

## THE HIDDEN DISCRIMINATION AND FRAGILE RESISTANCE: ASIAN HATE IN AMERICAN

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### ABSTRACT

*The issue of discrimination against Asians is a deep-seated social problem in the United States, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a tip of the iceberg of this issue to the public. This article believes that discrimination against Asians is a complex problem with various causes, which leads to a unique manifestation of this discrimination that has been overlooked by previous researchers. Therefore, due to this uniqueness, this article suggests that a thorough analysis of discrimination against Asians should start from the perspective of identity politics and analyze the asymmetry caused by the uniqueness of discrimination against Asians.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Discrimination Against Asians, Asian Discrimination, COVID-19 Pandemic*

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### INTRODUCTION

Under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, discrimination against Asians in the United States is becoming increasingly prominent. In this context, more and more scholars have analyzed the causes of Asian discrimination and put forward several viewpoints. However, the diverse causes of Asian discrimination have resulted in a unique manifestation of discrimination against Asians, which has been overlooked by the academic community. Therefore, this study is mainly divided into three parts: external and internal reasons for causing Asian discrimination, the intersection of external and internal reasons, and measures to address it. Through analysis from these three perspectives, this study comprehensively analyzes Asian discrimination and explains its uniqueness - asymmetry and the reasons for being ignored by society.

### The Literature Review on Asian Discrimination

The issue of discrimination against Asians has not received as much attention from society as the issue of discrimination against blacks. From a historical perspective, since the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882<sup>1</sup>, Asians, such as Korean and Japanese, in the United States have suffered discrimination and violence from other ethnic groups. This includes discrimination in position competing, university study, physical violence and verbal assault. Discrimination against Asians often receives less attention and support compared to other disadvantaged groups, and is also frequently overlooked in academic research. However, this does not diminish the existence of discrimination against Asians and the reasons for its lack of recognition in society and research should be examined. With limited research, however, there are still several types of explanations for the reasons for discrimination against Asians in existing articles, mainly summarized into two

categories of reasons, namely external reasons and internal reasons.

Two external reasons, the coronavirus epidemic and historical problems, partly cause Asian discrimination. First of all, the coronavirus epidemic brought from China has become a direct cause of the intensification of discrimination against Asians. At this time, stimulated by some officials of the U.S. government who turned the epidemic into a politicized event, Asians have become so-called spreaders of the virus, which has caused panic and exclusion in American society. (Angela R. Gover, 2020)<sup>2</sup> Under the influence of this situation, more verbal and behavioral violence against Asians began to occur in the United States. For example, Under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at CSU San Bernardino, "hate crimes in six major US cities continued to rise in 2021. New York City alone had 133 hate crime records, exceeding the national total for 2019-2020 according to the FBI. (University of Southern California) "<sup>3</sup>This document's data clearly illustrates the fact that, under the political insinuations of the US government and misunderstandings of other ethnic groups, Asians have been subjected to more attacks and unequal treatment in the context of COVID-19. Furthermore, the cultural history of Asians and the conflict with the West have also become a reason for Asians to be discriminated against. In history and culture, many Americans have stereotyped and unfriendly impressions of Asians. Under contact with the Manchu Qing government, Western society generally held an impression of arrogance, rudeness and backwardness towards Chinese society. The Chinese people's braids, the so-called squinting eyes, and the cunning heart are all portrayed by Western society. Also, the United States has had fierce conflicts and wars in Asia with Japan, China, Vietnam, and other countries.<sup>4</sup> These wars caused the huge losses and setbacks to America., which have made many ethnic groups in the United States to hostility towards Asians due to historical conflicts.

