

Collegiate Church Confession against Anti-Asian Racism during the COVID-19 Crisis

April 7, 2020

As the Ministers of The Collegiate Church, we confess America's original and ongoing sin of systemic racism. In 1626, the Dutch West India Company "purchased" Manhattan from the Lenape people for sixty Dutch guilders and imported eleven enslaved Africans to the new colony. In 1628, that same company sanctioned the establishment of the Collegiate Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in the City of New York, now known more commonly as the Collegiate Churches, which are dually affiliated with the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ. Since our church was founded in this context of racist and colonial violence, we confess our complicity in the wave of violence and hatred against Asians and Asian Americans that has arisen in the wake of the Coronavirus. **We confess the social sin of systemic racism and call for an end to racist rhetoric and violent hate crimes against Asians and Asian Americans during the COVID-19 crisis. Publicly repenting of racism is the only way our church and society can embody the revolutionary love of Jesus Christ.**

Racial discrimination against Asians and Asian Americans has deep roots in the history of New York and the United States. In 1882, our nation passed its first immigration ban--the first such law to target a particular ethnicity. The *Chinese Exclusion Act* forbade Chinese laborers from entering the U.S. It essentially trapped and ghettoized thousands of Chinese workers and in many ways was a shaping force of New York's first Chinatown. Not repealed until 1943 and not fully undone until 1965, the *Chinese Exclusion Act* was only a sign of anti-Asian racism to come. In 1900 the U.S. used the Philippines to expand its global influence following the Spanish American War. From 1942 to 1945, people of Japanese descent were placed in internment camps. The U.S.--the only country to use nuclear force during World War II--dropped nuclear weapons that incinerated the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The racism and xenophobia embodied in these political and military actions have been mirrored in personal attacks against Asians and Asian Americans throughout the course of our history. In 1982, Chinese American Vincent Chin was brutally murdered by two white auto workers in Detroit because they resented Japanese incursion into the

American automobile industry. We see the same racism on display in the brutal stabbing of Bawi Cung Nung and his son, Robert, inside a Midland, Texas Sam's Club on March 14th, 2020.

Since President Donald J. Trump started calling the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) the "Chinese Flu," there has been a dramatic rise in violent attacks against Asian Americans, particularly in the Chinese American community. The FBI warns that hate crimes will escalate during the days ahead. Since March 2020 there have been over 1,000 hate crimes against Asian Americans; however, many hate crimes go unreported because people are living in fear. In the words of renowned Korean theologian Hyun Kyung Chung, "Heresy is what is against life. That is heresy, whatever destroys life, because we are following Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God, the 'feast of the equals.' That is a radical vision of peace and justice for everyone because we share the same gifts, the love of God, the fullness of life. Anything that goes against that is heresy." As ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we denounce all racist rhetoric and attacks against Asian and Asian American people, both now and throughout history, and we repent of the church's long history of complicity in this project of racism, nationalism, and colonialism. Following Jesus' call to "love our neighbor" (Matt 22:37-39; Lev 19:18), we call on our fellow Americans, and everyone around the world, to join us in renouncing racist rhetoric and putting an end to hateful violence against Asians and Asian Americans once and for all.

Signed,

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