

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM AND SENTIMENTS IN THE U.S. & CANADA

Anti-Asian Racism in the United States and Canada: Generations of Misconceptions and its Modern-Day Effects

Olivia G. Cordero

The Global Studies and World Languages Academy at Tallwood High School

GSWLA Global Connections

Instructor: Lindsey Clouser

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Abstract

Racism and discrimination are issues the Asian community has faced for hundreds of years. Since the first major migration of Asians to North America, political and social constructs have limited the rights of Asian groups and generated misconstrued perceptions of Asian people and cultures. Exclusion acts, internment camps, and oversexualized or offensive Asian characters in films are only some of the methods of racism Asians have faced over the past 300 years. This study aims to review the history of anti-Asian racism and sentiments in Western countries, specifically the United States and Canada; it also covers current events on the Coronavirus pandemic and how it has sparked an increase in anti-Asian violence in these countries. In order to gain better insight into this research topic, the author not only analyzed online resources but conducted three interviews with local leaders connected to the Asian American and Pacific Islander, or AAPI, community. This research verifies that anti-Asian racism is an ongoing issue but is being actively fought against by campaigns and organizations both nationwide and worldwide.

Literature Review

Asians account for almost 60% of the Earth's population, making them the largest racial group in the entire world (Szmigiera, 2021). However, they are considered one of many minority groups in Western countries. Like most minorities in the West, members of the Asian community have faced a vast amount of racial discrimination and xenophobic violence for centuries. The review focuses primarily on the history of anti-Asian racism in Western countries, specifically in the United States and Canada, and its contributions to Western attitudes and perceptions of the Asian community. These aspects provide the information needed to understand the evolution of anti-Asian racism and sentiments in the U.S. and Canada and how their prevalence has affected members of the Asian community today.

Asian Migration

The migration of Asians to Western countries is one example of a “dynamic” social process where new, diverse communities have been created. Asian immigrants have streamed into the US from five main Asian countries--China, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and India--and are often traced back to the “better-known migration” of California in the 1840s; however, Asian migration actually goes as far back as the mid-1700s, when Asian immigrants settled along the Atlantic Coast to work as indentured servants, sailors, and ship workers (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). These “forgotten” immigrants preceded the migrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands who were “lured” to the United States by California's gold rush and Transcontinental Railroad (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). Despite their importance to the American workforce, many Asian immigrants faced discrimination from other American citizens. Racism and xenophobia--the fear against of people from other countries--were often expressed through the “development of exclusion laws” that affected all Asian immigrants (Hing,

2013); these laws would later be enacted in Canada as well and mainly prohibited the migration of Asian laborers to the West. Many scholarly sources specify how Asian groups--mostly Chinese, Japanese, and Korean--were affected by the bill, but few mention the major groups from Southeast Asia, like Asian Indians and Filipinos; this presents a gap in the research of anti-Asian racism in the United States.

Stereotypes of Asians

As Asians began migrating to Western countries, harmful stereotypes on common Asian behavior and characteristics began to emerge among American and Canadian citizens. Asians are often categorized into two conventionalized ideas: the perpetual foreigner and the model minority. The perpetual foreigner stereotype harmfully reinforces the idea that Asians are “not fully American” and suggests that they will never be fully accepted in Western society (Chuang, 2021). A subcategory to this stereotype directly targets Asian women as being naturally submissive and purposely seductive towards Western men, specifically those who are white; this misconception of Asian women derives from extreme hypersexualization and discrimination from Western media (Dhingra, 2021). The model minority stereotype, on the other hand, presents Asians in a more positive manner (Chuang, 2021). Many scholarly articles, such as those by Toronto-based journalist Angelyn Francis or associate professor Angie Chuang, define the model minority stereotype as the idea that East, Southeast, and South Asian communities are “studious, hardworking, and polite;” these traits that are plausibly tied to the professional success and wealth of Asians in comparison to other minority groups in the United States and Canada (Francis, 2021). Overall, most journalists and professionals acknowledge how these stereotypes of Asian people are inherently prejudicial and have resulted in negative sentiments towards them.

