
On Inheritances

Examining Contemporary Anti-Asian Violence and Black-Asian Solidarity

ABSTRACT In this presentation for the Asian American Writers' Workshop, Tamara K. Nopper analyzes the emergent discourses of "anti-Asian violence" and "Black-Asian solidarity" within historical and sociological contexts. She begins with a discussion of the importance of the 1980s and 1990s as formative moments in terms of post-Asian American Movement organizational infrastructure. She then discusses interracial violence, the coeval growth of hate crime data and legislation, and the hashtag #StopAAPIHate. Her primary concern in this discussion is to reveal what work these narrative framings do in service of or in opposition to anti-Blackness and carcerality. **KEYWORDS** anti-Asian violence, Asian American, carcerality, hate crimes, organizing, Vincent Chin

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The Asian American Writer's Workshop (AAWW) is a national not-for-profit arts organization devoted to creating, publishing, developing, and disseminating creative writing by Asian Americans. AAWW is the preeminent curatorial platform dedicated to the belief that Asian American stories, in all their cultural pluralism, deserve to be told. It is a safe community space and an anti-racist counterculture, incubating new ideas and interpretations of what it means to be both an American and a global citizen. They are interested in both the New York publishing industry and Ethnic Studies, the South Asian diasporic novel and the Asian American story of assimilation, high culture and pop culture, Lisa Lowe and Amar Chitra Katha, avant-garde poetry and spoken word, journalism and critical race theory, *Midnight's Children* and *Dictée*.

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"We Only have Vincent Chin"

Many of you are probably familiar with Vincent Chin. Vincent Chin was an Asian American man, he was Chinese American. He was bludgeoned [to death] by two white auto workers, Michael Nitz, and Ronald Ebens, who were related. He was bludgeoned. And then a few days later, he died. And this was in 1982, Detroit.

I know some people who have "Vincent Chin fatigue," meaning, some Asian Americans will say, "Well, we hear only about Vincent Chin," or "Vincent Chin is the only case." Sometimes you'll hear Asian Americans say, "Well, Asian Americans don't experience as much racial violence as other groups. We *only* have Vincent Chin." Vincent Chin will be used as the example that gets overdrawn or maybe over-talked about. Some people will say, "Well, Asian Americans have experienced more racial violence than Vincent Chin. Why is this the only case that gets interest?"

I think we actually could study this case *more*. Most of our knowledge about the Vincent Chin case comes from the film *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (Choy and Tajima-Peña 1987), which is a very important documentary by Rene Tajima-Peña and Christine Choy.

The Department of Justice brought federal charges against Eben and Nitz for violating Vincent Chin's civil rights. But this was the first case of the DOJ investigating on behalf of an Asian American having their civil rights violated through violence. So, this case has a lot of significance, I think more of us could actually study.

This was a case that [Asian Americans] built a movement around. [The Reverend Jesse Jackson, for example, lifted up Vincent Chin's case as part of the Rainbow Coalition Project.] So, you had Asian Americans for Justice, and so forth. They built a national campaign. And it also went international to an extent. We're seeing this right now, with Korean media and Chinese media. So, this case galvanized a lot of people. [You can see this] in New York, with Asian Americans for Equality. They were an organization, they're still around, and they were started in the 1970s. Some of their organizing had to do with organizing around Confucius Plaza, organizing for workers, around wages, being able to get access to jobs and so forth. They had a lot of Chinese Americans who are part of the organization—different Asian ethnic groups—and the case of Vincent Chin takes on this national significance where other organizations are dealing with it.

Asian American Organizing Against Violence

[Vincent Chin is only one example of racially motivated violence against Asian Americans, and Asian American organizations have long been organizing around such cases.]

