



PROJECT MUSE®

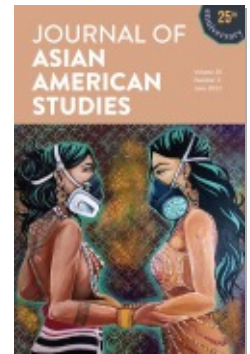
---

## 9 Where is the Reciprocity? Notes on Solidarity from the Field

Naoko Shibusawa

Journal of Asian American Studies, Volume 25, Number 2, June 2022, pp. 261-282 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/859707>

# 9

## WHERE IS THE RECIPROCITY?

*Notes on Solidarity from the Field*

*Naoko Shibusawa*

---

A friend from graduate school, a widely respected African Americanist, frequently tells me stories of facing resistance when she points out the need to be more inclusive of other racial and ethnic groups. Whether it be discussions about a book series, a conference, article submissions for a journal, leadership roles in professional organizations, a hiring strategy, graduate admissions, or even diversity at her university, she sounds like a broken record about the need to consider groups other than Black and white. She laughs about once again having “to push for diversity on diversity committees.” We attended Northwestern during the 1990s. During the struggle to establish faculty lines in Asian American studies there, she had been among a very small cohort of supportive graduate students and faculty, predominantly women of color. I remember asking her why she, an African American woman, was supporting the cause. “Because I’m human,” she smiled.

Nowadays, when she teaches her survey course, “African American History since 1865,” she contextualizes her analyses within a wider understanding of race relations within the United States. In her lecture, “Racialization of Citizenship and Labor,” she devotes some time talking about how Chinese laborers were brought to the South as disposable, powerless replacements for enslaved labor. In her lecture, “An Era of Compromise, Radicalism, and Reform,” she discusses how *U.S. v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898), during a period of deepening segregation, reaffirmed the narrow interpretation of birthright citizenship in the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>1</sup> She can tell by her students’ confused faces that they aren’t quite

sure why she is talking about Asians in a course on African Americans. The Asian students' faces turn quickly from confusion to delight. It can take a bit longer for some other students to get on board. She remembers a particular Black student who seemed displeased; the student had expected the course to be *her* time to learn about *her* people. But even this student began grasping the larger lesson as the class progressed, with my friend weaving in more stories about Asians and other nonblack groups into her lectures about African American history. The clincher for more resistant students, my friend thinks, happens towards the end of the semester when she shows an image of Asian students at a protest supporting affirmative action holding a sign that says: "We Won't Be Your Wedge."

The larger lesson is twofold: 1) race is multifaceted *and* relational (i.e., what happens to one race shapes the experiences of other races); and 2) solidarity is precious. My friend disagrees with the notion that all other racism is simply a less intense form of antiblack racism. Different histories, different legal regimes, and different stereotypes mean that different groups often experience racism differently. She will bring up the example that as a Black American, she never has anyone questioning her citizenship. As she and I chart our own understandings about racial formation, we swap stories from our childhoods during the 1970s—hers largely spent in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and mine in Houston, Texas. She has recalled the tiresome "oppression Olympics" among her peers while attending Mount Holyoke during the 1980s. She has said that she once believed that structural racism meant that a Black person couldn't be racist, but she began questioning that notion while still in college. Racism, we now both agree, is highly contextual and can shift dramatically depending on the power relations in micro-environments within larger structures of power. Anybody can be racist, to greater or lesser degrees, given the right context. But we also would like to believe that anyone could be anti-racist, given the right context. And it stands to reason that understanding racism contextually and relationally is a paramount step in fostering true anti-racism.<sup>2</sup>

Yet I find it hard to advocate for what I consider this anti-racist commonsense in many academic circles. When I first began drafting this essay in 2018, I was angry. Today, three years later, I am angrier still. Even clearer to me now is how a mentality of scarcity renders us ineffective in what should be our collective struggle against white supremacy and economic/environmental injustice. The original title of this essay was "Wrestling with Non-Black Privilege in the Age of Black Lives Matter," and I presented an early version of it at the April 2018 AAAS meeting. My objective was to discuss how fraught it was for Asian Americanists to voice anger, our grievances—not only to the white liberal powers-that-be, but also to our nonwhite peers, particularly to some of our African Americanist peers. I used Audre Lorde's essay, "The Uses of Anger," as

a lodestar, pulling me through my then more tentative analyses.<sup>3</sup> This revised, updated essay is a deeper reflection on Lorde's instructions to academics committed to dismantling white supremacy. A lot has happened in these past four years, but the fundamental challenge I outlined remains the same. I am thus offering the following observations on attempts at solidarity from the field.

\* \* \* \* \*

On Monday morning, June 1, 1981, Audre Lorde delivered a keynote at the third annual meeting of the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) in Storrs, Connecticut.<sup>4</sup> "Anger," Lorde pointed out, "is loaded with information and energy."<sup>5</sup> Just six months into the presidency of Ronald Reagan, Lorde and her fellow feminists in the audience had plenty to be angry about. It was clear that Reagan intended to roll back hard-won gains achieved in social movements since the beginning of the modern Civil Rights movement. After all, the man had provocatively launched his presidential campaign in a KKK stronghold, near the Mississippi town that was then still protecting the murderers of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner.<sup>6</sup> The NWSA meeting featured a roundtable, "Strategies for Women Studies in the Reagan Years," and a number of sessions concerned the ascending New Right and the Moral Majority.<sup>7</sup> Lorde, however, focused not on the anger that united feminists, but on the anger that divided. She distinguished between hatred to which they were subjected and the anger they felt: "Hatred is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction. Anger is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change."<sup>8</sup>

On one level, Lorde's 1981 NWSA keynote, "The Uses of Anger," was another grand call-out. In this respect, it was similar to "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," a paper that she had delivered at a different feminist conference two years earlier.<sup>9</sup> There, Lorde reminded an audience largely of white feminists that patriarchy could not be abolished without also eradicating racism. She had cited examples of white liberal tokenism, willful ignorance, and hypocrisy. She had argued for greater self-reflection in order to build a stronger movement against oppression.

