



Racism Needs to Stop

Apr 6, 2020

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Imagine your 20-year-old world spiraling out of control the spring semester of your senior year.

Life as you know it has plummeted from attending classes, occasionally serving in your family's Chinese restaurant on breaks, to witnessing your father wearing a rifle around the house because he is afraid for his family's life.

Imagine being avoided and scorned when you walk in Walmart or the town's sidewalks.

No more imagining. These are real stories of students, American students, international students, students of Asian descent, in 2020.

Verbal and physical attacks against innocent people of Asian descent are on the rise. These range from assaults on hotel guests in Indiana to targeting near a Los Angeles subway station.

Of the 7,120 hate crimes reported by the FBI in 2018, 3.4 percent were based on anti-Asian bias. This number is expected to rise by over 60 percent.

The fact this coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China belies the point that Asians are neither sole carriers of the disease nor responsible for its spread.

The WHO reports more than 1 million confirmed cases in nearly 180 countries. Yet, deep seated anti-Asian sentiment, specifically the 19th-century belief that Chinese harbored diseases, has reared its ugly head.

This sentiment of Asians harboring and spreading dangerous diseases was referred to as the Yellow Peril. Pressure from California labor unions in the late 1800s over concerns that Chinese laborers would swarm labor markets and destabilize wage levels led to venomous anti-Chinese sentiments.

Almost two centuries later, we are back to some of the same xenophobic and racist sentiments and behaviors.

We should think the practice of placing people into fixed categories would escape rational minds. But Gordon Allport, a psychologist from the 1950s whose work on the contact theory has informed many later theories of prejudice, argues otherwise.

“The human mind must think with the aid of categories,” he said. “Once formed, these categories are the basis for normal prejudgment.”

This categorization process orders thinking and shapes attitudes and prejudices toward those like us and those we otherize. In forming prejudices during intergroup interactions, prejudgments without merit, with no real evidence, and the use of fake facts can result.

Allport outlines five negative ways of acting on prejudice which span from benign actions to deadly consequences. These are antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attacks and extermination.

It is important to note the seemingly harmless acts of speaking negatively about an ethnic /racial group can set in motion degrees of actions that may lead to more dangerous consequences.

The Jewish Holocaust is a sobering reminder.

William “Smithy” Smith, Founding Executive Director of the National Center for Race Amity, calls us to return to a collective perspective that utilizes our propensity for collaboration, goodwill, and equity.

We have this in us, and in times of crisis we can be our better us.

We can reach out and invite the voices of the targets of negative acts of prejudice into the public transcript. Open up points of contact to community members of Asian descent who want to share their stories of fear, disappointment, trauma, reconciliation or goodwill.

The idea of consciousness raising and regulating the desire to act on prejudice cannot go unmentioned. To quote Ice Cube, “You better check yo self before you wreck yo self.”

Let’s return to another story. Imagine a group of young white folks driving along a Plattsburgh street. About 300 feet away, a young man is walking on the sidewalk.

I imagine in your version of the story, the car continues driving. In mine, it doesn’t.

One of the occupants hangs out of the car, coughs in the young man’s direction, laughs hysterically, and the car speeds away. No more imagining; this is the real story of our student, an American student, an Asian American student, in 2020.

Though no one in the car had the moral compass to stop this harassment, these are some of your sons and daughters, neighbors and acquaintances.

Reducing intergroup bias and prejudice requires those in the in-group to speak up and disrupt the negative behavior.


You can be a part of the solution, not just in reaching out, but in disrupting the silence and not allowing prejudicial behavior to go unchecked.


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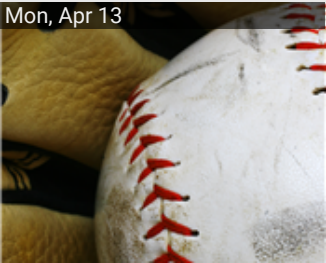
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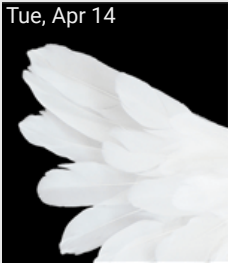
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SUNY Plattsburgh Women's Softball: Plattsburgh Stat...

Plattsburgh, NY

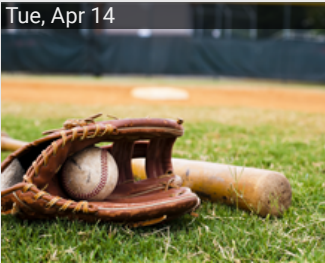
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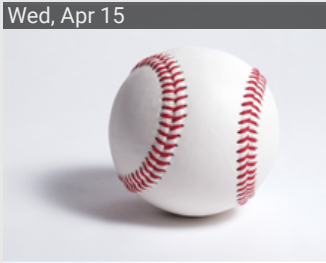
Tue, Apr 14



SUNY Plattsburgh: 4/14 4:00 PM Plattsburgh Stat...


Chip Cummings Field

Wed, Apr 15



SUNY Plattsburgh Women's Softball: Plattsburgh Stat...

Plattsburgh, NY



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