
Reject Hate

Social media brings out the hate in individuals

The Battle Against Online Racism in Football

The Fight Against Online Hate: Resources and Skills

#RejectHate

REJECT HATE



Islamophobia must be
stigmatized, as racism is.
Non-Muslims must stand up
with their Muslim neighbors
and reject those who would
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and fail to see the dignity and
worth of every individual.”

About the MWL

The Muslim World League is a non-governmental international organization based in Makkah. Its goal is to clarify the true message of Islam.

Crown Prince Faisal, the third son of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, founded the Muslim World League during the meeting of the general Islamic Conference on May 18, 1962, in order to fulfill his dream for an Islamic Ummah. The establishment of the MWL continued the vision of the Crown Prince to enlighten and educate the international Muslim community, which began with the founding of the Islamic University of Madinah in 1961. The Muslim World League has grown into a worldwide charity to which the Saudi Royal Family remain active donors.

Ascending to the throne as King Faisal in November 1964, the Saudi leader remained steadfast in his faith, proclaiming: “I beg of you, brothers, to look upon me as both brother and servant. ‘Majesty’ is reserved to God alone and ‘the throne’ is the throne of the Heavens and Earth.”




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Muslim World League

Recent Activities in Review



August 01

Dr. Al-Issa meets with Mr. Georg Pöstinger, Austrian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In the vicinity of the Grand Mosque, the Muslim World League brings together prominent Iraqi Sunni and Shiite religious leaders and scholars to promote unity, reconciliation and the values, customs and beliefs that bind all Muslims. They meet in Makkah, in the vicinity of The Grand Mosque.



August 04

Malaysia honors Dr. Al-Issa with the Hijra of the Prophet award, the world's most prestigious award for Islamic Scholars, in acknowledgment of his efforts to spread the true message of Islam and promote harmony and peace.



August 11



The President of the Republic of North Macedonia, Dr. Stevo Pendarovski, receives Dr. Al-Issa during his official visit to the capital of Skopje.

Dr. Al-Issa gives a lecture attended by the leading scholars and intellectuals of the Macedonian Muslim community, including Sheikh Hafiz Shakir Effendi, who lauds its contents and indicates that the lecture would be translated into the Balkan languages.



The President of the Assembly of North Macedonia, Dr. Talat Xhaferi, receives Dr. Al-Issa at the National Assembly Building. Their discussions focus on the need for cross-cultural bridge building and the support of pluralistic societies worldwide.





Dr. Al-Issa meets with Janet Alberd, Ambassador of the Netherlands to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Al-Issa receives the Ambassador of the Philippines to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mr. Adnan Alonto. During the meeting an invitation is extended to Dr. Al-Issa to visit the Philippines and give lectures at various universities and educational centers there.



The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, receives Dr. Al-Issa at the WHO headquarters in Geneva.





We dedicate this issue to a discussion of Islamophobia and to the #RejectHate campaign that the Muslim World League has launched. We developed this campaign to raise awareness of Islamophobia and the harm it does to all of us and to encourage people to fight it wherever it exists and in all its forms.

This is not a subject that we take on lightly, because it would be easy for skeptics to accuse us of mounting a self-serving campaign. After all, we are a Muslim organization, so we would be expected to stand up for Muslims. But the fight against Islamophobia is and must be an inherent part of the MWL's mission. We are fighting religious extremism, religious-inspired terror and religious intolerance. We speak out against anti-Semitism and violence against Christians. We encourage inter-faith dialogue and harmony. How can we not ask our brethren to join with us to end Islamophobia?

Islamophobia is much the same as other forms of prejudice and intolerance. It is born of ignorance and fear. It is nurtured by suspicion of "the other," the person who looks different, dresses different, worships different or speaks with an accent. Ironically, this kind of prejudice seems to grow as the world shrinks.

Then the attacks of 9/11 happened, fanatic extremists perverting the teachings of Islam mounted violent attacks around the world, and suddenly "the other" became someone to suspect, to fear and to loathe. Suspicion, insults and even violence was directed against peaceful and law-abiding Muslims. Muslims who had been loving neighbors and loyal citizens suddenly felt unwelcome in their communities. Thankfully, kind and rational

individuals have rallied to the side of the hundreds of millions of Muslims who follow the peaceful teachings of their faith, but it will take time and effort to eradicate the atmosphere of suspicion and fear that exists among many people.

This fear has manifested itself in violence even against non-Muslims in the U.S., such as the seven Sikhs who were killed in Wisconsin in 2012 by a racist gunman with a 9/11 tattoo on his arm who apparently mistook them for Muslims. It is a short stroll from bias to dehumanization, and then to violence.