The title of this earlier paper has become a catchphrase over the decades. Scholars and activists have imagined a range of what "the master's tools" could be, but in her address, Lorde was speaking specifically about the master's tool of stratification through differentiation. She pointed out how being poor, queer, and/or Black, as well as female, placed some of them "outside the circle of this

society's definition of acceptable women." She had urged her fellow feminist academics to learn to reject "the first patriarchal lesson" by seeing their differences as a source of critical strength. "In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower."<sup>10</sup>

But Lorde's call for intersectional solidarity had not landed well.<sup>11</sup> She received enough complaints over the next two years that she felt compelled to use her NWSA keynote to address accusations that she was engaging in "the kind vindictive and guilt-provoking politics" that hurt feminist solidarity.<sup>12</sup> Lorde brushed aside these charges as wounded feelings that were myopic and self-indulgent in the face of such greater dangers. She affirmed instead the right to be angry and not temper anger in the face of white liberal guilt. After all, Black women's anger wasn't and still isn't what "launches rockets, spends over sixty thousand dollars a second on missiles and other agents of war and death, slaughters children in cities, stockpiles nerve gas and chemical bombs, sodomizes our daughters and our earth."<sup>13</sup>

On another level, however, Lorde's NSWA keynote was also a "call in." She explained that her anger was specific to her individual experiences and identity as a Black, lesbian feminist, but stressed how her righteous anger against injustice and gender oppression was one she shared with her audience. She urged them to think about why oppressed communities were set against each other. "We operate," she pointed out, "in the teeth of a system for which racism and sexism are primary, established, and necessary props of profit."<sup>14</sup> Because racial, gender, class, and sexual oppressions were intertwined and thus inextricable, liberation from one oppression could only occur with freedom from all other oppressions.<sup>15</sup> Lorde repeated what she and the other members of the Combahee River Collective (CRC) had insisted in their 1977 statement—that a recognition of the "interlocking oppressions" embodied in Black lesbians demonstrated how the fight against oppression must be comprehensive. Lorde and the other members of the CRC insisted that an anti-capitalist struggle must simultaneously be anti-imperial, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic.<sup>16</sup>

But Lorde acknowledged that acting on this belief was easier said than done. She spoke about how she, too, had been called out:

When I speak of women of Color, I do not only mean Black women. The woman of Color who is not Black and who charges me with rendering her invisible by assuming that her struggles with racism are identical with my own has something to tell me that I had better learn from, lest we both waste ourselves fighting the truths between us. If I participate, knowingly or otherwise, in my sister's oppression and she calls me on it, to answer her anger with my

own only blankets the substance of our exchange with reaction. It wastes energy. And yes, it is very difficult to stand still and to listen to another woman's voice delineate an agony I do not share, or to one which I myself have contributed.<sup>17</sup>

Because white feminists had accused her of wielding “the moral authority of suffering” over them, Lorde clarified that she, like everyone, had to approach solidarity work with humility. She asked feminists to stop “fighting the truths among us”—to stop engaging in what our students today now call “woke Olympics.” In sum, she said: don't silence me, and don't just sit there feeling guilty. Guilty feelings will only grow into resentment against me, and that won't do any good for you or the wider world. Instead, reflect on what I have to say and come join me with your anger in our shared struggles.

Today, the stakes in our shared struggles are even more critical. Our planetary and social situations are now more dire than Lorde perhaps could have imagined when she spoke at the beginning of the Reagan years. Succumbing to cancer in 1992, she did not live to see neoliberalism's triumph during the Clinton presidency, the first Democratic presidency to embrace the dismantling of New Deal protections in public and financial welfare.<sup>18</sup> The Clinton administration's removal of social safety measures, coupled with its advocacy of harsher punishments for poor Blacks—“super-predators” in the words of First Lady Hillary Clinton—expanded and fostered the conditions that, two decades later, compelled a despairing and shocked Alicia Garza to tweet “#blacklivesmatter.” Garza typed the hashtag that sparked a movement after a jury acquitted Trayvon Martin's murderer of all charges on July 13, 2013.<sup>19</sup> Outraged, she could not help but conclude that in the US legal system, Trayvon's life did not matter, as Oscar Grant's life had not mattered, as so many other Black lives seemed not to matter as much as other lives mattered.<sup>20</sup> George Floyd's murder on May 25, 2020, galvanized millions across the nation and the world because his death seemed to epitomize the utter indifference to the ongoing protests to value Black lives. As Floyd slowly suffocated, begging to breathe, the police officer paid no attention and kept his knee on Floyd's neck even after Floyd lost consciousness and for an additional three and a half minutes after Floyd had perished.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, harassment and violence towards Asian Americans began to attract notice. By blaming the pandemic on Asians, the former US president seemed to have declared an open season to express racist resentment against Asians. The crisis in anti-Asian racism became clearer to mainstream America after the Atlanta spa shootings on March 16, 2021. The murders of eight people, six of them Asian women, in two Asian-owned businesses by the same gunman sparked “Stop Asian Hate”

rallies and vigils across the nation. The tragedy added force and momentum to the efforts of congressional members who had been speaking out publicly and introducing resolutions and bills against the racism directed towards Asians since the spring of 2020.<sup>22</sup> President Biden signed the COVID-19 Hate Crime Law on May 20, 2021, a little over two months after the deaths of Daoyou Feng, Delaina Ashley Yaun Gonzalez, Hyun Jung Kim Grant, Sun Cha Kim, Paul Andre Michaels, Soon Chung Park, Xiaojie Tan, and Yong Yue.

“Stop Asian Hate” or “Stop AAPI Hate” emblemizes our struggles as Asian American/Pacific Islander scholars and activists. The motto is mostly understood as a call to stop racism against Asians and/or Pacific Islanders by other Americans. On the other hand, it can also be read as a demand for Asians and/or AAPIs themselves to stop hating others. Read this way, it perhaps unwittingly echoes the ongoing calls to attend to the antiblack racism within our communities. Soon afterwards, it seemed necessary to remind everyone that Euroamericans perpetrate the most hate crimes against Asians.<sup>23</sup> Although many of the violent attacks against Asians that were caught on film and went viral had been committed by African Americans, we know that the media overrepresents crimes allegedly committed by Black people.<sup>24</sup> And yet—borrowing from Alicia Garza—we should recognize that “you can’t tell people that they don’t see what’s happening in front of their eyes.”<sup>25</sup>

In other words, even if the data overall shows the greatest number of perpetrators of anti-Asian hate crimes or harassment to be Euroamerican, it does not negate the fact of anti-Asian violence and abuse by African Americans and other nonwhites.<sup>26</sup> It has therefore been an uphill struggle to convince all Asian Americans about the necessity of People of Color (POC) solidarity. It has been particularly difficult to persuade those whose social worlds have been shaped by first-hand experiences, as well as stories, about physical or verbal attacks from Black and other nonwhite peers, neighbors, or strangers.<sup>27</sup> Our efforts to point out that more policing is not the solution to any racism, including racism against Asians, may be falling on deaf ears. If we want to stop hating on Asians and Asians from hating, then we need to insist that we attend to the anger on all sides. The object of anger, as defined by Lorde, is change. But while Asian American scholars and activists can easily call for Asians to pay attention to their antiblack racism, it seems we have more difficulty asking our African American peers to examine the anti-Asian racism within Black communities.

