

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# TIME TO END OUR LONG HISTORY OF ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Welcome to America! Asians in our country have never heard those words.

Discrimination against Asians the United States dates back at least 140 years to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The law suspended Chinese immigration and declared Chinese immigrants ineligible for naturalization.

The act was passed to placate Americans — especially residents of the West Coast — who blamed declining wages and economic ills on Chinese workers. Following an 1852 crop failure in China, more than 20,000 Chinese immigrants came here to join the California Gold Rush. Violence broke out between White miners and the Chinese, much of it racially charged. The act was meant to maintain White racial purity.

For some Americans, that reprehensible goal endures.

Just last week, Asian American lawmakers expressed support for the No Hate Act, in response to the wave of anti-Asian racism that has spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stop AAPI

(Asian American and Pacific Islander) Hate, a coalition that tracks hate incidents, has said it received more than 2,800 reports of verbal and physical attacks against Asian Americans between March and December 2020.

In the past month, 84-year-old Vicha Ratanapakdee, a Thailand native who emigrated to America to live with his daughter and son-in-law, was thrust to the ground in a random attack on a San Francisco street; he died a few days later.

In neighboring Oakland, a 91-year-old man was shoved onto a sidewalk in Chinatown but survived; the suspect then assaulted two other people, both of whom required hospitalization.

Across the country, a 52-year-old woman was subjected to a barrage of slurs as she stood outside a New York City bakery — then she was violently pushed down, hitting her head and requiring stitches. The assault was one of three known attacks against Asian Americans in the city that day.

The motivations behind these attacks are not clear, but it is probably no coincidence that they took place as AAPI people are being scapegoated for the origins and spread of the coronavirus. Nearly a year ago, I wrote about the local impact of such prejudice: a slowing of business in San Diego's Convoy District, a favorite destination for its Asian restaurants and markets.

Kent Lee is a San Diego Asian Business Association board member, co-chair of the San Diego Asian Pacific Islander Coalition, and executive director of Pacific Arts Movement (presenter of the San Diego Asian Film Festival). Lee said that a year into the pandemic, it's unclear whether Asian businesses have been disproportionately affected by COVID-related restrictions. "If an Asian business closes, we won't hear from them," Lee observed.

Part of the reason may be the myth of the model minority. It considers Asians to be quiet and apolitical — not because of an attempt to fit in, but more often, a

desire not to stand out. And it sees the economic advancement of some AAPIs as proof that they don't experience racism. How wrong that is.

Lee also notes that there is no uniform system for collecting and reporting hate crimes, which makes it difficult to measure their extent.

In a recent podcast, Russell Contreras, race and justice reporter for Axios, said that 90 percent of the country's law enforcement agencies reported zero hate crimes — or didn't bother to report the crimes if they did occur.

Fortunately, AAPIs have begun to find their voice. When the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, Asians represented 0.002 percent of the U.S. population. Now they are the country's fastest-growing demographic.

President Joe Biden signed an executive action that condemns anti-Asian bias and discrimination, while also directing agencies to combat harassment — including the collection and re-

porting of data. Biden also acknowledged the important role of AAPI health care workers in fighting the pandemic.

Locally, organizations like the San Diego Asian Pacific Islander Coalition are forming. Last year, they issued a statement denouncing anti-Asian hatred that was jointly signed by more than 70 organizations. It led to a resolution by the San Diego City Council denouncing xenophobia and anti-Asian racism.

Ultimately though, responsibility for combating hatred rests with each of us. Transform yourself from a bystander to an upstander.

Speak up when you hear or see prejudice and racism. If history teaches us anything, it's that the only way to defeat evil is to confront it.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit [ncronline.com](http://ncronline.com)

## HOME Some connect to mental health services

FROM B1 about 30 years, and he said his outlook on life has changed since meeting McGough about six months ago.

"Rodney convinced me to go to therapy, and what a blessing it was," he said. "I had to humble myself to do that. Without him, I wouldn't have gone."

McGough said five people living at the site have been connected to professional mental health services.

Eleven men and two women live on the site, and McGough said he plans to bring in more tents and create a section just for women. About half the tents on the site have come from donations, including some from Humanity Showers and from two online fundraisers. One fundraiser can be found on Isaiah Briggs' Instagram

page BSSC, an acronym for Brigg's group Bajo Un Solo Sol Collective. Another can be found on Instagram at [oside.peoples.kitchen](https://www.instagram.com/oside.peoples.kitchen).

Oceanside Mayor Esther Sanchez said she knows of McGough and appreciates how he and others there have kept the area clean.

"I think it actually looks pretty good," she said. "I don't question at all the phenomenal intentions of the person doing this. I'm very grateful that the manner they're doing it in is very respectful."

Sanchez said the city has no plans to run McGough and the others off the site, and she noted a precedent-setting court decision that allows people to sleep outdoors when there is no other place for them to be. The city's only shelter was one operated only in winter at Bread of Life, and it closed two years ago.