Even lawmakers have fallen prey to the spell of Islamophobia, such as in Oklahoma, where voters approved a ballot measure in 2010 to amend the state constitution to prohibit the use of sharia law in state courts. The issue prevailed despite the fact that legal and constitutional experts considered the likelihood that sharia would be introduced in the courts to be extremely far-fetched. North Carolina and Missouri later adopted similar laws.

One hundred years ago, many westerners viewed Muslims benignly as inhabitants of lands far away who practiced a different religion.

But we are no longer distant people. Today, Muslims and non-Muslims live close to each other and are in contact with each other every day.

There is no easy answer to islamophobia, as there is no easy answer to anti-Semitism, religious intolerance or racism. Combating it will require education, dialogue, forbearance and solid example. Muslims in non-Muslim areas must be part of the larger society and

must be seen as such. They must take part in broader civic life and know their neighbors. Self-segregation may be tempting and give a false feeling of security, but it is not the answer. Finally, Islamophobia must be stigmatized, as racism is. Non-Muslims must stand up with their Muslim neighbors and reject those who would dehumanize Muslims example and fail to see the dignity and worth of every individual.

- The Editors





Dr. Al-Issa meeting local children.

Reject Hate

The Reject Hate Campaign is a groundbreaking initiative undertaken by the MWL to protect Muslims from abuse and violence fueled by social media. It also aims to cleanse the internet space of hatred and bigotry. Its success rate depends on all of us.

What is Islamophobia?

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, Islamophobia is “an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam.” In recent years, the internet and social media have become a free space for expressing Islamophobic sentiments and ideas. Dr. Al-Issa believed that acting to

combat Islamophobia was a mission that the MWL should undertake vigorously as part of its ongoing effort to promote interreligious dialog, understanding and tolerance.

The power of Social Media

“Social media has the power to bring people together across physical boundaries, but in recent years we have seen it become a breeding ground for hatred and intolerance,” Dr. Al-Issa said. In October 2020, two leading global social media channels, Facebook and Twitter, introduced rules designed to combat hate speech on their platforms. They both also declared that they would remove posts denying

Holocaust. Additionally, although they have announced “zero-tolerance approach” to hate speech, no steps have been taken to curtail Islamophobic content from the platforms.

As the Reject Hate petition states, as many as one of every 1,000 posts on Facebook and Twitter violates the companies’ rules on hate speech, and more than three-quarters of content that is reported as potentially violating the companies’ anti-hate standards remain on the platforms even after being reported and investigated. This includes memes or posts that many Muslims and others consider offensive, anti-Islamic or Islamophobic.

Time for a Change

The MWL is calling for a zero-tolerance policy toward hate speech targeting Muslims or adherents of any religion. It is time to end personal abuse, threats, and physical violence directed against Muslims that are incubated and fueled by content spread through social media. Islamophobia can act as a disease, and we need to stop its spread.

In March 2021, the MWL launched the Reject Hate campaign to end Islamophobic content and hate speech on social media. The ongoing social media campaign is accompanied by a petition on change.org, and Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa sent letters to the CEOs of Facebook and Twitter, Mark Zuckerberg and Jack Dorsey urging them to improve their zero-tolerance policies toward hate speech targeting Muslims or adherents of any religion. The letters also called for more robust procedures to ensure that hateful content is removed quickly.

The Impact

As of the beginning of September, the Reject the Hate campaign has gained significant attention globally, accumulating more than 28.4 thousand signatures on change.org. The

campaign spikes the conversation among social media users. Since its inception, it has been mentioned over 16.3K times on Twitter. The keen interest confirms the need to act on this burning issue.



Social media has the power to bring people together across physical boundaries, but in recent years we have seen it become a breeding ground for hatred and intolerance.”

- Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa

Take Action!

Undeniably, the internet and social media play an essential role in our lives, and this role increases with the development of technology and the expansion of the modern lifestyle. The conversations taking place in the internet space have a real impact on people’s lives and wellbeing. There should be no room for hatred and bigotry of any kind on social media platforms. Therefore, The MWL urges everyone to participate in the Reject Hate campaign, to clamp down on abusive content in a meaningful way, and make sure that those who spread it no longer have a home on those platforms. To take action is a moral duty not only for Muslims, but for everyone who has at heart the ideal that the internet space should be free of intolerance, hatred, and bigotry to all humankind.



In 2016, about 200 people gathered in east Minneapolis for a rally and march to denounce hate speech and hate crimes against Muslims.

The Rise of Islamophobia

During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Islamophobia has become a multi-faceted and a deep-rooted problem globally, and it has gotten worse during the coronavirus pandemic.