I have to be clear lest I’m misunderstood—and we are easily misunderstood these days: I’m not saying that the intensity of racism that Asian Americans face is the same as the one African Americans must confront. Queer or straight, transgender or cis, Asian Americans hold nonblack privilege in a range of institutional and everyday situations. East and South Asians are well represented in

many of the upper echelons of academia, corporations, law, and medicine. In the fall of 2017, my university, Brown University, matriculated an undergraduate class of nearly 7,000 with fewer than 200 African American men.<sup>28</sup> In 2010, median wealth for Black women versus white women in their “prime working years” was \$5 to \$42,600; we do not have the statistics for Asian women but can presume it was well over \$5.<sup>29</sup> “Driving while Asian” is not a recognized phenomenon (although it does occur).<sup>30</sup> Walking alone, Asian Americans don’t inspire fear—although we now know Asians walking alone do inspire hatred. Still, I as an East Asian woman wouldn’t be followed around as a potential shoplifter in an upscale maternity store near campus as my then pregnant Black colleague was. Nor do I have to worry, as this same friend does now for her growing son, that my children could be targeted by the police in their own neighborhood. That Black people continue to be murdered while simply going about their daily lives—being out with friends on a summer night, returning home after grocery shopping, driving to a new job, studying the Bible with fellow parishioners, playing in a park, jogging, browsing in a Wal-Mart, selling cigarettes, knocking on a door to ask for directions, declining attention after accidentally setting off a medical alert, waiting for a train, strolling home after buying candy, sleeping in the comfort of one’s own bed at night—is why it’s urgent to demand that Black lives matter.<sup>31</sup>

BLM really means Black Lives *also* Matter. Reactionary slogans like “All Lives Matter” or “Blue Lives Matter” miss this fundamental point. BLM has never meant that other lives do not matter. All human lives *should* matter, of course; the slogan came from yet another example when it seemed that Black ones didn’t. The devaluing of Black lives has been extensively analyzed in Afro-pessimism. Afro-pessimists theorize that modern, capitalist societies depend upon and are thus structured by violence towards Black people. As scholars of race, most JAAS readers would find this assertion to be uncontroversial. After all, most of us see critical race theory as commonsensical—unlike those infuriated now by CRT who, to repeat Lorde, “do not share our goals” and are therefore supporting more “death and destruction.” Where many of us may depart with Afro-pessimists is their claim that the structures of violence against Black people “cannot be analogized with the regimes of violence that disciplines the Marxist subaltern, the postcolonial subaltern, the colored but nonblack Western immigrant, the nonblack queer, or the nonblack woman.”<sup>32</sup> I have no interest in arguing against the Afro-pessimist insistence that Blackness is *sui generis*, incomparable at some base level with other oppressions in the modern capitalist era. My main concern is about what incomparability means for solidarity. A solidarity that, as Lorde said, does not render other people of color as “invisible” and render nonblack “struggles with racism ... as identical with” or, presumably from an Afro-pessimist perspective, simply lesser than hers as a Black woman.



Afro-pessimism should probably be read with more subtlety, but it has become a dominant frame to understand Blackness even as some scholars connected with it have disavowed it.<sup>33</sup> Afro-pessimism appears to tap a deeply felt, very understandable sense that in any racial equation, Black people are bound to lose. Certainly, history has supported this fear time and again. This sense of scarcity, along with Afro-pessimism's insistence on incomparability, can and has been read as needing to center Black oppression because other oppressions are not as dire. Robin D. G. Kelley has referred to this type of "race-reductionist position" as "Afro-pessimism lite"—a type of "standoffishness" maintains that the "whole structure of Western civilization is based on anti-Blackness and anti-Blackness alone. And therefore, there can be no allyship, there can be no solidarity."<sup>34</sup>

"Afro-pessimism lite" can be expressed in confused ways, particularly outside scholarly circles. To give just one example: a white-presenting person posted a bold sign on their Instagram that proclaimed, "Asian Lives Don't Matter Until Black Lives Matter."<sup>35</sup> No doubt this person meant to show allyship to Black people, but it sends a very strange message to Asian people, to say the least. But even inside scholarly circles, a reductive understanding of Afro-pessimism has also hindered rather than helped solidarity. At Brown University, our updated Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) in 2021 excluded mention of Asian Americans that some of us had worked hard to include in the original 2016 version of DIAP.<sup>36</sup> In 2016, we had succeeded in putting across our points about the heterogeneity of Asian Americans and the underrepresentation of Asian faculty in the social sciences and humanities. In the five-year update to DIAP, however, our Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity purposefully excluded all mention of Asians, except a commitment to increase the number of Southeast Asians in our university's undergraduate population only.<sup>37</sup> To add insult to injury, DIAP 2.0 was released on April 1, 2021, over two weeks after the Atlanta shootings. Heightened awareness about Asians as a vulnerable, racialized group did not prompt our Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity to rethink the decision to excise Asians. This oversight was also reflected in the fact that the president's office did not consult a single Asian Americanist at Brown before putting out her statement on the violence against Asian Americans in the wake of Atlanta.

Both the Instagram post and the Brown DIAP examples rest on a presumption that the benefits of prioritizing Black struggles would eventually flow to everyone else. This idea seems to be supported by an oft-quoted statement made by Anna Julia Cooper before the Convocation of Colored Clergy of the Episcopal Church at Washington, DC, in 1886. Cooper stated, "Only the Black woman can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then



and there the whole Negro race enters with me.”<sup>38</sup> Likewise, it can be seen as a logical extension of what Lorde had said about poor, queer, older, Black women “outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable women.” Or, as the CRC stated, “If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.”<sup>39</sup> But prioritizing Black struggles over other struggles was not what any of these Black feminist leaders meant. The CRC’s statement was not necessarily proposing a starting point, but gestured instead to an end point: the freedom of Black women would signal the conclusion of dismantling oppressive structures.<sup>40</sup> Lorde also explicitly argued against such a notion: “Those of us who stand outside that power often identify one way in which we are different, and we assume that to be the primary cause of all oppression, forgetting other distortions around difference, some of which we ourselves may be practicing.”<sup>41</sup> Underlying her argument about the master’s tool of divide-and-conquer was that its oppressive strength came from a sense of scarcity. This master’s tool was and is driven by a zero-sum notion that believes that demands for equity and justice must be apportioned.

