

Coping with Another Virus: Rises in Anti-Asian Racism During the Age of COVID-19

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THE ISSUE

The spread of COVID-19 has threatened the security of people all over the world. Threats to our health, financial and emotional security, and uncertainty about the future are some examples of the devastating consequences people have experienced. An additional burden members of the Asian/Asian American community are facing is a spike in Anti-Asian sentiment. This has run the spectrum from microaggressions (e.g., being villified, treated as diseased) to discrimination, harassment, bullying, and hate crimes involving physical violence. During the first two weeks of its inception, [The Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center](#) was informed of over 1100 Anti-Asian incidents specifically related to COVID-19. Fortunately there are mechanisms available to help with taking care of ourselves, feeling more empowered, and remaining connected during this challenging and disheartening time.

SELF CARE TIPS FOR RACE-RELATED STRESS

Whether or not you have directly been exposed to COVID-19 related racism, hearing about the rise in xenophobia since the pandemic can impact your health and chip away at your emotional well-being. The following are some tips for taking care of yourself:

- **Acknowledge your reactions to incidents of racism as real.** Talk about it with someone you trust. Lean into spaces that can validate your experience and painful emotions for strength and support.
- **Give yourself breaks from media consumption.** Understand when staying updated feels helpful and informative versus when it becomes overwhelming and distressing. Limit the amount of time you spend on the news and social media each day.
- **Find ways to remain grounded.** This may involve sticking with familiar routines or engaging in self care activities like exercise. It is also an important time to practice self-compassion and give yourself permission to not function at your normal capacity.
- **Look for examples of human resilience, kindness, and hope in your daily surroundings or historically.** Consider role models and inspirational Asian authors who have also experienced hardship such as Grace Lee Boggs and Thich Nhat Hanh.
- **Stay connected with your culture and communities.** Turn to outlets such as literature, art, movies, online communities, cultural events, foods, and traditions.

RESPONDING TO RACISM

There is not a “one size fits all” approach for responding should you find yourself as the target of xenophobia. For instance if the goal seems to be to provoke you, walking away and not feeding the situation might be the best choice. In situations where ignorance appears to be the driving force, calling out incidents of racism, providing factual information, and introducing larger points to ponder may be a viable path. There may also be times where it feels too draining to address what is happening. Try not to get down on yourself afterwards for however you handled a situation. Know that you did what felt like the best option in the moment. It is helpful to have thought through potential strategies ahead of time. Safety is always the top priority.

- **Find helpful resources.**
 - [Teaching Tolerance](#) describes a 4 step process (if you decide to speak up against bias). It involves interrupting, questioning, educating, and echoing.
 - [Hollaback!](#) offers options for approaching online harassment (that can be applied to a range of circumstances including racism).
- **Take proactive steps to protect yourself.** Let someone know of your whereabouts if you are going somewhere alone. Bring your cell phone with you so you can have immediate access to support from your social network.
- **Report incidents of racism and hate.** This information can help advance the needs of the Asian community and make increased protections a priority. Get people in a position of authority (school administrators, administrators of social media platforms) involved.
- **Process your experience with a trusted confidant or a professional.** Provide yourself with the same compassion you would offer a loved one facing a similar situation. You deserve to feel safe and supported.

ALLYSHIP AND BYSTANDER SUPPORT

Bystander intervention and allyship are pivotal in decreasing the perpetuation of racism. They help chip away at a culture that says racism is acceptable and help those who have been injured heal. There are multiple options, involving varying levels of directiveness, for assisting someone who is the target of racism. Get involved in whatever form you feel able to convey support and solidarity.

- **Learn practical tools.** [The 5 D's of Hollaback!'s](#) bystander intervention methods are distract, delegate, document, delay, and direct. They highlight that there are powerful strategies that do not involve directly engaging the aggressor.
- **Take care of one another.** Check in with the Asian/Asian American people in your life and offer support. Listen to and acknowledge their worries and experiences of injustice.

- **Be proactive around trying to repair situations where you harmed others.**
Acknowledge your actions and apologize in a way that accepts responsibility. Engage in efforts to prevent similar incidents from reoccurring.
- **Make an impact on the systemic level.** Racism is a structural issue that needs to be addressed at multiple levels. For example, share relevant information and articles on social media to raise awareness among people.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Right now it is more important than ever to connect and help each other out. While it may require more creativity and effort with social distancing, it is still possible to build off of our collective energy and appreciate our cultures strengths, values, and successes together. Ways to unite, share our struggles and experiences, and help our culture continue to grow include:

- **Patronize Asian owned establishments.** Many have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 at particularly high rates (financially, by vandalism). An example is ordering takeout at a local Asian restaurant.
- **Donate your time or contribute financially to causes that support the Asian community and their needs.** Seek out ways to assist elders, those with low income, language barriers, and other populations who may be facing additional challenges.
- **Draw attention to systemic racism and mobilize action.** Apply pressure to politicians who can advocate for policy change. Take steps to help increase AAPI voter turnout. Contact media sources that perpetuate misinformation and put our communities at risk.
- **Find online communities.** Some examples that address issues relevant to the Asian community are:
 - [WashTheHate](#) - A social media campaign to raise awareness around anti-Asian racism and promote solidarity as we battle a common enemy.
 - [RacismisaVirus](#) - A campaign to empower Asian Americans to rise up against xenophobia in the wake of COVID-19 so we can all live in dignity and peace.
 - [Nextshark](#) - A leading online source for global Asian and Asian American news such as culture, entertainment, politics, lifestyle, etc.
 - [Subtle Asian Traits](#) - A closed Facebook group where Asians from all around the world could share their cultural experiences about a wide range of topics (both light and serious) through memes, personal accounts, etc.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [ActToChange](#) - A national nonprofit organization that aims to address bullying in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, with a recent emphasis on COVID-19 bullying and hate.
- [Asian American Advancing Justice](#) - An online option for reporting hate crimes. It advocates for the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and other underserved communities and lists a range of resources (about COVID-19 and other topics).
- [Asian American Suicida Prevention & Education](#) - A joint project providing resources for mental health support and educational materials in different languages.
- [IHeartMob](#) - A platform with information about managing online harassment. It is applicable to a wide range of circumstances including racial harassment.
- Brown University resources: [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), [Brown Center for Students of Color \(BCSC\)](#), [Global Brown Center](#), and [the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity](#).

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