



DYNAMICS OF RACISM AGAINST ASIAN ETHNICITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE RESISTANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Feb 07, 2025

Revised Feb 25, 2025

Accepted Mar 10, 2025

Keywords:

Asian ethnic,
Hate is a virus,
Network society,
Racism,
United States of America.

ABSTRACT

Racism has been a strong part of history in the United States since the 19th century. Racism has increased again during the Covid-19 pandemic targeting Asian-Americans, due to a long history and social media tweets from government institutions that encourage high acts of racism. The impact of this increase in racism formed a resistance through a community called Hate is a Virus. This community moves by utilizing a network society approach due to limited physical activity. By using qualitative methods and library studies, this paper focuses on describing the efforts made by the Hate is a Virus community. The form of resistance from the community to advocate for Asian Americans is by collecting donations, campaigning through hashtags and educating through social media.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the perspective of pluralism and constructivism, see that security issues have varied compared to realism [1]. According to American Psychological Association [2], racism is a system of structuring opportunities and assigning value based on physical features such as skin color and hair texture. Racism unfairly harms some individuals and groups and damages mental health for victims of racism. The acts of racism have adverse effects on interpersonal interactions in daily activities such as education, housing, employment, wealth, health, income, justice even in voting and others reflected there are differences that unfairly benefit individuals belonging to socially and politically dominant racial groups, and are structural, institutional, interpersonal and internalized. This is frequently defined as feeling anxious, fearful, or uneasy about the future. Anxiety is brought on by perceived or actual risks [3].

Ethnicity is a group of people who have different cultures and religions, however, the presence of a particular ethnicity often leads to conflict [4]. Racism against Asians in the United States developed during and after World War II. During this time Asian Americans were immigrants hoping to succeed in the country. But Asians were perceived as a threat to White society. In the late 19th century, White society spread propaganda about the ugliness of Chinese society in San Francisco, leading to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act [5]. This became the first law in the United States to ban immigration based solely on race.

In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This act provided an absolute 10-year ban on laborers from China immigrating to the United States. The Exclusion Act requires that some non-labor workers who wish to enter the United States must obtain certification from the Chinese government that they are eligible to migrate. But these non-labor workers found it difficult to prove their status because the law defined labor as 'skilled and unskilled.' Then 10 years after the expiration of the law, the US congress extended it by establishing the Geary Act that regulated Chinese immigration into the 20th century. Finally in 1943, when China

became a member of an allied country during World War II, the United States Congress repealed all the Exclusion Acts. However, with limited immigrant quotas [6].

Then during the Covid-19 pandemic, Donald Trump, a former President of the United States, used the term “Chinese virus,” [7]. This has led to the assumption that this terminology connotes a racist public promotion of Asian-Americans to exclude them from society [8]. One of the “*Chinese virus*” Twitter tweets often used by former US president Donald Trump [9]. The tweet reads as follows, “*The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus. We will be stronger than ever before!*” [10].

