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The “War on Drugs.” The “War on Terror.” Now the War on COVID-19: A history of anti-AAPI hate in the U.S. during public health emergencies

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
Spring 2022

Honors Capstone Project in History

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Abstract

In May 1907, white mobs stormed Chinese and Japanese owned buildings and businesses causing over \$40,000 in property damage and an untold number of casualties suffered by newly immigrated Chinese and Japanese Americans. From 1907-1908, white extremist mobs made similar attacks against East Asian and South Asian communities in the state of Washington, the city of San Francisco, and in Vancouver, Canada. These deadly events were known as the Pacific Coast Riots of 1907-1908. In 1980, there were many reports of Japanese cars having their windshields broken and tires slashed in the state of Michigan. Then, in the same year, a Chinese American man named Vincent Chen was horrifically beaten to death by a baseball bat by unemployed white automobile workers in Detroit that mistook him for Japanese. They accused the Japanese of stealing their jobs. On March 10, 2020, a Korean American woman in Midtown Manhattan of New York City was grabbed by the hair, shoved, and punched in the face by the suspect, who yelled “You’ve got the coronavirus, you Asian (expletive).” The suspect told police that he feared the victims were infecting others with the coronavirus.

Throughout U.S. history, anti-Asian violence and hate has persisted in times of national emergencies like COVID-19 today and the spread of plague during the early 1900s. In this thesis, I argue that these were not isolated incidents, rather, they were a pattern created by those in authority. This thesis discusses two public health emergencies: the San Francisco Plague of 1900 and COVID-19. This thesis compares how public health authorities, politicians, and white Americans all villainized newly immigrated Asian Americans during the San Francisco Plague to how public health has changed in light of COVID-19 by using a sound evidence-based approach. However, those in power exploited the COVID-19 situation to villainize the AAPI community for political gain. Another major difference between the two public health emergencies is that AAPI hate was nationalized rather than limited to California in 1900. In response, advocacy efforts in stopping AAPI hate became more pronounced during COVID-19. The purpose of this thesis is to showcase these efforts and how language about explicit and structural racism has changed over time, but the pattern of how racism starts and is facilitated by the same powerful groups remains the same. I hope to shed light on this issue and justify why it is on all of us to fight against hate.

Executive Summary

This approximately 60 page distinction thesis in the field of history begins with the first Asian groups to arrive in the United States in the nineteenth century. This thesis is a dissertation that discusses the challenges of Asian migrants, the historical figures, and the major events that took place preceding the events of COVID-19 starting with the San Francisco Plague of 1900, which is the focus of chapter 1 of this thesis. Due to the policies of the Qing dynasty, Chinese immigration into the United States was banned until the mid-1850s, where transcontinental railroad companies sought to import cheaper labor from China. In the section titled “Asian Exclusion Between 1882-1900,” I discussed the dangerous living and working conditions that Chinese migrant workers faced and migration of additional Asian migrant groups in search of better labor opportunities in the United States. I also discussed the exploitation of cheaper labor by railroad barons and the lack of policies protecting Chinese migrant workers from violence by white railroad workers and unemployed white Americans. Although the Chinese toiled in labor, the Chinese were not given the ability to naturalize into U.S. citizens and were subsequently deported back to China after finishing the construction of the railroad after the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. I analyzed what led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, why it happened, and the political, economic, and social consequences of such legislation. I then compared this law to the National Quarantine Act of 1893 that contained the same anti-Asian, particularly anti-Chinese, language that would be used to justify the cordon sanitaire, or quarantine, in the Chinatown neighborhood in San Francisco in 1900 and in 1904 for both plague events. I then proceeded to discuss divisive politicians like California Governors Henry T. Gage and Leland Stanford, both of whom established a Sinophobic platform in order to gain popularity from working class white males, who had the ability to vote, unlike Chinese migrant workers. I

then interjected into my discussion with Dr. Kinyoun and his troubled relationship with Governor Gage. Basically, Governor Gage did not want to implement quarantine measures when plague cases begin to pop up in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1900, whereas Dr. Kinyoun was in support for quarantine. Appointed by Dr. Walter Wyman, Dr. Kinyoun led the hygiene laboratory in Angel Island, where Asian migrants were first processed here before entering the United States. I then discussed the battle between science and maintaining California's economy. I further elaborated on the dilemma of how Governor Gage denies evidence of the Plague when the contrary was true. In the section titled "the Plague 1900-1907," I discussed public health data and analyze the statistical evidence of what the Marine Health Service collected. I then discussed the conflict between Chinese businesses, like Six Companies, and U.S. public health authorities. I then explained the consequences of quarantine and how one of the major results of a substantial increase of anti-Asian hate. Although I do not compare the events to COVID-19 yet, the purpose of this chapter was to show that the theme of anti-Asian hate in the U.S. has long been established well before the events of COVID-19 and the Trump administration. As evident in the primary sources (one of the research methods used), Trump bears many similarities with Gage. I then discussed court cases like Wong Wai v. Williamson, which has been one of the many contributing factors that led to the downfall of Dr. Kinyoun. I then discussed the 1907-1908 riots after the 1906 earthquake, and how there was a substantial increase in anti-Asian violence but were not classified as hate crimes at the time. This violence stemmed from the events of the first San Francisco Plague. The second San Francisco Plague started in 1907, after the first one ended in 1904. I compared these two events, where I highlighted the data in infection rates between white residents and Chinatown residents in San Francisco. I ended this chapter with discussion of the Eugenics movement and how it started in California before spreading to Nazi Germany as

well as discussing disparities between Angel Island and Ellis Island detention and deportation statistics. Ellis Island was where European immigrants would be processed before entering the United States. I touch briefly on Japanese internment during WWII, but it was not a public health emergency. However, the eugenics movement propelled a xenophobic platform in the U.S. and eugenics was a science, thus relevant to my thesis. Chapter 1's events end by the 1930s.

The second half of my distinction thesis is chapter 2, where the primary focus was COVID-19. I started my discussion of anti-Asian hate during the 1960s with the passage of several civil rights bills that eased immigration restrictions from what I discussed in the end of chapter 1 with the Immigration Quota of 1924. This was a key piece of legislation that sought to stop non-white immigration. Like the end of chapter 1, I discussed the influx of more Asian groups like South Asians and Southeast Asians and not just Chinese or Japanese immigration in chapter 2. I then found statistical evidence supporting the claim that Asians are the biggest racial group that has immigrated in the U.S. by the 1960s. I then discussed the evolution of the definition of a hate crime during the latter half of the twentieth century and how it would impact the treatment of Asian Americans. I then proceeded with my discussion of economic superpowers in Asian and its fierce competition with the United States, especially in the automobile industry. I discussed statistics on the economic successes of Japan over the United States and how it resulted in a downward economy for American automobile workers. A majority of these workers were white, and they lost their jobs due to a heavy demand in Japanese automobiles like Nissan or Toyota. These workers fostered hatred for Asian migrants that they thought were "stealing their jobs." This led to the death of Vincent Chin, who was actually a Chinese American. There was still the theme of scapegoating with my discussion of 9/11 and how South Asians and Arabs became targeted due to being blamed by the mainstream media and

political establishment. Like how the media and politicians blamed Chinatown for the San Francisco plague, the events around 9/11 followed a similar pattern, which was precisely why I discussed personal anecdotes of their treatment during 9/11. I myself had the unfortunate experience of being impacted by hate crimes related to 9/11. For much of chapter 2, I discussed President Bush's and Obama's relationship with China. China's superior economic growth compared to the United States becomes a point of tension in U.S. national politics and common talking point by presidential candidates, which is what Trump would use on the campaign trail from 2015-2016. I demarcated chapter two with anti-Asian hate and rhetoric before the of Trump, anti-Asian hate during COVID-19 when Donald Trump was president, and anti-Asian hate after Trump leaves office. A major portion of this chapter is statistics and emotionally disturbing descriptions of major incidents involving Asian American violence and how COVID-19 related anti-Asian discrimination disproportionately impacted Asian American women. The data supported these findings. I then discussed a major event, the 2021 Atlanta Spa shootings, and how it impacted the political and social landscape of the United States. From poor mental health outcomes to healthcare disparities from existing structural inequality, the AAPI community has been disproportionately impacted by a dual pandemic of COVID-19 and racism. I supported this argument with several paragraphs devoted to data relating to these healthcare disparities, especially Asian healthcare workers and essential workers. A lot of these themes are interconnected because of how anti-Asian racism has built up over the past century and the racist events that occurred during COVID-19 was the result of that pent up racism. I conclude with how these events led to a substantial increase in awareness of fighting against AAPI hate and all forms of hate against marginalized groups. My personal experienced with hate and violence during 9/11 shaped me write this dissertation to stop the othering of future marginalized groups.

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Preface

The main point of this work is for me to reflect on my life journey up to this point. I was born and raised in the medically underserved area of Elmhurst, Queens in New York City. Elmhurst is a heavily Arab, South Asian, African, and Latinx inner-city neighborhood. When the twin towers were hit, I didn't understand how much my life would change as a Muslim American growing up. The news cycle would also show that man's face: Mohamed Atta. They said he was the leader of the 19 hijackers. Egyptian. I am Bengali and Arab. Same first name. Same spelling. It was almost an everyday occurrence where teachers, cops, peers, and everyday people would look at my name and would think I was a terrorist. An elementary school aged child that they thought was an evil person. I write this thesis in defiance of those labels I grew up with. I worked hard in school to go into the helping professions to overcome the obstacles I faced. Then, I matured. I realized it was the mainstream media and politicians that put the blame on me, where I had no control over. They defined me when I didn't learn how to define myself until I got to Syracuse University. I now graduate with a bachelor's degree in both history and public health. I chose these academic programs because I wanted to understand why I went through what I went through and then use public health medicine to treat the root cause of racism and hate. When COVID-19 hit, I saw how the same fascist leaders and actors that blamed me now villainize the AAPI community. I wrote this thesis to support the AAPI community who are now subjected to violence in our cities because of the politicization of COVID-19, just like the politicization of the San Francisco Plague, the War on Drugs, and the War on Terror.

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I would like to acknowledge Professor Junko Takeda whom I met in the fall of my freshman year at Syracuse University. She was my first advisor in history. She introduced me to wide variety of programs by the history department and supported by endeavors to combine my passion for medicine and history and offered insight on how to complete both academic pursuits. Professor Takeda then became my thesis advisor and mentor. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Maureen Thompson whom I met in the spring of my freshman year at Syracuse University. Professor Thompson taught health disparities, which was an upper level course, but she continued to praise me for my excellent writing skills. Professor Thompson then became my public health advisor and mentor. I would also like to acknowledge Ali Cridge, who was my first pre-health advisor and now an honors advisor. Ali helped me with finding clinical experience and I am undoubtedly grateful for her insight. I would also like to acknowledge Lisa Branacato, who was my second pre-health advisor and helped me with the admissions process for medical school as she interviewed me for the committee letter. I am grateful for my residence director supervisor, Adam Wallander. I met him my sophomore year in Syracuse and has been a very supportive and kind man who really enjoys fishing. I am forever grateful for his support and friendship. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge my family, friends, classmates, and the most amazing peers I have met at Syracuse University, who have all been instrumental to my academic and personal growth. I will carry their hardships and successes with me as I take the next chapter in my life back in my home of Long Island.

Advice to Future Honors Students

Start planning what you want to do for your honors thesis the moment you start the honors program. Save notes from all the class you took, especially for your major(s). You may start as one major at Syracuse, but over 50% of undergraduates end up graduating with two majors. Broaden your horizons. Always go to office hours for exams. Build connections and close mentorships with professors. We are blessed to go to an elite, private university with a small student to teacher ratio, even less with honors. Use that to your advantage. Take contract courses, which is how I got to join a research lab. From these classes, you will find a topic that will interest you the most. There will be a light bulb flashing on top your head one day in a random lecture for a class you thought you would have no interest in. Go for it and brainstorm and see if you could turn it into a 60 page book (visualizing it, not literally doing it yet). If you can do that, **YOU CAN DO ANYTHING TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT!!!!**

Chapter 1: The San Francisco Plague

A nauseating odor oozed from a flea-ridden body in the basement of a run-down boarding house characterized the public health crisis that was to come. On the March 6, 1900, authorities found 41 year old Chinese laborer, Chick Gin, at Globe Hotel in San Francisco's Chinatown.¹ Little did they know that this day marked the first case of the plague of San Francisco in the mainland U.S.A. An autopsy of the body confirmed the presence of the bacillus pathogen.² This event would set into motion a series of quarantines ordered by Dr. J. J. Kinyoun, who was in charge of the Marine Hospital Service in San Francisco. Dr. J.J. Kinyoun was responsible for his role in stopping the spread of the San Francisco Plague by 1904.

Quarantines had been introduced just a decade prior in the United States in order to curtail the spread of infectious diseases that foreigners were suspected of bringing at the time. The process of quarantine, or "cordon sanitaire," was a "series of disinfecting efforts," which included burning homes and property, constructing a rope barrier around certain streets, and intentionally placing Chinese migrants in "detention camps."³ The mistreatment of Chinese migrants in Honolulu's Chinatown related to the quarantines during a plague outbreak there led to resistance against quarantine efforts in San Francisco. With the help of President McKinley, "federal quarantine officer, Dr. J.J. Kinyoun," mandated ship inspections for infected crew members, fumigated cargo, and enforced personal hygiene in port cities, while "the Chinese [legally] challenged quarantine measures... that hindered cooperation to discern the extent of the plague" and prevention measures.⁴ Dr. J.J. Kinyoun's efforts were also being undermined by

¹ Charles Richter and John S. Emrich, *How Honolulu's Chinatown "Went Up in Smoke"* (Rockville, Maryland: American Association of Immunologists, July 2020), p. 30-35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 30-35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30-35.

⁴ J.J. Kinyoun and Walter Wyman, *Plague in San Francisco* (San Francisco: U.S. Marine Health Service, November 1900), p. 1.

Governor Henry T. Gage of California, which resulted in a resurgence of the plague in 1907. The second wave of the San Francisco plague continued to spread like wildfire as businesses tried to convince politicians to stop the burning of precious cargo and internment of ships that did not have a health pass. These were quarantine measures set up by Dr. J.J. Kinyoun to limit contact between foreign ships and the U.S. during the San Francisco Plague of 1900.

Complicating the matter further was Governor Henry T. Gage's belief that the Plague was a conspiracy. On June 13, 1900, Governor Gage sent a telegram to Secretary of State John Hay. In this telegram, Governor Gage denied evidence of "an epidemic in Chinatown," claimed that there was "no proof that the plague" was "contagious," and went far as to say that autopsies from "suspected cases" indicated that they could not spread the disease.⁵ Governor Gage continued to reference discussions with medical experts, like bacteriologists and surgeons, as a way to substantiate his cover-up. He even admitted that he was only protecting corporate interests by stopping quarantine efforts. During his governorship, Gage barred anyone from "collecting plague bacteria samples, made the State Board of Health" the only source on plague information, "[illegalized] the reporting of plague news, and then set up his own quarantine office" to take away Dr. J.J. Kinyoun's job, who was pressured to resign.⁶ The State Board of Health was compromised and it unfairly targeted Asian migrants at the behest of Governor Gage. However, his clear dishonesty made him very unpopular. The reporting of actual numbers of bacillus plague cases that news outlets like the Sacramento Bee reported led to Governor Gage losing re-election. Gage lost because he prioritized commercial interests over the health of the people of California. The San Francisco Plague of 1900 did not care about the politics of the

⁵ A.J. Johnston, *Report of the Special Health Commissioners* (Sacramento, California: Superintendent State Printing, 1901), p. 16.

⁶ Mark M. Skubik, *Public health politics and the San Francisco plague epidemic of 1900-1904* (San Jose: San Jose State University, 2002), p. 80.

communities it had affected, but Governor Gage did not foresee the long-term consequences of his actions, which ironically further damaged the economy.

Another key figure that led up to the 1900 plague crisis in San Francisco was Dr. Walter Wyman. On February 15, 1893, the National Quarantine Act had been signed into law and it “granted extensive powers to the Marine Hospital Service to oversee... quarantine functions.”⁷ The Marine Hospital Service was led by Surgeon General Wyman, who was under the guidance of the Secretary of Treasury. Their role was to either assist local health officials in times where isolating the bacteria was warranted or replace local health officials if they were ineffective. Dr. Wyman had another responsibility and that was working with state officials to argue in favor of quarantine. Dr. Wyman also had to adhere to the Constitution as “quarantine went against promoting interstate commerce.”⁸ However, Dr. Wyman was successfully able to argue that the welfare of the American people was a higher priority than commercial interests. Dr. Wyman sent Dr. J.J. Kinyoun to San Francisco to lead the charge against the San Francisco Plague as his hygienics lab was well regarded at the time and had success in quarantine efforts in New York and other major U.S. cities.

This chapter will trace the development of anti-Asian laws that preceded and followed the Plague of San Francisco. They include the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, and the 1924 Immigration Bill. Taken together, these laws created an anti-Asian climate across this time period. Then, I will analyze how the prejudice against Asians in San Francisco emerged during the plague. This chapter will examine the racist actions of Governor Gage, Dr. J. J. Kinyoun, and the Supervising Surgeon General of Marine Hospital Service, Dr. Walter Wyman, through various primary sources. Some of these include sources

⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

related to anti-Asian medical racism prior to the plague, such as *The Transcript of The Chinese Exclusion Act, How Honolulu's Chinatown "Went Up in Smoke,"* and *The Chinese as medical scapegoats in San Francisco, 1870-1905*. Others include sources from the plague itself, including *Public health politics and the San Francisco plague epidemic of 1900-1904, Report of the Special Health Commissioners, Frederick Novy and the 1901 San Francisco Plague Commission Investigation, Plague in San Francisco: 1900, the Year of the Rat, The Forgotten Forefather: Joseph James Kinyoun and the Founding of the National Institutes of Health, The Black Death in Chinatown: Plague and Politics in San Francisco 1900-1904, Of Medicine, Race, and American Law: The Bubonic Plague Outbreak of 1900*.

I will begin this chapter with the analysis of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which banned Chinese migrants from entering the U.S. and forced Chinese railroad workers out of the country after they were done constructing the Pacific Railroad.⁹ Then, I will proceed to discussing the Quarantine Act of 1893 and how it influenced quarantine rules during the San Francisco Plague of 1900 and 1907. The Chinese Exclusion Act introduced the “medical argument” that the “Chinese [ignored] all laws of hygiene and sanitation” and spread disease, “thereby endangering the welfare of the state.”¹⁰ This law explained that the Chinese were seen as “dirty” or “plague rats,” and so it contributed to racist quarantine policies in San Francisco. These included the building of quarantine stations only in Chinatown and disinfecting the railroad system, where most Chinese migrants worked.

The plague only escalated racism against Asians. Following the plague, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 denied entry to Asian migrants, specifically the Japanese. The immigration quota of 1924 further intensified hatred toward Asian migrants and reinforced their “inferiority,”

⁹ Joan B. Trauner, *the Chinese as medical scapegoats in San Francisco, 1870-1905* in *California History* Vol. 57, No. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 70-87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70-87.

due to the Eugenics movement in California during the early twentieth century. I will end this chapter with racial disparities in deportation and detention statistics between Angel Island and Ellis Island. This chapter will demonstrate how xenophobic treatment of Asian populations indirectly impacted the public health response during the San Francisco Plague of 1900. Anti-immigration laws in the 19th and twentieth century, the Quarantine Act of 1893, the American Eugenics movement in California, and Angel Island deportation statistics all provide the historical context behind the events that took place during the 1900 San Francisco Plague.

Asian Exclusion Between 1882-1900

As the Union was recovering from the horrors of the Civil War, construction of the first ever transcontinental railroad was set to resume as migrant workers flooded the west coast. According to an article from *The Guardian*, from “1863 and 1869, roughly 15,000 Chinese workers... built the western leg” of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads across the treacherous Sierra Nevada mountains, which was “700 miles of train tracks” stretched between Sacramento, California and Promontory, Utah. After initial construction, “more than 2.5 million Chinese citizens left their country” in search of a better life in the U.S., but was met with “dangerous work conditions, like explosions, snow, and rock avalanches.”¹¹ As evident, the Chinese workforce made a significant impact to the American transportation industry but had to sacrifice their lives in the process. These statistics show that Asian migrants were not given credit for their contributions and were often in the shadows of their white coworkers. In terms of disparities between white and Chinese coworkers, the “railroad company provided room and board to white workers,” but Chinese migrants had to find their own meals and live in tents.¹²

¹¹ Nadja Sayej, *Forgotten by Society* – how Chinese migrants built the transcontinental railroad (Kings Place, London: The Guardian, July 2019), p. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Mistreatment of Chinese migrants and erasing their historic contribution would pave the way for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and Sinophobia in the late nineteenth century.



Note. Ceremony to drive the last spike on May 10, 1869.¹³

The erasure of Asian immigrants' importance to the construction of the western railroads is evident in the photo above. The presidents of both the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads shook hands as they commemorated the day that railroad construction was finished. This picture also symbolized America's industrial power post-Civil War. Based on this photo, only white workers were shown and many of the Chinese workers were intentionally left out. The prevailing view of the time was that Chinese labor was seen as cheap labor and because of this, railroad company owners specifically recruited Chinese migrants. These railroad barons cheated them out of wages in order to make profit and cover enormous construction costs,

¹³ Image from *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Build the Transcontinental Railroad*, Stanford University Press, 2019, <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMjAzNjE3N19fQU41?sid=5324db2e-aa08-4e40-aef9-3fbd7f586e7f@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>.

despite government subsidies. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese workers were not tolerated in their communities and were frequent targets of racism, discrimination and violence. For example, only Chinese railroad laborers were forced to live in railroad work camps for the sake of profit. Anthropological artifacts found at these camps illustrated “the everyday experiences of the workers” as the markings of one’s name on the bottom of a rice bowl might suggest that they had to depend on limited rations. They also wrote their names on the bowls to avoid theft.¹⁴ In addition, the “90 percent Chinese” Central Pacific railroad labor force were “ineligible to become U.S. naturalized citizens under federal law.” Sinophobia was further fueled by Leland Stanford, who was a tycoon owner and California governor from 1862-1863 that “ran under an anti-Chinese immigrant platform” and even served as president of the Central Pacific railroad.¹⁵ Like former California Governor Gage, Stanford was one of many politicians that sought to undermine the Chinese community, which would later influence the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Likewise, only white male landowners could legally vote at the time until 1920 with women’s suffrage, so Chinese migrants were not allowed to voice these matters, despite their numbers. Ironically, former governor Stanford recruited the Chinese because of a detrimental labor shortage and pressure from the federal government to finish the railroad on time. Mr. Stanford was popular among constituents at the time because “white [Americans] blamed the Chinese for squeezing them out of the job,” however, employers like Mr. Stanford could only provide lower wages for the Chinese. Sick of their mistreatment, Chinese workers “staged a strike in June 1867, demanding equal pay to white workers” and better working conditions, which would invalidate the stereotypical image of docile and

¹⁴ Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Build the Transcontinental Railroad* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 124.

¹⁵ Chris Fuchs, *The Chinese railroad workers who helped connect the country: Recovering an erased history* (New York: NBC News, April 2019), p. 4.

uneducated Chinese migrants.¹⁶ Despite resistance to anti-Asian hate, Mr. Stanford made sure their efforts in the railroad construction—a significant boon to the economy—were not recognized and were simply as a means to an end.

