

# ANTI-ASIAN AMERICAN RACISM

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## Defining Anti-Asian American Racism

Asian Americans have suffered from racism ever since arriving in the United States over 200 years ago, including through harassment, violence, and discrimination. Racism is perpetrated by individual actors, businesses, and institutions, as well as public policies and government actions on the local, state, and federal levels. Racism targeting those of Asian descent draws from other forms of bigotry, such as xenophobia, nativism, linguicism, fetishization, and objectification. Anti-Asian American racism is not only borne of, but also perpetuated by the “mutual reinforcement”<sup>2</sup> between public policy and cultural ideas.

Anti-Asian American racism, like other forms of bigotry, is sometimes used to justify bigotry against other people of color and pit minorities against one another.<sup>3</sup> Its impacts vary as widely as the cultural backgrounds among Asian Americans, and it hinges on foreign relations of the U.S. with countries across Asia, often those perceived as the motherland of the victims bearing the brunt of racism.

Too often, racism against—or perpetuated by—Asian Americans is viewed through individual narratives. In this paper, we explore anti-Asian American racism as a form of structural bigotry: the promotion, creation, implementation, and perpetuation of laws, policies, practices, narratives, norms, and state and institutional actions that: (1) deny the value, dignity, liberties, and opportunities of people based on their perceived membership in a social or socially-constructed group or on a human characteristic that has historically been subjected to oppression and subordination; and (2) drive and are driven by expressions of animus, including shared symbolism and hateful vocabulary, verbal and physical assaults including hate crimes, and exclusion which serves to entrench power in privileged insiders.

Racism, then, is a form of bigotry that maligns, vilifies, or “denies the value, dignity, liberties, and opportunities of people based on their” race and its attributes. Though the concept of racism—like the term “racist”—has evolved over time, one way of understanding racism is that it is rooted in bias, and essentializes the identity and value of a person.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to popular belief, racism is not just about being offended. Moreover, even when racism is not explicit or overt, it remains harmful. Institutional, systemic, and structural bigotry are rooted in power imbalances and cause harms that reach far beyond individual actions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>Claire Jean Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 105-38.

<sup>4</sup>John McWhorter, “Racist Is a Tough Little Word,” *Atlantic*, July 24, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/07/racism-concept-change/594526/>.

<sup>5</sup>Sung-Soo Hong, “Denial of Systemic Discrimination,” *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, February 21, 2022, <https://www.khan.co.kr/opinion/column/article/202202210300055>.

## Core Components of Anti-Asian American Racism throughout History

### Erasure and Invisibility

In 1869 in a barren region of northern Utah called Promontory Point, the transcontinental railroad project was completed. The culminating moment was celebrated by the driving of a final golden spike securing the last rail into place. The celebration was captured in an iconic photograph capturing dozens of men, some in suits and mostly anonymous workers, posing in front of two trains heading from the west and east. Noticeably unseen in this moment of triumph were men of Chinese descent, 15,000-strong who literally built the railroad in the treacherous stretches from west to east across mountains and deserts. Their sacrifice and contributions in the photo—as well as in the telling of the story of the massive undertaking linking the U.S. by rail that required ten years to complete, converging in Utah—were erased and excluded.

“We’ve forgotten the contribution of these workers, and in fact, we forget the contribution of all workers. We tend to focus on the achievement of the few and not the stories of the average everyday person,” explained a curator of the exhibition at the National Museum of American History commemorating the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad’s completion.<sup>6</sup>

Worse yet, the Chinese American laborers experienced discrimination at every turn of the project. They were paid half of what white workers earned, had to live outside in tents, and forced to scavenge for their own food, while white laborers lived in railroad cars and were provided with meals by the Central Pacific Railroad.<sup>7</sup> When the Chinese American workers went on strike to protest the indignities, the effort failed.<sup>8</sup> The owners had the full weight of power and resources, and not an ounce of compassion.

The invisibility of Asian Americans and erasure of their roles reach further. Acclaimed with a Pulitzer Prize, Oscar Handlin’s *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* examines the history of immigration in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> However, it focuses almost singularly on those who left their homes in Europe to cross the Atlantic and fails to tell the story of Asian immigrants. The first edition barely mentions those who traveled the Pacific Ocean and arrived at Angel Island in San Francisco Harbor, and even in later editions, coinciding with a period when non-European immigrants no longer dominate, those from Asia have received short shrift.

On a sunny day in the late 1980s, a group of community activists in Boston’s Chinatown neighborhood invited Stephen Coyle, the powerful head of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, to walk around the streets in the neighborhood. At the encounter of a young child riding a “Big Wheel” on the crowded

<sup>6</sup>Nadja Sayej, “‘Forgotten by Society’ – How Chinese Migrants Built the Transcontinental Railroad,” *Guardian*, July 18, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/jul/18/forgotten-by-society-how-chinese-migrants-built-the-transcontinental-railroad>.

<sup>7</sup>Sayej, “Forgotten by Society.” See also “Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project,” *Stanford University*, accessed April 25, 2022, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/>.

<sup>8</sup>Sayej, “Forgotten by Society.”

<sup>9</sup>Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

sidewalks during his visit, Coyle inquired with great surprise what the kid was doing in the heart of Chinatown. The activist replied that the kid lived in a nearby apartment.<sup>10</sup>

To many observers, including people like Coyle, their conception of Chinatown did not encompass more than the street-level restaurants and shops: a colorful business district, but not a neighborhood where above and beyond the storefronts where residents had a livelihood, many were trying to raise their families. In fact, Chinatown remains one of the densest sectors in Boston in residential concentration.<sup>11</sup>

For years, however, real estate developers and government officials shrunk the neighborhood to make way for major highways, hospital complexes, strip clubs, and luxury condos.<sup>12</sup> Though one of the oldest, and longest surviving of its kind in the U.S., Boston's Chinatown was an easy target because the lives of its residents were not considered at stake. Rather, their livelihoods were seen as expendable.

