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Coronavirus Live Updates

THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

New Site Collects Reports Of Racism Against Asian Americans Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

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As the coronavirus spreads and disrupts life across the country, Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans are facing a secondary threat: racism.

The virus was first detected in Wuhan, China, and some now blame the country for its global spread. In recent weeks, blame has escalated into reports of harassment and even assault in places with large communities of Asian Americans.

Last week Russell Jeung, a professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University, started tracking these attacks on a new website he helped launch called Stop AAPI Hate. In the site's first eight days, it received more than 650 reports of discrimination — largely against the Asian American community.

SHORT WAVE

As Coronavirus Spreads, Racism And Xenophobia Are Too

Jeung spoke with NPR's Steve Inskeep about this spike in reports. Here is some of what he had to say:

On the need for the site

We recognized early on that people were experiencing a lot of bullying, a lot of shunning, a lot of avoiding when the coronavirus outbreak occurred. And we didn't have any hard data to document what was going on, so the first thing we did was we

looked at news trends, and we counted news stories that had coronavirus and discrimination or xenophobia in it.

We found hundreds of articles about policies that people thought were xenophobic, economic boycotts of Asian businesses and then later on about interactions that Asian Americans were having where people were bullying, taunting, harassing and now attacking.

We had hundreds of accounts to go to the state legislature and say, "This is happening. We need to get it documented. We need to proactively address these trends." And since the government didn't have the capacity in California, we started our own website as a reporting center, and it just was launched last week and we've been getting over 100 reports every day.

What types of reports the site is receiving

Name-calling and verbal harassment — microaggressions are the most common. It moves up to people having bottles and cans thrown at them, their homes being vandalized, and then ... maybe three times a day, we have people actually being physically attacked, assaulted, being hit or punched, pushed on subways.

Are there things that have made it worse?

After [Sept. 11] people were attacking Muslim Americans and President Bush came out and said we have to not discriminate or mistreat Muslim Americans. What President Trump did was he insisted on calling it the "Chinese virus" and labeling coronavirus as a racial disease. And by othering Asians — and it's not just Chinese, anybody who looks Chinese — it just gave people license to attack us, to blame us for the disease, to say we're the source of it. And it's not the people who are the source of the disease, it's just, you know, a virus that doesn't discriminate.

On whether President Trump helped this week when he tweeted that the virus is not the fault of the Asian American community

Yeah, we appreciate that. I think that was due to the pressure that we exerted and the complaining. But I think it's a little too little, too late. He's already opened the door to

this racism. It was already starting even before he made the China virus remarks, and he just sort of exacerbated the situation. He still uses this us vs. them binary that argues that, "Oh, we're really working with them" and that "We're protecting them," that we're still outsiders and foreigners and not part of the American fabric.

Hear the full interview on Morning Edition here.

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