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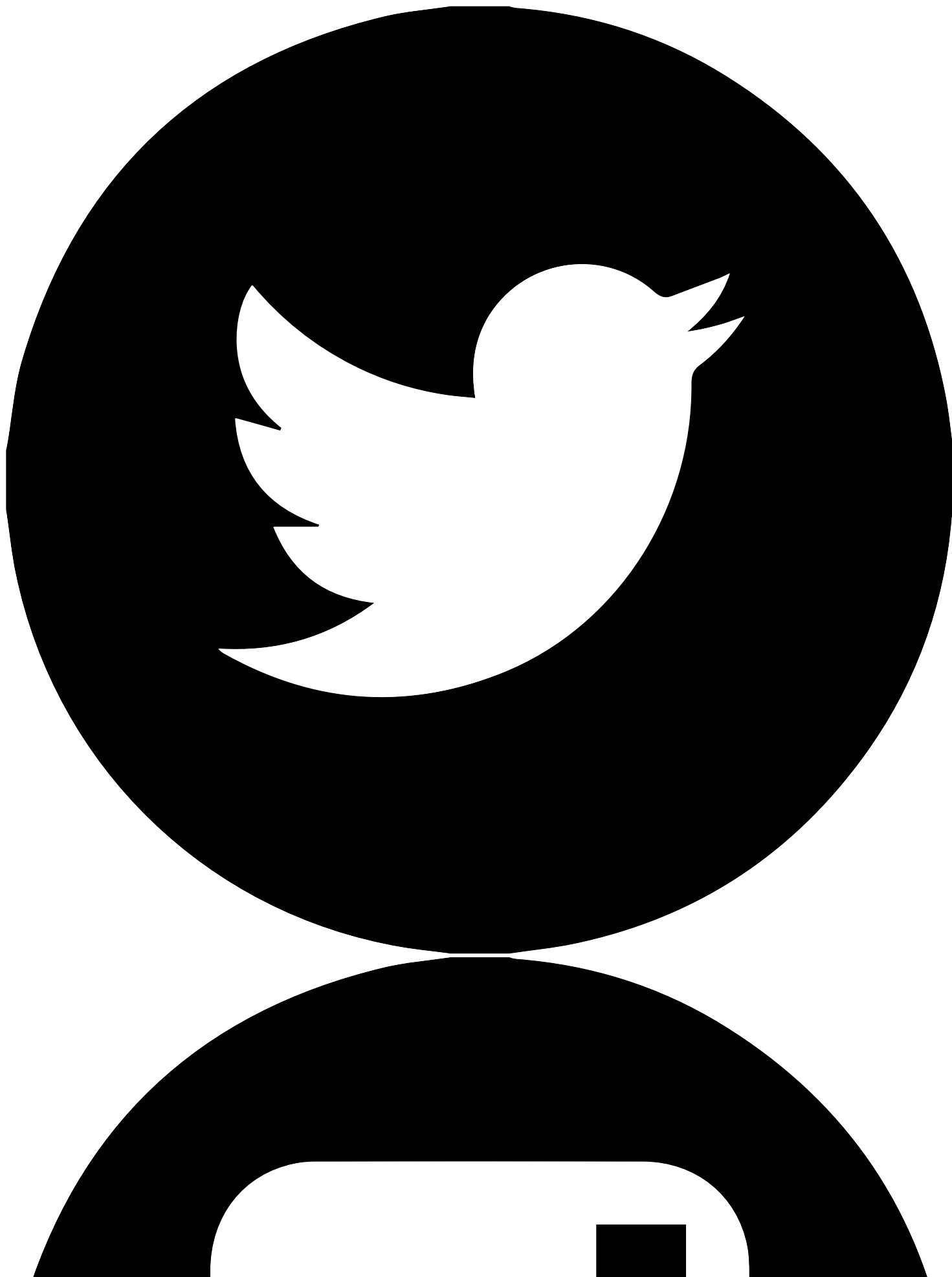
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