As the Chinese toiled in their grueling work at the mines and railroad, Chinese migrants were exposed to constant humiliation, second class citizen treatment, and toxic substances in their line of work, which led to the common assertion that Chinese migrants were vectors of disease in the late nineteenth century. Chapter 9 of the novel, *The Chinese and the Iron Road*, outlines the deplorable working and living conditions of Chinese migrants that stems from century long marginalization of this population. On a daily basis, Chinese railroad workers were forced to deal with heat exhaustion, “cave-ins, explosions, disease, malnutrition,” and constant violence from other workers. On top of that, they had to purchase their own medical care and housing.¹⁷ These were daily occurrences and the individual railroad companies only took care of their white workers over their Asian workers. In 1866, a local newspaper, the Sacramento Daily Union, recorded the “deaths of three Chinese railroad workers due to a premature explosion in Placer County, California” as well as “six more deaths caused by a cave-in near Dutch Flat, California.” In another incident, “a group of thirty to forty Chinese workers” that was employed by McCloud River Railroad were viciously attacked by “a mob of mostly unemployed white laborers.” As for Chinese railroad workers that were not subjected to violence, they eventually “perished from diseases such as smallpox,” which was able to spread rapidly because of how close everyone was to each other in the railroad housing camps.¹⁸ It was always the same story of a Chinese worker who left the comforts of home to the “land of opportunity,” only to perish due

¹⁶ Chris Fuchs, *The Chinese railroad workers who helped connect the country: Recovering an erased history* (New York: NBC News, April 2019), p. 9.

¹⁷ Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, p. 139.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

to racial violence and the legal mistreatment by these companies because of anti-Asian rhetoric espoused by political leaders at the time, such as Mr. Stanford. And so, Sinophobia merged with contemporaneous biological theories about contagion, miasmas, and germs as well as both physical and moral decay. According to nativists and white nationalist workers in 1870, Chinese laborers negatively impacted employment opportunities for whites as China was sending people from the lower castes. They asserted that “Chinese laborers were getting high on opium, engaging in prostitution, and gambling. They also argued that the Chinese did not make attempts to assimilate into American culture, and that the Chinese were seen as a threat to their goals of keeping America “homogenous” and free from integrating with inferior races.¹⁹ Historian Joan Trauner cited a physician in 1876, writing that the “Chinese were the focus of Caucasian animosities as they were made responsible” for smaller plague epidemics that occurred in San Francisco, where the Chinese was “5 percent of the total population of San Francisco.” The physician asserted that if a “destructive earthquake” would have happened they would have been blamed for it.²⁰ This medical racism was also reinforced by the San Francisco Board of Health, a political organization that was in charge of city hospitals, jails, schools and quarantine. This board composed of the mayor of San Francisco and four physicians that were not qualified for the roles they had to execute, which led to the medical scapegoating of the Chinese population. However, Chinatown was an insignificant part of San Francisco, and yet they became the first suspects if any outbreak occurred. This early anti-Asian bias shaped the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and racist sentiment at the time would eventually influence public health actions by those in power. In other words, the Chinese were political and economic targets. In an effort to appease white rage, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which expelled

¹⁹ Joan B. Trauner, p. 70-87.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 70-87.

Chinese railroad workers, banned Chinese immigration, and punished those who harbored Chinese migrants. This law was passed under the Chester A. Arthur presidential administration and would be one of three key pieces of legislation during this era that would continue to marginalize Asian populations in the U.S. This law, however, did not prevent Chinese immigration into the U.S. as “17,300 Chinese immigrants began to migrate first to Canada and Mexico and then crossed the [United States] borders illegally” between 1882-1920.²¹ This statistic explains the scale of those not only impacted by the San Francisco Plague, but anti-Asian laws enacted over the course of the century.

In order to understand how contagion theory came to be mobilized against Asian immigrants in the nineteenth century, we must first explore the theory itself. It traces back to classical Greece, and to Hippocrates, in particular, who is often regarded as the first physician in human history. He and his school established the theory of four humors. According to Hippocrates’ humoral theory, “all ills are due to forces” in the body and those “forces” are four components of the body, which are blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. Hippocrates asserted that “when an epidemic is established [a large number of people catch the same disease at the same time],” it is the area that is “infected” and not the individual because “all people breathe the same air or drink the same water.”²² Hippocrates explained that the actual spread of disease would be consistent with contagion theory of disease only if the disease spreads from person to person, but this was not true according to Hippocrates. He discovered that different people react differently to the same disease or cause of the disease. This would mean there needed to be another common variable that linked all afflicted persons together, which can only

²¹ Erika Lee, *The Yellow Peril and Asian Exclusion in the Americas* Vol. 76, Iss. 4 (Berkeley: Pacific Historical Review, November 2004), p. 537-562.

²² Melvin Santer, *Confronting Contagion: Our Evolving Understanding of Disease* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 30-32.

be air or water. This led to the miasma theory, or “bad air,” that influenced quarantine regulations set forth by Dr. J.J. Kinyoun.

According to a physician from the nineteenth century, R.P. Lorion, miasma theory was the “spread of disease among the poor,” and that the ground that was “polluted with waste products” would give off “bad air.” According to bacteriologists at the time, the more “bad air” there was, the more likely infectious diseases spread through there.²³ A majority of those living in poverty at the time were Chinese migrants; their apparent scruffiness from working gave off that “bad air,” which hurt the case for Chinese inclusion as they were seen as a grave threat to the health of white Americans. After German microbiologist Robert Koch discovered tuberculosis, anthrax, and cholera organisms as agents that caused disease, the Germ Theory became a driving force in scientific thinking. This new theory introduced the idea that certain microbial agents were responsible for infections in epidemics.²⁴ The new science of Germ Theory actually exacerbated anti-Asian and Sinophobe rhetoric of the nineteenth century. Together with Germ Theory and Miasma Theory, Chinese migrants were typically stereotyped as “dirty,” because they did not have access to adequate housing, and seemed to therefore lack sanitation, especially in San Francisco.

However, the conditions that caused poverty was parallel to the conditions that cause the spread of disease, and these conditions were forced on the Chinese community in San Francisco. Joan Trauner reports that sanitarians of the 1870s saw Chinatown as nothing more than a slum, where it was a “laboratory of infection” that was populated by “lying and treacherous aliens,” who had “minimal regard for the health of the American people.” Furthermore, the Germ theory

²³ R.P. Lorion, *Preventive Goals, and Indirect/Consultation Strategies: Focusing on Beginnings Reduces the Incidence and Severity of the Ends* (Towson, Maryland: Elsevier Inc., 2017), p. 9.

²⁴ Theodore H. Tulchinsky, *Robert Koch and Paul Ehrlich Criteria of Causation of Disease and Chemotherapy as “Magical Bullets”* (Jerusalem, Israel: Elsevier Inc., 2018), p. 118-120.

taught the sanitarians that materials like “cloth, tobacco, or food” could be infected with germs originated from the “existing evils in Chinatown,” albeit a physician was unable to trace the source of the infection to the Chinese migrants.²⁵ Public health officials at the time viewed Chinese migrants as originators of the Plague pathogen according to the germ theory or attributed their home in San Francisco as the origin of “bad air” according to the miasma theory. This finding reinforced that sanitarians and other public health officials disregarded proper medical findings about the spread of the Plague and offered their own understanding of the Plague, which is more often than not, characterized by anti-Asian sentiment of the time period. In 1880, San Francisco’s Board of Health “issued a resolution formally condemning Chinatown as a “nuisance” due to outside political pressure, stating that the “Chinese cancer must be cut out of the heart of our city, if we have any regard for its future sanitary welfare,” and that they are a “health-defying and law-defying population.”²⁶ The laws at the time were designed to segregate the “cancerous” Asian migrant population from the rest of the “pure” white population. Many of their quarantine rules that disproportionately impacted Asian businesses in San Francisco further damaged the American economy due to the blocking of imports from Asia.

²⁵ Joan B. Trauner, p. 70-87.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70-87.



Note. San Francisco's "Three Graces."²⁷

The portrayal of Chinatown as disease vector can be found in a contemporary journal from the period, seen above. The three graces were malaria, smallpox, and leprosy, which were common diseases that infected both the white and Asian population of San Francisco between the 1870s and 1880s, but these diseases explicitly associated with Chinatown.²⁸ This prevailing bias would lead to government overreach by Dr. J.J. Kinyoun, who forced quarantine measures against Chinese majority neighborhoods. Kinyoun and the San Francisco Board of Health would incorrectly link the miasma theory of disease to the Chinese community during the San Francisco Plague of 1900. The constant association of plague and the Chinese community in San Francisco created a hostile environment for Asian migrants, which would contribute to a wave of Anti-Asian rhetoric and full scale violence in the early twentieth century.

²⁷ Image from *The Chinese as Medical Scapegoats in San Francisco, 1870-1905*, University of California Press, Spring 1978, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25157817>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70-87.

Under the National Quarantine Act of 1893, which was passed on February 15, 1893, the secretary of the treasury was authorized to issue “regulations for the prevention of the spread of contagious diseases” should the states’ efforts to control the disease fail.²⁹ This new law gives Dr. J.J. Kinyoun and his federal quarantine officers the power for government overreach. For example, the state and city boards of health in California and San Francisco, respectively, could not determine the source of the spread. Shown below is a photograph of Rupert Blue and his staff that were charged with the complete sanitation of quarantine areas as these would be the faces that Chinatown’s residents would encounter. They would be responsible for placing stricter quarantine measures, like burning down houses of infected Asian persons, that would not have otherwise been implemented at the state level due to their failure of containing the Plague.



Note. The Federal Sanitary Officers. Passed Assistant Surgeon Rupert Blue and Staff. Blue is seated second from right.³⁰

²⁹ John F. Anderson, *Organization, Powers, and Duties of the United States Public Health Service Today* Vol. 3, No. 9 (Massachusetts: American Journal of Public Health, September 1913), p. 845-852.

³⁰ Image from *Eradicating Plague From San Francisco: Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*, Press of C.A. Murdock & Co. San Francisco, March 31, 1909, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31175031243945&view=1up&seq=9&skin=2021>.

Dr. Rupert and the same federal sanitation officers were concerned by the large number of “courtesans,” which were Chinese prostitutes that were “believed to be infected with a particularly virulent form of syphilis.” In 1877, Dr. H.H. Toland, who founded the University of California Medical School, testified before congress that “nine-tenths of venereal disease in San Francisco could be traced back to Chinese prostitutes,” and that most of their customers were white. Given this finding, they came to the conclusion that the Chinese was the “source of most terrible pollution of the blood” of future white generations.³¹ Dr. H.H. Toland’s testimony would give rise to eugenics laws in the early twentieth century and suggested that Chinese women were vectors of disease, which would later influence racial segregation policies under the guise of protecting the public health of the white population. Another contentious issue was the differential treatment of public health service towards vessels carrying Asian migrants. The “specified method of inspection” for “vessels arriving from Asian ports” was to count white passengers first and then count the Chinese passengers second.³² The Quarantine Act of 1893 charged quarantine officers to inspect every nook and crevice of all ships that enter the U.S., but the law allowed quarantine officers to racially profile Asian migrants.

Quarantine measures against the Chinese migrants were outlined in the National Quarantine Act of 1893, which granted additional powers and responsibilities for the Marine Health Service and set standards for quarantine in local communities like San Francisco’s Chinatown. However, it was not a popular law due to economic concerns. In a correspondence letter between Secretary of Treasury John G. Carlisle and the Committee on Epidemic Diseases on August 1, 1894, Secretary Carlisle addressed grievances of economic interruptions caused by quarantine and proposed amendments to this bill. One of these grievances is against a law where,

³¹ Joan B. Trauner, p. 70-87.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 70-87.

“under the penalty of [a] \$5000 fine,” foreign ships that enter at the “many frontier ports of the United States” and ships that sail between “Canadian and Mexican ports several times a day” are expected to produce a “consular bill of health” each time of entry. Secretary Carlisle rebuked this quarantine measure by explaining that enforcing the National Quarantine Act of 1893 “not only entails considerable expense but involves vexatious delays” and that this law is not practical because this law “seriously [interferes] with the daily intercourse” between ports.³³ The Secretary of Treasury oversaw the Marine Health Service, since the federal government believed at the time that public health was an integral part of maintaining interstate commerce. However, it aggravated regular trade with Mexico and Canada due to costly bills of health. Presenting a “consular bill of health certificate costs \$3 to \$9 for 1-3 trips” each and led to an unnecessary buildup of expenses.³⁴ In other words, the National Quarantine Act of 1893 delayed interstate trade and did not fulfill the goal of public health safety, which the bill was designed to do.

The Plague 1900-1907

By May 16, 1900, there were 11 confirmed Plague cases in Chinatown, and Dr. Kinyoun formally declared that there was an epidemic in San Francisco. The news sent shockwaves across the nation. President McKinley subsequently authorized enforcement of the “1893 interstate quarantine provisions requiring unvaccinated Chinese and Japanese persons” to produce “health certificates for interstate travel.”³⁵ However, this was not necessarily the case as movement of Asian migrants were closely monitored by Kinyoun. On May 19, 1900, Kinyoun “instructed

³³ John G. Carlisle, *Letter From The Secretary of The Treasury, transmitting a form of bill to amend the quarantine act of February 15, 1893, and giving facts in connection with the present quarantine laws.*

³⁴ John G. Carlisle, *Letter From The Secretary of The Treasury, transmitting a form of bill to amend the quarantine act of February 15, 1893, and giving facts in connection with the present quarantine laws.*

³⁵ David M. Morens and Anthony S. Fauci, *The Forgotten Forefather: Joseph James Kinyoun and the Founding of the National Institutes of Health*

railroad lines to refuse passage to the Chinese or Japanese” and “keep the Chinese and Japanese population under sanitary supervision” in San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento, Stockton, and Oakland, in an effort to antagonize the Chinese and Japanese even further. Kinyoun specifically targeted the Chinese and Japanese because he felt they gave the most “resistance” to the “house to house inspections,” thus making disease control efforts difficult.³⁶ Once again, this is explicit evidence of the Marine Health Service’s total control of Asian communities in San Francisco and the surrounding communities in California under the guise of public health.

The East Asian communities that were being marginalized did not cave into these biased policies. Ever since the National Quarantine Act of 1893, a prominent association of Chinese ambassadors to Chinatown and businessmen, called the Six Companies of San Francisco, filed an injunction suit against federal quarantine officers of the Marine Health Service. Strict quarantine measures like fumigation and inspections disproportionately affected Chinese communities. The Six Companies “[applied] for a restraining order against the city board of health” and Surgeon General of the Marine Health Service, J.J. Kinyoun. The “Japanese consul is identified in this suit” as well as of May 24, 1900.³⁷ All marginalized Asian communities at the time—Chinese and Japanese migrants—banded together to stop the encroachment by the local government under the guise of public health. The evidence clearly shows that the National Quarantine Act did not protect the health and safety of residents during the San Francisco Plague of 1900 as it was designed to, rather it unjustly created more economic and social instability.

The quarantine response to the novel Plague epidemic in San Francisco intensified tensions among the white American leadership and the larger Asian immigrant community. Kinyoun’s arrival at the quarantine station in San Francisco prevented suspected plague ships

³⁶ J.J. Kinyoun and Walter Wyman, *Plague in San Francisco (1900)*

³⁷ J.J. Kinyoun and Walter Wyman, *Plague in San Francisco (1900)*

from docking that arrived from Asia, but it also erupted a “state’s rights feud” between California and the federal government. When the San Francisco plague first appeared, Dr. Walter Wyman ordered Kinyoun “to not pay attention” to then California Governor Henry Tiff Gage, “who threatened [Marine Health Service] officials with lawsuits and armed force.”³⁸ Written on June 26, 2012, Kinyoun went down in history as one of the first public health doctors to respond to a major infectious disease—the San Francisco Plague—only to be met with resistance. San Francisco’s mayor, Edward Robeson Taylor, and San Francisco board of health attempted to place Chinatown in cordon sanitaire only to be met with “legal challenges” from the Six Companies.³⁹ Meanwhile, “Governor Gage declared [the Plague] to be a ruse” created by Kinyoun in order to siphon funds from the city of San Francisco to support their “public health” efforts. California legislature at the time “suggested that Kinyoun be hanged” for interrupting commerce in the state.⁴⁰ Alongside Chinese residents that did not comply with house to house inspections and quarantine efforts, Gage was at odds with Kinyoun as well, but his reason was that he wanted to protect white businesses from closing down despite the virulence of the Plague. Gage did not take the Plague seriously and Chinese residents recognized heavy discrimination by the federal government, specifically Kinyoun and Wyman.

³⁸ David M. Morens and Anthony S. Fauci, *The Forgotten Forefather: Joseph James Kinyoun and the Founding of the National Institutes of Health*, August 28, 2012

³⁹ David M. Morens and Anthony S. Fauci, *The Forgotten Forefather: Joseph James Kinyoun and the Founding of the National Institutes of Health*, August 28, 2012

⁴⁰ David M. Morens and Anthony S. Fauci, *The Forgotten Forefather: Joseph James Kinyoun and the Founding of the National Institutes of Health*, August 28, 2012



Note. This political cartoon shows a Chinese man injecting Haffkine Serum into Dr. Kinyoun.

Judge Morrow nods in approval.⁴¹

Dr. Kinyoun therefore faced backlash from both sides of the coin: the Chinese community and the California government. In a court case, *Wong Wai v. Williamson*, brought on behalf of 25,000 Chinese residents living in San Francisco city and county and argued on May 28, 1900, California circuit judge, William W. Morrow, ruled that the defendant, J.J. Kinyoun was barred from “restraining, or confining the complainant, or any Chinese residents of said city and county of San Francisco.” He also added that he could not subject them to inoculation with the serum, Haffkine Prophylactic, because it restricted their right to move freely protected by the U.S. Constitution.⁴² Haffkine Prophylactic was a vaccine made from the bacillus in the bubonic plague of San Francisco, which Dr. Kinyoun subjected the Chinese residents to. However, it ended up making them sicker and did nothing to limit the spread of the Plague. This ruling signified that J.J. Kinyoun overstepped his boundaries as federal quarantine officer alongside San

⁴¹ Image from *The Forgotten Forefather: Joseph James Kinyoun and the Founding of the National Institutes of Health*, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, August 28, 2012, [https://www.niaid.nih.gov/about/joseph-kinyoun-indispensable-man-plague-san-francisco#:~:text=On%2027%20April%201899%2C%20Wyman,not%20the%20world%20\(37\)](https://www.niaid.nih.gov/about/joseph-kinyoun-indispensable-man-plague-san-francisco#:~:text=On%2027%20April%201899%2C%20Wyman,not%20the%20world%20(37).).

⁴² Marilyn Chase, *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco*.

Francisco Board of Health, because they failed to justify why Asian residents were more likely to spread the Plague or even more susceptible to it than white residents. In the book, “The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco,” Marilyn Chase outlines how Republican Governor Gage took steps to get rid of Kinyoun for good and was willing to deny the existence of the plague to accomplish that goal. Gage lied to the press that “Kinyoun had imported cultures of bubonic plague” to his hygienic lab in Angel Island and that Kinyoun intentionally “[spilled] the bacteria” in an effort to orchestrate a catastrophe that he would have total control over.⁴³

Many at the time questioned how the bacteria from the San Francisco Plague originated. A string of events caused false stories to blow out of proportion because Dr. Kinyoun was strongly disliked by the State of California from both the Chinese and white residents. Fanning the flames even further, Gage asked the press, “could it have been possible that some dead body of a Chinaman had... received a postmortem inoculation by someone possessing the imported plague bacilli,” and even accused Kinyoun for “deluding” the people of California.⁴⁴ Gage’s purpose behind his smearing campaign was to make Kinyoun and other public health officers pay for their trespasses on their rights. For Gage, this was personal, and he wanted to send the message to those that represent the federal government, like Kinyoun, that the state of California would fight “tyranny” in any form. On January 23, 1901, the California State Legislature “passed a joint resolution” to push President McKinley to remove Dr. Kinyoun from his post as federal quarantine officer of the Golden Gate quarantine station. The resolution also stated that Kinyoun “should be hanged” as “exile was too mild” as a sanction.⁴⁵ Constant death threats from republican lawmakers and legal troubles from the Chinese’s Six Companies forced Dr. Kinyoun

⁴³ Marilyn Chase, *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco*

⁴⁴ Philip A. Kalisch, *The Black Death in Chinatown: Plague and Politics in San Francisco, 1900-1904*

⁴⁵ Marilyn Chase, *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco*

to resign. On June 16 of 1900, attorneys for the Chinese Six Companies, Reddy, Campbell, and Metson, asserted that Kinyoun violated an injunction, where Kinyoun refused to issue certificates “on the grounds that they were inhabitants of the former quarantine district” of Chinatown in San Francisco, despite the fact that a previous ruling by Judge Morrow allowed the Chinese to freely travel without mandatory inoculation.⁴⁶ These inhabitants were in fact Chinese migrants that were favored in the ruling from the case, *Wong Wai v. Williamson*. This resulted in charging Dr. Kinyoun with contempt of court. Although evidence of intentional cordon sanitaire among the Chinese neighborhoods over white areas was stacked against him, Judge Morrow acquitted him of these charges. After a series of mounting political pressure by the people of California, Dr. Kinyoun became a disgraced public health official, villainized for his role during the first San Francisco Plague. Kinyoun resigned on May 1, 1902.

Prior to Kinyoun’s resignation, United States Surgeon General, Dr. Walter Wyman, wanted an outside panel of experts who had no ties with the Marine Health Service nor the state of California in the face of political resistance by Gage and the people of California. In January 1901, this panel of scientists, who had extensive experience working with the 1897 Philippines plague epidemic, became known as the 1901 Plague Commission. Wyman selected Simon Flexner as director, “[a] professor of pathology at the University of Pennsylvania; Lewellys Barker” as secretary, “[a] professor of pathology at the University of Chicago; and Frederick Novy” as bacteriologist, “[an] associated professor of physiologic chemistry and bacteriology at the University of Michigan.”⁴⁷ Kinyoun was still in the process of being removed as federal quarantine officer and President McKinley gave into California’s demands. However, due to the

⁴⁶ Charles McClain, *Of Medicine, Race, and American Law: The Bubonic Plague Outbreak of 1900*

⁴⁷ Powel Kazanjian, *Frederick Novy and the 1901 San Francisco Plague Commission Investigation*

resistance, the spread of the San Francisco Plague of 1900 was not being kept under control, and so Flexner, Barker, and Novy was sent to alleviate some of the tension and mistrust toward public health guidance. Upon Dr. Novy's arrival in San Francisco on January 27, 1901, Novy observed that Governor Gage, the citizenry, and their press, *The Bulletin*, all worked together to deny the existence of the plague and sought the "repudiation of any scientist," including Kinyoun, if their findings "threatened the prosperity" of the city of San Francisco.⁴⁸ The 1901 Plague Commission that was assigned to uncover the source of anti-quarantine resistance was convinced that Gage and his electorate would not listen to reason or scientific evidence as it was simply a case of willful ignorance. Resistance from above—the state government—was also met with resistance from below—the commoners. The Chinese concealed diseased bodies during mandated home searches and Governor Gage made it illegal for the Marine Health Service to handle the plague bacillus. On February 5, 1901, the three commissioners forged an alliance with a group of politically connected businessmen to bypass Gage's efforts to impede the investigation and secure cooperation from Chinatown by "[limiting] their examination" to a small incision of enlarged glands and spleens in order to "respect a cultural wish among Chinese to have bodies remain undisturbed after death."⁴⁹ This inclusive approach by Novy and the other commissioners greatly differs from Dr. Kinyoun's racial profiling of Chinatown, which made identifying the Plague more successful. With the help of interpreter, Wong Chung, the commissioners had access to a "febrile 44-year-old," Wong Chi Lin, who succumbed to the Plague on February 7, 1901. Novy was able to successfully identify the 1900 Plague from San Francisco as *Bacillus pestis*.

