



Episode 132: Asian Americans Attaining Awareness (Transcript)

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Jason Lau: As an Asian American, you are navigating this desire to be accepted by your American peers, and you want to do things the American way, but you are living at home with your parents who have very strong cultural ties to food and language and music and things like that. You don't realize what a treasure it is until you get older. But I think it creates a lot of internal conflict for young Asian Americans growing up, "I want to fit in with my friends, I want to eat pizza and go to sleepovers" and things like that. I see this collaborative as really important because it helps us start those conversations and reduce some of those stigmas in that area.

Ike Evans: Hi, welcome to Into the Fold, the mental health podcast. I'm your host, Ike Evans. Today we're delighted to bring you episode 132, Asian Americans Attaining Awareness. The month of May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. As compared to last year when we covered this topic for the first time, maybe the conversation around Asian American mental health and wellbeing has advanced, and maybe this podcast played a tiny role in making it harder for Asian Americans to be taken for granted as a silent monolithic group. Yet here we are in 2022, still in a pandemic and still in a moment where overt displays of bigotry and xenophobia are on an upswing. I want to read for you a quote from a Hogg Foundation blog post that's about a year old. It was guest authored by Dr. Ravi Chandra, a psychiatrist and writer who we invited to share his perspective on Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and how it connects to our core concern of mental health and building a more just and equitable world.

Ike Evans: Here it goes. "We are all on journeys of identity, belonging, and wellness, and our journeys are connected. We all need safety and strive for survival. We cannot allow times of tension, change, and distress to lead directly to loss of life. As I've written before, our identities are the eight of the world trying to have a new experience. I hope someday that we can celebrate not just Asian American heritage month, but also future's month for the entire country, where we can

envision a world with less suffering, more compassion, more wisdom, and more possibilities for us all."

Ike Evans: Okay, I'm back. If we go back to episode 115, I made it clear how much that line our identities are the ache of the world trying to have a new experience stuck with me. Why would the world trying to have a new experience be an ache? One answer maybe is that the paradox that phrase captures is a painful one that we can't stay where we're at, but there's no other place that we can call home. This idea has been grist for literature, art, philosophy, and also comedy. So on that basis, and because it's something I'd been wanting to do for a long time, I decided for the first time, for episode 115 to invite onto the podcast a working comedian who also happened to have some very timely thoughts about Asian American identity and mental health.

Ike Evans: Ivy Lee, Austinite host and creator of the Fear of Going Outside or FOGO podcast, she came on for a conversation about inclusion, wellbeing, and all that good stuff refracted through her own point of view. As someone who's endeavoring to make a name for herself as a creative person of color and second generation Vietnamese American, here's a sampling.

Ivy Lee: Now I need everyone, but it takes a village. So I need everyone in their lives to be doing that work in order succeed. It's a team sport, breaking the cycle, intergenerational trauma. I think a lot of people they feel very alone in that, but I think culturally, something I have to draw on is that sense of community that growing up I know a lot of people, white people in my life right now, who they don't want to ask for help. They won't even give, they find it very gush for example, to even give money as a gift at weddings, right? My culture, it's not that way, but also just the way I grew up in America. In my neighborhoods, we kind of had a sense of, of course everything's rigged against you. If you try to go out it alone, you're just a schmuck, right? There is only kind of community, only collective power, only being on the same team will overcome these kinds of societal obstacles that we have.

Ike Evans: That was from episode 115, Fear of Going Outside. You can find the full episode in our catalog or a link in the description for today's episode. Let us get back to journeys of identity, belonging and wellness, and to trying to have a new experience. One of the things that an organization like Hogg tries to do is to help create structures so that when one is able to have a new experience, they bring others along with them. For today's episode, we're once again talking about Asian American mental health, but this time we're doing it within the context of shared collaborative effort, which brings me to my esteemed panel for this episode. Dr. Aneela Khan is the community behavioral health program manager at Asian American Health Coalition of Houston HOPE Clinic. They're one of the 10 grantees of the Hogg Foundation's communities of care initiative and is also the lead organization for Asian Americans Attaining Awareness, the collaborative that was formed under this initiative.