Asian Americans United (AAU) was founded in 1985, in Philadelphia, and they're still around. They organize in Chinatown and also in South Philly. [Luckily], they have timelines about different campaigns they were involved in. This is another example of why we need more organizers to really write about and document some of their campaigns, because you actually can't find a lot written about [examples such as] the McCreesh [playground incident]. But this case was really important because a white person got killed. AAU took up defending the Asian defendants, and that was not a popular position to take because these Asian defendants were accused of killing a white

person or participating in some way. [AAU] talked about the social context of this group called White Power Boys. They talked about the context of racial violence and of racial intimidation that Southeast Asians were facing regularly. They defended these Asian defendants, and they provided different forms of political support. Scott Kurashige has an article in the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, about AAU's organizing around this (Kurashige 2000). And, again, there's not a lot written about this [incident]. So that's a very important article to understand some of these things.

[Another notable incident took the life of] Ricky Byrdsong. I remember when this happened. I was watching the news. Ricky Byrdsong was a former basketball coach at Northwestern University. In 1999, a young white man went on a rampage throughout the Midwest, and he shot at Asians, Black people, and Jews. Ricky Byrdsong was killed. Ricky Byrdsong was with his children. Luckily, his children survived. Unfortunately, Ricky Byrdsong did not.

Won-Joon Yoon was killed [by the same shooter] as well. He was a Korean grad student at Indiana University. That's how far this man [the shooter] drove. He went from the neighborhood of Rogers Park in Chicago to Indiana University. I remember watching the news at the time, and there was all this debate. There was this concern that authorities had not alerted the public; that they should be concerned about this man going on the shooting spree. I remember watching that on TV and just thinking, "wow, they didn't warn people of color that there was a man driving around throughout different states, doing this."

In 1999, Buford O'Neal Furrow went on a rampage and he targeted people who were nonwhite. One of those people he killed was Joseph Iletto. Joseph Iletto is Filipino American. Furrow said he decided to kill Joseph Iletto on a whim after he had gone around shooting at other people because he thought [Iletto] was either Hispanic or Asian.

In Jersey City, there was a group called the Dotbusters. The Dotbusters was a group of white supremacist people who were writing open letters about what they saw as [their city] being taken over by South Asian Americans. South Asian Americans were experiencing lots and lots of different types of violence. If you look at some of the news stories at the time, they just list all these incidents of violence. Physical violence, but also vandalism to Asian businesses, and so forth. And what's deep is, if you read some of the police officers at the time, and some of these news stories, they say, "Oh, these Indians, when they're having a problem, they'll just keep calling the police." They really downplayed a lot of this violence. This started getting more attention [once] you [saw] more South Asians protesting in Jersey City, after the murder of Navroze Mody.

Now, what's really interesting about this, because I'm thinking about the political legacy [and] the narratives of Asian America that we inherit? What are the narratives that we have available to us [about] what it means to be Asian American, what it means to think about Asian Americans and racial politics, in this moment? What it means to think about Asian Americans and racial violence, and what we think, "our response as Asian Americans" should be, politically.

There's not actually a lot written about the Dotbusters and what was happening here. But this was a group that I grew up learning about. They were putting out threatening

material about trying to kill Indians or trying to run them out. Mody's murder gets put into this conversation of the Dotbusters. But he was actually killed by some Latino youth. There were about eleven Latino youth, according to the testimonies. They made fun of him, and then they got into a big conflict, and then they kept going. And [the state] wanted the four young people to be tried as adults. I was reading the testimony of one of the young people who went to prison at fifteen for the death of Navroze Mody. He talked about feeling a lot of remorse, and just doing a lot of work to try to help "at-risk youth" in his community in New Jersey, and just not wanting other people to get caught up in the system.

This is something that I think we're grappling with right now: What does it mean to think about interracial violence, and interracial violence that isn't always on this level of a mass shooting—stuff that happens in the course of people messing with each other? People arguing on the street and getting into a fight and so forth. But it's also this question that I think we should be exploring about what does it mean that the story about white supremacist racial violence and a group like the Dotbusters, who are trying to claim a white space and are willing to use or threaten to use violence to try to protect white space, what does it mean that the story of this man's death, Mr. Mody's death by Latino youth, and teenagers who get tried as adults eventually? If you look at the race data, who gets tried as adults tends to be very racially skewed toward Black and Latino youth. So how does this story get collapsed in the story about white supremacy, and about South Asians being threatened in terms of white racial violence?

