**HOW STOP AAPI HATE INSPIRED AND EMPOWERED ACTION**

*This month, we’re exploring the impact of the* [*2022 Free Expression Awards*](https://www.freedomforum.org/freeexpressionawards/) *honorees, including the founders of Stop AAPI Hate: San Francisco State University Professor Russell Jeung and advocacy group leaders Cynthia Choi of Chinese for Affirmative Action and Manjusha P. Kulkarni of the AAPI Equity Alliance. These are the stories of how the First Amendment advocates we’re honoring have used their voices to uplift others.* [*Watch the Free Expression Awards*](https://www.freedomforum.org/freeexpressionawards/#watch) *live at 8 p.m. EDT on Thursday, April 28.*

This is more than a story of fear, ignorance and hate. It’s a story of solidarity, resilience and justice.

March 2020 saw the beginning of a rapid spread in the U.S. of COVID-19, which originated in Wuhan, China. Along with it came a dramatic escalation of anti-Asian rhetoric, discrimination and incidents of hate.

Within weeks, leaders in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities came together to document, report and share these stories – and spur a movement for change.

On March 19, **Cynthia Choi, Russell M. Jeung** and **Manjusha P. Kulkarni** formed Stop AAPI Hate to document the harassment and hatred and to combat racism through education and advocacy, using First Amendment freedoms to defend the rights of millions of Americans.

**“**We don't want this to be a moment, we want this to be a movement.” — Russell Jeung, Stop AAPI Hate co-founder

Stop AAPI Hate collected reports of more than 650 incidents of hate in its first week.

“The more we have data about what's actually happening to people, the more we can make a case that we need a response,” said co-founder Cynthia Choi.

Supported by Stop AAPI Hate’s data and advocacy resources, communities began to respond. Santa Clara County, Calif., where nearly 40 percent of residents are Asian American, was among the first. On April 7, it passed a resolution denouncing xenophobia and committing to combat hate crimes.

By April 15, Stop AAPI Hate had recorded nearly 1,500 incidents of hate ranging from harassment to physical attacks. Unreported incidents likely make the true total much higher.

“Want to make a difference? Start really small and in practical ways, like with your family. Have a conversation with them. Read to understand what's happening and support other education efforts. Ask elected officials what they're doing to respond. Consider joining a community group on the frontlines.” – Cynthia Choi, Stop AAPI Hate co-founder

Over the next year, the movement grew as Asian American, Pacific Islander and allied communities pointed to Stop AAPI Hate’s work and joined in petitioning for action.

In March 2021, 12-year-old **Mina Fedor** and friends organized a Stop AAPI Hate rally in Berkeley, one of several protests in the San Francisco area. "They are disappointed that this nation doesn't live up to its ideals," said Stop AAPI Hate co-founder Russell Jeung.

The students went on to launch AAPI Youth Rising, a student-led coalition that petitions for education about Asian American history.

That same month, in Virginia, the student government at the College of William and Mary passed a Stop AAPI Hate resolution, condemning attacks on Asian and Pacific Islander Americans. Student Sen. Sailor Miao said that although the college’s student assembly may not have national influence, it is important to support the local AAPI community.

In May 2021, after citywide demonstrations, the city council in Manhattan Beach, Calif., unanimously passed an anti-AAPI hate resolution affirming support for the AAPI community and encouraging people who experienced bias or hate to report anonymously to Stop AAPI Hate.

The same month, a federal hate crimes act, with particular emphasis on support for Asian Americans experiencing increased hate during the COVID-19 pandemic, was signed into law.

In its first year, Stop AAPI Hate had recorded more than 6,500 incidents of hate – and more than 100 local, state and federal governing bodies had enacted laws or resolutions to counter xenophobia.

“We must forge a diverse democracy that builds power, equity and justice for all.” — Manjusha P. Kulkarni, Stop AAPI Hate co-founder

Stop AAPI Hate’s work publishing information about anti-Asian bias, assembling in support of AAPI communities and petitioning for action has continued to shift the story from one of hate to one of justice by uplifting Asian American and Pacific Islander voices.

By late 2021, Stop AAPI Hate’s database of anti-Asian incidents reached 10,000. Because of its leaders’ free and fearless expression, more than 250 communities had worked to counter the hatred with supportive statements and actions.

The group continues to petition for systemic solutions to discrimination that Asian Americans have faced for decades. It celebrates and teaches diversity, meeting each moment of hate with a movement of people speaking up to protect freedoms for all.

*The* [*2022 Free Expression Awards*](https://www.freedomforum.org/freeexpressionawards/) *are on April 28 at The Anthem in Washington, D.C. and streamed live online.*