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Title

Against Hate and Hardship: How Asian American Small Businesses and Restaurants Have Survived the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Title: Against Hate and Hardship: How Asian American Small Businesses and Restaurants Have Survived the COVID-19 Pandemic

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In the spring of 2021, IGS launched a two-year Diversity and Entrepreneurship Fellowship Program. Cal-in-Sac Fellows conducted original research focused on the challenges and opportunities facing women- and POC-owned small businesses and diverse entrepreneurs in California. This series includes Op-Eds, blogs, policy briefs and other research products that capture key findings of the students' research. Learn more at <https://igs.berkeley.edu/matsui-center/fellowships/cal-in-sacramento>.

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ANTI-ASIAN HATE

#StopAsianHate

**IS NOT
WHAT I STAND FOR**

#StopAAPIHate

**AGAINST HATE AND HARDSHIP: HOW ASIAN AMERICAN SMALL
BUSINESSES AND RESTAURANTS HAVE SURVIVED THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC**

By: Kai Noah Serrano Eusebio

**Throughout the summer of 2021,
I sought answers to the question,
"How have Asian American small
businesses and restaurants
mitigated the effects of the
COVID-19 Pandemic?"**

**What I would find consistently
throughout my research was
that, in order to answer this
question,**

**ALL I NEEDED TO DO
WAS READ THE
WRITING ON THE
WALLS.**

Get Vaccinated, San Francisco!

¡Vacúnese, San Francisco!
Magpabakuna, San Francisco!
三藩市疫苗齊接種!

Stop the spread of COVID-19.

Ponga fin a la propagación de COVID-19.

Itigil ang pagkalat ng COVID-19.

停止新型冠狀病毒傳播。

Vaccines are safe.

Las vacunas son seguras.

Ligtas ang mga bakuna.

Vaccines are free.

Las vacunas son gratuitas.

Libre ang mga bakuna.

疫苗是免費的。

No insurance required.

No se requiere tener seguro médico.

Walang kinakailangang insurance.

接種疫苗無需醫療健保

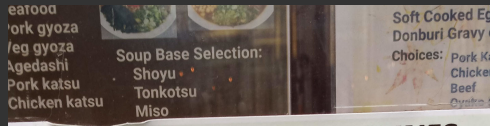
If it weren't evident by the empty streets and walkways, or by the closed shops, the signs on the walls in communities like Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, Japantown in San Francisco, and Chinatown in San Francisco will tell you a story: the pandemic is here, and has left no small business unscathed.

Nevertheless, if you look closer, you'll find exactly how these businesses, particularly Asian American small business restaurants, have been able to endure.

Signs have been used as forms of marketing communication between businesses and their customers since ancient times, under which their designs, information, and placement would engage with customers (Kellaris and Machleit). Throughout my research, I had a particular focus on this practice, known as signage, through an ethnographic lens; that is, I examined the behavior of the participants (businesses and customers) in the given social situation of posting signs and reacting to them within the context of the pandemic the pandemic. Understanding why businesses showcased their writing on the walls gives insight into what they want their customers to understand, feel, and act, which is exactly what I sought to focus on.



The majority of the signs you'll see on these businesses are all of the COVID-19 procedures that both the owners and the potential customers must abide by, each with their own direct or indirect consequences. Some signs note that customers aren't allowed to stand or sit in areas in order for the location or restaurant to be considered COVID-safe. Others require physical distancing and mask wearing, while others disallow food eaten inside of complexes to follow city ordinances and act in the interest of public health. Others showcase whether the establishment in particular has passed COVID safety guidelines, akin to a food safety inspection certificate.



COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDELINES

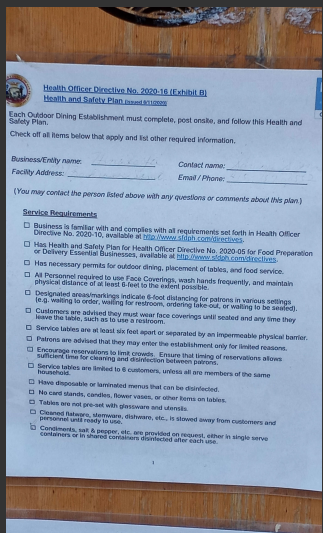
- 1.) Wash hands often and use hand sanitizer to prevent infection.
- 2.) Face mask or covering is required in public places.
- 3.) Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing.
- 4.) Prevent cross-contamination: Do not touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth.
- 5.) Temperature readings may be required.
- 6.) Respect one-way traffic signs and stay 6 ft. - 12 ft. away from others.
- 7.) If you feel sick or display COVID-19 symptoms, DO NOT ENTER!
- 8.) Take-out social distancing dining, Pre-orders and Curb Side Pickup.
- 9.) Future phases may change and/or modify dining protocol.