Asian Americans responded in a variety of ways. So, in some cases, they had protests. CAAAV, the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, held protests in support of South Asians. So you see this solidarity that's being built among different Asian American organizations regarding protesting racial violence.

[Asian American organizations also] started to put out a lot of material about what you can do to prevent a hate crime. They [tried] to make this material available in different languages.

What you start to see in the 1980s, and 1990s, is a growing conversation about hate crimes specifically against Asian Americans. And this is something that's happening among an organization like APALC, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, and some of the civil rights organizations that we associate with working on legislation or policy. But it's also happening among the organizations that we often claim as *radical* organizations.

The Importance of 1980s and 1990s Asian American Activism

Joseph Iletto's family became very involved in pushing conversations about hate crimes and telling the story of Joseph Iletto. So you have these organizations like APALC and others working with the victims and family members and loved ones of victims of racial violence. Part of what we're doing is galvanizing a conversation about what it means to be Asian and what it means to be Asian American, both in relationship to white supremacy, but also in relationship to what it means to be Asian American politically, in terms of how we respond to white supremacy and white racial violence.

This is why I think the 1980s and the 1990s are really important for us to study. A lot of people are going back to the Chinese Exclusion Act or sometimes the Korean War and the Vietnam War. These are important things to historicize, but this is really the most immediate legacy of discourses of racial violence and organizational infrastructure regarding how we combat it.

CAAAV originally started in 1986, as the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence. Today they keep CAAAV as the recognizable moniker, but now it's called CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities. One of the things they talk about came out of [the] response to rising anti-Asian violence across the country, including the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982. This is why it's important for us to study Vincent Chin's murder in terms of understanding the galvanizing and the building of Asian American organizations and political infrastructure.

One of the things that CAAAV did was they have their newsletter, *The Voice*. And you can find a lot of copies online. Minju Bae, who is a historian and fellow Temple University grad like me, has done a lot of nice [work] online archiving some of CAAAV's work (Bae n.d.). So [now] you can find a lot of these newsletters available on CAAAV's website itself. And they'll do *local* incidents of violence or harassment and also *national* incidents. If you look at the incidents [they cut] across class; you have (sometimes) working class people, poor people, a lot of international students getting murdered or beaten. Across ethnicity as well; it's a range of different Asian ethnic groups experiencing this violence and these incidents.

CAAAV has often organized against police brutality and against what we would call state violence. State violence in this case being either the police; nonresponsive city governments; what at that time would have been the INS, Immigration and Naturalization Service, [which] would now be ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]; and the Department of Homeland Security. This is important for us to consider because what happens today; people sometimes say you have the radical organizations that deal with state violence, and then you have the more liberal-leaning organizations that deal with violence in this way [with a carceral response]. But you actually see with these organizations combinations of [both structural and interpersonal] tactics and approaches.

For example, CAAAV, if you look at some of their newsletters, they were pushing for the city government to intervene. [They were] talking about how Mayor David Dinkins versus other people in the city were responding. Part of studying these organizations is thinking about the landscape of racial violence they were trying to confront. This is not a new conversation, as many people have pointed out. It's also looking at what [they did] to try to protect Asian Americans. This is a pretty big task: what does it mean to try to protect ourselves? How do we organizationally try to do that? What does it mean to do that in a noncarceral way is an increasing question that we're now asking in this era of an accelerated conversation about Defund the Police and abolishing the police. What are noncarceral ways to protect ourselves?

You see glimmers in these organizations of people trying to sort out this bigger question. What does it mean to draw attention to racial violence? How do we measure racial violence? How do we try to protect ourselves? What are the resources or

institutions we're trying to hold accountable? I would say we need to study these organizations more to understand what we're inheriting.

A Very Murky Definition of Hate: Defining Hate and Police Legitimacy

I talk to a lot of people about hate crime data. People are very surprised to find out what gets measured and what doesn't. People often assume hate crime is a stand-in for us talking about racism or sexism or homophobia. But, hate crime is really about saying, "we think you're targeted because you're a member of that group."