In addition, the self-segregation and meritocracy of Asians also lead to the social problem of Asian hate. In the beginning, Asians are less adept at integrating into other ethnic groups and often form communities that retain a large amount of Asian culture and self-isolate. Asians have formed a kind of survival behaviors of a country within the United States. This self-segregation also makes them considered by Americans of other ethnicities to lack loyalty to the United States. The discriminator believes that Asians only focus on their own lives entirely ignoring the help for social issues and sponsorship of public welfare activities. Secondly, Asians highly respect meritocracy and apply it extensively in their lives and the education of future generations. Meritocracy believes that those with better abilities can obtain the best resources in constant competition. Under the influence of it , Asian students' excellent academic performance can more easily meet the academic requirements of top universities occupying many places. This has led many Americans to believe that Asian students have deprived them of opportunities and has aroused their hatred towards Asians. In addition, based on meritocracy, Asian Americans who work hard and have upper mobility generally have an economic status above the middle class. This trait has also triggered hatred of Asians from other ethnic groups below the middle class or who have lost their jobs. (Kuo Wen H, 1995)<sup>5</sup> Priya Mariana Shimpi also proposed the factor that Asians are being attacked by other ethnic groups because of their economic success undoubtedly proving those discriminators feel a sense of imbalance and deprivation, which leads to hatred and attacks against Asians. In this case, what behind the success of Asians becomes a set of meritocracy logic in discriminators minds. This internal reason finally makes them against Asians and distort the image as disposers.

### **Asymmetric Discrimination: the Result of an Interaction between Complex Causes**

The reasons summarized above have directly or indirectly led to the social problem of Asian discrimination. But these individual, discrete causes of discrimination do not account for the causes and neglect of the problem of discrimination against Asians.

Generally speaking, blacks or Latinos live in slums for a long time, and their education level and economic status are relatively low. This is not only the result of discrimination, but also the reason for continued discrimination. But Asians are different. They belong to a group of people with higher incomes in the overall population of the United States. According to Statista's survey on Median household income in the United States in 2021, by race or ethnic group, Asians own as much as \$101,418 in 2021 The median household income of, which ranks first in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Compared with Asians, the median annual income of blacks who are unfairly discriminated against is \$45,208. However, higher economic status did not make them immune to racial hatred. From March 19, 2020 to December 31, 2021, the AAPI Alliance reported 10,905 incidents of discrimination against Asians.<sup>7</sup> According to the US Census Bureau, the total Asian population in the United States is approximately 19.9 million.<sup>8</sup> However, black people with a total population of about 38.9 million will experience about 4939 violent attacks due to racial discrimination in 2020.<sup>9</sup> Asians have suffered more serious racial discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic. These data show that high economic status cannot change the status quo of being racially attacked, which is the meaning of the "asymmetry" mentioned above.

Therefore, this article believes that the mutual response of external and internal reasons led to this asymmetry, and ultimately made many people think that Asians are not a group that will be racially hated. The particularity of discrimination against Asians lies in the interaction between different reasons, and the combination of several reasons often creates several situations or problems to attack Asians.

First of all, the new crown epidemic and the self-segregation of Asians have jointly created a special result of Asian discrimination. The new crown epidemic first broke out in China and then spread in the United States. Therefore, other ethnicities prejudiced that the virus was brought by Asians and launched discrimination and violent attacks on all Asians without distinction. But in fact, the virus is largely carried by tourists, students and international businessmen between China and the United States (Angela R. Gover, 2020). There is no scientific evidence to prove that a specific ethnic group is the carrier of the virus. However, this reason was not so solid that could form a long-term discrimination, but another problem of Asians themselves has caused this discrimination to become persistent. The self-segregation of Asians has caused this problem to a large extent. Asians do not like and are good at participating in the discussion and analysis of social issues. In other words, due to Asians' unequal time allocation between social issues and self-development, Asians' self-isolation and silence have aroused other ethnic groups' misunderstanding and even blind hatred of Asians. (Mariana Shimpi, 2012)<sup>10</sup> The attitudes of Asians in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to selfishness and a lack of concern for public affairs among Asians who are discriminated against. In the final analysis, discriminators believe that Asians consume more than they contribute to society, and Asians do not have social rights to enjoy high economic status in this situation. This is the first type of interaction between two types of discrimination that eventually lead to an asymmetric and complex discrimination.