TOGETHER WE SAVE LIVES! STAY HEALTHY! BE SAFE!

6 ft. - 12 ft. MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Thank you for shopping with us. We care about our community and our clients. We recommend looking for some type of protection in establishments yourself when you arrive home. Face masks and face coverings are mandatory & required in our essential building. You would also be asked to take a temperature reading and be required to exit the building if you have symptoms related to COVID-19.

Kinokuniya
More info on COVID-19 is available from the City of San Francisco at <https://sf.gov/toxics/coronavirus-covid-19>



請與他人保持6呎距離
Manténgase a un mínimo de seis (6) pies de los demas
Magbigay ng 6 na talampakang distansya mula sa isa't isa

SF.gov/coronavirus

MAKES WITH ONE-WAY VALVES
DONOT COMPLY
WITH THE SF COUNTY FACE COVERING ORDER

City and County of San Francisco

This business has been approved for the following uses:

Outdoor Business

- ✓ Sidewalk seating or retail

This business must follow these rules:

- Make and maintain a straight, clear travel path at least 6 feet (2 yards) wide across the sidewalk in front of their business.
- Have workers compensation insurance and commercial general liability insurance coverage.
- Comply with accessibility requirements.
- Install dividers for sidewalk seating or dining.

Date Issued: June 12, 2020
Valid until: December 31, 2020
This permit can be renewed.

For more information:
www.sfgov.org/seating




Ultimately, these signs that pertain to COVID-19 guidelines aim to keep businesses and their customers operating within health guidelines. Failure to comply with these signs have a direct and significant impact on the bottom line of these businesses.

With customers often unable to eat inside for public health and safety, restaurants have seen drastic drops in business. Mitsuru Sushi and Grill, owned by Mamoru Hanamure in Little Tokyo, noted that his business has only been able to make 25% of the revenue they had before when there was a ban on in-person food service; under indoor dining, it's at around 50% of pre-COVID business levels (Nakayama).



Under these conditions, restaurant owners find themselves having to deal with buying more takeout packaging, buying cleaning supplies, creating outdoor seating for dining outside of the restaurants, and various air filters and barriers: all of which erode their profitability (Dua, et al.). According to McKinsey and Company, at the national level, almost 40% of small business restaurants operated at a loss or only broke even before the pandemic; the pandemic has made slim operating margins even slimmer (Dua, et al.).

The image shows the storefront of a Nippon-ya shop. At the top, there is a white sign with the 'nippon-ya' logo, which consists of two red circles to the left of the text 'nippon-ya' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. Below the English text is the Japanese text 'にっぽんや' in a smaller font. Below this sign is a yellow panel with the text 'japanese confections, gifts & green tea' written in a cursive script. The storefront is framed by red and yellow panels. Below the yellow panel is a red horizontal band. Underneath this band are two windows with white metal grates. On either side of the central window, there is a vertical white sign with the 'nippon-ya' logo and text, oriented vertically. The windows are decorated with small, round, silver ornaments. The interior of the shop is visible through the grates, showing shelves and some items.