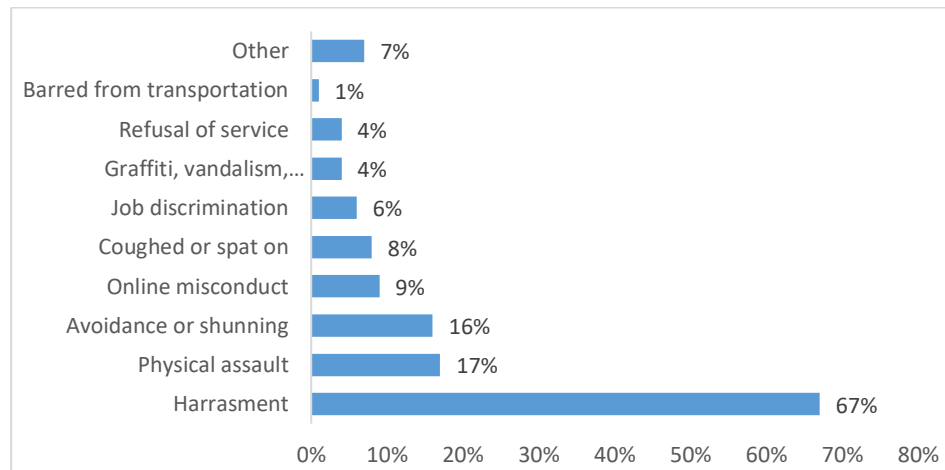


Figure 1. Types of racial discrimination against Asian Americans

Source: Stop AAPI Hate Report, 2022

In the annual report released by the Stop Asian-American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Hate coalition in the period March 19, 2020 - March 31, 2022 stated that there were 11,467 reports of racism incidents where 4,632 incidents occurred in 2020 and 6,273 incidents occurred in 2021, then in March 2022 reports of 562 incidents of racism were received. Where 67% of harassment, physical assault by 17%, avoidance by 16% and online misconduct by 9% [11].

Furthermore, small businesses owned by Asian-Americans have experienced difficulties and a number of customers declined by 80% due to policies to reduce activities outside the home [12]. According to the United States Department of Labor, this has resulted in an increase in unemployment of more than 450%, where in February 2020 the unemployment rate was 2.5% and then increased to 13.8% in June 2020 [13]. This is also due to the avoidance of Asian restaurants in the United States which increased during 2020 due to racist bias and the fact that most of these restaurants always serve food of Chinese heritage. Most consumers blame ethnic Asians for the spread of Covid-19 and are concerned that eating Chinese food will increase their risk of contracting the virus [14].

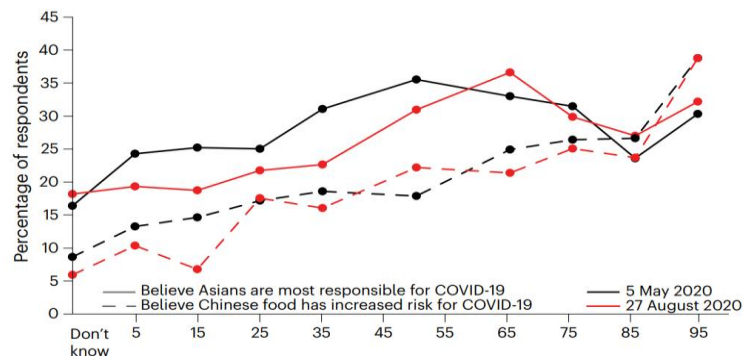


Figure 2. Racist bias against Asian food businesses in 2020

Source: Huang et al., 2023

On the issue of racism in the United States Castells [15] argues that inequality, poverty and social exclusion in the information age have become a problem called the “new American dilemma.” The United States is a society with a history of racial discrimination and weak ideology and politics against government regulations. Based on this



argument, during the Covid-19 pandemic, acts of racism against ethnic Asians increased as reported by Stop AAPI Hate as many as 11,467 reports of racism incidents.

The large number of incidents of racism reported by Stop AAPI Hate and the number of struggling Asian-American small businesses have resulted in a resistance by the Asian community to try to fight racism that occurs with various efforts, one of which is through a non-associated community movement 'Hate is a Virus'. The Hate is a Virus community is a non-governmental community engaged in suppressing acts of racism, hatred and security which can be simply understood as a condition that is free from all forms of danger, anxiety, threats and fear [16].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research used is descriptive research, where the author explains the impact of high acts of racism that gave rise to a pressure group, namely the Hate is a Virus community that seeks to deal with racism against Asian ethnicity in the United States. This research focuses on the efforts of the Hate is a Virus community in dealing with racism as a result of the community's emergence. In terms of time span, this research focuses on 2020-2022. As well as using secondary data sources obtained indirectly through pre-existing sources such as scientific literature in the form of journals or books, internet websites, reports of national or international community organizations and other relevant sources. In terms of data collection, the author uses library data collection techniques or library research by searching and collecting data that has relevance to the issues studied through books, journals, international news and official websites of an institution as well as from other credible sources. The data analysis technique in this research is qualitative by explaining or interpreting the data obtained through the secondary data collection stage.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE CONCEPT OF NETWORK SOCIETY

Network society is a network that emphasizes form and organization through the processing and exchange of information supported through social infrastructure and media. Network society, developed as a social formation that allows connecting at all levels (individual, group/organization and society). For western societies, network society has become the basic unit in connecting individuals to a network [17]. Rheingold [15] said that the presence of virtual forms of communication has brought people together online to inform each other about shared values and interests. In general, this network can be understood as a fairly interactive communication when it has a common interest and goal. Therefore, virtual communities do not need to conflict with physical communities, both have different interactions and dynamics.