Sanchez said Oceanside has been taking steps to create more affordable housing and an emergency shelter to address homelessness.

On Monday, the city will release a notice of funding available for affordable housing, and Oceanside also



RODNEY MCGOUGH says he has helped some homeless people living at the site get help from mental health services.

has requested an additional 100 housing vouchers to help get people off the street, she said.

Oceanside also is considering opening a bridge shelter for homeless people at the former Oceans Shores High School site on Ocean-

side Boulevard and El Camino Real.

In a similar effort, San Diego Rescue Mission President and CEO Donnie Dee said his nonprofit has made progress in its search for a coastal North County homeless shelter. The Rescue Mis-

sion merged with Bread of Life last year.

Vanessa Graziano, a local homeless advocate and founder of the grassroots nonprofit Oceanside Homeless Resource, supports McGough and has helped buy tents for the site.

"People may not like what it looks like, but they're forgetting that there's people inside those tents," she said. "We really need compassion."

Graziano said she has had some exchanges on social media with people who are opposed to the tents, and she's responded by saying she also does not think there should be tent cities for homeless people in Oceanside, but Rodney's project is different.

"What I do support is Rodney creating a safe environment," she said. "There's a couple of women I know who are there and feel they are safe now."

McGough said he plans to keep his homeless community in place, and he vows to keep it a safe place free of trash and a harbor for people seeking a new start. He and other homeless people at the site also have helped clear trash at the shopping center across the street.

"You have this almost surreal sense of home, a place where you belong," he said. "This is conducive to healing."

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## RALLY Ex-students advocate for academy

FROM B1 Gov. Gavin Newsom asking the state not to close the school before the end of the year.

Harris said moving the end date back to Dec. 31 would "allow the San Diego County community particularly of former alumni of the campus such as me, former foster youth, current youth on the campus, stakeholders and county officials to come together with a little more time to make a plan for the future that could begin next year."

Harris said the county should have told San Pasqual Academy staff and students about the change before many of them read it in the newspaper.

"The youth there should not have heard this in the media first, which is exactly what happened," he said. "It's wrong and it shows the failure of county officials to inform them first which they were entitled to know they would lose their home."

A spokesman for Nathan Fletcher, the Board of Supervisors chairman, said the county received the state notification on Feb. 8 and the child-welfare director informed academy officials Feb. 19, two days before the Union-Tribune report.

Suzanne Miyasaki, the San Pasqual Academy principal, referred questions to the San Diego County Office of Education. The chief of staff there, Music Watson, confirmed in an email that the schools' office learned of the state's decision Feb. 19.

"Because (the county schools' office) provides the educational program at the school and neither owns the facility nor oversees the residential program, we waited for additional information from the state and our partners at New Alternatives and the county of San Diego before notifying our employees who work at San Pasqual Academy," Watson wrote.

San Diego County and New Alternatives, a nonprofit contractor that operates the school, would have been responsible for telling other employees about the



San Pasqual Academy has been ordered to close.

planned closure, Watson said.

San Pasqual Academy has produced a number of graduates who have gone on to build productive lives. Its accomplishments have been a source of great pride for county child-welfare professionals, officials say.

Kanesha Poe, 30, of Surprise, Ariz., said she was a San Diego County foster child living in a bridge shelter when she was 14 and the experience was "kind of scary." She said she felt lucky to move into the academy, a place other children in the bridge shelter only dreamed of attending.

"You just always hear stories from the other kids who you're like, locked up with," she said of her time at the shelter. "It was like, 'I almost got in there but I had to go to juvie,' or, 'I really wanted to go there but I got in trouble,' so I was really happy to get the opportunity."

Poe said academy teachers worked with her to make sure she got good scores on college entrance exams, taught her about credit scores, how to balance a checkbook, how to use a computer and other skills needed to live independently. They also helped her get a job at what is now called the San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

San Diego County is planning to use the savings it expects from the school's \$13-million annual budget to fund expanded and improved services for families — and for all foster children 12 years old or older, not just those who are accepted into the academy.

Possible uses for the savings include expanding the partnership with the county Office of Education, providing older children more independent living skills and boosting services for foster

families. The county may also increase scholarships and life-skills coaching for young adults who age out of the system.

Richard Wexler, executive director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, said research has consistently found that institutionalizing children is not as good for them as placing them with families. He said the county could put the academy's budget to better use by keeping children out of foster care and safe with their families.

"It's not surprising that study after study has found that even small amounts of money to ameliorate the worst aspects of poverty go a long way to reducing what authorities define as 'child abuse' because poverty itself is often confused with neglect," he said in an email.

For example, the savings could be used to subsidize rent or provide childcare for 1,000 children per year, Wexler said. Or the county could follow Alabama's example and provide "flex funds" — one-shot cash infusions for families to find better housing, pay late utility bills or meet other immediate needs, he said.