Ike Evans: Joining her is Colonel Vipin Kumar, executive director of India House, a nonprofit organization in Houston, and Jason Lau, a project manager for DePelchin Children's Center in Houston. All three of our guests are deeply involved with Asian Americans Attaining Awareness. Welcome to all of you.

Jason Lau: Thank you for having us.

Colonel Vipin K...: Thank you for having us, definitely.

Dr. Aneela Khan: Thank you so much for having us.

Ike Evans: My first question is for all three of you. I'm just curious how the three of each other, and maybe you could tell our listeners a bit about your different roles within the collaborative.

Jason Lau: Sure. I'll start. Hi, everybody out there. My name is Jason Lau and I'm with DePelchin Children's Center here in Houston, Texas. We know each other... I will also start by saying that the nonprofit world in Houston is probably a pretty small community. I feel like a lot of nonprofits know about one another. Then when you talk about really Asian and Asian American focused nonprofits, I think that the community gets even smaller. I actually was already aware of the Asian American Health Coalition, and one of our other additional partners I've known for pretty much my entire lifetime, the Chinese Community Center. When I heard about the Hogg Foundation and this funding opportunity, I sort of immediately thought of Asian American Health Coalition. So I brought this up to Shane Chen, who is the COO and Karin Dunn, who does a lot of grant writing for them. I shared this opportunity with them and they were able to apply. That's how I knew people. Then I got to know more people as we came together as a collaborative.

Colonel Vipin K...: My name is Colonel Vipin Kumar. I'm a veteran of Indian Army. I've been here for 20 years. I'm the executive director of India House, a nonprofit organization in the Southwest Houston. We have been collaborating with HOPE Clinic on various programs, and we both have same aim, serving the community. In early 2019, we got a request from HOPE Clinic for a letter of support for Hogg Foundation funding for this particular program. That time we didn't know, we just sent a letter. Then we got a letter email from Aneela as a project manager that she had been appointed as a children's mental health project. Then we had many meetings. I remember sometime in August 2019, we had a press conference, where we all were invited to break this news that this is a Asian American Health Coalition looking after the aspect of mental health in the Asian community.

Colonel Vipin K...: I think that time we had 10 partners and exec numbers. Now it's growing and Aneela can tell more about it. After that, we have been having a lot of meeting. One of the meetings, we also came on a name called AAAA, Asian American Attaining Awareness, and I think Jason had thrown that name too. Ever since we

have been knowing each other, meeting on various platforms, various occasions, and working towards the success of this program.

Dr. Aneela Khan: I'm going to take up from here. My name is Aneela Khan and I'm the community behavior health program manager at Asian American Health Coalition HOPE Clinic. I have the honor of leading this collaborative, which is called the Asian Americans Attaining Awareness. I met all these wonderful people the first time we met for the program after I was hired, as Colonel Vipin just mentioned. That's basically how I met all of them. We have right now 13 different organizations in this collaborative. Chinese Community Center, Boat People SOS, VN Teamwork, Rohingya Community of Greater Houston, YMCA International, Future Beyond Charity, culture of advancing health together, CHAT, Rabbani Foundation, [inaudible 00:12:00] PCCI, Ibn Sina Foundation, and of course, India House and DePelchin Children's. Two representatives are here with us together.

Ike Evans: Asian Americans Attaining Awareness is a multi-sector collaborative as we've established. How would you describe the parts of the Houston community that your collaborative represents?

