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ENGLWRIT112

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A Hate Train Born from a Virus

00:00:00-00:00:05

[White text on black background: “Warning: Intense Language and Violence”]

00:00:05-00:00:14

[News footage from NBC Bay Area of a sidewalk. Someone pushes another person to the ground.]

Newscaster: Caught one of the more brutal incidents. It happened here Sunday afternoon. You can see that man violently push a 91 year old man to the ground.

00:00:14-00:00:18

[White text on black background: “A Hate Train Born From A Virus”]

00:00:18-00:00:40

[Throughout the video unless stated otherwise, red drawings are made on a small whiteboard and then erased between each section. Three figures are drawn with the text: “HATE IS A VIRUS”]

Dees: The young man in the video went on to commit two more acts of violence aimed at Asian Americans that day. One aimed at a 60 year old man and another at a 55 year old woman. This attack was one of the first widely covered instances of the recent rise in hate crimes against Asian American Pacific Islander people, or AAPI people.

00:00:40-00:01:13

[A person is drawn with a broken heart and a tear on their face. "HOW? WHY" is written above.]

Dees: When I first saw that video, I felt sort of like I had been shoved to the ground as well. I could never imagine how that 91 year old man felt while lying on the concrete. Maybe he felt immense disappointment, frustration. Maybe he was asking himself, what did I do to deserve this? Well, Sir, you did absolutely nothing wrong, and I'm sorry that a fellow citizen did this to you. And while there's no justification behind these actions, I want to understand how and why things escalate to this point.

00:01:13-00:01:27

[Text reads: "Why the rise in AAPI HATE?"]

Dees: And answer the question: Why the rise in AAPI hate?

00:01:27-00:01:40

[A smartphone is drawn, the screen reading: "Insta. Feb. Asian Elder Assaulted" A finger "presses" the home button of the drawn phone and the screen changes to read "May. Another attack"]

Dees: Since I saw this video in February, it feels like I haven't gone a day without seeing another story of mistreatment against Asian Americans. It's almost like every time I look at my phone, I see another story of another attack.

00:01:40-00:02:01

[An arrow is drawn between "March 2020" and "February 2021" with the text "150% ↑ in AAPI HATE Incidents"]

Dees: From March 19th, 2020 to February 28th, 2021, there has been 150% increase in Asian American hate related incidents aimed at AAPI people. However, that number only makes up a fraction of the actual incidences.

00:02:01-00:02:30

[A bar graph is shown, reflecting the spoken data.]

Dees: According to this year's national report from the Anti Asian Discrimination Group Stop AAPI Hate 68.1% of incidents involved verbal harassment. 20.5% involved avoidance and shunning. 11.1% involved physical abuse. And the remaining 34.2% included coughing, spitting, online harassment, workplace discrimination, barred from establishment and transportation, and vandalism.

00:02:30-00:02:47

[A street with buildings and a train as well as people on the sidewalk are drawn. Text above reads "Public Places"]

Dees: The majority of these occur at businesses and public streets and sidewalks. Not dark alleyways or obscured from public view, but right where everyone can see it happen.

00:02:47-00:03:47

[For each of the testimonies, black typed text on a white background are shown, mirroring the spoken testimonies.]

Dees: The national report also includes eyewitness testimony from the victims.

Two white middle-aged men who have been my neighbors for over fifteen years approached me threateningly on the street, pulled down the corners of their eyes and said, "Go back to Wuhan, b*tch and take the virus with you." When I called them vile, they then called me a "Thai wh*re" and threatened to beat up my husband. (West Vancouver, Canada).

One of my professors was talking about the public health response to COVID-19 and explicitly called it the “China Virus” and that “we’ve gotta be very careful about that country and what they’d do to us. (College Park, MD).

My boyfriend and I were riding the metro into DC. When on the escalator in the transfer station, a man repeatedly punched my back and pushed us past us. At the top, he circled back toward us, followed us, and repeatedly shouted “Chinese b**ch” at me, fake coughed at, and physically threatened us. A few days later, we saw a news story about how the owner of Valley Brook Tea in DC was harassed and pepper sprayed by the same man, calling him “Covid-19” repeatedly. (Annandale, VA).

00:03:47-00:04:08

[Text “Coronavirus” appears above a drawing of the earth.]

Dees: Based on these reports, it would be easy to assume that the coronavirus pandemic was the cause for the hate. Anti-Asian rhetoric like “go back to Wuhan” and “China Virus” seemed to be thrown around without regret, signaling the fires of the culprit. However, the pandemic is just a piece of the problem. The heart of the issue lies in leadership and media.

00:04:08-00:04:16

[A text bubble is drawn with “Wuhan virus” and “Chinese virus” inside]

Dees: Early in the coverage of COVID-19, many of the reports labeled the disease as the “Wuhan Virus” or the “Chinese Virus.”

00:04:16-00:04:25

[“Weaponizing Terms” is written above a sword]

Dees: During an interview with Seth Meyers, prominent Asian American actor Ken Jeong attributes the startling rise of hate to weaponizing terms like “China Virus” and “Kung Flu.”

00:04:25-00:04:32

[Chains are drawn, connecting “Covid-19” to “Asian People”]

Dees: These weaponizing terms attached COVID-19 to a people, paints them as the culprit for the pandemic.

00:04:32-00:04:42

[Symbols are drawn representing “warning” and social media platforms]

Dees: This language is dangerous when thrown across social media and large media platforms. It becomes deadly when our leaders are using these exact terms.