This logic of scarcity in the academy has prevented a fuller understanding of racism. It comes not just from an obdurate refusal by those who do not share our goal of dismantling white supremacy, as Nikole Hannah-Jones’s tenure case at the University of North Carolina has highlighted. But it also comes from those as committed as we are to anti-racism who act as if they don’t realize that a sole or overwhelming focus on Blackness is inadequate to understanding—and thus grappling with—racism and white supremacy. Since racism stems from settler colonialism and overseas imperialism, as well as transatlantic slavery, an under-

standing of racism as it functions today cannot be understood by solely analyzing antiblackness.<sup>42</sup> This is a point that should be too obvious to the readership of JAAS. I'm only repeating a version of what has been said since the origins of Asian American studies. Studying Asian American experiences does not strike most Americanists as essential in analyzing racial capitalism. Yet we know, and my friend from graduate school knows, that an understanding of US labor and immigration history, and history of US empire—particularly the master's tool of capitalist divide-and-conquer—is incomplete without a consideration of Asian experiences.<sup>43</sup>

Asian American scholars have not been subjected to white liberal guilt as much as Black scholars have. Instead, we find our scholarship dismissed as irrelevant or, worse, as merely indulgent exercises in “me-studies.”<sup>44</sup> The struggle to establish tenure-stream Asian American positions at Northwestern is illustrative. The 1995 struggle included an undergraduate hunger strike. The *Daily Northwestern* was sympathetic, but faculty members generally were not.<sup>45</sup> In a letter to the school paper, a professor with endowed chairs in neuroscience and audiology argued that Northwestern didn't need Asian American studies. Northwestern needed African American studies because of slavery and involuntary migration. And Northwestern needed women's studies because women had been “maltreated for 5,000 years.” But Asians, he claimed, were similar to the Irish and Italians—initially discriminated against but “rose into the mainstream.” In fact, “the principle distinctive feature of many Asian-American groups is their rapid achievement of success.” Hence no need for Asian American studies.<sup>46</sup> Clearly, this science faculty member saw our fields as victim studies that functioned only as reparations, rather than providing knowledge necessary for a more accurate understanding of US history and society.

The Northwestern History Department's support for Asian American studies during the hunger strike was tepid. One of my dissertation advisors criticized his science colleague's op-ed as ahistorical, but also explained to me why he didn't support Asian American studies, either. He pointed to his Chinese American colleague as an ideal example of moving past identity politics since she specialized in France, rather than China or Chinese Americans.<sup>47</sup> He, of course, was a white American male who made a career studying white American males. But his main point against hiring a specialist in Asian American history was that departmental faculty lines were too precious to devote to it. Likewise, another history faculty member, a white Latin Americanist, reasoned that since Asian Americanists were so rare—and we were rarer in the mid-1990s—it might not be ethical “to steal one from another campus.” An anthropology graduate student, now a prominent Latinx studies professor, scoffed at this reasoning. “This is what universities do: they try to steal the best scholars from each other!” The white

historian of modern China didn't support the effort, either. She forthrightly told me that she saw the University's resources as a "fixed pie." To her, the only China scholar in the department, it was a zero-sum game between Asian studies and Asian American studies.<sup>48</sup>

During the hunger strike, I was teaching the pilot survey course on Asian American history at Northwestern because, as a more sympathetic dissertation advisor told me, there was no one *more* qualified than me, a mere ABD, in all of Chicagoland to teach it. It was a challenging experience. The students deserved someone better trained and more experienced than I. The student activists in the class spent more time striving to get Asian American studies on campus rather than coming to class or doing the readings on Asian American history. When I pointed out this irony to my students, they criticized me for making them feel scolded. They were also critical of class readings—like Yoshiko Uchida's *Desert Exile*, which didn't seem angry enough to them.<sup>49</sup> In prolonged battle with an administration they found patronizing, they were angry and wanted more fuel for their fire than Uchida gave. Towards the end of the quarter, I pledged to my students that I would refuse to teach the class again so that Northwestern could not rely on contingent labor to keep teaching Asian American history. I told my dissertation director—a dean at the time and thus institutionally on the opposite side of the student activists—that I needed to focus on my own scholarship rather than teach again. It was true: I had a dissertation to write. Four years later in 1999, the Northwestern History Department hired Ji-Yeon Yuh—who joined by then a growing cohort of Asian Americanist historians in the Midwest that by the early 2000s included Erika Lee at Minnesota, Mae Ngai at Chicago, Scott Kurashige at Michigan, Augusto Espiritu at Illinois, and Moon-Ho Jung at Oberlin.

Over twenty years since those early victories in the Midwest, we still see Asian American studies siloed at both the undergraduate and professional levels. At Brown, with its open curriculum system with no general education course requirements, we see that courses on Asian American topics enroll almost exclusively Asian/American students. At the American Studies Association (ASA) or the Organization of American Historians (OAH), Asian American panels attract an Asian/American audience with a handful of non-Asian scholars, usually white. Asian American students at Brown have pointed out that they take courses in African studies, Latinx studies, and Native American studies—not to mention, of course, Eurocentric courses. "Where is the reciprocity?" they wonder. I asked a similar question at an ASA panel several years ago. The panel was titled, "Unexpected Sites of Asian American and Black Activism: Globalism, Radicalism, and Democracy," but the Asian Americanists and African Americanists disappointingly talked past each other. During the Q/A, I asked one of the

African Americanists, “Great paper on Marcus Garvey, but can you explain how it relates to the papers by your Asian American co-panelists?” In my recollection, the man did not say anything. After an awkward pause, it was one of the Asian Americanists—Cindy I-Fen Cheng—who responded.<sup>50</sup> She could because she is versed in African American history, as most Asian Americanist historians are. In contrast, it has been difficult to get the large majority of our non-Asian peers to take Asian American studies as more than tokenism. Within a climate of scarcity, Asian American studies is seen as nice to have, but not a priority in understanding US history. The same can probably be said for Latinx studies.<sup>51</sup>

