Anti-Asian Racism is Still a Dominant Force of the US Political Ideology

Although the associations with racial discrimination in the US are primarily related to the country’s black population, the problem is much deeper and more serious.

Even The Guardian, which is “friendly” to the current government in Washington, stresses that racism is rampant in the United States and that from the very beginning the US was built on the idea of white supremacy. This overt and deliberate racism has been practiced for longer than unconscious or hidden racism. Even though it has been almost 70 years since the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the US state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools are unconstitutional, the racial lines drawn 400 years ago still divide the nation, proving that the country’s current political elite’s rhetoric about freedom and equality is just empty words.

But alongside the black population, Asians are also targeted for racial discrimination in the US, which is by no means the result of policy in only recent years. After all, since the late 19th century there have been restrictions and special measures against the Chinese in the United States at the state level. Thus, when the gold rush broke out in California in the 1850s and caused increased demand for workers in mining and railroad construction, this dangerous and low-paying niche was filled with Chinese immigrants. However, the media’s portrayal of the typical Chinese grotesquely exaggerated aspects of Chinese identity that Americans found sinister or highly exotic. In such circumstances, conflicts with Chinese immigrants became very common. One of such episodes was the murder of a
Chinese immigrant Ling Sing by a white American George Hall, after which in 1854 the decision of the Supreme Court of California in the case of People v. Hall de facto gave carte blanche to anti-Asian violence by virtue of the ruling that the Chinese are “a race of people defined by nature as inferior and who are incapable of progress or intellectual development after a certain moment.”

Two decades later, the infamous “Chinese Massacre” took place in Los Angeles on the night of October 24, 1871, and no one was held responsible. This atrocity rightly became one of the bloodiest pages in the history of the city.

Four more years later, in 1875, the Page Act, the first restrictive federal immigration law in the United States, was enacted and applied mainly against the Chinese, aiming to limit Asian immigration. The Page Act marked the beginning of legal discrimination against the Chinese: in 1882, an overwhelming majority in Congress voted for the adoption of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned the Chinese immigration for 20 years.

Then on September 2, 1885, in Rock Springs, Wyoming, 150 white miners attacked their Chinese counterparts, which led to the death of 28 Chinese workers, 15 injured and several hundred more driven out of the town.

Nowadays, the Asian-American community is a diverse and rapidly growing racial group in the United States. The data released in 2019 showed that 23.2 million people in the United States identify themselves as Asian Americans. They represent 19 different groups of Asian origin, with Chinese Americans being the largest of them, followed by Indian Americans and Filipino Americans.

The US RAND Corporation recently presented a report on this problem, where anti-Asian racism is defined as discriminatory acts committed against people who are considered Asians living in the United States. These manifestations of anti-Asian racism have noticeably intensified with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. First, the White House initiated the trade war with China, followed by the coronavirus conflict, and then Beijing was officially accused of bearing responsibility for the terrible consequences of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the deaths of more than 100 thousand Americans from Covid-19. As these events unfolded over recent years, the United States has seen a resurgence in Sinophobia.

According to experts, in recent years a surge in hate attacks against Asian Americans and people from the Pacific region has been recorded almost throughout the United States, and could to some extent be provoked by negative statements by former President Donald Trump who accused China of spreading Covid-19. It is also reported that during the period from March 2020 to September 2021, there were more than 10,000 such incidents in the US.

However, the anti-Chinese racial wave about the alleged “Chinese virus” initiated by 45th US President Donald Trump’s remarks is also rooted in history. In 1900, a bubonic plague outbreak struck San Francisco, and the first victim was a Chinese immigrant, after which the accusation of allegedly bringing the virus was quickly brought against the Chinese community.

As for the manifestations of anti-Chinese racism in the United States, the statistics for 2021 showed that the number of attacks in San Francisco alone, directed against people of Asian origin and committed with racial motives due to the outbreak of Covid-19, increased several times, Insider reports. This was announced by the city authorities at a special press conference on January 25 with the participation of police representatives. The information at the conference clearly illustrates that the animosity toward people of Asian appearance in the United States is growing against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, in 2021 the number of attacks and other crimes committed against them on the racism and ethnic hostility grounds increased more than sixfold in San Francisco alone. The city officials have pledged to strengthen security to ensure the protection of all Asian Americans.

In an attempt to contribute to countering racial manifestations against Asians, ballet companies in the United States suddenly began to revise the image of Asians in The Nutcracker, trying to fight old stereotypes about Chinese culture, writes The New York Times. Some famous groups, inter alia, the New York Ballet, have adjusted Chinese dance, abandoning the thin hanging moustaches of male dancers, which were previously used as a traditional element of Asian culture. The scene “Confiturenburg, the Palace of Sweets” of this ballet was updated with a new character - an energetic and superhero-like cricket named Green Tea, whose mission is “countering stereotypes about Chinese culture.”

Some troupes have almost completely reworked Chinese dance, believing that this way it will find a greater response from a modern audience. So, the Tulsa Ballet company, in their quest to abandon the “outdated image” of Asians, filled its production with elements of martial arts, guided by a choreographer from China, and classical Chinese dance. And Colorado Ballet presented “The Nutcracker” with new costumes that were also present in the Chinese
Teachers and students of Butler University in Indianapolis this year made a decision to rename the famous “Tea” stage into “Dragon Beard” in honor of popular Chinese sweets. And the mythical figure of the Monkey King from classical Chinese literature became the basis for the choreography in this updated scene. The Boston Ballet added a new pas de deux scene based on a traditional Chinese ribbon dance.

But all these demonstrations against old stereotypes about Chinese culture cannot yet solve the main problem of the racism spreading in the United States. Therefore, the Asian community in the United States continues to protest against racial manifestations and hatred. Some famous personalities have joined the struggle. Philip Lim, a successful fashion designer, Daniel Day Kim, a Hollywood actor, and other Asian American celebrities in their interviews and online videos are calling for a stop to hatred. The anti-hate campaign is a real hit. #StopAsianHate gave a rise to a social movement.

But according to the American media it is clear to everyone that much remains to be done to eradicate racism from the political ideology of the United States.

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