Dr. Aneela Khan: For this, I would say that first of all, very rightly said that this collaborative is a multi-sector collaborative. We have organization that provides different types of community services, for example, Asian American Health Coalition, HOPE Clinic, and Ibn Sina providing health services to tax services, senior health, childcare. All these different community services are provided by the various organizations in this collaborative. I would say that it's not just one ZIP Code of Houston or a county of Houston. We represent a community of affiliation, which is the Asian community. For Asian, it's Asians and Asian Americans. By the term Asian we mean anybody who has ties to the continent of Asia, whether they are recent immigrants, first generation Asians, second generation Asians. These are all Asian, Asian Americans that we represent in this collaborative.

Ike Evans: I do have a quick follow up to that. There's no single Asian perspective on mental health. One thing I can't help but want to know is how challenging it might be to translate what you know to be true about mental health into messages that resonate with the community.

Dr. Aneela Khan: I would say that this is a general concept that Asians would have different perspective, but our assessment shows that there are a lot of common things across board for Asians, whether it is food, whether it is culture, whether it's religion, traditions being followed. Then that takes us to the point where the same messages have to be sent out to community in different languages. Fortunately enough, each one of us, whoever is representing their community on this collaborative have experts who can translate it and not just translate it, but also make it culturally appropriate for the community to be able to receive this message. I know DePelchin Children's has the responsibility in this collaborative to do the branding and marketing. I think Jason would be able to shed more light on this part.

- Jason Lau: Yeah. Aneela, thanks for that. I'll touch on that too. I think translating what we know about mental health to two different cultures, it's not always just language, right? Obviously there are things that different cultures feel about mental health and a lot of the things that Aneela sort of has touched on. We start entering things like generational gaps, when people come here for the first time and there are language barriers between them and their children. I think it can be a real difficulty to try to connect the language and the information that we understand about mental health. What Aneela was talking about is we are currently working on trying to get some marketing strategies out there and looking at getting them translated into multiple languages. I think we're going to start with five languages at first.
- Jason Lau: We're going to start with sort of the most important languages, probably some of the most populated communities in Houston. These are really sort of pamphlets on normalizing and reducing stigma around mental health, comparing the idea of if you're coughing and sneezing, you wouldn't hesitate to go see a doctor if you had symptoms, right? Likewise, if you have symptoms of mental health, right, you feel uncontrollable sadness sometimes for no reasons and long periods of time, or you feel really angry very often and you don't know what to do about it. Those are additional symptoms for some mental health things, and it's okay to go out and seek help for those sorts of things.
- Jason Lau: So we're going to have it in English for younger generation who may even need that to deal with the stress of things like school or peer relationships, or even relationships in the home and then we'll have them translated into what we may refer to sometimes as heart languages, the languages of our heart, the one that we speak the most easily. We'll have those available and we're going to do a print run and we'll include again, some normalizing languages. I think that's how we're going to try to get the message out there in the community and try to bridge that gap, so to speak.
- Colonel Vipin K...: If I may just add mental health reflects our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. So if we Asian, especially I'm talking about Indians, when we come here for the children who are here, it's inherent. There's emotional aspect, the psychological, and the social. Most of us, we keep quoting that we come with the few dollars in our hand, pockets, or come without any money and they transfer the language barrier. So all of these are very inherent for the Asian Indian.
- Ike Evans: Okay. Thank you. Aneela, my next question is for you. Just as the project coordinator, have there been any surprises or unanticipated challenges over the course of this project?
- Dr. Aneela Khan: Not just a few, a lot, but I would just tell you the top five. The first, when I was hired for this program and I joined them and I met the collaborative for the first time, I realized that though all the organizations had come together to apply for a common cause, but there were a lot of questions in everybody's mind. Most

of them were related to that what would happen over the next five years, since this is not a program that would have a defined journey, because we wanted to do an upstream program where a community would decide what is better for them. This was something that was different, and also to be able to talk about a topic that is not a very favorite topic in Asian household. So a lot of the collaborative members themselves had a lot of questions and it took us several meetings to be able to get on the same page.