nippon-ya
にっぽんや

japanese confections, gifts
& green tea

nippon-ya
にっぽんや

nippon-ya
にっぽんや

nippon-ya
にっぽんや

nippon-ya
にっぽんや

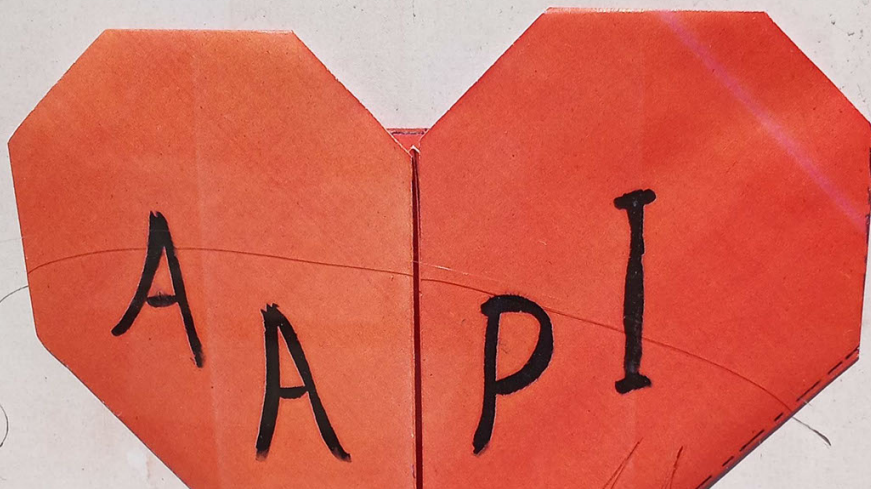
In Japantown, more than 10 businesses have closed up shop for good from the more than 70 small businesses that were a part of the community in 2019 (Kost). Between reduced hours businesses are able to be open for, in combination with the lack of business due to the pandemic, the average store is losing \$4,300 a month, while the average restaurant loses \$11,000 (Kost). Meanwhile, many of the tenants of Japantown also owe thousands of dollars in rent and maintenance; William Lee's restaurant, Kui Shin Bo, owes over \$20,000 (Kost).



In Little Tokyo, 26 small businesses have shut down, 19 of which were either restaurants, bars, or cafes (Nakayama). In Chinatown, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce noted that the ZIP code that houses most of Chinatown saw 75% of its storefronts become nonoperational at some point last year, in comparison to the city average, under which 54% of all storefronts were nonoperational at some point during 2020 (Rogers).

HEARTS FOR LOVE

LET'S CONQUER HATE WITH LOVE



In combination with the adverse impact of the pandemic, a notable increase in violence and hatred against the Asian American community has occurred; between March 19th and December 31st, Stop AAPI Hate has found more than 2,800 accounts of racism and discrimination targeting Asian Americans across the U.S (Rogers).

Discrimination against Asian Americans has also manifested in forms of misinformed xenophobia. Asian American businesses have seen adverse impacts caused by fearmongering and misinformation that tied Asian American communities with higher chances of getting COVID-19, resulting in less potential customers engaging with Asian American businesses (Walker).

Nevertheless, there are signs that point in a more hopeful direction for the future of these communities. With Anti-Asian hate on the rise throughout the nation within the midst of the pandemic, various non-profit organizations, local advocacy groups, business associations, law firms, and governmental organizations have not only rallied to prevent such hate, but have also helped to host cultural events and directly assist both businesses and the community at large.

In Little Tokyo, the Little Tokyo Community Council's "Community Feeding Community" program utilized donations and resources to purchase food from struggling local restaurants to give to those who were homeless or who had seen their financial capabilities weakened at the hands of the pandemic (Nakayama). The Little Tokyo Community Center, in collaboration with the US Small Business Administration, Asian Pacific Islander Small Business Program, and LA's Metro has also helped businesses apply for grant and loan applications, as well as help small businesses market themselves with more promotions and a greater online presence (Nakayama).

In Japantown and Chinatown, there are signs plastered on the walls showcasing various community gatherings and projects, as well as potential prizes for those who keep coming back to spend at the malls, with the intent of rallying community members and bringing in tourists to keep businesses afloat. There are also various AAPI community signs rallying against hate, with some even offering legal assistance for businesses that may suffer from hate crimes or if they need to apply for grants or loans.

Strength through Bonds of Community and Friendship

絆
KIZUNA

44th Edition
Northern California
Cherry Blossom Festival
April 10-11 & 17-18, 2021
Virtual Edition | 100% FREE

GRANTEES: GRANTS, ARTS, CANA, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHERRY BLOSSOM FOUNDATION, SAN FRANCISCO CHERRY BLOSSOM SOCIETY, SAN JOSE CHERRY BLOSSOM SOCIETY, SAN MATEO CHERRY BLOSSOM SOCIETY, SANTA CRUZ CHERRY BLOSSOM SOCIETY, SUTTER COUNTY CHERRY BLOSSOM SOCIETY, YUBA COUNTY CHERRY BLOSSOM SOCIETY

AAPI CARE FAIR SF
SATURDAY, APRIL 24
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
100% FREE

AAPI CARE FAIR SF
SATURDAY, APRIL 24
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
100% FREE

AAPI CARE FAIR SF is a community resource for AAPI individuals and families. It provides a safe space for AAPI individuals and families to connect, share, and support one another. The fair is held at the San Francisco Public Library, Main Branch, 100 Larkin St., San Francisco, CA 94102.