### Perpetual Foreigner Syndrome: Exclusion and Otherization

The question “where are you from?” followed by “no, where are you *really* from?” is an exchange Asian Americans are all too familiar with and tired of. The longevity, persistence, and consistency of this construction has been the most powerful impediment to the equity and inclusion of Asian Americans legally, politically, socially, and economically. It has been manifested in school kids being bullied to “go back to where you came from” and in discriminatory government policies as severe as those imposed against any group in the nation. Countless actions promulgated as policies and attitudes reflect the alleged pull of external attachments, questioning the allegiance of Asian Americans throughout history.

With the discovery of gold in California in 1848, those seeking to make their fortunes flocked to the American west from all over the world. With the surge of newly arrived workers, also rose the public resentment in the guise of economic concerns under the rallying cry “they are taking away our jobs.” The California State Legislature, in hopes of quelling the rising anxiety and anger, quickly passed the Foreign Miners' Tax Act to impose on all miners who were not U.S. citizens to pay a monthly fee of \$20—equivalent to about \$720 in today's market—for mining rights in the state. Expectedly, the new law was met with opposition from “foreign” miners, but only upon the protests from Irish, English, Canadian, and German miners was it amended to exempt “free white person[s],” or anyone who could become an American citizen, thereby placing Asian American miners at total disadvantage.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Michael Liu, *Forever Struggle: Activism, Identity, & Survival in Boston's Chinatown, 1880-2018* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), 111-12.

<sup>11</sup>Liu, *Forever Struggle*, 1.

<sup>12</sup>Liu, *Forever Struggle*. See also Greg Miller, “Mapping the Alarming Decline of America's Chinatowns,” *Wired*, October 9, 2013, <https://www.wired.com/2013/10/chinatown-map/>.

<sup>13</sup>Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

Likewise, anti-Asian American racism manifested in several local-level policies in the same era. For example, in 1880, San Francisco enacted an ordinance requiring laundries in “wooden buildings” to obtain permits. Although Chinese Americans operated 89 percent of San Francisco’s laundry businesses, all of their permit applications were denied and all applications submitted by white people were granted.<sup>14</sup>

The trend rapidly spread across the country, with Congress passing and President Chester Arthur enacting the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first federal government action in which the U.S. closed its borders to people coming from a specific nation. The concept of an “illegal immigrant” thus was born, cementing the perception of Asian Americans as foreigners and “the other.”<sup>15</sup> Two powerful forces, nativism and racism, blatantly influenced policy on the local, state, and federal levels. Immigration and citizenship policies, especially, sought to keep Asians out through additional laws such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which effectively cut off normal immigration from Asia until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, embedding in Asian Americans consequences that last to date.

A public policy that most markedly targeted Asian Americans came at the outbreak of the World War II. In 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 to remove Japanese Americans from the West Coast by force, deeming them “enemy aliens” and a threat to national security. Nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans, most of them born in the U.S., were incarcerated in concentration camps in remote, isolated places for up to four years, with little to no property ownership protected and their Constitutional rights stripped. General John DeWitt, who headed the forced removal as the leader of the Western Defense Command, explained the government’s reasoning behind the mass imprisonment with candor: “The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become ‘Americanized,’ the racial strains are undiluted.”<sup>16</sup> Or, more succinctly, “a Jap’s a Jap.”<sup>17</sup>

For the majority of their time in the U.S., newcomers from Asia were denied the right to naturalize. Instead, they were declared to be “aliens ineligible for citizenship” until subsequent court rulings permitted citizenship for Chinese Americans in 1943, Indian Americans in 1946, and Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans in 1952. Still, Americans of Asian descent are often perceived as not true Americans, regardless of their nationality, duration of residency in the U.S., education attainment, level of wealth, or social stature today. Additional legal obstacles confronted by Asian Americans included prohibitions on entering licensed professions,<sup>18</sup> owning real estate and property,<sup>19</sup> and other limitations.

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<sup>14</sup>Yick v. Hopkins, 118 U.S. 356 (1886).

<sup>15</sup>Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>16</sup>John Muyskens and Aaron Steckelberg, “Incarceration by Executive Order,” *Washington Post*, February 19, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/incarceration-executive-order/>.

<sup>17</sup>T.A. Frail, “The Injustice of Japanese-American Internment Camps Resonates Strongly to This Day,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/injustice-japanese-americans-internment-camps-resonates-strongly-180961422/>.

<sup>18</sup>Phillip Nash, “Asian-Americans and Their Rights for Employment and Education,” in *Asian Americans and the Supreme Court*, ed. Hyung-chan Kim (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 897-907.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas E. Stuen, “Asian Americans and Their Rights for Land Ownership,” in *Asian Americans and the Supreme Court*, ed. Hyung-chan Kim (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 603-22.

The question arises: what have been the stakes for Asian Americans in the perpetuation of bigoted exclusion? An 1854 California Supreme Court case provides some insight. In that case, George Hall and two other white men were tried for murdering a Chinese American.<sup>20</sup> One white and three Chinese American witnesses were called to testify by the prosecution. The jury found Hall guilty and sentenced him to be hung. Hall appealed his conviction citing an 1849 restriction in California law that stated, “No black or Mulatto person or Indian shall be allowed to give evidence for or against a white man.” The court reversed Hall’s conviction, stating that all Chinese Americans were restricted from testifying “because the word ‘white’ necessarily excludes all races other than Caucasians.” The court essentially said if you are not white you must be Black.

