

Sinophobia

defn: anti-Chinese sentiment.

TOPIC BRIEF

As the coronavirus 2019-nCoV outbreak spreads, the anti-Chinese xenophobia wave of panic is even more overwhelming. The response to the outbreak has been: European schools rescinding exchange student invitations; restaurants from South Korea to Canada are refusing Chinese customers, including citizens; yellow peril resurfacing in the French newspapers; and racial slurs and ethnic backlash blaming the Chinese people for “bringing the virus” and receiving karma for “what they deserve.” These forms of discrimination and stereotyping propel the idea that Chinese populations are inherently foreign, unhygienic and carriers of disease. The fear-mongering in newspapers such as New York Post and irresponsible social media reports of scientifically incorrect information further perpetuates prejudice and hate. As a result, Chinese businesses and restaurants have 20% to 90% less business since January 2020. Cases of aggression towards Asian citizens and immigrants have been reported all over the world, from the United States to Italy. The virus has turned to a justification for violence and hate, causing stigmatization not only to Chinese people, but to everyone who looks Asian. This climate of fear, moreover, imposes long-term damages on society.

CASE STUDY

In 2003, the SARS epidemic struck the globe. SARS, the severe acute respiratory syndrome, also originated in China. Read these quotes detailing the experience of Asian-Americans and compare them with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

- “While we learned from SARS there is no correlation between having SARS and being Chinese, there was a lot of racial profiling and racism during that time.”
- “During SARS, the hyper surveillance and containment in public spaces, transit, their workplaces, schools, were terrible to live through.”
- During the 2003 SARS outbreak, Toronto's Chinatowns saw their revenues drop between 40 percent and 80 percent.

QUESTIONS

1. How can you be an ally to the Asian-American community?
2. What are the long-term consequences of sinophobia stemming from the coronavirus pandemic?
3. What are your thoughts of Trump calling COVID-19 a “Chinese virus” on national television?