Table 1. Typology of mass society and network society

Characteristics	Mass Society	Network Society
Main components	Collectivities (Groups, Organizations, Communities)	Individuals (linked by networks)
Nature of components	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
Scale	Extended	Extended and reduced
Scope	Local	Global dan local
Connectivity and Connectedness	High within components	High between components
Density	High	Low
Centralization	High (few centres)	Lower (polycentric)
Inclusiveness	High	Low
Type of community	Physical and unitary	Virtual and diverse
Type of organization	Bureaucracy vertically integrated	Infocracy horizontally differentiated
Type of household	Large with extended family	Small with diversity of family relations
Main type of communication	Face-to-face	Increasingly mediated
Kind of media	Broadcast mass media	Narrowcast interactive media
Number of media	Low	High

Source. Dijk. 2006:33

The financial sector has also been affected by the development of the network. The global economy trades fifty times more currency than physical goods every day. This could not happen without a global network connecting

stock exchanges, transnational corporations, banks and investment funds. Transactions that take place in private networks are connected by satellite or terrestrial lines [17]. This means that the network community is not only limited to communicating, but has utilized network development to support a goal by providing funding assistance.

In its development, the network society has several trends due to the social and technological relationships that need each other. DIjk [17] says, there are several trends that occur in the development of network society, these trends are,

- The first trend, in the network society, is the combination of social networks and media that substantially changes the economy, politics, government, culture and daily life.
- The second trend is that social relations in network societies remain tied to physical environmental units, meaning that when tensions arise environmental characteristics are tied to place, time and physical conditions.
- The third trend, the presence of connectivity in networked societies, arises from the presence of social and technology. Socially, modern societal relationships have weak but strong bonds across distance. Technologically, there are improvements in transportation, the growth and reach of mass media, and the widespread use of electronic media such as telephones and electronic mail.
- The fourth trend is that the networking community has realized that social media networks will replace physical meetings with online meetings.

Castells [18] recognizes that societies are often in conflict, so wherever there is power there will also be counter power. Castells understands counter power as the capacity of social actors to challenge the existing power of an institution with the aim of claiming representation and interest in the values of these social actors. Social movements become part of the counter power by building themselves through autonomous communication processes, free from the control of institutional power-holding actors because the mass media has been largely influenced by the government and media corporations. Therefore, in a network society, autonomous communication is built through the internet or wireless communication platforms.

New media interaction has become a self-directed and independent method of education due to the rapid and widespread dissemination of information. When individuals stay at home, they have access to computers as a transformation of distance education. With digitization, the number of interactive new media has increased. This indicates that the interaction between media use is also growing and synchronized. The wide range of media usage options allows individuals/users to contribute through chat boxes, TV, video conferences and the similar [17]

During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2022, physical public activities are severely hampered due to efforts to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus, so that community activities in social, economic or political aspects are quite limited, not only that, direct communication within the community is also limited. In this research, the author discusses how the efforts of the 'Hate is a virus' community movement against racism towards Asian ethnicity in the United States during the Covid-19 pandemic through the approach of the concept of network society, where indirect communication slowly develops with the existence of media, such as chat, chat groups, virtual work teams and virtual communities [17], that help the Hate is a Virus' community continue to fight racism through online and persuasively.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The Emergence of the Hate is a Virus Community

The increasing acts of racism during the Covid-19 period have resulted in the formation of a community of resistance. March 2020 was the beginning of the 'Hate is a Virus' community movement by Tommy Cho, Michelle Hanabusa and Bryan Pham. Hate is a Virus is a non-profit community that emerged to strengthen the Asian community against racism and discrimination during the Covid-19 pandemic. It strives to facilitate Asian-American communities to participate in local and national campaigns, create spaces for dialog and education and provide funding that can be used for partnership purposes. There are three main goals that this community has, which are, raise awareness, educate and equip the community and raise money [19].