In law schools, *People v. Hall* is generally taught because it addresses the court’s interpretations of racial categories in the U.S. Yet Chief Justice Murray’s majority opinion provides some broader guidance about its significance. Justice Murray observed that “[t]he same rule which would admit [Chinese Americans] to testify would admit them to all the equal rights of citizenship, and we might soon see them at the polls, in the jury box, upon the bench, and in our legislative halls. This is not a speculation . . . it is an actual and present danger.”<sup>21</sup>

In Murray’s view, therefore, if you allowed Chinese Americans to testify against a white man, then those Chinese Americans might acquire the rights of citizenship and then come to the polls, sit as jurors and judges and they might serve in the legislative halls and actually make the laws which they and other citizens live by. As Murray warned, this was not speculation but “an actual and present danger.” Ironically here the image of the “model minority” as an engaged citizen seems to have raised fears rather than praise.

These manifestations of bigotry may help inform responses to bigotry, such as challenging barriers to civic and social participation, as discussed further below.

## Physical Violence

Along with the spread of public policy and government action targeting Asian Americans came the intensification of violence rooted in racial animosity, forming a positive loop feeding off each other. A few of the documented incidents in the wild West include: the Los Angeles massacre of Chinese Americans in 1871;<sup>22</sup> the Rock Springs massacre of 1885, in which dozens of Chinese American miners were murdered due to racial prejudice and misperception of “taking jobs away from white men” in Wyoming;<sup>23</sup> and the Hells Canyon Massacre of 1887 in which at least 31 Chinese American miners were ambushed and killed in Oregon.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>People v. Hall, 4 Cal. 399 (Cal. 1854).

<sup>21</sup>Hall, 4 Cal. at 404.

<sup>22</sup>Frank Shyong, “History forgot the 1871 Los Angeles Chinese massacre, but we’ve all been shaped by its violence,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-10-24/150th-anniversary-los-angeles-chinese-massacre>.

<sup>23</sup>“The Rock Springs Massacre,” History.com, April 13, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/rock-springs-massacre-wyoming>.

<sup>24</sup>Associated Press, “Files Found in Oregon Detail Massacre of Chinese,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/20/us/files-found-in-oregon-detail-massacre-of-chinese.html>.

Racially charged aggressions, stemming from economic anxiety and perception of zero-sum competition, have repeated throughout history.<sup>25</sup> In 1982, animosity towards Asian Americans skyrocketed in metro Detroit, as the escalating U.S.-Japan trade war accelerated the decline of American automobile conglomerates, resulting in massive layoffs. Two workers facing the threat of economic downturn beat a Chinese American to death with a baseball bat, blaming him for their job insecurity. The victim, 27-year-old Vincent Chin, was celebrating his upcoming wedding at the time and had no relationship with Japan or its automobile industry. The murderers served no jail time.

As such, anti-Asian American racism is affected by not only public policy in general, but also by U.S. foreign policy. By contrast, for white Americans, the line between them and where their ancestors came from is seldom blurred, even in times of conflict, and generally assumptions are not made about them based on their ancestry.

In 1999, Wen Ho Lee, a Taiwanese American scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, was racially scapegoated, profiled, and wrongfully charged with espionage by the U.S. government on the allegation that he was stealing secrets about the U.S. nuclear arsenal for China.<sup>26</sup> Lee eventually received apologies from a federal judge and a settlement from the federal government after a lawsuit. The U.S. Department of Justice under the Trump administration established a national security program titled the “China Initiative” to counter alleged espionage threats “that would benefit the Chinese state,”<sup>27</sup> which lasted until early 2022 when Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, appointed by President Biden, announced the end of the program because it “fostered anti-Asian bias.”<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, South Asian American communities were wrongfully blamed for the actions of the 9/11 terrorists, which led to hate crimes, workplace discrimination, school bullying, and racial and religious profiling, often directed at Sikh Americans.<sup>29</sup> One example of the continued violence against Sikhs in the U.S. was the mass shooting at a temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, in 2012.<sup>30</sup> The same pattern is seen in the rapid rise of racial violence against East Asian Americans with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as President Trump insisted on calling the virus the “China Virus” and “Wuhan Virus,” giving the crisis an Asian face. Indeed, more than 10,370 hate incidents—ranging from verbal

<sup>25</sup>Ramirez and Rosado Contribution; Heather McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021).

<sup>26</sup>Helen Zia and Wen Ho Lee, *My Country Versus Me* (New York: Hyperion, 2001).

<sup>27</sup>“Information about the Department of Justice’s China Initiative and a Compilation of China-Related Prosecutions since 2018,” *U.S. Department of Justice*, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/nsd/information-about-department-justice-s-china-initiative-and-compilation-china-related> (last updated November 19, 2021).

<sup>28</sup>Kevin Johnson and Dylan Wells, “DOJ Ending Trump-era ‘China Initiative’; National Security Program Fueled Asian ‘Intolerance, Bias,’” *USA Today*, February 23, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/02/23/trump-era-china-initiative-end-doj-says-fostered-bias/6907145001/>.

<sup>29</sup>“Fact Sheet on Post-9/11 Discrimination and Violence against Sikh Americans,” *Sikh Coalition*, <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/images/documents/fact%20sheet%20on%20hate%20against%20sikhs%20in%20america%20post%209-11%201.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2022).

<sup>30</sup>“Sikh Priest Who Was Left Paralyzed after 2012 Sikh Temple Shooting in Oak Creek Has Died,” *TMJ4: Milwaukee*, March 3, 2020, <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/sikh-priest-who-was-left-partially-paralyzed-after-2012-sikh-temple-shooting-in-oak-creek-has-died>.



harassment, vandalism, physical assaults, and discrimination—were reported to Stop AAPI Hate from March 2020 to September 2021.<sup>31</sup> A sharp surge in such aggression has also been found in the anti-Asian American hate crimes recorded by the Federal Bureau of Investigation,<sup>32</sup> anti-Asian American incidents recorded by the New York Police Department,<sup>33</sup> bias incident reports published by the Attorney General of New Jersey,<sup>34</sup> and many others across the country.