But in this political and social climate—with a more pitched awareness both about the perils of antiblackness and its intractability—it is even harder to ask for attention to nonblack racism. Our go-to phrase that we “need to go beyond the Black and white binary” now signifies an advocacy of post-racialism—suggesting support of the very oppression we seek to end. I was unaware of this until I learned this the hard way in a doctoral/postdoctoral seminar a few years ago. Under discussion was historical research by a white graduate student that wanted to make an argument about race and sex work by looking at only white and Black sex workers in Boston and Los Angeles. Why Boston and Los Angeles, I had asked, and why only Black and white sex workers? How can argument about race and sex work be made, I had asked rather forcefully, by looking at only those two groups—in Los Angeles, of all places? The convener silenced me with a mini-lecture on antiblackness. Thinking back on this, I confess I’m still a little stunned. If the work sought to analyze the historical experiences of Black sex workers in both cities, I would not have raised my question. It was the fact that an analysis about race relations was being made in a place like Los Angeles (or Boston for that matter) without attempting to include Latinx, Asians, or the Indigenous. Moreover, my question did not dispute the centrality of transatlantic slavery in the establishment of the United States and the maintenance of racial capitalism. The question was to urge a more accurate understanding of racial capitalism. It rested on a presumption that mutual knowledge of our histories would strengthen solidarities. But during these sensitive times, my inquiry about inclusion was seen as an effort to decenter Blackness, and thus antiblack.

It’s no fun being thought of as antiblack and having your integrity questioned. The fear of being labeled antiblack has, I believe, prompted some Asian Americans to perform solidarity for an imagined African American audience by being hypercritical of Asian Americanists, usually—but not only—among other Asian Americans. Journalist Lee Fang tweeted that Asian Americanist professors were “pushing pro-Peter Liang rallies” and blamed identity politics for “pro-cop reactionary bs.”<sup>52</sup> This was an annoying charge, coming from rank ignorance of Asian Americanist analyses and concerns. Likewise, several years

ago, some students in my colleague Bob Lee's class were apparently unhappy that he used the term "anti-Asian" because doing so "appropriated" the term "antiblack."<sup>53</sup> Perhaps these Asian students were reacting defensively to a charge floating around campus that Asians were "the most racist." This allegation may have rung true to those embarrassed by the racist attitudes of their immigrant parents, even though the claim makes no sense. Although *theoretically*, Asians can be the most bigoted, we cannot be the most racist in a white dominated society. It is not Asian bigotry that stunts the life chances of most people of color in the United States.

But it is easy to be labeled antiblack if you are Asian. In the summer and fall of 2019, I and a group of student and alumni activists advocated for a Latinx staffer who had been unjustly and summarily terminated without severance pay by a new, inexperienced supervisor, a Black woman. The staffer had worked for Brown for eight years as the director of a student center and had won a campus-wide prize for staff excellence just two years prior. The four remaining POC staffers of the center—three Black women and a South Asian woman—were anxious and fearful. Like the staffer who had been fired, they did not like the way the supervisor was doing her job.<sup>54</sup> I was the sole faculty member working with students and alums on this effort to advocate for the fired staffer and to make sure the remaining staffers were heard.<sup>55</sup> I met with the supervisor to get her side of the story and see what could be done.<sup>56</sup> But over the next weeks, it became clear that she would continue to run the center in ways that the remaining staff opposed and that she would not lift a finger to help secure severance pay for the fired staffer.<sup>57</sup> The students decided they needed to protest, and I assisted them. I spoke up at meetings, sat in with students in front of the supervisor's office, served as a sounding board for the remaining staffers, talked to colleagues, and wrote a long, detailed memo to the administration about the unjust firing. The involved students were Black, Asian, and Latinx, but the supervisor erased this multiracial effort. She was overheard saying to a small group of Black grad and undergraduate students after guest lecturing for an absent faculty member: "I'm not going to let those little Asian girls push me around."<sup>58</sup> The supervisor complained to the university leadership that I was antiblack for criticizing her. The dean of faculty called me into his office to strongly advise that I stay out of the conflict. I pointed out, of course, the absurdity of being accused of being antiblack while trying to defend staffers who included three Black women. "Well, I've seen how these things can get," he said as he walked me to the door. "You should stay out of it."<sup>59</sup>

At the outset of this essay, I mentioned how anti-Asian racism is not simply a less intense form of antiblack or other types of racism. Meditating on how Asians have been sucker-punched, slashed, hammered, shoved—randomly at-

tacked from out of the blue—I began wondering about the race-specific nature of hate crimes. For instance, a noose is an intentionally traumatizing racist message directed at Black people, although in far fewer numbers Latinx, Asians, the Indigenous, Jews, and other white people have also been lynched. So surely, there must be incidents of non-Asian female elders being suddenly punched in the face while walking down a street. But anecdotal evidence suggests that it's a racist hate-crime that is inflicted mostly on Asians. A recent study on hate crime against Asians tentatively agrees with long-standing notions that the model minority myth stokes racial resentment against Asians.<sup>60</sup>

Here, however, I want to reflect not so much on the base reasons for racial resentment against Asians, but on the forms that hatred and anger against Asians often take. The sucker-punching suggests a sense of impunity on the part of the aggressor. And again, we can guess the reasons Asians appear like “low-hanging fruit,” as a friend put it, to hateful or angry people reacting to Asians’ perceived passivity, low status, and social and physical weakness. The aggression is also gendered and ageist, and it also takes forms that are not physically violent. For instance, in the spring of 2021, a colleague of color berated our most senior Asian Americanist during a department meeting. At issue was an email the senior colleague had written in which she asked our colleagues to please consider the opinions and expertise of herself and the other most senior Asian Americanist in regards to a department decision about Asian American studies at Brown. She had pointed out how she and the other senior Asian Americanist had devoted their careers to developing Asian American studies, that they knew which way the field was going, and that after decades at Brown, they understood the needs of our Asian Americanist students. Our senior colleague was shocked into silence by the tirade, which included statements like: “Now that I have tenure, I am speaking truth to power . . . Just because some of us don’t agree with you, doesn’t mean we don’t respect your expertise.” Later during the meeting, the senior Asian Americanist responded, telling our colleague that she was sorry that her email had upset them, but that she had just re-read the email and didn’t quite understand— Before the senior colleague could finish her sentence, our colleague shook their head vigorously, threw up a hand at the zoom screen—*Oh, no, no, don’t even*—and refused to listen. This hostile reaction stunned our senior Asian Americanist into silence once more. I could hardly believe the double disrespect—to her person and to her expertise: Would this colleague have treated a non-Asian senior colleague this way?<sup>61</sup> This rudeness, of course, cannot be anywhere equated with the recent horrendous acts of anti-Asian violence. And yet, it seems to me, the freedom to be aggressive, particularly to a female Asian elder, was not wholly unrelated to the sucker-punchability of Asians.

