

Emily Chae

Article 1 - The Rise in Anti-Asian Attacks

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community has faced two battles—racism and the virus itself. According to Stop AAPI Hate, a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California, its reporting center has received at least 2,808 hate incident reports since its launch on March 19, 2020.

“We began as a response to stop hate incidents against Asian Americans aggravated by the coronavirus pandemic. There seemed to be more of them, so we wanted to track them, gather data, and provide resources and advocacy,” said Melissa (preferring her last name not to be used), a representative at Stop AAPI Hate.

By collecting police data from 16 of the most populous U.S. cities in 2020, California State University’s Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism analyzed nearly a 150% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes compared to 2019. Despite the recent surge in hate incidents, discrimination has been an ongoing issue in the AAPI community. During the Gold Rush of 1849, thousands of Chinese emigrated to California in pursuit of wealth and improved living conditions. Rather than achieving the American Dream of the mid-1800s, Chinese immigrants were met with discrimination and racially motivated attacks such as the Chinese Exclusion Act that prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the United States and becoming naturalized citizens.

Although this month will mark the first anniversary of Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center’s launch, only recently has it gained the recognition of its intended audience. In light of that Melissa stated that crime statistics have been underestimated. “We have received an influx of reports that our researchers need to examine,” she said. “That may just be due to the fact that we

are getting a lot of publicity right now.” By contributing their statistics to anti-Asian hate media coverage, STOP AAPI Hate has received increased attention from hate victims.

Washington state resident Joanna Lee is one of the victims who recently discovered Stop AAPI Hate. “I didn’t know a centralized reporting system for anti-Asian hate existed,” Lee said. Living as an Asian American in a predominately white town, she expressed concern over her safety, an issue she said she never dealt with before the pandemic. Citing former President Donald Trump’s reference to COVID-19 as the ‘Chinese virus’ or ‘Kung Flu,’ Lee said it has made Asian Americans scapegoats for the virus, causing unease in the community. Documented in her own journal, Lee counted 26 anti-Asian hate incidents and attacks that she has experienced or witnessed personally since the COVID-19 outbreak in less than a year. “It was like a domino effect. The first time I thought it was just a coincidence, but soon after, more followed. So I began keeping track,” she explained.

Despite the surge in anti-Asian racism in the United States, media awareness and the support from those outside the community have offered a silver lining for Lee and the AAPI community. “We are not in this battle alone,” she said. “We must continue to stick together and support one another, especially at this time.”