The mission of this community is that Hate Is A Virus is a non-profit community of movers and shakers to fight racism and hatred. As well as having a vision that 'We envision a world where all members of the AAPI community understand our history of oppression and struggle and feel ready to take action against hatred and racism against all communities of color. Hate is a Virus will continue to equip our community with how to advocate for systemic change and provide resources to support them in this journey of activism. The main pillar of this community is to combat hate and racism against communities of color by engaging, educating and mobilizing the AAPI community from generation to generation to stand up for its own community and the communities around it [20]. The community focuses on raising awareness and educating the public through online media as a way to promote AAPI. The efforts have reached more than 5 million impressions and raised 1 million dollars in donations, most of which were used to help small businesses affected by Covid-19. The community believes in unity, respect and compassion for all communities and actively contributes when others face discrimination due to unacceptable injustices [21].

Digital Fundraising to Support Asian Ethnicity

The Community Action Fund is one of the community initiative's efforts to raise up to US\$1 million to be donated back to local and national organizations or communities that provide essential services and programs to a community group. The Community Action Fund aims to help fund local and national organizations or communities that have been working to dismantle systematic issues over the past few decades. These donations are promoted online through Giveinmay.org. In this way Hate is a Virus seeks to strengthen the work of these organizations or communities.

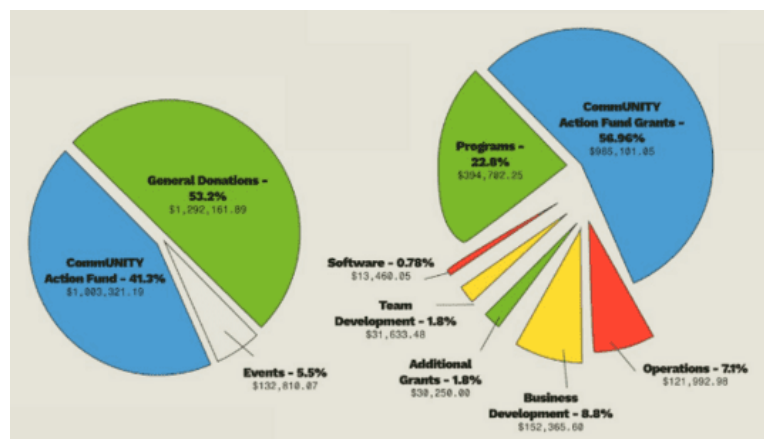


Figure 3. Result from Community Action Fund

Source. Hate is a Virus, 2024

The graphic shows that the fundraising program raised more than US\$2 million because the fundraising has been running from 2020 to 2023. The results of these donations were mostly distributed to communities or organizations receiving support from the Community Action Fund program at \$985,101.05 (56.96%), then \$394,702.25 (22.8%) was used to run other Hate is a Virus programs, then around \$152,365.60 (8.8%) was used for business development owned by the Hate is a Virus community itself.

The recipient organization of this program is the Asian Solidarity Collective (ASC), a grassroots organization located in San Diego, focused on activating and mobilizing the Asian-American community to shape radical, sustainable and fundamental change through organizing, community awareness and personal ecology [23]. The Hate is a Virus community identified that the Asian Solidarity Collective organization faces the biggest challenge of lack of capacity, staffing and resources as their membership has increased by 85% since 2020. Funding from the Community Action Fund by Hate is a Virus helped increase the organizational capacity of Asian Solidarity Collective and strengthen their organizational infrastructure and impact their work in political education, collective action, and community building.



Figure 4. Hate is a Virus with Asian Solidarity Collective

Source. Instagram @hateisavirus

The Asian-owned business assisted by the Hate is a Virus community is the Kiyosuzu Sushi restaurant located in Arcadia, California [24]. Similar to thousands of other small businesses, Kiyosuzu Sushi restaurant faced major challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. Owners Ikuko and Kiyoto were unable to access government loan programs, and were forced to reduce their workforce to just one person. In addition to getting help from Hate is a Virus, the restaurant also received help from the Power of 10. They funded the Kiyosuzu Sushi restaurant to rehire employees and cook 500 meals to be given to health workers and others affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Figure 5. Kiyosuzu restaurant prepares 500 portions of food

Source. Hate is a Virus, 2020

For the restaurant owners, Ikuko and Kiyoto have taught them to be responsible and do something for the community especially in Arcadia and they have also gained a lot of support from their neighborhood. After ensuring that Kiyosuzu restaurant was able to provide enough food and delivery for four weeks, Kiyosuzu Sushi restaurant became a great partner because it aligned with the mission of Hate is a Virus and the Power of 10.