Secondly, the interaction between cultural stereotypes and Asian meritocracy has also largely led to another special result of Asian discrimination. From the prejudiced perspective of other ethnic groups in the United States, Asians have an inherent arrogance and treachery, and this is the external cause of this situation. Historically speaking, the

arrogance of the rulers and officials of the Qing Dynasty were felt in the state affairs exchanges between European and American countries and the Qing government. From a historical point of view, the West felt the arrogance and ignorance of the rulers and officials of the Qing Dynasty through the state affairs between west world and the Manchu government. (Waroonporn Suwanthanin, 2022)<sup>11</sup> Historically, due to the closed and lagging development of Asian countries, Western society believed that the common people under the Qing government did not receive the so-called civilization-Western education. Affected by false stereotypes, Asians are often mistakenly portrayed as arrogant and indifferent to the country's affairs. In conclusion, the discrimination mentioned above stems from historical biases. The following part of this article will discuss the issue of self-identity among Asian Americans.

In addition, the emergence of discrimination is also closely related to Asian meritocracy shared within the Asian group, which is an internal reason for this situation. The dual effects of cultural stereotypes and the model minority myth have led to a phenomenon known as "affirmative discrimination." Specifically, affirmative discrimination refers to the phenomenon where various factors ultimately lead to the deepening of discrimination. Under the effects of meritocracy, Asians tend to put in more effort in the competition for social opportunities and are less concerned about other public things that have nothing to do with success. The characteristics of Asians who were good at accumulating and doing business allowed them to accumulate a lot of wealth and successfully cross the economic class within a short period of time in the United States. (Harvard Law Review, 1993)<sup>12</sup> Therefore, many other ethnic groups in the United States believe that Asians have no right to own a considerable amount of wealth. In the minds of many discriminators, they believe that Asians' money does not depend on their continuous hard work and work, but on speculation and cheating. (Small, Mario L, Devah Pager, 2020)<sup>13</sup> At the same time, this situation has also been raised academically. In specific, Asians are different from other ethnic groups in that they tend to leave a huge amount of property to their children and make their wealth permanent through strict education. Harvard professor Michael Sandel mentioned in his book *The Pride of Elites* that a common feature of meritocracy is that wealthy families can often provide a considerable number of educational resources and platforms to their offspring. The hard work of the offspring combined with the background of the parents can often have greater competitiveness and opportunities in society. Under such circumstances, Discrimination happened because people stereotyped Asians' academic success as only depending on their parents rather than real talents.

Under the interaction of stereotyped culture and meritocracy, Asians are regarded by many people as an economic class that is indifferent and arrogant to the lower classes. As Charles A. Murray, a sociology professor at Brooklyn College, said, "When racism and sexism fell out of favor, the last acceptable prejudice was credentialism." (Murray, Charles A, 2009)<sup>14</sup> In modern America, at least on an official level, racism and sexism are no longer accepted by society. Most people have changed their traditional mindsets and moved towards diversity. However, the hierarchical system defined by academic excellence has been normalized in society. The result of excessive emphasis on academic excellence is that successful people often lack sufficient tolerance towards other groups with lower economic status or educational backgrounds. In other words, academic excellence promotes the idea that success is achieved through individual effort, which leads to the belief that those who did not get into good universities or are struggling economically are not working hard enough, while those who do not work hard do not need help from others.

To sum up, the above two types of discrimination are respectively caused by the intersection of external and internal reasons. The multifaceted nature of external and internal reasons has led to an asymmetry of Neglected discrimination. Asians have an economic status that is completely unequal to their social status. This huge imbalance

creates the asymmetry of Asian discrimination and makes Asian discrimination a social problem different from conventional discrimination.

### **3. Solutions to Discrimination - Dealing with Internal and External Causes**

The issue of anti-Asian discrimination is particularly complex, as it is caused by a combination of internal and external factors. To address this unique form of discrimination, a multi-faceted approach is needed, which considers both the internal and external factors. First of all, Asian Americans must change themselves to address two internal factors: self-segregation and focus on meritocracy. Furthermore, the US government and society should establish policies to protect Asian Americans and improve relations with Asian countries.

