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What Can We Do to Stop Anti-Asian Hate Crimes?

March 15, 2021 | :

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by Emil Guillermo (<https://diverseeducation.com/article/author/eguillermo/>)



Print

Pak Ho is a 75 year-old-Asian American who died last Thursday (March 11) after he was robbed on the streets of Oakland, Calif., the latest victim in the rising number of anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S.

No one is saying, "Say his name."



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Emil Guillermo

There is no hashtag campaign for Ho.

But his death did occur around the same time President Joe Biden was delivering a prime-time address to the whole country on vaccination, but with a special message—that such racist acts against Asian Americans like the one against Ho will not be tolerated.

"Too often, we've turned against one another," Biden said in his Thursday address when he announced the goal of vaccines for all by May 1. But this portion was no less important. "Instead of working with each other, (we've seen) vicious hate crimes against Asian Americans who've been attacked, harassed, and scapegoated. It's wrong. It's un-American. And it must stop."

That's a whole lot better than the previous president who used the terms "China Virus" and "Kung Flu," and modeled selfish, unempathetic behavior.

But let's face it. This is more than just about the virus. This is about plain, old, 21st Century racism.

It's just too late for Ho, who died from head injuries suffered when he fell to the ground after being punched earlier last week on Tuesday in that Oakland robbery attempt. An African American suspect, Teaunte Bailey, 26, was arrested.

It's the second fatal death in recent weeks involving an elderly Asian American in the Bay Area. In San Francisco, Vicha Ratanapakdee, 84, was pushed to the ground in a crime that was caught on video.

Another incident last month in Oakland's Chinatown, also caught on video, showed yet another elderly Asian man pushed to the ground, but not fatally.

What gives?

"Most people think in terms of racial opposition as being Black versus white," said Prof. Daniel Phil Gonzales, a professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University's College of Ethnic Studies. "And the reality is, the "other" includes Asians and that "other" sets us in a position where we're the targets of hatred from both Black and white. And that's pretty much in evidence by the attacks that are going on."

I don't think that's the way we envisioned diversity working— where even racists are diverse in their makeup.

But Gonzales said as long as Asian Americans are "orientalized," as they have been for centuries, excluded, or seen as foreign and unassimilable, America will continue to have instances where Asian Americans are victimized by this modern and violent form of xenophobia.

An Ugly Viral Uber Video

And then there's the case of the Uber driver in San Francisco, Subhakar Khadka, a South Asian from Nepal, who was coughed on, pepper sprayed and had his mask ripped off by female passengers. And it was all caught on video.

One of the women, 24-year-old Malaysia King was arrested for assault while in Las Vegas on Thursday. The woman who coughed on Khadka, Arna Kimiai, also 24, said she plans to turn herself in this week.

The video has gone viral and shows an ugly sense of entitlement from the passengers who show no sense of decency or respect for Khadka.

They were acting no different from a white racist toward Khadka.

Gonzales said some could argue the women can't be racist if they have no power to exert their feelings. But having those feelings is still dangerous.

"It leaves us exactly where we are, where people will act on their beliefs, given an appropriate motivation," Gonzales said.

So far the circumstances of COVID- 19 have been significant "triggers," but add to that stereotypical feelings toward Asians as perpetual foreigners, with accents, who take available jobs, and it didn't take much for the women in that Uber to show their feelings.

What's the way out?

An Honest Race Conversation

There've been calls for race conversations in the past, but rarely have we seen the type that can make a difference. Gonzales said we need more than speeches from civil rights leaders. We need to see people speak up bluntly and directly about racism. Ordinary people with the same background as the perps need to denounce the racist actions we're seeing.

And then Asian Americans too, must confront our own racism.

"We need to have people accept that there are elements of racism within the way that we regard each other," Gonzales said. "We need to accept that, but for the ability to enforce that racism we have those ideas, we have those concepts."

In the meantime, hearing Joe Biden tell us anti-Asian hate is "Un-American" and to "stop it," is a start.

I'm just afraid, it won't be enough to effectively end the violent trend we're seeing toward Asian Americans.

Emil Guillermo is a journalist and commentator. He writes for the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and blogs at www.amok.com (<http://www.amok.com>). You can follow him on Twitter @emilamok.

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