Between World War II and the 2010s

Following World War II, during which anti-Asian racism was prominent in the United States and Canada, North American governments passed immigration reforms to retract laws that kept Asian and Pacific Islander communities “in check” (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008; Hing, 2013). However, these reforms only resolved surface-level issues by lifting the migration ban on Asian immigrants; previously-promoted misconceptions about Asian people and cultures encouraged discrimination against them. As a result, many Asian citizens, immigrants, and activists in the United States and Canada fought for civil rights movements and advocated for reparations for those affected by Japanese internment camps during World War II (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). This period has fewer prominent instances anti-Asian racism and violence, which presents yet another gap in information regarding this topic of research. The late 1900s and early 2000s, however, introduced a new wave of Asian migration to both the United States and Canada in response to the lifted exclusion system; this encouraged the continuation of racial intimidation and violence against the Asian community.

Now

Today, members of the Asian community still suffer from the effects of harmful stereotypes, discrimination, and immigration laws in the United States and Canada. Over the last few decades, many Western work settings have become more accepting in hiring people of color; this has also been the case in government departments. Although these professional settings are now more diverse, there is still racial discrimination against Asian employees, even against those with political powers (Kim, 2021). Recently, the poor treatment of Asians by their American and Canadian neighbors and governments has intensified. Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, anti-Asian violence has spiked in the United States; analysts have connected this

increase to “racist rhetoric and incidents of anti-Asian racism” (Dionne, Hayes, & Turkmen, 2021). Like in the past, the increase in anti-Asian racism is presumed to be a direct result of racist sentiments expressed in political rhetoric. Anti-Asian attacks in the United States have also caused an increase in anti-Asian violence in other Western countries as well, including the United Kingdom and Australia (Johnson & John, 2021).

Professional accounts and scholarly articles have all realized the prevalence of COVID-19 and its negative impact on the lives of Asians in Western countries. However, while many sources cover the perspectives of major Asian communities--Chinese, Korean, and Japanese--they rarely explain the sides of South and Southeast Asian groups. Ethnic groups from South and Southeast Asia, such as India and the Philippines, are often only briefly mentioned in published studies and media coverage; this lack of information has created a notable gap in this research study.

Conclusion

A majority of these sources recognize the cruel and unfair treatment of Asians in the United States and Canada since their arrival in the late 18th-century. Political propaganda, racially-exclusive laws, and Western media’s portrayal of Asian people have all contributed to the anti-Asian sentiments and racism many American and Canadian citizens hold against the Asian community. Although Asian Americans and Canadians are considered the model minority, the outbreak and media coverage of the Coronavirus has painted the Asian community as a liability to those around them. The goal of this paper is to not only further explain the historical and current events on anti-Asian racism but to also fill these gaps not explained by these scholarly sources. This literature review suggests that the history of anti-Asian racism--and the sentiments and stereotypes that have stemmed from it--has contributed to the poor treatment of

Asians in the United States and Canada, and the outbreak of the Coronavirus has deepened this issue.

Limitations of Study

Although this topic has been thoroughly researched and is accurately presented, several limitations prevented the study from reaching its full potential. These circumstances are related to the bias of the author and the research of the study.

The author is a member of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. As a Filipina-American, she is deeply passionate about her cultural heritage and encourages cultural awareness through organizations that she leads, like the Tallwood Filipino Culture Club. Her background and connections with the Asian and Pacific Islander community have influenced her advocacy for the equal treatment of Asians in the United States. For these reasons, it is important to note that, although bias is avoided in this academic paper, the author's personal experience as an Asian-American and opinion may limit the perspectives presented.

Furthermore, the author also faced research-related limitations in this study. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the author was limited to only using sources available online and virtual interviews with local leaders (see Appendices C, D, E, & F). Of the aforementioned sources, some scholarly journals required paid subscriptions to be read; as a high school student with no employment, the author had no way to pay for such access and was limited to only free articles available on research platforms, such as Gale. Moreover, although many online sources covered the history of major Asian groups in the United States and Canada, few sources went into detail on the viewpoint of South and Southeast Asian groups, who make up a large percentage of the Asian population in the West. As a result, there may be gaps in the presented research that the author was unable to address.