⁴⁸ Powel Kazanjian, *Frederick Novy and the 1901 San Francisco Plague Commission Investigation*

⁴⁹ Powel Kazanjian, *Frederick Novy and the 1901 San Francisco Plague Commission Investigation*

As the director of the hygienic laboratory in 1913, John F. Anderson outlined the powers and duties of the United States Public Health Service. Anderson wrote that the Federal Public Health Service was a bureau within the Treasury Department that began as the Marine Hospital Service designed to “aid in the execution of quarantine and health laws of the states” ever since the passage of a federal law on May 27, 1796.⁵⁰ The purpose of Anderson’s article was to communicate the role of the Marine Health Service that Kinyoun was in charge of as well as provide context for the schism between the state and federal government on the most appropriate public health response. Although Novy was able to find evidence of Plague in San Francisco, Governor Gage appointed a “state health commission” that was similar to the 1901 Plague Commission, but it was a group of physicians that were instructed to deny cases of Plague and falsify evidence. In their report, “between April 1901 and October 1901,” among the “145 deaths” they found, none of them had no plague, which allowed Gage to “[terminate] sanitary measures in Chinatown.”⁵¹ Gage wanted Wyman to prevent Novy and his Commission from publishing the actual findings in exchange for sanitation compliance. In an effort to undermine Wyman’s efforts, Gage created his own commission to further his own agenda by denying the Plague and risking the health and safety of not only California, but the rest of the nation, which was in stark contrast to the objectives of the United States Public Health Service and the National Quarantine Act that President McKinley had to enforce. By January 1902, Novy reported an increase in the number of deaths in San Francisco from the Plague, calling for the “reinstatement of [anti-plague] measures, including rat eradication.” However, the new goal was to make sure the Plague does not spread to the rest of the country, rather than just stopping the spread in

⁵⁰ John F. Anderson, *Organization, Powers, and Duties of the United States Public Health Service Today*

⁵¹ Powel Kazanjian, *Frederick Novy and the 1901 San Francisco Plague Commission Investigation*

California. So, in January 1903, the federal government imposed economic sanctions against the state of California if they did not take action to stop the spread of the Plague, which contributed to Gage's loss in being re-elected as Governor in 1902.⁵² Although the San Francisco Plague of 1900 was a threat to national security, the California State Board of Health did not see any substantial change in the number of deaths in Chinatown during the Plague, which indicated that the spread of the Plague was not limited to the Chinese community. This also meant Governor Gage was wasting states resources and time for a disease that could have been stopped sooner. George Pardee then became governor of California in January 1903, who promised to remove economic sanctions like the "embargo on railroads" out of California, by "taking effective action against the Plague," unlike his predecessor, Gage. In February 1903, Governor Pardee worked with the City and State Board of Health as well as Rupert Blue of the Marine Health Service to expand rat eradication measures like "removing porous wooden cellars... and replacing them with rat-proof concrete basements," and thus the State of California enjoyed a "reduced number of new plague cases."⁵³ For the first time, the state and federal government was working together using evidence-based interventions to stop the spread and incorporate measures that do not vilify the Asian American community. Unlike in previous years, not only did quarantine efforts marginalize Asian migrants, but it also did not contain the spread of Plague. Rupert Blue suspended anti-plague measures by April 1905 for a plague that claimed 121 lives, most of whom were Chinese, but Kinyoun's quarantine efforts were focused on containing the spread in Chinatown and away from white majority areas in San Francisco.

⁵² Powel Kazanjian, *Frederick Novy and the 1901 San Francisco Plague Commission Investigation*

⁵³ Powel Kazanjian, *Frederick Novy and the 1901 San Francisco Plague Commission Investigation*

The San Francisco Earthquake

An earthquake struck the coast of California at 5:15 a.m. on 18 April 1906 and a subsequent raging fire consumed two-thirds of the city of San Francisco. One of the most impacted areas of San Francisco was Chinatown. In his dissertation, “The impact of the 1906 earthquake on San Francisco’s Chinatown,” Ying Zi Pan argues that rebuilding Chinatown at a different location might have been “a policy long in the planning” rather an idea born out of the ashes of the 1906 California earthquake and fires.⁵⁴ The location of Chinatown had been a contentious issue even before the 1900 San Francisco Plague, but the Plague, the Earthquake, and Fires all contributed to the overall conversation around removing Chinatown from white majority San Francisco into a more marginal area like Oakland, California. Pan writes that anti-Asian rhetoric was shaped by early Chinese migrants in the mid-nineteenth century, who were reluctant to assimilate into American culture. The author writes that “the Chinese were not enthusiastic about becoming U.S. citizens” because it was “their belief that once a Chinese acquired citizenship in the United States, he became a lost son to China” as they believed China was more civilized than the U.S., whereas the white Americans believed they were superior, regardless of citizenship status.⁵⁵ This early lack of desire to assimilate set the economic conditions and treatment by white Americans in San Francisco that viewed the Chinese as “plague rats” in 1900, because they were not following American customs. Even Kinyoun inappropriately assumed that the Chinese do not wash their hands or bathe because of the Chinese’s lack of assimilation, since according to the U.S. government, only white Americans knew personal hygiene.

⁵⁴ Ying Zi Pan, *The impact of the 1906 earthquake on San Francisco’s Chinatown*

⁵⁵ Ying Zi Pan, *The impact of the 1906 earthquake on San Francisco’s Chinatown*

Pan further argued that plans for relocating Chinatown in San Francisco was the result of poor living conditions like over crowdedness, crime, and spread of illness. However, these social problems were caused by decades of white discrimination that isolated these problems within the Chinatown community. In 1853, an “article in the Daily Alta California recommended the removal of the Chinese” to another location, stating that if Dupont Street were “to have a Chinese community amongst [them],” there would be “no prospect” of wealth as Dupont Street is known for its lavish retail stores and family residencies.⁵⁶ Juxtaposing how modern day redlining works, the influx of minority populations, like the Chinese, made certain communities like Dupont Street less wealthy as white Americans created these invisible rules to keep out the Chinese and inflict further harm towards this community. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there were calls for the Chinese to be moved to government reservations after riots caused by white working Americans, returning the Chinese in ships back to China, and even declaring Chinatown as a “nuisance, a hazard to public health” by threatening to arrest Chinese migrants that did not move in 60 days.⁵⁷ As evident, relocation of Chinatown has been a longstanding issue prior to the San Francisco Plague, Earthquake, and Fires in the early twentieth century. In the wake of the 1900 San Francisco Plague, Mayor of San Francisco, James Phelan, offered to “[raze] Chinatown” during quarantine and was someone who was “so hostile to the Orientals that he would do anything to have Chinatown” taken off the map altogether.⁵⁸ Like Governor Gage, Mayor Phelan was a hardliner racist that saw the Chinese as inferior, whose actions to vilify the Chinese migrant community was justified by Kinyoun’s intentional quarantine of Chinatown, although knowledge of the plague in Chinatown was not known by

⁵⁶ Ying Zi Pan, *The impact of the 1906 earthquake on San Francisco’s Chinatown*

⁵⁷ Ying Zi Pan, *The impact of the 1906 earthquake on San Francisco’s Chinatown*

⁵⁸ Ying Zi Pan, *The impact of the 1906 earthquake on San Francisco’s Chinatown*

most. Three hours before the Fire reached Chinatown, “Brigadier General Frederick Funston ordered his troops to force [the Chinese] out” of their homes “with bayonets” in response to the 1906 Earthquake, which did little damage to Chinatown compared to the Fires.⁵⁹ From inoculating Chinese migrants that were never exposed to the bacillus bacteria to moving the Chinese out of their homes even though the earthquake did not affect them as much as the other parts of Northern California, it was always about controlling the Chinese population.

Asian Exclusion Between 1907-1924

The 1900 San Francisco Plague ended with its last documented case in February 1904, but it reemerged in 1907. This time, the governor did not stand in the way of acknowledging the epidemic. In May of 1907, an unconscious sick man was taken to the United States Marine Hospital from a boat off the coast of Mendocino County, near San Francisco. “The doctors that attended” to the sick man “recognized his case as plague,” but he shortly died afterwards. On August 12, “fourteen new cases” of the San Francisco plague reappeared, “scattered all over the city” and “there was no restricted area that could be roped off,” so the “[San Francisco] Plague was no longer an oriental disease” or a “filthy disease.”⁶⁰ The dispersive nature of the new San Francisco plague forced the public health response team, Marine Health Service, to stop focusing on Chinatown and other Asian communities to “isolate.” According to the U.S. Public Health Service, the San Francisco Plague’s pathology was consistent with the bubonic plague, where it was not a disease based on one’s “filth,” but rather a “rat disease.” Based on evidence of transmission, “people that bathe every day are just as likely to get it as” those that rarely wash, but both populations must be “bitten by a flea that carries the specific bacillus” and those fleas

⁵⁹ Ying Zi Pan, *The impact of the 1906 earthquake on San Francisco’s Chinatown*

⁶⁰ Frank Morton Todd, *Eradicating Plague from San Francisco: Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*

comes from rats.⁶¹ The trope of the “filthy Oriental” was non-existent during the second episode of the San Francisco Plague because rates of infection is higher among the “clean” white Americans, which suggests that the plague was not centered on Asian populations. This new conclusion by public health authorities have suppressed possible medical scapegoating of Asian populations. By September 1907, there were “fifty-five cases of Plague in San Francisco,” so the mayor, Edward Robeson Taylor, called on President Theodore Roosevelt’s help before the disease spreads on a national level. President Roosevelt “directed Surgeon-General Walter Wyman of the United States Public Health and Marine Hospital Service to take charge of the situation,” but Dr. Wyman ordered Passed Assistant Surgeon Rupert Blue to assume command locally.⁶² By 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt emerged as a key figure in promoting the public health response against the San Francisco Plague as a national security issue. Due to President Roosevelt’s involvement in combatting the Plague in San Francisco, Dr. Blue was able to have “154,000 rats bacteriologically examined” for the same bacillus in the same man found off the coast of Mendocino Bay.⁶³ The success of the public health response was reinforced by the Citizen’s Health Commmittee, which acts as a sort of “vigilante” community partnership.

The Marine Health Service was still responsible for implementing quarantine measures, however, they utilized the “Citizen’s Health Committee” to eradicate the San Francisco Plague by killing rodents and burning food sources.⁶⁴ In 1907 and onwards, the public health response calls on community partners like the Citizen’s Health Committee to augment Rupert Blue’s

⁶¹ Frank Morton Todd, *Eradicating Plague from San Francisco: Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*

⁶² Frank Morton Todd, *Eradicating Plague from San Francisco: Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*

⁶³ Frank Morton Todd, *Eradicating Plague from San Francisco: Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*

⁶⁴ J.J. Kinyoun and Walter Wyman, *Plague in San Francisco (1900)*

public health activities, but a majority of its members, if not all, were white Americans. According to the “Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee and An Account of Its Work” called “Eradicating Plague from San Francisco,” Mayor of San Francisco Edward Robeson Taylor appointed the members of the Citizen’s Health Committee on January 28, 1908, in order to “secure the co-operation” between the San Francisco community and “sanitary forces of the City, State, and Federal Governments” and protect the city from “impending pestilence.”⁶⁵ The members of the Citizen’s Health Committee were a mix of laypersons and physicians, with Homer S. King serving as the chairman and L. M. King serving as secretary. Both individuals were part of the general committee and all of the twenty five individuals stated in this report were white Americans. In the Executive Committee of the Citizen’s Health Committee, Charles C. Moore served as the chairman, and he was also a non-physician. In the same report, the Citizen’s Health Committee called the San Francisco plague an “oriental disease” and unanimously declared that as the “Union’s relations with other countries” increase, there will be a higher “risk of infection by plague.”⁶⁶ Here, the Citizen’s Health Committee’s report provided evidence of the mistreatment of “Oriental,” or Asian races, where they were still public health targets. However, the Citizen’s Health Committee found conflicting evidence of this conclusion of Asians spreading the plague, where they reported that “very few Orientals were affected.” Of the “160 human cases, 77 white persons died—many of them” in peak condition. Then, they explained that “the difference in mortality was not due to race or condition,” rather it was “early discovery and prompt treatment,” but they still maintained the conclusion that the cause of the

⁶⁵ Frank Morton Todd, *Eradicating Plague from San Francisco: Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*

⁶⁶ Frank Morton Todd, *Eradicating Plague from San Francisco: Report of the Citizen’s Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*

plague is from Oriental to white population transmission.⁶⁷ Using their logic, the Citizen's Health Committee, the San Francisco Board of Health, and the California Board of Health prioritized the health of white Americans over Asian Americans as evident in early diagnosis and treatment rates of the white population compared to the Asian population.

Illegal violence from below—working class whites—was met with legal violence from above—the federal, state, and local governments. While the U.S. government and corporations gave working class whites better jobs and housing opportunities compared to Asian migrant workers, their impact on the Asian community pales in comparison to the daily abuse by the white citizenry that set the stage for anti-Asian rhetoric during the twentieth century. Many of those on the Citizen's Health Committee shared the same sentiments as the white mob during the 1907 anti-Asian riots across the “pacific coasts of the United States and Canada.” Erika Lee reports that in May of 1907, “Japanese restaurants and bathhouses were damaged by white mobs in San Francisco” and that a similar mob of “10,000 gathered in Vancouver” at an anti-Asian parade in 1907 caused “\$40,000 in property damages” during their attacks on Chinese and Japanese owned buildings and businesses.⁶⁸ At the local level, the destructive nature of anti-Asian hate escalated across different parts of the U.S. and Canada. There is a strong evidence of small, isolated incidents of anti-Asian hate culminated in the events of the 1907 anti-Asian riots. In September of 1907, “150 white men attacked the South Asian community in Bellingham, Washington” on the issue of South Asians being employed in the local lumber mills. Lee argues that “the riots in San Francisco, Bellingham, and Vancouver were not isolated events,” rather,

⁶⁷ Frank Morton Todd, *Eradicating Plague from San Francisco: Report of the Citizen's Health Committee And An Account of Its Work*

⁶⁸ Erika Lee, *Hemispheric Orientalism and the 1907 Pacific Coast Riots* Vol. 33, Iss. 2 (London: Amerasia Journal, February 2019), p. 19-48.

they were “extreme manifestations of an inter-connected” display of anti-Asian racism.⁶⁹ The attacks on the South Asian community in Washington state stemmed from companies employing cheaper labor, which is comprised of South Asian migrants. However, the mob that drove the South Asian community out of their town viewed this practice as South Asian migrants stealing their jobs from the white working class. The laws and policies of the U.S. and Canada that continues to favor the white working class at the expense of Asian migrants enabled them to commit acts of violence toward the Asian American community.

The argument is that these incidents were not isolated rather it was a racist movement that incorporated class conflict, labor struggle, and living conditions at the time. Unfortunately, the Asian community has been the target of this white rage. According to Lee, the “Chinese, Japanese and South Asians were among the largest groups to migrate” to and throughout North America in the “late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” Lee explains that national policies that gave birth to transnational anti-racism as evident in the 1907 anti-Asian riots, the 1907 San Francisco Plague, and the 1900 San Francisco plague is what she defines as “Hemispheric Orientalism.”⁷⁰ There is this explosion of immigrants coming from Asia into the U.S. looking for opportunity only to be met with societal, economical, political, and legal exclusion at the federal and state level, which is the hemispheric orientalism. Lee also discusses how the United States stoked fears about the Chinese like how they were “inassimilable, inferior, and immoral” or that they took jobs for low pay compared to white workers that were given higher pay. The United States did not only have the “largest population of Chinese migrants,” they also took the most action against Chinese immigration. As a result, the Chinese were described as the “yellow

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 19-48.

⁷⁰ Erika Lee, *The Yellow Peril and Asian Exclusion in the Americas* Vol. 76, Iss. 4 (Berkeley: Pacific Historical Review, November 2004), p. 537-562.

wave,” the “yellow plague,” and the “Mongol Invasion.”⁷¹ This was more evidence that the biased reporting of the San Francisco Plague contributed to white Americans seeing the Chinese as a disease, and thus policies at the federal and local level continued to exclude the Chinese, thereby “quarantining them” from the rest of society.



Note. U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt carries his big stick and the White Fleet.⁷²

At the federal level, the U.S. became emboldened to assert their power over smaller non-white nations under the Theodore Roosevelt Administration, where he initiated a big stick policy and expanded the power of the U.S. Navy, as shown above. As part of the growing tide of anti-Asian discrimination, the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907 became the second of the three anti-immigration laws but dealt with Japanese immigration, which was finalized on January 25, 1908. Directly from a letter written to secretary of commerce and labor V. H. Metcalf, U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt wrote that the “only way to prevent constant friction between the United States and Japan” was to “prevent all immigration of [the] Japanese coolie class,” or Japanese

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 537-562.

⁷² Image from *What Does Teddy Roosevelt’s ‘Big Stick’ Line Really Mean, Anyway?*, The Atlantic, September 24, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/09/what-does-teddy-roosevelts-big-stick-line-really-mean-anyway/262579/>.

laborers, with the exception of businessmen and tourists.⁷³ Like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other anti-Chinese policies in the late nineteenth century, immigration of lower classes was heavily enforced over the immigration of those in the upper classes, like businessmen and the social elite. Here, anti-Japanese discrimination was driven by cultural factors as well as socioeconomic factors. In the Spring of 1908, “U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt advocated for a “unity of action” among the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia in an effort to promote a “White Pacific” and white supremacy in the early nineteenth century.⁷⁴ This is an explicit declaration of legalized mistreatment of Asian Americans during this time, which wasn’t just one incident rather it was an era of anti-Asian hate, where political leaders like Roosevelt are simply stoking the flames even further. In his “White Pacific” speech, President Roosevelt wrote to British politician, Arthur Hamilton Lee, that “there should be no immigration in mass of Orientals to the countries where English-speaking peoples now form and will form the population of the future.” President Roosevelt also used the U.S. Navy’s sixteen battleship for a Pacific Ocean tour from December 1907 to February 1909 to “demonstrate Anglo-American unity against the Yellow Peril” that the Japanese represented.⁷⁵ The purpose of the fleet was to literally show their display of white supremacy in the face of a large influx of Asian immigration in the United States, thus accomplishing the goal of making them feel unwelcome through both national policies and daily microaggressions by angry white Americans. Unlike the Chinese, “a tradition of using the Japanese as medical scapegoats never developed” because mass immigration from Japan into Hawaii and California would happen in the early twentieth century and not in the late nineteenth century, but they were still targets of the “bubonic plague scare” of

⁷³ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

⁷⁴ Erika Lee, p. 537-562.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 537-562.

1900-1904.⁷⁶ Both the Chinese and Japanese were lopped together because of their unique physical characteristics and institutional policies that forced poor living and working conditions within these communities, which would later contribute to the wave of growing anti-Asian hate.

Passed by Congress on February 5, 1917, the Immigration Act of 1917, or the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, significantly limited immigration by “undesirable groups” even further, like Asian populations. This legislation extended exclusion of not only Chinese immigrants, but “also other Asian immigrant groups,” which were South Asians, Southeast Asians, and Pacific Islanders.⁷⁷ In terms of legal opposition towards the Asian community, the immigration act of 1917 is the strictest quota of immigrant population in U.S. history so far, until the immigration act of 1924, which sets up an even more strict quota. According to the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, the term, “alien,” included “any person not native-born or naturalized citizen of the United States,” but does not include Native Amerindians, citizens who live in annexed island territories. The term, “United States,” included the continental United States, and “any waters or territory subject to the jurisdiction” of the United States, “except the Isthmian Canal Zone.”⁷⁸ The coarse language of the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917 signified the anti-immigration stance of the United States at the time due to influences from the Quarantine Act of 1893 and the public health crisis of 1900 and 1907 in San Francisco, where presumably, alien migration was a national security issue. In the latter half of the act, Congress wrote “if any alien shall leave the Canal Zone or any insular possession of the United States” and then attempt to re-enter the United States, “nothing contained in this Act” did not permit them to enter and were then classified as

⁷⁶ Joan B. Trauner, *the Chinese as medical scapegoats in San Francisco, 1870-1905*

⁷⁷ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

⁷⁸ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

alien.⁷⁹ To clarify, this clause of the act stated that if a citizen were to leave any territory under the jurisdiction of the United States, then their citizenship would automatically be renounced and reclassified as an alien. This part of the legislation stood in defiance to a court opinion in the *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* court case in 1898, where a U.S. born Chinese American left San Francisco for a short period of time to go to China and when he returned, he was detained by customs officers, despite being American-born. The court argued that since “Wong Kim Ark [is] a Chinese person and a subject of the Emperor of China” since his parents were migrants from China, despite proof that Wong Kim Ark was born in “the year 1873, at No. 751 Sacramento Street, in the city and county of San Francisco, State of California. Wong Kim Ark was classified as a “laborer,” similar to other Chinese migrants, but unlike them, Wong Kim Ark’s lawyers argued that Ark and his parents “enjoyed a permanent domicile” and only one residence in the city and county of San Francisco, which is under the jurisdiction of the United States.⁸⁰ Lawyers representing Wong Kim Ark stated that Ark never left the United States to join the China, rather it was a temporary visit with a means to return and that they did not have a residence or ties to China, which means detaining Ark as a U.S. citizen would be illegal. Although the court ruled in Ark’s favor because he was a naturalized citizen under the citizenship clause of the fourteenth amendment, the fact that customs officers and the government targeted non-white citizens that return to the territorial United States was representative of the anti-Asian political atmosphere at the time.

Like the court case, *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, that decided whether Ark would be able to legally return to the U.S., *Takao Ozawa v. United States* (1922) decided that Ozawa was not eligible for U.S. Citizenship when he applied on October 16, 1914, because he was neither

⁷⁹ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

⁸⁰ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

white nor of African descent. Under section 2169 of the act of June 29, 1906, a provision was added that stated that aliens can only be naturalized for U.S. citizenship only if they are “free white persons, aliens of African nativity,” or “persons of African descent,” which did not include first generation Japanese immigrants like Takao Ozawa that had no semblance of whiteness.⁸¹ This court decision reinforces the recurring theme of the early twentieth century that non-white persons were not “American” and laws at the time continued to suppress Asian integration into white American society. Furthermore, the latest naturalization act in 1906 extended “the privilege of naturalization to those of African Nativity and descent in 1870” in response to the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments of the U.S. Constitution.⁸² The Japanese were neither white nor African, and so Justice George Sutherland, who delivered the opinion of the U.S. District Court in Hawaii, decided that the 1906 law cannot be extended to Ozawa’s case for naturalization, thus he was denied. Another court case, *United States vs. Bhagat Singh Thind* in 1923, defined “whiteness” for the process of U.S. citizenship even further using the same legal language and legal precedents from *Takao Ozawa vs. United States*. *Bhagat Singh Thind* was a Punjabi Sikh from India, who first immigrated to the U.S. in 1913 and then joined the U.S. Army in 1917 during World War I and then is honorably discharged in 1918. In 1920, Thind applied for U.S. citizenship and was initially approved by the district court, only for a “naturalization examiner” to appeal the decision on the basis that Thind was not white as he was in fact an Asian Indian. On the other hand, Thind argued that he was white because he was from a high caste in India, suggesting he was Aryan, and therefore white, but the court argued that the “term ‘Aryan’ has to do with linguistic and not physical characteristics.” The court also argued that those that can be recognized as “Caucasian Americans” were those with English, French, German, Italian,

⁸¹ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

⁸² Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

Scandinavian, and other European lineage.⁸³ This is an important development because the court is defining whiteness and it is not those of Japanese or Asian Indian heritage. Another issue for the court was that Thind immigrated to the U.S. from India in 1913, but the Asiatic Barred Zone Act banned immigration from India only after 1917. The Court argued that since there is evidence of “congressional attitude of opposition to Asiatic immigration,” it would also mean they are also opposed to “Asiatic naturalization,” so the question of whether Thind rightly immigrated to the U.S. before 1917 is unnecessary.⁸⁴ This means Thind cannot be a U.S. citizen regardless of when he came to the U.S. because the goal of the 1917 law was to restrict immigration of non-white races and so, the argument becomes the naturalization of non-white persons would not be appropriate.

