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Introduction to the issue: Evaluating the Psychological Impact of COVID 19

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At the end of January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a world public health emergency when virus like symptoms led to 213 deaths in China and millions apparently infected. Throughout the month of February, Americans read in disbelief that no country would be spared from this new virus. The impact of the virus spread quickly through European countries and showed us that we must prepare for our own outbreak. By the second week of March, a national emergency was declared and states across the country declared public shutdowns of schools, businesses, and essentially our way of life. Before we could even comprehend our life altering circumstances, Americans witnessed and experienced the massive impact of COVID 19; by April, over a million cases reported and millions of people left jobless and approximately 50 to 60 thousand deaths. As of this writing, over 200,000 American COVID related deaths with communities of color disproportionately impacted by COVID on every fallout measure.

These expert voices help us begin to document the early days of this crisis, what it revealed, and questions raised. In this particular issue, “The psychological impact of COVID 19” researchers focus on different marginalized communities and their experiences with the pandemic. The communities discussed were among the first to be hit the hardest and who continue to experience disproportionate impacts for years to come. These written accounts provide not only historical context but also recommendations for how we may eventually emerge from this life altering event.

Dr. Genevieve Leung reviews and connects historical prejudice against Chinese Americans and how its evolved discourse impacts Chinese American communities today. Dr. Hsiu-Lan Cheng extends our understanding through her analysis of mental health impacts experienced by the Chinese community, and more broadly the Asian American community, because of stigma and marginalization. Dr. Daniela Dominguez provides voice to the experience of undocumented immigrant communities and also includes recommendations for indigenous approaches to therapy and healing. Dr. Joyce Yang and Dr. Sierra Carter not only definitively document the disparities experienced by marginalized communities but they also name the unrecognized emotions we feel in this moment: collective grief.