Through a global network of individuals and communities, the initiative was able to raise funds to support communities affected by hate and discrimination. This initiative reflects how the network society not only drives the global economy, but is also an effective tool for creating solidarity, driving social change, and providing financial assistance that has a direct impact on society. In this case, it can be observed that fundraising has developed digitally. Digital fundraising is a new method that creates awareness of potential donors by promoting, socializing and educating to deliver ideas and insights through programs using smartphones, computers or other electronic media [25].

In this context, digital platforms such as social media, funding and websites are the main tools to connect donors with communities like Hate is a Virus or individuals who need support. The concept of network society emphasizes the importance of communication networks as a social structure, where information and relationships between parties play a central role. Therefore, communities that organize fundraising need to understand how to build and maintain strong networks by utilizing communication technology to increase donor trust and engagement.

Hashtag #hateisavirus as a Digital Campaign

Through social media, both individuals and communities create a social network with people they have never met before in real life. One of the components that keeps them connected in a network is the existence of social public issues. According to Bolsen & Leeper [26] issues in the public are defined as a group of people who are interested in certain issues. In this case, racism is a social issue that has emerged in the public life of the United States and has received a lot of attention from various community groups, especially the Hate is a Virus community.

Table 2. Frequent keywords and hashtags on social media

Category	Keywords
<i>Covid-19 Hate keywords</i>	<i>coronavirus, covid 19, covid-19, covid19, corona virus #CCPVirus, #ChinaDidThis, #ChinaLiedPeopleDied, #ChinaVirus, #ChineseVirus, chinese virus, #ChineseBioterrorism, #FuckChina, #KungFlu, #MakeChinaPay, #wuhanflu, #wuhanvirus, wuhan virus, chink, chinky, chonky, churka, cina, cokin, communistvirus, coolie, dink, niakoue, pastel de flango, slant, slant eye, slopehead, ting tong, yokel</i>
<i>Counterspeech keywords</i>	<i>#IAmNotAVirus, #WashTheHate, #RacismIsAVirus, #IAmNotCovid19, #BeCool2Asians, #StopAAPIHate, #ActToChange, #HateIsAVirus</i>

Source. He et al., 2021

Based on the table, *#hateisavirus* is one part of counterspeech that is often used and often appears on social media. This hashtag campaign is a form of Asian resistance in the face of the many hate speech experienced online by writing messages or opinions of social media users to support a better environment. Castells [28] states that one dimension of the new society is to place cultural manifestations in an interactive electronic hypertext and become a common framework for symbolic processing of all message sources. The hashtag *#hateisavirus* has become a symbolic instrument on Instagram, Facebook and X apps. Through the hashtag *#hateisavirus*, written messages are able to connect internet users who are packaged multimedia both textually and visually.

One form of resistance to racism carried out by the Hate is a Virus community is through the hashtag *#hateisavirus*. This hashtag was created by the Hate is a Virus community to encourage activists, influencers, the public and others to express their expressions by wearing masks as part of an illustration that wearing masks is not only for one race but for everyone. The hashtag *#hateisavirus* represents masks as a form of resistance to racism because hate crimes that occur always target Asian Americans who wear masks. For the Hate is a Virus community, this movement is a simple step by posting photos or illustrations with masks and then writing the hashtag *#hateisavirus* on social media with the aim of normalizing the use of masks and spreading awareness of increasing racism in the United States.