The immigration act of 1924 would be the third piece of legislation that dealt a major blow to U.S. immigration at the time, which was even more strict than the immigration act of 1917, but followed a similar theme of keeping out “undesirable races.” The Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 was passed by Congress on May 26, 1924. This act was passed in response to an “estimated twenty-two million to twenty-four million immigrants entered the United States” from 1880-1920, where a majority of them was from Italy, Ireland, Eastern Europe, and Russia. According to Republican Rep. Albert Johnson and Republican Sen. David Reed, the goal of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 was to maintain “American homogeneity” by removing “unwanted immigrants from Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Asia,” whose numbers continue to rise.⁸⁵ The coarse language of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 explicitly defines which races were “alien” and alludes to white supremacist

⁸³ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

⁸⁴ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

⁸⁵ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

thinking in the government that continues to build on their animosity towards minority populations through this latest legislation. In terms of the process of curbing immigration, the United States government would set “quotas and state-specific prohibition” similar to the “legislative corollaries [of] the National Origins Act and the Asian Exclusion Act.” Rep. Johnson and Sen. Reed would use an “emergency provision that from the 1921 Immigration Act (also sponsored by Johnson and Reed),” which states they can establish a “nation-based quota system,” the first of which in U.S. immigration history. This act limited “annual immigration from any country to at most 3 percent of the number of people” of that nationality already living in the United States, “banned immigration from Asia entirely,” and it extended the Asiatic Barred Zone act to Japan as well.⁸⁶ The 1924 Immigration Act was significant for this quota based system and was known for being the harshest piece of legislation by far, which would harm the Asian American community even further. The 1924 Immigration Act also expanded the 1917 Immigration Act with the “Steamship Fines” clause. In 1924, a new added clause to “Section 9 of the Immigration Act of 1917” stated that “any transportation company other than railway lines entering the United States from foreign contiguous territory... any alien afflicted with idiocy, insanity, imbecility, feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, chronic alcoholism, tuberculosis in any form,” or any disease or disability, the owner of that vessel would be fined.⁸⁷ Johnson and Reed also created barriers for migrants with a disease and disability, where not only will they be refused treatment, but sent back for bringing disease or disability. This theme of “closed door” policies was consistent with efforts to maintain “racial purity” and was a legal way to marginalize the Asian American community at the time.

Birth of American Eugenics and Angel Island Deportations

⁸⁶ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

⁸⁷ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al., *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*

U.S. President Calvin Coolidge endorsed Representative Johnson's and Senator Reed's stern 1924 immigration act in his annual message to Congress on December 6, 1923. In his speech, Coolidge argued that "America must be kept American" because their "present economic and social conditions warrant a limitation of those to be admitted" and that American needs "additional safety" from aliens that do not "want to be partakers of the American spirit."⁸⁸ Coolidge's presidency established the tone for future mistreatment of immigrants and defines who among the aliens were best fit to be American. To him, the ideal American was white. This thinking of "fitness" or superiority over others gave birth to the field of eugenics. Eugenics, "[in] its extreme, racist form," was the removal of all human beings "deemed unfit" and "preserving only those who conformed to a Nordic type."⁸⁹ In order to remove "unfit" humans, like Asian migrants at the time, the state of California forced sterilizations, banned interracial marriage, and segregated migrant communities from the white population. "Before World War II, nearly half of coercive sterilizations were done in California" even though it was the "third state to adopt" sterilization and anti-immigration laws. Eugenicists in California sought to populate the Earth with "blond, blue-eyed Nordic types" and intended to "subtract emancipated negroes, immigrant Asian laborers, Indians, Hispanics, East Europeans, Jews" and anyone else that did not fit into the ideal master race.⁹⁰ This list included migrant Asian populations in San Francisco that were still subjected to the 1924 immigration bell. The 1924 immigration act was the major context behind the growth of the eugenics movement in California, and soon the world.

In the book, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, Stern writes that "from 1935 to 1941, readers of the *Los Angeles Times*" could draw

⁸⁸ Calvin Coolidge, *December 6, 1923: First Annual Message*

⁸⁹ Edwin Black, *Eugenics and the Nazis – the California connection*

⁹⁰ Edwin Black, *Eugenics and the Nazis – the California connection*

their attention to a column of that newspaper, “Social Eugenics,” which was written by an “arts and society contributor Fred Hogue.” Hogue, who had attended meetings of the California Division of the American Eugenics Society, “applauded the movement in Germany and other Nordic countries of Europe for the elimination of the reproduction of the unfit” in 1936.⁹¹ The media significantly contributed to the American and global eugenics movement but has its origins from the state of California. Even more alarming is that the owner of the Los Angeles Times at the time, Harry Chandler, was a charter member of the Human Betterment Foundation, which was another racist organization with similar goals to that of the American Eugenics Society. Harry Chandler, who “published a defense of Nazi [Germany] policies in 1935,” was among an “influential sector of elite Californians that embraced eugenics as the best solution” to the state’s problems by advocating for population control of through birth control and sterilization efforts.⁹² Like Chandler, Hogue argued that sterilization would “save the state thousands of dollars” in healthcare costs by “preventing the birth of defective children.” Hogue also stated that without targeted social eugenics, “Western civilization would collapse.”⁹³ Western civilization most likely referred to “white” civilization as the birth of “unfit” races or different groups of people would “pollute” the “superior” white population. Eugenics was the direct consequence of nativist sentiment from the early twentieth century and anti-immigration rhetoric around the time of the San Francisco Plague. From the 1920s to the 1960s, California “[performed] approximately twenty thousand sterilizations,” which was more than any state in the country. Due to legislation that was passed between 1935 and 1937 that broadened the applicability of California’s sterilization law and expand the power of the State Board of

⁹¹ Alexandra M. Stern, *Eugenics Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), p. 82.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 82-83.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Eugenics, California believed it was the “constitutional right and moral responsibility of the state, not the individual, to safeguard the public” and the “fate of those yet unborn,” by sterilizing the “feeble-minded or otherwise unfit” to reproduce beyond state hospitals and asylums and to include a wave of institutions like correctional schools or prisons.⁹⁴ There was a recurring theme of the state government and the media working together to alienate those who were not “fit” to be part of some “master race.” Once again, this notion of racial superiority stemmed from a multitude of previous cases of controlling the Asian population through quarantine and sterilization efforts under Dr. Kinyoun.

Table 1 Length of detention, by origin, 1913–19

Number of days	Origin							
	Chinese		Japanese		Non-Asians		Total	
	Number	Cumulative percentage	Number	Cumulative percentage	Number	Cumulative percentage	Number	Cumulative percentage
0 days	4,332	24.0	496	10.4	4,045	62.0	8,873	30.2
1 day	1,208	30.7	1,102	33.6	1,059	78.2	3,369	41.7
2 days	1,611	39.6	1,560	66.4	613	87.6	3,784	54.6
3 days	856	44.3	699	81.1	156	90.0	1,711	60.4
4–7 days	4,188	67.5	614	94.1	300	94.6	5,102	77.8
8–14 days	2,364	80.6	181	97.9	136	96.7	2,681	87.0
15–30 days	2,076	92.1	58	99.1	136	98.8	2,270	94.7
31–90 days	1,256	99.0	42	99.9	74	99.9	1,372	99.4
91–180 days	164	99.9	1	100.0	5	100.0	170	99.9
> 180 days	11	100.0			1	100.0	12	100.0
Total	18,066		4,753		6,525		29,344	
All passengers								
Median	4		2		0		2	
Mean	10.0		3.0		2		7.1	
Standard deviation	(18.31)		(5.51)		(7.46)		(15.41)	
Only those passengers detained								
Median	6		3		2		4	
Mean	13.3		3.4		5.3		10.2	
Standard deviation	(19.97)		(5.72)		(11.47)		(17.58)	

Sources: Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913–15, 1915–18.

Note. Length of detention of persons based on national origin.⁹⁵

The field of eugenics was not based on science or evidence, rather it was a sentiment shared by white American leadership during the early twentieth century and explains the racist actions by those in power as well as differential treatment between Asian and European migrants, as shown above. The goal of the eugenics movement in California was to preserve the

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83–84.

⁹⁵ Image from *Detention at Angel Island: First Empirical Evidence*, Cambridge University Press, Spring 2006, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40267900>.

“pure, superior Nordic races” of Europe that Hogue and Chandler seem to glorify. Stern argued that California’s unique history of systemic racism paved the way for scientific racism. For example, in 1851, one year after California became a state, a “law was passed that taxed the quantity” of any gold mined by foreign nationals, and then in the 1870s and 1880s, the Workingmen’s party of San Francisco, which was a white mob that repeatedly attacked and harassed Chinese communities, “burned down homes and businesses, and sought to pass a law in what would become the federal Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.” Like other Western states, California passed the “anti-miscegenation statute” that forbid interracial marriage “between whites and negroes and mulattoes, adding Mongolians to the list” in 1880.⁹⁶ As evident in the laws, this was an entire era of anti-Asian hate that gave the eugenics movement its momentum.

Differential treatment between Asian and European migrants would most likely have been supported by the likes of Hogue and Chandler as well as the California Eugenics movement. Many immigrants from Asia entered the United States through Angel Island in California and many immigrants from Europe entered through Ellis Island in New York. Many of the immigrants from Europe had “Nordic” facial and physical characteristics that significantly influenced their length of detention, as shown above. From 1910 to 1940, entry into the United States through Angel Island’s immigration station in San Francisco Bay consisted of “invasive health exams, lengthy interrogations, and detention,” whereas European immigrants that arrived through Ellis Island were proceeded in a “matter of hours.”⁹⁷ Although this was years after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiment existed and was present through the actions of immigration officials at Angel island. San Francisco was also home to Dr.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 87.

⁹⁷ Robert Barde and Gustavo J. Bobonis, *Detention at Angel Island: First Empirical Evidence* Vol. 30, No. 1 (Cambridge University Press, Spring 2006), p. 103-136.

Kinyoun's quarantine station, so there was an additional health inspection for all Chinese migrants through the process of quarantine, or detention. Data from the image above came from data collected from the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, where they recorded the detention of their passengers at Angel Island from 1913 to 1919. The length of that detention among the Chinese "coolie" class—persons that belonged to the low castes back in China lasted—"for months, even years," whereas the "average detention lasted two weeks" for those that were exempt from the anti-Chinese immigration policies like "students, teachers, ministers, merchants," tourists, those born in the U.S., and the children of those that belong to these categories.⁹⁸ Disparities between Asian and European immigration was not just a racial issue as it was also a socioeconomic issue. This also connects back to how the Chinese were seen as "dirty," which misattributed the San Francisco plague to the Chinese, and those events led to the passage of strict federal immigration laws in the 1920s and the eugenics movement in California that saw all non-white populations, including the Asian minority, as a new plague.

Although the Angel Island Immigration Station building "burned in 1940 along with many of its administrative records," it was estimated that "340,000 aliens arrived through the Port of San Francisco between 1910 and 1940" to account for inconsistencies as actual number of aliens that entered Angel Island were underreported in some years due to the number of deportees or those still in transit not being recorded.⁹⁹ Although actual numbers were lost to history, legislation like the National Quarantine Act of 1893, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, the Immigration Act of 1917, and the Immigration Act of 1924 reinforced the narrative that Asian migrants were mistreated for a longer period of time than their European counterparts. Since the Angel Island Immigration Station facility opened in 1910, Chinese migrants that were

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 103-136.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 103-136.

detained in the late nineteenth century were “kept in a warehouse on the PMSS’s Pier 40,” which was most “notorious for its wretched conditions.” Since 1819, U.S. law had “required the master of every vessel entering a U.S. port list each passenger” by name, gender, age, or country of origin, but Immigration Service that was established in 1891 required only Chinese and Japanese aliens to verify their identity.¹⁰⁰ The U.S. instituted policies at the federal level to adapt to the mass immigration by non-white person during the nineteenth century, which coincided with quarantine rules set by the U.S. Public Health Service under Dr. Kinyoun’s administration. From data collected “between May 13, 1913, and August 16, 1919,” of the “29,344 passengers” that were recorded in the PMSS’s ledgers, the “median stay” at the detention center barracks on Angel Island was “5 days (mean 7.8)” and less than “6 percent of passengers went to the immigration station’s hospital.¹⁰¹ Those 29,344 passengers included Chinese and Japanese nationals that were most likely detained for a long period of time. The statistic of less than six percent is staggering, which suggests that Asian migrant detainees were not given proper medical attention, and thus it extended their quarantine period in the event that they were physically sick due to forced detention at Angel Island. The deplorable conditions before the construction of the immigration center before 1910 and after was evidence of legalized anti-Asian exclusion by federal officials. In short, there were many sources of racism against the Asian community as it created a situation of being “surrounded.”

Plague of 1900 in San Francisco and racism against East Asian migrant workers and communities sparked a broader half century long simmering series of events against anti-Pacific immigration. Villainization of the Asian community was not an isolated event, rather it was a culmination of racial violence by white Americans in power. It was a half-century long anti-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 103-136.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 103-136.

immigration environment nourished from below by white workers, and from above, which was the federal and state government. This chapter provides the political and social context. The plague of 1900 exposed the racism, but it does not end racism against Asian Americans, rather it accelerated it. The events of the San Francisco Plague gave white Americans a tangible memory. The 1900 plague is a step in the direction in the policies from 1917 to 1924. Strict anti-immigration policies post-1924 provided a launching pad for policing Asian immigration into the U.S. As evident in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the National Quarantine Act of 1893, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, the 1924 immigration quota, the rise of the eugenics movement in California during the 1930s, and racial disparities in Angel Island deportations, the public health crisis in San Francisco during the early twentieth century amplified the anti-Asian racism that was already present during this era in United States history. As we shall see, relations between the United States and Asian countries are strained and anti-Asian rhetoric is intensified by white authorities. That rhetoric translated to violence throughout the twentieth century. The hate-fueled violence against the AAPI community nationalizes and becomes part of a violent pattern that will culminate in a pandemic of hate during COVID-19 and onward.

Chapter 2: The COVID-19 Pandemic

Around December 2019, there were major reports out of Wuhan, China about an “increase in pneumonia cases of unexplained origin.” Little did they know that these cases were due to a new type of coronavirus, which we now know as COVID-19 that resulted in fatalities across the globe.¹⁰² In response, governments worldwide have instituted lockdowns, mask mandates, and other ways to curb the spread of COVID-19. This has led to social isolation, social unrest, and economic deprivation. In the United States and Europe, in particular, frustration has led to the scapegoating of the Asian and Asian American communities. On March 10, 2020, a Korean American woman in Midtown Manhattan of New York City was “grabbed by the hair, shoved, and punched in the face” by the suspect, who yelled “You’ve got the coronavirus, you Asian (expletive).” That victim suffered a dislocated jaw. On March 14, 2020, in Midland Texas, a suspect stabbed a 2-year-old girl and 6-year-old boy from Myanmar. The suspect told police that he “feared the victims were infecting others with the coronavirus.”¹⁰³ These are just some of many of the incidents that the Stop Asian Hate reporting center documented when the lockdowns started in the U.S. Although the media reported that these incidents were isolated in itself, the incidents follow a dangerous trend on the reality of Asian Americans during COVID-19, at a time they are also struggling with life during lockdown as well as face the harsh reality of racism.

The Stop AAPI Hate reporting center formally launched on March 19, 2020, in response to Asian American violence, discrimination, harassment, and hate under the context of COVID-19, which was a public health crisis. The reporting tool was founded by three organizations that

¹⁰² Angela R. Gover et al., *Anti-Asian Hate Crime During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Reproduction of Inequality* (Asheville, North Carolina: Southern Criminal Justice Association, 2020), p. 648.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 659

can “trace their roots to the 1969 Asian Movement in California.” Those organizations were the “Chinese for Affirmative Action” (CAA), which was founded in 1969 in San Francisco, the Asian Pacific Planning and Policy Council (A3PCON), which was founded in the 1970s, and the Asian American Studies department at San Francisco State University (SFSU).¹⁰⁴ Each of these organizations responded to the lack of civil rights for Asian migrants and other marginalized groups during the mid-twentieth century and continues to advocate for racial and social justice for the AAPI community today. Similar to the lack of government intervention, or the enabling of anti-Asian hate, during the 1901 San Francisco Plague, the Office of the Attorney General in California denied the petition of the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center that co-founders Dr. Russell Jeung, Director Cynthia Choi, and Director Manjusha Kulkarni had started, who were the leaders of the aforementioned organizations. They used their respective institutions to mobilize community resources and put together a national reporting tool as a “means to disseminate the reports” easily, because they could “quickly access a political infrastructure that the AAPI community had built over the last half-century.”¹⁰⁵ That infrastructure was the result of the Immigration Act of 1965, which was part of a series of sweeping reforms from President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society” agenda.

The Immigration Act of 1965 rectified the limitations of Asian immigration caused by the 1924 Immigration Quota fueled by anti-Asian hate and xenophobia of the early twentieth century. Before 1965, about “7 percent of all immigrants came from Asia,” but since 1965, Asian immigration to the United States “increased tenfold,” where “44 percent of the total annual immigration stream” are from Asian countries. These countries include China, Japan, Korea, and

¹⁰⁴ Kara Takashi, *Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center: A Model of Collective Leadership and Community Advocacy* Vol. 23, No. 3 (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, October 2020), p.341-351.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.341-351.

the Philippines.¹⁰⁶ There is now a huge influx of immigrants that has shaped the sociopolitical landscape that now exists today. During the 1901 San Francisco Plague, anti-Asian racism was largely contained in the West Coast. However, shifting population demographics post-1965 has provided the environment for anti-Asian hate to spread rapidly across the United States during the COVID-19 crisis. Litam reports Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders represent the “fastest growing ethnic or racial group in the United States,” with “approximately 20.9 million people” identifying as AAPI in 2015.¹⁰⁷ As evident, the Asian American population has significantly increased and daily attacks on the Asian American community is highlighted by the fact that there are more people affected by this new pandemic of hate.

The Stop AAPI Hate National Report “covers 3,795 incidents” that was documented by the Stop AAPI hate reporting center “from March 19, 2020, to February 28, 2021,” however, the statistics on the report underestimate the actual number of instances of anti-Asian violence. According to the report, 68.1% of the total number of incidents from that time period was verbal harassment toward AAPI victims, 11.1% of those incidents were physical assaults, civil rights violations make up 8.5% of total incidents, and online harassment make up 6.8% of the total incidents.¹⁰⁸ Verbal harassment makes up the largest of these incidents and may include comments that indicate that blames Chinese Americans for the problems caused by COVID-19 or even racial slurs that have historically been used to marginalize or belittle Asian American individuals. In terms of national data trends, AAPI women report “hate incidents 2.3 times more

¹⁰⁶ Morrison G. Wong, *Post-1965 Asian Immigrants: Where Do They Come From, Where Are They Now, and Where Are They Going?* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, December 2012), p. 151.

¹⁰⁷ Stacey Diane A. Litam, “*Take Your Kung-Flu Back to Wuhan*”: *Counseling Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders With Race-Based Trauma Related to COVID-19* Vol. 10, Issue 2 (Cleveland, Ohio: The Professional Counselor, 2020), p. 144-156.

¹⁰⁸ Russell Jeung et al., *Stop AAPI Hate National Report* Vol. 44, Issue 2 (Berkeley, California: Ethnic Studies Review, 2021), p. 19-26.

than [AAPI] men,” the Chinese are the largest ethnic group that experiences hate crime the most at a staggering 42.2% of cases, and private businesses are the “primary site of discrimination,” followed by “public streets.¹⁰⁹ As evident in the data, women are frequently more targeted, suggesting that gender is a determinant in racially motivated violence, and that public places seem to be the optimal environment that enables extreme racist behavior to occur, thus creating power hierarchies similar to the anti-Asian hate crime wave in the early twentieth century.

This chapter will focus on how hate escalated towards Asians following the election of Donald Trump and during the COVID-19 crisis. President Trump was the first prominent figure to call COVID-19 the “China Virus” as a political smear campaign against China but is now used as a political tool to incite violence against the Asian American community. According to political scientist, Arofah Minasari, because COVID-19 was first discovered in Wuhan, China, American society automatically associated COVID-19 with China, and this resulted in Asian migrants in the U.S. being seen as “carriers of the virus,” similar to how the origins of the bubonic plague in 1901 was attributed to Chinatown in San Francisco.¹¹⁰ Now COVID-19 is being attributed to Asian Americans once again, because of the fact they are non-white and therefore “foreign.” It is reasonable to infer that “hate incidents that are reported in the media” are the direct result of “xenophobic language used by public officials,” like cabinet members of the Trump administration, which include Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Senior Advisor to the President Stephen Miller.¹¹¹ In response to rampant attacks on the AAPI community and Trump’s racist rhetoric, the World Health Organization (WHO) sent a public announcement that

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 19-26.

¹¹⁰ Arofah Minasari et al., *#STOPASIANHATE: Donald Trump's Political Propaganda Against Asian Racism in the United States* Vol. 5, No. 2 (Indonesia: Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, December 2021), p. 160

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 160.

“urged people to avoid terms like ‘Wuhan Virus’ or ‘Chinese Virus’” because of the likelihood that this could spark backlash for the Asian community that is just as affected by COVID-19 like anybody else in the world.¹¹² It is without a doubt that Trump has directly caused a spike in anti-Asian violence in the United States because of the rhetoric he espouses.

This chapter will first provide the context in which the anti-Asian pandemic of hate thrived in well before the election of Donald J. Trump. I will first discuss the socioeconomic globalization of the early twenty first century that has allowed immigrants from non-European countries to be part of the American economy and way of life but has fueled tensions between a particular subset of white Americans and BIPOC communities in the United States. Going along the same theme of critical events before Trump, the “othering” of Asian communities and anti-Muslim policies during the post-9/11 era has contributed to the brewing of Sinophobia, Islamophobia, and xenophobia in the United States. Along the campaign trail and his subsequent election, Trump becomes the new face for white rage as he supported strict anti-immigration policies like the construction of a wall along the southern U.S. border, massive deportation of undocumented citizens of the Latinx background, and a “Muslim” ban and registry, which would reinforce the racism he would espouse during COVID-19. From 2017-2021, the Trump administration’s political activity would coincide with an uptick of hate crimes.

Through primary sources on AAPI hate before and during COVID-19, I will be able to argue that COVID-19 created the perfect storm for hate to be weaponized by the Trump administration. One set of primary sources include sources that are related to Trump and other political reports: #STOPASIANHATE: Donald Trump's Political Propaganda Against Asian Racism in the United States, Anti-Asian violence and US imperialism, and Asian/American

¹¹² Ibid., p. 162.

Women Scholars, Gendered Orientalism, and Racialized Violence: Before, During, and After the 2021 Atlanta Massacre. A second set of primary sources include that are related to Asian advocacy programs: “Take Your Kung-Flu Back to Wuhan”: Counseling Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders With Race-Based Trauma Related to COVID-19, Anti-Asian Hate Crime During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Reproduction of Inequality, Resistance is Not Futile: Challenging AAPI Hate, and the Stop AAPI Hate National Report. A third set of primary sources include that are related to journalism and social media: Association of “#COVID19” Versus “#chinesevirus” With Anti-Asian Sentiments on Twitter: March 9–23, 2020 and For Asian Americans, a Dual Pandemic of COVID-19 and Racism. Even though contexts are very different, racism against Asians during COVID-19 bears some similarities to the San Francisco Plague from a century prior. One of these similarities between both public health emergencies that this chapter will show is the pre-existing anti-Asian climate that brews years before the COVID-19 pandemic. The epidemics intensifies the anti-Asian racism that is already there. Given the demographic explosion of Asian immigration in the last quarter century, the other difference from the 1900 San Francisco plague is that AAPI hate during COVID-19 is not localized anymore, rather it is nationalized.

