

Asian American Racism

By Maximus Vo

When we think of Racism, what do we imagine? We imagine slur being said, attacking somebody, riots, and verbal abuse. Racism is so common in our justice systems and in the minds of the communities we live in. The main focus of racism is toward POC mainly black people. Racism against the black community is long lasting and doesn't seem to stop after 400 years. Just as much as racism goes toward black people, there is another community of people who recently experienced extreme amounts of racism and an increased number of hate crimes over the past couple of months. This community is the Asian American Community. Due to the most recent CoronaVirus, Asian Americans have had a large increase in hate crimes. As Asian American racism takes form in hate crimes and verbal abuse dating all the way back to the 1800's and being rooted in the education systems in the country we live in. Now what I'm about to talk about and what I just talked about does not mean Black lives do not matter. They certainly do and I just want to shed some light on the Asian community and what they have experienced trying to get some justice.

I myself, a 13 year old Vietnamese-American have experienced racism. I go to school like every other kid my age and usually don't have to worry about the color of my skin. But getting older, I realize the small things that have been said to me that were meant as a joke but did not realize the racism behind it are called Microaggressions. In school I have been asked, "Can I have **Chink** pass" At first I didn't know why they were asking this but I knew it was bad so of course, I said no without realizing how bad it was but because I'm in middle school in 2020 they still used that term at me and with other people after saying no. In an article I found it said *"Teachers don't always recognize when Asian Americans are being bullied and stigmatized. They may not acknowledge that certain gestures, like pulling your eyes slanted, can be offensive."*

I found this to really hit home because I've had somebody slant their eyes at me but I always brushed it off not doing anything about it. Until I took it up to my Mother and asked her about it. Of course it was bad, but I couldn't do anything about it. Asian American racism usually takes form in verbal abuse, shunning, and cyberbullying. But due to the most recent CoronaVirus, a spike in these hate crimes has occurred. Our own president has directed racism to the community by calling the virus a "Chinese Virus". This puts a very large number of people in fear because knowing the leader of somewhere you live doesn't even want you there either. In a quote made by a highschool student in an NBC article said *"Fear is really damaging to someone's Self-Esteem and sense of Identity."*

I found this quote really interesting because of how true it is. When you're scared, it makes you regret what you have done and want to change to make something better but in this case, you can't change anything trying to make a false perception of yourself. Racism in our community is very normalized to where in the community we get asked, "Do you eat dogs?" or "Look! Asian eyes!" to the point where it's scary to act against it where we get shunned and we just have to brush all of this off because of fear that will come.

Most of the time if not all, people don't understand their privilege, they can go places without being worried, apply to jobs not having to worry, and not having to worry about being attacked. Although, systemic racism still exists and is also amongst our education systems. There is factual evidence that there

is racial bias lurking in our education systems. An example of this is at the Ivy League School Yale there was a study done that for a “the great majority” of cases, Asian American and White applicants have “only one-tenth to one-fourth of the likelihood of admission” Which on the grand scale of applicants trying to get into a very successful school is unfair if they all had the same skill and stats. But I quote I read said “There is no such thing as a nice form of race discrimination” and when you really think about it, it’s true. Everybody would send racist actions toward People of color but when we act up about it they would say “It’s just a joke, chill” But how could we chill when you’re damaging our self identity, sometimes it's not a joke but recently, the schools Harvard University and Yale both had court cases if they were to admit students based off race but both schools prevailed and won their cases on how they do not discriminate by race. But a study has been done where students were Asian American applicants with highest stats and better applications had a lower rate of acceptance. Having to worry about getting into a school based on where you’re from is absurd. Discrimination on your ethnicity and being declined from a necessity to a good job where we have worked so hard for the past 12 years to be declined. These kinds of things in life are unacceptable because we can fix this very easily but internalized and normalized racism that has been built up in these old schools are hard to get rid of because they have been built into the system. It would be a dream where POC could go to school and not have to face these kinds of things where we don't have privilege because of the normalized race in schools where we’re treated like outcasts.

Racism has no limits, it dates back all the way to the beginning of time where people are discriminated against by looking different, but in the past, racism doesn’t seem like it’s going to stop even when we are in 2020 when dating years back xenophobic things have been said and done but they still proceed to happen and hate crimes have been rebirthed due to the CoronaVirus with almost 100 Hate crimes per day since the virus has bloomed. But when we go back in time to 1800-1900 Racism against Asian Americans still existed, Obviously. We go back to one of the major acts of racism, The Chinese Exclusion Act. This act was a period of time where there was an outbreak of Cholera and Smallpox, people thought that the chinese people were dirty and were carrying these illnesses. When they assumed the community was carrying these illnesses and made stereotypes on them. Since there was so much fueled racism on how Chinese people were “Dirty”, the racism fueled the Chinese Exclusion act, the first law in the US that barred immigration solely on race that made a restriction on immigration for 10 years. A whole law in the US based on an assumption of how clean people are, Absurd. The racism behind all the xenophobic articles all targeting Chinese people and how they are unwanted because they are dirty posted everywhere trying to make them as less of a person as possible when it was all fake and propaganda. But the real thing behind all of this isn’t to be ashamed of your ethnicity, we have so many role models in our society who are POC and use their position to inspire the new and old generation of the past that was once reality and trying to fix things. We have role models like Sandra Oh who said “It’s an honor just to be Asian.” Which is really just an inspiring thing said by her because of the hardships that can come from all the haters with internalized racism who believe that POC aren’t on the same level as white people but that isn’t the case in 2020. We’re growing as people and trying to leave behind the past and the bad things that happened. We have people who aren’t afraid to speak up and give a huge number of people more confidence in what they can do. We shouldn’t be ashamed of who we are, we take pride in our ethnicities, backgrounds, and opinions where people can all be happy and have confidence and I believe that is possible with the society that is changing and growing as we know it.

In conclusion, we have to admit that our world isn't the best place we've ever seen, the USA? Not even close to being the best country ever, Racism lurks in the minds of our community with prejudice and stereotypes still out there. Some things we can't change and we have to accept that but racism, we can change. Everybody can change no doubt about it, we have role models, leaders, and speakers who are able to strengthen the minds of the next generation to battle the racism and fight for the change that we all want. We started with Racism dating back centuries and have racism in our education systems and just in the people around us. Although 1 person cannot make a change, the community who supports it and education of the topic can make a difference, a huge impact. We all have the power to change but some people refuse to and that's what's holding us back. We the people have not lived up to what our founding fathers have said. "All men are created equal". We cannot be equal until everybody treats everyone the same. Black people are not equal, Asian people aren't equal, Native people aren't equal and so many groups of people are not equal but what we are missing is the word yet. We have opportunities for everyone to be equal but we just have to work together to do that because it is possible for that to happen.