According to The Conversation, 2015-2019 observed a spike of anti-Muslim hate incidents. The U.S. media reported more than 1,000 such acts. However, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated over 50% of hate crimes go unreported. During the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Islamophobia has taken on a new form.

Hindu-Muslim tensions have existed in India since before partition and independence, and a strong wave of Islamophobia struck in India

when national authorities linked the spread of COVID-19 in that country to an annual Muslim conference in Delhi in early March 2020. Rumors alleging that Muslims had spread the virus in this country led to excluding this minority from some areas of public life.

Muslims make up less than ten percent of the population of Sri Lanka and largely stayed out of that country's 26-year civil war. Yet Islamophobia has been growing since the war ended, fueled my suspicion that the country's Muslims are real-ly allied with the Tamil minority. They intensified after the Easter suicide bombings of hotels and Christian churches in Sri Lanka in 2019.

The coronavirus pandemic gave rise to new suspicions in March 2020 when Muslims staged protests to oppose the Sri Lankan government's order that the bodies of all Covid-19 victims be cremated. Cremation, which is the practice among Hindus, is a violation of Islamic law, and Muslims sought an exception to the mandate.

At the beginning of the pandemic, well-established mainstream western media such as CNN, BBC, or The New York Times used images of famous mosques in Istanbul, among other images, to illustrate stories about the U.S. suspension of travel from Europe. At the same time, a wave of hateful memes depicting Muslims as super spreaders of the virus gained popularity across social media platforms, often accompanied by provocative images taken before the pandemic.

Facebook and Twitter did not take steps to remove unsubstantiated claims that Muslims were ignoring social distancing regulations and that mosques were outbreak sources.

According to TIME magazine, between March 28 and April 3, 2020, hashtag #CoronaJihad has appeared nearly 300,000 times on Twitter, and as many as 165 million platform users may have seen it.

The immediate and uncontrolled spread of false or defamatory information fuels further abuse, which often moves beyond the online realm, affecting people's lives, safety, and health. Harmful content, including false news, abusive memes and negative discussions, have remained on social media for months despite users' attempts to report them for violating the platforms' community standards.

The coronavirus escalated Islamophobia worldwide by giving the purveyors of anti-Islamic sentiments a new false theme argument to exploit. Now, more than ever, we need to act against this ongoing hatred and abuse. The Reject Hate campaign is a resource providing an opportunity to end the mistreatment of Muslims on social media.



The Reject Hate campaign is a resource providing an opportunity to end the mistreatment of Muslims on social media.



Social Media Brings Out The Hate in Individuals

This article was originally published in the Washington Times.

A perusal of social media content shows how those of all backgrounds violate the most sacred of tenets.

"Do not hate one another," Prophet Muhammad teaches. "Do not turn away from one another. Do not undercut one another."

Similarly, St. Paul offers in Ephesians: "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

In Judaism, the concept of *hotzaat shem ra* forbids defamation. In Buddhism, backbiting and other forms of divisiveness run contrary to the values of right speech.

Even secular traditions from ancient Greece until today offer us variants of the Golden Rule: Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing.

Yet even a cursory perusal of social media content published around the world shows how wantonly individuals of all backgrounds violate these most sacred of tenets. Studies show how each day hundreds of thousands of tweets, snaps, updates and posts break the rules for hate speech created by social media platforms. The problem is only getting worse.

When describing what constitutes virtuous behavior toward the other, none of our faiths or philosophies include a special exception for social media materials. There is no asterisk to

be found pertaining to proper interpersonal conduct in the Quran, the New Testament, the Talmud or any other venerated text. Nor is there a moral carve-out buried in the footnotes of the humanist canon.

Around the world, diverse legal foundations and statutory frameworks guide us. But what the fundamentally peaceful religions and belief systems that undergird our societies impart is that online hatred ought to have no place in our world. Every day, men and women should not have to bear the psychological and even physical strain of social media abuse. We have seen how no one is immune when social media platforms allow for vile threats and dehumanizing comments, often cloaked behind protection of fake names and false images.

Last month, the chief executives of Twitter, Facebook and Alphabet all promised to curtail the use of social media for misinformation and extremism, laying out before a House committee what their platforms have done as well as their technological advancements to combat online hate. None focused on the detrimental impact such material has on the daily lives of the people.

In the United States, some of the biggest stars in sports have reported revolting abuse directed toward them. Even as English Premier League teams take the knee in opposition to racism, footballers of color repeatedly have had to decry the racist aggression they face on social media.

I commend the efforts of athletes and sports leagues to stand up to the abuse. The Premier

League recently wrote an open letter to the CEOs of Twitter and Facebook, Jack Dorsey and Mark Zuckerberg, imploring them to root out hatred on their platforms. Their plea echoes many of the sentiments we at the Muslim World League have expressed in our correspondence with social media companies.