00:04:32-00:04:44

[The Twitter symbol is drawn alongside “#ChineseVirus” and branching lines]

Dees: In fact, a study by UC San Francisco found that after Donald Trump began using #Chinesevirus in his tweets, those who adopted the hashtag were far more likely to pair it with an overtly racist hashtag.

00:04:44-00:05:22

[A person speaks at a podium; the crown reflects the spoken expressions. A dark cloud fills the sky, emanating from the speaker.]

Dees: It's human nature to follow the leader. People are engineered to believe that if authority deems something to be acceptable, then it must be. When the coronavirus pandemic arrived in the US, the population was angry, scared, and desperate for answers. The moment that the president attached the idea of the pandemic to Asians, a dark, xenophobic cloud formed over an angry population, looking to take all of it out.

00:05:22-00:05:54

[A street cart, a bat, and a laughing face are drawn, connecting to “foreign” which connects to an AAPI figure]

Dees: All of a sudden there was justification for Halloween costumes of Wuhan street vendors and memes and jokes about bats. Spread of this racist and generalized outlook on AAPI people painted them and the virus as one foreign entity, condemning phenotypically Asian bodies as the spread of the virus. As a result, those grasped by this false perception get to express a contempt for COVID-19, and xenophobia, prejudice, and violence against Asian Americans.

00:05:54-00:06:12

[A 1900 US map with “Plague” pointing to San Francisco]

Dees: This isn't the first time that AAPI people have been blamed for something that they didn't cause. An eerily similar outbreak involving the Bubonic Plague mirrors the events happening today. It's 1900, and the world is experiencing an outbreak of Bubonic Plague. While the source of disease is debated, it has somehow arrived in San Francisco.

00:06:12-00:06:23

[Boarded-up architecture in Chinatown is drawn with people holding weapons on guard outside]

Dees: And a Chinese immigrant happens to be the first casualty. San Francisco authorities discovered this and placed a quarantine on Chinatown. Yet only those with Chinese descent are forced to quarantine.

00:06:23-00:06:45

[Two figures are drawn with their hands raised, accompanied by a dead figure hidden in the ground, and a figure with a weapon. A nearby building is on fire.]

Dees: Their homes were subjected to searches and sometimes destroyed if evidence of the disease is present. To avoid further mistreatment, hiding the sick and dead became normal. One

San Francisco paper warned of the almond-eyed Mongolian who will assassinate you and your children with one of his many maladies. The blame for the disease and its entirety fell on the Asian population.

00:06:45-00:07:10

[A law enforcement badge, a red cross, crossed bars, and a UFO are drawn]

Dees: Instead of receiving protection and assistance, Chinese Americans were met with punishment and alienation. The events in 1900 are comparable to what's happening today. Take, for example, the report from College Park. A reporter indicates that the professor warns their students to be careful with the Chinese, as if they're actively trying to do harm. The San Francisco paper used a similar language but is much more bluntly racist than pinning disease on the Chinese.

00:07:10-00:07:20

[Below "1940," a plane is drawn with explosions beneath it]

Dees: Nonetheless, the events of 1900 echo what's happening today. And it's important to learn from this. One more example that must not be overlooked in this conversation is the Japanese Internment of 1940.

00:07:20-00:07:36

[An internment camp is drawn]

Dees: Following the bombings of Pearl Harbor, thousands of Japanese Americans were ordered out of their homes and were sent to internment camps under suspicion of Japanese espionage. These people had to leave behind their belongings. They were not told where they were being taken or how long they would be there.

00:07:36-00:08:00

[Text: “A JAP IS A JAP” with vandalized buildings drawn beneath]

Dees: General John L. DeWitt, the West Coast commander, who urged this removal is quoted by multiple local papers to have said “a Jap is a Jap, it makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not.” When the Japanese business owners and homeowners returned from internment after almost three years, they would come to find their businesses and homes ransacked with anti-Asian rhetoric painted on the buildings.

00:08:00-00:08:14

[“Blame” with an arrow to “AAPI”]

Dees: Despite what General DeWitt had to say, those Japanese Americans were just as American as anybody else. Anyone could have been a spy working with the Japanese. However, the blame fell solely on Japanese Americans. Despite what the 1900 San Francisco paper said,

00:08:14-00:08:45

[A crowd of people with signs; a speech bubble reads: “NO MORE.” A person at a podium smiles]

Dees: Anyone could have spread the Bubonic Plague. However, the blame fell solely on Chinese Americans. And despite the tweets of Donald Trump, the COVID-19 pandemic is the result of global unpreparedness. It's not the sole fault of Asians. It's a different time in 1900 and 1940.

AAPI people don't need to hide anymore. Rallies and protests are popping up all over America.

With widespread media attention and respected Asian representatives taking charge, it's an opportunity to change how Asian Americans will be viewed for centuries to come.

00:08:45-00:09:15

[Text reads: “‘A very opportune moment in history is happening right now’ -Kwak Sin-ae”]

Dees: As said by the producer on the four time Oscar winning film Parasite and First Woman of Color to win an Oscar. Kwak Sin-ae: “I feel like a very opportune moment in history is happening right now”. I never imagined that this was the context that would lead to my praise of her, but I feel she is right and that the message must be heard. Now is the best opportunity for a revolution of the Asian American to occur, but more importantly for the anxiety of death and mistreatment

00:09:15-00:09:37

[Text reads: “My thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected. #HATEISAVIRUS”]

Dees: of the AAPI body to be gone for good.