Participants:
Trevor Parry-Giles
Zhuo Ban
Richie Hao
Ali Na

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Introduction:
This is *Communication Matters, The NCA Podcast*.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Hello, I'm Trevor Perry-Giles, the Executive Director of the National Communication Association and I'm your host on *Communication Matters, The NCA Podcast*. Thanks for joining us for today's episode.

Hi, listeners. On March 16th, 2021, eight people were killed at three spas or massage parlors in Atlanta, Georgia. Six of the victims were Asian women. This horrific act is just one of numerous acts of violence that have been perpetrated against Asians and Asian-Americans, particularly elders, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today's episode of *Communication Matters, The NCA Podcast* addresses anti-Asian hate speech and discrimination, including the rise in violence and xenophobia related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as some strategies to address this ongoing issue. Joining me today are three outstanding, all-star panel of communication professors with expertise on these issues, Zhuo Ban, Richie Hao, and Ali Na.

Let me tell you a little bit about our all-star panel. Zhuo Ban is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Ban studies globalization, labor activism, and corporate social responsibility discourses from Critical Public Relations and Critical Organizational Communication perspectives. Dr. Ban has published numerous journal articles in peer-reviewed journals including in NCA's *Journal of Applied Communication Research* and our very own *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*. Hi, Zhuo, welcome to the podcast.

Zhuo Ban:
Thanks for the opportunity.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Richie Hao is an Assistant Professor in the department of Communication Studies in the Division of Rhetoric and Literacy at Antelope Valley College. Dr. Hao is also Vice Chair of the NCA Asian/Pacific American Communication Studies Division and the Asian/Pacific American Caucus. Hao has published research on the intersectionality of culture, performance, and critical pedagogy, including an examination of how biases against silence in the classroom privilege a Western way of thinking about class participation. Hi, Richie, welcome to *Communication Matters*.

Richie Hao:
Thank you for having me.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Ali Na is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Film and Media at Queen's University in Canada. Dr. Na is also the Vice Chair-Elect of the NCA Asian/Pacific American Communication Studies Division and the Asian/Pacific American Caucus. Dr. Na is a media scholar who studies how media performances define and defy conceptions of Asian and Asian diasporic bodies. Na is currently working on a book project entitled *Trans Medial Performance: Affirming Asian/American Femininity Otherwise*.

Ali Na:
Good to be here.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Let's start with Zhuo Ban. You wrote in NCA's online magazine *Spectra* a while ago about anti-Asian racism related to COVID-19 and your experiences with being quarantined in Nanjing, China last year. Could you tell us a little bit more about your experience at that time and how that perception of the increasing racism and xenophobia here in the United States was influenced by your quarantining?

Zhuo Ban:
Thank you. I can talk a little bit about my initial experience actually of me and my family. My family which includes my spouse, me, and our two young children, we were on this trip to China which is a long-planned sabbatical semester in China. And when our flight landed in Nanjing in January 2020, local media just reported the first confirmed case in that city in that very day. And then so there were lockdowns and there were travel restrictions. We lived in an apartment with my parents in a gated apartment community. And for a long time, we had to show proof of residence and have our temperatures taken whenever we get in and out of that community. Our initial experience with COVID was actually not as dramatic and emotional as one would have imagined. For one thing, I was a journalist. I was in television news in Guangzhou during the 2003 SARS epidemic.

At that time, that was the epicenter. So there was a sense that okay, I've seen this before and actually up closer and I survived it. And I think that's a sense shared by a lot of people in China who have gone through the SARS epidemic. There was a sense that we have seen this before and we have gone through it. We have seen quarantine start and end. So it's all going to be okay. Of course, that sense wore away quite quickly when the epidemic didn't go away as planned and when it escalated into a global pandemic.

