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Yellow Peril Redux: Vitalizing Pre-existing Racial Conditions with a New Symbol

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Abstract

Racially-motivated verbal and physical assaults toward people of Asian descent in the United States have escalated substantially in the United States since 2020. However, authorities do not often view these cases as racially-motivated. I argue that this is a continuation of a long historical trend in the United States due to a renewed kind of Yellow Peril fear. I look at the language and metaphors used by politicians that has revitalized pre-existing discrimenation towards the East Asian Americans, both during the pandemic and previously, and examine how those in authority handled these cases. Dissemination of misinformation and false news stories concerning COVID has created a new Yellow Peril Redux using new symbolic vocabulary. This has reified, reinforced, and—indeed—legitimated increased prejudice and intolerance against an already marginalized community.

Introduction

Since early 2020 racially-motivated verbal and physical assaults toward people of Asian descent have escalated in the United States. According to Jeung, et al. (2021) between March 2020 and February 2021 the numbers of racially-motivated assault cases were 3,795, a 150% spike from 2019 (Yam, 2021). However, authorities have often reported that these were incidents of mental or psychological lapses—such "a temper tantrum" or "sex addiction"—rather than racial acts of violence. These crimes are often treated that there is little racism directed towards people of Asian descent in this society. I argue that today's increasing violence toward people of Asian descent in the United States is a continuation of a long historical trend of ethnic discrimination the United States.

Anti-Asian racism has always been present in the U.S. society for over 150 years, though it has been encoded in different vocabulary and language in different periods of time. The old "Yellow Peril" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has continued off and on throughout most of the modern U.S. history, starting with the response to Chinese "coolies" flooding California shores in the 1870s–resulting in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first federal law to prevent immigration and naturalization on the basis of race. It continued with the World War II internment camps being built to control an assumed secret and festering domestic Japanese menace. The 1990s brought fears of Japan Incorporated swallowing up the world economy. Asian super-students in the 21st century are now said to be taking up all the spots at America's best universities, even necessitating court intervention. And above all this, is the specter of Chinese industrial and military power surpassing a declining U.S. superpower. This visceral fear of "Asians"—more clearly and honestly called "the Yellow Peril" at the turn of the twentieth century—has never disappeared.

In this paper I look at the instances of discrimination that happened in the East Asian diaspora communities, and current problems East Asians and East Asian Americans are facing under the COVID-19 pandemic's social restrictions and economic depression. I then argue that none of these

are isolated cases, but caused by a new kind of Yellow Peril stereotype against East Asians. Furthermore, I analyze the language and metaphors used by former president Donald Trump that has revitalized pre-existing tensions in the already tender climate of this country. The language and symbols have changed over the time, and yet today's hate crimes toward Asians and Asian Americans are caused by Yellow Peril, nonetheless.

What is Happening to East Asians in the United States During the Pandemic

People in mainstream society are often oblivious to their discriminatory rhetoric, and even sometimes believe their insults are complements. Sue (2010) describes these things as "microinsults." Chou and Feagin (2014), Fong (2020), and Lee (2009) also argue that calling Asian Americans the Model Minority is problematic. They also point out the categorization of Asian America a monolithic community instead of recognizing diverse ethnic groups within it, is equally problematic. In other words, prior to the pandemic, people in the United States considered racial discrimination against Asian Americans were isolated incidents, directed at the level of the individual (Chu & Sue, 2011). However, once media reports of the World Health Organization finding cases of the coronavirus associated with Wuhan, China, in early January 2020, incidents of racial insults toward Chinese were no longer merely indirect but, "rather direct verbal discrimination in person," or "microassualt(s)." The United States declared a national public health emergency only on February 3, 2020, a month-later, after passengers on a California cruise ship tested positive for COVID. Under the state emergency, citizens were forced into social restrictions and many lost their jobs. The president at that time, Donald Trump, insinuated that China had leaked the coronavirus from a Wuhan virology lab, spreading the virus throughout the world, and often called it the China virus or the Wuhan flu. At the same time, the mass media broadcasted negative and nullifying images of Chinese people selling freshly caught bats hanging in open markets, in unsanitary conditions (the obvious visual metaphor being, these are primitive people, for some reason, eating an exotic food—a microinvalidation of a people's custom and food-choice). In this study I focus mainly on racism against East Asians, particularly Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans who are often confused in United States and thrown into the same ethnic group (as was seen in the murder of Vincent China, which will be discussed later).

During the start of the pandemic panic, in the spring of 2020, I was in Ocala, Florida, Franklin, Tennessee, and Normal, Illinois, and noticed several local Chinese restaurants had closed down soon after some states enacted a stay-at-home order in March. It turned out that not several, but numerous, Chinese restaurants, including many of which mainly provided take-out even in normal time, were closing completely, and putting up signs like "Due to the coronavirus outbreak we are temporally closed. We will open again when we can." On the other hand, other restaurants, such as Mexican and Italian establishments, were providing food for their customers by adopting, at first, take-out and, later, new ad hoc ways (like curbside service). I wondered at that time why Chinese restaurants were completely closed instead of staying opening for business with take-out or home delivery, which had been their specialty prior to the epidemic. And asked myself, was this happening only in the Midwest and South, or was it also happening in other places? Was it only Chinese restaurants, or other East Asian restaurants as well? What about restaurants of other ethnic groups whose ancestors' homelands were severely suffering with COVID-19?

In April 2020, I was part of a team of several people calling various East Asian restaurants—mainly Chinese, Korean, and Japanese—and other ethnic restaurants—such as Italian and Mexican—all over the United States to find out who was open and who was closed. It looked like no matter what the state or size of town—for example, small towns like Springfield, South Carolina,

Hamilton, Montana, and Brunswick, Maine; or large cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles—small family-run restaurants owned by East Asians (especially Chinese-family owned), were more frequently closed than those run by big chain restaurants like Panda Express. Furthermore, most shops of all kinds in the Chinatowns of Chicago and New York were closed.

Schaer (2020), who participated in this project, stated in his presentation at the 2020 Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs that this finding was exactly the opposite from what he expected. Before his research, Schaer thought various big chain restaurants might close, while family-owned small restaurants would continue staying in business. The reason was he felt small family-owned businesses would do whatever it took to stay afloat, including exploiting family members, if necessary. However, this is not what we found. Apparently, larger restaurants had more liquid capital than family-owned restaurants and could "weather the storm" better. Making the decision to close their restaurants for an unknown period of time was much harder for owners of family-run establishments than for global cooperate chains like Panda Express.