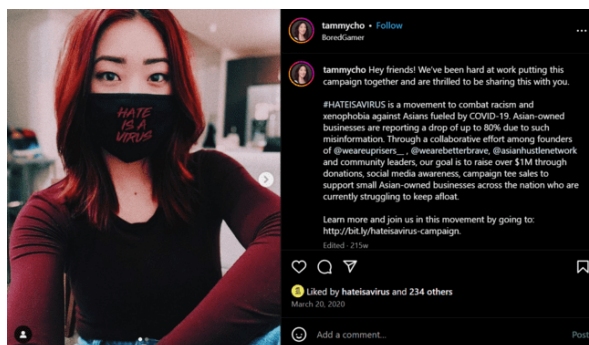


Figure 6. Tammy Cho posted *#hateisavirus*
Source. Instagram @tammycho, 2020

Tammy Cho as one of the founders of the Hate is a Virus community is also involved in this campaign. Through her personal Instagram post, on March 20, 2020, she invited social media users to join this campaign, besides that, Tammy also explained the purpose of this campaign simply aims to fight racism and xenophobia against Asians due to Covid-19. The hashtag *#hateisavirus* has become one of the most frequently used pieces of counterspeech on social media. This hashtag campaign is a form of Asian resistance in the face of the many hate speech experienced online by writing messages or opinions of social media users to support a better environment.

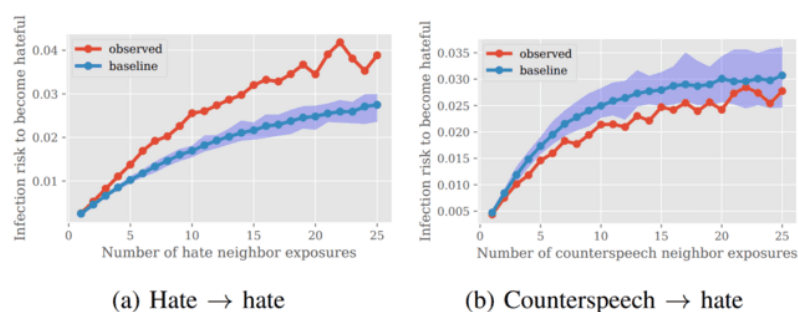


Figure 7. Comparison of hate speech and counterspeech

Source. He et al., 2021

The graphic images, especially graph (a) show that exposure or influence of hate speech increases the adoption of hate along with the amount of exposure or influence. The effect of the hate speech gives rise to countermeasures in the form of counterspeech. As can be seen in graph (b), counterspeech can surpass the hate speech from the previous data, thus having the potential to hinder low social life [27]. The hashtag *#hateisavirus* has reached more than 16,000,000 impressions on Instagram and there are more than 4,345 *#hateisavirus* users on social media channels Hate is a Virus [22] In the *#hateisavirus* movement, the community has been optimistic about being able to positively

influence the Asian-American community by helping to drive up counterspeech rates. The internet has brought people together to speak out and protect each other through solidarity. In the face of racism, Asian-American solidarity is an important force. Solidarity on social media is able to raise the voices of oppressed Asian-Americans to fight against bad stereotypes of Asians.

The use of photos or images of masks in the #hateisavirus hashtag on social media is part of a visual activity that has become a political communication and protest in response to the problem of racism. Poell [29] said that social media has an advantage in contemporary protest by seeing that an image can enhance the character of a protest. However, it should be noted that visual activism also emphasizes identity in a social movement [29]. The use of photos using masks is very clearly the work of individuals or communities who empirically follow the #hateisavirus campaign and show that Asian Americans encourage the general public to always use masks in all their activities to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Social Media as an Educational Platform

The use of social media has provided its own advantages in influencing a topic on the public agenda. Compared to the use of traditional mass media, digital or social media has the advantage of getting 'headlines' or public attention because it has good frequency, reach, accessibility and durability [30]. Social media has developed into a fast-paced information medium during globalization. The benefits provided by the development of social media are able to reach various levels of society around the world to connect with each other and share information. In this case, the Hate is a Virus community has utilized various social media platforms to educate the Asian community to prevent and fight against acts of racism.

On April 12, 2021 Instagram @hateisavirus posted about how to become a bystander intervention. This post was in collaboration with Hollaback! (renamed Right to be) and Asian-Americans Advancing Justice. Bystander intervention is a third-party actor (individual) who tries to help someone who is being harassed and supports the victim to build a sense of safety.

