

'A Spike In Prejudice':

DFW Asian-Americans Share Stories Of Racism As Coronavirus Rolls In



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The front cover of the Dallas Chinese Times' March 3 front cover says "Discrimination is worse than the epidemic".

As 34-year-old Lang Nguyen stood in line to vote in Irving last week, he took a sip of water and began to choke.

“The woman [in front of me] happened to turn around and say if you’re going to be sick you might want to stay home,” he said.

Nguyen said he was shocked, but assured her he wasn’t sick and explained the situation.

“She said some racial slur to me like, ‘All you Asian people are spreading that coronavirus’ and so forth,” he said.

Nguyen said he was stunned by her response and another woman who heard the exchange stepped in to defend him.

Stories like this of prejudice and discrimination against Asian-Americans during the coronavirus outbreak have been shared in the U.S. and across the world. In the Dallas-Fort

Worth area, the stigmatizing of Asian-Americans has affected the community personally and economically.

When Nguyen finished voting, he said a police officer approached him in the parking lot and immediately asked for his ID.

“Apparently, he was telling me as he was looking at my ID, the woman felt like I was going to assault her,” he said. “That shocked me even more.”

After he and another person explained the situation, Nguyen said he heard the officer admonish the woman who made racist remarks to him, telling her she should thank Nguyen, who was deployed three times to Iraq and Afghanistan, for being a veteran.

Across the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Asian-American restaurants and stores have suffered during the coronavirus outbreak as business has sharply declined.

Paul Pass, executive director of the Japan-America Society of Dallas-Fort Worth, said Asian-American businesses and restaurants across the metroplex have turned to cost-cutting measures.

“I’ve heard that because of the reduction in revenue, they need to lay off workers,” he said. “They need to perhaps adjust shifts so they’re not paying as much for their workers.”

Pass said while Chinese-American businesses have primarily been affected, the

coronavirus outbreak has also affected other Asian-American business owners, including Japanese-American and Korean-American entrepreneurs.

He said the neighborhoods that seem to be most affected are those with large Asian populations, including Richardson, East Plano and Carrollton.

Bias against Chinese and other Asian-Americans because of the virus has become so prevalent that the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) issued guidance on its website:

“Stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge about how COVID-19 spreads, a need to blame someone, fears about disease and death, and gossip that spreads rumors and myths. Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger towards ordinary people instead of the disease that is causing the problem.”

The prejudice spurred on by the coronavirus is not just a local issue. Nationally

and internationally, stories of prejudice have been reported, even among public officials and leaders.

Some conservative politicians and officials in the U.S., including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Sen. Tom Cotton and Rep. Paul Gosar, referred to COVID-19 as the “Wuhan virus.” Public health officials, including the CDC and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), have [advised against](#) these kinds of references.

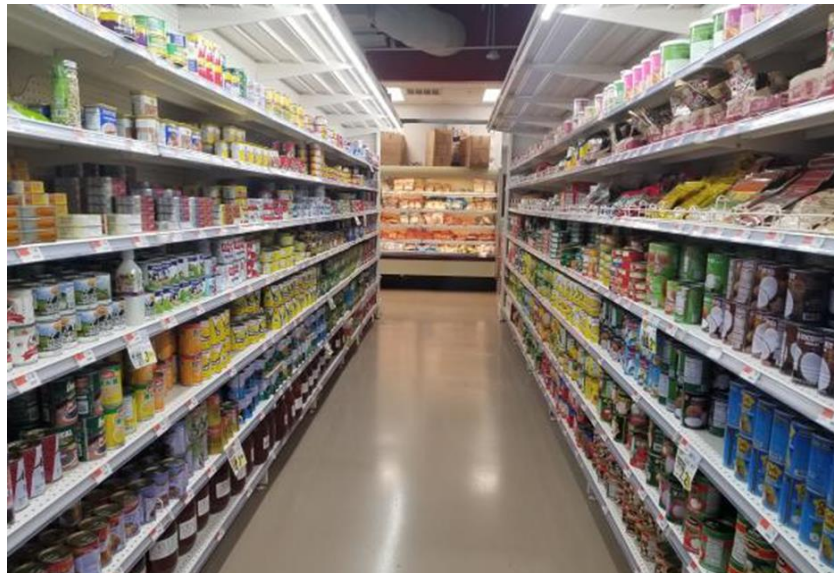
Rep. Grace Meng, a New York Democrat, called out Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California for referring to COVID-19 as the “Chinese coronavirus”.

At an art fair in Britain, a [Vietnamese art curator was dropped](#) by an exhibitor who stated in an email that her “presence on the stand would unfortunately create hesitation” given the spread of the coronavirus.

Dennis Kratz, director of Asian studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, said because the new coronavirus first emerged in Wuhan, China, people wrongly link Chinese people and the coronavirus.

“It’s just as nonsensical as the decline of the purchasing of Corona beer because the word ‘corona’ appears in the word,” he said. “We make these irrational connections and they are very powerful.”

He argues that today's stigma is rooted in a long history of American and Western prejudice against Asians. He points to the 19th and early 20th century, the first immigration laws were passed specifically to exclude Asians from the U.S.



*An empty aisle at a Chinese supermarket in Richardson's Chinatown.
Credit Elizabeth Myong / KERA News*