Dr. Aneela Khan: Just to let you know that the collaborative meets every third Wednesday of the month. We aim for an hour meeting and mostly gets spilled over one hour 30 minutes. So repeated discussions, brainstorming. Finally, as we were getting together to implement and finalize our assessment, the second biggest challenge came in and which was COVID. The pandemic has turned things in a different direction, almost putting stop to a lot of activities. The initial program activities were definitely programed for in person meetings or in person community engagements, moving them all to online, and within that period also responding to the pandemic itself, as we told you that most of us are social service organizations. Third, the pandemic itself being somehow linked to Asia added to a lot of surprises for all of us when community members were very hesitant even to take the surveys, talk about it. This mental health was slightly pushed back on their priority list because of events that had emerged related to racism. All this had been few years of surprises for all of us.

Ike Evans: My next question is for Jason. You're with DePelchin Children's Center, which is, I think, a backbone institution in the Houston area when it comes to mental health. I mean, it's been around, I think since first established in 1892. I just want to know how your center's involvement or your involvement through the center strengthens the collaborative.

Jason Lau: Sure. First of all, thank you for saying that. You're absolutely right. 1892 is when we were first founded. 2022 is going to be our 130th anniversary. One of the things that we say here at DePelchin is that we are deeply rooted in our community having been around for so long. So you're right. A few of the areas we specialize in are mental health, prevention based services, as well as child welfare services. Our involvement, DePelchin Children's Center involvement with this collaborative really is deeply personal to me. As someone who is Asian American, as a Chinese American who has grown up here in America but has parents who have immigrated from abroad, I have a deep and personal connection to this project. But I think what DePelchin brings to this collaborative, and I'm hoping that what we bring helps strengthen it is first, my area and the work that I do is really grounded in evaluation.

Jason Lau: DePelchin has an entire department dedicated to program evaluation, quality improvement, which we don't often see at nonprofits. We might usually see one or two people dedicated to this, but we have a whole department. I'm hoping that what we bring is a little bit of expertise to help guide this. Now, I'll also say that Aneela doesn't need it. She does a great job managing this entire grant and

she's corralling all of us as nonprofits and getting us together. But to give a little bit of expertise in evaluation and to sort of provide feedback when we need it, I think is one thing. One area that we also help in is our resources and connection to ongoing services. Having been around for this long, we have sort of a connection to who's in the area, who has free or low cost services. We might be able to share some of those resources with our partners.

Jason Lau: A lot of our partners are those places that provide those free services, especially if people need it in a specific language, but we do have connections to a lot of places. Then the last area I would say is really our specialty in mental health and that child welfare space. Right? The way that we've contributed to the project so far as we've had a couple of people even present on some topics like specialized mental health areas, we've had some of our licensed clinicians present on some of those topics, we also bring specialty in specific areas like trauma informed services, evidence based programming. What Aneela was talking about, we had a grant that was able to offer youth mental health first aid. I think we were able to offer that training to some of our collaborative partners. All that sort of coming together, evaluation work, connection to resources, and just being sort of a collaborative partner here is what sort of bring to the table.

Ike Evans: Great. Colonel Kumar, I guess I have a similar question for you. You are with the India House. Again, I'm kind of just curious about what it is that through India House you hope to infuse into the work that the collaborative is doing.

Colonel Vipin K...: Okay. India House, let me, my belief is that what the community needs, what they don't get causes the mental health, anyone. Mental health reflects over emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It has a strong impact on the way we interact with others, we handle the problems, or make decisions. Being in the military, I have experience. It has taught me, my experience has taught me that mental health can be affected due to stressful and extreme conditions. We see it all around some of our veterans we have seen here. They're the burning example of this mental health problem. But my belief is the mental health can be strengthened by offering helping hand. That's what India House does. During this stressful situation, if we offer the helping hand, these can be taken care of. Majority of our programs, which are offered at India House, take care of these mental health problems.

