



Writers in the Schools is and will always be an organization that supports and celebrates children of all backgrounds. Our staff stands firmly against the rising xenophobia and sinophobia that has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will not be silent as members of our community are targeted with hate and bias. Across the globe and in our Texas community, [there has been a dramatic increase in hate crimes](#) against members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. In addition to many incidents of public harassment, there has been a 40-70% decrease in sales throughout businesses in Houston's Asiatown community. Our students are undoubtedly seeing misleading information about the spread of the virus and may also be experiencing the impacts of this visceral xenophobia and sinophobia in their own lives.

As an organization, WITS would like to offer tools and resources for our writers to understand how to best serve, honor, and protect our students during this time. Our job will always be to strive to be worthy of the students that we serve and to be worthy of the communities who need us most. We will not allow fear to fuel ignorance.

WITS Cultural Collaborative has created a FAQ sheet with links to other sites that take a deeper dive into understanding xenophobia and sinophobia.

FAQ on Xenophobia and Sinophobia

What is Xenophobia?

Xenophobia is a fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is considered strange or foreign.

What is Sinophobia?

Sinophobia is a sentiment against China, its people, overseas Chinese, or Chinese culture. It often targets Chinese minorities living outside of China and involves immigration, development of national identity in neighboring countries, the disparity of wealth, the past central tributary system, majority-minority relations, imperialist legacies, and racism. Its opposite is Sinophilia.



Is Xenophobia and/or Sinophobia a new issue?

No. The idea that people from other countries carry contagious diseases dates back to the 19th century. A pandemic like COVID-19 causes people to look for scapegoats, or “outsiders,” and creates a “rhetoric of blame.” This rhetoric follows a few cruel points that have been tenacious across centuries. This ugly prejudice unfolds in the form of violence, harassment, and outward displays of bigotry.

What are some ways to combat xenophobia and sinophobia in the classroom?

1. Teach children kindness and how to talk about differences
2. Create extended classroom norms for students
3. [Teaching Tolerance](#) offers resources on ways that educators can work with students on speaking up against hate and bias.

What should I do if one of my students says something xenophobic/sinophobic during a session?

If a student says or shares something that is harmful to a safe learning environment, first check on any student(s) who may be affected, then share why the comment isn't okay. Use direct language such as, “ *The comment you shared with us isn't okay because... I ask that you refrain from using that language and honor each of your classmates during this time.*” After an incident, please send an email to WITS staff member Raie Crawford. She will share this information with programming staff and move to action.

How can I keep myself informed about rising xenophobia and sinophobia in my local and global community?

Please follow the links below to find more information on xenophobia and sinophobia, as well as information about local and national organizations that are fighting misinformation about COVID-19 and the AAPI community.

- [NY Times](#)
- [OCA Greater Houston](#)
- [18 Million Rising](#)
- [Coronavirus Discrimination in the News](#)



How can I report a hate crime during this time?

If you witness a hate crime during this time, please report the crime to your local authorities. You can also report incidents using this [link](#) or by visiting aapihatecrimes.org.

Sources:

Merriam Webster Dictionary. www.merriam-webster.com.

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<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/article/chinatown-houston-restaurants-bars-close-learn-15135483.php>.

Chen, Debbie and Joseph, Marjorie. "OCA Greater Houston & Houston Coalition Against Hate Statement." <http://www.oca-houston.org/page-18280/8858368>