Methodology

This study researched the following questions: “how has anti-Asian racism changed since the initial arrival of Asian migrants in the United States and Canada? What has caused these changes, or lack thereof?” The methods used to acquire information to answer these questions were analyzing online sources, such as news articles or professional journals, and collecting qualitative data from personal interviews.

The author was able to connect with local leaders from the Hampton Roads’ Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. As part of her study, the author interviewed three community members through virtual Zoom meetings; the participants included Dr. Allan Bergano, Dr. Anil Nair, and a local leader who requested to remain anonymous. Two interviews were recorded via audio recording, but all answers were documented through note-taking (see Appendices D, E, and F). Each interview observed how local, nonprofit organizations have supported the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, as well as how they have adapted in face of the COVID-19 pandemic. These interviews may have produced biased results, but they provide an in-depth and personal understanding of the participants’ perceptions of the Asian American community and any racism it faces.

Introduction

Racial prejudice is a deep-rooted aspect of modern society. In Western countries, specifically where immigration rates are high, hundreds of years of discrimination and division amongst different minority groups have greatly influenced conceptualizations of foreign cultures, languages, and religions. Oftentimes, non-members of these groups believe minorities lack certain morals and virtues, such as modesty or good hygiene. The erred perception of Asians can be linked to the ongoing promotion of harmful Asian stereotypes in Western media and entertainment; a prime example of this is Mickey Rooney's portrayal of Mr. Yunioshi, the main character's "irate" Japanese neighbor, in the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* ("Commentary: The Problem of Racism," 2003; see Appendix A for image). In the white actor's portrayal of Yunioshi, he wore prosthetic buck teeth, squinted his eyes, and mimicked a "thick Asian accent," all of which solidified the idea that Asians were unattractive and grossly ill-mannered (Morgan, 2018). Misconceptions such as these have generated years' worth of racism and xenophobia that have negatively affected modern sentiments and events regarding race and ethnicity, especially those connected to the Asian and Pacific Islander community in the United States and Canada.

The goal of this research is to humanize Asian Americans and Canadians by exploring the deep history of racism they have faced and its effects on modern anti-Asian sentiments today. Extreme racism and xenophobia have oppressed the Asian community in the United States and Canada for about 300 years. Although there have been significant improvements towards equality and social justice for all Asians in the West, there is still a deep history of racism. With the outbreak of the Coronavirus and its inaccurate connection to Asian society, misconceptions and altered modern perceptions of Asians have circulated throughout the Western world, especially in Canada and the United States.

Discussion

HISTORY OF RACISM

Migration and Anti-Asian Laws

Animosity against people of color, especially those of Asian descent, is not uncommon in the United States or Canada; in fact, both countries have profound reputations for enforcing regulations and promoting rhetoric against the Asian community. Anti-Asian violence and sentiments are often traced to the first major migration of Asians to North America in the late 19th-century, but the roots of Asian migration can be found as far back as 1763 when Filipino ship workers settled in modern-day Louisiana (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). The first Asians to immigrate to the United States “in appreciable numbers,” however, were from China, where many suffered from the aftereffects of the Taiping Rebellion and China’s then-ongoing rice shortage (Hing, 2013). So, incited by job opportunities that were otherwise unavailable in China at the time, thousands of Chinese laborers moved abroad and were primarily employed in the construction of America’s Transcontinental Railroad. However, the sudden influx of Chinese immigrants resulted in accusations and “agitation” among Western citizens that blamed Asians for “taking white men’s jobs” and bringing “Asian diseases” (Chuang, 2021; “Immigrants, Asian,” 2008; Fitzgerald, 2017).

Eventually, in response to public uproar, the American government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This bill, which would later inspire the 1885 Chinese Immigration Act and head tax in Canada, prohibited the migration of Chinese laborers and was also enforced against other Asian immigrants (Yao, 2021; “Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). The Page Act of 1875 was yet another extension of the exclusion system, specifically denying Asian women the right to immigrate to the United States; under the pretense that they--Asian women--travel for “lewd”

purposes like “purposes of prostitution,” the American government reasoned their presence would taint the morality of the country (Dhingra, 2021). This “intense hostility” towards Asian migrants lasted for generations, even throughout the 20th century, when the exclusion acts were repealed and Asian people were able to enter the United States and Canada once again (Fletcher, 2011).