Colonel Vipin K...: I can name a few. I take pride in saying that the India House is a community center and it is perceived to be the Indian community center, where it's a community service center where most of the beneficiary, 95% of the beneficiary come from a very diverse background, and none of them is Indian. Most of our beneficiaries of our programs are non-Indian. We do community support food distribution. Now, anybody can have a mental health problem due to food insecurity. We run a charity clinic. We do a family and immigration law consultation, where it can take care of a lot of mental health issues. We offer yoga classes and BollyX fitness classes. It not only keeps people engaged, but

also make them mentally strong. We offer child classes to the children, art classes, soccer coaching classes. I'm going to talk about it a little later.

Colonel Vipin K...: With the collaborative with this Hogg Foundation, this program, we've done personality development courses, a workshop of eight weeks. I'll be talking about it later when we describe what we are doing. Then, we also take care of the seniors' technology classes. You see, it's a stigma. For today's seniors, it's a big problem with challenge, how to send a picture on a phone, how to attach a photo on a phone and they look around for help. So these technology classes take out that inhibition from them. Likewise, there are many programs which we've done, and being part of AAAA, we have conducted a focus group, we have conducted radio shows, personality development programs, and done surveys. All this, my belief is everything contributes towards a better wellbeing and better mental health.

Ike Evans: Okay. I'm hoping to make this fairly broad discussion a little bit more personally grounded. Do any of you have personal stories or experiences that really brought home for you? First of all, why mental health is important, but then why this collaborative in particular was needed.

Colonel Vipin K...: If I may take the lead on it, as I was mentioning during focus group, we had many youngsters, 18 to 25 years of age. One of few lessons we learned, for example, they find it very difficult dealing with the parents. I was so surprised when majority of them said due to the generation gap. This is one thing which we can work on. The radio shows. We had a radio show on mental health. We found that people were not coming forward to speak during the show. However, they all wanted to speak to these experts who was on the radio show after that. Our listenership of the radio increased exponentially, but the callers they were not calling. There's a stigma. They don't want to share and talk about these programs.

Colonel Vipin K...: We had personality development workshop. I have experience about this particular workshop, and I definitely want to share this experience. About this program, we have eight weeks workshop, and due to COVID, we moved from in person to online. As things open up, we said six weeks will be online and two weeks will be in person, last two classes, workshop. There's a girl, and from the early age, her mother told us that she had some, I would call it a social anxiety, or she was not opening up. She will hide behind her mother. She didn't want to participate in this personality development program initiated by collaboration. Somehow I talked to her, talked to her mother and she participated. She agreed only for the online class for six classes online, but she will not come for in person.

Colonel Vipin K...: However, we kind of convinced her to come for the in person class, the seventh one, which was a rehearsal for the final show. She came, she understood. She somehow opened up. And this child who from childhood has been having inhibition, her mother was feeling very bad about it that my child cannot come

forward, trust me, on the eighth class, the final class, she was one of the best speaker. If they're handle, if we have this education, if we take care of them at that right time, I personally feel that we can make a very good impact on the life of these people. Similar case of the, we have soccer coaching for the children, there was a kid who won't get out of his car. He's just about nine years old. He will not get out of the car to play soccer with the people. Today he's the one who is running around maximum. He's so cheerful, it's transformed.

Colonel Vipin K...: I feel so happy about all this. I think this is the need of the hour that we give this mental health initiative more and more push to enrich and better the life of so many young and old.

Jason Lau: I can share a little bit too. Personally, growing up as an Asian American, mental health is not something we talk about openly in our families. I can tell you that from experience growing up and having friends who are also mostly Asian, and that includes both South Asian and East Asian. I think one of the things that is not unique to Asian Americans, but I definitely see it in our community is, and I touched on it before, and it is this cultural and language gap. They can both happen, especially if your parents immigrated to the US and sort of you're the first foreign generation here. As an Asian American, you are navigating this desire to be accepted by your American peers and you want to do things the American way, but you are living at home with your parents who have very strong cultural ties to food and language and music and things like that.