Anti-Asian Rhetoric in the Quarter Century Before the Rise of Trump

In popular imagination, the image of Asia is very much limited to East Asian. When we think of anti-Asian immigration, the focus rests on East Asians. However, in examination of recent history, it shows that anti-Asian hate is much broader than East Asians. If we turn back the timeline further to a quarter century ago with 9/11, the rhetoric against Asians emerged strongly with a combined attack on Muslims post-9/11 and anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese rhetoric, in particular, from the Reagan years. Anti-Asian hate was a reaction towards the

Chinese and Japanese as economic threats due to globalization as well as the reaction towards Muslims as a physical threat due to 9/11. Asians are imagined as an existential threat to America physically, economically, and culturally because American society thinks they are taking over their society, which is predominately white. Rampant immigration and the perceived Muslim threat has led to the villainization of the Asian community, which not only includes East Asian peoples, but those from the Middle East and South Asia.

Since 1964, anti-Asian hate has nationalized. Asian immigration has spiked since the Immigration Act of 1965 that rectified the ban on anti-Asian immigration in the 1924 Immigration Quota Act, which sought to maintain “white hegemony” as a type of racial hierarchy. Civil rights legislation that was passed during sweeping reforms of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society in the 1960s focused on “race-conscious decision-making” for all aspects of life from education opportunities to job opportunities to societal treatment. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration instituted “color-blind” policies that called for repealing of “affirmative action” policies that afford people of color the same opportunities as white counterparts by taking down barriers built during Jim Crow Segregation.¹¹³ Neoconservatives like Reagan that wanted to reverse the momentum of the civil rights movement gained was a prime example of white fragility or white anger against the success of communities of color. Reagan’s racist rhetoric would pave the way for future politicians like Trump to continue their barrage against marginalized identities, including Asians during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This barrage towards Asian Americans was historically known as the “Yellow Peril.” Reagan was popular among white Americans because he was staunchly anti-communist.

¹¹³ Denetra Walker and Allison Daniel Anders, “*China Virus*” and “*Kung-Flu*”: *A Critical Race Case Study of Asian American Journalists’ Experiences During COVID-19* Vol. 22, Issue 1 (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Journals, November 2021), p. 76-88.

Unfortunately, communism was heavily associated with East Asian identities. Historian M.J. Heale argued that the ‘Yellow Peril’ was a variation of McCarthyism with the irrational fear that there would be an “Asiatic invasion” due to the growth in power of Asian countries like China and Japan throughout global history.¹¹⁴ The ‘Yellow Peril’ theory being pushed by the mainstream media in the 1980s and 1990s was a type of racial dog whistling to signal that Asian immigration and integration was a threat to “white spaces,” thus perpetuating ideas of white supremacy under the guise of anti-communism. Former Governor of Texas, John Connally, made a bid for the Republican nomination in the 1980 presidential race. In his speech, Connally mocked the Japanese stating they should be “prepared to sit on the docks of Yokohama in your little Toyotas while you stare at your little TV sets and eat your mandarin oranges.”¹¹⁵ John Connally was a former democrat, who switched to the Republican Party because of his support for Richard Nixon. Connally was a key political figure that would reshape the identity of the Republican Party as a platform of hate that would continue to worsen as evident in the election of Donald Trump, who will parrot racist tropes of the Asian American community. There was much physical violence toward Japanese Americans in 1982 as “29 percent of Americans had an unfavorable attitude towards Japan,” which jumped from “12 percent in 1980.” In Michigan cities, like Flint and Lansing, “there were reports of Japanese cars” having their windscreens broken and tires slashed and then a Chinese American was “horribly beaten to death by a baseball bat” by unemployed white automobile workers in Detroit that mistook him for Japanese and were convinced that the Japanese were stealing their jobs.¹¹⁶ That Chinese American was Vincent Chen. These gruesome incidents are one of many attacks against the AAPI community

¹¹⁴ M. J. Heale, *Anatomy of a Scare: Yellow Peril Politics in America, 1980-1993* Vol. 43, Issue 1 (Journal of American Studies, May 2009), p. 20-21.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

at a time when anti-Asian racism was escalating at a national level. Around this decade, Japan was one of the Asian tigers, indicating that they were an economic superpower. As evident in the localized violence, jobs in the U.S. were being sent overseas and the U.S. was a major consumer of Japanese products, and these events triggered acts of violence were not isolated.

In chapter 9 of the *Handbook of the Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations*, Nadia Kim summarized the Asian experience perfectly: no matter how long Asian Americans have been in the United States or how “assimilated” into mainstream society they have become, they remain “foreigners” in America.¹¹⁷ Even before the hate crime wave against the Asian community during COVID-19, Asians faced challenges being seen as not assimilable or not American, which made the U.S. a breeding ground for hate long before the pandemic. Kim also argues that anti-Asian racism is rooted in “white Americans’ nativism,” which has relied on several anti-Asian stereotypes such as, “economic competitor, organized criminal, ‘illegal alien,’ and yellow peril.”¹¹⁸ These labels also tie into the socioeconomic globalization of the twenty first century, where Asian countries are seen as rivals to the U.S., and thus Asian Americans are not seen as “American,” because of their possible “ties” to the Asian countries like China and Japan, even if their family has lived in the U.S. for over five generations. Historians Peter Trubowitz and Jungkun Seo asserts that ever since America’s “earliest campaigns against importation of cheap Chinese labor” in the late nineteenth century and recent cold war tensions with rise of China as a “communist superpower,” U.S. politicians label China as a “threat to American values and

¹¹⁷ Nadia Kia, *Handbook of the Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations*, Chapter 9 (Boston, Massachusetts: Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research, 2007), p. 131-144.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131-144.

livelihoods.”¹¹⁹ This 2012 peer-reviewed article argues that anti-Chinese rhetoric or a Sinophobic platform has been used by U.S. politicians for political gain well before Trump. For example, Republicans during the 1950s twisted the story of China’s “fall to communism” as a foreign policy failure under Democratic President Harry Truman’s leadership, and thus helped divide votes within the Democratic voting bloc. Subsequently, Democrats in the late 1980s seized the opportunity to blame “George H.W. Bush’s pro-China policies” in response to the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 in order to attract the Republican voting bloc, thus paving the path to power for Democratic President Bill Clinton.¹²⁰ The Democratic Party and the Republican Party are major political parties in U.S. politics and the evidence shows that both parties were at fault for exploiting world events that related to China and not the U.S. for political gain. Due to the continued villainization of China and constant association of communism and the Asian identity, Asian Americans are a recurring target in hate crimes during the post-Cold War period. US politicians have indirectly used the Yellow Peril theory from the early twentieth century to engage in “Japan-bashing in Washington” in the 1980s, where Democratic Texas congressman Jack Brooks said that Harry Truman “should have dropped four” nuclear bombs instead of the two that obliterated Nagasaki and Hiroshima.¹²¹ In an effort to curb the importation of Japanese automobile products into the U.S. and wealth transfer to Japan from U.S.-Japanese trade during the 1986 midterm elections, U.S. politicians from both parties promoted a platform of hate at the expense of Japanese Americans that have become a target of hate crimes during this era. This has

¹¹⁹ Peter Trubowitz and Jungkun Seo, *The China Card: Playing Politics with Sino-American Relations* Vol. 127, No. 2 (New York, New York: The Academy of Political Science, Summer 2012), p. 189-211.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189-211.

¹²¹ M. J. Heale, p. 20-21.

become what was known as “economic nationalism” as a way to gain political visibility, which is precisely what Trump would engage in during the campaign trail.

Los Angeles Times writer, Jeffrey Kaye, argues that the economic situation in the U.S. parallels their immigration policy or how American society treats immigrants. At the time of the recession in “fiscal year 2009,” Obama allowed Immigration and Customs Enforcement to deport “387,790” people, and this statistic represented a “5 percent increase” in deportations that differed from his predecessor, George W. Bush.¹²² Economic problems at the time were attributed to migrant populations as they were common scapegoats through U.S. history. Doctoral Candidate, Xiaodong Fang, asserts that “China has long been accused by U.S. politicians of undervaluing its currency to gain unfair advantages in trade” with the United States, but this has been a common strategy in presidential elections since George H.W. Bush. As a result, “cheaper Chinese imports flood U.S. markets, ultimately” hurting the American manufacturing industry as there are less jobs and American manufacturers can’t sell their products to China because China imposed tariffs, whereas America did not.¹²³ Globalization in the twenty first century has allowed the U.S. political establishment to villainize China, thus giving birth to anti-Chinese rhetoric and indirectly inspiring anti-Asian violence at the local level. These developments reinforce the alleged ‘yellow peril,’ but the bulk of violence and hate towards the Asian community is taken by Asian Americans, who have no ties to the countries of their heritage. Anti-Chinese rhetoric was used by Bush and Obama to further their political clout at the expense of the Asian community. For example, when Obama was running for re-election in 2012, there were “16 New York Times articles” that contained Obama’s anti-China “rhetoric

¹²² Jeffrey Kaye, *Economy dictates immigration policy* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News, March 2010), p. 2.

¹²³ Xiaodong Fang, *Anti-China Rhetoric, Presidential Elections, and U.S. Foreign Policy Towards China* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, May 2016), p. 96

on trade and currency issues, and 14 White House statements” that took a “tough stance on China” from March 1 to November 6, 2012.¹²⁴ This suggests that anti-China sentiment has been brewing for years leading up to the election of Donald J. Trump and is independent of party affiliation. The cost of their political rhetoric is the intensity of anti-Asian hate across the US.

On August 31, 1967, a year before his assassination, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a speech at the National Conference on New Politics, where he identified three problems as the “plague of Western civilization,” which is “the sickness of racism, excessive materialism, and militarism.”¹²⁵ The excessive materialism ties into the previous discussion on how U.S. politicians in the post-U.S.S.R era has looked to scapegoat China and other Asian countries for the economic failures in the United States. In turn, Chinese Americans and other Asian communities have been in the forefront of interpersonal violence because of the sociopolitical atmosphere that has been brewing for decades before the fuse lit during COVID-19 and Trump. On December 15, 2016, Dr. Hatem Bazian reports that in the U.S., “71 mosques have been attacked” since the 9/11 attacks as Dr. Bazian argues that “we have transitioned from rhetoric to violence because civil society” has been allowed to be taken over by fascist leaders that incorporate racism, materialism, and militarism into their rhetoric, which what Dr. King had analyzed.¹²⁶ Dr. Bazian attributes this trend on Islamophobia as a pattern of racialized violence by political elites in today’s society that has a wide array of tools at their disposal. One of those tools is the “media’s negative representation of Islam and Muslims,” where “economic and political elites” have the authority to label certain groups or individuals as “enemies of society.” Such is the fate of “African Americans, Native Americans, Jews, Chinese, Latinos, Japanese,

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 97-98

¹²⁵ Hatem Bazian, *Islamophobia and “The Three Evils of Society”* Vol. 3, No. 1 (London, United Kingdom: Pluto Journals, Fall 2015), p. 158-166.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 158-166.

Catholics, and Vietnamese” as “enemy number one,” since media coverage reflected the priorities of these economic and political elites at the time.¹²⁷ Those priorities were alienating possible threats to their power, which include racial and ethnic minorities. Reinforcing the fact that Islamophobia and xenophobia are major problems in Western countries, “violence committed by Muslims accounts for 2% of all incidents” across the European continent, “while 98% is the result of neo-Nazi, nationalist, separatist, and ethnic oriented violence.”¹²⁸ Media portrayal of Muslims as terrorists reinforced the brewing hatred toward immigrant populations, and Asians in the United States and other Western countries would suffer the same bigoted attacks by the media during COVID-19.

According to the FBI, hate crimes against Arab and Muslim Americans increased by “1600 percent from 2000 to 2001” after the 9/11 attacks.¹²⁹ Like racism-fueled acts of hate experienced by Asian Americans during the San Francisco plague, physical assaults, vandalism, arson, workplace discrimination, and verbal assault towards Arab and Muslim Americans were classified as hate crimes post-2001 and was punishable by law. However, these acts of violence were not classified as hate crimes in the early twentieth century and it took civil rights legislation passed in the mid twentieth century and a number of landmark decision in the Supreme Court of the United States to guarantee equal protection under the Constitution, using defined protected statuses, which includes race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin, among many others. However, the data shows that hateful acts still exist toward minority groups in the United States during national crises like the San Francisco Plague, 9/11, or COVID-19. From racist headlines

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 158-166.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 158-166.

¹²⁹ Evelyn Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11: Representational Strategies for a “Postrace” era* Vol. 65, No. 1 (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, March 2013), p. 161-169.

like “Unveiling Freedom” or “Under the Veil,” which refers to the headdress worn by Muslim women, to the villainization of Islam as a “brutal, violent, backward and oppressive,” journalists have shaped the narrative to fit the idea of American superiority and “advance U.S. imperialism” in response to the 9/11 attacks.¹³⁰ Like how U.S. politicians exploited world events in China and Japan during the 1980s for political gain, U.S. politicians were working with the mainstream media to paint a negative picture of Muslim and Arab countries as “threats to the American way of life” in order to justify their mistreatment and American hegemony. In other words, the racial dog whistling by the Right wing media represents an appeal to protect “[white] American values” and their evidence is the alleged oppression of Muslim women in these countries, so that the party that villainizes the minority stays in power.

Trump’s Platform of Hate Leading Up to COVID-19

Trump inherited the anti-Asian discourse from predecessors but became more emboldened to weaponize hate and become the new face of the Republican Party during the campaign trail of 2015. During Trump’s speech when he announced his bid for the republican nomination for president, Trump infamously said that “when Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best... they’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.” Inflammatory and racist rhetoric by a major U.S. political figure allowed white Americans to “act on their existing prejudices” by engaging in acts of violence against “members of marginalized groups” that protested against Trump’s victory, where the Southern Poverty Law Center “tracked a drastic increase in bias-related

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 161-169.

incidents” in the first month of Trump’s victory, totaling up to 1,094.¹³¹ Statistically speaking, the significant increase in hate crime incidents in the U.S. toward marginalized groups, including Asians, show that Trump was directly responsible for inciting violence and hate for political gain. This theme of xenophobia follows a similar pattern to Governor Gage’s and Dr. J.J. Kinyoun’s handling of the San Francisco Plague in 1900, where Chinatown bore responsibility and political leaders at the time blamed economic problems and social deterioration on the influx of immigrants. During an interview with “FOX News, pro-Trump advocate Carl Higbie” on Trump’s campaign trail in 2016, Higbie claimed that “Japanese American incarceration served as a precedent for a Muslim Registry,” in which he was widely criticized by many organizations, like Densho, whose mission is shed light on the atrocities of Japanese American incarceration during World War II in order to promote equity and justice today.¹³² And thus, many of Trump’s opponents supported the Muslim, Latinx, and Asian communities in defiance of Trump’s rhetoric and platform. What is even more reprehensible is that Conservative commentators claim there “can be no comparison between” the Executive Order that incarcerated the Japanese and the travel ban under Trump because they did not target a specific ethnicity. However, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) was quick to respond that both executive actions did not specifically mention race or ethnicity in order to make it “constitutional,” but many Muslim Americans were unconstitutionally kept out of the United States. In response to the Supreme Court’s decision to uphold the travel ban after including North Korea and Venezuela, Trump hailed it as a “tremendous victory for the American people” and decided to include “more Asian

¹³¹ Benjamin Newman et al., *The Trump Effect: An Experimental Investigation of the Emboldening Effect of Racially Inflammatory Elite Communication* Vol. 51, Issue 3 (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, February 2020), p. 1138-1159.

¹³² Rachel Pistol, *Asian American Responses to Donald Trump’s anti-Asian rhetoric and misuse of the history of Japanese American incarceration* Vol. 17 (Comparative American Studies An International Journal, 2020), p. 296-311.

and African countries” as part of their work to “limit immigration of people of [color]” into the United States; the travel ban even increased hate crimes towards Muslim Americans “from 38 in 2014 to 300 in 2017” when the first travel ban was implemented.¹³³ Based on Trump’s rhetoric, the American people referred to white Americans and others who flirted with the idea that non-white Americans were a problem or a threat, similar to the Yellow Peril theory. The blatant disregard by the Trump administration and his allies to learn from the mistakes of past presidential administrations, especially Japanese incarceration, shows that Trump intentionally weaponized racism to enhance his political goals. Thus, Trump was able to garner support of a new racist voting base of American society.

Trump’s campaign slogan was to “Make America Great Again.” Trump’s vision was to recreate an America in which he would be privileged once again as a white, Christian American at the expense of marginalized groups, similar to how Trump grew up during the Civil Rights Era. Historian Lindsay Perez Huber argues that racist nativism as a concept “explains how People of Color have historically” been perceived as “non-native, regardless of their actual origin,” and “not belonging to the monolithic ‘American’ identity, which has historically been tied to “constructions of whiteness.”¹³⁴ This is an important concept because Trump appeals to working class white Americans the same way U.S. politicians appealed to working class white Americans during the anti-Asian riots in 1908 and during the construction of the transcontinental railroad, because they were allegedly “stealing” the jobs that “rightfully belonged” to white Americans. However, policies at the time allowed employers to pay Asian migrants lower wages than white counterparts, but Asian migrants became the target of disgruntled workers. The

¹³³ Ibid., p. 296-311.

¹³⁴ Lindsay Perez Huber, “*Make America Great Again!*”: *Donald Trump, Racist Nativism and The Virulent Adherence to White Supremacy Amid U.S. Demographic Change* Vol. 10 (Charleston, South Carolina: Charleston Law Review, 2016), p. 220-221.

question remains why this new voting bloc of racist white Americans are shifting their anger with marginalized groups, even after all the civil rights legislation that had been passed in the 1960s and stronger hate crime laws being passed after 9/11. In 2015, Trump ran for president in order to restore the “failing U.S. economy, infrastructure,” and the well-being of America by attributing America’s decline to the “millions” of perceived “invaders” across the Southern border of the United States. The author also adds that “Trump’s stance on immigration was not new” as there has been a long history of anti-Latinx immigration politics, where researchers have found that the U.S. media’s continued portrayal of Latinx persons as “criminals,” “invaders,” or “threats to U.S. well-being,” has allowed white Americans to incorrectly associate “all undocumented people as Mexican, regardless of national origin or immigration status.”¹³⁵ This trend in hate-based politics derives from the othering of marginalized identities and reinforces the fact that white Americans are privileged enough to subjugate non-white Americans into submission through racism and justify their actions in order to protect white America. The othering of marginalized identities would soon extend to Asian Americans during COVID-19, who also do not fit construction of whiteness.

As part of the American upper class, Trump has used his position to embody the divisive and bigoted views of his supporters for the sake of power. For example, when Trump visited Iowa State University for the football game and spread his rhetoric, crowds cheered him on, where several white students have been saying things like “vote for white supremacy!” or “if it ain’t white, it ain’t right” as they dismantle posters by Latinx protestors against Trump.¹³⁶ This was not an isolated event as a similar event happened in August 2015, where two white men leaving a Red Sox baseball game were “inspired” by Trump to “beat a homeless Latino man

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 224-225.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

sleeping outside” the stadium and then in November 2015, an “African American protestor from the Black Lives Matter movement” was beaten and shoved around by “white Trump supporters at a rally in Birmingham, Alabama.” In response to these incidents, Trump said that the “people who are following me are very passionate. They love this country, and they want this country to be great again.”¹³⁷ The image shows three different angles of a Black protestor, Kashiya Nwanguma, being shoved by 75-year-old veteran, Alvin Bamberger, and other white men, who claimed to be incited by President Trump to engage in violence against the protestors in a 2016 Kentucky rally. In a lawsuit against then President-elect Trump, Alvin Bamberger regretted pushing the protestor, but blames his actions on Trump. This image shows a group of white men physically harassing a Black protestor all because she held a sign with Trump’s head on a pig’s body. This is yet another example of hate-based violence against racial minorities at the behest of Trump, who egged them on. The repeated acts of violence at any of Trump’s rallies proves that Trump is responsible for intensifying hate leading up to the events in 2020.



Note. President Trump can be heard barking “Get Out” as a Black protestor is shoved by a crowd of white male Trump supporters at a rally in Louisville, Kentucky.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹³⁸ Image from *Man accused of attacking rally protestor says Trump inspired him*, CNN, April 16, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/15/politics/donald-trump-rally-lawsuit/index.html>.

These racist incidents occurred as demographically, the United States has become more racially diverse akin to the “browning of America” theory. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that the “national population has become more racially and ethnically diverse in just the past decade,” where 2015 marks the “first time in U.S. history that more than 50% of children under the age of 5 are non-white.” In 2015, the “percentage of non-Hispanic whites declined to 62%,” while Latinx and Asian populations “increased nearly fivefold,” making them the largest group of immigrants. In response to these shifting demographics, the Pew Research Center “reported in June 2014 that 73% of political conservatives believed” that immigrants “burden [their] country” by taking away “jobs, housing and healthcare,” and among white U.S. voters, they believed that the increased influx of immigrants in the U.S. “threatens traditional American customs/values.”¹³⁹ There is a recurring theme of seeing immigrants as “threats to American values” is another type of racist dog whistling that has enabled white supremacy to take hold during the Trump administration. Lastly, Huber reported what was known at the time as the “white flight from the Democratic Party” that has led to the current political polarization, where the existing white establishment of the Republican party has encouraged white conservatives to be “virulently adhere to white supremacy” under the “post-racial era façade” in response to the “threat of the non-native,” which are people of color and new Americans.¹⁴⁰ Population demographic shifts from the 1960s to 2015, the accumulation of racist nativist sentiment from U.S. politicians, and national crises like 9/11 or the Iraq War has allowed hate crime against Asians and immigrants to spike well before the election of Trump and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trump “employs a radical fix by blaming racial others and immigrants” in order to “validate white people’s superiority.” Republicans capitalized on the fears of working class

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 238.

whites through “racial resentment,” which Trump successfully tapped into.¹⁴¹ Trump represents a loudspeaker for the new voting bloc of white rage as they feel entitled to act on their prejudices, because Trump gave them the platform. For instance, in response to a person dying at the 2017 United the Right Rally in Charlottesville, “Trump legitimized white Supremacist violence” by normalizing it as he said that “there were fine people on both sides.”¹⁴² This sort of rhetoric further fuels the othering of marginalized groups and affirms white supremacy in the United States as the citizenry often models after its leaders, like Trump.

Through his administration’s policies, Trump has revived efforts to curb Asian immigration as well as the immigration of people of color or nonwhite populations. For example in 2018, the Trump administration’s “Buy American, Hire American” initiative allowed immigration officials to “restrict H-1B visas of highly skilled immigrants,” many of whom were Asian Americans as AAPI workers that immigrated “between 2001 and 2015 received about 70% of all H-1B visas.”¹⁴³ That percentage significantly decreased during the Trump administration because Trump’s platform centered on marginalizing immigrant and more specifically, Asian American communities. Researchers studying the emotional attitudes held by racial minorities, including AAPI respondents, reported that “AAPI, Black, and Latina/o respondents” are significantly less angry and less fearful compared to whites in response to emotions felt during Trump’s campaign trail in 2016. The authors of this study explain that “racial minorities generally do not possess the same senses of political agency and entitlement”

¹⁴¹ Laura Pulido et al., *Environmental Deregulation, Spectacular Racism, and White Nationalism in the Trump Era* Vol. 109, Issue 2 (Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 2019), p. 520-532.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 520-532.