During the project, Xue Ma (Ma, 2020) found that although all Chinese restaurants with closed signs on their doors did not answer our phone calls, many of the family-owned restaurants still ran their business by word of mouth, fulfilling orders for those who knew how to contact them, often using Chinese-based apps such as WeChat in Midwest small towns,. Xue Ma stated that they felt safer to deal with people who knew these Chinese apps (in other words, those who spoke Chinese, or are more sympathetic to Chinese). An owner of a Chinese restaurant in Ocala, Florida, a small conservative town, also told me of his fear of racial bashing. After discussing the safety of their stores and families, a group of Chinese family restaurant owners in the area decided to close for at least a month to assess the situation. There were also such fears in large liberal cities like Los Angles and New York. In studying small businesses in ethnic neighborhoods in Los Angles, Ong, et al. (2020) stated that:

> In Chinatown, businesses reported a decrease in customers at the beginning of the pandemic, likely due to xenophobic reactions on the origin of the virus. This xenophobia has been seen in New York City as well—the NYU COVID Closure Study found that ethnically Chinese neighborhoods experienced a higher proportion of restaurant and grocery closures than other comparable neighborhoods (p. 11).

Elaine Quijano at CBS News also reported that from February to April in 2020, about 233,000 small businesses owned by people of Asian descent closed due to racial harassment.

These targets were not only ethnic businesses, but as soon as the pandemic started, there were many reports on physical assaults against people of Asian descent during their daily routine and activities in town. For instance, an Asian woman was kicked and punched in a Manhattan subway station and a Chinese American man was followed to a bus stop, shouted at, and then hit over the head in front of his 10-year-old son in New York City. An Asian American family of three (including a two-year-old and six-year-old child) were stabbed by a man at a Sam's Club store in Texas. In the San Fernando Valley in California a 16-year-old Asian American boy was bullied by his classmates in school, who accused him of having the coronavirus, and he was sent to the emergency room. According to an online survey of 9,654 U.S. adults conducted by the Pew Research Center, already by April, 2020, 58% of Asians and Asian Americans said they had been victims of racially insensitive incidents (Ruiz et al., 2020, p. 7), as seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Percentages of People Who Said They Have Been Targeted More Often With Racial Incidents During the Pandemic*

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
37%	38%	41%	58%

And by early 2021, we were seeing a startling new trend of attacks on the elderly and women. When the social restrictions became longer, the number of older and female Asians who had been targets of physical assaults markedly increased. One such case in the Asian American community was that an 84-year-old Thai man was pushed and killed by a passerby in his neighborhood during his morning walk in January 2021. (I will return to this issue in the following session of "Minimization of Racial Issues by Authorities").

Under such an atmosphere even after they "reopened" to the public, many Chinese restaurant owners—including the restaurant in Ocala, Florida, that I previously mentioned—did not let anybody into their stores, and only took orders over the phone or by drive-through (or through Chinese-based apps). They were of course afraid of the coronavirus like everyone else, but they were also worried about being targets of racial violence, especially if someone who entered their store contracted COVID-19. If so, they would likely be blamed for spreading COVID in the area. In a news interview which took place right after the Atlanta spa mass-shooting of 2021, journalist Helen Zia mentioned that prior to this, some Asian Americans were already afraid of the possibility of mass killings of people of East Asian descent due to the Corona virus. In the same news interview, actor and activist Tzi Ma concurred, saying that the mass murder of women of East Asian descent in Atlanta broke his heart, but did not surprise him; this has always been his fear his entire life. In other words, Zia and Ma state that Asian Americans have been racially discriminated against in American society, and some people are just waiting for an excuse to blame Asian Americans for *something*.

Mask-wearing violence could be one of these excuses. Although mask-wearing is to protect one's own health, since mask-wearing is often stereotypically seen as a symbol of Asian-ness by mainstream Americans, numerous people of Asian descent who followed the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and wore masks became targets of physical assaults. One such case was a New York City subway station attack in February 2020. In May 2021, two women of Asian descent were also attacked in New York City by a stranger who demanded these women remove their masks, before striking one in the head with a hammer.

Several females of Asian descent were punched in Vancouver, Canada in April 2020 (a city with a high—and apparently well-assimilated—Asian population).

The sociologist Yinxuan Huang calls this phenomenon "Maskapobia" (Young, 2020). Maskapobia was caused by media-images of Chinese and other East Asians wearing masks prior to the epidemic, even though they were doing it to avoid polluted air, hay fever, ragweed, and so on. When the epidemic started, this image expanded as Chinese who were evacuated from China because of the COVID virus began appearing in the media (Young, 2020). East Asians and East Asian Americans are among the most socially-conscientious: 80% wearing masks all or most of the time in public during the pandemic, and 9% at least some of the time (Ruiz, et al., 2020, p. 6-7). According to Ruiz et al. (2020); however, 36% of people of Asian descent worry about what others would think if they were wearing masks (Table 2).

Table 2. *Anxiety About Mask-wearing by Ethnic Group*

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Not at all	80	27	42	32
Not too much	14	30	34	32
A fair amount	3	24	15	19
A great deal	1	18	7	17

I need to note that fear of mask-wearing was not only found for people of Asian descent, but also for Black Americans and Africans in the US. As seen in Table 2, 42% of Black people also feel either "a fair amount" or "a great deal" of anxiety when wearing masks. According to Tylor (2020), Black Americans and Africans could be seen as criminal suspects if they hid their faces with masks; he went on to say that many Blacks worry about being stopped by the police in these situations.

During the pandemic, then, racial minorities are spending every day worrying about becoming victims of not only an infectious disease but also racially-motivated physical violence (Kandil & Yam, 2020; Ruiz, Edwards, & Lopex, 2021; Tessler, Choi, & Kao, 2020). Even after citizens were required to wear masks, racial violence against mask-wearing people of Asian descent occurred. When they are wearing masks, they are attacked being told remove them; when they are not wearing masks, they are told to go back "home," even though it is impossible for a majority of Asian Americans to "return" to places other than the United States.

Voices of People of Asian Descent

Recently it has come to light that when the famous Titanic went down in 1912, there were eight Chinese and one Japanese[1] on the ship. However, we have hardly heard about them. We now know, over a hundred years later, that upon arriving on Ellis Island, the Chinese survivors could not enter the United States because of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1892. The six Chinese survivors were immediately deported from Ellis Island in New York to Cuba (Feng & Wang, 2021). Reporters and historians did not record the experiences of these minorities. Their voices were not important for or interest in the American public in those days and they were never heard. And these Chinese survivors—who were legally oppressed in the United States—did not, and could not, vocalize their treatment by the U.S. government. What about current voices of people of Asian descent in the United States? Surely things have improved, but perhaps not as much as one might have expected or hoped.

