



Dear International friends, colleagues and students,

In the midst of the hate crimes against individuals of Asian and Asian-Pacific Islander lineage, I don't have anything extremely wise or profound to share. The fact that people of Asian descent or those believed to be of Asian descent are being attacked, hurt, mistreated and killed because of how they look is very emotional and personal to me.

It is sickening to think about any person being harmed or killed, ever, but our most vulnerable elderly population being targeted just because of their ethnic background is overwhelming. I could never have imagined that such incidents would happen and that humans could be so mean or cruel to another human being for absolutely no reason, except how the person looks.

As you have heard or read in the news, Anti-Asian hate crimes have more than doubled during the pandemic, according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino. The violence has surged amid racist rhetoric during the coronavirus pandemic – much of which was popularized by the ex-president. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/18/us/metro-atlanta-shootings-thursday/index.html>

When my children were young, and I was asked if my children's father was Vietnamese, or asked if their father was Chinese or Korean, I felt that it was a gift that so many different ethnicities felt connected to my children. I believed that my children would feel connected and be connected to many people and many different cultures. As a young mother, I had always viewed my children who are Asian, Black or Hispanic to have an advantage, and I still believe they do. I've believed that their affiliations and experiences would be rich and would give them a broader experience of our world than I had growing up as a white Irish American in KC. Nonetheless, being white, I didn't understand my white privilege and conversely, I didn't understand the societal disadvantages that society can impose because of the color of one's skin or one's ethnic lineage.

And I didn't understand fearing for my children's safety because of how my children look or because of the color of their skin. But now I do. One of my sons is called "Asian Boy" by his friends, and he has embraced it as his nickname. But it causes me to worry, does this mean he could be a target at his school? Because our children are people of color, we recently bought all of our children, male and female alike, mace and personal alarms.

How do we protect our children, our students, our friends and coworker's during these times?

I do not have the answers. But I know that we have to use our love and privilege to protect each other. We have to use our positions of privilege and our power to protect those who are vulnerable. We are called to do that.

Because we worry about the safety of our community, we are offering a Community Conversation on personal safety with Sgt. Sisk on Thursday at 4:00. I hope you will attend and ask your colleagues and friends to attend. It is helpful to know our Campus Police and Campus Safety Officers, and to rely on them when you would like someone to escort you to your car or when you feel uncomfortable. They are willing and waiting. Sgt. Sisk is offering her cell phone number to you for any questions or needs you may have 816-506-0799 and her email is ksisk@kumc.edu. In addition, please see some of the resources offered by our KUMC police department [Security Escort Service, Police Department, University of Kansas Medical Center \(kumc.edu\)](#)

As a community, we need to ensure that vulnerable individuals in our community not only feel safe but ARE truly safe. How can we do this? What are your ideas? How can we stand together to prevent Hate Crimes and protect each other?

Please let us know your ideas, and please reach out to friends and neighbors to ensure each other's safety. Do not walk alone. Walk in small groups. Be aware and be vigilant.

I stand with our friends who identify as Asian and Asian Pacific Islander. I stand against xenophobia, hate, racism and all bias. The Office of International Programs is available 24/7. Please feel free to text or WhatsApp, email or call.

Let's all not just be allies, let us all be active allies. Let us support each other, and let us be friends to each other.

[Kimberly Connelly](#), M.A.T. | KUMC Senior International Officer and Director, [Office of International Programs](#) | PDSO & ARO, FULBRIGHT Advisor | Co-Chair Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programming Committee | *For upcoming events and programming, please visit the [OIP Events Calendar](#)* | 5007 WESCOE Academic Affairs | [University of Kansas Medical Center](#) | 3901 Rainbow Blvd. | Mail Stop 3033 | Kansas City, KS 66160 | Phone: 913.588.1480 | Fax: 913.588.1462 | kconnelly@kumc.edu | **CELL** and **WhatsApp** 816.668.6414 | 2021 **President of the IRC Board** [International Relations Council \(irckc.org\)](#) | Please [Visit Our Full IRC Event Calendar](#) |

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” – Marcel Proust