[When] we're talking about hate crime[s], we might be talking about it casually, but it means something *technically* to the state. The Department of Justice distinguishes between a hate crime or a bias or hate *incident*: acts of prejudice that are not crimes or do not involve violence or property damage. [...] Some people think a hate crime is just the act itself of racism, an act that's recognized as a crime itself under law. This is important because we use the term *hate crime* very loosely, as if the act of racism itself is a crime per se. But it usually means [enhanced penalties]. For example, if you killed somebody and if [the state] thinks there is a motivation for committing that crime based on bias, that's a hate crime.

What does [the frame of hate crimes] mean for our understanding of hate? It isn't really an understanding of racial power [because] white people can be [articulated as] victims of anti-white bias. Men can be seen as victims of gender bias. And sexual orientation for victims of anti-heterosexual bias. If we're thinking about how we hold people accountable for structural violence that manifests itself in terms of acts or behaviors or treatment of a group from an individual, we're dealing with a very murky definition of hate.

[Being the victim of a hate crime] just means that we think you being a member of this group is the basis of why this crime happened. A lot of this data is being reported by police departments, and so police departments and prosecutors are in a position to say: we think that there is something about you being white [or male, or straight] which is why you experienced this.

[Let's look at] offenders. Who were the offenders [who commit hate crimes]? About half were white, but [...] in 23.9% of cases [the state] decided that a Black person had targeted someone because of their race. This is a significant percent here. In South Carolina there was an anti-lynching law. Black people, especially Black young people, were actually being prosecuted under this anti-lynching law because lynching was measured as two people who brutalized somebody else, regardless of race. So Black people were only a certain percentage of the population of South Carolina, but they were getting charged [disproportionately] with this [anti-]lynching law.

LGBT people of color defending themselves against other LGBT folks who are racist might call [their attackers using slurs]. And sometimes [they'll be accused of a hate crime], even if they were defending themselves, because they might have used certain language. That [language use] is being used to criminalize them, even though they were the victims or were structurally more vulnerable to being targeted.

Victims of a hate crime can be an individual, a business, a financial institution, government entity, religious organization, or society; [the] public as a whole. This [means hate crimes] could include drug/narcotics offenses, gambling offenses [because] society has been victimized by this. And a lot of people don't realize that this is [prosecuted and counted] under hate crime law.

You read different timelines about when hate crime laws start. If you go into the Department of Justice's website, they'll say, well, hate crime law started with Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s—and they're referring to a certain clause in certain Civil Rights Acts. Kay Whitlock draws our attention to some of the laws that were going on in the 1870s in what would be Reconstruction (2012: 8–9). Along with the 14th and 15th Amendments, there were also laws to hold both individuals and government officials accountable for restricting or violating the rights of Black people, including the formation of the Ku Klux Klan. Whitlock has emphasized that historically [hate crime legislation] was also about holding government officials accountable; people who represent the structure or the state in some ways. And so, you had a much more robust approach to protect the rights of people and [try] to hold people accountable.

These laws were rolled back by the Supreme Court to uphold states' rights over federal authority. [So we get] this rollback of holding government officials and people who represented the structure [accountable] in a particular way. Whitlock says that this is the logic of contemporary hate crime laws. Now we're focused mainly on individuals who do acts of aggression toward somebody because of that person being a member of a group.

In 1990, Congress [passed] the Hate Crimes Statistics Act and [mandated] the collection of hate crime data [by] the FBI . . . as part of the Uniform Crime reporting. The Uniform Crime Report was one of the first national data sources for crime. If you go into the Bureau of Justice statistics, it's where all of these different sources of data are provided and sometimes cleaned up and put in these reports to make them look like they're national data. But those data sources come from different police districts. They can come from different states. They can come from [the] US Marshall's Service, [the] Bureau of Prisons, the Department of Corrections. A lot of these states have different reporting guidelines. A lot of crime data is not always required for local police departments.