So for these and other related examples I do not have space here to describe, I am angry, angrier than I was in 2018. This anger, as Lorde explained, is one directed at allies. The master's tool continues to function all too well, leaving us weakened in our struggle against white supremacy. Our communities are divided because we can easily see the racist stereotypes about our own communities, but fall prey to hegemonic, racist discourse about other communities. There is anger, injustice, and misunderstanding all around that need attending to. Fighting racism is not a competition with gold, silver, and bronze medals. We need to examine our *relative* and *related* privileges in order to bury the most destructive master's tool. We need to learn from each other, to rephrase Lorde, "lest we *all* waste ourselves fighting the truths *amongst* us." And we need to heed her point that our strength "lies in recognizing differences between us as creative, and in standing to those distortions which we inherited without blame, but which are now ours to alter."<sup>62</sup> History shows that all groups have been implicated in upholding racism. Our past is messed up. The question is, how can we move together towards a better future?

We are tired of wasting energy. It is energy-sucking and emotionally draining to have to continue to bang our heads against a wall of indifference. It's difficult to try to dialogue with non-Asian POC audiences who don't always want to be talking or listening to us. It's frustrating to have to constantly remind whites and other POCs that Asians must not be ignored if we are to understand how immigration and diasporic communities function in racial capitalism. But resentment will help no one. Instead, we need to learn lessons and continue striving to create spaces that foster dialogue and learning across constituencies. Tensions among our students of color today demand that we emphasize the wisdom of Lorde and the Combahee River Collective. I will continue to try to create opportunities for my students and strive to make programmatic changes. I will raise concerns when I think they'll fall on receptive ears and work to create more receptive ears (through those programmatic changes). I will continue to try to support staffers who will never have the privilege of tenure. And I will continue to show up even after setbacks, even after making mistakes, and even after I've been misunderstood. This is one way to keep generating energy—to keep our eyes on the greater struggle, ongoing and ever more acute, that requires all the energy we can give.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'm grateful to Cathy Schlund-Vials for inviting me to expand my AAAS conference paper into this essay. For offering improvements and/or sources for



this essay, I thank Amy Chin, Patrick Chung, Genevieve Clutario, Monisha Das Gupta, Candace Fujikane, Cynthia Franklin, Heather Lee, Arisa Lohmeier, Lillian Pickett, Anthony Pratcher, and Bee Vang, as well as my PhD-undergrad writing group who read it in 2018 as a conference paper draft: Erin Aoyama, Jessica Jiang, Takuya Maeda, Katelynn Pan, Nicole Sintetos, Mark Tseng-Putterman, and Ida Yalzadeh. For wisdom on what it means to be human over the decades, I thank my compañera, Michele Mitchell.

## NOTES

1. My friend points out to her students that the Fourteenth Amendment did not cover the great bulk of the Indigenous—covering only those who were “taxed”—and did not make it clear that it covered the birthright citizenship of Asians.
2. For a complementary argument, see Diane C. Fujino, “Black-Asian Solidarity Requires Us to Think and Act Relationally,” *Society and Space*, April 26, 2021, <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/black-asian-solidarity>. Accessed July 10, 2021.
3. Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* ([1984] New York: Ten Speed Press, 2007, Kindle).
4. Lorde shared keynote honors with her friend, Adrienne Rich, in a session titled, “Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde on Racism, Homophobia, and the Power of Women.” See p. 20 of the program for the Third Annual Convention of the National Women’s Studies Association, “Women Respond to Racism,” at University of Connecticut, Storrs, May 31–June 4, 1981, digitally available at <https://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/20595>. *Women Studies Quarterly* devoted its issue following the conference to impressions of it. It reprinted the keynotes by Lorde and Rich and included excerpts of reactions from various constituencies, including Asian/American women. Their complaints were similar to ours today and can be summed up in Leila Ahmed’s commentary, “What about ‘The Rest of Us?’” *Women Studies Quarterly* 9:3 (Fall 1981): 16–17.
5. Lorde, “The Uses of Anger” (above, n. 3), 127.
6. Reagan’s speech at the Neshoba County Fair on August 3, 1980.
7. See session descriptions in 1981 NWSA program cited (above, n. 4).
8. Lorde, “Uses of Anger” (above, n. 3), 129.
9. Comments at “The Personal and the Political Panel,” Second Sex Conference, New York, Sept. 29, 1979, reprinted as “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” in Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (above, n. 3), 110–13.
10. Lorde, “Master’s Tools” (above, n. 9, n. 3), 112. She explained in another essay how white women could more easily believe “the dangerous fantasy” that they can “co-exist with patriarchy in relative peace” if they abided by its rules for gender, race, sexuality, age, and class. In this paper, delivered at the Copeland Colloquium at Amherst College in April 1980, she also repeated her metaphor about the master’s

tools. See Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” in *Sister Outsider* (above, n. 3), 118, 123.