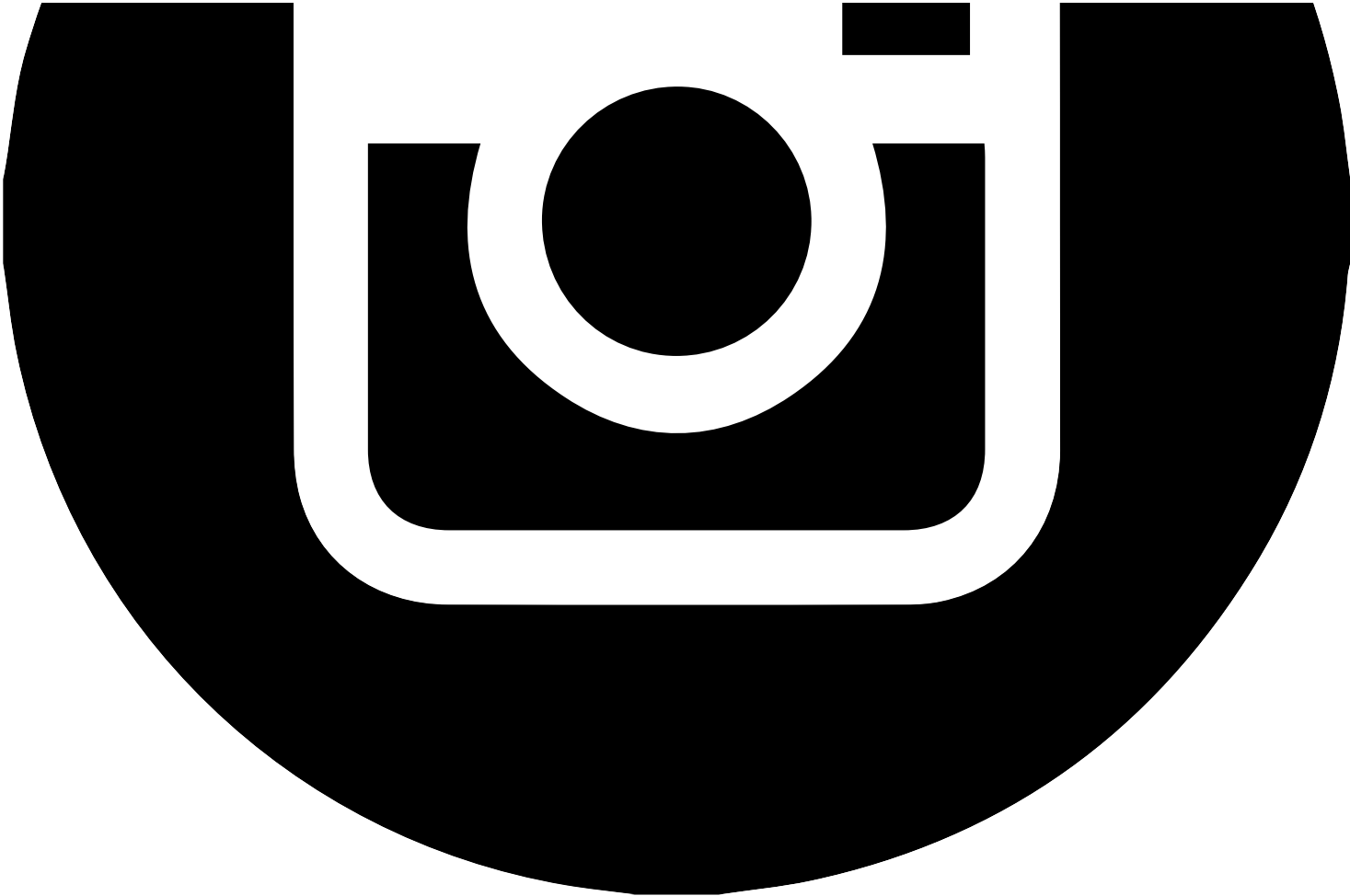
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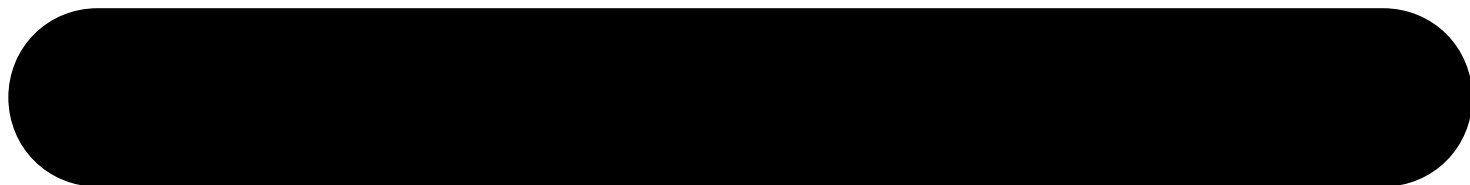
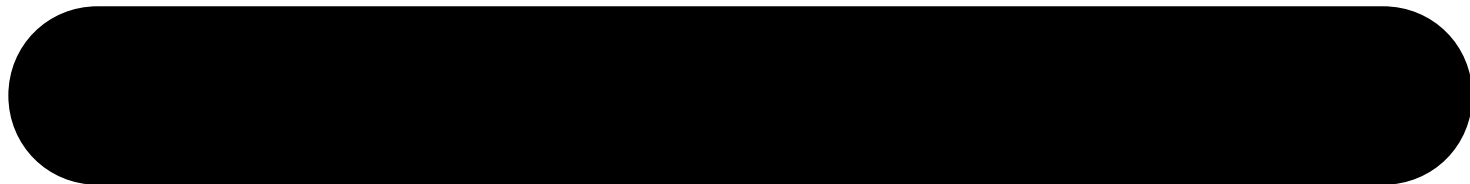
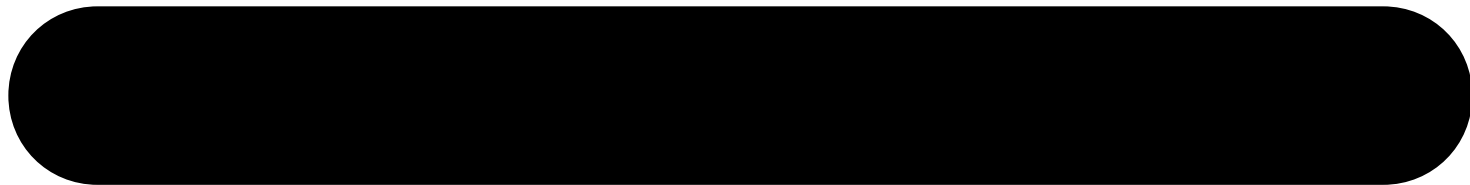
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## COVID-19: From the POV of Chinese-Identifying Students

