addressing the issues through communications and dialogue both internally and externally. According to a 2019 Glassdoor survey, 61 percent of U.S. employees have witnessed or experienced discrimination based on age, race, gender or LGBTQ identity in the workplace. The study conducted by The Harris Poll surveyed over 1,100 U.S. employees. Issues of racism and bias exist in and outside our workplace. Taking a leadership role to address these issues further reinforces to your employees, customers and stakeholders, your organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We have developed recommendations, including links to additional resources to support your efforts.

- **Align your internal DE&I commitment values to external marketplace and strategy**

We propose companies publicly state their support for collaboration, empathy, unity, and positive change in racial equity and justice.

- **Leverage the power behind your status**

By utilizing the impact of your branding, you can create bold messaging campaigns that target your commitment to racial justice and provide insight to how your company is tackling these difficult conversations and challenges in our world.

- **Have difficult conversations with your employees**

Take that courageous step and have tough conversations at work. You must be upfront with your employees about the inequities impacting your staff, be it directly or indirectly. Even if your staff members do not identify as AAPI, they are being affected by the violence shown on media networks, the dialogues on social media platforms, and personal conversations and experiences they have about the AAPI hate crimes. (see: [How to support Asian American colleagues amid the recent wave of anti-Asian violence](#))

- **Be prepared for reactions from employees and customers**

With any bold statement in business, you will receive support for your stance as well as dissension. Have a plan on how you will respond in both cases and be sure it is clear and consistent.

How some organizations have addressed these recent events and past events of a similar nature.

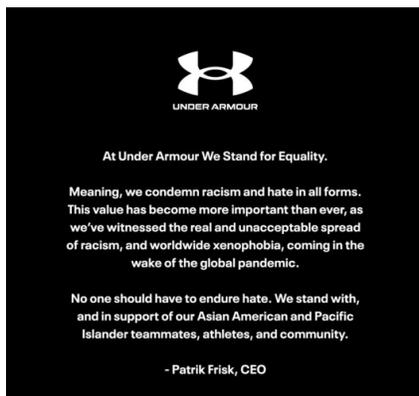


Nike's CEO, Mark Parker, has [written a letter](#) to the company's employees about the police violence against Black Americans. In his letter, he is honest and vulnerable about the impact of the events on his own well-being and condemns racism and discrimination as destructive forces. He then discusses the actionable plan he has created to support the 52 percent BIPOC Nike workforce, including listening and dialogue sessions to guide the company's future impact. Nike also made a public statement on Instagram titled [#StopAsianHate](#) to voice the company's solidarity with the

AAPI community. On their [Until We All Win](#) community page, Nike states that they have donated to 20 nonprofit organizations so far to address the racial intolerances being demonstrated to our AAPI community during our COVID-19 pandemic reality.

Liberty Mutual Social Media Response

A letter written by David H. Long, Chairman and CEO of Liberty Mutual Insurance. "I hope all are enjoying the Lunar New Year. This is a time of celebration, happiness and renewal for the Pan-Asian community. As I reflect on this joyous time of year, I am deeply saddened by the rising violence against this community. Since the onset of COVID-19, the Pan-Asian community has been the target of intensified hate and bias. Unfortunately, these events and recent attacks are just the latest example of racism in our country. Many of our Pan-Asian colleagues, partners and customers are feeling unsafe in their communities because of their race, and they bring this fear into work. We remain steadfast in our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and treating everyone with dignity and respect. Guided by our Value to put people first, I ask you to join me in supporting our Pan-Asian community and colleagues during this time. As we continue our dialog on race and work to make things better for all of us, we will emerge stronger."



Under Armour Social Media Response

"At Under Armour We Stand for Equality. Meaning, we condemn racism and hate in all forms. This value has become more important than ever, as we've witnessed the real and unacceptable spread of racism, and worldwide xenophobia, coming in the wake of the global pandemic. No one should have to endure hate. We stand with, and in support of our Asian American and Pacific Islander teammates, athletes, and community."

We stand united against racism, hatred, violence, and the recent rise of attacks against the Asian American & Pacific Islander community.

#StopAAPIHate
#StopAsianHate

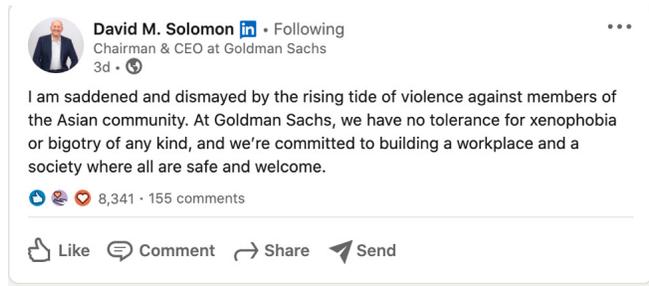
VIACOMCBS

Viacom CBS Social Media Response

Image description: "We stand united against racism, hatred, violence, and the recent rise of attacks against the Asian American & Pacific Islander community. #StopAAPIHate #StopAsianHate"

Statement from David M. Solomon, Chairman and CEO at Goldman Sachs

"I am saddened and dismayed by the rising tide of violence against members of the Asian community. At Goldman Sachs, we have no tolerance for xenophobia or bigotry of any kind, and we're committed to building a workplace and a society where all are safe and welcome."



Apple CEO, Tim Cook, has pledged the company will donate to groups that are supporting the AAPI hate crime victims. He further condemned the violence on social media.