CUSTOMER APPRECIATION MONTH

From June 4 to July 4, 2021, for every \$100 you spend at a participating Japanese Merchant Association member's business, you will receive one (1) entry ticket for a chance to win one of the fabulous prizes listed.

Grand Prize
\$5,000 Cash

1st Prize
65" Sony LED TV

2nd Prize
Sony Playstation 5 Console (40000)

3rd Prize
Apple iPad

4th Prize
\$1000 Visa Gift Card (2000000)

5th Prize
One month FREE parking @ Japanese Center

Plus many more valuable prizes!

To enter the drawing:
1) Shop or dine at any business displaying the Customer Appreciation Month poster.
2) Take your paid receipts to the Validation Center located in the Japan Center West Mall, Suite 350, 4000th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

"HEARTS FOR LOVE" Community Project

There is a crisis today. Many Asians, including our most vulnerable, have become the target of hate crimes. Join me in folding 1,000 Origami Hearts as a show of support to the families of those victims who lost their loved ones. Let's counter HATE with LOVE!

Folding 1,000 Origami Hearts is a spin on the tradition of folding 1,000 origami cranes in order to realize a wish. I embrace this tradition by folding 1,000 HEARTS as show of LOVE - the human emotion which can counter HATE and create POSITIVITY.

Rough sketch of the projected final piece

JOIN THE FOLD!

1. Fold a RED HEART out of the template provided on CoFoldMe.com! Fold additional hearts out of any color (except solid red), preferably out of 6" paper, then write wishes of hope and positivity on the front. Send them to Paper Tree at 1743 Buchanan Street, SF, CA 94115.
2. Show your support by creating your OWN HEART and displaying it in your front window!
3. Share this page with your friends and family. Let's go WORLDWIDE! Tag us on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter @paperstreet!

AAPI Legal Outreach
Working for Equal Justice in the AAPI Community

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2020 - VOLUME 1 - SPECIAL EDITION
Supporting Immigrant Communities Amid COVID-19 Crisis

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!
As the global pandemic magnifies pre-existing economic, social and racial inequalities, AAPI Legal Outreach remains committed to promoting social justice and empowering our communities during this challenging time. The recently passed federal legislation provides different types of economic reliefs. In this newsletter, you will find information about:

- Eligibility for State and Federal Benefits
- Stimulus Direct Payments
- How to File for Unemployment Benefit
- How to Report Anti-Asian Hate Crimes

CALL US FOR LEGAL ADVICE
Although Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach (APILO) office is currently closed to the public due to the shelter-in-place order, we are still providing legal assistance via phone and email. If you wish to speak with an attorney for legal advice, you may call our office at (415) 557-4255 or (510) 251-2846. APILO Staff will give you a call back on the same day.

SPEAK UP AGAINST THE RISE OF ANTI-ASIAN HATE CRIMES
AAPI Legal Outreach is COVID-19의 발발 이후 반 아시아 인종 차별의 증가를 우려합니다. It is important that we document these incidents in order to advocate for interventions and policies from an AAPI and community-centered framework. If you have experienced a hate crime since the COVID-19 outbreak, please report it here so it can be tracked by the STOP AAPI Hate Reporting Center. The incident report only takes a few minutes and is available in English, Vietnamese, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Khmer, Korean, Japanese, and Thai.

SPEAK UP

RESOURCES FOR

SMALL BUSINESSES AND WORKERS

We're all in this together and together we'll get through this

If you're a business, nonprofit or worker in San Francisco who has been impacted by COVID-19, **we're here for you.**

For the latest resources including information on state and federal worker benefit programs, small business grants and loans, and other assistance, visit:

Signs, as a medium that can be analyzed, serve as a gateway to understand how businesses communicate with their customers. Ultimately, the writing on these walls communicate to customers what the businesses in Little Tokyo, Chinatown, and Japantown have encountered in the wake of both the consequences of the pandemic and a wave of anti-Asian hatred. However, the writing on the walls in the form of these pamphlets are not singularly the bearer of hard times: they also showcase how many in the community have endured, and what work needs to still be done in fighting the pandemic, standing against hatred, and in keeping these communities culture and livelihoods intact.



CHINA TOWN
KITES

四海
FOUR
LEAS
四海

英和旅店
REMI
HOT

EASTERN

CHINESE
AMERICAN FOOD
Coca-Cola

SN
GAF

EASY
TRAVELER
BAG & GIFTS

COMPS SHOP

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Credits:

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