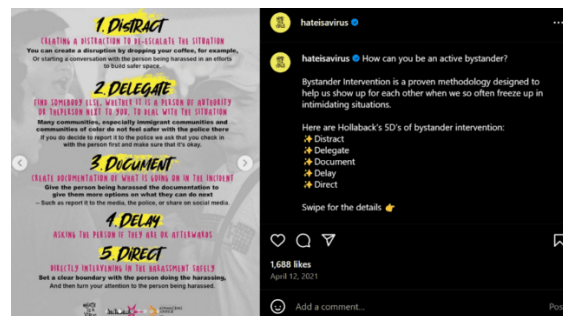


Figure 8. Instagram post about Bystander intervention

Source. Instagram @hateisavirus, 2021

In the post, this community tries to educate the public to become a bystander intervention by using the 5D's method, which are Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct. Distract, try to divert attention to defuse the situation. Delegate, find someone else, whether it is a person in authority or the person next to you to deal with the harassment situation. Document, create documentation of what happened in the harassment incident. Delay, ask the person if he/she is okay after the harassment incident. This post is very important for those who find it difficult to act when they see incidents of harassment or racism happening in front of their eyes. Through the 5D's method, people can help victims who experience harassment or racism and close the space for perpetrators who try to commit acts of racism.

Besides educating through Instagram, the community also organized the Changemakers Summit which was held in 2021 and 2022 virtually. This is a national AAPI Youth Conference, created in partnership with Act to Change, Hate Is A Virus, and Stop AAPI Hate. Designed to support, connect and develop the next generation of AAPI youth activists. The 2021 conference focused on the theme of national bullying prevention [31], while the 2022 conference centered on the theme of Intergenerational & Intersectional Activism [32].



Figure 9. Changemakers Summit 2022

Source. Youtube hate is a virus, 2022

This activity was held virtually through zoom which was broadcast live streamed on Youtube. The Changemakers Summit targeted junior high school students and college students as the target audience. In addition, to support a broader forum for the AAPI community, this activity also invited educators, mentors and leaders from other AAPI communities to participate and share knowledge. Hate is a Virus organized this event through the concept of a speaker panel and discussion that participants could join. The event was successfully attended by 503 students and 55 speakers.

The Hate is a Virus community's use of social media has become an important instrument to influence the public agenda and educate people on racism prevention, especially through bystander intervention methods. By utilizing digital platforms and activities such as the Changemakers Summit, the community seeks to reach out to different walks of life to raise awareness and support for victims of racism. In addition, the content generated invites individuals to reflect on personal experiences and contribute to social change, making social media an effective tool in expanding social impact.

By 2022, all social media metrics for the Hate is a Virus community had reached 694,511 impressions, 78,924 likes and 34,275 shares [22]. Based on these numbers, it reflects that there is strong engagement from the audience and shows the success of this community initiative in spreading anti-racism messages. Impressions of almost 700,000 indicate that the messages that the community wants to convey have successfully reached many people to raise awareness of the problems of racism and discrimination that still occur in the lives of Asian Americans.

The number of likes, which reached nearly 80,000, indicates that many network members support and respond positively to the media content released by this community. In addition, the more than 34,000 shares show that the audience is not only passively engaged, but also actively spreading the messages to others. This indicates that there is potential to expand the positive impact of the Hate is a Virus community even further and provides hope for sustainability to encourage more people to get involved in the collective effort against all forms of racism.

5. CONCLUSION

Racism has a negative impact on the activities of people's lives, especially Asian Americans, because of unfair differences that are detrimental to a group. The large number of incidents of racism during the Covid-19 pandemic occurred due to two causes, such as the history of racism against Asian Americans has become a part of a strong history in the United States and the existence of racist tweets by leaders of US government institutions related to the Chinese virus. This increased the number of incidents of racism received by Stop AAPI Hate to 11,467. Based on the high intensity of racism, a resistance group, the Hate is a Virus community, emerged as a result of the high reports of racism. This community mobilizes through social media to connect people to network with each other to speak out for justice. It endeavors to positively impact every Asian-American affected by racism by providing advocacy, donations, education and support to each victim so that they can get their lives back on track.

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