

AAPIP



COLLECTIVE GOOD

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY ON
RACIAL SOLIDARITY & ASIAN AMERICAN,
NATIVE HAWAIIAN
AND PACIFIC ISLANDER (AANHPI)
COMMUNITIES



INTRODUCTION

“You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it.”

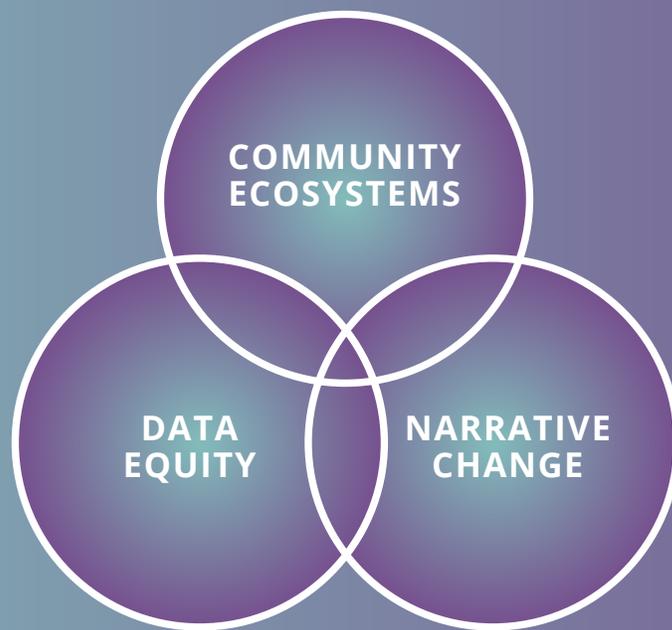
— GRACE LEE BOGGS

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR PHILANTHROPY TO TRULY HONOR THE RACIAL RECKONING MOMENT OF OUR TIME, TO CONNECT THE DOTS ACROSS ANTI-BLACK AND ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE IN THE COURSE OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC? HOW CAN PHILANTHROPY, USING ITS RESOURCES OF MONEY AND INFLUENCE, LEVERAGE THE STRENGTHS OF ALL OUR COMMUNITIES IN SERVICE TO A VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY?

Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) believes that building vibrant communities through cross-racial and intergenerational solidarity is essential to achieving transformative change. We know that such efforts have resulted in historic achievements in labor, education, civil rights, and social justice, and AAPIP continues our journey to deepen cross-racial and intergenerational solidarity work, as well as

more fully represent the vast diversity within the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities. Together, through deep solidarity, understanding, and action, we can better harness our collective strength and reimagine a shared future filled with abundance.

Throughout 2020 and continuing well into 2021, long-entrenched disparities stemming particularly from racial injustices have been given newfound awareness as communities across the country organized protests against anti-Black racism in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. For (AANHPI) communities, the pandemic unleashed the newest version of anti-Asian attacks. In the past year alone, anti-Asian incidents have increased by nearly 150 percent throughout the country, particularly within large cities.¹ At the convergence of anti-Black racism and anti-Asian attacks, conversations about race and racism took on rapid urgency.



A CALL FOR ACTION

The day following the tragic shooting of six Asian women on March 16, 2021, in Atlanta, Georgia, a convening of AANHPI philanthropic leaders was called to develop plans for collective action. Within two weeks, AAPIP organized and published [***A Call for Solidarity & Collective Action***](#) signed by over 700 philanthropic professionals, among them 300 CEOs, 60 of whom identify as AANHPI.

Shortly after, AAPIP released a new report, [***Seeking to Soar: Foundation Funding for Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities***](#), highlighting the miniscule level of philanthropic funding designated to AANHPI communities and the need for stronger national advocacy. Following publication of the report, three working groups convened in Spring 2021 to develop a framework and set of recommendations to expand and sustain resources for AANHPI communities to advance racial justice in this era of racial solidarity. The three working groups focused on:

- 🌸 **Community Ecosystems**
- 🌸 **Data Equity**
- 🌸 **Narrative Change**

It is cross-racial solidarity, centered within grassroots organizing, that is the overarching strategy tying together the priorities and recommendations identified by all three working groups.

