

Handout: Quotes on the Coronavirus

Cut the following media quotes into strips and place them in a large envelope for students to select.

["It's hysteria,"](#) said one freshman [at Arizona State University (ASU)]. "I cough in class and everybody looks at me," she said. "I'm paranoid of coughing." ... [She] mentioned a social and cultural divide that already exists between the large population of international students from China at ASU and the rest of the student body, stating that the virus "just made it more obvious."

[Rumors can travel](#) more quickly and more widely than they could in an era before social media," said Thomas Rid a professor of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins University "That of course lends itself to conspiracies spreading more quickly."

["In my Chinese moms chat group,](#) we discussed how to brace ourselves and the kids for the inevitable wave of racism coming our way as this [the coronavirus] unfolds. Many of us have never even been to China but know we will not go unscathed."

["Perhaps revealing some naiveté,](#) I'm surprised at the levels of vitriol towards Chinese people I'm seeing in the comments sections of stories about the Wuhan coronavirus. And I mean towards the people, not the government. Disheartening."

["Some of the xenophobia](#) is likely undergirded by broader political and economic tensions and anxieties related to China, which are interacting with more recent fears of contagion," said Kristi Govella, an assistant professor of Asian studies at the University of Hawaii, Manoa.

[In France,](#) one Vietnamese woman told the newspaper Le Monde that she had been insulted by a car driver who shouted "Keep your virus, dirty Chinese!" and "You are not welcome in France" as he sped away through a puddle, splashing her.

[In Australia,](#) Andy Miao, 24, an ethnic Chinese Australian who returned this month from a trip to China, said that passengers on public transport gave him odd looks if he was not wearing a face mask. "It makes people like me who are very, very Australian feel like outsiders," Mr. Miao said. "It's definitely invoking a lot of past racial stereotypes."

["While the virus can be traced](#) to a province in China, we have to be cautious that this not be seen as a Chinese virus," [a Toronto] ... school board ... said in a statement issued on Monday. "At times such as this, we must come together as Canadians and avoid any hint of xenophobia, which in this case can victimize our east Asian Chinese community."

[In the Ginza shopping district of Tokyo](#), which is often thronged with Chinese tourists, Michiko Kubota, who runs a clothing boutique, said she hoped the Japanese government might do more to help China, such as by sending masks or other medical supplies. “Japan and China may be critical of each other sometimes, but the kindness is mutual,” Ms. Kubota said. “I hope we could do more to help eradicate fear in China as well.”

[When Toronto](#) resident Terri Chu tweeted that she and other Chinese mothers feared the “inevitable wave of racism” that would accompany the spread of coronavirus around the world, she didn’t realize how visceral the reactions would be. “My Twitter has just exploded with vitriol since this morning,” she said on Tuesday. “But it’s just par for the course, growing up as a minority when you’re not part of a dominant class.”

“[We are aware](#) of an escalated level of concern and anxiety among families of Chinese heritage,” wrote York board chair Juanita Nathan and education director Louise Sirisko. “Individuals who make assumptions, even with positive intentions of safety, about the risk of others, request or demand quarantine can be seen as demonstrating bias and racism.”

[As news of the deadly new coronavirus](#) sweeps headlines, [fourteen-year-olds Kathleen Chen and Helen Deng] ... say they’ve endured even more cruel jokes and suspicious stares than usual. “Since the virus hit, that’s when more jokes started coming up,” said Deng, “They say we eat dogs. They make fun of our eyes a lot, how they’re smaller.”

[In France](#), a local newspaper sparked outrage for using headlines that translate to “Yellow peril?” and “Yellow alert.”

[There’s no escaping](#) the racist stereotypes online, either. On TikTok, ... racist and misleading videos about coronavirus abound. On Twitter, users are sharing racist memes, blaming the outbreak on Chinese eating habits.

“[I think people are acting](#) out their frustrations and their racism and their stereotypes and prejudices, [and] that the floodgates are lifted when situations like this arise,” said Paul Watanabe, a political science professor and director of the Institute for Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

[The fact of the matter](#) is we are facing a health crisis right now in the United States, and it’s a domestic one and it’s the flu. ... The flu will clearly lead to the illness and death of more people in the United States And yet there’s no sort of assumption that Americans in general — mainstream Americans — don’t clean their hands or eat strange food or don’t take care of their food properly.

[Boston Public Schools](#) has consistently educated students and staff about the vital importance of cultural proficiency, and how to prevent, report, and address bias-based conduct. [They] ... remind us of the work that remains in our schools and our communities to strengthen our efforts to eliminate all forms of bias, and ensure every student is affirmed and welcomed.

[“I was really scared](#) because I didn’t want to get sick,” one student said. “I was terrified of people touching me and sneezing around me ‘cause I didn’t want to get the virus.”

[“My friends](#), they said some people call this ‘Chinese virus.’ But it’s discrimination. It’s not true,” [Yasmine Lei, 23] ... said. In the meantime, she’ll ignore any wary stares or comments from strangers. “I know people are afraid because they don’t want to be sick,” she said. “So I don’t judge others about how they see me or how they act.”

