



From: GRO Executive Board
Date: 24 November 2020
Subject: GRO Executive Board Statement Regarding Sinophobia and Anti-Asian Racism

Dear JHU Graduate Student Body,

We are writing today to share our thoughts regarding xenophobic attacks and discrimination towards the Asian community as cases of COVID-19 continue to rise in the U.S. During this past year, the Asian community has been faced with outright violence, bullying, and more insidious forms of social and political abuse, showing that ignorance about the pandemic is as potent as the illness itself. The GRO stands in solidarity with our Asian community and condemns discrimination and harassment based on race, national origin, or any other grounds.

Unfortunately, many have placed the blame for COVID-19 on the Asian community. US officials have repeatedly referred to this virus as the ‘Chinese virus’ or ‘Kung-flu’. Our engagement with China in trade wars, as well as human rights controversies, has also led people to wrongly form negative opinions towards Asians. As a result, a large number of Asians today experience feelings of being targeted and unfairly blamed. [According to the Pew Research Center](#), 73% of US adults have an unfavorable view of China, up 26% from 2018. 78% of US adults place ‘a fair amount/great deal of the blame’ for the global spread of COVID-19 on China’s initial handling of the outbreak in Wuhan. The consequences for this include the Asian community having to deal with horrible treatment, such as being spat on and called racial slurs in public. Asians have also had to face [outright physical abuse](#) as a result of people’s xenophobic behavior. This does not begin to describe the emotional distress felt by those enduring or living in fear of such abhorrent treatment.

An example of a heinous act of racism and hatred happened right here at Johns Hopkins. On October 28, a Chinese graduate student from the Department of Chemistry (KSAS) was leading a seminar on Zoom when a person (identified as a non-affiliate by Hopkins IT) hacked the meeting and shouted racist, anti-Chinese slurs at the graduate student. A few moments later, another person hacked the meeting and shouted various racial slurs targeted towards Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. This despicable act leaves us incredibly saddened and angry. As a diverse community, we must be committed to confronting discrimination where we see it and be outspoken advocates for equality.



It is encouraging to see our government take steps to combat discrimination against Asians. The US House of Representatives passed a [resolution](#) this past September denouncing anti-Asian behavior and rhetoric, including President Trump's use of the term "China virus" in reference to the pandemic. Even though this resolution helps with condemning racism and xenophobia, it is not enough. All efforts put forth by our government will be for naught if we as a community do not step up and do our part.

As the abuse faced by Asian individuals and communities intensifies across the country, the GRO Executive Board would like to encourage students to avoid being bystanders. There are plenty of ways to combat sinophobia and racism against Asians, including creating petitions, calling representatives and lawmakers, calling out racism in our community, and self-education. The GRO Executive Board will continue to urge the University to support future initiatives for collaboration and conversation on issues regarding race and justice, and take steps towards combating systems of oppression for minority groups. For instance, we will advocate for racial sensitivity training for our security personnel as well as town halls where members of our community can express their concerns to the administration. We will continue to advocate for our graduate community and we would like to invite students to provide input on what actions they would like to see as part of this effort.

We encourage everyone to seek out [mental health and wellness resources](#) offered by the University. We also want to share a list of [resources](#) recommended by the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) on the East Baltimore Campus that focuses on self-care in the wake of enduring racial trauma. We would like to share a collection of resources [\[1\],\[2\],\[3\]](#) for members of the university community looking to understand more about antiracism and how to strive for it in themselves and with others. Finally, please refer to this [webpage](#) in case you want to report inappropriate behavior during a Zoom meeting.

We hope the Homewood graduate community takes this opportunity to reflect on such matters and how we can collectively work to better ourselves, our community, and the world we share. We need each other. Regardless of our race, as long as we care for each other and are willing to contribute to the betterment of our community, we will be in good shape. Besides our dedication to research, it is our commitment to each other's success and wellbeing that will make our university great. We must uphold our values of dignity and diversity. As the GRO, we stand resolute in our commitment to address racism in all forms within our community.

In solidarity,
Your GRO Executive Board