Talking about the racism and xenophobic kind of incidents in the U.S., I think my sense of it actually started by reading even the initial news reports on the disease, on the strange disease, SARS-like disease even before the China virus discourse started. In my article on *New York Times* reports on China, I talked about this idea of media reports creating an orientalist knowledge about China. So the earlier media reports certainly were to create, to construct a view of COVID as an oriental disease. Instead of focusing on the symptomology, on the prognosis, on the way to prevent the disease, for example, earlier media reports focused a lot on the exotic origin of the disease, focusing on ideas like the oriental wet markets and bush meats. So the construction of COVID as an oriental disease I think is really consequential and it really has a causal link to what happened later. Because this construction, like all the other orientalist knowledge, provides a justification for the suspicion as well as the surveillance and the control of the bodies of Chinese and other Asian bodies. So Trump is certainly not the first person to raise the idea of China virus but I think he certainly made it more famous and more connected to specific political agendas.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
We have this 2020 Pew Research Center survey that found that 40% of the respondents felt it had become more common to express those racist views about Asians during the pandemic than before COVID-19. Those survey results I think and your comments will lead to a sort of historicist perspective on all of this. And Ali, you gave an interesting lecture recently on the history behind anti-Asian discourses related to COVID-19. Can you talk about these tropes and how you identified them in the lecture and what the media has done to sort of perpetuate those? Because I think it really follows on from this Pew study and Zhuo's experiences.

Ali Na:
Yes, absolutely. I mean a lot of these things that we're hearing come directly out of the 19th century media coverage. And back then, of course, we're not talking about digital media. We're not talking about film media. We're talking about print media. And in my recent lecture, I sort of looked at three of these tropes, first being filth and immorality. And really this was solidified in print culture as a way to say that disease was inherent to Chinese-ness. And so a really good case of this comes from the 1878 Yao Jong leper case. And so this is a real case of an actual leper that was used to make a singular instance map onto the whole of the Chinese diaspora in the U.S. And so the print media coverage said 1) every Chinese person essentially is carrying

this disease and 2) they are intentionally spreading it in white families' homes. And so you see this building of print media creating fear, distrust, intention, and really grouping people together as a whole and making it a racialized phenomenon. The second trope I look at is eating taboos which Zhuo's already outlined how that's happening here in COVID. But those originate at least in the U.S. context in the 19th century where there's political cartoons of Chinese workers eating rats and these political cartoons were used to justify low wages. They were said to say, these are the exact reasons why we don't need to pay these folks the same amount as Irish immigrants, for instance. Because they don't eat like us. Therefore, they spread disease. And that relates to the third trope which is animality in the inhuman other. And so saying that one eats rats was used to say one is a rat. And so this mapping of inhumanity onto Chinese folks at the time was done through political cartoons to say they are swarms of rats, they're plagues of locusts. And this was repeated in political rhetorics that eventually were used to justify the Chinese Exclusion Act and various types of anti-Asian legislation. And so a lot of this is really visual. The talk is on YouTube so maybe it's a little bit better to look at that. But these exact same repetitions happen in 19th century political cartoons and print media and then get carried through film culture in the 20th century. And that's really what we're seeing in the digital rhetorics and discourses today.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Well, listeners will find a link to the YouTube video with the podcast. So that'll be really good. I'm interested though as you talk about these various tropes and how they've evolved over time, it seems to me they also sort of flatten out Asian and Asian-American difference. So we know that the Asian communities and the Asian diaspora in the United States and Canada is very diverse and very different and very rich. And how do you think the COVID-19 pandemic and all of that history has sort of flattened it out so that it becomes kind of monolithic? It's anti-Asian, not anti-Korean or anti-Cambodian. What do you think about that?

Ali Na:
Well, I mean this happens very early on actually. So obviously, we see this today where people are being attacked if they're the Hmong American family that was stabbed, Filipino women being attacked in hallways. This is happening across North America. But as far back as, when was the Page Act? I think it was 1875. This was a legislation in the U.S. that collapsed all of the Asian races into one category. And so I mean this collapse has been happening for a long time. It's been repeated and there's sort of this sensibility, Cathy Park Hong has this sort of fiction piece out right now that talks about this. And she says that Chinese-ness in the U.S. is really used as shorthand for Asian. And so we see these happening in our discourses but also in these histories.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Richie, did you have a thought about the flattening of Asian identity?