Jason Lau: You don't realize what a treasure it is until you get older, but I think it creates a lot of internal conflict for young Asian Americans growing up. I want to fit in with my friends, I want to eat pizza and go to sleepovers and things like that. It's just not something that's typically done. The conversations around mental health are one of those things that I feel is a very much an American or even sort of a Western concept, right, of normalizing going to counseling. It's relatively new, even in America too, to have these sort of normalized conversations about mental health and what it means to be open and seeking help for that. I see this collaborative as really important because it helps us start those conversations and reduce some of those stigmas in that area.

Jason Lau: I am fortunate enough to work at a place where we are able to offer free mental health services to the community. We have a huge program called FAYS, Family and Youth Success. It's funded through the state and it's free to families. As an evaluator, I get to look at those client satisfaction stories about people who express how grateful they are when they come in and they're dealing with a really tough issue, whether it be peer-to-peer conflict in school or family relationships that are just really on the edge of just like blowing up. By working through as a family, parents and children together, they come to this place where they have mutual understanding, they're able to talk about their feelings and emotions, and I see that as such a need how great would that have been when we were growing up or when I was growing up to have had that as a resource.

Jason Lau: I think it all sort of came to a head too. I really, really saw this from an Asian American, a Chinese American perspective during COVID, where there was a very strong anti-Asian sentiment here in the US. It really struck home, even as an adult living in sort of fear of going out, fear for my family and friends to be berated in public for being Chinese and at least Asian appearing. So I think that across the gamut, young to old, I think there is a need to have resources that address our mental health need because just like health comes and goes, sometimes you get sick and sometimes you're better, mental health is the same way. We sort of live in this space of mental wellness and sometimes it's not as great as it can be. Sometimes we're perfectly okay. So I think that throughout our lives, we need to sort of have this normalizing conversation about what it means to be mentally well and being okay to seek out those resources and reaching out to this community, because it's something that we don't often talk about.

Dr. Aneela Khan: Then for me, I actually, for this program, I have been on the listening end and have listened to focal persons of collaboratives to youth to colleagues. I have noticed that, yes, Asians are viewed as the model minority, but then are they actually model minority is something that we really need to let the world know? People think that dropping out of school is a big problem. People who are underserved is a challenge for the community. But for Asian always being on the top, being a first grader, being on top 5% of the class is a big mental health challenge. To be able to keep up with the finances is a big challenge. Then that's how I came to learn that there are people who want to have these stories shared, but because of various reasons, it is just a side talk. It's just because of this collaborative that people have started opening up and have these discussions.

Dr. Aneela Khan: We have Asian youth who have experienced suicide in home, which is never ever discussed again in that household, come forward and discuss how they feel. Siblings of autistic, a child in the house have discussed how they are being neglected and how the other one is not getting proper care, because this is not something the Asian household would discuss. These are some of the things, and there are a lot of stories like this, whether it is active hallucination of somebody from the Rohingya community or suicide from a siblings. There were stories that were repeatedly shared over the course of time in the program. This is a moment that we all think that had this opportunity not been there for us, we would never have had that time to sit together and talk about this, because we repeatedly say that we do not discuss these things in our household and so we do not discuss this in other social gatherings.

Dr. Aneela Khan: But this collaborative has given all of us an opportunity to discuss something that has been pushed under the carpet for a long time. Overall, this program has been a journey of realization for us, reflections, our challenges, and of course success.

