

[00:00:01.15] TORAL PATEL: The opinions expressed by the guests and contributors of this podcast are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Cornell University or its employees.

[00:00:10.48] [THEME MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:00:12.42] We're back with another episode of Let's Talk. Today we're here to talk about Anti-Asian violence and what it means to be in solidarity with the Asian, Asian-American, and Pacific Islander communities in this moment. This episode contains content that may be alarming for some of our listeners. My name is Toral Patel.

[00:00:31.14] ANTHONY SIS: My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:00:32.61] TORAL PATEL: And you're listening to the Inclusive Excellence Podcast. Anthony, we're back, and we're here to talk about a very serious topic of things that are happening in our country right now. And as you know, I identify as Asian, so this is something that's been extremely hard for me. It's been challenging thinking about how this might affect my family.

[00:00:57.51] And so before we dig a little bit more into the topic itself, let's tell our listeners what has been happening. Can you tell us what's been going on?

[00:01:06.20] ANTHONY SIS: Thank you, Toral, for sharing what you just shared. I know that this is something I definitely want to revisit later on in the episode in terms of solidarity. But just to give some context for our listeners who are curious about what's specifically going on in this moment, so there has been an increase in anti-Asian hate crimes due to covid-19.

[00:01:27.62] And so we're just going to share some data, some statistics, from organizations that have compiled this information about the severity of this particular issue in this moment. So according to an organization called Stop AAPI hate-- so AAPI, just for some additional context, is Asian Asian-American Pacific Islander-- from March to August 2020 alone, there were over 2,583 reports of anti-Asian attacks in this country.

[00:01:56.65] So that's 2,583 reports. Toral, can you imagine if you got that many reports through the biased reporting tool?

[00:02:04.64] TORAL PATEL: Right, yeah. No way. That is way too many.

[00:02:07.31] ANTHONY SIS: It's a lot. And that's just up until August of 2020 so we're currently in March of 2021. In addition to that, towards the end of January and into early February, there were specific attacks that happened that we also want to share. Specifically an 84-year-old Thai man was pushed and killed while walking on a sidewalk in Oakland.

[00:02:26.78] In addition to that, there was a 64-year-old Vietnamese-American woman who was assaulted and robbed in broad daylight in San Jose, California, and a 61-year-old Filipino-American whose face was slashed with a box cutter while on the subway and that was in New York City.

[00:02:42.77] So I think it's just important to name this, that this is an issue that's happening. And there are videos out there. There are images. I've seen them all, unfortunately, and it just-- it's terrifying. It's terrifying to know that this can happen to anybody, but especially the fact that it's happening specifically to Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander folks is really key.

[00:03:05.75] Because there's also been some research that shows that Asians, in particular, have seen a 1900% increase in hate crimes since the start of covid-19, which was about early last year in 2020. Toral, do you have any other additional data statistics that you want to share with our listeners?

[00:03:26.87] TORAL PATEL: So a couple more points here is that hate crime incidents have been reported in 46 of the 50 states, and so that tells you it's prevalent across our nation. And then also 32% of Americans have reported seeing someone blaming Asians for the coronavirus pandemic. And then the last couple of statistics I want to share is that Asian hate crimes increased by 114% in Los Angeles and by 867% in New York City.

[00:03:55.01] Just imagine that. It's been increased by 867%, right?

[00:03:59.87] ANTHONY SIS: Wow.

[00:04:00.11] TORAL PATEL: And so if the increase is this high, it makes me wonder, right? And these are the reported cases, right? And so it makes me wonder how many cases, actually go unreported. So it's just staggering for me how much of an increase this is.

[00:04:13.04] ANTHONY SIS: Right. And I think it's just important to name, too, that yes, this is happening during covid-19 in particular, because there's just been a lot of misinformation about the virus. Just a lot of stereotypes and assumptions about it, too. And so that's really where this comes from and it's correlation with covid-19.

[00:04:30.86] At the same time, I think it's also just important to remember that there have been biases and discrimination towards Asian-American, Asian Pacific Islander communities even before this. And I think--

[00:04:42.92] TORAL PATEL: Right

[00:04:43.01] ANTHONY SIS: --it's also important to name that it most likely will continue after covid-19. So it's being heightened in this particular moment, but it's not necessarily a new issue. But it is something that needs to be addressed because of just

how severe it is. So Toral, to continue this conversation, I think it's important to also name whether or not we've seen an increase in bias incidents towards Asian communities, as well.

