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COUNCILMEMBERS' LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE CALLS FOR INFORMATION, TRAINING & EDUCATION TO COMBAT HATE CRIMES AND STREET HARASSMENT

LOS ANGELES – Today Councilmembers Buscaino, Lee, Martinez, O'Farrell, Raman, and Rodriguez introduced two motions and a resolution aimed at addressing the alarming rise in hate crimes and street harassment towards the Asian American & Pacific Islander community in Los Angeles.

The first motion seeks to address the increase in violence and hate against Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, which, according to the Los Angeles Police Department, has sharply increased over the past year. The motion calls for data on the City's reporting of and response to hate crimes targeting Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders. It also seeks to ascertain what City resources can be utilized in ongoing efforts to support the victims and mitigate the problem.

"Racism against Asian Americans is sadly nothing new, and it's time for action," said Councilmember Lee, who co-authored the motion. "We need action that goes beyond symbolism - action that protects Angelenos of Asian descent from these kinds of hateful acts and lets everyone know that such behaviors will not be tolerated. Throughout history, we have seen racism rear its ugly head against Asian Americans. We cannot let history repeat itself by acting when it's too late."

The Council also adopted a resolution urging state and federal legislators to take action to address hate directed toward the Asian American & Pacific Islander community, calling for legislative protections and administrative actions as well as more funding to combat hate crimes.

“The increase of hate crimes against the Asian American & Pacific Islander community in Los Angeles is extremely disturbing: data from the Los Angeles Police Department indicates that hate crimes targeting this community have increased by 114% percent over the last year,” said Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell, who represents Historic Filipinotown, part of Koreatown, and Thai Town in the 13th Council District. “The racist rhetoric espoused by bigots since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in scapegoating, hate, and violence. Many of these cowardly physical assaults have targeted the elderly. Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders are cherished members of the Los Angeles community, and I call on each and every one of us to stand against xenophobia, racism, and hate wherever it is found.”

Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing population in the United States. Between 2000 and 2015, the U.S. Asian American & Pacific Islander populations increased by 72%, from about 12 million to a little over 20 million people. According to the American Journal of Criminal Justice, the rate of violent crimes against Asian Americans almost doubled between 2015 to 2018. Since the start of the pandemic, cities across the country have reported a disturbing surge in anti-Asian violence, and the lack of sustained and significant attention on the plight of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders gives evidence to their often isolating experience and struggle, not only for equality but also to be recognized as Americans.

“Hate anywhere is hate everywhere - and hate against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders concerns all of us,” said Capri Maddox, Executive Director of the [Los Angeles Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department](#). “Anyone who has faced hate or discrimination in the City of Los Angeles should report it, and can contact our department for information and resources.”

The second motion seeks to address the pervasive issue of street harassment across all demographics. Most major cities in the United States and around the globe have taken some level of action to mitigate street harassment. There are many examples of successful approaches, such as educational campaigns, bystander training, mandatory government personnel training, task forces, accessible and simple reporting systems, and much more. As the second-most populous city in the nation, the City of Los Angeles has a responsibility to protect its most vulnerable residents from harassment in public spaces.

“Los Angeles needs a citywide educational campaign and bystander training program to halt street harassment in its tracks,” said Councilmember Joe Buscaino. “The most common victims of this type of harassment are young girls aged 10 to 18. Eighty percent of women have experienced some type of street harassment in their lifetime. These are appalling statistics and everyone has a responsibility to make Los Angeles a safer place for all communities, but especially for our children.”

[Street harassment](#), according to the national nonprofit Stop Street Harassment, is defined as unwanted, disrespectful, or threatening interactions in a public space, often consisting of comments, gestures, exposure, following, and taking photos or videos of a person without their consent. The most frequently listed location for harassment for all populations is a public space.

“The problem is not with the women who are the victims, it is with the men who victimize,” said Council President Martinez. “The truth is, we need to raise better men to respect women. We

cannot continue to be this culture where women are sexualized as they go about their daily business. Walking down the street should not trigger women to be prepared for a fight or flight situation.”

Street harassment is typically directed at a person due to actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and religion. It disproportionately affects already vulnerable populations, including people of color, women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, seniors, and adolescents. In a [2019 study](#) conducted by Stop Street Harassment, the age in which individuals begin to experience street harassment is between 10 and 18 years old, the same age range for which street harassment is most common. Women and girls are the most targeted demographic of street harassment, often taking the form of sexual harassment.

“The recent increase in hateful, inappropriate, xenophobic, sexist, and racist language in our country is unacceptable,” said Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez. “I am proud to be a part of this motion today calling for stronger oversight, mitigation, and response to harassment in public spaces throughout the City. As a City that prides itself on the contributions immigrant communities make to our communities, we must ensure that all Angelenos feel safe regardless of their gender or ethnic background.”

[A 2018 survey](#) found that nearly 80% of women experienced verbal or non-verbal harassment in their lifetime and over one-third of women under the age of 24 had experienced street harassment in the past six months.

“People of color, women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, trans and nonbinary individuals, seniors, and adolescents all deserve to live, work, and play in our city without fear of harassment and intimidation in public spaces,” said Councilmember Nithya Raman. “My hope is that my daughter, all women and women-identifying individuals, and all Angelenos can grow up with the confidence that all parts of this city, from a local bus to the chambers of City Council, belong to them equally and fully. Education programs to curb harassment in public places are an important step in realizing that vision.”

Copies of both motions and the resolution are attached.

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