¹⁴³ Davin L. Phoenix and Maneesh Arora, *From emotion to action among Asian Americans: assessing the roles of threat and identity in the age of Trump* Vol. 6, Issue 3 (Politics, Groups, and Identities, 2018), p. 357-372.

that allows them to voice their anger or fear as opposed to the privilege of whites that are allowed to showcase their emotion without repercussion.¹⁴⁴ The data collected by this research group reinforces the fact that Trump enables white Americans to act upon their biases, which are measured by their emotions, in order to alienate Asian communities. The data also shows how Trump will tap on this “white rage” as the COVID-19 Pandemic draws near. In a 2016 ethnographic study of white Louisianans, Hochschild concluded that white voters that formed a majority of Trump’s voting base were angry with the elitist establishment. Hochschild found that from their perspective, “they have been patiently waiting in line” for the chance of receiving the “American Dream,” while “line cutters—women, minorities, immigrants—appear to be cutting in front of them” as white Louisianans felt entitled to live the American Dream.¹⁴⁵ Their support for Trump on the campaign trail and during his presidency provided a space for them to vent, especially against Obama that Trump tapped onto at the expense of immigrants, including Asian Americans. In the same study, white Louisianans felt “betrayed by Obama, [who] seemed to favor the line cutters,” whereas Trump’s presidency was “associated with the feeling of safety.” Based on a 2018 dramaturgical analysis of Trump’s “identity politics” and interviews with Trump supporters, scholars found that because of Trump’s physicality during his speeches, where he was in “constant motion” or he had a tendency to fidget, showcased his “working-class persona.” And this was idolized by the “white working class who felt that they had been devalorized” by the politically correct elite or the left that Trump seems to villainize.¹⁴⁶ As evident by both the 2016 ethnographic study and 2018 dramaturgical study, Trump’s election

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 357-372.

¹⁴⁵ Eric O. Silva, *Donald Trump’s discursive field: A juncture of stigma contests over race, gender, religion, and democracy* Vol. 13, Issue 12 (Sociology Compass, December 2019), p. 1-13.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 1-13.

was seen as a victory for the white working class that felt they were waging a war against immigrants for their piece of the American pie that they felt worked hard for. This racist notion of vilifying immigrants, including Asian immigrants, came from not only Trump but from many other right wing personalities that made anti-immigration a staple of right wing identity politics that white Americans seem to identify with. Hochschild explains that the purpose of electing Donald Trump, an anti-establishment outsider, was a way to “unify all the white, evangelical enthusiasts” against outsiders like “Muslims, undocumented immigrants and the politically correct liberals,” thus elevating the ingroup of white middle-class Americans at the expense of the outgroup.¹⁴⁷ That ingroup best identified with Trump as a hardworking white man frustrated with the “globalist elites” and immigrants of color that they feel are leeching off of them, because Trump told them who to blame. These same voters felt that they didn’t have to “wait in line” during Trump’s presidency, however, this rapid rise of hate among Trump’s supporters due to Trump’s nationalist politics would contextualize the anti-Asian violence in 2020.

Trump declared China as public enemy number one during the campaign trail, but his continued villainization of China draws near the COVID-19 Pandemic as China wins the alleged trade wars against the U.S. in 2018. For respondents that felt anger during the campaign trail in 2016 from the same study, all four racial groups felt “unfavourability toward Trump” and had “personal experiences with discrimination. However, AAPI respondents were the “only group” that felt fear due to being perceived as an “economic threat” as Trump continued to hamper the economic successes of Asian immigrants by waging a media war against them, stating they were stealing the jobs of white voters for Trump.¹⁴⁸ The data from this study reinforces the anti-Asian racism felt in the years leading up to the COVID-19 Pandemic as anti-Chinese sentiment

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 1-13.

¹⁴⁸ Davin L. Phoenix and Maneesh Arora, p. 357-372.

intensified, especially with the trade wars. Relations with China is a common wedge issue among U.S. presidential administrations as evident in Trump's rhetoric against China during the trade wars, stating that "global warming is a Chinese plot." In response to free trade policies enacted by the Obama administration with China, Trump believes that the U.S. is losing the trade war, so Trump "vowed to label China" as a "currency manipulator" and "[imposed] a 45 percent tariff on Chinese imports."¹⁴⁹ Trump's political demonization of China allowed him to be elected and remain popular among his base, but the demonization stretched to Chinese Americans who had no relation to China and were subjected to daily violence and hate during the Trump era. On the subject of globalization and trade during the Obama administration, Obama asserted himself in support for globalization as a way for mutual cooperation between cultures when he was trying to ratify the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2016. However, Trump takes the opposite stance stating that the TPP is the "greatest danger yet," because "it would further open our markets to aggressive currency cheaters, that's what they are, cheaters," referring to China. Trump then goes on his trade disaster tirade by presenting China as a "distinct other" or a threat to the "American identity," by stating that "China is corrupt" and that America is about "law and order."¹⁵⁰ Although Obama also takes the position that China is a "distinct other," Obama is not aggressive in his language as Trump is and does not seek to scapegoat China. This villainization of China under the theme of trade will inevitably fuel anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 Pandemic as Trump sets the stage for his anti-Asian rhetoric from the end of the Obama administration to right before the COVID-19 Pandemic. The same article explains why Trump's populist rhetoric from the campaign trail through 2019 becomes the perfect environment to

¹⁴⁹ Lowell Dittmer, *Trump on China* Vol. 41, No. 4 (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, October-December 2017), p. 677-678.

¹⁵⁰ Amy Skonieczny, *Emotions and Political Narratives: Populism, Trump and Trade* Vol. 6, Issue 4 (San Francisco, California: Politics and Governance, December 2018), p. 62-72.

espouse hate in a “us/them character clash,” where Trump “blames China, Mexico, corporations, ‘the elite,’ or immigrants” for stealing jobs from working class whites that they feel entitled to.¹⁵¹

Trump created a sense of urgency and represented safety from racial “others” threatening working class whites out of their piece of the America pie, and thus his populist platform helped him tap onto the racist ideology that was silently and slowly building up during the Obama era.

On November 1, 2018, Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, launched the “China Initiative,” where he led Trump’s Justice Department in order to target “Chinese economic espionage against the United States” that has been “increasing rapidly,” according to Trump. Then, in June 2020, Trump appointed Director of the FBI, Christopher Wray, claimed that there were more “more than 2,000 active investigations that [linked] back to the Chinese government,” where the suspects were accused of engaging in “trade secret theft” and “attempted theft of U.S.-based technology” and the fact that those suspects had both “natural and legal connections to the PRC,” or the People’s Republic of China.¹⁵² Towards the middle of Trump’s only term as President, Trump’s latest attack on China is utilizing his Justice Department to focus on Chinese Americans who are privy to classified knowledge that Trump believed would undermine U.S. national security under the guise of protecting American industry and the private information of American citizens. Similar to the Patriot Act during the Bush Era with the indirect marginalization of Muslim and Arab Americans, Trump is attempting to strip the rights of Chinese Americans currently employed in various sectors of industry by accusing them of espionage and creating this narrative that China is out to get America, and Trump’s consistent anti-Asian rhetoric extends this narrative to Chinese Americans. Law Professor Margaret K.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 62-72.

¹⁵² Margaret K. Lewis, *Criminalizing China* Vol. 111, No. 1 (Chicago, Illinois: Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Spring 2021), p. 145-225.

Lewis argues that Trump's DOJ has stressed that "criminal charges are only of [their] tools" in the China initiative in order to "combat a China threat." The United States' criminal justice system "does not allow guilt by association" as it would be unconstitutional, however, Lewis argues that Trump's China Initiative has labeled specific Chinese persons as "threat by association" with the PRC by legalizing the stigmatization of them.¹⁵³ As evident, there was a slow progression of coded racism that Trump attempted to legalize and normalize it right before the COVID-19 Pandemic blows his anti-Chinese platform out of proportion. Trump inherited the anti-Asian discourse from his predecessors like Obama, Bush, and Reagan, but Trump's new spin on the anti-Chinese narrative as a bipolar opposite in both ideology and physical appearance makes anti-Asian racism during the Trump era more pronounced than ever. Both the pent-up racism among working class whites that were fed up with Obama as he was villainized by Trump and the volatile relationship between the PRC and the US fueled the anti-Asian violence that was soon to come in 2020 as first reports of unknown virus rapidly spread across Wuhan, China in 2019 that would slowly make its way to America in January 2020.

COVID-19 and Anti-Asian Violence

While Trumpian racism was not new, his nativist argument positioned at the center of his campaign and presidency were. As this thesis has shown, anti-Asian sentiment, policies, and violence had predated Trump by decades, however, Democratic and Republican Leadership since the past century made efforts to mute their racism within legislation. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration's anti-Asian rhetoric achieved new heights, stimulating a massive spike in violence across the United States previously unseen. This was part of a broader nativist platform espoused by Stephen Bannon, Stephen Miller, and other Trump

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 145-225.

cabinet members as well as certain right wing media personalities that support Trump that sought to marginalize and vilify immigrants of color through their rhetoric and immigration policy. In 2019, scholars Finley and Esposito argued that the way immigrants have been framed by Trump explains his appeal to his supporters. The three frames used in support for “nativist immigrant policies” were “that immigrants are a criminal threat, that free trade policies and conflation of immigration [depressed] wages” and forced them to “compete for jobs with [white] citizens,” and “that the politically correct left refused to solve these problems.”¹⁵⁴ Using both survey data and experimentation, the scholars reported that these frames were consistent with the history of American nativism and that Trump was responsible for unearthing the negative public attitudes towards immigrants that was supposedly dormant or muted during the Obama years. Historian Kivisto has identified “features of right-wing populism that predate Trump,” where it “involves not just contrast of corrupt elite against a pure people,” but creating an empower ingroup and a “stigmatized outgroup,” which is also the hallmark of Trump’s fascist politics. “The Republican Party had been moving towards racism and xenophobia before Trump” as current understanding of “right-wing [populism] defines the “pure people” as “hardworking, pro-capitalist, white, religious Christians who espouse traditional gender roles,” whereas their left leaning “opponents [have] the opposite qualities.”¹⁵⁵ The opponent’s opposite qualities refers to supporting civil rights for women, immigrants, and other minorities, that they perceive as “line-cutters.” Stepping away from oblique racism of the twentieth century to the more pronounced and vocal racism today as Trump’s supporters feel empowered to act on their biases toward immigrants of color. Several of the aforementioned studies proves that the current Republican establishment post-Trump is not hiding their racism anymore and seeks to weaponize it.

¹⁵⁴ Eric O. Silva, p. 1-13.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 1-13.

In 2019, historian Alexander claims that Stephen Bannon is the “man behind the president,” whose “anti-democratic ideology” is based on pitting “real Americans against immigrants,” where real Americans refers to generations of white Americans that lived in the U.S. for centuries and that immigrants were viewed as tools for the elite. Trump’s chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, who was instrumental in the travel ban against Muslim immigrants, encouraged Trump to exploit the current sociopolitical atmosphere of “racial resentment” from the Obama years in order to present himself as a “champion of the people,” or a champion for white middle-class Americans.¹⁵⁶ Prior to his appointment within Trump’s cabinet, Steve Bannon was a key editor for his far-right media company, Breitbart News. This media source was known for publishing racist, bigoted, xenophobic, antisemitic, and inflammatory material, which played a key role in the political rhetoric of Trump’s administration against Asian Americans. When Bannon was executive chairman of Breitbart, Bannon openly said that “we’re the platform of the alt-right,” that seeks to legitimize white supremacy as Bannon and his supporters believed that the America belonged to the “descendants of the older wave of European immigrants,” or white Anglo-Saxon protestant Americans. Historian Thomas J. Main also notes that “Trump’s policy agenda” was staunchly “anti-immigrant, anti-globalist, populist, and nationalistic,” which is “identical with Breitbart’s” platform, which shaped Trump’s racist rhetoric as evident in his tweets and the sharing of Alt-Right memes from white supremacists to his voting base.¹⁵⁷ Although Bannon’s tenure with the Trump administration was short lived, Bannon established himself as a white supremacist and contributed to the restructuring of Trump’s republican party as a political body to spread hate against the outgroup, which are

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 1-13.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas J. Main, *The Alt-Lite, Breitbart, Bannon, and Trump* (Washington, District of Columbia: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), p. 210-230.

immigrants of color. Similarly to Bannon, another Trump cabinet member also shared the same anti-immigrant of color ideology, which was former senior advisor to the president, Stephen Miller. From an email leak regarding Stephen Miller's promotion of "white nationalist articles and books to a writer at Breitbart," a coalition of 55 civil rights groups wrote to President Trump in 2019 calling for Miller's resignation. They stated that "Stephen Miller has stoked bigotry, hate and division with his extreme political rhetoric and policies throughout his career," which makes him "unfit to serve" as it was no "surprise that the architect of Donald Trump's anti-immigration agenda endorsed white-supremacist views."¹⁵⁸ Evidently, Donald Trump has a track record of bringing white supremacists and white nationalist extremist thinkers to his inner circle, thus intensifying his xenophobic and racist platform that would blow over in the form of localized violence across the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, which would take a similar shape from the events that led to the outbreak in San Francisco in 1900.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19, was believed to have originated in Wuhan, China in late December 2019 as reports emerged of pneumonia cases from an unknown, virulent pathogen that decimated the region. COVID-19 would soon take over the world by storm by Spring of 2020, where governments around the world, including the Trump administration, had taken active steps to curb the spread of COVID-19 through lockdowns, masking, and social distancing. However, Trump and many of his supporters were not too happy about their "freedoms" being taken away in an effort to protect the health and safety of everyone, and thus they felt compelled to target their hate on marginalized populations, especially the AAPI community in the United States, because of the quarantine situation in 2020. Historian Angela R. Gover reports that as COVID-19 spread rapidly in early 2020, more and more Asian

¹⁵⁸ Amanda Holpuch, *Stephen Miller: the white nationalist at the heart of Trump's White House* (London, United Kingdom: The Guardian, November 2019), p. 1-5.

Americans were subjected to “racially motivated hate crimes involving physical violence and harassment.” Echoing the main argument of this thesis, Gover argues that throughout U.S. history, “pandemic-related health crises have been associated with the stigmatization and the ‘othering’ of people of Asian descent” and other non-white populations by those that encourage AAPI hate.¹⁵⁹ The “othering” of those of Asian descent most likely alluded to outbreaks during the twentieth and nineteenth centuries, where the San Francisco Plague of 1900 and other minor bacterial plagues in cities were often attributed to the influx of Chinese and other Asian migrants. Public health officials acknowledged that since diseases at the time were centered in slum-like sectors of cities like in Chinatown and that immigrant workers were required to live in the slums, they used their authority to villainize Asian migrants in order to protect the health and safety of white Americans that did not live in the slums.

As all Americans are adjusting to a “new normal” of staying at home and protecting themselves from the spread of COVID-19, Asian Americans have been hit with a dual pandemic of COVID-19 and racial violence. Under the Hate Crime Statistics Act that was passed in 1990, a hate crime is defined as “crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, gender and gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity,” and those crimes include “racist microaggressions, verbal attacks, physical violence, and harassment.”¹⁶⁰ The sharp increase of hate crimes against Asian Americans refers to those that have origins from East Asia or Southeast Asia. These definitions are important as I continue to illustrate more examples of anti-Asian violence during public health crises, which is the focus of this thesis. Asian Americans have experienced “physical violence/hate crime and harassment, persistent stereotyping, and verbal attacks and microaggressions” from the “time they arrived in America in

¹⁵⁹ Angela R. Gover et al., p. 647.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 648.

the late 1700s up until the present day” due to localized racism from white working class and from xenophobic attitudes voiced by congressional leaders throughout U.S. history.¹⁶¹ COVID-19 opened the floodgates of racism by posing Asian Americans as a national security threat and “general xenophobia,” which were both factors that significantly increased anti-Asian crime compared to other racial groups within the first half of 2020.

To Trump and his supporters, COVID-19 was an affront to their freedom and power and so, Trump used China as a scapegoat to garner support from his people as a nationalist politician, but many of his supporters decided to take their anger out on everyday Chinese Americans that had nothing to do with the government of China. According to the Othering Theory, the “racial group with the most power in American society,” whites, believed that they had the most “civic belonging,” and thus, they felt justified to “stigmatize and distance themselves who are racially different, such as Asian Americans.¹⁶² Their hate was channeled against Asian Americans, because of the fact that they did not look white, and thus not part of the “dominant group” that normalized social exclusion, racism, and marginalization of nonwhites.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 649.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 650.



Note. President Trump’s notes show he crossed out Corona with China, March 19, 2019.¹⁶³

When confronted about his continued use of the term, “China Virus,” rather than the WHO-designated term, COVID-19, Trump responded, “It’s from China. That’s why. It comes from China. I want to be accurate.” Trump’s secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, preferred the term, “Wuhan Virus.” Critics argue that Trump’s anti-Chinese rhetoric is both “racist and xenophobic” and only promotes “anti-Asian bias and exclusion,” which may contribute to an increased risk of hate crime experienced by the AAPI community, especially racial violence.¹⁶⁴ Trump established himself as a champion for white supremacy in the years leading up to COVID-19. Trump’s latest attack on another marginalized group, the AAPI community, demonstrated his complete lack of regard of the safety and well-being of communities of color, especially in a time of crisis, where

¹⁶³ Image from *Photo of Trump remarks shows ‘corona’ crossed out and replaced with ‘Chinese’ virus*, NBC News, March 19, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/photo-trump-remarks-shows-corona-crossed-out-replaced-chinese-virus-n1164111>.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 654.

scapegoating would be involved. Like the San Francisco Plague of 1900, COVID-19 represented an excuse for white American Trump supporters to act on their biases toward the AAPI community, because they felt compelled to place the blame on the AAPI community despite the fact all racial groups are inconvenienced by the government's response to a deadly pandemic. On March 18, 2020, Republican Senator John Cornyn of Texas said in a press conference that "China was to be [blamed] for the spread of COVID-19," because they were a "culture where people eat bats and snakes and dogs and things like that." Racist remarks by Republican politicians caused the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI to issue a warning on March 23, where "white supremacists may use the crisis to justify harm or violence against Asian Americans" and that there would be a "surge of anti-Asian crime during the pandemic," that would, unfortunately, become correct.¹⁶⁵

A stark difference between the federal government's response to hate crimes that occurred during the San Francisco Plague of 1900 and COVID-19 was that federal agencies like the FBI and Department of Homeland Security are taking an effort to combat hate crime and racial violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of who is in power or the sociopolitical climate. Trump's white house inappropriately defended Trump's use of the term, "China Virus," stating that previous epidemics were "named after geographic locations," such as the "Spanish Flu, West Nile, Zika Virus, and Ebola." However, the World Health Organization (WHO) appropriately "named the novel coronavirus 'COVID-19' to avoid a connection with a geographic area," and thus, entirely avoid the stigmatization of the people or culture living there. The positive correlation between the sharp increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in the United States during the COVID-19 Pandemic "underlines the importance of avoid geography" or culture

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 654.

when naming communicable diseases or health crises.¹⁶⁶ To build off of the discussion about Trump's anti-China rhetoric during the trade wars in 2018, Trump continued to politicize COVID-19 and its insignificant connection to China despite the fact that this disease was affecting people all over the world. Once again, Trump has made the villainization of non-white civilizations, like China, his platform and twisting it to fit his form of nationalist and populist politics, and thus maintaining popularity within the white supremacist voting base.

The Stop AAPI Hate reporting center was an online centralized tool developed by academic researchers and advocacy organizations “that [collected] reports of racist incidents that Asian Americans have experienced during the COVID-19” Pandemic since its inception on March 19, 2020. Since then, Stop AAPI Hate “emerged as a national and global resource” for combatting anti-Asian racism and has been successful in raising awareness in the current news cycle about the horrific racial violence that has been occurring through the sharing of personal accounts among the AAPI community.¹⁶⁷ Comparing 2020 to 2021, Stop AAPI Hate received 2,808 reports, but that number increased to 3,292 reports in 2020, due to incidents reported retroactively in 2021, with a total of 3,795 incidents by February 28, 2021. In terms of nation trends, scholar Russell Jeung concluded that AAPI women reported “hate incidents 2.3 times more than [AAPI] men, [AAPI] youth (0 to 17 years old) [reported] 12.6% of incidents,” AAPI senior citizens (60 years or older) reported “6.2% of the total incidents of the total incidents,” and Chinese Americans were the “largest ethnic group that [reported] experiencing hate” at “42.2%, followed by Koreans at 14.8%, Vietnamese at 8.5%, and Filipinos at 7.9%.” As discussed earlier, anti-Asian violence and hate ranged from verbal harassment, physical assault, civil rights violations like workplace discrimination or refusal of service due to race, and online

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 659.

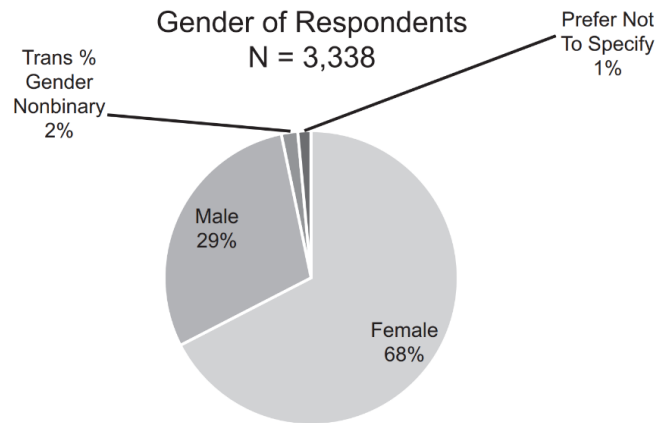
¹⁶⁷ Kara Takashi, p. 341-351.

harassment.¹⁶⁸ Although the data speaks for itself, personal anecdotes illustrated the Asian American experience during COVID-19 in the Trump era. In Brooklyn, New York, a white man catcalled an Asian woman, stalked her, and kept yelling “Ch*nk and C*nt” and no one intervened as they watched him assault her. In Milpitas, California, an older man started making faces at another Asian woman and responded with “we delisted your companies, shipped back your international students... when do you ship out? When do you ship out? We are going to take away you citizenship!” From data based on 3,395 respondents, 35.4% of hate incidents occurred on business property, followed by 25.3% of hate incidents occurring on the public street or sidewalks, however, respondents were able to choose all choices that applied.¹⁶⁹ Since 68.1% of anti-Asian hate and violence was verbal harassment during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and that many of these incidents occurred in public areas, it stands to reason that those that committed acts of hate towards the AAPI community were emboldened to act on their existing biases, because they were most likely empowered to do so and the fact that politicians and other powerful actors vilified the AAPI community in order to score political points. In other words, the hate was already there, but politicians during the COVID-19 pandemic tapped onto that hate, which follows a similar pattern to how anti-Asian violence spread as anti-Asian rhetoric spread across the country throughout the past century. It should also be noted that states with the highest number of incidents reported to the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center were California at 44.56% and New York at 13.62%.¹⁷⁰ Historically, it makes sense since a majority of Asian ethnic communities are concentrated in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

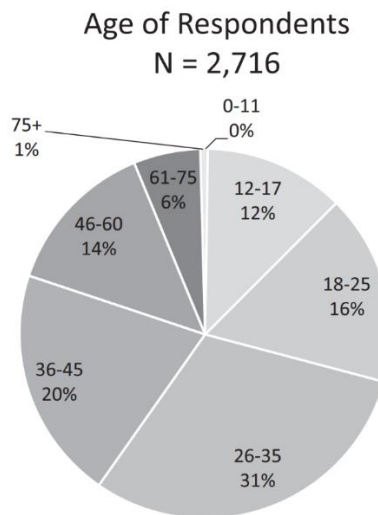
¹⁶⁸ Russell Jeung, p. 19-26.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 19-26.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 19-26.



