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CORONAVIRUS COLLATERAL DAMAGE: THE LONELY CHINESE RESTAURANT

LILLY WEBER WRITES — With highly influential individuals like President Donald Trump referring to the coronavirus using the phrase the “Chinese Virus”, it’s not entirely surprising that Asian Americans are being negatively affected by such rhetoric. While the entirety of the restaurant industry has been hit hard by the shelter-in-orders in response to coronacvirus, specific restaurants have been hit harder than others. The spread of the coronavirus has devastated Asian restaurants throughout the United States; from Brooklyn to Berkeley.

The fear of the virus, sadly generated based on unfounded rumors, has scared many previously consistent customers away. These concerns are undeniably racially based and contrary to official

statements by entities like the World Health Organization. To further point out the ridiculousness of these sentiments, the vast majority of flights to China (and back) have been suspended and so any Chinese American's contact with someone who has been in China is extremely low.

Examples of racism towards Asian restaurants in America include individuals like the woman featured below who had already ordered Chinese food via delivery, but ignored the driver after realizing that the Chinese food and driver were ... Chinese. Aside from lost revenues and mass food waste due to lowered customer turnout, Asian restaurants are also becoming victims of hate crimes with examples including a restaurant in New York vandalized with xenophobic graffiti, like Jeju Noodle Bar that had "Stop Eating Dogs" written on its front door. This issue is directed towards Asian establishments, as consumers have continued to eat from Italian restaurants despite Italy being one of the most covid-hit countries besides China.

Luckily, not everyone is being influenced by the hateful rhetoric and many people are, in fact, coming out to show their love and support for their favorite Asian restaurants. On numerous social media sites like Instagram and Twitter, customers are posting and promoting hashtags like #DinewithThem, #IWillEatwithYou, and #SupportChinatown when visiting or ordering from Asian, specifically Chinese kitchens.

Support events have also been organized to support Chinatown and Chinese restaurants, such as New York City's official "Show Some Love for Chinatown" event, which ran for one month from February 14 to March 15th, and which gave out raffle tickets to possibly win luxury items like an iPhoneX to participating customers who had shopped or dined at Manhattan's Chinatown. In Los Angeles as well, the hashtag #LoveLT was initiated by the Little Tokyo Community Council in support of businesses in the community. Twitter users are also promoting their families' restaurants and their locations, often going viral and resulting in a major boost in sales and a new consciousness of the respective restaurant.

Restaurants, regardless of background, are trying their best to ensure that their food, staff, and customers are safe and being held to strict sanitary standards. There is no hidden threat or agenda by Chinese restaurants to infect your family, so as long as you use the same level of caution you would use going to your local grocery store. Show up, show your support, spread awareness, and enjoy some delicious cuisine.

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