[A Malaysian-Chinese social worker](#) ... [told CNN] “A couple of people at an East London school I work in have asked me why Chinese people eat weird food when they know it causes viruses.”

[In Canada](#), there have been reports of Chinese children being bullied or singled out at school. In New Zealand -- where there are no confirmed coronavirus cases -- a Singaporean woman says she was confronted and faced racist harassment in a mall.

[Singaporean Kiwi Dollice Chua](#), who has lived [in New Zealand] ... for 21 years ... visited the mall wearing a mask to purchase a wedding card. ... while on the way to the toilets a middle-aged woman gave her “the dagger eyes.” “You Asians are the ones who brought this virus,” the woman said. Chua responded that she was originally from Singapore. But her abuser continued “mumbling and glaring at me” as she walked away ... This gave me a very lousy feeling. It’s racist and beyond rude.”

Jarred Evans, evacuee passenger from Wuhan, now in the U.S., talks about what Wuhan was like. [“There’s no transportation](#), no trains, no subway, no planes. The military is blocking off each and every aspect of the road. You think to yourself, like, is this real? Is this a movie? Is this a nightmare? You cannot go outside without a mask, and/or goggles. It’s very scary.”z

[“We got here before the outbreak](#) and it went south really quick. We went from just being encouraged not to go outside, and not to go to private places, to: do not go outside.” Jenna Davidson, a U.S. college student in China, explains. [“It’s a ghost town](#). There’s 24 million people in Shanghai and there’s no one on the street. It’s kind of spooky.”

[“We don’t know](#) what’s actually going on. We’re not really sure if they’re reporting the truth or like if they’re underreporting the actual numbers,” says Wuhan resident, Helen Chen.

[“Everyone is trying to leave](#) China right now ... and airlines know that so the prices are ridiculously high. The flights are booked, fully, if not overbooked. We’ve been actively trying to leave for the past few days. About the point where we started realizing that we were ... running low on food, we started looking at trying to get out of here,” Jenna Davidson, a U.S. college student in China, explains.

[“In light of current events](#), we east Asians in the UK are on high alert, paying close attention to how people interact with us. It is not their concern about health that is problematic, but the stereotyping of all east Asians as a coronavirus risk. At times such as this, even a simple bus trip can feel like a hostile environment.”

[“The atmosphere](#) on my morning commute is tense. As panic over the coronavirus deepens and dominates the headlines, as an east Asian, I can’t help but feel more and more uncomfortable. On the bus to work last week, as I sat down, the man next to me immediately scrambled to gather his stuff and stood up to avoid sitting next to me.”

[“As it spreads](#), the virus has revealed more and more stereotyped judgments about Chinese people. I have also heard accounts from east Asians, even if they are not Chinese, who have recently been profiled while travelling at airports or on trains due to the ignorant perception that all east Asians are Chinese.”

[“In \[a\] ... loud conversation](#), I overheard a woman talking about how terrified she was that her friend, who had spent some time working with Chinese students, might have infected her with the virus.”

[“Perhaps it did not occur](#) to some of these people ... that I was also concerned about the virus – or that I, as a British citizen, was no more likely than them to be carrying the virus. They grouped all east Asian people together, without factoring in that perhaps we were British or, if not, we were from unaffected areas of China, or even came from other countries in the Chinese diaspora. We were all the same to them.”

[East Asians have been accused](#) of instigating the virus by having “revolting” eating habits. Most Asians know these stereotypes all too well. These insulting depictions don’t reflect the reality of being Chinese at all, and encourage the misguided perception of more than one billion people being a monolithic and singular group in which everyone speaks, acts and looks the same. In fact, there is a huge diversity.

[“This week](#), my ethnicity has made me feel like I was part of a threatening and diseased mass. To see me as someone who carries the virus just because of my race is, well, just racist.”

[“As the lunar new year celebrations](#) take place across the world, let’s take a moment to think about the way in which east Asians are perceived and how important it is to see us in all our diversity, as individual human beings, and to challenge stereotypes. The coronavirus is a human tragedy, so let’s not allow fear to breed hatred, intolerance and racism.”

[On Friday](#), Wuhan’s Communist Party chief ... acknowledged his culpability for failing to taking “strict, preventive measures earlier.” “I’m in a state of guilt, shame and self-reproach,” Ma Guoqiang told the country in a state media interview.

[“We didn’t wear masks at work](#). That would have frightened off customers,” Yu Haiyan, a waitress from rural Hubei, said of the days before the shutdown. “When they closed off Wuhan, only then did I think, ‘Oh, this is really serious, this is not some average virus.’”

[Dr. Li is 34 and has a child](#). He and his wife are expecting a second in the summer. He is now recovering from the virus in the hospital where he worked. In an interview via text messages, he said he felt aggrieved “If the officials had disclosed information about the epidemic earlier,” he said, “I think it would have been a lot better. There should be more openness and transparency.”