Against the Racism and Xenophobia of Recent Remarks Addressing COVID-19

We write this statement in support of graduate students nationwide. We wish to address the harmful forms of racism now prevalent across the US. No matter how high the level of government or prominent the speaker it comes from, it is crucial we stand behind our values in addressing that any form of racism is wrong, so as to support our own members at the community level and the progress of the nationwide pandemic response.

The novel coronavirus behind the current 2019 coronavirus pandemic (abbreviated "COVID-19") is known scientifically as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SAR-CoV-2). Calling it the "Wuhan virus" or the "Chinese virus" promotes stigma on the basis of ethnicity, harming Chinese Americans and other members of the Asian-American community. By overriding the advice of the World Health Organization and prominent figures of other leading countries in the pandemic response, we signify that we are permitting the stigmatization of our own citizens.

Graduate students from all backgrounds across the US are working tirelessly to advance the science and technology that has given the nation such a commanding presence on the world stage. Past public health emergencies have shown that it is easy to distrust and blame others. In order to most effectively combat this disease, we must consciously choose to support and work with each other and not give in to prejudice. We call on our leaders to stop promoting division and instead refer to the novel coronavirus by its scientifically accurate name. More importantly, it is time to put aside our differences, to join with the rest of the world, and to focus on protecting our most vulnerable and those most at risk.

The Harvard External Advocacy Committee, as part of the Harvard Graduate Council, represents graduate students at Harvard University across twelve different schools, abbreviated as GSAS, GSD, HBS, HDS, HES, HGSE, HKS, HLS, HMS, HSDM, HSPH, and SEAS.

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