Richie Hao:
Yeah, I think when we think about the term Asian, it is still primarily in reference to East Asia. So it homogenizes the diversity of Asian Pacific Americans. And I think moreover when we think of the term Asian, it's still communicated as non-U.S. American bodies. So in essence, it perpetrates the kind of like a perpetual foreigner identity that is imposed upon Asian Pacific Americans.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
And particularly Asian-American women and Asian women which in most of the incidents, I think somewhere like 68% percent of the incidents of anti-Asian hate between March 2020 and February of 2021 were against women and were reported by women. Now that may be that women are more likely to report these incidents which is a good thing because we know that the vast number of these go unreported, these incidences of anti-Asian hate and anti-Asian violence are unreported. Is there a particularly unique gender dynamic? I know, Ali, in your lecture that is posted on the podcast page, in your lecture, you talk about the influences of this anti-Asian violence against women in particular. But I'm wondering if we might explore a little bit more the gendered nature of all of this and how the intersection there works really in some harmful ways.

Ali Na:
Yeah. So, well, the Page Act that I was just talking about from 1875 is a sort of first instance of legislating this. And so the Page Act assumed that all Asian women regardless of country of origin were essentially deemed prostitutes until proven otherwise. And so they were made to prove their sexual purity. This was often done at immigration centers like Angel Island. And so this idea has been sort of legislated in U.S. culture and then solidified in U.S. popular culture through films like the World of Susie Wong, Full Metal Jacket, this idea that Asian women essentially are objects of sexual pleasure for white men. And I think that it is really important to understand that that's a real effect. And I agree that under-reporting might be part of it. But if you look at Asian women and Asian-American women's experiences of violence, they're far more likely, 41% to 61% of them experience violence by an intimate partner than any other race. And so this is something that is uniquely perpetuated in our society in which Asian and Asian-American women are sort of seen as passive sexual objects.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Now let's talk a little bit about the response, the societal and I guess political but also the just general social response to this anti-Asian hate and this anti-Asian violence. Zhuo, I know you're interested in corporate social responsibility. And have you seen any evidence of how corporations both in the United States but also multinational corporations are dealing with these concerns effectively or conversely ineffectively? And what should the corporate sector be doing here?

Zhuo Ban:
That's a really good question. I do feel that corporations can do a lot of things. Corporate social responsibility can and should do a lot of things to help address the many challenges we are facing today in terms of anti-Asian racism. And they have done a lot of things. When the Atlanta shooting took place, the Asian business communities in the city that I'm living in in Cincinnati, they were instrumental in pulling all the logistics resources together and spreading the words about the protest in the city, right? And they are among the many Asian business people in the community and in other cities who are really vocally and financially contributed to the Stop Asian Hate protest. Outside the Asian business community, we've also seen corporations like Coca-Cola, like Nike, and business celebrities like Tim Cook of Apple, Brad Smith of Microsoft, Jassy of Amazon, John Foley of Peloton, so on and so forth, they are among many business people who are vocal about their support of the AAPI community and also giving hefty, substantial donations. But giving donations and being vocal about this is not the only thing that corporations can do. In a recent *Harvard Business Review* article, the author talked about the role that corporations can do to be supportive to their Asian employees, specifically by acknowledging that there's an issue, there's a problem, being available, by providing space for discussions and, by making commitments. So there is a lot that a corporation can do and I do believe that Stop Asian Hate shares a common fate with all the other racial justice movements. In that sense, whenever a corporation works on issues of racial justice, that's going to have a positive impact on the AAPI community. That being said, a big caveat, right? I like to, like I argued in my article about CSR labor issues, there are limits to which CSR can do and actually we should be vigilant about what we allow them to do. In short, CSR can make specific contributions to social changes but they are really bad at making fundamental social transformations. So I'm also building coalition with the business community, allowing them to contribute to the efforts of positive social change but I would really hesitate to let the corporations become the leaders or the sole players in these efforts. For example, Tim Cook tweeted about Stop Asian Hate. But we remember that Apple workers in Asia earn just about three dollars per hour and I would seriously question how much commitment that corporations like that can have towards real social justice. We should not forget the role that East Asian Company played in the early colonial history and its lingering effect on the racial inequality on a global scale. Neither can we ignore the fact that many racist neo-colonial interventions in contemporary society are carried out in the name of free market. So like fire, corporations are good servants but really bad masters.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Right. Richie your particular expertise is in critical communication pedagogy and I'm curious what you think about how we can address these issues a little closer to home through our teaching, through our research, and in our sort of anti-Asian commitments in the classroom, in our syllabi? What are some of the nuts and bolts of really combating this where we all live in the college and university classroom?

