
Covid-19 Ignites Anti-Asian Discrimination

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Compared to one or two centuries ago, or even one or two decades ago, the problem of racism seems to have been mitigated. With globalization enabling the mingling of different races, it seems that every generation, people are becoming increasingly open-minded towards other races...or so we thought. As Covid-19 turned our world as we know it upside down, spiking the unemployment rate as economies crash, locking people in quarantine, and causing the death toll to skyrocket with nearly one million dead, everyone is upset and uneasy about the situation. In times like these, it is human nature to pin blame onto someone or some group, so Asians became the scapegoats. Covid-19 is the spark that ignited the hatred towards Asians, unveiling the true nature of xenophobic and racist people, as they now have the pandemic as justification for their hostility. Those of Asian descent now face verbal harassment, bullying, and physical assault, just to name a few. The pandemic brought the issue of xenophobia and racism under the spotlight.

Although there has been Asian discrimination all around the globe, it's particularly bad in countries that have ethnic diversity yet still favor white people, such as in the United States. The Chinese and other Asians are scorned upon, despite the fact that the people who spread the virus to the United States are most likely Europeans such as Italians. Aside from directly attacking Asians, some are even spreading absurd xenophobic conspiracies, such as that China created the virus in a lab for world domination. Of course, the American president is exacerbating the problem, as he relies on using people's fear to claim he will fight against the "enemies", as in the Chinese. Joe Biden is not helping matters as he released an advertisement accusing Trump of letting in 40,000 Chinese travelers, which implies that they carried the virus to America. Unable to distinguish between travelers or recent immigrants, and those who have lived in America their whole lives, people are telling Asian-Americans to go back to their own country, when America is their home country. One of my best friends in America is half Chinese and half Japanese, but grew up in America all her life, unable to speak a word of Chinese. Although she was not personally harassed, many Asians like her are experiencing an identity crisis because of the inappropriate words of thoughtless people.

Outright racist wrath isn't a problem in Asian countries such as Japan like it is in America, perhaps partially because they haven't been hit as hard, but many still harbor ill feelings towards the Chinese people for letting the virus spread into other countries. Towards the beginning of the pandemic, when there were still quite a few Chinese tourists

since the borders were open, I definitely noticed some discreet discrimination towards the Chinese. When I was on the train home, and there were some Chinese tourists boarding, my friend who was next to me whispered ‘Why are there Chinese here? They should stay in China’, then proceeded to cover her nose and mouth with her sleeve, as she wasn’t wearing a mask since it wasn’t mandatory yet. I understand why she reacted this way, since it is best to contain the spread, however I couldn’t help but feel a little sad. It made me think that if those who are generally accepting of other ethnicities react this way, the Chinese must be receiving a lot of hate from racist people. My fears came true when it spread to the rest of the world.

Unfortunately, there is no single obvious solution to this problem. However, that does not mean the problem of racism can be ignored. The first step to a peaceful and just society is to elect leaders that don’t say anything racist, since they are the example of their countries. Moreover, everyone can speak out against racist comments or try to help people understand that Asians should not be solely blamed for the pandemic. Nevertheless, in order to completely eradicate racism, it’s necessary for everyone to grow up in an environment with ethnic diversity. Nurturing people to be accustomed to diversity is very impactful, as it can keep those from being fearful of different races. Teaching people to respect everyone in school could be beneficial, but growing up in a diverse environment is the easiest way for people to be accepting of others.

Solving the issue of racism and xenophobia won’t be quick and easy, as it is deeply rooted into society, but this isn’t a problem we can ignore. Rather than wasting energy on fueling hatred towards Asians, everyone needs to come together to overcome adversity. Unity is necessary now more than ever before, in order for governments to cooperate to make a vaccine for Covid-19, as well as to heal the world in the aftermath of the pandemic.