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Trump defends use of 'Chinese virus' when referring to Covid-19



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Trump defends use of 'Chinese virus' when referring to Covid-19

By Press Association 2020 Virus Outbreak Trump

Virus Outbreak Trump

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President Trump does not think calling Covid-19 the “Chinese virus” puts Asian Americans at risk of retaliation, despite growing reports they are facing virus-related discrimination.

Since coronavirus infections started appearing in the United States in January, Asian Americans have shared stories ranging from minor aggression to blatant attacks from people blaming them for the pandemic, which has killed more than 130 people in the United States.

Among the hate crimes reported in major cities with Chinese communities: An Asian man in a Brooklyn subway who was yelled at and sprayed with Febreze air freshener.

Donald J. Trump 



In Los Angeles, a 16-year-old boy of Asian descent said other students had bullied him and accused him of carrying the virus.

Even before cities began shutting down all restaurants to stop the spread of the virus, Chinese restaurant owners were already experiencing steep declines in business because of racial stigma.

Asked why he keeps calling the coronavirus the “Chinese virus” when scientists say the disease does not respect borders and is not caused by ethnicity, President Trump told reporters at the White House that he does not consider it a racist remark.

“It’s not racist at all,” President Trump said, adding that he calls it the “Chinese virus” because he wants to be accurate.

He indicated his terminology was a warranted pushback to Chinese officials who have been suggesting the US military might have introduced the virus to Wuhan, the Chinese city where it was first reported in late 2019.

“China had tried to say at one point — maybe they stopped now — that it was caused by American soldiers,” President Trump said. “That can’t happen. It’s not going to happen, not as long as I’m president. It comes from China.”

Beijing has complained, but Trump administration officials continue to link the virus to China.

At a State Department news conference on Tuesday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo referred six times to the virus as the “Wuhan virus” and suggested the Chinese were trying to distract the world from the shortcomings of its initial response.

Mr Pompeo also suggested that an “after-action” report would corroborate his claim, suggesting that US-China tensions are unlikely to end when the pandemic is over.

Reports of anti-Asian violence are on the rise along with white nationalist rhetoric about the coronavirus on social media and far-right websites, according to Eric Ward, director of the Western States Centre, a group based in Portland, Oregon, that works to strengthen inclusion.

“We have an irresponsible president who continues to refer to Covid-19 as a Chinese virus. That is intentional,” Mr Ward said. “And at a time of great panic and fear, that will only lead to physical violence.”

“It is going to be critically important for community leaders, elected officials and others to step up their resistance to hate groups and their goal of dividing a united America.”

John C Yang, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice, said President Trump’s comments were reminiscent of the late 1800s, when Chinese Americans were deemed the “yellow peril”, despite living in the United States for years.

“For us, words matter,” Mr Yang said. “In reality, Chinese are not more genetically prone to transmit the virus. What we all need to do is focus on our public health.”

He noted that the World Health Organisation has cautioned against using geographic descriptors because it leads to ethnic discrimination. Mr Yang said terms like “Kung-flu” are not jokes.

During a White House briefing on the coronavirus, President Trump was told that an unidentified administration official had used the term “kung-flu”.

The president was asked whether using a term like “Chinese virus” puts Asian Americans at risk.

“No, not at all. Not at all,” he replied. “I think they probably would agree with it 100%. It comes from China.”

After the news conference, the White House defended the president’s language, saying that previous epidemics, such as the Spanish flu and West Nile Virus, were named after geographic locations. They labelled the controversy a “fake media outrage”.

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