The child-welfare reformer also suggested directing those savings to high-quality legal representation for children and families, to keep children out of foster care without compromising safety or a drug treatment facility where parents can stay with their children while they recover.

The greater San Diego County child welfare system, which serves thousands of children, has a history of mismanagement and devastating failures that have resulted in lawsuits and legal settlements.

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## NONPROFIT Some online messages had personal info

FROM B1 Email addresses, drivers license numbers and refugee and immigration case information also were included in some of the messages posted on the Internet.

It appeared that only the date and body of messages sent through the online contact form were exposed, because some users had typed personal information into a text box.

Jewish Family Service of San Diego was established in 1918, and has become one of the largest social-services providers in the region. It reported \$32.4 million in revenue and \$24.9 million in expenditures in the year ending June 30, 2019, according to its most recent publicly available tax return.

Last July, the charity an-

nounced that it was one of many nonprofit organizations that experienced security breaches related to a ransomware attack on Blackbaud, a major financial and fundraising technology provider used primarily by nonprofits.

In October, the nonprofit Identity Theft Resource Center reported that 144 organizations and 7 million people had been affected.

The 2020 data breach included "donor name and contact information, and may have also included telephone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses; and a brief history of donors' relationships with JFS up to that point, such as donation dates and giving amounts," charity officials said last year.

The nonprofit has been a lifeline for many people in San Diego and beyond for more than a century, providing assistance to tens of thousands of people each year, its annual reports state. It awarded millions of dollars in cash grants for people in crisis and provided desperately

needed services such as car loans and safe overnight parking for people living in their vehicles.

Jewish Family Service also serves as a resource for various government agencies, including social workers seeking to connect their clients with public benefits.

Dozens of the exposed messages were from grateful clients, thanking the organization for helping them get through rough patches in their lives and setting them back on a track to self-sufficiency.

The messages also showed how deeply many San Diego County residents have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several of the writers said they had tried and failed to find help elsewhere and didn't know what to do.

A handful of the messages appeared to be from charity administrators, testing the form's functionality or conveying messages internally. Several simply said "test."

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## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, Feb. 28, the 59th day of 2021. There are 306 days left in the year.

**Today's highlight**  
On Feb. 28, 2013, Benedict XVI became the first pope in 600 years to resign, ending an eight-year pontificate. (Benedict was succeeded the following month by Pope Francis.)

**On this date**  
**In 1784**, John Wesley, the co-founder of Methodism, chartered the first Methodist Church in the United States in Leesburg, Va.  
**In 1844**, a 12-inch gun aboard the USS Princeton exploded as the ship was sailing on the Potomac River, killing Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur, Navy Secretary Thomas W. Gilmer and several others.  
**In 1849**, the California gold rush began in earnest as regular steamship service started bringing gold-seekers to San Francisco.  
**In 1953**, scientists James D. Watson and Francis H.C. Crick announced they had discov-

ered the double-helix structure of DNA.  
**In 1972**, President Richard M. Nixon and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai issued the Shanghai Communiqué, which called for normalizing relations between their countries, at the conclusion of Nixon's historic visit to China.  
**In 1983**, the long-running TV series "M-A-S-H" ended after 11 seasons on CBS with a special 2 1/2 hour finale that was watched by an estimated 121.6 million people.  
**In 1988**, the 15th Olympic Winter Games held its closing ceremony in Calgary, Alberta.  
**In 1993**, a gunbattle erupted at a religious compound near Waco, Texas, when Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents tried to arrest Branch Davidian leader David Koresh on weapons charges; four agents and six Davidians were killed as a 51-day standoff began.  
**In 1996**, Britain's Princess Diana agreed to divorce Prince Charles. (Their 15-year marriage officially ended in August

1996; Diana died in a car crash in Paris a year after that.)  
**In 2018**, Walmart announced that it would no longer sell firearms and ammunition to people younger than 21 and would remove items resembling assault-style rifles from its website. Dick's Sporting Goods said it would stop selling assault-style rifles and ban the sale of all guns to anyone younger than 21.

**Today's birthdays**  
Architect Frank Gehry is 92. Actor Gavin MacLeod is 90. Singer Sam the Sham is 84. Actor-director-dancer Tommy Tune is 82. Hall of Fame auto racer Mario Andretti is 81. Actor Frank Bonner is 79. Actor Kelly Bishop is 77. Actor Stephen Beacham is 74. Actor Mercedes Ruehl is 73. Actor Bernadette Peters is 73. Comedian Gilbert Gottfried is 66. Basketball Hall of Famer Adrian Dantley is 66. Actor John Turturro is 64. Singer Cindy Wilson is 64. Actor Rae Dawn Chong is 60. Author Daniel Handler (aka "Lemony Snicket") is 51. Actor Ali Larter is 45.

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