This memo lays out key recommendations for supporting AANHPI communities while evolving and refining a practice of cross-racial solidarity and action. It is an invitation to add a critical layer to strengthen racial equity strategy in philanthropy.

Philanthropy has a win-win opportunity going forward and new ground to walk. This is a pivotal moment to more fully invest in organizations led by and for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Black, and Latinx communities in a way that sees each community in full nuance, while supporting cross-racial efforts toward a vibrantly inclusive America.

CROSS-RACIAL SOLIDARITY AND CENTERING GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

INTERSECTIONAL CROSS-RACIAL SOLIDARITY CENTERED WITHIN GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING WORK IS THE OVERARCHING STRATEGY AND ACTION THAT TIES TOGETHER THE PRIORITIES OF ALL THREE WORKING GROUPS. AANHPI communities forge durable, lasting strengths through organizing with other communities of color in the face of common challenges. In doing so we build solidarity, understanding, trust and a bond informed by shared experiences.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS



Recognize that we are interconnected — that the fights against anti-Blackness, erasure of Native Americans, and vilification of Latinx communities are essential to AANHPI communities in dismantling white supremacy and patriarchy. Reject the “Model Minority” Myth.



Prioritize and support the work of those in all communities of color working on the ground who are closest to injustice, including those from within AANHPI communities. Smaller, more local organizations are the equivalent to essential workers vital to the greater whole.



Highlight the broad diversity of people under the AANHPI umbrella — our community is not a monolith. The construct of a singular “Asian America” enables oppression.



Practice trust-based philanthropy and nurture authentic relationships with organizations by and for communities of color through multi-year general support grants. Their core work is creating change in communities, not responding to philanthropy.

ECOSYSTEMS: RECOGNIZING THE FULL BREADTH OF AANHPI COMMUNITIES

A recent AAPIP report, [*Seeking to Soar: Foundation Funding for Asian American & Pacific Islander Communities*](#) found that funding for AAPI communities is heavily concentrated among a handful of foundations. The top five funders accounted for nearly 40 percent of all philanthropic support for AAPI communities. The second largest funder on that list, [*The Wallace H. Coulter Foundation and Trust*](#), has made a decision to sunset, and is the only funder with a specific AANHPI initiative.

PHILANTHROPIC INVESTMENT IN ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES THIS PAST SPRING FOUND ITS WAY PRIMARILY TO LARGE NATIONAL AANHPI ORGANIZATIONS AND, TO A FAR LESSER EXTENT, SMALLER LESS-RESOURCED LOCAL GROUPS, WITH A CONTINUED DEARTH OF SUPPORT FOR PACIFIC ISLANDER AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITIES, IN PARTICULAR.² Smaller, more local organizations are the equivalent to essential workers vital to the greater whole of the AANHPI ecosystem.

Greater coordination across regions, issues, and organizations is needed to center those most impacted, working at the local level to meet a new pivotal moment.

WHAT WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEM

AANHPI nonprofit organizations exist across the country at local, regional and national levels to address the needs of the nation's fastest growing racial group.³ These are the very organizations that AANHPI communities rely on every day for support and survival. They comprise a fragile ecosystem as many organizations struggle to survive with minimal infrastructure. AAPIP's recent report, [*Seeking to Soar: Foundation Funding for Asian American & Pacific Islander Communities*](#) found that foundation funding for AANHPI communities remained relatively flat for more than 30 years — for every \$100 awarded by foundations for work in the United States, only 20 cents were

designated for AANHPI communities despite the rapid growth of these communities and despite explosive growth in assets and giving among foundations.⁴

AANHPI communities and their own community-based formations have historically been a core means of survival in the U.S. through mutual aid efforts, a growing network of AANHPI specific community and family foundations, and grassroots giving circles. These are vital components of the community's ecosystem that must also be supplemented and supported by organized philanthropy.