Following the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion and Page Acts, major streams of Asian migration flowed from five main countries--China, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and India--and their country of origin often determined their social rank on American and Canadian racial hierarchies (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008; Fletcher, 2011). When World War II began in the late 1930s, the perception of Asians, especially those of Japanese descent, declined once more. Faced with “yellow peril,” the concept that Asians aimed to “overrun white civilizations,” American and Canadian governments began detaining Japanese families in internment camps and passing laws that restricted their abilities to work in legal, teaching, and medical professions (Allison, 2000; Quinn, 1991). To differentiate themselves from Japanese Americans and avoid being put in internment camps, some Asian migrants, like Chinese Americans, started wearing buttons and badges that identified their ethnicity; phrases like “I am Chinese” were extremely common (“Chinese Americans Labeling Themselves,” 2021).

In December 1943, American involvement in World War II prompted a “watershed era” that resulted in the “formal end” of Asian exclusion in the United States (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). Groups from Korea, the Philippines, and South Asia benefited greatly from the lift on Asian exclusion; many were allowed to join the United States armed forces and sought naturalization rights. The end of World War II led to the release of Japanese families from internment camps and further reshaped immigration regulations in the United States. Laws such

as the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act permitted Asian immigrants to enter the United States and gain American citizenship (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). In comparison, the Canadian government formally apologized for their treatment of their Japanese population and “provided compensation” on behalf of the federal government’s actions during the war (Yao, 2021).

Throughout the mid to late 1900s, anti-Asian sentiments were less prominent in the United States; Western media’s concern had instead focused on the Cold War and Red Scare, which condemned foreign communists (K’annan, 2021). The mid-1960s to late 1900s saw the rise of civil rights and immigration movements for “Asian-derived communities,” many of whom worked with other communities of color to advocate for racial equality (“Immigrants, Asian,” 2008). Repeals over exclusion-era and World War II acts improved the treatment of Asian groups in the United States and Canada, but many Asian immigrants and individuals still faced vast amounts of racism and xenophobia from Western society in the following decades.

Asian Stereotypes

Prejudiced rhetoric behind anti-Asian exclusion acts skewed Western perception of Asian people and led to the establishment of harmful racial cliches. Asians, whether they were born in Asia or not, are commonly accepted as the model minority and perpetual foreigners, both of which were influenced by the exclusive immigration laws enforced in the United States and Canada.

The first--the model minority--initially took root in the 1800s after the first wave of Asian migration to the United States. Asian immigrants’ exceptional work on the Transcontinental Railroad began the outline of the model minority myth, the idea that all Asians are “hardworking and submissive,” as well as “economically prosperous” (Chuang, 2021; Yao, 2021). This stereotype was formally coined a century later by American sociologist William Petersen, when

the United States' 1965 Hart-Celler Act passed new immigration quotas and spurred a wave of immigration from countries around the world, including Asia ("Immigration and Nationality Act," 2004). The policy encouraged universities to offer international graduate scholarships to students overseas, specifically "highly skilled immigrants" from east and southeast Asian countries (Chuang, 2021). Many of the immigrants excelled in American universities and were later hired for professional jobs in science and technology fields; this, in turn, solidified the idea that Asians were "studious" and "hardworking"--ideal traits that led to the success and wealth of Asian Americans and Canadians in comparison to other minority groups (Francis, 2021). The model minority myth not only promoted the idea that Asians were better than other minority groups but reinforced "continued systemic discrimination" in both the United States and Canada (Francis, 2021; Yao, 2021).

The perpetual foreigner is another common Asian stereotype that was developed following the 1800 Asian migration. The perpetual foreigner stereotype implies that Asians and Pacific Islanders are "outsiders and aliens" regardless of whether they migrated to or were born in Western countries like the United States and Canada (New American Economy, 2021). Incited by xenophobia, this stereotype reinforced the idea that Asians are not and would never be "fully American," or otherwise accepted in Western society (Chuang, 2021). The assumption that individuals of Asian or Pacific Islander descent gave rise to the contemporary form of racism known as racial microaggression, wherein racism is hidden by falsely-amiably comments and actions; racial microaggression against the Asian community commonly presented itself in the questioning of one's true country of origin or the complimenting of one's proficiency in the English language (Huynh et al., 2011). Since their initial use, the perpetual foreigner and model minority stereotypes have distorted the realities of Asian lives in the United States and Canada.

