Understanding and Stopping Anti-Asian Hate: Article #5

WHY ASIANS ARE BEING SEEN AS OUTSIDERS

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Since the arrival of Asian immigrants in the United States in the 1850s, they have always been seen as outsiders. During the California Gold Rush, thousands of Chinese immigrants arrived in America in search of wealth. Other Asian immigrants (including immigrants from Japan, Korea, and South Asia) also started to arrive in America in search of labor. However, due to the large numbers of Asian immigrants suddenly entering the country, hostility intensified and Asian immigrants became increasingly excluded from American privileges. Nativism, the policy of protecting established inhabitants' interests as opposed to immigrant interests, progressively spread and discrimination against Asian Americans and immigrants grew. The United States government passed policies that restricted immigration based on race and required immigrants to register with the government, and eventually almost completely excluded Asian immigration in the 1920s. Asian immigrants finally became eligible for citizenship in 1943 but still face racism and hostility in the United States today.

A major reason why Asian immigrants are seen as outsiders is because of stereotypes such as the "model minority" and "perpetual foreigner." Asian Americans and immigrants are subject to the model minority stereotype, which assumes that

Asians are "hardworking overachievers who have made it to the highest levels of success" (CNBC). This may seem satisfactory but in reality holds Asian Americans back because it assumes that Asians face no discrimination in the United States. It has also kept Asian Americans from pursuing equal opportunities compared to others. This stereotype also groups many different ethnicities into one big group, and does not account for those who may not fit into the stereotype. Another stereotype, the "perpetual foreigner," causes Asian Americans to be seen as foreigners regardless of their citizenship or how long their families have lived in America. Many Asian Americans are often treated as foreigners, even if they were born in America or have lived in America for a long time. This stereotype instigates further racist ideologies by labeling Asian Americans as "un-American." The spread of these ideas by American media and government harm Asian Americans by portraying them as outsiders who do not belong in America.

Another reason why Asians in America are seen as outsiders is because their separate ethnic identities do not matter to some white Americans. Asian American is a broad term describing many different ethnic groups, and although it unifies Asian immigrants, it also encompasses diverse groups that have separate values and identities. The classification may be too broad and erases individual aspects of different cultures. Some Americans identify individuals as Asian and do not consider their true ethnicity. There is a loss of individuality and character that comes with grouping all Asian Americans into a single category. Also, when all Asian Americans are grouped together, it is hard to see inequities because groups from different regions have different experiences.

Although now Asian Americans are fitting in better in American society, they still face discrimination because of being viewed as outsiders. Stereotypes that have existed for too long in the United States harm the livelihood of Asian Americans by subjecting them to hostility and racism. The grouping of over 50 ethnicities into a singular group is unfair to different cultural and traditional values. Treating Asian Americans as true Americans is crucial to ending the racism and xenophobia that still exists in the United States. The public must change its mindset on categorizing Asian Americans as a singular group and recognize that the term encompasses diverse backgrounds and nationalities. Asian Americans deserve better treatment and equal privileges, and should not be seen as outsiders.