



## Definitions

**Racism:** The belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another. Racism can be direct and obvious, or more subtle and indirect.

**Xenophobia:** Fear or hatred of foreigners, people from different cultures, or strangers.

**Microaggressions:** Brief everyday interactions that "otherize" and communicate negative messages to those from minority backgrounds.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has **uncovered racist and xenophobic views of Asian Americans**, resulting in a **dramatic increase in verbal harassment and physical assaults against this group.**

## What is happening?

**By mid-April, over 1500 cases of anti-Asian discrimination related to COVID-19 were reported.**

- **Physical violence:** An Asian woman wearing a mask was kicked and punched in a New York City subway station (Feb 5)
- **Stabbed:** A Burmese American man and his two children were stabbed at a Sam's Club in Texas (Mar 14).
- **Acid attack:** An Asian woman was attacked with acid while taking her garbage out in Brooklyn (Apr 5)
- **Verbal assault:** An Asian family was verbally harassed during a birthday celebration at a restaurant in California (Jul 6)

## Encountering racism often causes...



fear



anger



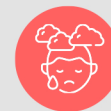
frustration



confusion



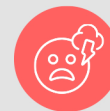
shame



low self-esteem



depression



anxiety



## Why is this happening?

**Negative stereotypes of Asians are nothing new.** Ever since Asians arrived in the U.S. in large numbers in the 1800s, they have been painted as the dirty and diseased "Yellow Peril" by news media, medical journals, and government officials.

**The "Yellow Peril" label was replaced in the 1950s by the "Model Minority" stereotype.** Although it might seem positive, the model minority stereotype is harmful because it erases significant differences between different Asian groups, sets up a divisive contrast with other minorities, and minimizes the impact of discrimination.

**COVID-19 has shown how quickly the "Model Minority" once again becomes the "Yellow Peril"** in the public's perception. The pandemic has caused massive disruptions for nearly everyone in the world, including negative health and economic effects, and a lot of anxiety and uncertainty about the future. **A common response to anxiety and fear is anger and the desire to find someone to blame.** Because the virus originated in Wuhan, China, this anger has been directed at Chinese people, and by extension, all Asians. Politicians' use of terms like "The Chinese Virus" directly contribute to this type of racial stereotyping.

**Racial Trauma:** Racism and discrimination can harm both **psychological and physical health** and cause a **post-traumatic stress response**, including **increased fear/anxiety, avoidance**, and **hyper-vigilance** (being constantly on guard against future attacks).

## Effects on mental health

Asians face microaggressions in daily life that constantly reinforce a feeling of "otherness."

- "Where are you *really* from?"
- "You must be good at math."
- "You're a cute obedient woman."
- "I can't tell you people apart."
- "You're not really a minority."

**Microaggressions, racism & xenophobia are harmful to health**

- Low self-esteem and internalization of negative stereotypes
- Symptoms of anxiety and depression, including suicidal thoughts
- Worsening of medical problems, including heart disease & pain
- Second generation (children of immigrants) at higher risk

## What can we do?



### Help ourselves

#### Maintain a sense of safety

- **Racism can feel like an attack**, even if there was no violence
- Cultivate a sense of **safety and security**
- **Surround yourself with positive community** that supports and understands you
- **Reach out** to loved ones, respected mentors, peers in affinity groups (e.g., Asian American alliance) or faith-based organizations

#### Practice good self care

- **Recognize that anxiety is a normal response to trauma**, including the "vicarious trauma" of seeing attacks on Asians in the media.
- **Identify and focus** on the areas of your life you CAN control
- **Optimize basic needs** (diet, exercise, and sleep)
- Engage in **routines and practices** that you know help calm you
- Seek **professional help** if needed

**Report incidents of hate and bias** to institutional and local authorities, including police if it feels safe to do so, as well as national registries—e.g., A3PCON's "Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center."

Reporting these incidents provides evidence they are happening, pushes institutions and policymakers to address racism, and can help you regain a sense of agency during a challenging time.

### Help others



- **Call out racism** when you see it
- **Get bystander training** so you know how to respond to bias incidents
- **Reach out** to victims
- **Stand in solidarity** with other oppressed groups

### Help the community



- Get people **talking about it**. Organize panels or discussions at school or work
- We can all help fight internalized stigma by **being vulnerable and** sharing our own negative experiences, then **organizing and advocating** to stop more racist attacks from happening in the future



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