Note. This figure shows the gender of respondents that submitted reports to the Stop AAPI Reporting Center from March 19, 2020, to February 28, 2021.¹⁷¹



Note. This figure shows the age of respondents that submitted reports to the Stop AAPI Reporting Center from March 19, 2020, to February 28, 2021.¹⁷²

Although it was optional for respondents to report age and gender, disparities in the demographics among the AAPI communities that made the reports do exist. The aforementioned

¹⁷¹ Image from *Stop AAPI Hate National Report*, Ethnic Studies Review, 2021, <http://online.ucpress.edu/esr/article-pdf/44/2/19/479186/esr.2021.44.2.19.pdf>.

¹⁷² Image from *Stop AAPI Hate National Report*, Ethnic Studies Review, 2021, <http://online.ucpress.edu/esr/article-pdf/44/2/19/479186/esr.2021.44.2.19.pdf>.

anecdotal experiences that involved the Asian women were just some of the many incidents of AAPI hate that are disproportionately affecting younger women during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data shows that sexism towards the AAPI community exists as well and is under the umbrella of anti-Asian violence occurring during the Trump era. Although 6% of the 61-75 aged population reported experiencing hate during this period, this statistic can be explained by the fact that many of this age cohort are most likely not technologically literate as opposed to the other younger age cohorts that are able to use the online reporting tool. We also know that many Asian immigrant communities tend to have multi-generational families, so the anti-Asian rhetoric they experienced when they first came to America was internalized and normalized, and thus never became problematic to them as opposed to younger generations that have the tools to recognize hate and bias. Anti-Asian violence during COVID-19 involved attacks of Asian-identifying individuals that had more than one marginalized identity. In Jefferson, Kentucky, An Asian individual that was wearing a mask that showed love and support for the LGBTQ+ community was harassed by a white woman and a man, who proceeded to say: "Oh so you're one of them? She then proceeded to hurl anti-Asian and homophobic slurs against the individual.¹⁷³ Racism and acts of hate that occurred under the Trump era involved intersectional identities, especially in the Asian community that may belong to more than one marginalized group, and it led to hateful acts toward other marginalized groups.

Researchers also found that familiarity between the aggressor(s) and the impacted individual(s) did not influence the likelihood of engaging in hateful acts toward the people experiencing the hate crime or even intervene in times of distress. In Vancouver, Canada, two white, middle-aged men, who have been neighbors with the impacted individual for over fifteen

¹⁷³ Russell Jeung., p. 19-26.

years, approached an Asian woman with the corner of their eyes pulled down, saying “go back to Wuhan, b*tch, and take the virus with you,” and calling her a “Thai wh*re,” and threatened to physically harm her husband.¹⁷⁴ Although her other neighbors saw the incident, they did not intervene or provide comfort. One factor behind this observation is the bystander effect, which postulates that in a group, witnesses are less likely to intervene due to thinking that someone else. However, this does not excuse them for not intervening as the woman was showing signs of extreme distress and it was clearly obvious that she was in immediate danger of life-threatening injuries from the two white men. Although the white men were her neighbors, they acted out of fear and hate and chose to channel that fear of COVID-19 onto a marginalized group. The other neighbors contributed to the invisibility of anti-Asian violence by not speaking up, regardless of whether they were fearful of the aggressors or the impacted person due to racial bias. This underscores the factor of fear that plays in these scenarios, where Trump and other powerful actors vilified the AAPI community. On top of that, the data shows the repercussions of Trump’s lies and rhetoric in the form of this constant violence. Then in Annandale, Virginia, during an escalator ride, a man repeatedly punched an Asian woman’s back and as he pushed her, he shouted “Chinese b**ch and fake coughed on her. Then, a couple days later, the same man harassed, and pepper sprayed the owner of Valley Brook Tea in DC, calling him “COVID-19” repeatedly, who was an Asian-American man.¹⁷⁵ The worst cases of anti-Asian violence involved being coughed at, being spat on, or being in danger of serious physical harm. Once again, Asian women are at the center of this violence and hate towards this specific group gave rise to other groups like the LGBTQIA+ community, the immigrant community, and many other marginalized groups in the United States that are the target of Trump’s racist rhetoric.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 19-26.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 19-26.

Executive Director of Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), Manjusha Kulkarni, conducted a IPSOS poll in May of 2020, where she found that “30% of all Americans witnessed someone blaming Asian Americans for COVID-19 and 60% of Asian Americans witnessed” anti-Asian behavior. She argues that the “scapegoating of AAPIs is leading to harassment, civil rights violations, and in some cases, acts of physical violence against our communities. Another founder of the Stop AAPI Hate reporting tool and Co-Executive Director of Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), Cynthia Choi, argues that “this new wave of racism is a reminder to challenge racism and inequality that has been exposed as a result of this pandemic” as Dr. Russell Jeung argues further that both the virus and racism are dangerous threats to the Asian American community.¹⁷⁶ The leaders of these advocacy organizations and academic research centers stood in solidarity with the Asian American community in response to the dual pandemic of racism and COVID-19 in order to increase awareness regarding the prevalence of anti-Asian violence and how the recent uptick of this violence was a direct consequence of President Trump’s actions. From 1700 reports, this news release features certain painful anecdotes based on the reports submitted in May of 2020. Some of these incidents involved a professor called the coronavirus, the “Wuhan Virus,” in an email sent to all students in his English class, a zoom bombing by uninvited person, where participants were exposed to racist and vulgar images, profane language, and slurs, a vandalism incident with someone’s car that had COVID-19 painted on it, and people shouting “Trump 2020, Die Ch*nk Die! Of all these horrific incidents, a vulnerable older adult became the latest target of this racism-fueled violence. A 92-year old Asian man was killed by a white man in his 50s, who dragged him out of a store

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 19-26.

and shoved him outside, causing an injury to the head and neck.¹⁷⁷ As evident, the message of hate against the AAPI community has historically remained the same, but new ways to engage in hateful acts were new and became modernized by exploiting Zoom and email communications.

Besides women and the elderly, AAPI youth are just as vulnerable to anti-Asian violence and harassment during COVID-19 as evident in the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Report that collected data between March 19, 2020, and July 22, 2020, where they received 341 reports of anti-Asian discrimination involving youth across the nation. Incidents involving Asian youth made up 16% of all hate incidents during the Pandemic. In terms of the data, 81.5% of Asian youth reported being bullied or verbally harassed, 24% of Asian youth reported facing social isolation from peers, and 8% of Asian youth were physically assaulted.¹⁷⁸ Racism not only occurs in the real world involving everyday adults, but it has spread to our schools and classrooms, where educators have failed the AAPI community to root out anti-Asian hate. Based on this data, they may have been partook in acts of hate towards Asian youth on the basis of COVID-19 fears, and thus contributing to the invisibility of the AAPI community. Among trends in discrimination, scholar Russell Jeung and others found that Asian youth “were more likely than [Asian] adults to be harassed at school (16.7% vs. 1.8%), public parks (13.5% vs. 11.2%), and online (16.7% vs. 10.1%.” Girls were “2.5 times more likely to report hate incidents than boys, slightly higher than the adult ratio.” In over 56% of these cases, “perpetrators employ anti-Chinese hate speech, including blaming China and mocking Chinese dietary habits,” and bystanders intervened “in only 10%” of these cases.¹⁷⁹ Although sampling bias may be present with less youth making reports than adults, these statistics illustrate the fact that AAPI youth are severely more impacted

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 19-26.

¹⁷⁸ Russell Jeung et al., *Stop AAPI Hate Youth Report* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2020), p. 1-18.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 1-18.

than adults as racism is taking a toll during a critical point in their growth during childhood. Like the statistics involving AAPI adults, 52.57% of hate incidents against AAPI youth were from California, followed by New York at 12.08%. Furthermore, 71% of Asian youth that identified as female from a sample of 317 reported hate of incidents compared to 28% of Asian youth that identified as male. Chinese youth experienced the most hate out of all ethnic groups at 36.1% followed by Korean youth at 17.3%.¹⁸⁰ The same disparities that existed for AAPI adults and other age cohorts parallel the AAPI youth experience and this data speaks volumes about how the sociopolitical situation of COVID-19 is impacting all sectors of society from school to businesses to workplaces to public places.

Historian Simeon Man reinforces the narrative that anti-Asian racism and violence during COVID-19 was not isolated or a single episode in U.S. history rather it should be seen as a “structure of US settler colonialism and racial capitalism.” Man argues that the “racism of the Donald Trump Administration” is part of the “calculated cruelty” of U.S. imperialism, where mistreatment of Asian persons during COVID-19 is a symptom of violence inflicted by the U.S. empire. He explains that the Pandemic “has not slowed the US drive to build borders, prisons and other war infrastructures,” but has continued to neglect the suffering of marginalized groups, like Black and Asian Americans, who are among the “unhoused, the incarcerated, the unemployed, the undocumented, the immune-compromised, the uninsured,” and other marginalized groups in the U.S. and in the world.¹⁸¹ The author asserts that racism is a symptom of capitalism and U.S. militarism, which makes sense since Trump’s inflammatory comments during his administration rose from his conflicts with rival nations, like China, although the U.S.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 1-18.

¹⁸¹ Simeon Man, *Anti-Asian Violence and US Imperialism* Vol. 62, Issue 2 (Los Angeles, California: Race & Class, 2020), p. 24-33.

is home to many Chinese communities. The tremors of Trump's rhetoric was not felt by the nation of China, rather it was felt by Chinese Americans, who become prey to everyday violence in public places and are unable to find support from bystanders due to the fear that both Trump and COVID-19 spreads. In short, Trump was the virus that made the Pandemic even deadlier.

AAPI Community during the Biden era and Racial Disparities in Healthcare

There is still a long way to go to address disparities in COVID diagnoses, vaccination rates, and other healthcare disparities that disproportionately impact the AAPI community as well as other racial minorities and marginalized groups. A recent prospective cohort study on 26,741 adults insured by Medicaid and 58,802 adults insured by Medicare Advantage sought to “examine the relationship of self-reported social health needs with SARS-COV-2 infection by race/ethnicity among insured adults with access to high-quality health care.” The study was conducted between March 1, 2020, and November 30, 2020. Researchers found that “Latino (16-18%), Asian (11-14%), and Black (11-12%) members” had the “highest prevalence” of COVID-19 infections compared to white members at “7-8%.” Researchers attributed this finding to “essential worker roles” being disproportionately ascribed to communities of color that contributed to significantly higher COVID-19 transmission among insured adults that identify with these marginalized groups.¹⁸² This is an important finding as COVID-19 was predicted to disproportionately impact Black, Asian, Latinx, and other minority groups due to existing healthcare disparities and comorbidities that have been established well before COVID-19. Asian healthcare workers also fall under the “essential worker role” during the COVID-19 Pandemic, where researchers conducted an “observational prospective cohort study of 24,769 healthcare

¹⁸² Jodi K. McCloskey et al., *Accounting for Social Risk Does not Eliminate Race/Ethnic Disparities in COVID-19 Infection Among Insured Adults: a Cohort Study* Vol. 37, Issue 5 (Journal of General Internal Medicine, February 2022), p. 1183-1190.

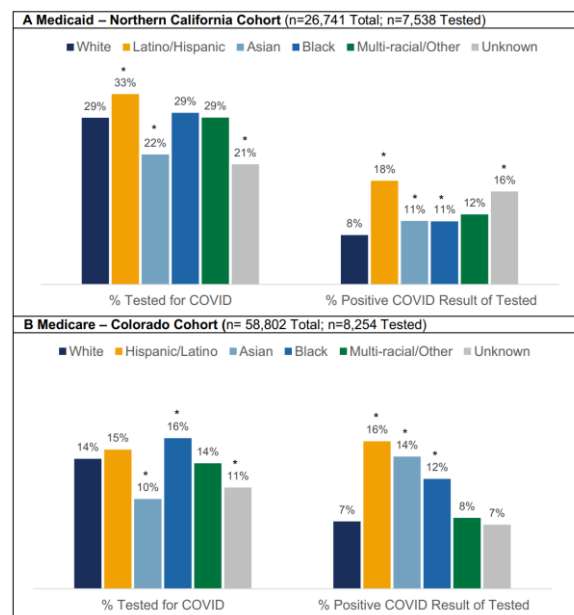
workers from 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia” between April 10, 2020, and June 30, 2021, in order to analyze the experiences of healthcare workers of color, including Asians. Researchers found that Black and Asian healthcare workers “were less likely to receive SARS-CoV-2 viral testing than white participants” and both groups “were less likely to report interest in a COVID-19 vaccine.”¹⁸³ These findings stem from workplace disparities, where Asian healthcare workers and other healthcare workers were more at risk of contracting COVID-19 than white healthcare workers. Researchers argue that “inadequate access to high-quality health care has been” among Black, Asian, and Latinx communities has been a driving force in healthcare disparities and how social risk factors, like “financial need, transportation barriers, food insecurity, social isolation, and/or mental stress,” are “disproportionately experienced by low-income communities of color,” which explains the prevalence of COVID-19 in these communities.¹⁸⁴ Both inadequate access to high-quality health care and the social determinants of health represent barriers to better health outcomes, which reinforces the dual pandemic of racism and COVID-19 that makes COVID-19 much more deadlier for the AAPI community and Asian healthcare workers are just as vulnerable to this dual Pandemic.

In this section of the thesis, I will transition from my discussion of explicit racism from the Trump era and from the past century toward structural racism as evident in the data. The researchers from the same article define structural racism as the “underlying, long-standing societal factors that are the root cause” of disproportionate risks of contracting COVID-19, and the fact that “Latino, Black, and Asian Americans are more likely to live in multi-generational

¹⁸³ Jay B. Lusk, et al., *Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare Worker Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Analysis of the HERO Registry* Vol. 45 (Durham, North Carolina: eClinicalMedicine, March 2022), p. 1-14.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1183-1190.

housing,” which is risk factor for the spread of COVID-19.¹⁸⁵ COVID-19 has recently exposed the structural racism that has always existed in American society and Trump was simply another driving force of this structural racism through his rhetoric and policies. Below is a series of bar graphs that illustrates the fact that Asian Americans are contracting COVID-19 at higher rates based on this representative sample as evident in the high sample of 7,000-8,000 participants being tested. The purpose of comparing the Medicaid and Medicare cohort was to prevent insurance status from being an extraneous variable as PCR testing was used to collect COVID-19 data and PCR testing requires health insurance. Two cohorts in this study increased the validity and reliability of the data as among Asians, the positivity ranged from 11-14%, but was still greater than the white participants at 7-8%.



Note. This set of bar graphs compares COVID-19 testing and positivity rates by race and ethnicity for both cohorts, Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 1183-1190.

¹⁸⁶ Image from *Accounting for Social Risk Does not Eliminate Race/Ethnic Disparities in COVID-19 Infection Among Insured Adults: a Cohort Study*, Journal of General Internal Medicine, February 2, 2022, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35107716/>.

Two preregistered studies that were conducted in the fall of 2020 hypothesized that extensive U.S. media coverage of “racial disparities in COVID-19 infections and deaths” may “ironically reduce public concern about COVID-19” among white U.S. residents. Using a correlational design study of 498 white U.S. adults in the state of Wisconsin, researchers found that those who “perceived COVID-19 racial disparities to be greater reported reduced fear of COVID-19,” which led to the downplaying of COVID-19’s severity, reduced empathy for those vulnerable to COVID-19, and lack of a support for taking safety precautions.¹⁸⁷ In the second study that was used to compare against the first study, researchers did not make another cohort of 1,505 white U.S. adults aware of COVID-19 racial disparities, and found they were more likely to follow COVID-19 safety precautions and had more empathy for those suffering from COVID-19. These findings are staggering as it reinforces the fact that white supremacy is very much alive and well in our current society and is shaping the impact of COVID-19 that is disproportionately killing communities of color, especially the AAPI community, through both COVID-19 and racism. The article argued that “race is central to U.S. social organization, wherein society affords the most power, privilege, and status to people who are categorized as White,” and this explains why the same white U.S. adult participants of this study became “accustomed to thinking and behaving in ways that reinforces the hierarchy” of race. The article also discusses how high status groups, such as white Americans, “may be less concerned about social issues that predominantly impact people of color (i.e. police violence, environmental contaminants, health conditions),” because white Americans in this study believe it does not affect them. This study about exposing white U.S. adults to COVID-19 racial disparities

¹⁸⁷ Allison L. Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., *Highlighting Covid-19 racial disparities can reduce support for safety precautions among White U.S. residents* (Atlanta, Georgia: Social Science & Medicine, March 2022), p. 1-22.

reinforces these misguided beliefs of white U.S. adults being “immune” to COVID-19, despite the fact that “white Americans make up the majority of COVID-19 deaths in the U.S.”¹⁸⁸ This definition of privilege explains the attitudes held by the participants of this study, who are all white. They downplayed COVID-19 only after learning about racial disparities in COVID-19 infections, and thus they felt entitled to disregard public health safety precautions, even though a biological virus transcends the boundaries of race, socioeconomic status, gender, and other types of identities. This relates to anti-Asian hate in the sense that the white U.S. adult participants in this Wisconsin-based study showed significantly less empathy for racial groups other than non-Hispanic white suffering from COVID-19. Threats “seem more psychologically distant when they impact others who are less familiar, or more distinct from one’s own group,” and thus, “associating COVID-19 with people of color could make COVID-19 seem more distant from white U.S. residents” and it could reduce concern about the virus and support for public health guidance from authorities. Researchers also found that “when political orientation was included” in the study, “increased conservatism predicted reduced fear of COVID-19” after receiving information about COVID-19 racial disparities without explanation of the cause of structural inequalities that led to these disparities.¹⁸⁹ In short, these findings explain why patients of color have received low quality health care well before COVID-19 as they were most likely treated by white medical providers that downplayed their symptoms and comorbidities. These attitudes also reinforce the structural racism that is killing Asian Americans on top of race-based violence.

The COVID-19 Pandemic caused a substantial decline in mental health in the United States, where marginalized groups were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Given “higher rates of COVID-19 infections and deaths” within “communities of color along with

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1-22.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-22.

greater exposure to pandemic-related stressors,” such as unemployment and food insecurity, researchers found that “the decline in mental health was more pronounced among Black, Hispanic, and Asian adults,” as these groups were also less likely to access mental health services compared to white adults. Based on the results of the 2019 National Household Interview Survey with a sample size of 30,368 households and the 2020-2021 Household Pulse Survey with a sample of approximately 1.6 million households, they found “significant increases in depression and anxiety” over the course of the COVID-19 Pandemic among Black, Hispanic, and Asian adults.¹⁹⁰ Researchers cite the Atlanta Spa Shooting in March 2021 as the reason for poor mental health outcomes in the AAPI community similar to how police brutality cases with extensive media coverage, like the George Floyd or Breonna Taylor murder, had a mental ripple effect in the Black community. For example, they found that the “rate of depression/anxiety among Asian respondents was 15% higher during the period around the Atlanta spa murders compared to the prior period, but about 35% higher than the period after.”¹⁹¹ As evident in the data, race-based hate crimes with extensive media coverage was directly proportional to mental health outcomes among racial minorities. The spread and cause of COVID-19 was attributed to the Asian community by certain influential U.S. politicians and right wing media personalities, which was a contributing factor in mental health disparities in the U.S. on top of COVID-19 infection disparities along racial lines.

¹⁹⁰ Mieke Beth Thomeer, Myles D. Moody, and Jenjira Yahirun, *Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mental Health and Mental Health Care During The COVID-19 Pandemic* (Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, 2022), p. 1-16.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-16.

Table 1 Percentages and means (with standard deviations) for key variables from analytic sample (National Health Interview Study, 2019, N=30,368; Household Pulse Survey, April 2020–April 2021; N=1,677,238)

	2019 (NHIS)				2020–2021 (HPS)			
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Percentage of sample	64.91	12.07	16.98	6.04	63.60	12.49	17.86	6.04
Depression or anxiety	11.58	10.80	9.43 ^A	5.11 ^A	37.97 ^B	41.69 ^{AB}	44.23 ^{AB}	34.31 ^{AB}
Receiving mental health care ^C	6.52	5.63	3.91 ^A	2.44 ^A	10.14 ^B	9.29 ^{AB}	8.87 ^{AB}	6.46 ^{AB}
Not receiving mental health care when have depression or anxiety ^D	79.52	75.47	80.36	84.03	82.09	84.98 ^{AB}	86.18 ^{AB}	87.67 ^A
Woman	50.92	54.79 ^A	51.59	52.11	51.38	56.00 ^A	49.96 ^A	49.13 ^A
Age (years)	50.10 (0.16)	45.39 ^A (0.40)	41.99 ^A (0.32)	45.16 ^A (0.54)	50.16 (0.04)	46.62 ^{AB} (0.10)	42.63 ^{AB} (0.10)	44.64 ^A (0.15)
Education								
Less than high school	7.81	12.30 ^A	30.46 ^A	8.61	4.39 ^B	9.14 ^{AB}	20.27 ^{AB}	10.46 ^A
High school	27.05	33.01 ^A	28.54	15.46 ^A	30.43 ^B	34.17 ^A	33.12 ^{AB}	15.94 ^A
Some college	32.64	34.41	25.91 ^A	21.65 ^A	30.90 ^B	33.14 ^A	29.12 ^{AB}	22.58 ^A
College degree	32.50	20.29 ^A	15.10 ^A	54.28 ^A	34.28 ^B	23.55 ^{AB}	17.48 ^{AB}	51.02 ^{AB}
Household income in previous year								
Less than \$35 K	20.28	39.03 ^A	33.35 ^A	21.65	21.33 ^B	42.68 ^{AB}	38.77 ^{AB}	21.21
Between \$35 K–\$74 K	30.24	33.08 ^A	37.31 ^A	24.65 ^A	30.43	31.69 ^A	34.01 ^{AB}	26.10 ^A
Between \$75 K–\$149 K	14.40	11.26 ^A	11.83 ^A	12.80	31.82 ^B	19.07 ^{AB}	20.19 ^{AB}	28.84 ^{AB}
More than \$149 K	35.08	16.64 ^A	17.51 ^A	40.90 ^A	16.42 ^{AB}	6.56 ^{AB}	7.03 ^{AB}	23.85 ^{AB}
Housing								
Rent	23.45	53.10 ^A	46.03 ^A	34.41 ^A	23.05	47.94 ^{AB}	41.76 ^{AB}	28.96 ^{AB}
Owens house	74.41	45.21 ^A	51.33 ^A	62.49 ^A	75.53 ^B	49.50 ^{AB}	55.99 ^{AB}	69.33 ^{AB}
Other arrangement	2.15	1.68	2.64	3.10	1.42 ^B	2.56 ^B	2.25	1.71 ^{AB}
Food insecure	6.88	19.47 ^A	15.44 ^A	5.33	7.76 ^B	20.22 ^A	18.15 ^{AB}	7.61 ^B

Weighted using sample weights; ^AN=30,368 (NHIS) and 926,182 (HPS); ^BN=3,305 (NHIS) and 360,976 (HPS); ^Astatistically different ($p < 0.05$) from White respondents within same year; ^Bstatistically different ($p < 0.05$) from 2019 race/ethnicity counterpart

Note. This data table highlights different social determinants of health and compares these determinants to mental health outcomes among different race groups.¹⁹²

The table above features data from the 2020 Household Pulse Survey, where researchers compared mental health and common social determinants of health like household income and education among race groups. An alarming finding is that 84.03% of Asians did not receive mental healthcare when they had depression or anxiety compared to 79.52% of whites in 2019. This percentage drastically increased to 87.67% of Asians in 2020–2021, indicating that there were unmet mental health needs. Recent studies showed that “there was no statistically significant differences in unmet mental health care needs in 2019,” Black, Hispanic, and Asian respondents “had a significantly higher probability of unmet mental health care needs during the pandemic compared to white adults.” To explain this statistic, another major finding of the study was that “white respondents continued to have much higher rates of receiving professional mental health care during both periods than Black, Hispanic, and Asian groups after adjusting for

¹⁹² Image from *Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mental Health and Mental Health Care During The COVID-19 Pandemic*, Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, March 9, 2022, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40615-022-01284-9>.

socioeconomic” status.¹⁹³ Like trends in inequitable medical care among racial minorities, inequitable access the mental health services has been detrimental to the Asian American community and has contributed to increasing healthcare disparities during COVID-19 due to the widening of structural inequalities that persisted decades before COVID-19.