So now [let's consider] the present moment. You see statements by Acting US Attorneys in different districts regarding anti-Asian hate crimes and bias acts. I want us to pay attention to how the Department of Justice distinguishes between hate crimes and bias incidents.

Joe Biden, who ran all of those attack ads on China and had really xenophobic ads against China when he was running for president, [he] wants us to know that he does not stand for intolerance against Asian Americans or xenophobia. So, he puts out this statement on January 26, 2021. And he's made a point of saying that "my White House will not say things like 'Kung Flu'" and so forth. [On] March 4th, the White House has a listening session with Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders on rising hate crimes and incidents, and these things are being bundled together: hate crimes and incidents against Asian American communities. [Representative] Grace Meng, and Senator [Mazie]

Hirono are sponsoring a COVID-19 hate crime law. And I have to say this: If you work in public health and you're concerned about the intersection of public health and the criminal justice system or carcerality, I think you should be paying attention to this act, because President Biden is saying he supports this type of act.

Before March 4th, [Meng] and others were already proposing legislation to combat anti-Asian hate crimes or sentiments. Now they're proposing a specific COVID-19 hate crime act. [In the text of the act,] the term "COVID-19 hate crime" means a crime of violence that is motivated by hate but also, the actual *perceived* relationship to the spread of COVID-19 of any person because of the characteristics described.

I think we should be paying attention to this act because this conversation about wanting to protect Asian Americans from racial violence is being used in a very particular way in this situation. I'm concerned about the consequences if this act passes.

Violence here involves both what has been legally determined to be a crime, but also a range of bias incidents, and those bias incidents range in and of themselves. All of this is being grouped under anti-Asian violence, but it's also being grouped under this idea of a crime wave: A wave of crime against Asian Americans. And this is being used to stampede this idea of "we need hate crime legislation to protect Asian Americans."

Any time you're talking about hate crime law, you're talking about more legitimacy for the police, and you're also talking about, frankly, more funding for the police. So when we're talking about Defund the Police, if you're calling for hate crime legislation, that works against defunding the police.

Data and Reporting

Let's talk about some of the data that Asian Americans are creating to go do this. [With] hate crime data, there's all these concerns about "are we collecting enough data?" In the absence of official data from the state or what people see as negligent data collection, you'll have individuals start collecting their own data. [An example of this kind of data collection] we hear a lot about [is] the dataset from Stop AAPI Hate (see Jeung et al. 2021, also this issue).

The report covers 3,795 incidents. This is the one that keeps getting cited everywhere. And one of the people who is associated with Stop AAPI Hate said, "Yes, not all of these incidents are physical violence; there's a lot of different incidents."

I want us to look at what were some of the things that got reported here: Verbal harassment and name-calling; avoidance and shunning; physical assault; coughed at/spat on; online; workplace discrimination; barred from establishment; vandalism/graffiti; barred from transportation. A lot of these incidents don't involve physical violence. And some of the stuff is shunning, and I found that really interesting.

This is something that we want to think about: what does it mean that the term *hate* encompasses all these different activities? And that hate is also being used sometimes interchangeably with violence. And how this is being used to mobilize tougher hate crime laws [and] criminal justice responses to things.

Another data source that keeps getting a lot of attention in the conversation is from the Center for Study of Hate and Extremism. [We might look at this center as an

example of what] Kay Whitlock talks about [the institutionalization of the study of hate]. This report has gotten a lot of attention (Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism 2021). You keep hearing this percentage: anti-Asian hate crimes have surged 149%. [They] released an updated version, so now it's only 145%. But I want us to look at the numbers here.

This comes from police data of the 16 largest cities in the country. Originally in 2019, there were 49 cases. Now there are 120. And this is obviously an under count because this is who the police decide had a hate crime. This is not all the people who experienced something. This is not all the people who even reported it.

But this is something that I want us to think about: You could literally have one person experience something and then if three people experience something the next year, you could say, it increased by 200%. And so when you keep getting 145% as a surge, part of what's happening is [that] this discussion about anti-Asian violence is helping reproduce this idea of a *crime wave*.

