

April 3, 2021

To Van and members of New Jersey Vietnamese American Community Association,

On behalf of the organizing committee of last Saturday's #StopAsianHate rally, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support. In the past few days, it feels like the entire country is having a crash course on Asian American history and our personal experiences. Our voices are beginning to be heard, but whether these dialogues will be continued in the future depend on how strong our coalition will be in our fight for social justice.



As a community, we strongly advocate for changing the narrative about racism in this country from Black vs. White (or Black vs. Asian) to one that acknowledges the complex dynamics that different groups face under white supremacy. The outcry from all of us is a strong reminder of the layered nature of racial victimizations, and the way they intersect with class, gender, immigration status, and other identities.

Anne Anlin Cheng, a comparative race scholar at Princeton University, recently wrote eloquently and powerfully in The New York Times:

In the desire to move past racial troubles — in our eagerness to progress — we as a nation have been more focused on quantifying injury and shoring up identity categories than doing the harder work of confronting the enduring, ineffable, at times contradictory and messier wounds of American racism: how being hated and hating can look the same; how the lesson of powerlessness can teach justice or, perversely, the ugly pleasures of power; how the legacy of anger, shame and guilt is complex.

Because the challenge of democracy is not about identifying with someone like yourself (that's easy to do) nor about giving up your self-interest (that's hard to ask). It's about learning to see your self-interest as profoundly and inevitably entwined with the interests of others.

As many of you mentioned at the rally, education is the core of this movement. The hard work is ahead for all of us. I am comforted by the fact that as we continue to make our voices heard, as we continue on the path toward social justice, we are all standing together in solidarity.

With much gratitude,

Cecilia Xie Birge
Princeton Chinese Community