THE COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEMS WORKING GROUP IDENTIFIED THREE PRIORITY AREAS:



INCREASE FUNDING FOR AANHPI AND CROSS-RACIAL WORK

Increased funding and support for AANHPI and other communities of color working toward progressive change, particularly grassroots organizations closest to the ground, is essential to larger racial equity efforts. We recognize the many grassroots movement builders who have been organizing and responding to community needs, have been historically under-funded and overlooked by mainstream philanthropy for decades. Acknowledging the long existing philanthropic generosity within our communities, we are not looking for a handout, but rather offer philanthropy a “hand up” in building bridges to the fastest growing racial group in the country and a jump start to increasing support. To

supplement philanthropic knowledge and build core competencies within and across AANHPI communities, both the sector as well as the communities themselves need more avenues for information sharing and to facilitate direct connections.



SUPPORT AANHPI LEADERSHIP & INTERNAL PHILANTHROPIC PRACTICES

As AANHPI staff in philanthropy, while we bring our own wealth of lived expertise to foundation knowledge, we are also committed to further developing and expanding our knowledge of the broader ecosystem outside of our own lived experiences. In order to sustain and excel at our work, we need support from the institutions within which we work. Examples include supporting staff to participate in related programs and activities that build connections to local AANHPI communities; investing in leadership development aligned with racial equity goals in grantmaking and resource allocation decisions; and nominating leaders of color, including AANHPI leaders to sit on philanthropic boards.



ANALYZE THE FULL COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEM AND LANDSCAPE

“Asian America” is a social construct. It is an amalgam of distinct ethnic identities from Asian- and Pacific Island-originating countries, which are spread across the U.S. There are AANHPI in every state in the union, but not necessarily every ethnicity is represented in each. The philanthropic sector would benefit from a more complete picture of these communities in their regions.

THREE PRIORITY AREAS TO SUPPLEMENT AND SUPPORT THE AANHPI ECOSYSTEM



While rich data is currently available from platforms such as AAPI Data and the Pew Research Center, there is much more needed on a local level. Many of these efforts, which take a national approach, offer just cursory information about local nuances. Investments in more responsible research and data collection on AANHPI communities to obtain these local nuances will facilitate a much stronger understanding of AANHPI communities.

Finally, the task of analyzing and mapping the ecosystem of AANHPI communities is a unique challenge — yet it is an essential one for philanthropy. Absent a commitment to a full grasp of this ecosystem, informed by its complexity and depth, grant makers will have an incomplete picture of the community's

needs and grantmaking strategy will continue to fall short of any promise to meaningfully effect structural change.

DATA EQUITY: AANHPI COMMUNITIES IN-DEPTH

“Funders and peer reviewers are contributing to systemic racism through their biases about members of these populations.”

— “RESEARCH ON ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS IS BEING STIFLED”, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

WITH ROOTS IN MORE THAN 40 COUNTRIES ACROSS ASIA AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS, COMMUNITIES FALLING UNDER THE WIDELY RECOGNIZED LABEL “ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER” (“AAPI”) ARE DIVERSE IN INCOME, IMMIGRATION STATUS, LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND OTHER SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS. When datasets utilize the single category of “Asian” or “Asian and Pacific Islander,” critical gaps and needs within this massive umbrella category are lost, while Native Hawaiians are often completely absent from the data. As a result, these reductive categories routinely perpetuate the harm of the “model minority” myth, by neglecting key distinctions among AANHPI communities.

WHAT WE MEAN BY DATA EQUITY

While data and research are often portrayed as neutral, rigorous, and unbiased, data is not purely objective. Data is collected and analyzed by people, influenced by their personal experiences and motivations. It is then interpreted and disseminated within various historical, cultural, and political contexts. It is vulnerable to unconscious interpretative biases, sometimes leading to complete dismissal of data. In a world heavily dependent on its availability, omission of data can render communities invisible, and the persistent use of misleading data creates and perpetuates inequitable power structures, policies, and harmful narratives.

We believe data is foundational to advancing equity, dismantling systems of oppression, and elevating marginalized voices and needs.