Since Asian Americans are hardly united as a single group, it is hard for them to vocalize issues, like, say, those of the African diaspora (Wu, 2002). Part of the reason is those of the Asian diaspora in the United States do not necessarily share many commonalities, like a religion or a diaspora language. In fact, the religious beliefs of Asian Americans are as diverse as those of non-Asian nationals. According to Masci et al. (2018, pp. 2–3, see Table 3) roughly 79% of African

[1] This Japanese person, Masabumi Hosono, was a Japanese-government civil servant. Thus, he could land in the United States and return to Japan. His note–on Titanic stationery–about his experiences of the days of April 14 and 15 when the ship went down has survived. He was on a lifeboat which was rescued by the RMS Carpathia on April 15, 1913. Incidentally, Hosono was a grandfather of Haruomi Hosono, a member of the very popular Japanese rock band of the 1970s, Yellow Magic Orchestra.

Americans self-identify as Christians**.** Among these, 53% are associated with historically Black Protestant churches, 14% with evangelical Protestantism, 5% with Catholicism, and 4% mainline Protestantism. In the case of Latinx people, they show a definite predilection for Christianity (almost 78% self-identifying as such). However, almost half identify as Catholics, with 19% as evangelical Protestants, and 5% as mainline Protestants. On the other hand, less than half of all people of Asian descent identified themselves as Christian: only 42%. Among them 22% are Protestant, 13% are Evangelical and 19% are mainline Catholic. And about a quarter identified themselves as non-Christians, i.e., 14% identified themselves as Buddhists and 10% identified themselves as Hindu). Considering the prevalence of religious wars throughout history, we cannot completely ignore the possibility of religious diversity among people of Asian descent being a contributing factor for making political unification difficult.

Table 3. *Percentage of Religious Beliefs by Ethnicity in the United States*

	Non Christian	Evangelical Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Historically Black Protestant	Catholic	Other Christian Group	Non-Christian faiths	Unaffiliated
Black	79	14	4	53	5	3	3	18
White	70	29	19	1	19	4	5	24
Hispanic	77	19	5	1	48	3	2	10
Asian	42	13	9	n.a.	19	1	29*	26

* Buddhist 14, Hindu 10, Muslim 4, Sikh 1

Furthermore, many African Americans share a particular linguistic register, sometimes called "Black English" or "African American Vernacular English," or the contested term, Ebonics. People of Latin heritage often share Spanglish. When Asian nationals came to the United States, they brought with them many different languages—including Cantonese, Hokkien, Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Hindi, and Urdu. Upon arriving in the United States, they could hardly communicate with each other in their mother tongues. According to American film director Eddie Huang (as discussed on CBS News in 2021), when he grew up Chinese migrants encourage their children to learn English, the language of the majority in the United States. Children were often encouraged doing well at school and follow the accepted norms of mainstream society. (I will return to this issue in the following session, "Asian Americans: The Target of National Scapegoating"). The later generations have not formed a diaspora language, but have become monolingual English speakers. According to Wei (2021, p. 90), when bilingual and multilingual speakers use different languages it is not only an effective means of communication but an act of identity by maintaining and changing ethnic-group boundaries and person relationships, and contrast define "self," and other" within a broader political, economic and historical context. Asian Americans communicate with each other in English—the major language of the mainstream—to emphasize their "American-ness" and being citizens of the United States (instead of remaining as children of Asian immigrants). However, ironically, people in mainstream society still see East Asian Americans as "others" or "foreigners," albeit ones who have learned English well (see the discussion later in the section, "The Created Stereotypical Image of Asian Americans as 'Foreigner' in U.S. Racial History").

Kendi (2019) states that the community of African Americans is, however, neither one monolithic community nor one completely united. For example, he cites a quote made by Christopher Duncan, a light-skinned African American actor: "I have a nice car, …I hate it when I get pulled over and I'm treated like I am one of them niggers[2]" (p. 136). He argues that African Americans see themselves as "Black people," but some separate themselves from other African American "niggers," Kendi argues that words like "I have a nice car," and "I hate…" and "I'm treated like I am one of them…" signify that some economically successful African Americans look down on less successful African Americans or "niggers" (referring to drug addicts, or thugs, or the less ambitious), and feel they belong to a different social category.

Latinxes are also a very diverse group, whose ancestors just happened to be from Latin American nations. But Latinxs from different countries are different groups of people. For instance, a descendant of Quichua-speaking farmers from Peru may have little in common with a middle-class banking family originally from Buenos Aires. Many Americans learned this though the presidential election of 2020. Many non-Latinx Americans believed *all* Latinxes would vote against President Trump, who made many humiliating statements regarding Mexicans, such as:

> When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people. (Speech given on 16 June 2015, at his announcement to run for president)

However, it turned out that many Latinxs actually supported Trump (Krogstad & Lopez, 2020). Among the numerous issues on the table, such as conservative views on gender, education, and taxes, one of the reasons for their support was, ironically, his tough stand on immigration. These voters were legal Americans who do not wish to be seen as illegal immigrants themselves, or supporters of illegal immigration.

There are many people of Mexican descent in the American Southwest. Among those are descendants of people who became Americans due to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican American War (1846–1848). The United States' annexing of Texas in 1845 started the conflict, and its end saw the United States expand its territory to eventually include California, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico (Morales, 2002). When the area became U.S. territories and states, not only was the land, but also the inhabitants, became subject to American laws. The local inhabitants "became the victims of racism and cultural genocide and…[today] are [still] relegated to a submerged status" (Acuña, 2016, p. 61). Regardless of their being proud of their Mexican heritage, they have suffered by Anglo (White) stereotyping, who mock Mexican descendants as rural and uneducated, and say everything Mexican is cheap or of poor quality (Hill, 1993). Accomplished or assimilated Mexican Americans did not wish to receive such microinvalidations and to be stigmatized and put in the same category as Trump's illegal immigrants, rapists, and drug dealers. As a result, many of them supported Trump's policies, like building border walls and deporting illegal immigrants.

Moreover, there are many Americans of Cuban descent who supported Trump, helping him to win Florida in the 2020 election. Their ancestors left Cuba after 1959 when Castro took political power in Cuba. Believing Trump's words—that all Democrats are socialists—this voting block generally took the side of the Republicans. These Cuban Americans have been continuously taught

[2] I have debated with myself long and hard about using this terribly offensive word. However, because Kendi uses it intentionally himself to draw attention to an alleged stigmatized subgroup within an already stigmatized subgroup—and how that itself is a product of a hegemonic racialized image—I have (reluctantly) decided to use this word, as Kendi did.

at home, and in the greater diaspora community, about how bad socialism is. African Americans and Latinx Americans are diverse diaspora communities, then, just like Asian Americans, and they do not necessary stand in solidarity and help each other.