The Oversexualization of Asian Women

Two stereotypes connected to the perpetual foreigner and model minority stereotypes directly target Asian women and are commonly assigned to Asian characters in Western entertainment; they are known as the Lotus Blossom and the Temptress (Pham, 2021). The Lotus Blossom, otherwise known as China Doll or Geisha Girl, depicts Asian women as “quiet and submissive” (Tran, 2021; Pham, 2021). She also is someone in need of being “saved,” oftentimes by a Western man (Tran, 2021). The American musical *Miss Saigon* has a classic example of the Lotus Blossom stereotype in its main character Kim, a “passive” Vietnamese woman who falls in love with an American soldier and waits patiently for him to fulfill his promises of bringing her to the states (Pham, 2021) (see Appendix B Figure 1 for image).

The Temptress stereotype, on the other hand, portrays Asian women as manipulative and reliant on promiscuity (Terry, 2013). This stereotype can be connected to the Page Act of 1875, which reasoned Asian women were traveling to the United States for “immoral reasons” and promptly prohibited them from entering the United States (Dhingra, 2021). Unlike the Lotus Blossom, the Temptress uses her sexual desirability as a “dangerous weapon” to appeal to and lure Western men (Tran, 2021). The James Bond film *You Only Live Twice* features this type of stereotype in Asian spies who seduce the main character but later attack him to complete a personal mission (Pham, 2021; see Appendix B Figure 2 for image).

In many Western films and stories, Asian women are depicted as one of these two stereotypes, which not only skews the perception of Asian women, but encourages their hypersexualization. Because so many past and current American films have portrayed Asian women as overtly sexual--whether it was innocently or deliberately--many Asian American women have been “treated as prostitutes” and considered “sex objects to be exploited” (Tran,

2021). The normalization of oversexualizing Asian women and stereotyping Asians, as a whole, has negatively affected the lives of Asian individuals for generations. Today, it can be connected to hate crimes against the Asian community seen throughout history and in current events.

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM TODAY

Racism in the '90s

By the 1990s, Asian Americans made up 3% of the American population; Canada also faced a “post-1965 influx of migrants and refugees” as popular destinations, such as Toronto and Vancouver, saw increased Asian and Pacific Islander immigration between the ‘80s and ‘90s (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1988; The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022). The Asian community grew in these countries, and members of it were still considered “foreigners” and part of the model minority (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1988); however, their growing presence seemed to encourage the ongoing racial intimidation and violence against them. In 1992, the American Civil Rights Commission identified factors that spurred anti-Asian bigotry: “racial integration of neighborhoods leading to ‘move-in violence,’” racial hatred from organized hate groups, “economic competition” between racial groups, “insensitive media coverage of minority groups,” and “poor police response to hate crimes” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1988).

Although government groups issued public statements on anti-Asian violence and its main “ingredients,” anti-Asian crimes and discrimination continued throughout the United States. A common expression of anti-Asian sentiments is using racist remarks against Asian individuals. In 1997, a group of Asian students was at a restaurant when they were called racial slurs by “a group of white patrons” before being physically assaulted; although police later arrived on the scene, they brushed it off as “nothing more than a parking-lot fight.” The local

defense attorney also refused to press charges on the assailants (Hsu & Buruma, 2021). Racial stereotyping and violence became another common means of anti-Asian sentiments in the 1990s. Non-Asian citizens often mistook Asian individuals to be dangerous and would take violent actions to defend themselves (Hsu & Buruma, 2021). Also in 1997, a Taiwan-born engineer was shot dead on his own property. The “friendly” engineer, Kuan Chung Kao, had celebrated his new job at a local Californian bar and had an altercation with another patron, who spouted several racist insults against him. Upon arriving home, Kao appeared angry, inciting his neighbors to call the police. When officers arrived, they claimed Kao was waving a stick and promptly shot him in defense. The police issued a statement claiming Kao held the stick “in a threatening martial arts fashion;” Kao had no martial arts training, and the police’s warrant for such evidence “turned up nothing” (Hsu & Buruma, 2021). These 1997 cases were similar to hundreds of cases around the United States; white assailants were often left unpunished despite their crimes against the Asian community. These patterns in anti-Asian sentiments have continued for the past few decades and have only heightened since the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