- Ike Evans: Okay. My last question is, what is it that you are hoping will happen for your collaborative to grow, and what can people do to help?
- Dr. Aneela Khan: There are various ways, as I've just mentioned that for us to grow, definitely we have just started. Changing your perspective towards behavior health or mental health, it's not something that's going to be achieved in a day or year, but the best thing is that the conversation has started. Our capacity has grown through all the various researches that we have not only done on ourselves, but also all those trainings that have been offered, whether it's by Prevention Institute, by Hogg Foundation themselves, by the evaluation team. Somehow a basic structure is there on which we can definitely build upon. We have really higher hopes that we will reach a point where things like this will be discussed openly in Asian community, where we have providers who are able to provide culturally competent behavioral health services. We have more providers who are fluent in languages with Asian origin.
- Dr. Aneela Khan: The question regarding how people can help, definitely if they want to volunteer, we have a youth resiliency program. They can get in contact with any of the organization or directly with me. Through that program, there are different opportunities that they can help us with. The other thing, what people can help us is with networking. They can collaborate with us, not just with Asian American Health Coalition HOPE Clinic, but each one of the individual organization. They all have really good reach into the communities they serve. They have good social services that provide, so a big help would be more collaboration. Definitely, we do want to sustain all the pilot programs that we have started. We want to have people share funding opportunities with the collaborative member organizations so that this initiative, the work that is done under this initiative is not left alone once the funding from Hogg is over. There are various ways people can help us up. I don't know if Jason or Colonel Vipin would want to add something to it.
- Colonel Vipin K...: No. One of the things we had done during personality development was we took the evaluation of the children before taking the workshop and after the workshop. These evaluation question were formed with the help of a very known psychologist and the expert of the field. It clearly indicates the tremendous improvement in the children. Why I'm bringing this is we have to continue with these programs. Under no circumstances we should stop or stall these programs. I would request whoever is able to pass on the words that please continue these programs, these benefit the society, the community most. They need it and we should do it.
- Ike Evans: Okay, wonderful. Jason Lau, Aneela Khan, and Colonel Vipin Kumar, I can't tell you how glad we are that you were able to find the time in your busy lives to talk to us about something that's not easy to talk about because it's, we're not talking just about a single service or program. We're talking about a network of what we hope are synergistic activities and all sorts of things aimed at raising awareness among a diverse community that can't be easily reduced to any one

set of traits. But this you did admirably in giving us a sense of what Asian Americans Attaining Awareness is all about and what it has in store for the Houston community. We really do appreciate it. Thank you.

Colonel Vipin K...: Thank you so much for having us.

Dr. Aneela Khan: Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to at least talk about it and spread the word. Asians are in a need of network from those communities who have already grown through those challenges. Thank you so much for providing us this opportunity to be able to express what is that we think is going on in the Asian community.

Jason Lau: Thank you very much.

Ike Evans: The COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront many of our nation's deep xenophobic biases, one's which harm Asian people of color in the United States, especially. For episode 101, we were joined by Dr. Eric Tang, associate professor of African and African Diaspora Studies and director of The Center for Asian American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He had some pointed things to say about Asian Americans and their growing sense of peril in a nation divided. Here's a sample.

Dr. Eric Tang: I think there's a struggle among Asian Americans to figure out their racial location, if I hear your question correctly. Are they people of color in, quote unquote, the same way as African Americans and Latinos who are dealing with economic inequality compounded by environmental inequalities, such as housing segregation, environmental racism, so on and so forth, or are they people of color of a different sort, because according to census data, they tend to do better economically, they tend to have higher educational achievements, so on and so forth? Are they closer to white because of that? That's a question that many Asian Americans struggle with. What I've learned over time is two things. Number one, that no matter the differences between Asian Americans and say blacks and Latinos, Asian Americans will never be, can never be white. They can out white the white on all these metrics of educational and say career achievement, but they will never be white in the sense that whiteness is already predicated on othering Asians.

Ike Evans: That is from episode 101 Asian American Identity in the Time of COVID-19. Look for it in our catalog, or just follow the link in today's show description wherever you get your podcast. That does it for this episode. We're so glad that you could join us. If you have comments on anything that you would like to share about the podcast, feel free to reach out to us at intothefold@austin.utexas.edu. Especially thoughtful comments will be acknowledged during a future episode production assistance by Anna Harris, Darrell Wiggins, Kate Rooney. Just as taking care of ourselves enhances our ability to help others, so it is as well that by helping others we enhance our own resilience. Please leave a review, subscribe to us on the podcast app of your choice. You can find us on Apple

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