In the beginning, some of the characteristics of Asians contribute to the occurrence of discriminatory events. In order to prevent continued discrimination, Asians need to make three changes within themselves to demonstrate the true characteristics of the Asian race and change the stereotypes held by other ethnicities.

First of all, in the current social context, Asians should take a more positive attitude in the process of interacting with other ethnic groups. Only when Asians join the integration process with other ethnicities in the United States can they truly assimilate into American society and culture. Currently, the self-segregation within the Asian community is not helpful for mutual communication between different ethnic groups within the community. This situation undoubtedly leads to stereotypes and racial discrimination from other ethnicities. (Mariana Shimpi, 2012) This article believes that Asians need to decompose Asian communities and integrate into other ethnic residential areas through new ways of living or making cultural concessions to attract various ethnic people to join Asian communities. Asians' decisions and actions play a significant role in combating discrimination, and only when Asians change their mindset and decide to be more open, can they reduce misunderstandings and increase familiarity with the true Asian identity among other ethnic groups.

At the same time, Asian Americans should form a strong anti-discrimination alliance within their own ethnic group and collaborate with other minority groups. Specifically, due to the cultural, economic, political, religious customs, and language differences across various Asian countries, there are significant differences among Asian Americans. (Gao Zhan 2023)<sup>15</sup> There are often historical conflicts and identity issues within the Asian ethnic group, and they have never seen themselves as a unified whole. However, discriminators often do not launch attacks after further confirming which country's descendants of the Asian community they belong to. This internal conflict is meaningless and will only weaken the group's strength. Therefore, forming a common identity and community is essential to promoting the disappearance of discrimination against Asians.

Additionally, violence against Asians is often caused by white people, not by the mistaken stereotypes of Black people. According to a survey by the Chinese Human Rights Research Association, 75% of hate crime attackers against Asian Americans were white, while the remaining 25% were from other minority ethnic groups. (Gao Zhan, 2023) Therefore, both Asians and Blacks are victims of racial discrimination, and they should work together to promote the resolution of racial discrimination issues. (Center for Social Innovation, 2022)<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, Asians should change their received stereotype of only focusing on academic education and ignore social contributions. Under the influence of the meritocracy, Asians often have a stronger desire for economic and social status than other ethnic groups. To change the existing Asian discrimination in society, they need to first eliminate the excessive attachment to academic excellence and diplomas. Specifically, changing the competitive nature of social

resources is a very difficult and unrealistic plan, and existing resources cannot meet the needs of everyone. The reform that Asians can make internally is to change their educational beliefs.

Based on the evidence above, this article believes that the emphasis on academic excellence can lead to Asian apathy towards social issues and ultimately lead to cleavage between Asians and other ethnic groups in the United States. They must change their traditional mindset and engage in communication with other ethnic groups from an equal and non-discriminatory perspective, regardless of educational background.

Solving the social problem of discrimination against Asian Americans requires not only internal change within the Asian American community, but also external change from the US government and society. They should work to eliminate the root causes of discrimination against Asian Americans through three aspects: racial policies, foreign policies, and overall economic redistribution.

The US government should provide additional protections for minorities who are vulnerable to racial attacks by creating more protective agencies for Asians and other minorities. Although the US government has determined the illegality of racial discrimination as early as 1964 in The Civil Rights Act<sup>17</sup> and Executive Order 11246, it has not provided sufficient means of protection to specifically protect minorities. Discrimination against verbal and violent attacks on minorities is often dealt with by the same department as attacks on the main race, which directly leads to incomplete coverage and inefficiency in protecting the rights and interests of minorities. This paper argues that the US government can learn from the special protection measures of the Carolina state government for Asians to ensure the safety of Asians. At present, California has implemented specific measures to address the hate crime of discrimination against Asians. In March 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 85, which provides \$1.4 million in additional funding to track and respond to hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI).<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the bill also established a hotline for reporting hate crimes and directed state agencies to continue to track and hold hate incidents accountable. Policies that provide additional protection for minorities will undoubtedly promote the resolution of discrimination against Asians and even discrimination against Blacks. In conclusion, the US government should provide dedicated government processing units for all vulnerable minorities.