Media study scholars talk about how police forces and policing agencies benefit from the idea of a crime wave a lot of times because it helps give legitimacy to the idea that they're needed. And that can be used not only for trying to get tougher sentencing or hate crime laws, but also for funding. To say: "We are needed. Look at this crime wave that's happening."

Even when people have been critical of carcerality and self-identified as abolitionists, you see a lot of people who are using both #StopAAPIHate and #StopAsianHate. Under this hashtag on social media, and also, in think pieces and so forth, so many Asian American grievances are getting put under this hashtag. People are saying things like erasing the work of women and femmes who do this labor is anti-Asian violence. Some are talking about their names being misspelled or mispronounced. Some people are talking about people's old tweets from when they were 17 years old. People are talking about some commentary or a meme some people put up. Some people are talking about violence they experienced. Some people are talking about being sexualized as Asian women. Basically, this hashtag has become a space to tell a range of Asian American grievances. But this is also helping mobilize this idea of a wave of anti-Asian violence and anti-Asian crime.

And this raises a significant question for us: What does it mean for us to want to share and to want to talk about all the racism that we've experienced? And about sharing the grievances we have? But what does it mean that under this umbrella, people are sharing everything from the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the Chinese Exclusion Act, World War II internment, to being hassled on the street, to somebody's old tweets, to people being killed. There's a whole range of grievances that are here. And one of the reasons I don't use this hashtag is because I worry about this hashtag being part of the mobilization for [increasing police funding and police presence].

And so even if we're anti-carceral and even if we call ourselves abolitionists, I'm thinking about what work does helping mobilize this hashtag and helping mobilize this idea of a crime wave and tougher hate crime laws [do]. Even if we say we oppose hate crime acts. This is why I never use this hashtag because I'm watching all this happen, and

I have some serious concerns about it [because] I've studied and taught about how crime wave discourse gets used.

So, this is a question: what do we do with our grievances and what do we do with the violences that we experience and want to talk about instead of having to bottle it in? These are very valid things that we're thinking about, and we shouldn't have to hold it in. But what does it mean that it's being galvanized under this particular umbrella? And this umbrella is being galvanized by journalists, by legislators, by advocates, and it's helping contribute, I would say, to this idea of a crime wave. And I'm distinguishing between an increase in actual incidents [and] how something gets *messaged* as a crime wave in a way that could benefit the police; in a way that eventually harms communities.

Black-Asian Solidarity: Thinking Through 1992

So, I have been interested in how this conversation about anti-Asian violence was being merged with this [other conversation about hate crimes]. About a month and a half ago, you saw some high-profile situations. When I say high-profile situations, there were situations where Asians got physically attacked or killed and in some of those cases it involved a Black perpetrator. And those became high-profile partly because of the media and some celebrities using their platform and people putting up rewards and so forth. Those incidents got widely circulated, and they became part of this conversation about Black-Asian solidarity.

One set of responses falls under the umbrella of carceral responses that increase the funding, legitimacy, and power of the police; the other set falls under the umbrella of Black-Asian solidarity.

A carceral response would be: call the police, put up rewards, hate crime legislation, and so forth. And you've had some people say, "Well, we oppose the carceral response, so we're going to promote Black-Asian solidarity." Now, I want us to unpack here what this push for Black-Asian solidarity is doing, and is it always as anti-carceral as we might think [by thinking through a prior historical moment, the 1992 L.A. Rebellion.]

So, for years I've been studying the 1992 L.A. Rebellion, and I've interviewed Korean immigrant store owners, and I've done ethnographies about Black-Korean relations and conflict, and I've looked at banking and lending from Korean banks to Korean businesses in the post-L.A. environment (see Nopper 2014).

After the 1992 L.A. Rebellion, [there was] about a billion dollars in property loss in the riot zones, as they call them, and about half of that was incurred by Korean immigrants. And so you saw increased attention on Korean immigrants in Black neighborhoods. That was already an area of scholarship, a lot of times done by sociologists of entrepreneurship. But the conversation about Black and Korean conflict became a bigger Asian American conversation after the L.A. Rebellion. A range of Asian American authors and artists and scholars started writing about Black-Korean conflict or [even] if their entire manuscripts weren't about it, they would reference Korean store owners. Regardless of the ethnicity of the Asian American author. The Korean store owner became the stand-in [for Asian America].

