

# Online Hate and Media Literacy

Asians  
Against  
Racism  
and Hate

## What is online hate?

“Any hateful posts about a person or group based on their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or gender”<sup>1</sup>

- The spread of online hate can influence people’s perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes, even if it is rooted in misinformation (incorrect information)



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Oftentimes online hate can take the form of dehumanizing folks through humor or the spreading of conspiracies

- These tactics work to deny that “an individual or social group is fully human,” justifying harsh and inhumane treatment against these folks or groups<sup>2</sup>



**“When jokes about a specific group are repeated and shared, they can turn the stereotypes into essential characteristics of these groups”<sup>3</sup>**

- For example, 'jokes' about Chinese folks during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, including drawings, quickly turned into online hate that manifested in physical violence for many folks

1. Australian Government eSafety Commissioner, n.d.

2. Sakki and Castrén, 2022

3. Ibid.



# Who Is A Target/Victim Of Online Hate?

Racialized individuals are **three times** more likely to be targets or victims of online hate<sup>4</sup>

- This is because many stereotypes and conspiracy theories surrounding online hate are rooted in white supremacy
- For example, many stereotypes and conspiracy theories reinforce ideas that racialized groups are 'inferior' for a variety of reasons (ex. they are less intelligent, 'backwards,' 'foreign', etc)



**Incidents of online hate and racism have increased significantly since the start of the pandemic<sup>5</sup>**

There have been increasing incidents of anti-Asian racism online, but also a lot of hateful rhetoric rooted in anti-Blackness, anti-Indigenous, Islamophobic, and anti-refugee sentiments

**HATE**

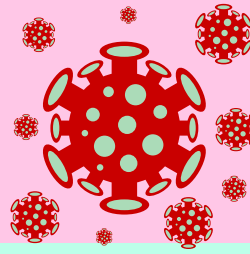


4. Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2021

5. Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter & Fight COVID Racism, 2021



# Online Hate and COVID-19



It was evident that the rise in physical violence against Asian folks during COVID-19 was in large part a result of “bigotry and conspiracy theories that grew online, fanned by national leaders... blaming China for the pandemic and referring to the virus” in derogatory ways that scapegoated a group of folks<sup>6</sup>


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- **In fact, there was an “85 percent increase in negative sentiment on Twitter towards Asians following news that [Donald Trump] contracted the coronavirus”<sup>7</sup>**



Studies show that the number of conspiracy theories increased during the pandemic, with many targeting Asian and Chinese folks<sup>8</sup>

- Through conspiracy theories and stereotypes, folks online dehumanized Asian folks by painting them as threatening monsters and ‘backwards’ folks whose (disgusting) cultural practices spread COVID-19, which led to further anti-Asian rhetoric and possible violence<sup>9</sup>

6. Anti-Defamation League, 2021      7. Ibid.  
8. Sakki and Castrén, 2022      9. Ibid.



# How Does Online Hate Translate Offline?

This hate doesn't stay online, but instead often translates offline into real-life violence



- For example, when folks continue to read and contribute to forums that dehumanize and promote violence against Asian folks, they feel emboldened to perpetuate this same rhetoric and violence in real life



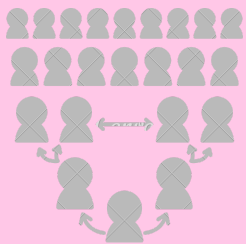
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**Online hate doesn't just harm its targets, but also increases risks "that those who encounter it may be radicalized by it"<sup>10</sup>**



- Folks may begin to believe that violence against others is **justified** because of online hate
  - Often tactics that drive online hate rely on fear (creating fear of an 'enemy') and requires dehumanization of folks (ex. painting some folks as 'less than human' or deserving of violence for various reasons like a perceived lack of morality, cultural 'backwardness', etc)



# Online Hate and Chinese Canadian Communities

Many of our community members live and work without speaking English or French in Chinese-dense enclaves

- Including neighbourhoods of Scarborough, Markham, Mississauga, or East Toronto



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**THEY ARE ABLE TO CONNECT TO THE NEWS AND OTHERS THROUGH CHINESE LANGUAGE MEDIA**



The Chinese Canadian community has resiliently formed an established network of information sharing, using traditional media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, radio, television), as well as social media (e.g. WeChat, YouTube), websites, and online forums



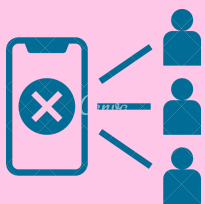
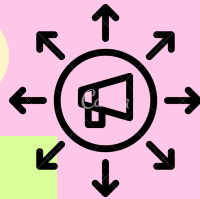


CCNCTO has been working to understand how online hate is produced and spread in Chinese language online media

