Statement from the National Association of Asian American Professionals on Xenophobia and Racism in Response to Coronavirus

The National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP) is issuing the following statement in response to the racism and violence that have resulted from heightened fear over COVID-19—also known as the Coronavirus Disease—in the United States:

The United States has a long and painful history of associating individuals of Asian descent with contamination and disease. From the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, to the Yellow Peril of the early 20th century, racist fears of “filthy yellow hordes” have been deeply entrenched in American society for centuries.

Sadly, the reports this week of violence against the Asian and Asian American communities illustrate that these malevolent narratives are not simply a thing of the past, but an ugly reality of the present-day. NAAAP is deeply disturbed by stories of students being bullied in schools, citizens being harassed or accosted on the street, and active disinformation campaigns slandering Asian and Asian American businesses. NAAAP condemns these acts of violence as well as the calls to boycott Asian cultural events and epicenters across the country.

Finally, NAAAP encourages the media to discontinue the casual use of photographs depicting people of Asian descent wearing facemasks in its coverage of the virus. These photos frequently feature people who are not known to have the virus, and locations entirely separate from the focus of the story. These practices reinforce the racist association between the disease and Asian communities, and have the potential to both directly and indirectly incite hostility and violence toward our communities.

NAAAP’s thoughts are with those suffering because of the virus—and because of the response to it.

About NAAAP
The National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP) is the premier leadership organization for Asian and Asian American professionals in North America, with 30 chapters, several thousand active members, and a reach of more than 20,000 professionals. Founded in 1982, NAAAP is a volunteer-run non-profit that inspires, develops, and connects leaders across industries and communities through networking and educational events, trainings, community service programs, and celebrations of Asian American excellence. For more information, please visit www.naaap.org.

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