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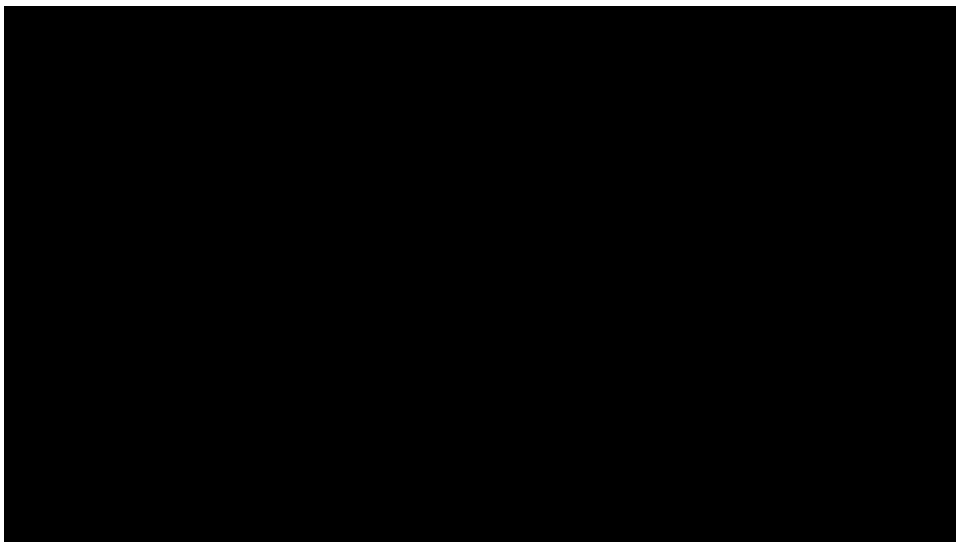
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Despite increasing racism, being Asian American during this time has been a blessing in disguise



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Justin Chan

May 1, 2020, 12:07 PM CDT



As the U.S. continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans have found themselves not only fending off the virus itself, but the discrimination that comes with it. In March, for instance, the FBI [warned of a spike in hate crimes](#) against the Asian community as an increasing number of Americans began to associate the coronavirus with outdated stereotypes of the East Asian community.

Since the end of that month, the Asian American blog
[NextShark](#) has counted nearly 1,500 reported incidents of

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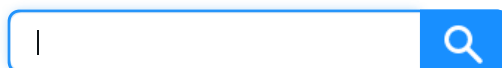
virus,” [sparking a backlash](#) from Asian American activists and politicians, who accused him of encouraging xenophobia against one of the nation’s [fastest-growing demographics](#). He then [doubled down](#), claiming that the virus came from China. Countless Asian Americans, including former Democratic presidential candidate [Andrew Yang](#), have since shared their fear about being targeted for simply *beingAsian*.

For many, including myself, misconceptions of and racism against Asians can be traced to the very moment we were *born*, and it has long contributed to struggles that we, as Asian Americans, face when balancing a bi-cultural identity.

I was born to Macanese American parents in Manhattan and spent the first six years of my childhood in Woodside, Queens. Unlike Chinatown or Flushing, Woodside didn’t have a large Chinese immigrant population — most residents around me at the time were either Southeast Asian (mainly Filipino) or Central American.

It was a weird time. My parents weren’t too fluent in English, so they relied on neighbors and family friends to take care of me — even though none of those people could speak Cantonese, my parents’ native tongue. While we didn’t share the same language, we all shared the immigrant experience. My father, for example, had come to New York in the early 1980s to study at Baruch College, and my mother followed soon after to be with him. Both had come from humble beginnings — my father was one of nine children who lived in a shack that was the size of a walk-in closet, and my mother was one of five whose home only had a queen-sized bed and a single bunk bed to share among seven family members.

Story continues



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