In Islam, we learn to abhor backbiting, or *gheebah*, which Allah likens to eating the flesh of your dead brother. It is by no means a position unique to Islam.

That is why we are engaging other faith-based communities, and reaching out to the CEOs of Twitter, Facebook and other companies to clamp down on the online hate their services have helped incubate.

We have seen some positive steps. In October, Facebook agreed to ban all content that denies the Holocaust. Such a prohibition was long overdue, though we note with sadness that the policy has yet to be thoroughly implemented.

Lamentably, hatred against Muslims hasn't been pursued with the same vigor. Dehumanizing content continues to flourish related to the Rohingya in Myanmar despite what many countries have declared a genocide. Even in the liberal democracies of the West, open insults to Islam and its adherents proliferate widely.

Online hate doesn't stop in cyberspace. Muslims from all walks of life are disproportionately subjected to verbal attacks, vandalism, discrimination and physical violence. Too often, the motivation stems from social media.

Such hatred is not inherently human or inevitable. In my work as an interfaith bridge builder, I have repeatedly found that the overwhelming majority of people abhor racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity or prejudice and discrimination of any kind.

Unfortunately, our voices rarely get amplified on social media when we are not famous influencers or millionaire entertainers.

For those of us in leadership positions, we bear special responsibility. We must use our voices to speak not only for ourselves, but also for the millions of men and women, girls and boys who suffer the scars of online hate. They are predominantly ordinary people who often struggle to stand up to the abusers.

The victims are very real and we all know them. They are our neighbors and our co-workers. They stock the grocery stores and deliver the packages in a time of pandemic. They teach our children, treat our illnesses and ensure our public services. They deserve the same outcry in response to hatred, the same promise of protection as the most recognized celebrity.

As a religious leader, it is not for me to prescribe a universal remedy across different national borders and legal codes. Some reforms are obvious, however. At the very least, social media companies should prevent individuals using their platforms to attack and denigrate others while keeping their own identities hidden.

Even among the non-religious, can anyone argue such behavior is anything other than sinful?

**The
Washington
Times**



The three young black stars following their crucial misses (Left to Right) Marcus Rashford, Bukayo Saka, and Jadon Sancho.

The Battle Against Online Racism in Football

The world of social media has made strides in connecting people from all over the world, especially when it comes to sports. Fans can watch, interact with, and stay on top of their favorite teams from anywhere in the world through multiple mediums. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram allow fans to “speak” with players by tagging them or direct-messaging them. Additionally, people can speak their minds about players or

teams, vent their frustrations, or praise performances all while seeing their words reach thousands of people online.

This is a relatively new phenomenon and has led to some amazing connections and new fans, but unfortunately this has also created a dangerous online “veil of anonymity.” Behind a keyboard, people feel untouchable and are more willing to post harmful or hurtful

messages about players without fear of repercussions. This has created a fertile ground for online racism, especially in European football.

Racism is not a new phenomenon, but online platforms seem to offer those who may not be willing to showcase their prejudices in person a way to do so without consequences. In 2015, internet companies along with police identified over 130,000 racially charged posts towards Premier League players alone.

This past year, racism around the world has come to center stage with the Black Lives Movement and the events surrounding the death of George Floyd. In response to and support of the movement, the majority of European football clubs have been taking a knee on the pitch before each match. It has also reached global importance surrounding England's penalty time loss in the finals of the UEFA European Championships this summer.

Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka are three budding stars for England who hold the trust and respect of their teammates and coaches. They are also among England's best penalty kickers, and they were selected to take game-deciding penalty kicks in the final against Italy. Unfortunately for them and England, all their shots missed or hit the goalkeeper, leaving England on the losing side once again. The racist outpouring on social media immediately following has disheartened all of England and the football world. This even reached the extent of racist fans defacing a mural of Rashford in his hometown of Manchester with graffiti slurs.

Combating such racism is not an easy task. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has already taken the step to ban any and all identifiable online racists from all future British football matches, but this does not solve the real issue. The principal obstacle to online racism, besides the existence of racism itself, is that there is no real

way to hold many of these people accountable, for two primary reasons.

First of all, the majority of racially charged comments about those players came from accounts outside England, where English authorities have no jurisdiction. Additionally, some of the accounts are fake, "troll," or "bot" accounts, meaning there is no single person behind



Racism is not a new phenomenon, but online platforms seem to offer those who may not be willing to showcase their prejudices in person a way to do so without consequences. In 2015, internet companies along with police identified over 130,000 racially charged posts towards Premier League players alone. "

them. Another issue surrounds the privacy of account holders. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have regulations that prevent them from disclosing certain information about users of their platforms. All of this makes it increasingly difficult to hold racists accountable in the modern age. But that is not to say that all is lost.