Graffiti with racial slurs outside Asian restaurants<sup>35</sup> and family homes,<sup>36</sup> unprovoked attacks toward Asian American shopkeepers,<sup>37</sup> lighting an 89-year-old passer-by on fire,<sup>38</sup> killing a senior citizen for looking Asian,<sup>39</sup> shoving an Asian American woman in front of an oncoming subway train,<sup>40</sup> and following an Asian American woman only to stab her more than forty times until she died<sup>41</sup> — numerous examples of racial violence against Asian Americans since the onset of the pandemic are substantial and continuing.

## Fetishization and Objectification

Most of the victims in the aforementioned cases of physical violence are women, elderly, and lack English proficiency—or, at least, they are perceived that way. In the case of the shooting spree that targeted three spas in the greater Atlanta area in March 2020, six of the eight victims who died were Asian American women. Many community organizers and advocates described the incident as “racially motivated sexual violence against women,”<sup>42</sup> rooted in the culturally pervasive aspect of anti-Asian American bigotry that includes sexism through fetishization of Asian American women.

<sup>31</sup>Aggie J. Yellow Horse, Russell Jeung, and Ronae Matriano, *Stop AAPI Hate National Report* (Stop AAPI Hate, November 21, 2021), <https://stopaapihate.org/national-report-through-september-2021/>.

<sup>32</sup>Sakshi Venkatraman, “Asian-American Hate Crimes Rose 73% Last Year, Updated FBI Data Says,” *NBC News*, October 25, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-rose-73-last-year-updated-fbi-data-says-rcna3741>.

<sup>33</sup>Jose Martinez, “2021 Saw Another Surge of Anti-Asian Hate Crimes in Subway,” *City*, January 4, 2022, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/1/4/22867479/2021-saw-another-surge-of-anti-asian-hate-crimes-in-subway>.

<sup>34</sup>“Bias Incident Reports,” *Office of the Attorney General, State of New Jersey*, <https://www.njsp.org/ucr/bias-incident-reports.shtml>.

<sup>35</sup>Erika Adams, “Racist Graffiti Scrawled on Michelin-Starred West Village Korean Restaurant Jeju,” *Eater: New York*, April 13, 2020, <https://ny.eater.com/2020/4/13/21218921/jeju-noodle-bar-racist-graffiti-harrasment-coronavirus-nyc>.

<sup>36</sup>Erin Hassanzadeh, “Coronavirus in Minnesota: ‘We’re Watching You’: Racist Note Left on Woodbury Home of Asian American Couple,” *CBS Minnesota*, March 27, 2020, <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2020/03/27/coronavirus-in-minnesota-were-watching-you-racist-note-left-on-woodbury-home-of-asian-american-couple/>.

<sup>37</sup>Jill Konopka, “Albany Shop Employee Says He Was Attacked for Trying to Enforce Social Distancing,” *WNYT: Albany*, June 14, 2020, <https://wnyt.com/news/albany-shop-employee-says-he-was-attacked-for-trying-to-enforce-social-distancing/5759718/>.

<sup>38</sup>“89-Year-Old Woman Who Was Attacked, Set on Fire in Brooklyn Speaks Out,” *ABC7: New York*, July 24, 2020, <https://abc7ny.com/woman-set-on-fire-elderly-attack-89-year-old-attacked-bensonhurst-crime/6333749/>.

<sup>39</sup>Associated Press, “U.S. Cities Honor One-Year Mark after Killing of Vicha Ratanapakdee, Thai Grandfather,” *NBC News*, January 31, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/us-cities-honor-one-year-mark-killing-vicha-ratanapakdee-thai-grandfat-rcna14211>.

<sup>40</sup>Kimmy Yam, “NYC Subway Station Death of Michelle Go Leaves Asian Americans Reeling,” *NBC News*, January 20, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/nyc-subway-station-death-michelle-go-leaves-asian-americans-reeling-rcna12650>.

<sup>41</sup>Precious Fondren and Ashley Southall, “Woman Followed and Fatally Stabbed in Her Chinatown Apartment,” *New York Times*, February 13, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/13/nyregion/murder-chinatown-nyc.html>.

<sup>42</sup>Marlene Lenthang, “Atlanta Shooting and the Legacy of Misogyny and Racism against Asian Women,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/atlanta-shooting-legacy-misogyny-racism-asian-women/story?id=76533776>.

Several participants in our community conversation groups attested to its prevalence with their own experiences of being objectified and asked to change their appearances and behaviors to match the stereotypical expectations of them.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to being objectified, “harmful stereotypes” portray Asian American women as “hypersexualized” and “submissive,”<sup>44</sup> as seen in Hollywood movies like *Rush Hour*, *Austin Powers*, and so many more. A study by Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media found that almost half of AANHPI women in films between 2010 and 2019 were disproportionately sexualized.<sup>45</sup>

The fetishization has been a persistent accompaniment of attitudes with disrespect to women. The Page Act of 1875 sought to “end the danger of cheap Chinese labor and immoral Chinese women,” who were overwhelmingly thought to be prostitutes. President Grant who enacted the law echoed the sentiment later that year in an address to the joint session of Congress: “no less an evil—the importation of Chinese women, but few of whom are brought to our shores to pursue honorable or useful occupations.”<sup>46</sup> The sexual objectification and “the trope of the hypersexual but docile Asian woman,” then, has been reinforced through the emergence of films and artwork after U.S.-led wars in Asian countries<sup>47</sup> that reflected the “colonial fantasies of pale, fragile, and diminutive Asian women, and continued circulating these images to ensure the certainty of [the Westerners’] ownership and domination over the East.”<sup>48</sup>

Michelle Li, an anchor and reporter at a TV station based in St. Louis, shared on air that her choice for a favorite New Year’s meal was dumpling soup, explaining it is “what a lot of Korean people do.” This simple statement prompted harsh criticism from a viewer who called in to complain that “she was being very Asian” and advised that “[s]he can keep her Korean to herself.”<sup>49</sup> The incident highlights that an increase in mere representation in the media does not necessarily lead to acceptance of Asian Americans.