Richie Hao:
I think engaging in a culturally inclusive pedagogy is both an intentional and reflexive act. And what I mean by this is that we need to make an explicit commitment to assigning readings and assignments that represent the voices of the other. So theoretically, for instance, we have to expose our students to Asia-centric, Afrocentric, Native, Latinx, and transnational perspectives beyond what we've been trained to do really in terms of our studies primarily grounded in a Western U.S. centric perspective. So we also have to be reflexive in utilizing an intersectional approach. And when we're studying culture, by integrating, for example, queer and transnational theories as a way to really be able to understand diverse experiences. Now in terms of assignments, I think that we have to be intentional and reflexive in allowing our students to confront and question their own cultural identities. I do want to be clear that you don't have to be in an intercultural communication class to do this, especially as teachers. For example, in my public speaking class, I actually assign my students to do a cultural narrative speech which really allows them to share a life experience and how that impacts their understanding of their own cultural identities. I think this is just one example as an opportunity for students to learn from one another but ultimately learning about different experiences and world views from and with each other.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
I'd love to see that assignment. Maybe it already has been written up in *Communication Teacher* because I think I would have never thought of doing an assignment like that. So that's great. Beyond the classroom then, what can colleges and universities do? When the Atlanta violence happened, everybody puts out a statement. College presidents fall all over themselves putting out statements and that's great. I think that's important. What kind of specific actions do you think that colleges and universities can do to really alleviate a lot of the fear that many of their students, their Asian students and other students might be feeling? Is there something that colleges and universities don't do that we should be doing more of? Or what do you think?

Richie Hao:
I think first and foremost from an interpersonal level, I think departments, colleges should be able to check in with their students and faculty to assure them that they belong in their academic home and will be supported if they ever experience any type of racism and discrimination. Secondly, if possible, I think if you are currently in your own campus or at least safe to return, perhaps also being able to talk to your campus security to find out what other safety measures in place that can help protect one another. And I think perhaps the most important step that departments, colleges, and universities can do is to review their own departmental and institutional culture to understand if there are current practices that need to be changed to provide an inclusive environment for all people who work there but in particular here as we are referring to Asian Pacific Americans in this particular academic community.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
It strikes me that a lot of colleges and universities have often viewed their Asian students either internationally or domestically as sort of a model minority. I'm wondering if you all think that's a, I'm assuming you do, but I'm wondering what you think about the dangers of that sort of myth and how that speaks to both college and university responses but also the larger societal questions surrounding anti-Asian hate and anti-Asian violence.

Zhuo Ban:
I would just want to start with talking from the perspective of someone who's doing labor movement research. Whenever the establishment sets up a small minority, a small token within the minority as an exemplary example, it's time to be suspicious about it because it can create, for one thing, an unrealistic expectation for that group of people. It can mask the real oppressions that's happening in the group. And we've mentioned this earlier, it creates an image that flattens the complex composition of that minority group.

Ali Na:
I would also add that there's this work that's being done in the model minority rhetoric that is really about creating anti-black racism, is about perpetuating racial division. And when racial minorities are pitted against one another, white supremacy wins out. These types of modes of mobilizing a model minority are harmful and they're really inaccurate. Asian Pacific Islander Americans are of the most, I think that they actually are the most dynamic in terms of splits, Hilo and have such a vast difference amongst different groups that it is really problematic to talk about the sort of model minority with that group as a whole because there are so many differences that are really overlooked in our history because we forward that narrative.