FOUR PRIORITY AREAS TO SUPPLEMENT AND SUPPORT AANHPI DATA EQUITY



There are no excuses for keeping entire populations invisible and unseen. For too long AANHPI communities and other communities of color have been routinely considered too small or too costly to be meaningfully included in research. The lack of data equity has led to the lack of equity resources and opportunity for AANHPI as well as other groups often sidelined. We call for inclusive representation of AANHPI communities and ethnicities, community- or ethnicity-level data, and a thriving field of researchers, translators, and field outreach.

Using data to understand current as well as historical patterns (and their root causes) of structural discrimination against AANHPI communities helps to inform and develop equitable strategies, programs and policies for AANHPI communities and improve equity for all communities of color.

Data should benefit, not pathologize, communities. Philanthropy has a long history of extracting data and information from grantees in the name of accountability. Ensuring

equitable access and participatory approaches to data products across stakeholder groups, including language and cultural considerations, builds the capacity of stakeholders to collect, analyze, and utilize data.

THE DATA EQUITY WORKING GROUP IDENTIFIED FOUR PRIORITY AREAS:



CENTER THE COMPLEX NEEDS OF ALL AANHPI COMMUNITIES THROUGH ETHNICITY-LEVEL DATA

Disaggregating, or collecting and reporting data by ethnicity and caste⁵ (where applicable), allows change makers to surface and target resources. Disaggregating data to ethnicity levels benefits not just the AANHPI community, but all communities of color. Because critical detail is obscured by the

“AAPI” social construct, disaggregation of individual ethnic subgroups allows us to parse through potentially misleading information. For example, the general “AAPI” statistic often obscures the complex reality that the high educational attainment of some individual ethnic groups routinely masks the lower educational attainment of others.



STANDARDIZE RACIAL AND ETHNIC CATEGORIES IN HOW WE COLLECT DATA

AANHPI represents a diversity of cultures, religions, and experiences. These communities have been lumped together as a racial category and there is little consistency in when or how they are tracked, grouped, or otherwise disaggregated. This lack of standardization creates barriers to our understanding of AANHPI communities, their needs, and the allocation of resources to address those needs. The usefulness and effectiveness of that data is limited, as one cannot compare data from different sources nor combine data across databases.



IMPROVE AND STRENGTHEN AANHPI SURVEY PANELS

Survey panels are an unseen part of America’s data infrastructure – similar to plumbing or electrical wiring in a house. These panels are the underlying data infrastructure that researchers, media, and private businesses regularly rely upon, seldom questioning their quality. At this time, panels tend to have a small and skewed pool of AANHPI participants, particularly when outreach is only conducted in English and Spanish.

Philanthropy often plays a critical role in

these data collection efforts, as both an investor and as a consumer. In doing so philanthropy possesses both the leverage — and the responsibility — to call for improved data collection standards that accurately reflect the AANHPI community in these harvests. Harm will continue to result from a distorted, incomplete picture of the community. Failing to include AANHPI with limited English proficiency, for example, leads to a significant undercount of AANHPI who are struggling. Thus, improving the data quality of AANHPI respondents requires surveys to be available in at least several languages spoken and understood by AANHPI people and developed in collaboration with local language experts.



PRIORITIZE EQUITY IN PHILANTHROPIC MONITORING, EVALUATION, LEARNING, AND RESEARCH

Increasing philanthropic support to rectify historical underinvestment in the AANHPI community and other communities of color means more than increasing money flow. It also means engaging with grassroots community organizations differently, including doing away with inequitable or burdensome data practices in monitoring, evaluation, learning, and research on grantees.

RESETTING THE AANHPI NARRATIVE: A FORCE FOR RACIAL EQUITY

“News coverage of Asian Americans was so sparse, it was as if it was written in invisible ink.”

— INVISIBLE INK: MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

THROUGHOUT U.S. HISTORY, DOMINANT NARRATIVES ABOUT AANHPI PEOPLE SUCH AS THE “PERPETUAL FOREIGNER” OR THE “MODEL MINORITY” HAVE CREATED A HARMFUL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION THAT RENDERS AANHPI COMMUNITIES OFTEN INVISIBLE OR MISREPRESENTED.⁶

The “perpetual foreigner” narrative quickly resurfaced alongside the pandemic, building steam for an onslaught of anti-Asian violence which has continued nearly unabated.⁷

This moment in our history offers a unique opening to transform conversations about how and where AANHPI belong in the continuum of racial reckoning in the U.S.