The differences, therefore, between African Americans and Latinx Americans, versus Asian Americans, is not that Asian Americans are more diverse–so that they cannot, or would not, unite themselves to protest for equality, human rights, and citizen's rights. However, Tzi Ma (Quijano, CBS News, 2021) states that the Asian American community has been protesting against certain discriminatory social and political issues throughout their history in the United States (albeit, often unsuccessfully). One of such activity was the Asian American Movement of the late 1960s to mid-1970s on the West Coast. Soon after the end of World War II and the surrender of Japan, the United States found itself in other wars against Asia (Korea in the early 1950s, then Vietnam in the 1960s, and other countries in Southeast Asia in the 70s). Asian Americans called for political change in the United States, which was often deeply rooted in western colonialism and its own political agendas. Nonetheless, the U.S. government tried to justify its actions by claiming it was saving poor Asian nations from the evils of communism. Asian Americans argued instead that this justification was made under the same racist stereotypes as that which allowed the Japanese internment camps during World War II.

Today many Americans do not know of the Asian American movement in the 1960s. Why has their voice not reached mainstream society? Why do people who recognize the significance of the Black Lives Matter movement, and who care for the human rights, do not hear the voices of Asian Americans? Why is anti-Asian racism mostly not talked about, or even heard of? Were their voices against wars in Asia taken as foreigners criticizing American politics? In order to consider these questions, I begin by looking at the stereotypical images of Asians-as-foreigners in relation to the concept of Yellow Peril—the idea that Asians pose an existential threat to the United States.

"Foreigner:" The Created Stereotypical Image of Asian Americans in American History

Asian Americans are continually seen as foreigners in the United States regardless of whether or not they were born, raised, or educated in the United States. Historian Ronald Takaki, a third-generation Japanese American, a University of California, Berkeley, PhD and Berkeley Professor of Asian-American Studies, summed up his life experiences in the following anecdote:

> Often my fellow White students would ask me: "How long have you been in this county?" "Where did you learn to speak English?" They did not see me as an "American." I did not look American and did not have an American name. They saw me as a foreigner. But my grandfather had sailed east to America in 1886, before the arrival of many European immigrant groups. (1998, p. 347)

Even when Takaki mentions he was an American, he was seen as a foreigner throughout his whole life in the mindset of many in the United States. Regardless of his being an eloquent English native-speaker, according to Takaki, he received comments on his English again and again. A subtle, but commonly occurring, racism that today we know this racial rhetoric as microaggression (Sue, 2010). Tuan (1999) acknowledged this social situation by referring to Asian Americans as being "forever foreigners."

Filipino sailors started arriving in the coast of California already in the mid-1500s, and other Asian immigrants (such as Chinese and Asian Indians) began arriving in the United States around the mid-1800s. Thus, Asians arrived in the New World no later than many European immigrant groups, as Takaki mentioned in the above quote. However, Asian Americans are always seen as

new-arrivals. No doubt part of the reason for this is that they were excluded from holding U.S. citizenship in the first federal citizenship law, the Naturalization Act of 1790. This legislation granted citizenship only to "free White persons" of "good moral character." Although the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 redefined the qualification of citizen from "free White persons" to "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof," the phrase "good moral character" has remained in the American imagination until this day—whether implicit or explicit.

Lapp (2012, p. 1572) argues that although the Founding Fathers and their heirs wished to protect the nation from having "disruptive" or "dangerous" people in the community, the texts have been interpreted very ambiguously. In other words, what kind of morality constitutes "disruptive" or "dangerous" behavior? Or conversely, *whose* morality is it, that is "good" or upstanding? These things have been contingent on criteria depending on whom you are talking to and which period you are talking about. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the political leaders of the United States were descendants of White, western Europeans, whose morality was based on Christianity. These elites saw people who were not White, spoke non-European languages, and had non-Christian beliefs as non-moral (Adachi 2021).

This European-ethnocentric view was reflected in the U.S. government's policy in the early 1900s toward non-Christian immigration. In other words, the United States government discriminated against East Asians, such as Chinese and Japanese, on the basis of phenotype, language, and religion. We see this discrimination in the prohibition of Japanese immigration to North America in the 1920s (e.g., the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908 and the Immigration Act of 1924). This resulted in the Japanese government encouraging mass-emigration to Brazil in the 1930s, instead of going to North America. Although the Japanese government could not change anyone's physical features, in the new nation of Brazil the Japanese government hoped to minimalize social friction, and they provided Portuguese language classes (the official language of Brazil) for its emigrants, and encouraged them to convert to Catholicism, the national religion of Brazil (Adachi, 2017; Handa, 1970).

After the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1868, the requirement for citizenship changed from "White free men who resided in the United States more than two years" to "All persons born or naturalized in the United States." However, the legal specifics regarding the holding of citizenship were not made clear at the time. As a result, in 1895, after traveling to China for nine months, the U.S.-born Wong Kim Ark was denied reentry to the United States because he was no longer recognized as an American citizen. After a three-year legal battle, by a 6–2 decision by the Supreme Court in 1898, Wong Kim Ark finally regained his U.S. citizenship. Why was his citizenship not recognized in 1895? The notion that race was really the underlying issue can be seen in the dissenting opinion of the Supreme Court written by Associate Justice Melville Fuller. The dissenters argued that under the Fourteenth Amendment, citizenship should not be granted to "the children of foreigners, happening to be born to them while passing through the country" (United States Supreme Court, United States v. Wong Kim Ark, No. 132). If the majority opinion prevailed, they argued, then even children "whether of the Mongolian, Malay or other races, were eligible to the presidency, while children of our citizens, born abroad, were not" (U.S. Supreme Court, United States v. Wong Kim Ark, No. 132, 1898).