As part of research conducted with Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice, we've found that racialized immigrant communities face particular barriers of **socioeconomic and political marginalization** from the larger Canadian society

- As such, they are in a more isolated and precarious environment which allows online hate (including hate rooted in misinformation) to occur and spread through minority-language online media, such as Chinese language online media

- Isolated by a lack of linguistically accessible and culturally relevant services
- With lower rates of or a lack of interaction between racialized communities
- With a lack of accessible resources to better understand other racialized communities



**Research participants' perceptions of other racialized communities were largely informed by the misinformation concerning racism and hate prevalent in Chinese language online media**

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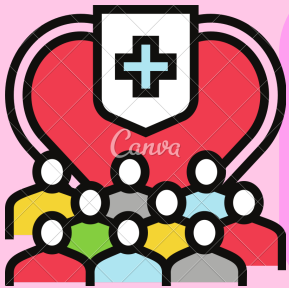
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# What Can We Do About Online Hate?

When you see online hate: Call it out, stand up to it to “change the narrative”, report it (if there are reporting mechanisms), and “take care of the person who’s being targeted”<sup>11</sup>

- Speak to those around you if you see them perpetuating online hate or misinformation to call them ‘in’ to understand why this hate is not okay!
  - This can include calling folks in for posting conspiracy theories and jokes that may seem ‘harmless’



To address online hate on a larger level our community calls for community-based and community-led initiatives that prioritize the safety and well-being of our communities

- This includes investments to increase public education about critical race studies and media literacy
- These investments should take into consideration **accessibility**, so that education can be culturally specific, linguistically accessible, and trauma-informed for communities, including those harmed by (and also perpetuating) online hate

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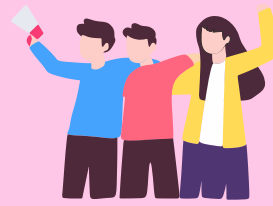
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11. Australian Government eSafety Commissioner, n.d.

# Critical Race Studies



- Accessible workshops on anti-racism would work towards **building solidarity** between racialized and marginalized communities
- Workshops can focus on topics of white supremacy, harmful racial myths and stereotypes, and debunking alt-right beliefs of scientific racism
  - CCNCTO has found that these workshops would be useful for marginalized community members who may often be subject to misinformation regarding scientific racism in minority-language media

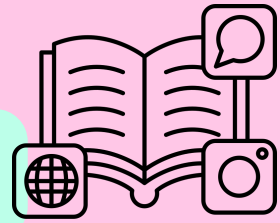
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# Media Literacy Education



- Media literacy education would allow folks to develop critical skills of inquiry, allowing them to better “access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate” with media to “become more informed, thoughtful media consumers”<sup>12</sup>
  - It’s evident that media literacy education can help folks “**recognize bias** in media depictions of race and ethnicity and understand the harm it can cause”<sup>13</sup>
  - There is also some evidence to suggest that “media literacy education can help adolescents become sensitive to prejudice and learn to appreciate diversity”<sup>14</sup>





# What Else Can I Do?



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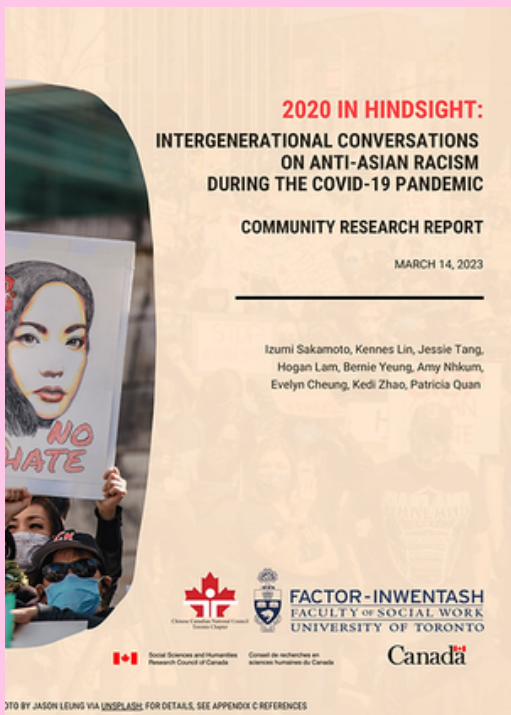
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Stay in touch with CCNCTO through **WeChat** or follow us on Instagram @**CCNCTO**

- Check out our most recent [2020 in Hindsight: Intergenerational Conversations on Anti-Asian Racism during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) report!

To get involved in any of our work, subscribe to our newsletter [www.ccnctoronto.ca/monthlynewsletter](http://www.ccnctoronto.ca/monthlynewsletter)



- **Talk** to others in your social circles about racism
- **Call out** all levels of racism
- **Share** this information with others
- **Engage** with local community members and organizations to advocate for change



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