Moreover, the US government needs to actively strengthen contacts with Asian countries and improve international relations. Before the outbreak of the new crown epidemic in 2018, the Trump administration launched a trade war with China on March 23. (Chad P. Bown,2021)<sup>19</sup> This trades war has greatly affected the economic development between the two countries and has begun to deteriorate the political relationship between China and the United States. In addition, during the new crown epidemic, Trump's remarks naming the new crown virus as the Chinese virus to divert domestic conflicts have deepened the political conflict and kept the relationship between the two countries under tension. (Gover, Angela R, 2020) This paper argues that the US government should restore US-China relations by reducing political hostility and ultimately provide positive assistance to the social problem of Asian discrimination. One of the main external reasons for Asians being attacked is the hatred of Asians by nationalists for political reasons, and the speeches of the national government often subtly influence nationalists in their own country. Through US-China high-level political dialogue and consultation and cooperation in various international affairs, the political relationship between the US and China will certainly be eased. When the United States and China return to normal state-to-state relations or even partnership relations, the discrimination caused by state confrontation will surely be eased.

Ultimately, issues related to the identity politics of ethnic minorities reflect not only issues related to identity but also of social class. To fully address external factors causing discrimination against Asian Americans, research must be conducted into the unequal economic and racial status that is characteristic of this discrimination (Small, Mario L, Devah Pager, 2020). On the surface, discrimination against Asian Americans appears to be caused by racial factors, but in reality, the US economic system plays a crucial role behind the scenes. From a macro perspective, Asian Americans are a model one among US ethnic minorities, working diligently, earning high incomes, and having lower criminal records (Kuo Wen H, 1995). However, with economic crisis occurring, such as the US-China trade war, Asian Americans become scapegoats used by the government to divert attention and shift blame for the economic downturn (Andrew Malekoff, 2021).<sup>20</sup> Compared to other ethnic minorities, Asian Americans often occupy a more special position. During economic downturns or declines in capitalist economies, due to the nature of the work of most ethnic minorities, they are often the hardest hit. Specifically, with the impact of the trade war, many industries moved to avoid taxes, causing a large number of ethnic minority laborers to lose their jobs and causing economic turbulence among ethnic minorities. However, due to the differences in the nature of work between most Asian Americans and other ethnic minorities, they are rarely affected by factory layoffs. That's why ethnic unemployed minorities cannot compete with white people in higher social status result in directing their anger towards Asian Americans who have lower racial status (Kuo, Wen H, 1995). Simple punishment policies cannot fundamentally resolve the economic system that causes discrimination. Therefore, this article believes that only when the US changes its economic system and gradually balances the income levels of all ethnic groups can it reduce the inequality caused by economic factors. Perhaps the problems of the current economic system are difficult to completely solve, but basic economic security for economically disadvantaged groups often fundamentally reduces discrimination. Only when the material is highly developed and the US economy changes can it completely address the discrimination against Asian Americans caused by external factors.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, through studying the overlooked reasons for the social problem of anti-Asian discrimination, internal and external factors that contribute to its asymmetry formation, and ways to address it, it can be concluded that anti-Asian discrimination is a complex form of discrimination that differs from the traditional ones. The issue of anti-Asian discrimination is not as simple as its manifestations in society suggest. In fact, it reflects a long-standing economic inequality in the United States and a political problem of shifting conflicts. The hidden dangers of anti-Asian discrimination are also often overlooked by American politics and society. As current period, humanity has gradually learned to coexist with the novel coronavirus.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the immediate triggers of anti-Asian discrimination are gradually disappearing. However, the brief period of concealment does not mean that this problem has been eliminated. Asian discrimination is still a serious hidden danger in society, and once it re-emerges during a major public crisis, it will express itself in a more acute way and undermine the fundamental human concept of racial equality. This article reemphasizes that the brief period of concealment of anti-Asian discrimination does not mean that it has been resolved by society. American society should still actively seek solutions to this issue during this period of latent discrimination.

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