

When We Act Together, We Can Stop Coronavirus Discrimination: A Letter from the City Council

“Everyone has a role to play in ensuring Hillsboro is an inclusive, welcoming community”

by the Hillsboro City Council

Our community is resilient, responsive, and caring. When anyone in Hillsboro experiences discrimination, we must act together against hate and bias.

The Oregon Department of Justice is reporting increased discrimination and hate crimes against people perceived to be Asian, including our Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American communities during the coronavirus pandemic.

Coronavirus-related discrimination

Health officials have made clear there is no link between coronavirus and a person’s race or national origin — anyone can get the virus, and anyone can spread it. Yet, misinformation is leading to discrimination due to the false association between race and coronavirus. This scapegoating has led to derogatory name-calling, verbal harassment, denial of entry and service, and even physical violence.

For Asian-owned businesses, the loss of customers has been especially drastic due to coronavirus misinformation, making a challenging situation even more difficult. Racist misinformation impacts livelihoods and lives. This is unacceptable, and serves as a direct call to action.

If we do not acknowledge, put name to, and directly address racism in our community, we will continue to perpetuate inequality. Racism — in the forms of offhand jokes, derogatory memes, and acts of intimidation and violence — threatens the safety, dignity, and identities of our Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American communities in Hillsboro and beyond.

Every Hillsboro resident deserves to live free of targeted economic marginalization, fear for personal safety, and discrimination. You can make a difference in our community by educating yourself and your family on the [*Spread Facts, Not Fear*](#) campaign from the Oregon Health Authority.

Here are some of the ways we are stepping up as a City:

- **Publicly denouncing bigotry**

On behalf of the City of Hillsboro, Mayor Steve Callaway signed the anti-discrimination petition created by Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum. We are using the City’s website and social media channels to educate community members on how to safely engage in active bystander intervention when witnessing discrimination, as well as the ramifications of unchecked racist jokes, online posts, and behaviors. We are making it clear that everyone has a role to play in ensuring Hillsboro is an inclusive, welcoming community.

- **Encouraging all to report acts of hate and discrimination**

Our Police Department’s mission is to work with the community through the strength of our humanity, the principles of integrity, loyalty, and our progressive spirit. **We encourage you to report hate crimes via 911 or through non-emergency dispatch at 503-629-0111.**

We know that harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes are underreported. We acknowledge that it is exceptionally traumatic not only to experience racism, but to also report it. In recognition of the increased incidents during the coronavirus pandemic, we are increasing our communications and outreach in support of reporting.

The Oregon Department of Justice is tracking hate crimes and bias incidents, and responding to reports with referrals to relevant services, including to the Hillsboro Police Department, if desired. Whether you experience or witness derogatory language, denial of entry or service, or another racist incident, we encourage you to [report it to the Oregon Department of Justice](#) and speak to trauma-informed staff on options available to you.

Support is also available through non-governmental organizations such as the regional resource Portland United Against Hate and others. However, these are not substitutes for filing a police report. You should call 911 in an emergency, such as use of violence.

- **Using accurate and inclusive language**

We're sharing information from public health agencies and health experts, without misrepresentations connected to race. We firmly reject the use of racist labels to describe coronavirus in ways that fuel biases and hate, and we encourage you to do the same.

Working together to overcome hate

We are living through extraordinary times, but we are an extraordinary community. By staying unified, we will make it through this together. Thank you.