Stereotypes about AANHPI people have roots in anti-Black narratives and Native American erasure. They are used as a tool to reinforce white supremacy, obscuring the challenges of various groups wedging the AANHPI community against communities of color with whom there is shared experience. We reject misinformation that dehumanizes AANHPI communities and

weaponizes us against Black, Latinx, and Native American communities.

The task in front of philanthropy — indeed, the country — is to dispel the notion that AANHPI are monolithic and to reveal and recognize the diversity of experiences lived by these communities. Moreover, this opportunity calls for an end to the pervasive narrative that AANHPI are not “fully American.” To make progress on racial equity, AANHPI communities must be recognized as an essential stakeholder in that aspiration.

WHAT WE MEAN BY NARRATIVE CHANGE

Narrative change should be distinguished from strategic communications. Long-term narrative shifts are multi-dimensional and complex to navigate within and across communities. Philanthropy can play a leading role in disrupting the narrative frame that has been assigned to AANHPI communities and all communities of color that has been largely centered on the

THREE PRIORITY AREAS TO SUPPORT AANHPI NARRATIVE CHANGE



1 JOURNALISM AND ETHNIC MEDIA



2 PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION



3 ARTS AND CULTURE

experience of white persons — white men, specifically — culturally, socially, and politically.

This shift requires a structural response across sectors, communities, and platforms. Public awareness and education should be drawn by and center the lived experiences of AANHPI communities themselves. Reinforcing this practice will disrupt damaging misinformation and misperceptions, and contribute to a cycle of clearer, authentic portraits of the community and its complexity.

Narrative change means breaking through and dismantling harmful stereotypes and racial tropes; and in their place developing informed through-lines that center community institutions and leaders with lived expertise. Together, our communities can define a new narrative portrait with full agency.

THE NARRATIVE CHANGE WORKING GROUP IDENTIFIED THREE PRIORITY AREAS:



JOURNALISM AND ETHNIC MEDIA

Within the field of journalism, there is a dearth of journalists with wisdom and knowledge of AANHPI communities and issues, as well as how these issues are linked cross-racially. The result is a lack of inclusion of AANHPI communities in research and reporting on racial justice, reinforcing the



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Opportunities to portray AANHPI as diverse populations must be expanded through quality public education and awareness. Racial illiteracy about our communities contributes to racial inequities and racism, including the persistence of anti-Asian violence. It is time to invest in ethnic studies curricula into public education and expand the pool of intellectual leadership to include more AANHPI and all people of color, particularly those with lived expertise.



ARTS AND CULTURE

The erasure of AANHPIs is perpetuated through artistic and cultural exclusion in mainstream cultural institutions, production, and distribution. Dominant frameworks in arts and culture often exclude or minimize visibility of communities of color, while white-centered arts organizations enjoy ongoing disproportionate support and structural advantages. In addition, cultural appropriation of AANHPI and all people of color-specific cultural practices is problematic.



MOVING FORWARD

THIS IS THE PIVOTAL MOMENT FOR THE COUNTRY AND FOR PHILANTHROPY TO EVOLVE ITS STRATEGIES FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE, MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY. IT IS NOT AS SIMPLE AS BLACK AND WHITE — AND THAT IS THE POINT.⁶

Within the backdrop of a global pandemic nearly every sector has been challenged with an opportunity to revisit and test the assumptions that form the very basis of their work and lives. For philanthropy, this critical moment will be assessed and evaluated not only by how the field rose to the challenges of its own metrics — payout or regulatory compliance or focus on a particular mission-focus for each foundation — but also how the sector proactively supported (or not) the social, economic, cultural, and structural shifts that mark this new era.

For communities of color, the hallmark of this time will be the way in which it revealed deep-seated, structural inequalities that the pandemic laid painfully bare and that has taken shape into the racial reckoning before us. Communities of color across the nation have experienced this before. This reckoning is not new, not even for AANHPI communities.