11. For examples of the complaints, see Lorde, “Uses of Anger” (above, n. 3), 124–26, 131.
12. Quote from letter by eight organizers of the Second Sex Conference to Audre Lorde, dated Oct. 23, 1979, cited in Lester Olson, “Anger Among Allies: Audre Lorde’s 1981 Keynote Admonishing the National Women’s Studies Association,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97:3 (August 2011): 293–94, 307.
13. Lorde, “Uses of Anger” (above, n. 3), 133.
14. Lorde, “Uses of Anger” (above, n. 3), 128. In another essay, Lorde provides a Marxist analysis as to why “difference [has been] an absolute necessity in a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people.” Karl Marx theorized that capitalism relied on a “reserve army of labor” that was necessary to keep employment precarious and the employed seeing the unemployed as competitors. Black/feminist Marxists later pointed out the necessity to add a gendered and racialized analysis to Marx’s original formulations. Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex” (above, n. 10, n. 3), 115; see Karl Marx, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes, repr. ([1867, 1976] Penguin, 1990), 781–94.
15. She expanded this idea in “There Is No Hierarchy in Oppression” in Rudolph P. Bryd, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, eds., *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde* (Oxford U. Press, 2009), 219–20.
16. See Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Haymarket Books, 2017). In 1989, a dozen years after the CRC statement, Kimberlé Crenshaw drew new attention to “interlocking oppressions” by coining the term, “intersectionality.” After another dozen years or so, this newer term has become ubiquitous, but it is still not fully grasped. Doing so requires comprehension of identity politics’ original meaning, which most Americans lack. For this lapse, we academics may be partly to blame. CRC member Barbara Smith stated that “academics who [had] a partial understanding” of identity politics were the ones introducing it to students. “Trigger warnings and safe spaces and microaggressions—those are all real, but the thing is, that’s not what we were focused upon,” she stated in 2017. See Taylor, *How We Get Free*, Kindle Locations 847–50.
17. Lorde, “Uses of Anger” (above, n. 3), 127–28.
18. In his 1996 State of the Union Address, Clinton famously announced, “The era of big government is over.” That year, he signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. It replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). In 1999, he invalidated Glass-Steagall, the New Deal safety measure to prevent another catastrophic financial crash. In addition, Clinton’s 1994 omnibus crime bill included mandatory minimum sentences and contained a “three strikes” provision that imposed a life sentence on anyone with two previous felony convictions. Clinton’s January 23, 1996 State of the Union Address and other speeches are available at: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-23-1996-state-union-address>. For a brief summary of other harmful Clintonian policies, see: Marina

Fang and Amber Ferguson, "Bill Clinton Is Sorry for A Lot of Things," *Huff Post*, July 17, 2015. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bill-clinton-is-sorry\\_n\\_55a83397e4b0896514d0e220](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bill-clinton-is-sorry_n_55a83397e4b0896514d0e220). Accessed August 3, 2021.

19. Garza is an Oakland-based community organizer who co-founded the Black Live Matter movement with Patrice Cullors and Opal Tometi. Alicia Garza, *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart* (New York: One World/Random House, 2020), chap. 6, iBooks.
20. Garza had helped organize the protest about Oscar Grant's murder at the Fruitvale Station. *Ibid.*
21. Paul Walsh, Rochelle Olson, and Chao Xiong, "Derek Chauvin kept knee on neck for 3 1/2 minutes after George Floyd drew last breath, expert says," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 9, 2021. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/derek-chauvin-kept-knee-on-neck-for-3-12-minutes-after-george-floyd-drew-last-breath-expert-says/ar-BB1frU5M>. Accessed on July 21, 2021.
22. From spring 2020 through summer 2021, congressional representatives introduced over a dozen resolutions and bills condemning violence against Asians and emphasizing the need for Asian American history. See US congressional website at <https://www.congress.gov/s> with search filter "anti-Asian." Accessed July 26, 2021. Also see Sono Shah, Regina Widjaya, and Aaron Smith. "How U.S. Lawmakers Have Discussed Asian Americans on Social Media," *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project* (blog), May 13, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/05/13/how-u-s-lawmakers-have-discussed-asian-americans-on-social-media/>. Accessed July 27, 2021.
23. Janelle Wong, "Beyond the Headlines: Review of National Anti-Asian Hate Incident Reporting/Data Collection Published over 2019–2021," June 7, 2021. Paper available at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/19IIMUCDHX-hLKru-cnDCq0BirlpNgF-07W3f-qJ0ko4/edit>. ; Kimmy Yam, "Viral images show people of color as anti-Asian perpetrators. That misses the big picture," ABC News online, June 15, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/viral-images-show-people-color-anti-asian-perpetrators-misses-big-n1270821>. Both accessed July 23, 2021.
24. Azi Paybarah, "Media Matters: New York TV News Over-Reports on Crimes with Black Suspects," *Politico*, March 23, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/city-hall/story/2015/03/media-matters-new-york-tv-news-over-reports-on-crimes-with-black-suspects-020674>. Accessed July 27, 2021.
25. Garza, *The Purpose of Power* (above, n. 19) chap. 5, iBooks.
26. In contrast to hate crimes experienced by African Americans and Latinx Americans, Asian Americans are "more likely" to experience hate crimes committed by nonwhite offenders; by strangers rather than acquaintances; at school or college; and away from their residences. The authors of this study urge further study to investigate how hate crimes may stem from differing motivations across ethnic groups. Yan Zhang, Lening Zhang, and Francis Benton, "Hate Crimes against Asian Americans," *American Journal of Criminal Justice* (Jan. 7, 2021), 17–19. p. 10, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09602-9>.

27. Ying Ma, “Black Racism: the hate that dare not speak its name,” *American Enterprise* 9:6 (Nov./Dec. 1998), 54–56. A self-described conservative, Ma has also been recently writing and speaking out on this topic. Ying Ma, “An overdue conversation about black-on-Asian violence,” op-ed in *Washington Examiner*, May 13, 2021, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/an-overdue-conversation-about-black-on-asian-violence>; Scott Morefield, “‘Is It Really Republican Racists Doing This?’: Tucker, Ying Ma Take On ‘Lie’ That Attacks On Asians Are Trump-Inspired,” *Daily Caller*, March 13, 2021, <https://dailycaller.com/2021/03/13/tucker-carlson-ying-ma-asian-american-violence/>. Both accessed July 27, 2021.
28. The Asian American population is about half the size of the population of African Americans in the United States, but more than twice the number of Asian American men were enrolled--458 to 190. Female enrollments exhibited a similar ratio--570 to 270, Asian to African American. Factbook, Office of Institutional Research, Brown University, <https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/institutional-research/factbook/enrollment>, accessed July 25, 2018.
29. Mariko Chang and Meizhu Lui, “Lifting as We Climb: Women of Color, Wealth, and America’s Future,” Insight Center for Economic Development (Spring 2010), 3, <https://insightcced.org/press-room/publications/assets/> Accessed July 25, 2018.
30. For instance, my father and brother were pulled over by the US Border Patrol as they drove from Austin to Los Angeles during the 1980s. They were about to be hauled into the office, but my father pulled out identification, including his business card that showed him to be an LA-based Japanese banker. Then the border patrol officer changed his mind, saying that the computers were down since it was a Saturday. He gave both my father and brother a stern warning about always carrying their green cards before allowing them to proceed. Class privilege, then, shortened my father and brother’s ordeal. Also around that time, my father was arrested by LAPD officers who, it turned out, wrongfully charged him with drunk driving. Class privilege did not shorten the experience this time. Although my father’s alcohol blood level was within the legal range, he spent the night in jail.
31. Antwon Rose (2018), Philandro Castile (2016), Sandra Bland (2015), the Charleston Nine—Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Clementa Pickney, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Myra Thompson—(2015), Tamir Rice (2014), Ahmaud Aubrey (2020), John Crawford (2014), Eric Garner (2014), Renisha McBride (2013), Kenneth Chamberlain (2011), Oscar Grant (2009), Trayvon Martin (2012), Breonna Taylor (2020).
32. Patrice Douglass, Selamawit D. Terrefe, Frank B. Wilderson, “Afro-Pessimism” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, last modified Aug. 28, 2018, DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780190280024-0056. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190280024/obo-9780190280024-0056.xml> Accessed July 29, 2021.
33. See “Afro-pessimism and Its Others: A Discussion with Hortense Spillers and Lewis R. Gordon,” a talk sponsored by Soka University of America, May 24, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-s-Ltu06NI&t=1s>. Accessed July 30, 2021.

