

Public Statement on Anti-Asian Racism in Reaction to COVID-19 Pandemic

As the outbreak of coronavirus COVID-19 continues across the globe with increasing deaths, the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) denounces and condemns all forms of racism that render immigrants, communities of color, actors in the Global South, and occupied people vulnerable to the disease, subsequent health disparities, new and old forms of anti-Asian racist violence, and the continual economic precarity.

As scholars who are committed to studying the relationship between the sporting body, health, and structures of power, we understand that the historical construction of contagions and knowledge about them have been through the racializing, sexualizing, and gendering of underrepresented, dispossessed, and marginalized communities. At this present conjecture, we understand that the ways that COVID-19/Coronavirus discussions, especially in the political realm, are erroneous, anti-intellectual, and has led to wide-spread attacks against people of Asian descent. Donald Trump in the United States, and his constant referral to the virus as the “Chinese virus,” is just one part of a longer history of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian racism across North America. The United States, Canada, and Mexico are sites of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian racism during this time of COVID-19.

As scholars of sport who study the transnational and global impact of sport and sporting cultures, we are deeply concerned with the rising incidents of anti-Asian racism. We recognize that anti-Chinese racism and anti-Asian racism reflect colonial and imperial histories of European powers as well as the colonial, settler-colonial, imperial histories, and contemporary forms of white supremacy in North America. As critical scholars of sport, race, and coloniality, we underscore the simultaneous racialization and subjugation of Asians during the time of British colonialism and the expanding of racial capitalism. While dealing with British colonialism in China and other parts of Asia, the British moved indentured, exploitable “coolie” Chinese and Indian laborers across North America to supplant, control, and mediate enslaved black labor and Indigenous genocide. Therefore, Chinese subjects endured racism and marginalization, on different terms and within different conditions, in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. These nation-states often vilified Chinese immigrants to shore up the boundaries of whiteness and citizenship. As a result, the recent invocations of Chinese in particular and Asians in general as pathological bodies at the disposal of western missionaries, North American nation-states, and western humanitarian-industrial complexes is not a new phenomenon. In addition, we recognize that the anti-Asian racism is one part of a larger infrastructure of white supremacy and settler-colonialism that negatively impacts Asian communities, Indigenous communities, Muslim communities, Jewish communities, black diasporic communities, Latinx communities, and sexual minorities.

Therefore, we recognize that as marginalized communities are most impacted by the sporting and health infrastructure, these communities are also most impacted by COVID-19 as a result of racially based health disparities, disproportionate numbers of people of color as essential workers, lack of resources for Indigenous communities, and the expanding numbers of people of color as prisoners in the prison-industrial complex. Communities of color, working-poor communities, and LGBTQI communities are especially vulnerable to the illness and its economic aftermath because of the current material conditions and material inequality. We, as an academic organization and as scholars with a commitment to justice, condemn anti-Asian racism and all forms of racism emerging during this time of the

coronavirus. We support calls to aid our communities, hold politicians accountable, and elevate the voices of medical staff and scientists. In the process, we make a call to foreground radical forms of care and love, create expansive systems of mutual aid, and form expansive collaborations in order to respond to the current pandemic and create more equitable futures.

Respectfully,

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