COVID-19 and the Acceleration of Hate Crimes

Since the late 1900s, anti-Asian sentiments and racism has persisted in countries like the United States and Canada. In areas where the Asian population was relatively high, local organizations reported gradually increasing crimes “targeting Asian-Americans” during the mid-2010s; in Los Angeles county, assaults against Asian-Americans tripled between 2014 and 2015 (Chen, 2017). Between 2010 and 2020, nonprofit organizations, like Asian Americans Advancing justice, combated racism by spreading awareness of these crimes and tracking hate-related reports by those of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community

(Chen, 2017). Despite grassroots organizations' anti-hate projects, racially-motivated incidents against the AAPI community had relatively little coverage in public media; it wasn't until the outbreak of the Coronavirus, otherwise known as COVID-19, that anti-Asian hate crimes became more highlighted in Western media.

In 2019, the Coronavirus emerged in China ("Report Says Virus," 2020). It has since spread to almost 200 countries around the world, infecting over 375 million people and killing more than 5 million (The Visual and Data Journalism Team, 2022). The start of the pandemic devastated over 170 countries, many of whose government leaders sought a scapegoat. Because the virus began in China, government officials began using anti-Chinese and anti-Asian rhetoric in public statements about the Coronavirus, essentially blaming the Asian community for the virus (Human Rights Watch, 2020). American President Donald Trump reinforced this idea--the perception that Asians are to blame because they carried disease into the United States--by repeatedly declaring that the "Chinese virus" or "'Kung Flu' virus came from China" (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Dhingra, 2021). Federal governments' stress on the connection between Asians and the Coronavirus both "directly and indirectly" encouraged anti-Asian racism, xenophobia, and hate crimes and speech since 2020 (Human Rights Watch, 2020; "Reports Says Virus," 2020).

For the past few years, Asians and those of Asian descent have been targeted for the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Africa. Between 2020 and 2021, harassment and violence toward Asian Americans rose by 150% (Dhingra, 2021). Similarly, between June and September 2020, the United Kingdom reported a 96% increase in hate crimes against people of Asian descent (Johnson & John, 2021). Canada's national council tracked over 900 anti-Asian incidents within a year; it also reported that Asian Canadians have

seen the “largest increase in hate incidents” since the beginning of the pandemic (The Globe and Mail, 2021). In February 2021, a California-based advocacy group, the Stop AAPI Hate organization, documented almost 4000 hate incidents since March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic became an internationally-recognized disease (Dionne et al., 2021). Thousands of Asian individuals--all of varying ages, ethnicities, nationalities, and genders--have encountered verbal, physical, and online incidents of harassment and racism.

One notable crime is that of the murder of eight individuals in Atlanta, Georgia, most of whom were Asian and Asian American women. In March 2021, a man “went on a rampage” and killed eight people at three local spas in Cherokee County (The New York Times, 2021). After the man had been apprehended, the Cherokee County sheriff spokesman justified the assailant’s actions by suggesting he was simply “having a ‘bad day’” and that his crimes were “born of a sex addiction” rather than racist ideals (Kornfield & Knowles, 2021; The Associated Press, 2021); authorities further stated that the assailant aimed to “eliminate a ‘temptation’” (Kornfield & Knowles, 2021). These statements received backlash from both the public and government leaders. Georgia state Representative Bee Nguyen felt that Long’s crimes “were ‘intended to target Asian people, specifically Asian women,’” seeing as six of the eight victims were women of Asian descent (The Associated Press, 2021). Considering both the police’s and Representative Nguyen’s statements, some activists suspected that the Lotus Blossom and Temptress stereotypes fueled the Atlanta shootings (Dhingra, 2021). In current events such as this, anti-Asian hate crimes are becoming more publicized by media outlets; however, the deep history of racism against Asians has prevented the full recognition and resolution of anti-Asian sentiments and violence in the United States, Canada, and other western countries.