But perhaps what distinguishes this reckoning from others is the extent to which it exposed how deeply economic and racial inequality is experienced and shared across all communities of color — and the racial animus that can result.

Just as it has always been, but in many ways now more than ever, it is clear that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders live in solidarity and share life experience with all communities of color — Native Americans, Black Americans, and Latinx Americans — as well as disenfranchised communities, including differently abled persons, those who are LGBTQ or gender non-conforming.

AANHPI communities are an essential voice in the calls for change, and in the structures that serve them — including philanthropy. At AAPIP, we believe that taken together, communities of color are greater than the sum of the parts.

If the last two years has illustrated anything — in the wake of George Floyd’s murder and the ensuing call for justice in Black communities, a rising tide of anti-Asian violence across the nation, unbridled voter suppression efforts squarely aimed at communities of color, and climate change — it’s that we are not alone.

Our work at AAPIP and for the AANHPI community will continue to be about moving philanthropy to recognize opportunities for meaningful structural change in the lives of all communities, and to seize upon them. We believe in and are committed to realizing, as fully as possible, a collective good that is informed with full agency by the communities most affected by racial and economic inequality.

ABOUT AAPIP

ESTABLISHED IN 1990, AAPIP is a justice-minded, national philanthropy-serving organization that provides unique community spaces for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and allies in philanthropy. Our mission is to expand and mobilize resources for AANHPI communities to build a more just and equitable society. We are a membership-based organization that centers equity and justice in philanthropy. AAPIP is a critical partner in multiracial and intergenerational efforts to amplify the voices of and expand all forms of philanthropic capital to AANHPI communities for an inclusive democracy.

AAPIP serves as the progressive home to AANHPI in philanthropy at all leadership levels across the sector while recognizing that much more work is needed to be more inclusive and representative of AANHPI communities as a whole. Anchored by national staff, AAPIP works across the country through a chapter network. Our chapters serve as sites of regional activism acting as a bridge between philanthropy and local non-profit organizations. These chapters are centers for place-based advocacy, information sharing, leadership development and network building focused on AANHPI issues and philanthropy.

AAPIP envisions a just and equitable democracy with the full civic and economic participation of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. **Our work is guided by several key pillars:**

- 🌿 **RACIAL SOLIDARITY IN ACTION:** We work at the intersection of anti-Asian and anti-Black racism, unapologetically advocating for Asian American communities while aligned and in allyship with Black and all otherized communities. We center the lived experiences of people and communities most impacted and closest to ground for impactful change.
- 🌿 **ETHNIC DIVERSITY:** Asian Americans have been racialized as a distinct group across vast cultural and regional differences, hailing from more than 40 countries, speaking over 100 different languages. We recognize and honor both the similarities as well as the complexities within and across the diasporic experiences.
- 🌿 **MULTI-GENERATIONAL ABUNDANCE:** We make space for leadership across generations, approaching philanthropy with a spirit of abundance, driven by the love of humanity, not money.

More information can be found on [AAPIP's website](#). In order to grow our impact, we need you! If you are not yet a member, please take a moment to sign up for [membership](#)!

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Institutional affiliations are listed for identification purposes only and are not intended to express institutional viewpoints. We apologize for and regret any inadvertent omissions.

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Cynthia Yung, The Boone Family Foundation
Eddy Zheng, New Breath Foundation

ENDNOTES

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- (2) [Seeking to Soar, Foundation Funding for Asian American & Pacific Islander Communities](#), Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), 2021, page 8
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- (5) [“Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation”](#), Pew Research Center, June 29, 2021, page 96
- (6) [“6 Charts That Dismantle The Trope Of Asian Americans As A Model Minority”](#), Connie Hanzhang Jin, NPR, May 25, 2021
- (7) See [Stop AAPI Hate National Report, 3/19/20 – 6/30/21](#), Stop AAPI Hate, 2021

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Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) expands and mobilizes resources for AAPI communities to build a more just and equitable society.

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Building Democratic
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