[00:05:07.46] There's this assumption sometimes, when I do these trainings, that a lot of these things that are happening outside of Cornell don't happen internally here at Cornell. And so, as somebody who oversees the bias reporting tool related to staff and faculty, what have you been seeing? Are we seeing a similar trend, as well?

[00:05:23.09] TORAL PATEL: Yeah. You're definitely correct, Anthony, that a lot of people tend to assume that somehow we're in this little bubble and that what happens within the country doesn't necessarily happen on our campus. And I hate to be the one to pop that bubble, or break that bubble, but we're not immune from that, right? And so we have definitely seen an increase in bias reports related to students, faculty, and staff, specifically towards Asian and Asian-Americans within our own communities.

[00:05:50.01] ANTHONY SIS: So just knowing that these incidents are also happening here at Cornell, what is it that we can do? Where do we even start to have these conversations to make sure that these incidents don't continue to happen, at least here at Cornell? But also to be mindful of the fact that these incidents continue to happen outside of Cornell, and that they affect, specifically, our Asian communities who work here, who are students here, just our Cornell community, broadly speaking. I mean where do we even begin?

[00:06:19.01] TORAL PATEL: Yeah. So I would definitely say within our own community I would continue to encourage everyone to report, right? And anything that you experience, please report it, because if we don't know about them we can't help address them. So that's number one, I also think that it's important to check in with your fellow colleagues and then, Anthony, from your perspective in all the trainings that you do, how can we be in solidarity with our Asian, Asian-American communities right now?

[00:06:44.37] ANTHONY SIS: Well, one of the key things that I always tell people is that if you're looking to be in solidarity or show allyship to a particular community, do it with them not for them. And so, not to reinforce this notion that you're doing something for a community, because it kind of reinforces the separation of there's you as a privileged person, but then also them in the outside group that is not aligned with your own identity.

[00:07:10.74] So in terms of really showcasing allyship as well as solidarity, it's to do something with the community. And so continuing to-- one of the first things I thought about was elevating the voices of Asian, and Asian-American, Pacific Islander communities that are being directly impacted by this violence.

[00:07:27.11] And so there have been some articles which we'll put in our show notes for this episode from people who identify as AAPI folks who explicitly name the issues that are happening in this moment and the need for people who are not Asian, Asian-

American, Pacific Islander folks, like myself, to continue having these conversations to break down these barriers and to combat against these biases and acts of discrimination, and specifically these hate crimes that are happening across the country.

[00:07:55.34] Another thing too in terms of the check in is-- be intentional with the check in. So let's--

[00:08:01.85] TORAL PATEL: Mm-hmm.

[00:08:02.24] ANTHONY SIS: --let's not ask-- and I wouldn't ask you this, but this is just an example of-- Toral, what do you feel about that? I mean, you already explicitly named how you feel about everything that's going on as someone who identifies as Asian, but whenever you see violence being done to a personal identity or group that you belong to, it's right to feel a ton of emotions: anger, frustration, anxiety, about what's going on.

[00:08:27.09] And so just being intentional with that check in, to be more about how can I support you in this moment.

[00:08:33.72] TORAL PATEL: Right.

[00:08:34.13] ANTHONY SIS: And so I haven't asked you that directly, Toral, but I'm going to ask you now is, how can I support you in this moment? For you specifically.

[00:08:42.65] TORAL PATEL: Anthony, I'll be honest and tell you that I think you do this on a regular basis. And the first and foremost-- and this is why I actually said checking in is important-- because that's what you do with me almost every day, right? It's more like, how are you today? And to your point, the other question is, how can I help? Right? That's a great way to start.

[00:09:00.24] I also think that we can also, each one of us individually, can really reflect on how we help perpetuate some of these stereotypes and some of these biases that occur. So in terms of making sure that we're not using terms that are racist in nature. Like Kung Flu, when referring to the virus, or China Virus, and calling it what it is.

[00:09:19.89] And if we see some of this stuff being reflected in our social media, taking that step and possibly the action, where you stand up and you take that opportunity to educate somebody else. And so I think those are key things that we can all do. Because when it comes down to it, the bottom line, I truly feel-- and I'm going to quote an actor named Daniel Dae Kim, and what he said was that it's not about one community against another. It's everyone against racism.

[00:09:44.46] So we all need to take that stand against racism.