[Skye Li,](#)

[Lami Zhang,](#) Photo/Video Editor

[Michelle Zhang,](#)

[Sherry Xue,](#)

**May. 06, 2020**

In late January, when everyone around me was getting ready for the new quarter, my mind was seven thousand miles away, where my family and friends were quarantined.

When COVID-19 hit China, I was worried, stressed and anxious. Millions of Chinese citizens had their plans disrupted as panic began to sweep the country. Transportation systems, family reunions – in peril, endangered and eventually gone.

These feelings, I'm sure, are now shared by almost everyone in the U.S. But three months ago, I felt alone. I felt alone because there was no awareness, no understanding and no support around me. Instead, what I saw was apathy and racism.

Together with three other Chinese students, I interviewed some Chinese-identifying students on campus in February to show their narratives during a time when only a small part of the world knew about the pandemic. They all wore masks, like most Chinese citizens did. I hope that looking at these quotes can remind people of the importance of empathy and compassion.



Skye Li / North by Northwestern

**Ashley Fang, Weinberg sophomore from Beijing with family in northern China**

"A lot of people in the U.S. are not taking the pandemic in China seriously. It's frustrating."

"Most of the news you see (in Western media) are numbers and statistics. You don't see how the actual people in China are being affected on Western news. You can't feel how bad it is in China. We, as Mandarin speakers, can see stories about the people in China. But it is so hard to explain that to people around me."



Skye Li / North by Northwestern

**Tracy Zhang, Medill sophomore from Beijing with family in northern China**

"The virus almost reaffirmed all the prejudices Western media had for China, like 'Chinese people eat raw animals,' 'Chinese government hides information from the people'... There is so much confirmation bias."

"I find it unbelievable how much divide there is between people just because they have different nationalities. We share like 98% of the same genes, why can't people understand and support each other just because they don't live in the same country?"

"I really want to go home. The last time I went home was last summer. I was hoping I can go home this spring break but now I can't go home until at least this summer."



Skye Li / North by Northwestern

**Jessy Kong, McCormick sophomore from Wisconsin with family in Guangzhou, China**

"I see it on Facebook pages like 'Subtle Asian Traits'. They talk about it a lot there, sometimes as a meme. A lot of times it's like, don't make jokes about this, it's not funny because people are actually affected."

"I think being an ally is really important for this. If you know someone that's Chinese and has friends and family in China that can possibly be affected by this disease, I think making insensitive jokes about it is offensive in a way and also not helpful. Keeping it light-hearted and joking about it is fine as long as you're not being completely rude and insensitive."



Michelle Zhang / North by Northwestern

**Cynthia Zhang, Medill sophomore from Ohio with family in Shandong, China**

"It made me very angry for a while to see how many Chinese Americans, Chinese citizens, and Chinese citizens in other countries are being treated. I don't think it's justifiable, like the racism and xenophobia that's coming with the virus, but it's unfortunately really widespread and I've been seeing news from France where they printed a newspaper that said "yellow peril" on it."

"I feel like the students themselves just need to be more respectful and remind themselves that certain jokes are not appropriate because they're affecting real people, and for some people, they're affecting really close loved ones — the situation is very real."

"加油 (jiā yóu) ! I saw a very cute video – everyone's in quarantine right now – of an apartment complex and it was just everybody like all these people out on the balcony and just yelling at each other like "加油" and just kind of saying like, you know, cheer up we can do this. So I think it's just having that mentality of like solidarity, like everyone's in this together. It's a human issue and it's affecting other human beings and at the end of the day, that's all we are like regardless of race or country boundaries."



Michelle Zhang / North by Northwestern

**Coco Huang, Communication sophomore from Beijing with family in Beijing, China**

"I feel lost and excluded by both the Chinese and American circles, denied full disclosure by both sides. Being physically in the U.S., there is the impassible distance from home. And non-Chinese people around me don't get it. They don't share my fear and anxiety. I'm forcefully removed from my people and placed among the bystanders. And all the racist comments seem so ridiculous and increase my frustration. They are missing the point. I wish I had more faith in human empathy."



Lami Zhang / North by Northwestern

**Devin Shen, McCormick sophomore from California with family in Guangzhou and Jiangsu, China**

"I read an article earlier with a quotation from the Feinberg School of Medicine saying that we should not worry about it (COVID-19) as "Americans and as Chicago people"... I don't think that's the right mindset personally. If you should not worry about it, then why have the travel ban and all those flight cancellations?"

"If, say, more people are wearing face masks, I wonder what kind of reception from the general public would we get as Asians."



Sherry Xue / North by Northwestern

**Jennifer Wang, SESP sophomore from Texas with family in Fujian, China**

"A lot of Western media are reporting like this (COVID-19) is a problem, but it is not our problem, to an extent," said Wang. "I'm also getting a tone of Western superiority. Like the stories are saying that this (the virus) isn't gonna reach our borders so we don't really need to send help. We don't need to care. It's honestly very disheartening."

*Editor's Note: Cynthia Zhang is a current member of NBN's magazine staff*

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