"The rising violence against the Asian community is a painful & urgent reminder that we must unite against racism in all its forms. There is no place for hate in our society. The team at Apple stands together & we will be

donating to groups providing support to those affected."

Starbucks is set to establish the Starbucks Community Resilience Fund which will

invest \$100 million by 2025 to support small businesses and community development initiatives in BIPOC communities. They

have also announced a partnership with

the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and plans on sharing resources from the museum through its app and website. Their employees, and customers too, are also volunteering with the Freedmen's Bureau Transcription Project, digitally transcribing handwritten records containing details on emancipated Black people following the Civil War.



Four tips and two sample guidelines for facilitating challenging conversations

- **Create and secure safe spaces** for these conversations to take place.
- **Look to your executives and Employee Resource Groups** to help plan and support these initiatives.
- **Consider using prework, text and/or video to ground the conversation.** This ensures a consistent starting place for everyone and a place to come back to for the facilitator throughout the discussion.
- **Create a follow-up process** to receive suggestions for actions participants might suggest as a result of these conversations and, more importantly, a process to respond to them.

Facilitating and handling difficult conversations is not a process to be underestimated. Ensure you have someone skilled at navigating diversity discussions, conflict resolution strategies, and/or can guide focus groups. HR business partners as well as organizational development professionals are typically adept at these skill-sets. Our WMM Solutions team can provide skilled facilitation services as well.

HOW TO CREATE APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTS FOR FACILITATING RACIALLY-BASED CONVERSATIONS:

1. Ensure you set ground rules with all participants.

Creating agreed upon group norms will help with guiding conversations and directing behaviors to help provide understanding of an individual's actions. (see: [8 Ground Rules for Great Meetings](#))

2. Allow for first time faux pas/mistakes.

Many of us avoid honest dialogues because we are afraid we'll say something wrong, and sometimes we do. To successfully have these difficult conversations, we have to allow for these mistakes.

3. Forgive first mistakes, don't blame.

Take advantage of "teachable moments" and hold people accountable for improved behavior and actions going forward.

4. Assume a curious and positive intent.

When someone says something that could be offensive or makes someone uncomfortable, it is much easier to respond to those statements if you assume that the person did not mean to offend.

5. Attack the problem, not the person.

When someone says something that could be offensive or makes someone uncomfortable, out the issue with what was said instead of blaming the person who said it. Come with an understanding that some mindsets have evolved from centuries of inequities and systemic racism practices. The person is here to grow to unravel these issues.

6. Listen more.

Understanding and empathy are critically important in furthering dialogue. Actively listening to others' perspectives, experiences, and opinions will help shed light on alternative viewpoints.

7. As a facilitator or participant, be aware of your own "hot buttons."

It is important to recognize the words or topics that create visceral reactions for yourself. Be aware of those reactions, how you feel, and how you respond to your own reactions. As a facilitator, be particularly aware and ensure you remain neutral in soliciting conversation and drawing out learnings.

HOW TO CREATE IMPACTFUL PRE WORK AND DIALOGUE DURING RACIALLY-BASED CONVERSATIONS:

(Recommended for DE&I councils, Employee Resource Groups, and Leadership meetings)

- 1. Share readings and/or videos** with your DE&I council as pre-work.
- 2. Ensure there is diversity in the room** and a skilled facilitator.
- 3. Set and establish ground rules** for "safe/brave space dialogue."
- 4. Facilitate an open dialogue.**

Some sample questions are:

- *Many companies have spoken out against police shootings in response to George Floyd's murder. Some companies have started to do the same for the Asian-American hate crimes sweeping the nation. What are the implications of these public stances?*
- *Are you hearing any water-cooler conversations on these issues? If so, what are you hearing?*
- *How have the recent events impacted your work?*
- *How have the recent events impacted you personally?*
- *Why is it important to discuss racial inequity and social injustice in the workplace?*
- *With regard to addressing these issues, how have the actions of your company mirrored the vision of DE&I your company has? Does anything need to change or be handled differently in order to align with your company's values or strategy?*

HOW TO HOST SAME GROUP AND CROSS GROUP DIALOGUES:

(Recommended for ERGs/BRGs)

- 1. Create "safe/brave space"** for your employees to share their perspectives.
- 2. Create and facilitate various focus groups** based on predetermined demographics (e.g. women, men, Black, Latino, white, Asian, generational) to share their perspectives. Gather their input and insights.
- 3. Bring all groups together** to share the data and insights.
- 4. Facilitate discussion** on reactions and solutions.

"Pre Work and Dialogue" and "Same Group, Cross Group Dialogue" are two suggested formats for discussing topics that employees may have different opinions on. These suggestions are not meant to limit any company's style of communication, but rather provide other methods to initiate conversations.

Additional Resources to Facilitate Conversation

Asian American Bar Association of New York: [A Rising Tide of Hate and Violence against Asian Americans in New York During COVID-19: Impact, Causes, Solutions](#)

Center for Positive Organizations: [Finding the Strength to Lead in Trying Times](#)

-[Helping Your Workplace Heal](#)

McKinsey & Company: [COVID-19 and Advancing Asian American Recovery](#)

National Organization for Women: [For White Allies: Challenging Everyday Racism](#)

New York Times: [A Conversation on Race: A Series of Short Films about Identity in America](#)

Time: ['I Will Not Stand Silent.' 10 Asian Americans Reflect on Racism During the Pandemic and the Need for Equality.](#)