Richie Hao:
And I think I also would like to chime in in terms of even what we've been seeing with the anti-Asian violence. We've seen that a lot of these cases are happening in urban centers such as Chinatowns and if anything else, that really exposes us to the myth of the modern minority so to speak. But on top of that, even, I'm just thinking about the number of COVID cases specifically in terms of where I live in the Los Angeles County, even though we make up about 14% of the county's population, about a third of our population has been impacted by COVID. And so that is actually significant, statistically significant that oftentimes we don't necessarily hear about.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
One of the things that NCA has been thinking about a lot lately is mentorship and how we encourage mentorship and how we as a society can encourage mentorship, networking, community building. Richie, I know you've done a lot of work in this area and particularly cultivating a mentorship sort of relationship. We just are going to ask the legislative assembly to form the

Mentorship and Leadership Council in NCA. And do you have any advice for them particularly when it comes to mentorship and networking and community building in the Asian and Asian-American diaspora and how all that can work to create a more supportive climate for our members and our scholar teachers?

Richie Hao:
Well, I think first and foremost, we need to understand that mentoring is not limited to a formal mentor/mentee relationship. Many years ago, I actually co-authored this mentoring piece with Bryant Alexander, Bernadette Calafell, Amy Kilgard, the late John T. Warren, and Kate Willink that mentoring should be understood as a form of community building. What this means is that mentoring can be a positive, enriching experience if we have the support of those around us in our daily academic lives such as advisors, colleagues, committee members, department chair, deans, and even students. So as an example, I think we often find comfort with our colleagues through our own research. Even right now as a as a program planner for the Asian Pacific American division and caucus this year, I'm actually very glad to see that many colleagues who are collaborating on the very topic that we are talking about. Community building is also about I think being able to break the hierarchical and formal relationships that we often think about of mentoring. So I think as faculty members in particular, I would say that it is okay to reach out to our students to show our own vulnerability during these difficult times. I think in many ways it also allows me to kind of think about or remind me of what Bernadette Calafell calls the act of caring through the informal relationships that we build through mentoring.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
I was in a workshop recently where somebody was talking about both vertical and horizontal mentoring and that struck me as interesting because usually when you think of mentoring, it's like an older, wiser colleague mentoring a younger colleague. But I love that horizontal mentoring because it sounds to me more like what you're talking about, community building and creating a sense of shared purpose and shared identity. That's great. Now for the big question, right? The big *Communication Matters* question. We always like to talk about communication matters in both of its meanings. How do you think the continuing conversations that we're having, that the society is having about anti-Asian racism, anti-Asian hate speech, violence, and discrimination, how do you think those contribute to broader discussions about anti-racist futures and the role of communication as a discipline and as a practice in creating those anti-racist futures?

Richie Hao:
I think for me when I think of communication, I tend to think of it really as a bridge to different knowledge and experiences. But I think more importantly, I also think of using communication as an opportunity to create sites of resistance and to question and challenge normative assumptions. So I do hope that we take this opportunity to really be able to be reflexive in our own subjectivities

and positionalities and be able to engage in those difficult conversations but more importantly, really think about what are some of even the very micro waves of really being able to engage in some of the changes that we would like to see.

Zhuo Ban:
I think the many incidents and the broader social discourses in culture that we problematize as anti-Asian racism really is a good opportunity for communication scholars to really think about this relationship between discourses, communication, and social reality what. I see as a communication scholar is that it really raised the question, again, it emphasized the importance of looking at the relationship between discourses and social reality, the more material, more substantive aspect of social reality. We all know that racism existed as a discourse in society. And what's happening in the recent past is that this discourse has gained teeth, teeth that can actually bite. And this gives the question about looking at what actually happened to make certain discourses really have the muscle to change social reality, to turn hidden thoughts into aggressive behavior, into policies, into discriminatory policies. And we can flip it around, what communication can do to look for those action signals to how to make the anti-discriminatory discourses, to make social movements and their positive social racial justice discourses to have more teeth in order to fight the muscle on the other side.