After this, although it appeared that citizenship-discrimination against people of Asian descent had been abolished in the United States, it has still continued. Even almost half a century later from the supposed to be guaranteed citizenship for people who were born in the United State, about 120,000 people of Japanese descent were sent to internment camps during World War II. Among

them, at least two thirds were American citizens. However, their citizenship rights were denied, and they were sent to relocation camps. Even though Italy and Germany were fighting against the United States as much as the Japanese, only scattered selected Italian and German nationals were sent to internment camps. Almost all U.S.-born American citizens of Italian or German ancestry were not subject to relocation. In other words, in the case or Italian and German descendants, if they were American-born they were recognized as Americans—unlike Japanese Americans who were not recognized as citizens, or had their citizenship denied. When we hear the government announcement for the reason of relocation camps it is clear that the government stated "[all descendants of Japanese] are potentially dangerous" (https://archive.org/details/Japanese1943, 1:04) to the U.S. society. Furthermore, almost 6,000 Japanese Americans were irretrievably stripped of their legal citizenship after they refused to fill out a loyalty questionnaire from the U.S. government–at the very time they were confined in internment camps (Collins, 1985, p. 4; Kim, 2019, p. 38). So Asian Americans citizenships were not permanently protected as a basic human right, and they were seen as "foreigners" in mainstream society, regardless of the U.S. Constitution. In other words, Asian Americans have perpetually lived in fear in American society of easily losing their basic rights in their home country.

The image that people of Asian descent are all new arrivals to the U.S. has not changed even to this day. The part of the cause for this image is not only their treatment by the government but also immigration laws of American history. Asian nationals have been often denied entry to the United States: Chinese immigrants were excluded from immigration by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882; immigration from the Asian-Pacific zone was prohibited by the Immigration Act of 1917 as well as the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement (the latter targeting only Japanese); and immigration from Asia was completely eliminated by the Immigration Act of 1924. Until the new Immigration and Nationality Act was signed in 1965, there were almost no newcomers coming into the United States from Asia between 1924 and 1965; while immigrants from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe continued during this period. As a result, today 60% of the population of the Asian diaspora in the United States is foreign-born (Lee & Fernandez, 1998, p. 324).

The total number of native-born Asian Americans is still relatively small, being a little over 18.9 million among the 328 million of the 2019 U.S. population—about 5.4% (United States Census Bureau, 2019). According to 2019 statistics (Hanna & Batalova, 2021, Figure 1), a little over 14.1 million people of Asian descent who reside in the United States were born outside the country. Among them, 61%—or 8.6 million people—were naturalized citizens (Hanna & Batalova, 2021, section on "Immigration Pathways and Naturalization"). Such naturalized American citizens might be strongly committed to be Americans. This is because becoming U.S. citizens, many have given up their natal citizenships as numerous governments (like China, India, and Japan) do not allow for dual citizenships. Furthermore, 364,800 Asians received permanent residencies, or Green Cards, from the U.S. government in 2019 (ibid.). So at least 27.5 million people of Asian descent are U.S. citizens compared to about 5.5 million who are foreign nationals. In other words, only about a fifth of the people of Asian descent who are in the United States are temporary visa holders, or "real," legal foreigners. Despite the fact that the vast majority are U.S. citizens or permanent residents—a majority even being native English speakers—all of these people are somehow seen as foreigners.

The stereotypical image has been reemphasized each time Americans causally call them Japanese, Korean, Chinese, or Indians instead of simply Americans, or Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, or Chinese Americans. On the other hand, most European Americans—such as those of German, French, and British descent—are called just *Americans,* and never Germans,

French, or British (or rarely, German Americans, French Americans, or British Americans). This causal language is a reflection of Asian American being new and outsiders in the eyes of the American public. Since people reemphasize Asian Americans being outsiders when an emergency social situation occurs in the society, people tend to blame "different people" and "dangerous people."

Seeing how mainstream European American society treats other minorities, East Asians and their American born children follow the philosophy of "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" and they often try very hard to assimilate into mainstream society. One example of this is seen in intercultural marriage. The rate of marriage between people of Asian descent and White (or other) Americans is very high: the rate of intermarriages of Chinese and European Americans is 53.7%; for Japanese it is 64.9%; for Koreans, 67.9%; for Indians, 69.3%; and for Filipinos, 61% (Lee & Fernandez, 1998, p. 330). Furthermore, Chinese transnational migrants often change their Chinese names to local names (Lo & Reyes, 2004, p. 116) and, as I mentioned earlier, children of Chinese nationals mostly choose to speak English over their parent's language in North America (Wei, 2016, p. 6).

According to Sue (2010), the first thing non-Asian Americans ask Asian Americans is "Where are you from?" If their answer is something like "I am from California," the other person would keep asking "Where are you *really* from?" or "Where are you originally from?" This goes on until the non-Asian American speaker is satisfied by categorizing the Asian American by his or her ancestor's homeland. These exchanges happen ritually, and it seems a proper social relationship cannot be established otherwise.

In Japanese society people do a similar thing regarding social status. Itoh (2007) reported that Japanese often ask about the social status of their addressees when they first meet. Until they find out the social status of each other, people cannot start to have a conversational exchange. This is because depending on their social status, their speech styles and discourse manners can be different for Japanese. In the case of non-Asian Americans talking to people of Asian descent, it might be a similar mindset. Since non-Asian Americans see Asian Americans as "foreigners," non-Asian Americans think that not only Asian nationals, but even Asian Americans, do not share the same "American" culture as they do (assuming there is such a thing as "American culture," and that the speaker is thinking in such abstractions). It could be that the non-Asian American needs to find out which nations the Asian-looking persons are "from" so they can have a conversation "accordingly."

Such queries as this reflect a pattern of thinking—one so prevalent and obvious to people of Asian descent that they go to great lengths not to be labeled as foreigners, even to the extent of abandoning their heritage language, or not forming a diaspora language in the United States. A Washington, D. C.-born Taiwanese American film director, Eddie Huang, told CBS News in 2021, "…ever since I am a kid, [my Chinese parents and grandparents] had always told us that … this isn't our country, be good, do homework, and follow the rules. We are not equal here. Don't cause any troubles." In order for them to master the language of the mainstream, they did not master their parents' languages or form a diaspora language. However, this is not the same in all diaspora communities of people of Asian descent in the world. As I have argued previously, Japanese Brazilians formed their own diaspora language (Adachi, 2017) and Japanese Hawaiians formed English pidgin language with other national immigrants; and other Asian diaspora communities have formed their own diaspora languages (Adachi, 2021). One of the reasons why Asian Americans in the mainland of the United States did not do so is that if they communicate in a diaspora language—although this would foster solidarity among small diaspora groups—they

would emphasize the stereotype Americans have about them: that is, they as non-Americans or foreigners in their own country (Adachi, 2021).

