



Center for Student Health & Counseling
Portland State University
Phone: 503.725.2800
Fax: 503.725.5812
1880 SW 6th Ave. Portland UCB Suite 200



SHAC Statement Against Racism and Xenophobia

Statement

COVID-19 has presented us with new realities that we are working to face together. One reality we must actively fight against is systemic racism in our world and within our healthcare system in particular, as we witness communities of color be disproportionately affected by this virus. The Center for Student Health and Counseling Services (SHAC) recognizes that this experience may be impacting our PSU community in ways that we do not yet fully know or understand. For people of color, this may also elicit oppression-based trauma and concerns for families, culture, and communities. Oppression-based trauma occurs when a person, or group of people, is left feeling powerless as a result of systemic inequities and can take an emotional, mental, and sometimes physical toll on your body. We also recognize the ways in which powerlessness and restricted self-determined choices related to COVID-19 may disproportionately impact the health and wellbeing of individuals who hold intersecting identities. Despite these realities, SHAC is committed to supporting students who are navigating these difficulties, and are actively working to dismantle these systems. We strive to provide trauma-informed, culturally sensitive medical and mental health care, as well as resources for our cultural centers and community groups.

Another unfortunate reality and consequence of this virus has been the experience of increased anti-Asian racism and xenophobia for members of the Pacific Islander, Asian, and Asian American (PIAAA) community. Members of the PSU and PIAAA community have seen an increased number of bias incidents and anti-Asian racism at PSU and in the larger community. These experiences may range from anti-Asian sentiment and attempted jokes such as referring to the virus as the “Chinese Virus” and “the Kung Flu” to intimidation and physical harm. Regardless of the scale of the behavior, these behaviors are not acceptable and can lead to harm and lasting impact for members of our community. These behaviors can further perpetuate oppression-based trauma, which as we noted takes an emotional, mental, and physical toll. Student Health and Counseling Services recognizes the harm caused by such actions and opposes acts of discrimination, xenophobia, and racist anti-Asian sentiments regardless of scale. We are dedicated to combating hate and supporting anyone who has experienced this form of oppression. SHAC is committed to prevention efforts that seek to mitigate future occurrences of bias through our Illuminate bystander intervention workshops and health promotion efforts.

We also recognize that as a result of oppression-based trauma, structural inequalities, and a history of racial profiling, people of color may experience increased anxiety and uncertainty related to wearing protective masks, as well as increased risk of experiencing racism and discrimination. Although black and latinx men may have these experiences more frequently, this is not exclusive to their gender or racial/ethnic group, as others with intersectional identities may also experience this form of trauma associated with COVID-19. Student Health and Counseling Services is committed to promoting an understanding that the practice of mask wearing may promote further marginalization and/or increase anxiety for persons of color and those with intersecting identities. Further, we understand that as such, this prescribed safety measure may be difficult to employ by members of the aforesaid groups, and encourage you to consult with your healthcare provider for support.

If you have experienced any discrimination or harassment as a result of your perceived identity, we encourage you to access:

- For mental health and health support, we encourage you to contact Student Health and Counseling Services (SHAC). SHAC services are available M-F from 9-5 pm, simply call 503-725-2800 to set up a telehealth appointment.

- For community support, we encourage you to reach out to the [PSU Cultural Resource Centers](#). The Cultural Resource Centers offer a space for connection and community building.
- For reporting your experience and to access support, we encourage you to contact the [Bias Review Team](#) through the Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion

Additionally, there are coping strategies that can help build resilience and help you survive and resist hate when we experience and witness it in our everyday lives. Here are just few examples:

- Connect to family, friends, community, and culture- Reach out to GDI, DMSS, CRCs, or other communities that affirm your humanity
- Take care of your body. Self-care is an act of resistance.
- Try to come up with a schedule for yourself to make your life more predictable. Making our interior life more routine is important to combat the unpredictability that is happening in our exterior lives right now. That doesn't mean you can't include fun spontaneous activities or have to be rigid about the schedule.
- Know that it is okay if you are not able to accomplish as much as you normally would accomplish. Practice self-compassion, you are doing the best you can as you navigate very difficult circumstances.
- Engage in activities that increase your experience of agency -- whether that is something old or new, like cooking, sewing, gardening, doing a puzzle, coloring, reading a book -- enjoy but keep more passive/numbing activities like TV, computer, social media, and video games more limited.
- Nourish your soul. Listen to music, watch movies, connect to your cultural values/rituals.
- Take a deep breath and practice self-compassion.
- Listen to your gut or healthy cultural suspicion, which gives loads of information as to how best to self-preserve.
- Give yourself permission to experience and to honor your anger, frustration, helplessness, despair, and injustice.
- Seek out and create joy. Loving kindness to other People of Color.
- Mindfulness, exercise/moving your body, getting some sun, and relaxation strategies may help you to feel grounded and connected in this difficult time.
- Remember your ancestors and call on their strength.
- And if you feel up for it, find a call to action, whether through creativity, supporting others that may be going through a hard time, or resisting hate in a way that feels aligned with your needs and values.

Please be sure to check out our [Navigating Racism and Xenophobia Resource Page](#).