Two groups have emerged in the U.K. that attempt to fight back against forces of discrimination, prejudice and racism in football. Show Racism the Red Card and Kick It Out are two of

the leading anti-discrimination organizations and have been around since the late '90s. Kick it Out works "throughout the football, educational and community sectors to challenge discrimination, encourage inclusive practices and campaign for positive change." Kick It Out looks to partner with schools and youth clubs to educate young footballers to be inclusive. The group calls on football fans to report racist abuse that they see online through their website, with hopes to either take these postings down or hold the authors accountable. Show Racism the Red Card follows the same path. These are great steps toward a more inclusive football environment, but the road is long, and racism still permeates the colonial history of the U.K. and its football clubs.

To fully end discrimination in sports takes the strength of a community to be unwavering in its support for all athletes and unapologetic in



Kick it Out works throughout the football, educational and community sectors to challenge discrimination, encourage inclusive practices and campaign for positive change. "

holding racist and prejudiced fans accountable for their words. As players continue to take the knee and use their platforms to promote change, more conversations can be had, more lessons can be learned, and eventually the world of football and sports in general can be safe and welcoming to all.



Kick It Out is the leader in combating racism and discrimination in football.

Marcus Rashford's Fight for Justice

Marcus Rashford has taken it upon himself to use the death of George Floyd, the racist fallout from the Euro Finals, and the vandalism of his hometown mural as a call to arms to end racial abuse of football players. He is not alone. Rashford and other black athletes in football and other sports have taken to social media to promote change, and Marcus is one of the leaders. Marcus's tough and underprivileged upbringing has made him a symbol for youth around the globe, with the message that a person can overcome adversity or disadvantage in life. In this vein, he wrote a book titled, *You Are a Champion: How to Be the Best You Can Be*, which is already being seen as the work of a true global activist.

Marcus's efforts on and off the pitch have not gone unnoticed. Once his loving fans saw the

graffiti that tainted his mural, the local community of Withington, Manchester, took to the streets to show their support for their local hero. Fans from all over England came to cover up the graffiti with notes of love, encouragement, praise and thanks to Rashford, who has become a role model for young black footballers and youth everywhere. "Seeing the response in Withington had me on the verge of tears," he said. "The communities that always wrapped their arms around me continue to hold me up. I'm Marcus Rashford, 23-year-old, black man from Withington and Wythenshawe, South Manchester. If I have nothing else I have that." Rashford continues his fight for justice and the world looks to more young stars like him to lead the way.



The vandalized mural is seen here covered in notes of support for Rashford.

Sloane Stephens Receives Thousands of Hate Messages after US Open Loss

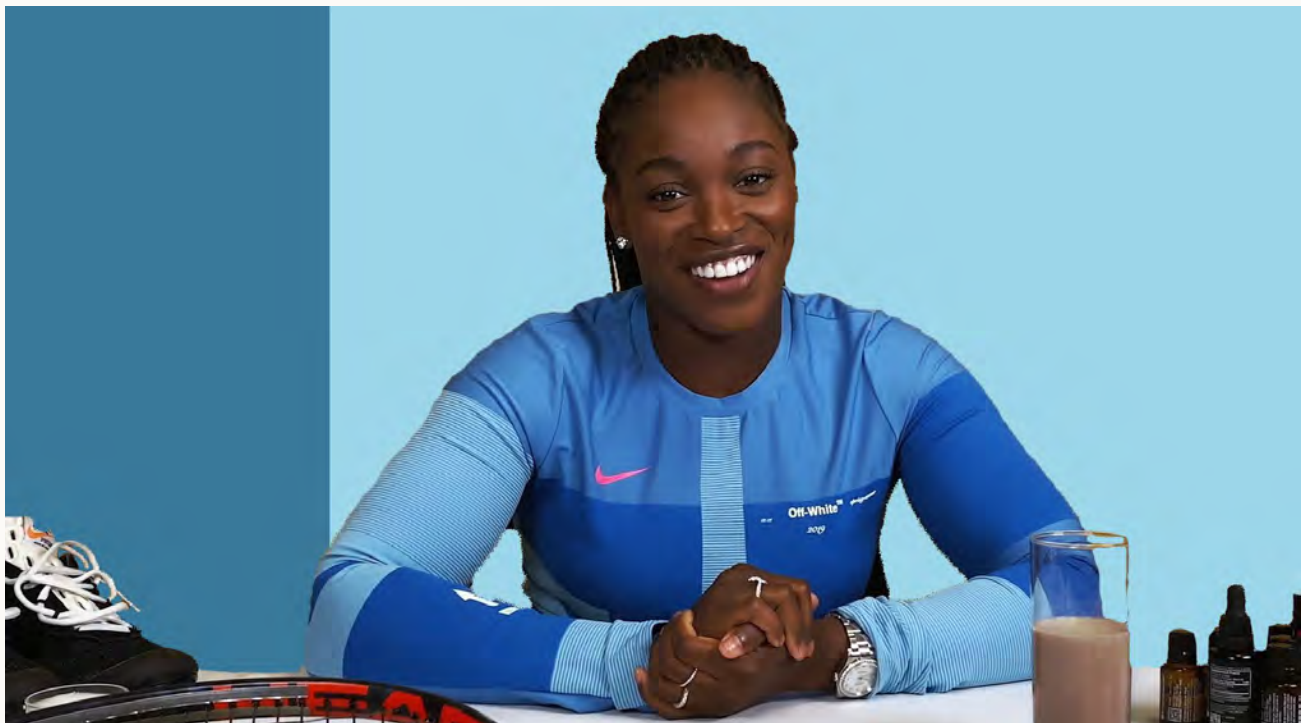
Vitriol against athletes is not limited to football players. While tennis is a low-impact and non-contact sport that does not usually evoke the frenzy of team sports like European football, it has long been considered an elite sport for the “privileged” and has not been immune to negative racial attention.