Historian Ibram Kendi (2019) claims that minorities often subject themselves to racist behaviors, ironically falling into the manners and discourse of the hegemony. He told of his own personal experience as he thought that as a Black youth, he believed he could never achieve anything in society. Greater society imprinted his racial inferiority in his mind. As a result, he did not make any effort in his childhood to achieve his dreams. Asians and Asian Americans can also fall prey to a similar mind set. They can develop inferior self-images and dismiss their ancestors' cultures and languages. They might try to separate themselves from their Asian diaspora communities, but at the same time they are seen as perpetual foreigners by the mainstream. This is a recipe for alienation and emotional and cultural homelessness. This is a vicious cycle that since they feel cultural homeless that they do not advocate their citizenship rights and since their citizenships do not protect them *firmly* that they hesitate making their voice to establish their position. This vicious cycle is also letting the U.S. society targeting of National Scapegoating that I am pointing out in the following section.

Asian Americans: The Target of National Scapegoating

Once a social or political or economic crisis occurs, such "foreign" minorities easily become targets of scapegoating. This has happened many times in American history. For example, Japanese Americans became political scapegoats and were sent to internment camps during World War II. In 2004, in his interview to *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Fred Korematsu (1919- 2005), who had a long battle in the U.S. Supreme Court regarding Japanese American internment, stated that Japanese Americans were victims of a political strategy that promoted fear toward the enemy, and encouraged real Americans to fight against the Japanese:

> Fears and prejudices directed against minority communities are too easy to evoke and exaggerate, often to serve the political agendas of those who promote those fears. I know what it is like to be at the other end of such scapegoating and how difficult it is to clear one's name after unjustified suspicions are endorsed as fact by the government. If someone is a spy or terrorist they should be prosecuted for their actions. But no one should ever be locked away simply because they share the same race, ethnicity, or religion as a spy or terrorist. If that principle was not learned from the internment of Japanese Americans, then these are very dangerous times for our democracy. (Hong. January 30, 2017)

During World War II, then, lingering Yellow Peril—though no longer couched in that language—propagated fear toward the enemy, Japan, and Tokyo Rose became a scapegoat in the still-present war hysteria at the end of World War II. There was a national call for justice, and *someone* had to pay. There was no one specific person named Tokyo Rose; there were several English-speaking female broadcasters who announced on Radio Tokyo (today's NHK's World Radio). During World War II in the South Pacific, Allied troops called these English-speaking female broadcasters Tokyo Rose. Radio Tokyo was established in 1935 and at one time it sent broadcasts to 15 transmission-regions in 33 languages until the American occupation forces stopped its overseas broadcasting in 1945 (Robbins, 1977). Although many nations broadcast such propaganda during the war—including Nazi Germany—the U.S. Army really only hunted down these various Tokyo Roses. And of them all, only Iva Toguri (who was a broadcaster for the Zero Hour program) was ever arrested and accused of treason. But the majority of people who engaged in the Zero Hour program were war prisoners who happened to be native English speakers. Toguri was one of these; she was visiting her Japanese Aunt when the war broke out.

Toguri was in Japan just because her mother who had diabetes asked her to go to Japan to take care of her aunt who was dying alone. Soon after arriving in Japan, World War II started, and Toguri could not return. In refusing the Japanese government pressure to renouncement her U.S. citizenship, she had to leave her relative's home. In addition, she could not receive a food-ration card. This meant she had to purchase expensive food through the black market. Being an English monolingual speaker, not being familiar with Japanese culture, and staying in Japan longer than she anticipated, she had to seek a job to support herself in the community of English speakers in Japan, which was very limited. Her English-speaking ability was one of her few marketable skills, and working at Radio Tokyo was one of the few job opportunities for her (Bernstein, 2006; Robbins, 1977). There was no clear evidence that Toguri was ever the "real" Tokyo Rose, but she was nonetheless charged with treason (only the 17th person in U.S. history up until 1945 to be so convicted). Furthermore, she lost her American citizenship.

It was almost thirty years later, when finally, she was pardoned by President Gerald Ford and had her citizenship restored back to her in 1977. But by this time Toguri already had a ruined personal reputation, and suffered social ostracism until her death in 2006. She had to suffer all her life just because the U.S. government and military needed a scapegoat. According to Nelson (2006), due to a decision made by General Douglas McArthur—the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), the *de facto* ruler of occupied Japan—because the United States could not prosecute the Showa Emperor, Hirohito, who many felt was the real war leader of the Japanese government, by 1948 there was pressure steadily building on President Truman. Thus, the Tokyo Rose prosecution became rather public and notorious. In addition (Morton, 2017), the sensuality of the sultry voice of this Asian *femme fatale* who supposedly warped the minds of innocent American boys in foxholes all over the Pacific Theater attracted the attention of the American public much more than the dry and legalistic Tokyo war crimes tribunal. (The sexualization of Asian females is something that goes back to the turn of the twentieth century with Pierre Loti's Madame Chrysanthème trope to Giacomo Puccini's Madame Butterfly opera, and is still seen today–perhaps the Atlanta mass-shooting as another example). Toguri was interviewed on the CBS News program *60 Minutes* (Bernstein, 2006) and she said that America just needed anybody at the time to be a scapegoat: it was eeny, meeny, miny, … and she was the "moe." She was a great match for an American stereotype of Asian women who sextually seduce and manipulate innocent and gullible White men. At that moment it was not important if she was really Tokyo Rose or not; people were angry, and this Asian woman needed to be prosecuted.

A more recent scapegoating incident occurred in 2008 concerning a Chinese American-owned family bank, Abacus Federal Saving Bank. The bank was accused of a scheme to falsify loan applications. Abacus Federal Saving Bank was run by the Sung family, founded by Thomas Sung, who arrived in the Untied States from Taiwan at age ten. He ran the bank with his American-born daughters, Vera Sung and Jill Sung, in New York's Chinatown. The bank was indicted on charges of a scheme to falsify loan applications to Fannie Mae in 2012 by Manhattan district attorney, Cyrus Vance, Jr. After a four-month trail the Sungs won their case. However, because of the legal bills this court battle entailed, it drained the bank of more than $10 million and hamstringed the bank's business for three years (the period of the prosecution). Abacus remains the only U.S. bank *ever* to have been prosecuted in connection to the 2008 financial crisis. The Sungs said in a documentary film on the prosecution, Americans tend to think Chinese will not fight for justice, or bring attention to themselves in public, so they can easily become targets for scapegoating (James, 2016).