Ali Na:
Yeah. And I think that if we are talking about communication for anti-racist futures, we have to understand the past. And it's so vital that we not sort of buy into this progressive timeline of communication and practices. I really get this, and I feel bad about doing it, but I get this a lot from students who see a movie like *Crazy Rich Asians*—I'm not joking when I say this—they see this as a really monumental moment, as like a turning point in history. And I can't blame them because if they've grown up in North America, they haven't seen themselves on screen ever never, in minor roles but nothing like this, right? But the thing is that's actually a repetition of history. Every 30 years, there's a major blockbuster with an all-Asian cast, right? And so what we're looking at if we're looking at history and we're looking forward, we're also thinking about how to create these types of proliferations so that it's not a one-off, that it's not a sort of cycle that we get caught in where we think that we're doing better and we stop trying. And one of the lessons from history that I think is really important moving forward, and we've talked about this a bit, is really building coalition. It can't just be about anti-Asian racism. It has to be about anti-racist coalitions. And so I think that as we, communication scholars and people who just experience communication whether it be discourse, institutional structures, media, all of these things need to build across and they need to proliferate. It can't be a one-off and fixed situation.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
And that is a great illustration of how communication can matter in terms of coalition building, critical communication pedagogy, corporate responsibility, you name it, across the board. So thank you all very much. This has been a really timely and interesting discussion of how communication plays a role in the envisioning of an anti-racist future while also recognizing, and Ali, I really think that's important, the historical roots of how it is we got to our present moment. Thanks for joining us again on *Communication Matters, The NCA Podcast*. And I really appreciate everybody discussing these very difficult issues with all of us and with our listeners.

In NCA News, in response to the ongoing national conversations about systemic racism, NCA has expanded our existing anti-racism resource bank to include resources related to anti-Asian violence and climate justice. In addition to journal articles, news articles, and other resources, the page includes new and recent statements issued by the NCA Officers, NCA's African American Communication and Culture Division and Black Caucus, the Korean American Communication Association, and the American Council of Learned Societies. Read the full statements on the resource bank at natcom.org/anti-racism-resources.

Also, in NCA News, a new *Spectra* "Field Notes" essay examines the concept of "injured privilege" and its relationship to the "model minority" myth about Asian immigrants to the United States. In the essay, Communication Professor Hsin-I Cheng, who developed the concept, argues that injured privilege acknowledges the complexity of Asian-Americans' experiences related to discrimination and privilege. The term injured privilege also recognizes how the model minority myth has silenced Asian-Americans from sharing stories of discrimination. Cheng argues that vocalizing these experiences is key to Asian American political agency. You can read the full essay at natcom.org/Spectra.

Listeners, I hope you'll tune in for the next episode of *Communication Matters* on May 20th. Devika Chawla, the incoming Chair of NCA's Publications Council; Mary Stuckey, a past editor of NCA's *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, and two veteran reviewers, Denise M. Bostdorff and Rebecca de Souza, will join the podcast to address journal reviewing as mentorship and some related issues in journal editing, including issues related to diversity, inclusion, equity, and access. Whether you're a seasoned reviewer or new to academic publishing, I hope you'll join us for this conversation about the review process.

Be sure to engage with us on social media by liking us on Facebook, following NCA on Twitter and Instagram and watching us on YouTube. And before you go, hit subscribe wherever you get your podcasts to listen in as we discuss emerging scholarship, establish theory and new applications, all exploring just how much communication matters in our classrooms, in our communities and in our world. See you next time.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
The National Communication Association is the preeminent scholarly association devoted to the study and teaching of communication. Founded in 1914, NCA is a thriving group of thousands from across the nation and around the world who are committed to a collective mission to advance communication as an academic discipline. In keeping with NCA's mission to advance the discipline of communication, NCA has developed this podcast series to expand the reach of our member scholars' work and perspectives.

Conclusion:
Communication Matters is hosted by NCA Executive Director Trevor Parry-Giles. The podcast, organized at the national office in downtown Washington DC, is produced by Assistant Director of External Affairs and Publications Chelsea Bowes with writing support from Director of External Affairs and Publications Wendy Fernando and Content Development Specialist Grace Hébert. Thank you for listening.

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