World number three Sloane Stephens has long been one of the WTA Tour’s leading players, having won the 2017 US Open and five other titles. After losing to Germany’s Angelique Kerber in the 2021 US Open, the American player says she received more than 2,000 messages of abuse - including racist and sexist comments. Stephens posted examples of the hateful messages in her Instagram story to shine a light on the extent of the abuse. She confirmed that this

type of hate is persistent and exhausting, and she believes it isn’t talked about enough.

The Women’s Tennis Association, the governing body of the women’s tour, said player safety is its number one priority.

Star athletes like fellow tennis player Naomi Osaka and gymnast Simone Biles have shined a renewed spotlight on the importance of mental health in sports. In light of this recent attention given to mental health in sports, the WTA highlighted its work to educate, counsel, and protect players. It is working with social media companies to combat harassment and abuse on their platforms, by shutting down accounts when warranted and notifying authorities, if applicable. Despite the online hate, Stephens said she is thankful to have people who also support her.



Sloane Stephens.



Communities demonstrate against a rise in hateful speech and violence against Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities.

A New Online Twist in A Long History of Anti-Asian Hate

Anti-Asian Hate Resurgent Online Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

As the world continues to grapple with a global pandemic affecting people of all religious faiths, ethnicities, and nationalities, it is more important than ever to remember that there is more that unites us than divides us. We must look to history, old and new, to understand the role hate and bigotry has played in dividing communities. Only if we reject not only Islamophobia but work to combat all strains of

virulent ideology can humanity move forward together in the spirit of cooperation.

Of prominence since the COVID-19 pandemic has been the unfortunate rise of hate against people of Asian descent in the United States and across the world, with malign actors thriving online and propagating their misinformation and hate through social media to

the detriment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and all of us.

Xenophobia in the United States against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders has had a real and deep adverse impact on the physical and mental health of those victimized by hateful online rhetoric. References to COVID-19 as the “kung flu” online seek to place blame on Asian Americans for the emergence of the pandemic and can lead to deadly attacks carried out later in the physical world such as the Atlanta spa shootings. An organization called Stop AAPI Hate has recorded over 6,000 hate incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islands, a rise of more than 149% compared to the year preceding the pandemic.

The fact that Asians are often stereotyped as a “model minority” can have adverse effects on efforts to take hate speech against them seriously and can result in their concerns being minimized. A survey from January 2021 reported that 17% of Asian Americans had experienced harassment. According to Morning Consult, 2 in 5 Asian Americans say social media companies are doing a poor job of moderating hate on their platforms. 75% of those who had experienced harassment attributed the cause of the online attacks to their race or ethnicity.

From a historical perspective, racism against Asian-Americans is not new. In the 19th century, the Page and Chinese Exclusion Acts shut out immigrants that sought a better life in the United States. Japanese Americans were forcibly incarcerated during WWII, often regardless of any ties to Japanese state institutions and absent any role in the conflict.

According to the Media Diversity Institute, the hashtag #ChineseVirus was used more than 68,000 times on Instagram. Together with harmful tags such as #coronajihad and #MuslimVirus that reportedly reached 170 million users, social media has been abused against

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and Muslims alike during this pandemic. In response to such hateful trends on social media, communities have begun to take the matter into their own hands and push back on the tide of hate using their own hashtags that have gained prominence such as #StopAsianHate and #StopAAPIHate.