## Minimization and Racial Hierarchy

Despite the abundance of examples of anti-Asian American racism throughout history, its impacts and existence tend to be minimized. Indeed, the participants in our conversation group described anti-Asian American racism with words like, “subtle,” “nuanced,” and “veiled” and shared that often they did not know how to process—let alone respond to—anti-Asian American racism other than

<sup>43</sup>For this project, we conducted two conversation groups with sixteen participants total. These conversation groups are referred to throughout our report contribution.

<sup>44</sup>Lenthang, “Atlanta Shooting.” 6

<sup>45</sup>*Am Not a Fetish or Model Minority: Redefining What It Means to Be API in the Entertainment Industry* (CAPE and Gold House, 2021), <https://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/api-study-2021-8.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup>Ulysses S. Grant, “Seventh Annual Message,” December 7, 1875, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/seventh-annual-message-3>.

<sup>47</sup>Celine Parrenas Shimizu, *The Hypersexuality of Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>48</sup>Joey Lee, “East Asian ‘China Doll’ or ‘Dragon Lady’?,” *Bridges: An Undergraduate Journal of Contemporary Connections* 3, no. 1 (2018): 1, [https://scholars.wlu.ca/bridges\\_contemporary\\_connections/vol3/iss1/2](https://scholars.wlu.ca/bridges_contemporary_connections/vol3/iss1/2).

<sup>49</sup>Nicole Chavez, “A Viewer Called to Criticize a TV Anchor in Missouri over Being ‘Very Asian,’” *CNN*, January 4, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/04/us/missouri-complain-asian-tv-anchor-michelle-li/index.html>.



“shrug it off, [and] don’t talk about it.” One participant described this as racist gaslighting, where Asian Americans are primed to dismiss racial slights and aggressions and the perpetrators are afforded the option to deny it.<sup>50</sup> This sometimes involves victim blaming so the responsibilities and culpabilities would even fall on those vulnerable to bigotry—verbal, psychological, physical, or otherwise. In this environment, as another participant put it, Asian Americans often feel the pressure to “conform [one’s] self for the comfort of others” and “we have to convince ourselves one more time that what we’re going through is racism.”

A few of the conversation group participants indicated that anti-Asian American racism is less severe or harmful than racism targeting non-Asian Americans. Certainly, this notion is prevalent and the notion of a racial hierarchy was codified as far back as 1896 in Justice Harlan’s “Great Dissent” to the Supreme Court’s ruling on *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Although Justice Harlan deserves much credit for his position on the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment at the time, he noted that “a Chinaman can ride in the same passenger coach with white citizens of the United States,” while citizens of the black race in Louisiana may not sit in integrated coaches.<sup>51</sup> This may be one of the earliest examples of the comparative evaluation of people of color to determine what their entitlement to recognition and rights.<sup>52</sup>

Legal scholar Gabriel J. Chin describes such a style of argument, popular to date, more explicitly: “pitting racial minorities against each other by positing that one is receiving an unmerited advantage to the detriment of the other.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the narrative that Asian Americans suffer less from racism reduces efforts to address anti-Asian American racism to petulant whining. One participant in the conversation group, who has been involved with civil rights advocacy for years in New York City, recalled that she often has to actively fight for the inclusion of Asian Americans’ resource needs, facing pushbacks along the lines of “just wait your turn,” and “wait until someone gets murdered.”

The lens through which Asian Americans are perceived to enjoy more rights, and therefore less racism and harms than other people of color, but are still required to “earn their way” suggests that there is not simply a bipolar framework juxtaposing “the ‘higher’ against the ‘lower’ races.”<sup>54</sup> Political scientist Claire Jean Kim offers an alternative in a racial triangulation theory, in which on the vertical axis of status and privilege, whites are placed as the most “superior,” followed by Asian Americans and Black Americans, and on the horizontal axis, Asian Americans are placed on one end labeled “foreigner” and white and Black Americans on the other end labeled “insider.”<sup>55</sup>

As such, the manifestations and harms inflicted by racism must be recognized as different, rather than put on a scale of severity—or, as one participant of the conversation group dubbed “oppression Olympics”—in order to arrive at equitable approaches to address bigotry.

<sup>50</sup>Author and poet Cathy Park Hong also discusses this term. See Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (New York: One World, 2020).

<sup>51</sup>*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 561 (1896).

<sup>52</sup>Gabriel J. Chin, “The *Plessy* Myth: Justice Harlan and the Chinese Cases,” *Iowa Law Review* 82, no. 1 (1996).

<sup>53</sup>Chin, “The *Plessy* Myth,” 175.

<sup>54</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, “Strivings of the Negro People,” *Atlantic*, August 1897, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1897/08/strivings-of-the-negro-people/305446>.

<sup>55</sup>Claire Jean Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 105-38.

## Model Minority Myth

The alleged intermediate position of Asian Americans has been recognized by scholars with varying views and many Americans who have described it as “white proximity” or call Asian Americans the “middleman minority.”<sup>56</sup> Certainly, this perception serves as the premise of Justice Harlan’s argument in his “Great Dissent.” Asian Americans have also been characterized as a model minority whose stereotypes include a high level of income and education attainment, as well as characteristics like “passive,” “hard-working,” and “obedient.” While interpreted by some as a positive commentary on a community of color in the United States, the concept is much less concerned with valorizing Asian Americans and more about the behavior and treatment of Black Americans historically and Latinx more recently.<sup>57</sup>

The important issue in this regard is to recognize the origins of the myth in the 1960s, a period marked by racial unrest with virtually every major U.S. city targeted by protests and demands for change. The model minority narrative with respect to another non-white group—the Asian Americans—was carefully and consciously developed in influential media and government circles to counter the arguments about systemic and structural racism that drove much of Black ire. Asian Americans were used by those dominant powers to argue that Asian Americans are people of color who are successful, content, and uncomplaining. To Black America, in other words, the message was that it was their own (mis)behavior, not institutional racism, that explained their plight.