CLOSING GAPS

Since the first major wave of Asian migration to the West, Asian groups have faced racism, exclusion, and discrimination. While many scholarly and media sources address the perspectives of major Asian communities in North America, very few go into depth on the history of South and Southeast Asian groups in the United States. To close these gaps, Dr. Anil Nair and Dr. Allan Bergano, AAPI community leaders in Hampton Roads, offered their knowledge on Indian-American and Filipino-American history. In both Dr. Nair's and Dr. Bergano's interviews, they acknowledged the fact that there are not many resources that closely follow their ethnic groups' history or culture in the United States (See Appendices D and E).

To combat this lack of awareness, Dr. Nair and Dr. Bergano have become leaders in their local communities. Dr. Nair, who is a board member of the Asian Indians of Hampton Roads (AIHR), explained how he and his organization promotes Indian culture and history through annual cultural events, such as India Fest. Although the spread of COVID-19 has suspended their normal activities, for the time being, AIHR has continued to meet online and support those in the Indian community by promoting small businesses.

As the Founding President of the Filipino American National Historical Society's Hampton Roads Chapter (FANHS), Dr. Bergano has made it his mission to resolve this issue by documenting the oral stories and histories of Filipino Americans from local communities. So far, he and his wife, along with other FANHS members, have written and published books that "feature the story of Filipinos across America" (Filipino American National Historical Society, 2020). Through the Filipino American National Historical Society, Dr. Bergano has helped preserve and present Filipino American history to thousands of people--Filipino and non--around the country. Like Dr. Nair and AIHR, the Coronavirus pandemic has affected the activities of

FANHHS; however, thanks to online meeting platforms like Zoom, FANHHS members, scholars, and activists have been able to continue their work.

Other nonprofit organizations aim to spread cultural and historical information about the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community and the cultures within it. Dr. Bergano, Dr. Nair, and another local community leader who requested to remain anonymous (see Appendix F) have worked with the Asian Business Association of Hampton Roads (ABAHR) and Norfolk Sister Cities to support the AAPI community. Together, these community leaders have organized webinars and conferences to help small Asian businesses and promote cultural awareness to those in the local community.

Conclusion

For centuries, anti-Asian xenophobia and racism have been prevalent in Western countries like the United States and Canada. What started as racial stereotypes and prejudice-driven exclusion acts has resulted in the skewed perception of Asian cultures and people. Over the past 300 years, Asian immigrants and groups have advocated for racial equality and justice, and many succeeded in securing civil rights for future generations; however, anti-Asian racism has remained persistent in Western society. Media and entertainment in the United States and Canada, as well as other Western countries in Europe, have greatly contributed to this increase in xenophobia through defamatory stereotypes and rhetoric.

As a society that encourages racial equality and cultural acceptance, it is important to not only recognize the historical racism that has burdened the Asian and Pacific Islander community but recompense those affected by it. Nonprofit groups, like the American Stop AAPI Hate organization, and promotional campaigns, like the #NoSoyUnVirus movement in Spain, have worked to secure the equality and protection of Asians around the world by protesting against

anti-Asian racism and spreading awareness on the growth of anti-Asian violence (Johnson & John, 2021). Spreading both cultural and historical awareness, like Drs. Bergano and Nair, are also vital in repairing the flawed treatment of Asians in the United States and outside of it.

Anti-Asian racism is likely to continue into the future unless both Asian and non-Asian citizens work together to delegitimize the long-promoted misconceptions and racism of Asians.

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Appendix A



Figure 1: Side-by-side comparison of the Japanese character Mr. Yunioshi from the 1961 *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and the American actor who played him, Mickey Rooney. (2016).

Retrieved from

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/the180/opioid-clickbait-on-screen-accents-and-trump-is-no-capitalist-1.3803835/fake-asian-accents-don-t-have-to-be-racist-1.3804005>.

Appendix B



Figure 1: Characters Chris (Alistair Brammer) and Kim (Eva Noblezada) in the 2017 Broadway revival of the musical *Miss Saigon*. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.onstageblog.com/columns/2016/4/27/miss-saigon-is-coming-back-and-so-are-my-in-securities>.