Victims often note that social media companies such as Twitter put the burden to report inappropriate hate speech on users, and that reporting dozens of bigoted Tweets can quickly become an additional burden only to receive feedback from Twitter that many comments are not outside the bounds of the company’s hate speech policy.

Following a surge in COVID-19 misinformation, as well as the rise in online hate speech against AAPI communities, the U.S. Congress called for the testimony of the CEOs of Facebook, Twitter, and Google in March 2021. In May 2021, the



#STOP ASIAN HATE

#StopAsianHate emerged as a force on social media to counteract the surge in bigoted attacks against Asian American and Pacific Islanders.



The Muslim World League supports AAPI communities during this difficult time and will continue resolute in its efforts to foster peace and increase understanding between all of God's creations."

U.S. Congress responded to the tide of hate in a bipartisan manner and Biden Administration signed into law legislation to protect those

who would be harmed by the physical violence and online assaults of those driven by extremist and bigoted ideology.

In May 2021, Facebook added #StopAsian-Hate notifications in news feeds as an additional measure to prevent hate. Efforts by the Facebook Partner Center to convene relevant organizations and provide educational materials and guidance to prevent Anti-Asian hate are welcome, but this problem will only be tackled when all forms of hate are moderated with significantly more investment so that people of all backgrounds and creeds can live in peaceful coexistence.

The Muslim World League supports AAPI communities during this difficult time and will continue resolute in its efforts to foster peace and increase understanding between all of God's creations.



Artwork promoting positive messages about Asian-Americans in the United States is being used in educational programming online to stem the tide of hate during the COVID-19 pandemic.



A workshop on online hate conducted by the Amadeu Antonio Foundation.

The Fight Against Online Hate: Resources and Skills

With the rise of social media and the prevalence of the internet in our daily lives, there has been a commensurate rise in online hate. Online hate isn't only schoolyard bullying or mean words gone digital, but any expression or promotion of vitriolic hate and racism, whether it is clear or veiled behind a messaging strategy. There has been significant work done by organizations across the world in order to put forward strategies and best practices to address this growing problem.

One such organization is the Turing Institute in the UK. It offers a resource hub that organizes a variety of initiatives in a single website, a one-stop-shop for those interested in accessing resources for anything related to online hate. It includes sources for metrics designed to track online hate, tech solutions for countering online abuse, statistics, academic research, and workshops on online hate.

links to a specific site, a WHOIS search to show who owns a domain, and conducting basic search engine tests to reveal the reliability of a site.

Hate speech is an area of particular concern due to its disproportionate impact on young people. This is because they are typically the heaviest users of the internet, and social media specifically. The concern is that teenagers and young adults might not have developed the skills necessary to contend with the hateful content they may be exposed to and therefore are less likely to be able to deal with it in a healthy or constructive way.

A shining example of how this disproportionate impact on the young is being addressed is the work of Sadat Rahman, a Bangladeshi teen who created a mobile app to help young people report instances of online hate. The app, called Cyber Teens, allows users to report instances of online abuse confidentially to a network of volunteers who then communicate with the relevant authorities to address the reported abuse. In addition to its reporting mechanism, the app also includes educational materials on online safety for its users.

This app is especially noteworthy due to the importance of establishing a space in which those who feel like they have been targeted by hate speech online can communicate their experiences. This is important because exposure to hateful messages and materials can cause stress, anxiety, and even depression. Therefore, it is crucial that there be a space for those affected to discuss their experiences and to make available to them any treatment that can remedy the adverse effects of hate speech.

In addition to access to resources, people of all ages need digital literacy if they are to counter online hate. Many people assume that most of us are digitally literate today due to our extensive exposure to the internet, particularly young people. But the truth is that digital literacy is more than simply being familiar with online content.

Digital literacy also includes knowing how to verify sources in an environment in which many hate groups devote considerable effort to ensure that their sites look legitimate. This includes conducting link searches to see who links to a specific site, a WHOIS search to show who owns a domain, and conducting basic



Logo of the Cyber Teens website.

search engine searches to reveal the reliability of a site.

The ability to identify hate speech is another valuable skill if we are to counter its prevalence online. Keywords to look out for when trying to ascertain whether something is hate speech are terms that refer to “others,” a “glorious past” and “victimhood.” This rhetoric is used to create a narrative that attempts to justify intolerance by singling out one group as the cause of a society’s problems or as the cause of a specific group’s decline.

These steps are generally what is advised by the various guides and workshops dedicated to addressing this important issue and should be

considered a “best practice” when it comes to dealing with online hate.

However, this isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to an issue as complex and multifaceted as online hate speech. Organizations may choose to focus on aspects of this problem that are the most relevant to their own environment rather than taking a holistic approach.