Over the past fifty years, Asian Americans have been used to perpetuate the model minority myth as an example of the “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” illusion, effectively pitting minorities against one another and distracting those suffering from the harms from exploring institutional flaws and meaningful solutions. By creating a monolithic depiction of Asian Americans, the myth has also erased the economic, social, and health-related plights of Asian immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos who arrived to the U.S. as refugees.

## Anti-Asian American Racism in Summary

Anti-Asian American racism was not only borne of, but more importantly, has been mutually reinforced by cultural ideas and public policy. It has especially been impacted by U.S. foreign and immigration policies, as they dictate which attributes of Asians and Asian Americans are portrayed in the U.S., and at times give rise to the appeal of exclusion due to the perceived linkage of Asian Americans with foreign nations at an adversarial position. Anti-Asian American racism also depicts Asians and Asian Americans with a broad stroke, reducing their identity to one dimension and denying the diversity in their backgrounds in culture, nation of origin, language, religion, and much more.

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<sup>56</sup>Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” 105-38.

<sup>57</sup>Paul Y. Watanabe, “Asian Americans Rise Up: The Response to the Pew Report on the Rise of Asian Americans,” *UCLA AAPI Nexus Journal: Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders Policy, Practice and Community* 13, no. 2 (2015): 321-335, DOI: 10.17953/1545-0317.13.1.321.

Bigotry targeting Asian Americans also features elements of xenophobia and nativism, largely through the lens of perpetual foreigner syndrome. Likewise, anti-Asian American bigotry intersects with linguicism through targeting of those who lack of English proficiency.<sup>58</sup> The detrimental impacts of linguicism are well noted in Cynthia Willis Esqueda and Tyler Press Sutherland's report contribution.

Additionally, anti-Asian American racism incorporates sexism, which manifests in hypersexualized portrayal of Asian women in media, in a disproportionate economic impact on Asian American women with respect to unemployment<sup>59</sup> and other economic opportunities,<sup>60</sup> and in targeted exclusion and violence, as in countless instances of recent attacks.

Anyone who is perceived as Asian American remains susceptible to anti-Asian American racism, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, duration of residency in the U.S., English proficiency, educational attainment, social stature, economic wealth, or perceived contribution to our country.

Asian American elected officials like former Washington Governor Gary Locke, Congressman Andy Kim from New Jersey, and Hoboken, New Jersey Mayor Ravi Bhalla have all been accused of nefarious ties to a foreign country,<sup>61</sup> called "not one of us,"<sup>62</sup> or described as a "terrorist."<sup>63</sup> Filipino American entrepreneur and multi-millionaire James Juanillo was confronted by the police after a passer-by accusing him of trespassing.<sup>64</sup> Olympians representing the U.S. at Nagano and Beijing are described as foreigners—as in the victory announcement of Tara Lipinski that read "American Beats Kwan," referring to Michelle Kwan, another American figure skater and now nominated as the U.S. Ambassador to Belize—and accused of authenticity and dual loyalty.<sup>65</sup> Over 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated, and many Sikh Americans, and Vincent Chin, were killed because of their perceived ties to foreign adversaries of the U.S.

In Boston, Michelle Wu recently made history as the first woman and person of color to be elected mayor. Every day she has to read a barrage of racist messages or hear the rants of some calling her Mayor Wuhan and raising fear that she is taking marching orders from Beijing leaders.

<sup>58</sup>Donald L. Rubin, "Nonlanguage Factors Affecting Undergraduates' Judgments of Nonnative English-Speaking Teaching Assistants," *Research in Higher Education* 33, no. 4 (1992): 511-31.

<sup>59</sup>"Long-Term Unemployment among Asian American and Pacific Islander Women," *National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum*, June 3, 2021, <https://www.napawf.org/our-work/content/2021/6/3/long-term-unemployment-among-aapi-women-afzf4>.

<sup>60</sup>See Lewis and Tabacco Mar Contribution (addressing sexism).

<sup>61</sup>Nick Corasaniti, Jeremy W. Peters, and Annie Karni, "New Trump Ad Suggests a Campaign Strategy amid Crisis: Xenophobia," *New York Times*, April 13, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/10/us/politics/trump-ad-gary-locke.html>.

<sup>62</sup>Ryan J. Reilly, "Andy Kim Is a South Jersey Boy. The GOP Calls Him 'Not One of Us,'" *Huffington Post*, October 30, 2018, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/andy-kim-tom-macarthur-nj-3rd-district\\_n\\_5bbcd8c5e4b01470d055d5eb](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/andy-kim-tom-macarthur-nj-3rd-district_n_5bbcd8c5e4b01470d055d5eb).

<sup>63</sup>Chris Fuchs, "'Terrorism' Flyer Targeting Sikh Mayoral Candidate Being Investigated as Possible Bias Crime," *NBC News*, November 5, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/terrorism-flyer-targeting-sikh-mayoral-candidate-being-investigated-possible-bias-n817691>.

<sup>64</sup>Claire Wang, "Filipino American Confronted for BLM Message Sheds Light on Form of Genteel Racism, Experts Say," *NBC News*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/filipino-american-confronted-blm-message-sheds-light-form-genteel-racism-n1231409>.

<sup>65</sup>"Fame and Fury: China's Wildly Different Reactions to US-Born Olympians," *CNN*, February 11, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/11/china/eileen-gu-zhu-yi-nathan-chen-comparison-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>.