Figure 2: A promotional poster for the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice*, wherein several scantily-clad Asian women appear to be serving and bathing the main character. (2020).

Retrieved from <https://ultimateclassicrock.com/james-bond-you-only-live-twice/>.

Appendix C

1. What Asian or Asian-American programs are you a part of?
2. How long have you been active in the Hampton Roads' Asian/Asian-American community? (Volunteer-wise)
 - a. How did you get involved?
 - b. How have you and your organization/association contributed to the AAPI community in Hampton Roads?
 - c. How has your involvement in your organization and in the Hampton Roads' Asian/Asian-American community affected your life?
3. What is the mission of your organization? How has it changed since the COVID-19 pandemic, if at all?
4. How has your heritage/ethnicity/background as an Asian person shaped the person you are today?
5. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its regulations, how has the organization continued to stay connected to the Asian community?
6. How has the #StopAAPIHate movement affected how the organization supports the Asian and Asian-American community? (Fundraisers? Direct support? Cultural or social events?)
7. What other groups have your organization partnered with if any? In what ways have you collaborated with them to help the Asian-American community?
8. What are some ways members of the community can support or be more involved in your organization?
 - a. What are the best ways to learn more and stay updated about your organization?

Appendix D

On January 16, 2022, the author interviewed Dr. Allan Bergano of the Filipino American National Historical Society. Otherwise known as FANHS, his organization was founded in 1982; Dr. Bergano and his wife established and have led the Hampton Roads chapter since 1989. In addition to organizing events for the Filipino American National Historical Society, Dr. Bergano previously participated in protests during the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Dr. Bergano stated that, although Filipinos are the “oldest” Asian ethnic group in the United States, there is little to no acknowledgment of Filipino American history in Asian American studies. He believes that the history of Filipino Americans is extremely “valuable,” which is why he works to gather, record, and share Filipino American history. In its 40 years of active participation in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, the organization has published books and held annual conferences with scholars and community activists to promote Filipino-American history. Although the COVID-19 pandemic initially prevented Dr. Bergano and FANHS from organizing regular meetings, the organization has since strengthened its national network by using Zoom to meet instead. His passion for his cultural heritage fuels his work as he encourages community members of all backgrounds to join FANHS’ Zoom and hybrid events to learn more about Filipino history in the United States.

(O. Cordero, personal communication, January 16, 2022).

Appendix E

On January 18, 2022, the author interviewed Dr. Anil Nair, a local university professor involved in the Hampton Roads Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. For the past ten years, he has helped organize events and projects for several community organizations, including the Asian Business Association of Hampton Roads (ABAHR), the Asian Indians of Hampton Roads (AIHR), and the Norfolk Sister Cities Association. With each of these organizations, Dr. Nair presents Indian culture to community members, educates Asian business owners on American business policies, and promotes small businesses within the Hampton Roads community. His participation in these nonprofit organizations has helped him be more “involved” in the community and understand Asian cultures outside his own--Asian Indian. Like many other community groups, ABAHR and AIHR were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, both organizations have worked to combat the pandemic’s limitations by meeting online through Zoom and holding public webinars to continue their mission of spreading cultural and economy-related information to the community. Dr. Nair believes that having more community participation in organizations like AIHR and ABAHR will help strengthen the shared mission of spreading cultural awareness and opportunities with the community.

(O. Cordero, personal communication, January 18, 2022).

Appendix F

On January 21, 2022, the author interviewed a university professor with personal connections to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Since 2006, he has volunteered with nonprofit organizations and helped lead public events that not only promote Asian culture and language but encourage collaboration between Asian and non-Asian groups in the community. In his eyes, improving the understanding of the Asian community is important in reducing judgment against Asian people and cultures, which is why the cultural events he helps organize are so important. He addressed the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way people of the AAPI community interact with and support each other; meeting in person is difficult, and now most activities are online. He finds that it and the Stop AAPI Hate movement, however, now allows American society to understand the Asian community and not only see them as a “scapegoat” for the Coronavirus. He encourages community members to let Asian voices be heard in the media and government, to support Asian restaurants and businesses, and correct misinformation about Asian culture.

(O. Cordero, personal communication, January 21, 2022).