Independently from which source one chooses to tackle this problem, the choice should be guided by education and tempered by empathy. Reminding people that there are human beings behind the usernames found online is something that is crucial to successfully addressing the problem of online hate.



Sadat Rahman, the 17-year-old creator of the Cyber Teens mobile app.



Protestors hold signs during a rally in March 2021 to protect Asian Communities after numerous hateful attacks on the Asian community online and in real life.

What to Do if You're A Target of Online Abuse

The concept of bullying is not new. Bullies are a part of any type of group dynamic, whether it is in school, among friend groups, in the workplace or and online. as seen over the last 20 or so years.

Online bullying—or cyberbullying—and internet hate seemed top hit their stride in the mid-2000s, as technology evolved, people became

comfortable with the internet and access to different sites became much easier. In addition, the ability to share information such as photos got easier once text messaging and emailing became more popular and advanced.

Cyberbullying is most common among teenagers. Young people are able to communicate with their friends online in a way that differs



A parent holds a sign to protest cyberbullying near Surfside Middle School in Panama City Beach, Florida, following the death of a student due to cyberbullying attacks.

significantly from normal school interactions. One area in which they communicate is through social media. Anonymous threats and slander are not new, but the ability to bully or slander online has grown with the expansion of the digital world. Online abuse — from impersonation accounts to hateful slurs and death threats—began with the advent of the internet itself, but the problem is pervasive and growing.

A 2017 study from the Pew Research Center found that more than 40 percent of Americans have experienced online abuse, and more than 60 percent have witnessed it. Social media is

traditionally an open forum that has been only loosely monitored and regulated, which has made cyberbullying relatively easy. A person will often do or say things from a distance, in the distant safety of their home and through their computer or mobile device, that they would never say or do in public or in person. Hate and abuse can be directed at any number of areas, including a person's appearance, religion, race or sexual orientation, or may be based on rivalries in sports or social activities or groups.

Cyberbullying has produced some tragic results, and schools, state and local govern-



San Francisco Protest.

ments and communities across the country have adopted measures to prevent or punish it. Still, it continues. Being the target of an online attack is certainly hurtful, but it can also be humiliating or destroy the victim's reputation. Cyberbullying has led to school transfers, emotional breakdowns, and even suicides among the victims, but steps can be taken by anyone who wishes to defend themselves and find some peace.

The first thing one can do if they are the target of online abuse is to identify the type of abuse. Is it a racial or religious attack? Is it an attack on appearance? Personality? Work? Identifying

the type of attack and its probable source is important in determining what to do next.

Additionally, some attacks may be more serious than others, depending on what is important to the victim. Once the type of abuse is identified, the next step is to document it. Documenting the attack is important because it allows the person being bullied to communicate with someone in authority and offer verifiable facts.

Furthermore, it entails keeping screenshots, saving emails/ texts, and recording details about online interactions in writing. The victim

should document everything he or she thinks is important before reporting it to authorities. The authorities will have questions, so it is important to have as many details documented as possible.

The next step would be to assess the situation. Is safety a concern? Are these online attacks threatening to the victim and his or her family's safety or merely rude and annoying? Is the abuse from a person known to be abusive in the past? Have the attacks moved to a different platform?

Assessing the degree of physical safety and taking the necessary steps to ensure the victim is safe is a priority. If the victim feels unsafe, he or she should seek a friend and get help.

If the situation shows no sign of stopping, and particularly if it escalates in scale or intensity, the victim should consider reporting it to law enforcement. When these attacks occur on an established social media platform, there are a few things one can do to block, mute and report them.

Muting the person will showcase fewer posts from the bully, and blocking the person will prevent any communication between the victim and the abuser. Reporting abuse can get the account revoked and the person banned from the platform.

All of these actions have risks as well. Muting the abuser can be temporary and may not resolve the issue. Depending on the abuser, blocking or reporting might escalate the abuse, as a person can easily create another account and continue the attacks. It is important to try to stay calm and rational while making a decision that best fits the situation.

It is important also to have allies. These can be friends, family, or any other support system. When one gets abused online, it can feel really draining and stressful, so it is important that victims have people who are there for them. Practicing self-care is also important. Victims should remember that the cyber abuse isn't their fault. Regardless, online abuse can cause a lot of stress and shame and take a toll on mental health.



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It is unfortunate that online abuse and cyberbullying are still going on despite all the attention it has received and the measures being taken to stop it. Social media companies now do a better job of monitoring their platforms for abuse and taking steps against it, including cooperating with law enforcement. However, as long as kids, teens, and the general public have easy access to social media sites and are emboldened by the ease of launching anonymous attacks at a distance and over the internet, we can expect it to continue.

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