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Asian Americans speak out after rise in hate crimes during coronavirus: "We are all human. We are all one."

BY CAITLIN O'KANE

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At a time when most people are staying inside fearing the same thing – coronavirus – one group is fearing for their safety in the outside world because of something else: Racism.

One group in California documenting hate crimes and discrimination targeting Asian-Americans said it had received reports of 550 instances in the week after it launched the effort.

In New York, the NYPD made two hate crime arrests in cases involving assailants who made anti-Asian statements.

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In Philadelphia, a graphic video recently surfaced on social media showing multiple young people surrounding an Asian, striking him in the head and he falls to the ground, according to CBS Philly.

In Los Angeles, a flyer is posted in the Carson area, with a fake seal of the World Health Organization, told residents to avoid Asian-American businesses, according to Reuters.

Those are just some recent examples of anti-Asian incidents. The Southern Poverty Law Center blamed President Trump's "racist and xenophobic language" when speaking about COVID-19 for "creating a climate of hate that is permeating the country and putting people at risk." Mr. Trump has several times referred to the virus as the "Chinese virus."

"There has been an increase in reports of bias-related attacks against Asians and Asian Americans in communities and online," the organization said.

On March 23, Mr. Trump tweeted support for the community: "It is very important that we totally protect our Asian American community in the United States, and all around the world. They are amazing people, and the spreading of the Virus...is NOT their fault in any

way, shape, or form. They are working closely with us to get rid of it. WE WILL PREVAIL TOGETHER!"

Still, several lawmakers have spoken out against the president and his use of the "Chinese virus" to refer to COVID-19.

"Asian Americans will likely encounter more discrimination because of your tweet below," said Ted Lieu, a Democrat from California, referring to one of Mr. Trump's tweets. "Please stop your unnecessary rhetoric. #COVID19 is now an American virus, an Italian virus, a Spanish virus. We all are impacted & we all need to work together," Lieu wrote.

Lieu has responded to several tweets from Mr. Trump and the White House, writing that their "language will cause more discrimination against Asian Americans," and asking to "stop dividing Americans."

Other organizations are trying to combat anti-Asian stereotypes, too. Phenomenal Women, an organization with several initiatives for social causes, launched a campaign in response to the racism experienced by the Asian community in the wake of the Coronavirus.

Several celebrities, including fashion designer Phillip Lim and journalist Ann Curry, have supported the organization by sporting its "Phenomenally Asian" t-shirts. All net proceeds from the Phenomenally Asian collection will benefit the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, Phenomenal Women told CBS News.

Daniel Dae Kim, who announced he has coronavirus, has also used his platform to speak out against anti-Asian hate. "People have been asking me why I've been silent in the face of the blatant acts of racism against Asian people during this outbreak. The truth is there have been so many it's been too heartbreaking to comment on all of them," he wrote on Twitter.

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— Daniel Dae Kim (@danieldaekim) March 15, 2020

The actor also wrote that the coronavirus "doesn't care what race, gender, religion or sexuality we are. Ironically, it knows better than we do a lesson I wish we could all learn, once and for all: that we are all human. We are all one."

In an essay for People Magazine, TV personality Jeannie Mai said, "It feels like there's two viruses. COVID-19 ... and fearful ignorance."

"Hate will get you sick, even if the virus doesn't," Mai wrote.

In an interview with CBS News, Mai said seeing headlines and social media posts about anti-Asian hate, and experiencing it herself, inspired her to write the essay. "The Real" co-host said she started getting a barrage of anti-Asian comments on her Instagram posts, including photos of herself with her boyfriend.

"When I saw the comments about myself, I was embarrassed," Mai said. "I thought, 'My God, how terrible is it that people can be so ignorant and then make... my partner feel pulled into this because of me.' I felt at fault."

Several celebrities like Daniel Dae and Jeannie Mai are using their platforms to speak out against anti-Asian hate during the coronavirus pandemic. Some celebrities, like Phillip Lim, are wearing "Phenomenally Asian" shirts to raise awareness for the issue.

GETTY/INSTAGRAM

"I immediately take blame... And then, it wasn't until I saw other headlines with other people that I got angry," Mai said. "I got irate, actually."

Mai said the message she wants to send is for everyday people. "In your conversations, as we're 'FaceTime-ing,' as we're 'Zooming,' as we're posting on Instagram and we're talking to friends, as we're talking about how terrible this is, if anybody says any racist remarks, say something," she said.

"If you see something that's happening to any civilian out there, speak up, take action. Definitely don't just stand there. Be an up-stander, not a bystander," Mai said.

When asked if she was involved with any social organizations, Mai simply said "I'm in the organization of being Asian."

"That, to me, is full-time right there. I got to do my part, I got to make sure I speak up when I see something wrong," she said. "And by the way, that's not just for Asians, I'm going to speak up when I see anything hideous in any of my circles."

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