## Disrupting Anti-Asian American Racism

The goal of dismantling structural bigotry of all forms has proven elusive. Indeed, the notion of racial superiority is undergoing a bit of a revival in the U.S. and elsewhere. Perhaps a challenge that one might hope to gain some ground on is helping to better manage the impact of racism and bigotry. Understanding aspects of the Asian American experience is a fundamental way to begin to address structural racism and a critical factor in easing the prevalence and pain of bigoted acts. That, and some other ways to disrupt the racist impulse and to ease its costs, are summarized below:

### 1. Include Asian American history in public education

Despite their longevity and growth, Asian Americans have generally been the least studied and understood racial group. Invisibility and erasure have led to dire consequences. When little is known about a group, the dominant powers can define or “racialize” it, and thereby, limit the group’s agency.<sup>66</sup> These limitations have led to the marginalization of Asian Americans and being defined by highly prejudicial stereotypes. Access to better and more accurate information may lead to an abandonment of racist and bigoted views and action. Indeed, a teacher educator with the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Learning for Justice initiative has advocated for the inclusion of Asian American history in public education curriculum: “By not showing up in American history, by not hearing about Asian Americans in schools, that contributes to that sense of foreignness.”<sup>67</sup> Following years of advocacy, the State of Illinois became the first state in the country to adopt this policy by enacting legislation in July 2020,<sup>68</sup> and New Jersey followed suit in January 2022.<sup>69</sup>

Additionally, partially in response to the absence of a major scholarly work that focused on the immigrants who left Asian lands to come to America, historian Ronald Takaki wrote a book with a suggestive and purposeful title, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*.<sup>70</sup> Writing near the dawn of a new century, Takaki’s work added new, once-silenced, voices telling epic stories of the American people. Since Takaki lifted the shroud, several Asian American authors have continued to combat erasure and invisibility.<sup>71</sup>

### 2. Ensure and expand workforce diversity

Another way to provide access to better and more accurate information on Asian Americans is to increase mere exposure to them. Ensuring and expanding diversity in the workforce not only helps with representation but also provides equitable economic opportunities to those who may otherwise be underserved. It may be a lengthy process that requires years of change in recruitment, retention,

<sup>66</sup>Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>67</sup>Li Zhou, “Why a New Law Requiring Asian American History in Schools Is so Significant,” *Vox*, July 20, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/2021/7/20/22576138/asian-american-history-illinois-law>.

<sup>68</sup>Gov. Pritzker Signs Historic Legislation Requiring Asian American History to Be Taught in Schools,” *Center for East & Pacific Studies, Illinois Global Institute*, July 12, 2021, <https://ceaps.illinois.edu/news/2021-07-12/gov-pritzker-signs-historic-legislation-requiring-asian-american-history-be-taught>.

<sup>69</sup>“Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Ensuring AAPI-Inclusive Curriculum Is Taught in New Jersey Schools,” *State of New Jersey, Governor Phil Murphy*, January 18, 2022, <https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562022/20220118c.shtml>.

<sup>70</sup>Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989).

<sup>71</sup>See Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2015).

and promotion of the workforce, but it can begin with a mandatory survey of workforce demographics for public access on a regular basis. One benchmark would be that of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which has published an annual report on the executive branch employment by gender and race/national origin since 2006.<sup>72</sup> The U.S. Government Accountability Office has released similar reports, with a narrower purview and deeper investigation on potential barriers to diversity.<sup>73</sup> In the State of Illinois, the legislature has directed the Illinois Department of Central Management Services to submit to the Illinois General Assembly an annual plan to increase the number of African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American persons employed by the State. Similar measures may be taken in all levels of government, by agency directive or legislation, to serve as the basis for ensuring and expanding diversity in public employment, whether for civil servants, public teachers, or otherwise. Once the data identifies deficiencies, solutions may be devised to address them.

### **3. Identify and eliminate barriers that impede civic and social participation**

One way to counter bigotry is to challenge the many hurdles that Asian Americans find particularly troublesome on their way to full electoral participation. The citizenship requirement for a population nearly 70% foreign-born is daunting and then getting those who are citizens registered to vote adds another hurdle.

Language barriers limit civic and social participation in several areas. A Pew Research Center report found that 28% of Asian Americans speak English at a level “less than proficient” as of 2019.<sup>74</sup> Language barriers can affect participation in public affairs, the political process, and accessing resources like healthcare. For example, a Virginia election law required voters to provide their full name and address in an “audible” manner.<sup>75</sup> Those with limited English proficiency felt intimidated and thus discouraged to participate in elections, which led to the change in the law permitting self-identification in writing as well. English proficiency, or any proof of entitlement, should not be required of any American exercising their rights. Additionally, improved language access materials and bilingual ballots are critical accompaniments of increased formal political participation.

### **4. Protect those vulnerable to violence**

The threat of violence is very much current and close, especially to Asian Americans living in the age of COVID-19. Recently, the effort to address the rapid rise of racially charged violence against Asian Americans has been centered on hate crimes, which is a “criminal act defined by law in which bias

<sup>72</sup>“Policy, Data, Oversight,” *U.S. Office of Personal Management*, <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/data-analysis-documentation/federal-employment-reports/reports-publications/executive-branch-employment-by-gender-and-racenational-origin/> (accessed April 14, 2022).

<sup>73</sup>“State Department: Additional Steps Are Needed to Identify Potential Barriers to Diversity,” *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, January 27, 2020, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-237>.

<sup>74</sup>Abby Budiman and Neil G. Ruiz, “Key Facts about Asian Americans, a Diverse and Growing Population,” *Pew Research Center*, April 29, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans>.

<sup>75</sup>Virginia Code Annotated § 24.2-643.

— whether it’s gender based, sexual orientation, religion or other descriptor — can be proven to be a central motive.”<sup>76</sup>

Notably, hate crimes require immense time and effort to prove, and tend to focus our attention on one-off punishment of the perpetrator. Where appropriate, our efforts should also include responses beyond law enforcement and legal interventions. Whether targeted by racial, ethnic, or gender bias, those vulnerable to such threats must be protected and further instances of violence must be prevented. Although limiting its scope to hate crimes, the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, authored by Senator Hirono and Representative Meng (Public Law 117–13), serves as a multi-pronged response by facilitating the expedited review of hate crimes reported to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and supports them with public education campaigns. Two pieces of legislation recently introduced in the California State Legislature, 2022 CA SB1161 and AB2549, provide a complementary approach by declaring street harassment a public health issue and directing the State Department of Public Health to conduct research and public awareness campaigns to better address street harassment, especially on public transit.