In April 2018, about a year and half prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, President Trump announced a list of Chinese products would suffer an import surcharge equivalent to $50 billion. In return, China imposed import tariffs on a list of American products, including the imposition of a 25% tariff on soybeans from the U.S.A. As a result, not only did American agricultural industries lose revenue, but so far the tariffs have not been paid by China, but have been entirely paid by U.S. importers (Carvalho et al., 2019). This was the start of a trade-war between the United States and China which still continues. Then the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. By early 2019 some negative opinions about this trade war with China started to surface and some farmers became vocal about their economic problems. Yet soon after the pandemic started, the media shifted their focuses entirely to the corona virus. President Trump did not waste this chance, and started blaming China directly and indirectly for the virus.

It is still not yet known how, or exactly where, the pandemic really started. Some people say it came from Europe (such as Spain or Italy where the corona virus hit hard early in the pandemic period). Most others say it came from China, another early victim of the pandemic. Former president Trump has constantly blamed China for the pandemic. He accused China not only of a negligent response, he also said he suspected the virus came from Wuhan Institute of Virology, unleashed by mistake or on purpose (Mangan, 2020). While he was making these accusations (of which there is still no definitive proof), President Trump never failed to use the words *communist* or *socialism*, whenever he mentioned China in his speeches. According to studies of Pew Research Center (October 7, 2019; Harting, 2019) even prior to the pandemic, 55% of Americans had a negative impression of "socialism," and about one-in-five (19%) say that socialism undercuts people's initiative and work ethic, making people too reliant on the government for support. As a result, Republicans have been claiming that any national health care program, including Obamacare, is the product of socialism, and say supporting it will eventually cause Americans to lose their "freedom" to healthcare access. Manipulating such American folk beliefs, the Trump administration conflated *China*, *communism*, and *evil* together in the mind of the populous, saying an activist government will monitor individual behavior, killing freedom and democracy. This scenario was successfully used to blame China for the social fear of the corona virus as well as negative trade deficit of the United States. The U.S. government switched from an economic issue—resulting from the unpopular trade-war with China—to an existential fight against China: China will not only invade the American economy, but China will also take away American individuality and freedom.

The racial tension did not stop with only the Chinese government, but also affected Chinese and Chinese American persons as well (including other Asians and Asian Americans). For example, a newly elected California Republican Congresswoman, Michelle Steel, said in her interview with Tucker Carlson on Fox News on Nov. 18, 2020, that she was born in Korea and raised in Japan—so she speaks Korean and Japanese natively. But she has nothing to do with China and speaks no Chinese language. Yet people in the United States still see her as if she were Chinese, especially these days during the pandemic. The current racial tension based on epidemic threat, socio-political (i.e., socialist) threat, and economic threat involves not only Asians but also Asian Americans; people in the United States often do not make a distinction.

Today, in the 21st century, the Trump administration targeted China as a political scapegoat—a new kind of Yellow Peril threat from the East. These types of racial comments have continued even on national news programs like *Tucker Carlson Tonight* and *Hannity* at Fox, and even less conservative media outlets. This can only foster bias among people who are watching (even though no one has ever offered much proof for anything Tucker Carlson or Sean Hannity have said on the

air about Trump being correct). Kiki Monifa (2021) stated that social media no doubt influences hatred: when the Anti-Defamation League surveyed 2,251 people, 31% of Asian Americans confessed to experiencing online hate speech and harassment.

The fear of the nation political-economic system, i.e., capitalism or communism, however, did not just start influencing the American mind overnight by Donald Trump. A seed of such fear on Asian economic power was planted in the late 1970s in an expanding economic power of Asian nations. In the early 1900s, the old Yellow Peril—the concept of Asians being an existential danger to American society—was derived from a fear of Asians taking jobs from American people. However, the fear toward Asians and Asian Americans, has been shifted to the expanding economic power of Asian nations when Japanese automakers successfully and competitively entered the U.S. automobile market, and American automakers' sales and profits suffered a steep decline in the 1980s. In 1982, with fear of losing their jobs, frustrated autoworkers sometimes resorted to violence. A "Japanese" looking person, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was killed in such an act. After an argument with two Chrysler plant workers, Chin was beaten to death by them with a baseball bat. Regardless of taking a life, the accused men were found guilty of lesser charges and were fined only around $3,000 and given a three-year probation with no jail time. The reason for this light sentence was that the jurors were very sympathetic for the Chrysler plant workers who were worried about losing their jobs to the Japanese auto industry. The fact that the two White men did not know the difference between a Chinese or Japanese person was irrelevant; it seems in the language of the court record that this distinction was not especially germane, for either side.

By the end of the 1900s then, the direct danger of the hordes of the Yellow Peril taking over the manual labor market had passed (which has now largely been taken up Latinxs or Hispanic Americans). But it is felt that the whole American economy is being threatened by Asia and Asians. Today's threat of such economic expansion even started connecting to socialism and communism. The Yellow Peril never really disappeared from American society, but has been omnipresent, rising up in times of war, or political, economic, or cultural crises. Each time it resurfaces after being updated accordingly to the new social conditions.

Minimization of Racial Issues by Authorities

Early in 2021, even as the social restrictions of the pandemic began to be lifted, people of Asian descent were still targeted for anti-racial acts of physical violence, even against the vulnerable and the elderly. For instance, an 84-year-old Thai man, Vicha Ratanapakdee was killed in his San Francisco neighborhood by a random passerby (Fuller, 2021). When 19-year-old Antoine Watson was walking with his girlfriend, he saw Ratanapakdee and ran into him and mashed him into a garage door and killed him (Cho & Thorbecke, 2021). In the following month, February 2021, Yahya Muslim, a 28-year-old man, purposely went to the Oakland Chinatown in California to physically attack vulnerable older people, including a 91-year-old man who was pushed to the sidewalk, a 60-year-old man, and a 55-year-old woman (who lost consciousness).

Defense lawyers like Chesa Boudin, the attorney for Antoine Watson, claim Watson is not a racist: Just before Watson saw Ratanapakdee, he received a speeding ticket and when he saw Ratanapakdee, Watson went into a temper tantrum. Because of his mental state Watson committed the act of violence, but it was not because he is a racist. This clam is exactly the same excuse used for the defendants in the Vincent Chin murder case back in 1982. Auto workers faced an extremely vulnerable economic period at the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. Starting with the oil crisis of 1973 the American economy faced a stock market crash in 1973–74. Although the recession

ended in 1975, inflation remained high until the early 1980s. During this period of economic crisis Japanese automakers gradually became popular among American consumers who viewed Japanese cars as both inexpensive and reliable (Swiecki et al., 2020). According to Jones (1980) during the 1974–1975 recession, already 145,300 auto-industry workers were jobless, while another 200,000 auto workers were facing possible layoffs by the early 1980s.