You also saw Black people weighing in. If you think about Cornel West's *Race Matters* (1993), the very beginning of the book, the first sentence is about the L.A. Rebellion being a multi-racial rebellion. Manning Marable had a book, *Beyond Black and White* (1995), where he talks about the L.A. Rebellion. A series of discourses starts to emerge to talk about Korean store owners in that neighborhood, but also to talk about the rebellions.

So, one was the idea that Korean immigrants were abandoned by the state in terms of the lack of policing. So, this was seen as a pro-carceral response: this critique that the police abandoned Koreans, which desires policing in some ways. Another one was that Korean immigrants are caught in the middle between Black and white. And then there was this idea of mutual misunderstanding between Black people and Korean immigrants, and that Korean immigrants were the targets of misdirected rage. And what's interesting is, Latinos participated a lot in the L.A. Rebellion, but this conversation about Latino rage toward Koreans or about Latino rage being misdirected, you didn't have a whole body of scholarship on that.

It became this political preoccupation with Black people's perception of Korean immigrants. And were Black people misdirecting their rage at Koreans or were they really politically confused?

[In scholarship you see the 1992 LA Rebellion being explained through these frames of "mutual misunderstanding" and Black peoples' presumed "misdirected rage." And this lays the groundwork for a push to uncover a "hidden history" of Black-Asian solidarity.] You had people writing about Yuri Kochiyama and Malcolm X. People talked about Grace Lee Boggs. People talked about Asian Americans in the Black Panther Party. You had a body of work that started to look at forms of racial cooperation and social justice; Third World solidarity politics.

This stuff did exist, but it was not the *norm* for Asian Americans. Most Asian Americans were not part of political organizations. Most people of *any* racial group are not part of political organizations and most people of any racial group are not part of Third World solidarity organizations.

And Asian Americans who participate in this hidden history will often talk about how other Asian Americans look down on them. They knew they were the minority in their communities. But what you [see] is when people talk about the history of Black-Asian relations, they'll often go to this "hidden history," but this hidden history is not the norm.

There was also this interesting [practice of cultural exchange around a shared oppression framework], and this was not just academic or intellectual or artistic. You have programs like Seoul to Soul, these exchange programs between Korean organizations and Black organizations. The Korea Society hired a Black woman who used to work for the Urban League to do outreach on behalf of the Korea Society when there were all these boycotts and protests of Korean-owned stores in Black neighborhoods in New York City.

And you also had organizations, city governments, human relations commissions in different cities, who were also part of trying to build this cultural exchange, and basically, [all of this] was [based on] this assumption that when Black people protested or rebelled and Korean businesses were impacted, it was [because] Black people just didn't know enough about Asian Americans, supposedly, or didn't know enough about the history of

[Black-Asian] solidarity. It was also assumed that when Koreans were racist to Black people or called the police on them or made an exorbitant amount of wealth in [Black] neighborhoods, it was assumed that they just didn't know the hidden history [of Black-Asian solidarity either].

And what happened was people were encouraged to have a class analysis of the conflicts; to focus on corporations, capitalism, globalization, or imperialism, but they were really discouraged from having a race analysis about Asian Americans potentially having not only relative power compared to Black people, but also power over Black people. [Instead, there was] this comparative racialization frame [with] people saying, "Well, Asian Americans and Black people, we are, of course, racialized differently. But we have similarities in terms of how we're treated." And you see that still circulating today. This conversation, I think, is happening *now*, but it's happening against a slightly different backdrop.

The Realm of the Structural

So today, you have this growing conversation, thankfully, about Defund the Police and abolition, and a lot of Asian Americans are participating in that conversation and they're participating not just on the discursive level, but on the organizing level and on the actual practice level. And in the process you also have this conversation about Asian Americans confronting anti-Blackness and there's a lot of debate about "Is that sincere? Is it not? Is it just something that Asian Americans with platforms and think pieces are doing?"