[00:09:47.18] ANTHONY SIS: Absolutely. And what I hear that, right, is to make sure we're sharing the facts and not the myths.

[00:09:51.92] TORAL PATEL: Correct.

[00:09:52.54] ANTHONY SIS: And when I think about myths, especially towards Asian communities, I think a lot about the episode we did a few months back with Hei Hei, where she talked about xenophobia. And she talked about a specific incident that happened to her here at Cornell that stemmed from anti-Asian discrimination and biases.

[00:10:11.25] And I think about the model minority myth. So just for some context with the model minority myth, it's this notion that particularly Asian communities are seen as the "model minority" as a framework for how other communities should also, particularly historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, should also be like or subscribe to act in terms of what it means to be a model minority, whatever that means. And so--

[00:10:37.55] TORAL PATEL: Right.

[00:10:37.79] ANTHONY SIS: --this is something that stems back from the '60s. But what I appreciated, and what Hei Hei shared in her experience is that it's a form of violence, right? It's not a physical violent act but that myth in and of itself perpetuates these violent acts and continues to do so, not just within the community, but also for other communities outside of Asian identifying folks as well.

[00:10:59.41] And so there's just a lot of harm that's been done through this myth, as well, so I just wanted to really emphasize this notion of making sure we're spreading facts and not reinforcing the violence that comes with myths like the model minority myth.

[00:11:12.62] TORAL PATEL: Right. And to add to that model minority myth, it's also indicating that when you are part of this model group that somehow this model identity or this model group is thriving or they're excelling. And that's another myth that we want to make sure people are aware of, that every minority group, every ethnic group struggles and that there is not one ideal that we need to all strive to be a part of.

[00:11:35.82] ANTHONY SIS: The other thing I want to mention, and I'll say this is a form of solidarity that may not necessarily be tangible for everybody, but what we've been seeing in terms of articles and things that have come up is that Chinatowns across the country have been financially impacted by covid-19.

[00:11:51.72] And so one of the ways in which you can showcase solidarity, if you live in an urban setting like New York City, or Chicago, or Los Angeles, is to be able to support local businesses within Chinatowns across the country that have been impacted by covid-19. So that's another thing that you can also consider in terms of solidarity.

[00:12:10.65] And we're actually going to put a link from a New York magazine article that has specific organizations that, if you have the financial means to do so-- to be able to contribute funds to these organizations-- please feel free to take a look at that article.

And that can also be another form of solidarity if that's something within your scope that you can contribute to as well.

[00:12:30.72] TORAL PATEL: And you can support the local businesses even if you're not from an urban area, definitely within your own towns or cities.

[00:12:37.65] ANTHONY SIS: I think the most important thing to remember from all of this, in terms of the content from this episode, is to make sure that we're not staying silent about the violence that is happening towards Asian communities in this particular moment. So whatever it is that you do, continue to have these conversations, bring these issues to the forefront, whether it's within your families, or even in a workplace setting, too.

[00:12:59.52] But the key and the main takeaway I hope people leave with is that we cannot continue to be silent when these issues come up. And if there's anything that we learned from last summer's incidents of racial injustice that were happening across the country it is that. The moment to be silent has ended, and we must continue these conversations in a way that's going to be productive and going to challenge us to think about inclusion and the importance of equity, and diversity, and belonging more broadly.

[00:13:27.40] TORAL PATEL: Anthony, what a great message to end our talk today on. And it's this concept of continuing this work and that we all have a part to play in continuing this work.

[00:13:41.13] Thank you for listening. Be sure to subscribe to us wherever you listen to podcasts, and rate and submit a review on Apple Podcasts. That helps new listeners find us and the show. For the latest updates on diversity, equity, and inclusion at Cornell be sure to visit diversity.cornell.edu. My name is Toral Patel.

[00:14:00.20] ANTHONY SIS: My name is Anthony Sis. Thank you for listening to another episode of the Inclusive Excellence Podcast.

[00:14:06.38] TORAL PATEL: This podcast is a production of the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity in collaboration with Cornell Broadcast Media.

[00:14:13.91] ANTHONY SIS: We would like to thank our producer and sound engineer, Bert Odom-Reed, as always for making us sound wonderful each and every episode.

[00:14:22.14] TORAL PATEL: Thanks Bert

[00:14:22.46] ANTHONY SIS: Thanks Bert.

[00:14:23.36] [THEME MUSIC PLAYING]

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