The Vincent Chin murder happened at the height of this period. Because of these economic hardships, the jurors were sorry for the killers, Ronald Ebens (who was a Chrysler plant supervisor) and his stepson, Michael Nitz (a laid-off autoworker). It was felt that Americans faced economic difficulties because the Japanese auto industry was taking jobs away from them. For these reasons, they were quite sympathetic for the defendants (Choy & Tajima-Pene, 1987). Regardless of taking a young man's life they walked away, free from any jail time. Almost half a year later the first Japanese auto plant was built in Marysville, Ohio, and today there are seven Japanese auto plants in the US—all hiring American workers and contributing to the American economy. For instance, in 2019 Japanese automakers directly employed 98,291 workers in the United States and contributed 53.3 billion dollars in U.S. income (Swiecki et al., 2020, pp. 4–5). The murder case trials went on until 1987; ironically by this time two Japanese auto plants (Honda and Nissan) were in fully operation—and one large Toyota plant was under construction in Georgetown, Kentucky. These all, of course, hired American autoworkers. The jurors, and the judges who saw this case, ignored this economic fact at the time.

Today in the Atlanta Massage Parlor mass shooting in 2021 the authorities again deny their anti-Asian sentiments. They claim the shooter was sexually disturbed rather than being a racist. His sexual addiction and the pressures of COVID caused the crime. On March 16, 2021, Robert Aaron Long purchased a 9mm handgun and killed eight people in Georgia, six of them Asian women. In an announcement from the Cherokee County police department, they stated that a likely motivation was because of his alleged "sex addiction." During a news interview (Yoganathan, 2021), Bee Nguyen, a Vietnamese American and Democratic state representative in the Georgia house, said the incident was an intersection of gender-based violence, misogyny and xenophobia–saying little about its obvious racial underpinnings. Hearing such statements, on first impression, people who already have a preconceived notion that people of Asian descent are rarely victims of racism would minimalize this action as an "isolated incident" or a "random act of violence," even thought this might be a clear case of assault and prejudice against Asian women.

The issues of a possible racial motivation of the shooter, or the sexual fetishization of Asian women, will only be a secondary consideration. This latter problem has been found throughout American history. For example, the Page Law of 1875 prohibited the immigration of Chinese women to the United States because it was felt that they all were coming to work as prostitutes. And, as I mentioned before, we saw that Iva "Tokyo Rose" Toguri was believed to be a modern-day Siren, drawing innocent and susceptible young American boys to their doom during World War II. (This is similar to other extreme comments made about immigrants today, such as former president Trump's claim that all Mexicans are drug dealers or rapists). The point is, regardless of the misogyny and xenophobia, the racism of the incident has been downplayed; and it is clear that many people still have a stereotype of Asian women being sexual objects and threats to Christian morality.

Conclusion

Increasing incidents of xenophobia and racial hatred directed against people of Asian descent in the United States today is related to a Yellow Period-based perpetual-foreigner stereotype—not

unique to the present health crisis, but is something that has been deeply embedded into American consciousness throughout its history. In order to support this statement, I looked at incidents of discrimination and violence against East Asian descendants during both the pandemic period and the previous periods and analyzed what caused them, and how mainstream society, especially those in authority, handled these cases. All those incidents are due to a certain kind of stereotype of East Asians; as foreigners who do not fit into American society. Such an image of Asians being unfit to be here encourages fear in the hearts of the American people, especially when the nation is under social, economic, political, or medical threat.

Being treated as perpetual foreigners, people of East Asian descent try hard to assimilate into American society, even to the point where they will discontinue the use of their parents' languages and culture. This perpetual foreigner, outsider, stereotype insures that Asian American voices are rarely heard by the insiders. This guarantees scapegoating, whether it is Tokyo Rose right after World War II, Vincent Chin during the oil shock recession in the 70s, or the persecution of the Abacus Federal Savings Bank in the 2008 economic collapse. Today, the COVID pandemic is also taking its toll, with Chinese restaurants closing in the early period to numerous acts of physical violence. Furthermore, we see that the authorities often minimize the racism behind these incidents. Such actions are self-fulfilling vicious circles.

All these attitudes were exploited by former President Trump to foster racial division and to foster his own political ends. To say the least, his language was disingenuous, if not mendacious. He repeatedly used racially loaded terms like "the Chinese virus" and "Kung Flu" together with "Communist China." He apparently used these words in a joking manner, according to Sue (2010) and many scholars in sociology and ethnic studies see this attitude as simple "microaggression." His behavior is indisputably associated with the old Yellow Peril notion, which becomes repackaged at various times in America, and in various guises, and has been recreated in the current 21st century as the Neo-Yellow Peril threat to the United States. Furthermore, his words rekindled fear and anger toward Asians and Asian Americans to a different level. From the fear before World War II was that Asians would bring in cheap labor and bust labor unions and their hard-fought victories, to the fear of rising economic power of Asian nations in the 21st century, to the fear that Americans will become figurative or literal slaves to Asian (i.e., China) and Americans will lose their "freedom," the most precious of all of America's symbolic values. In other words, this time American folk-economics beliefs regarding capitalism versus socialism has been used to promote racial division and derision. Many citizens blindly took the word of political demagogues without any due diligence. Some leaders said a socialist government would do no end of nefarious deeds, like intentionally creating a corona virus in a Wuhan lab. Such preposterous false news, filled with buzz words, has caused racial tensions to flare up against not only Chinese but all people of Asian descent in the United States. I argue that such words successfully deflected people's attention away from the ineffective political policy of the previous administration's poor response to a health crisis, and fostered fear in the hearts and minds of the citizenry regarding Asian Americans and people from Asia. This scapegoating continues to stoke fear during the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic, and indeed, is still doing so today.

Preposterous false news, filled with the code words, has caused racial cooperation to deteriorate. Pitting ethnic groups against each other unfortunately has always been a part of mainstream politics—just like President Trump saying all Latinxs cannot be distinguished from illegal immigrants. Trump's injudicious language might have been targeting certain Mexicans; however, his words affected not only Mexicans but all people of Latin descent in the United States. He had successfully rekindled racial tensions which have not dissipated even after his power ended.

Under such a tense social and cultural climate, more racial incidents are occurring, and indeed, even escalating. Here I have argued that the American fear of East Asian community—though not caused by Trump—was certainly exploited by him during the pandemic. It could be said that former President Trump watered a seed of fear toward East Asians already found in American soil, while the pandemic provided fertilizer where plenty of racist seeds have already been planted. These seeds continue to grow, and today with the pandemic, the plant seems to be blooming.

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