But you actually have a lot of Asian American organizations trying to deal with this. Whether they deal with it in a way that is satisfactory is another thing, but people are trying.

People [trying to move away from a carceral response] say, "Well, we'll keep each other safe," or Black-Asian solidarity is a way to challenge the carceral response. But part of the history of Black-Asian solidarity discourse has often been (what some people could see as) disciplinary toward Black people. Meaning even though it's talked about as mutual misunderstanding, there's often this assumption that Black people are misdirected or that they've absorbed white supremacy or that Black people are treating Asian Americans as foreigners. And what happens is Black people somehow get positioned as having more racial or national power to determine boundaries [than Asian Americans]. And so this is part of this conversation, this idea that Black people have to be taught to care about Asian Americans.

You saw some of this stuff going on [in the last few months]. There were rallies where Black people were on the mic saying things like "I want people to know I don't have a problem with diverse neighborhoods." I was watching and was like, "Wow, this is interesting!" Why do people feel the need to hear that? Why do they need to hear a Black person say, "I don't have a problem with Asians." What is going on here that that [declaration] is expected?!

The comparative racialization frame doesn't deal with certain things. So you have, for example, this idea that Asians have been racially invisible. And this is being galvanized right now. A lot of think pieces and commentators are saying, "Well, part of the reason

why you're hearing so much about our grievances is we've had to be silent for so long" or "We've been invisible for so long" or "We haven't been silent, but people haven't listened to us."

And this idea of not being listened to as a racial minority group, that usually suggests a certain resentment toward Black people. Any time a racial minority group says we have not gotten the attention we deserve as a minority group, it's usually an underhanded way of saying Black people have gotten too much attention. Or it's an underhanded way of saying people in power have given Black people too much attention.

[Underlying the "we'll keep each other safe" framework] there's this idea that Asian Americans are vulnerable to American violence because people don't understand our story. That was actually a discourse that played out with Korean immigrants post L.A. People would say, "Well, they were targeted and rage was misdirected at them because people didn't *know* their story of imperialism or globalization or what they struggled with as immigrants."

Now, I would say there's some truth to that. [For] Asian Americans, a lot of our experiences with violence and racism are not given a lot of sociological attention. [Our experiences] are not given a lot of media attention. And right now what you're seeing is this avalanche of grievances, and you're seeing an avalanche of media support.

But we're assuming that if we just do counting, if we say, "Okay, we have all of these grievances," that this proves something. But there is something [else] I want us to think about; it's this point by Frank Wilderson. He says, "Shared experiences in the realm of the social do not necessarily index shared positions in the realm of the structural" (Wilderson III 2010: 269).

Asian Americans, we can count and we have numerous experiences of racism, race incidents, violence, a range of different types of incidents. We have those experiences. They are real. And they often are not given visibility on an empirical level in terms of attention. But we go to the comparative racialization frame where we say that "well, we're racialized differently," but we don't often deal with *this*.

And it's not just about Black people experiencing things worse, which by most sociological indicators, Black people do experience things worse than other racial groups. You can look at all the data on that. But it's about what positionality do Black people play in the social order that organizes everybody else's freedom or oppression?

And so [we must consider] the realm of the structural. If we think about opposition to the social welfare state, . . . we know welfare is used by a range of groups, but research shows opposition to Black people shapes a lot of opposition to civil rights policies that could help all of us. Research shows that opposition to Black people shapes housing values and neighborhood values and appraisals. Research shows that opposition to Black people or perceptions of Black people shapes people's perceptions of crime, whoever is doing "crime."

So, Black people occupy a particular space and anti-Blackness operates in a particular way, where it structures how we're all understood or measured against. And how we're all evaluated. And I think this gets lost when we're talking about the demand for Asian American visibility. We could bring more visibility to Asian American suffering. I think

we should. But that visibility doesn't really undermine this point. And I think that's something I'm interested in, [and] the contemporary conversation may need grappling with more. All right. I'm done. Thank you very much. ■

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