## 5. Disaggregate data on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders

Most data on the Asian American community aggregates all Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders into a single group. Today, as indicated earlier, the Asian American community consists of dozens of specific Asian ethnic groups. For example, Hmong Americans have a high rate of school drop-outs,<sup>77</sup> and Southeast Asian Americans fare worse than average in socioeconomic security.<sup>78</sup> Many South Asians feel the threat of Islamophobia, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders suffer from high rates of several health-related maladies.<sup>79</sup> To address the harms across the board and provide equitable means of support, all information and data on the broader Asian American community must be disaggregated.

## 6. Establish and expand a body of resources to support people targeted by bigotry

A robust array of resources must be established and expanded, readily accessible regardless of language proficiency, socioeconomic status, age, or physical ability, from which Asian Americans can learn to identify and properly respond to bigotry at all levels. To build such a body of resources, additional support (financial and otherwise) must be given to community organizations, advocates, scholars, and institutions of higher education including those with Asian American studies programs. Those resources should include mental health services with counselors and therapists who understand how

<sup>76</sup>Cheryl Cheng, “Understanding Today’s Anti-Asian Violence by Looking at the Past,” *UCLA: Newsroom*, May 6, 2021, <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/anti-asian-hatred-karen-umemoto-david-yoo>.

<sup>77</sup>Moriah Balingit, “Hmong Students Are among the Forgotten Minorities of Higher Education,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 18, 2019, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/nation-world/2019/03/19/hmong-students-are-among/>.

<sup>78</sup>*Southeast Asian American Journeys* (SEARAC and Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2020), [https://www.searac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SEARAC\\_NationalSnapshot\\_PrinterFriendly.pdf](https://www.searac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SEARAC_NationalSnapshot_PrinterFriendly.pdf).

<sup>79</sup>Ashley K. Morisako et al., “Beyond the Ability to Pay: The Health Status of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders in Relationship to Health Insurance,” *Hawai’i Journal of Medicine & Public Health* 76, no. 3 (2017), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5375012>.



Asian Americans experience the impacts of structural and internalized racism: “[A]lways looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”<sup>80</sup>

## 7. Increase exposure and representation and build solidarity

One of the suggestions in Ramirez and Rosado’s report on anti-Latinx racism is to “offer new, alternative narratives through social contact and interpersonal relationships, and attempt to change social norms on this more intimate level.” This suggestion is also a sound approach to combating bigotry of all stripes and could be instrumental in building solidarity with all those suffering the harm of bigotry. Indeed, several participants of the conversation group emphasized the importance of inclusion of lived experiences, especially those of language minorities. They were concerned that discourse on bigotry largely occurs in academic settings and favors those with access, scholarly privilege, and English proficiency, which would distort the portrayal of the Asian American community towards a specific subset of groups, not only socioeconomically but also geographically, the latter of which plays a significant role in the lived experiences of Asian Americans and their identity.

Notably, before the 150th commemoration of the completion of the transcontinental railroad, legendary photographer-activist Corky Lee<sup>81</sup> put out a call for Chinese Americans to meet at the Golden Spike site. There, with replicas of the two trains positioned as they were a century and a half earlier, Lee took a new picture that included solely dozens of Chinese Americans reclaiming space, contesting invisibility, and demanding inclusion. This is one powerful example of the kinds of narrative efforts that can combat bigotry.

## 8. Support Community-Based Resistance

Asian American communities are resisting bigotry through activist movements across the country. The powerful forces that have for decades feasted on the residents of Boston’s Chinatown and other enclaves throughout the U.S. have exploited Asian American invisibility through a thousand cuts—including roads, hospitals, expensive condominium complexes, gentrification, pollution, strip joints—to dismantle the homes and lives of its residents. The attempts to overtake the area have not fully succeeded and the principal reason for the incomplete removal has been the response of community members who live in and have a connection with Chinatown.<sup>82</sup> Resistance has been a path for some to combat the exclusion.

<sup>80</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, “Strivings of the Negro People,” *Atlantic*, August 1897, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1897/08/strivings-of-the-negro-people/305446>.

<sup>81</sup>Sadly, in the early months of the COVID crisis, the virus claimed Corky.

<sup>82</sup>This story of resistance is effectively told in the recent authoritative account of an activist who for decades has joined in the battle. Michael Liu, *Forever Struggle: Activism, Identity, and Survival in Boston’s Chinatown, 1880-2018* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020).

## In Closing

As the United States is becoming a nation with a majority of people of color, the prospect brings fear and loathing and feeds the fires of bigotry burning throughout much of America. Racial hierarchies are intact, inequities persist, and the toll of bigotry is felt from Buffalo to Brooklyn, Minneapolis to Atlanta, Miami to Kenosha, and Charlottesville to Charleston. Asian Americans have important roles to play in confronting the racial divides and violence.

To our Latinx siblings, we can say “we know we have also been the undesirable strangers at the border. We have been outsiders, too.” To the undocumented, we can say, “we know, indeed the term ‘illegal immigrant’ was coined for us. We have been aliens ineligible for citizenship. We have had ‘paper sons,’ many of us are still undocumented, and many of our families are being ripped apart by deportations, too.” To our Muslim siblings, “We know. We have been deemed agents of foreign influences, our loyalties questioned and victimized by misplaced notions of collective guilt, and we have seen our families thrown into America’s concentration camps because they looked like the enemy.”

Asian Americans are not a monolithic Model Minority, perpetual foreigners, a yellow peril, a virus, or the other. In solidarity we must proclaim that we are Vincent Chin, Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, we are all somebody.