On March 16, 2021, 21-year old Robert Aaron Long “killed eight people,” where six of the women—Hyun Jung Grant, Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, Paul Andre Michels, Yong Ae Yue, Suncha Kim, Delaina Ashley Yaun and Soon Chung Park—that worked in three spas were of Asian descent in the city of Atlanta. A recent study used “structural topic modeling and text mining” to understand how the 2021 Atlanta Spa shooting “ignited public discourse on the #StopAsianHate-related conversations” on social media by analyzing patterns and emerging topics on Twitter during the first seven days of the shooting.¹⁹⁴ The purpose of this study is to explore how social media and current technology can be used to combat hate, structural racism, and explicit racism, but it may have also played a role in the Biden administration’s response in taking formal steps to stop AAPI hate, unlike his predecessor. This uptick of attacks against the AAPI community during the Trump era prompted President Biden “to sign an executive memorandum acknowledging that ‘inflammatory and xenophobic rhetoric’ has put AAPI persons, families, communities, and businesses at risk” of targeted violence, like the Atlanta Spa shooting.¹⁹⁵ We should also take into account that it is Biden’s first two months in office, and he is already taking steps to fight against white supremacy and hate across the nation, which he acknowledged was created by Trump. Support for the AAPI community did not only come from

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 1-16.

¹⁹⁴ Claire Seungeun Lee and Ahnlee Jang, *Questing for Justice on Twitter: Topic Modeling of #StopAsian Hate Discourses in the Wake of Atlanta Shooting* (Lowell, Massachusetts: Crime & Delinquency, 2021), p. 1-27.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 1-27.

the President of the United States, but it came from fellow citizens as well. Researchers observed that “topics such as ‘stand with the AAPI community’ and ‘stop racism’ remained prevalent “throughout the 7-day period,” which corresponded from March 16 to March 22 of 2021. Researchers chose the 7-day period for three reasons: Twitter’s standard data analytics tool allows researchers to collect data from the past seven days, the goal of the study was to identify immediate responses to the Atlanta Spa shooting, and to compare the AAPI social justice movement before and after March 16, 2021.¹⁹⁶ Under the purview of digital justice, social media was an important tool that allowed everyday people to familiarize themselves with the injustices inflicted against the AAPI community in light of these recent events through the power of technology. This online movement created mounting pressure from the public that most likely prompted President Biden to respond, which was most likely a test to determine if he was worthy to lead, unlike Trump.



Note. This figure shows activists demanding action be taken against explicit anti-Asian racism and gender-based violence in the wake of the 2021 Atlanta Spa Shooting.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 1-27.

¹⁹⁷ Image from *Why the Atlanta Shooting Is So Hard to Talk About*, Slate, March 22, 2021, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2021/03/atlanta-shooting-asian-american-community-sex-work-religion-gun-control.html>.

The 2021 Atlanta Spa Shooting was a wakeup call for the nation about the reality of anti-Asian violence in the United States since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collected from the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center showed how anti-Asian hate disproportionately impacted more women than men, regardless of age. The fact that six Asian women of the eight women were killed illustrated that this was indeed a racially-motivated attack, despite Long asserting that it was due to his sex addiction and fetish for Asian women. Long was motivated to “end” his addiction by ending the lives of those that worked at the spa, where he was a regular customer. However, this does not change the fact that he killed the Asian women on the basis of race. University of Washington Tacoma’s Dean of Education Rachel Endo asserts that the term Oriental has “gendered and sexualized dimensions” that may explain Long’s actions that day and the rise of “racialized sexualization” in Oriental cultures, which “involves the exotification and objectification of Asian bodies, cultures, and experiences based on white-supremacist fantasies.” Endo says that racialized sexualization in Asian cultures created by white supremacists are “rooted in centuries of the West’s geopolitical and military involvement in Asia” that is both literally and figuratively “penetrating and violating the feminine and subservient East.”¹⁹⁸ Endo’s analysis touches on the historical characterization of Eastern Asian cultures and how imperialism by Western powers has created structural inequalities based on race and gender. The harm created by this phenomenon of racialized sexualization of Asian cultures is particularly harmful against Asian women, which explains why Asian women were more likely to report a hate crime during COVID-10. As a result of the shootings, Biden advocated for classifying this horrific incident as a hate crime. Biden’s actions to offer support for the AAPI community by physically

¹⁹⁸ Rachel Endo, *Asian/American Women Scholars, Gendered Orientalism, and Racialized Violence: Before, During, and After the 2021 Atlanta Massacre* Vol. 21, Issue 4 (Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 2021), p. 344-350.

making a speech in Atlanta and pass legislation to prevent future hate-based violent attacks against marginalized communities differentiates him from his predecessor. However, a change of administration does not guarantee that the violence will stop.

Like how hate crimes increased during COVID-19 Pandemic was the result of decades of xenophobia and Sinophobia, the 2021 Atlanta Spa Shootings were the result of decades of Asian and Asian American women being “belittled, cat-called, demeaned, discredited, grouped, infantilized, stalked, subjected to highly sexualized jokes, and touched by mostly white women and men.” Endo’s personal experience as a young Asian American girl growing up in “majority-white public schools in the Midwest” saw that many of her peers and herself “were educated to believe that” Asians and Asian Americans and “other BIPOC people were inferior and undesirable to whites” by erasing her culture and devaluing “racialized bodies.”¹⁹⁹ For Endo, there was a “lack of a culturally affirming learning experience” and all of Endo’s teachers were white. Endo experienced many conflicts with her intersectional identities as an Asian woman in a white space where she wasn’t allowed to stay over for dinner at her friend’s house due to the friend’s mother claiming she “was too dirty,” even though she bathed daily, or even the time a “white male teacher put his hand on [her] rear” when she was in middle school.²⁰⁰ Endo’s troubling childhood experiences is the result of structural racism and sexism that disproportionately impacts her by a system that continues to invalidate her, thus creating a perpetual invisibility of the Asian experience in the United States. This invisibility grew and became the weight that is holding down the AAPI community as they face a Pandemic of hate and anti-Asian violence during COVID-19. This was even more apparent when Endo “learned of the Atlanta Massacre on March 16, 2021,” and heard about how “white law-enforcement

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 344-350.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 344-350.

officials” called it “a ‘bad day’ as reasons for why he slaughtered eight Americans including six who looked like [her] relative or [her].” Endo “grieved for the young Asian and Asian American girls and women “who have been subjected to everything from rape to sexual harassment to sexual violence by white males like Long who cavalierly disrespect” the families, the lives, the minds, the racialized identities, and the cultures of the AAPI community, but “somehow claim to love [her] bodies and [her] cultures” in the form of a fetish, or a sexual fantasy.²⁰¹ Sexism or the fetishization of Asian women was another tool by the white establishment to control Asian bodies alongside with racism. This triple Pandemic of racism, sexism, and COVID-19 was fueled by the structural inequalities that have existed throughout U.S. history seeking to erase the Asian identity through hate based violence as evident in the data and personal anecdotes.

Conclusion

On April 11, 1997, “a group of six Asian American students and one white student were denied service and beaten in the parking lot of the Denny’s [restaurant] on 2863 E. Erie Blvd.” in Syracuse, New York, by around 20 white patrons that also shouted racial slurs and made xenophobic comments. This hate crime became widely referred to as “The Denny’s Incident,” where this incident happened exactly 25 years ago. “After a five month investigation by the district attorney’s office, the case was dismissed” by District Attorney William Fitzpatrick.²⁰² There was no justice and no peace for the horrors that those 7 Syracuse University students experienced and the many marginalized communities at Syracuse University that already felt under attack. They were appalled by the blatant racialized violence and subsequent dismissal of the case and thus, they rightfully struggle with their identity. In response to Fitzpatrick’s

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 344-350.

²⁰² Emily Kelleher, *AAPI Heritage Month exhibit remembers SU campus hate crime, raises awareness* (Syracuse, New York: The Daily Orange, April 2019), p. 1-3.

handling of the case, “students protested in Schine Student Center and later marched downtown with a petition demanding Fitzpatrick to offer an apology” for indirectly supporting the racist attitudes held by the aggressors that day. Outreach Librarian at Syracuse University Libraries Tarida Anantachi, who also serves as cochair of the AAPI Heritage Month Planning Committee, says that “Asian hate crimes have happened in the United States just about everywhere for decades, centuries even,” and “this was an incident that happened right on our doorstep.”²⁰³ This violent incident hit closer to home, here at Syracuse University. Throughout Syracuse University’s history, many racist incidents have plagued this campus and every one of these incidents were met with student activism and solidarity with marginalized identities, like the AAPI community in celebration of AAPI Heritage Month every May.



Note. A group of Syracuse University students watch a video exhibit circa 2007 documenting the Denny’s Hate Crime Incident in Syracuse, NY.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Ibid., p.1-3

²⁰⁴ Image from *AAPI Heritage Month exhibit remembers SU campus hate crime*, The Daily Orange, April 15, 2019, <https://dailyorange.com/2019/04/aapi-heritage-month-exhibit-remembers-su-campus-hate-crime-raises-awareness/>.

The purpose of the video exhibit, which is a video documentary of the Denny's incident involving interviews of those involved at the time, was to “prompt students to write down ways in which they can help empower the AAPI community” as well as bringing connections “to other marginalized groups” and standing in solidarity with all communities of color. Syracuse University senior Jasmine Kim directed this documentary titled, “April 11, 1997,” during AAPI heritage month because it was meant to show “awareness and trying to understand our culture, our presence and respect” for those that identify with this culture.²⁰⁵ Social activism in the Asian community in the United States has become more pronounced during COVID-19 than in recent years or even the past century. The result of this activism has brought much needed attention to issues stemming from the Denny's incident among many of the anti-Asian hate crimes that occurred as the University was waging the war against both racism and COVID-19.



Note. SU's ASIA President Chittaphong (not shown) and approximately 100 students marched to Denny's to protest DA Fitzpatrick's failure to prosecute those responsible.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Emily Kelleher, p. 1-3.

²⁰⁶ Image from *A decade later: Details surrounding April 11, 1997, Denny's incident still remain unclear, despite strong emotions within SU community*, The Daily Orange, April 10, 2007,

As I conclude this thesis, it is important for the Asian community to reflect on the past injustices and move forward to tackle future incidents that will inevitably occur. As shown in the image above, “anti-Fitzpatrick sentiment persisted into November of that year,” with signs reading ‘No Hate Crimes,’ and “Too Late for Apologies-Justice Now,” were held in the Maxwell school at Syracuse University’s campus at the time when DA Fitzpatrick “spoke to Professor Bill Coplin’s public policy class.” Now the head of multicultural affairs at Sienna College, Chittaphong asserts that “you can’t kick someone in the head and call them a ‘chink’ and not call that a hate crime,” or in the words of the DA, “negligible wrongdoing.”²⁰⁷ Like how law enforcement officials called Long’s massacre was him having a “bad day,” DA Fitzpatrick was elected to bring justice for all groups in the city of Syracuse, but failed to bring justice when it mattered, which was the Denny’s incident. These were students that wanted a high quality education at Syracuse University but was met with racism, xenophobia, and violence. Rightfully so, it is up to the AAPI community and their allies to stand up against these injustices and call powerful actors out for enabling racism as evident in their silence, denial, and excuses. University of Washington’s Dean of Education Rachel Endo adds that “people who look like me have been brutalized, racially profiled, slaughtered for centuries in the United States and overseas. Government-sanctioned racism has clearly enable a culture of violence against racialized bodies,” and believes that the solution to combat racism by powerful actors is calling for “national leaders [to] finally reckon with our nation’s racialized past through a reparations framework.” Endo further argues that “freedom, liberation [and] peace” must benefit Asian and

<https://dailyorange.com/2007/04/a-decade-later-details-surrounding-april-11-1997-denny-s-incident-still-remain-unclear-despite-strong-emotions-within-su-community/>.

²⁰⁷ Kevin Sajdak, *A decade later: Details surrounding April 11, 1997, Denny’s incident still remain unclear, despite strong emotions within SU community* (Syracuse, New York: The Daily Orange, April 2007), p. 1-7.

Asian American people, “as well as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander folks,” which is the “only way to realize true progress” in heavily white spaces like those at Syracuse University.²⁰⁸ The best way to move forward is to fight for much needed racial equity and justice alongside the AAPI community in all spaces that continue to cast a long shadow over them.

Even before the Denny’s incident, the AAPI community was as strong as ever as evident in the student publication group, “The Asian Eye,” that has been active on Syracuse University’s campus as early as Fall 1992, as well as registered student organization, Asian Students in America, or ASIA. According to ASIA’s secretary in Fall 1992, Maila Arzadon, ASIA was created to provide a sense belonging and community for Asian students that Syracuse University lacked as well as “striving to strengthen [their] voice and to INCREASE Asian awareness.”²⁰⁹ Even back then, the Asian community was strong and student involvement in cultivating the Asian identity in white spaces was an important goal in the early 1990s. From segment of the same publication, “To Be Or Not To Be A Twinkie,” Teeq Benzon describes the slur, Twinkie is particularly offensive against Asian Americans assimilating into U.S. culture while balancing their ethnic identity, where “Twinkie” refers to a person with a “yellow” skin color out the outside that characterizes Asian groups, but “white” on the inside or someone who acts “white.” In response to the common usage of this slur, Benzon says that “we must empower ourselves with the knowledge of where we came from” and “embrace the fact that we are Asian and of color,” in an effort to give Asian-identifying students to define who they are without white American society imposing the “model minority” myth or other racist characterizations.²¹⁰ In

²⁰⁸ Rachel Endo, p. 344-350.

²⁰⁹ Nga Vu, “*Letter from the President*” Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Syracuse, New York: The Asian Eye, September – October, 1992), SU Student Publications Collection, Box 3.

²¹⁰ Teeq Benzon, *P.A.P.: Proud Asian Perspective* Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Syracuse, New York: The Asian Eye, September – October, 1992), SU Student Publications Collection, Box 3.

another edition in Fall 1993 of the same publication, ASIA President Nga Vu describes how Syracuse University has “Celebrate Difference Week,” sponsored events by SGA, and correspondence by administration that “adopts new vocabulary to seem more diversity-tolerant,” but the school does not have an “Asian/Asian American curriculum” if the school is “trying to be so multicultural.” Vu says her organization, ASIA, is “pushing for the development of this curriculum” and it is essential to create this curriculum in order to promote the history and identity of the Asian community at Syracuse University in light of extensive history of racial violence and imperialism in Asia by powers like the United States.²¹¹ Little did they know that the horrific incident at Denny’s in 1997 would pave the way for this much needed curriculum that seeks to validate the Asian American experience and embraces the vast identities of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities that are part of this one big identity. Past student activism provided the groundwork for combatting anti-Asian hate, but unfortunately, efforts to combat anti-Asian hate seem to happen after horrific accidents that cannot be swept under the rug, thus creating obstacles for future efforts to tackle racial violence on campus and beyond.

The second part of this thesis is to address the existing mental health and medical care disparities that exist in the AAPI community during public health emergencies like COVID-19 that has exposed the structural inequalities that have been made invisible previously by the same people that continue to exert hate-fueled violence against the Asian community. In order to address the mental health disparities as a result of COVID-19 related racism, researchers argue that counselors need to prepare themselves by “[screening] for race-based trauma that differs from Eurocentric trauma symptoms, including headaches, stomach problems, and chronic pain.” Counselors were “called to reflect on how their own internalized biases and attitudes may

²¹¹ Nga Vu, “*Where are ASIANS in Multiculturalism*” Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Syracuse, New York: The Asian Eye, September – October, 1993), SU Student Publications Collection, Box 3.

compromise treatment effectiveness and to avoid imposing their values onto clients.”

Researchers also explain that the “experiences of racial oppression and discrimination toward AAPIs” have been “overlooked because of the *model minority* stereotype that portrays Asian Americans as achieving high educational and societal success,” but the reality is that they are subjected to explicit and implicit experiences of racism, physical harassment, and emotional harassment “related to accents and physical appearance.”²¹² Every single individual has cognitive biases, but recent studies show that we can choose to act on those biases, thus giving birth to racism and hate-based violence, especially against the AAPI community during mainstream media coverage of COVID-19. In order to “heal race-based trauma” in the AAPI community, researchers offer new strategies or ways to “deliver treatment within cultural settings in which clients feel most safe and comfortable.” These strategies include “decolonizing trauma-based interventions,” where counseling should not be based in the European perspective and should be rooted in ethnicity-centered treatment and recovery; “promoting mindfulness and self-compassion,” where “increasing self-compassion may decrease feelings of guilt and shame” from “instances of racial discrimination” by learning to love oneself; “microinterventions,” where counselors provide “psychoeducation about microinterventions” and use role plays to communicate “validation of experiential reality” that seeks acknowledge that the client is not alone in this struggle against AAPI hate; and “making the ‘invisible’ visible,” where the perpetrator of the microaggression or racist act is made aware of their behavior in an effort to educate them in an assertive manner about these sensitive issues and why it’s important to not engage in this malicious behavior moving forward.²¹³ Mental health during COVID-19 has substantially impacted every racial and social group throughout the globe, but due to existing

²¹² Stacey Diane A. Litam, p. 144-156.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 144-156.

racial inequality, mental health has disproportionately impacted Asian American adults and youth. These are just some of the strategies used to tackle mental health in the AAPI community and offers a safe and comfortable way for the AAPI community to move forward through both activism and selfcare.



Note. The image shows the same note on a billboard found in three buildings on Syracuse University’s campus circa Fall 2020.²¹⁴

The racist note targeted Chinese students on campus claiming they were a “threat sent by the Chinese government.” Syracuse University’s Department of Public Safety was notified of the incident and removed anti-Asian flyers from Eggers Hall, Huntington Hall, and Hall of Languages on March 11, 2021. Senior Staff Writer, Sarah Alessandrini, says these notes came “less than two weeks after two unknown individuals” hurled “anti-Asian language toward a student on Comstock Avenue,” in Syracuse, New York, in another unrelated incident. In response to these incidents, “Chancellor Kent Syverud and Keith Alford,” Syracuse University’s Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, called these incidents “reprehensible and cowardly” and

²¹⁴ Image from *Anti-Asian messages found in Syracuse University buildings*, The Daily Orange, March 11, 2021, <https://dailyorange.com/2021/03/anti-asian-message-found-syracuse-university-bulletin-board/>.

condemns these incidents, stating that “anyone who harbors these kinds of biases is not welcome in our community.”²¹⁵ Hate crimes against the AAPI community significantly increased in 2020 alone due to Trump’s rhetoric of placing blame on China for the Pandemic at the expense of Chinese student and other Asian students on campus and in other similar spaces that have to bear the burden of hate and racism. Anti-Asian hate crimes that occurred on campus also spurred support for the #NotAgainSU movement that was led by Black students from Syracuse University, which sought to stand in solidarity with marginalized identities on campus, including the AAPI community. The #NotAgainSU movement bolstered their efforts to fight against this new wave of racism as evident by students protesting a year after #NotAgainSU was created.



Note. The image to the right shows #NotAgainSU protestors circa Fall 2019.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Sarah Alessandrini, *Anti-Asian messages found in Syracuse University buildings* (Syracuse, New York: The Daily Orange, March 2021), p. 1-2.

²¹⁶ Image from *More racist graffiti is reported at Syracuse University*, The Washington Post, November 21, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/11/21/more-racist-graffiti-is-reported-syracuse-university/>.

#NotAgainSU was an aggressive response to the University's inactions against a string of hate crimes that occurred in various residence halls that impacted not only African American students and Jewish students, but Asian students and Chinese international students as well. The image above showcased students marching to Chancellor Syverud's house during one evening in response to hate crimes that occurred in Fall of 2019. On November 13, 2019, anti-Asian graffiti and vandalism was discovered in a bathroom stall in the Physics building. On November 14, 2019, anti-Asian graffiti was found on the third floor of Day Hall. On January 30, 2020, an Asian American SU student was verbally harassed by individuals in a vehicle driving by. On February 27, 2021, a student was verbally harassed by two unknown individuals hurling anti-Asian slurs at him when he was walking home on Comstock Avenue. Over the course of the Pandemic, anti-Asian hate crimes substantially increased on campus, where Syracuse University chemistry professor Jon Zubieta was put on administrative leave after writing "Wuhan Flu" and "Chinese Communist Party Virus" on his syllabus in Fall 2020. This led to other incidents involving a flyer distributed in bird library containing derogatory language against the AAPI community in Spring 2021. More recently, on February 4, 2022, a student posted racist anti-Asian and anti-Buddhist messages on Discord, a social media site.²¹⁷ These are just some of the most egregious hate incidents targeting the AAPI community among many that has happened throughout my four years at Syracuse University as an undergraduate student.

We now focus our attention to current student activism at Syracuse University in response to the rise of anti-Asian bigotry and violence in our local community that involves Asian-identifying students, staff, and faculty who come from all over the globe. We now focus our attention on the mental health, the physical health, and the emotional health of our Asian

²¹⁷ Katie Camero, *Professor who called COVID-19 'Chinese Communist Party Virus' is on leave at Syracuse* (Miami, Florida: Miami Herald, September 2020), p. 1-5.

friends and family. We now focus on our attention to the rise of anti-Asian hate crime and violence in the communities that each of us originate from against the backdrop of the Trump regime's anti-Chinese rhetoric and actions and the right wing media that continues to scapegoat marginalized communities throughout our history. From the War on Drugs and on Black Americans to the War on Terror and on Muslim Americans and finally the War on COVID-19 and on Asian Americans, white authorities throughout U.S. history have continued to target non-white populations and invalidate the cultural identities of marginalized groups for the sake of their power. It is no secret that white Americans are at an advantage and there are powerful groups that continue to elevate them at the expense of marginalized racial groups, especially the AAPI community, every time it suits them.

Although the history of Anti-Asian hate is painful to analyze, I would like to end this thesis on a positive note. The language to describe anti-Asian hate has changed throughout the course of U.S. history from not being recognized at all to a term universally recognized in the current media cycle: #StopAsianHate. This was a limitation in my research, but a powerful explanation on the disparities between how the AAPI community was treated during the San Francisco Plague in 1900 from 100 years ago to today, where we have more scientific knowledge on how diseases spread, but the disease of racism seems to have no vaccine. The purpose of this thesis is to show that the vaccine is around us. It is our activism. It our kindness we show every day. We take these vaccines for granted because of the current invisibility of marginalized identities in the United States. Together, we can make the invisible, "visible," and continue on this path. We are not defined by the horrific events that happen throughout our world and history. We are defined by ourselves, and our definition should honored by our allies. Together, we can stop anti-Asian hate and all form of hate against anyone and anywhere for good.