34. "This kind of standoffishness, saying Black people need to just be there for Black people" was not the position of the late Cedric Robinson, author of *Black Marxism*. Nor does it appear to be Kelley's position. Vinson Cunningham, "The Future of L.A. is here. Robin D.G. Kelley's radical imagination shows us the way," *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2021-03-17/robin-dg-kelley-black-marxism-protests-la-politics>. Accessed Feb. 25, 2022.
35. I thank Bee Vang for sharing this post with me.
36. Both DIAP action plans can be found at: <https://diap.brown.edu/plans-reports>.
37. Asked to explain the reasoning behind the excision, the vice president of Institutional Equity and Inclusion responded that they had deleted reference to Asian underrepresentation in the humanities and social sciences from the 2016 DIAP report because the US Department of Education did not identify AAPI as underrepresented in the social sciences and humanities. Shontay Delaloue, email to author, April 2, 2021.
38. Anna Julia Cooper, "Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race," in *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South*, reprint ([1892], Chapel Hill: U. North Carolina Press, 2017), 26, e-book.
39. The Combahee River Collective Statement, part 3: "Problems in Organizing Black Feminists" in Taylor, (above, n. 16), 22–23.
40. According to founding CRC member Margo Okazawa-Rey, "We were not saying that we were the most oppressed. That is a misreading of it." If one read around the sentence, Okazawa-Rey pointed out, one could see that the larger argument they were trying to make was about institutional and structural oppression. It is an understandable misreading, however, since the sentence prior to this oft-quoted one is "We might use our position at the bottom, however, to make a clear leap into revolutionary action." Yet, the lines come from a section on the difficulties among Black feminists and a call to them to organize by being attentive to intersectionality. Okazawa-Rey stated that the larger message is about the freedom that could be attained by all if the inequities were addressed. In other words, it was not an argument to prioritize the freedom of Black women. Margo Okazawa-Rey, "What Time Is It A Transnational Black Feminist Movement," talk to the National Women's Studies Association, March 25, 2021, available at: <https://vimeo.com/567066487>, starting at 1:18 on the recording. Accessed August 17, 2021. My thanks to Amy Chin for this reference and point.
41. Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex" (above, n. 10, n. 3), 116.
42. I have analyzed elsewhere the relationship between US imperialism and racial capitalism. See Naoko Shibusawa, "U.S. Empire and Racial Capitalist Modernity," *Diplomatic History* 45:5 (Nov. 2021): 855–84.
43. And in Hawai'i and elsewhere: Asians as settler colonialists.
44. "Me-studies" is how a white male colleague described an Asian American applicant to our graduate program in US history.
45. The paper's editorial page voiced support even before the hunger strike. "Where is NU's support for Asian [American] Studies?" *Daily Northwestern*, Feb. 9, 1994, 6. During the hunger strike, however, a few students from a fraternity mocked

the students by setting up a table near the protest and loudly offered free pizza to passersby. The protesters later said gleefully that they saw one student take a pizza slice but throw it on the ground with disgust after finding out its purpose.

46. Peter Dallos, John Evans Professor of Neuroscience; and Hugh Knowles, professor of audiology; letter to the editor, "AAAB's [Asian American Advisory Board's] desire for new program isn't legitimate," *Daily Northwestern*, April 17, 1995, 6.
47. This Chinese American Europeanist—then an untenured assistant professor and the only Asian American and the only female faculty of color at the time in the department—was also the only faculty member I recalled standing with the hunger striking students, who happened to be camped out in front of Harris Hall, the History Department building. She complained that it felt "so essentializing" to be the only professor publicly supporting the protest for Asian American studies. She said she managed "to shame" another junior faculty member, an Americanist now still known for her radical politics, to support the cause.
48. This mentality of scarce resources was hardly unique to Northwestern faculty members. Around the same time, this reasoning impelled a renowned African Americanist from another institution—a Civil Rights icon—to reject the Ford Fellowship application of a fellow Northwestern PhD student, an African American woman studying Japan/Japanese America. According to someone present at the evaluation, this famous figure said: "We don't want to waste our precious resources on someone doing Asian."
49. Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family* (Seattle: U. Washington Press, 1982). Some of the activists in the class sneered that Uchida complained more about the lack of showers and private toilets. It was a female student, the only non-Asian in the class, who defended Uchida's focus on the quotidian. "I don't know about you all," this ally said, "but I'd be really upset if I couldn't shower!"
50. Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association, Nov. 8, 2014. The panel's chair, a Black African Americanist from the West Coast, was similarly disappointed because he, too, had hoped that the papers would be in conversation with each other. He told me that it is a challenge to get fellow African Americanists interested in Asian American history.
51. With a growing awareness of settler colonialism in the academy, more long overdue attention and resources are fortunately being directed at Indigenous studies. While there is not as much literature on Asian-Latinx solidarity, we see more Asian-Latinx solidarity among activists. One example is the Japanese Americans in Tsuru for Solidarity, who are drawing upon the family histories of family separation and incarceration during World War II to protest the current policies of family separation of the undocumented. Two examples of scholarship on Asian-Latinx solidarity are Kevin Escudero, *Organizing While Undocumented: Immigrant Youth's Political Activism Under the Law* (New York: NYU Press, 2020) and Monisha Das Gupta's forthcoming book on anti-deportation organization, Duke U. Press.
52. Lee Fang, Twitter post, Feb. 17, 2016, 11:04 p.m., <http://twitter.com/lhfang>. As far as I could identify, those responding to Fang's tweet were fellow Asians, including myself.

53. Some online discussions among Asian students at Brown several years ago before the pandemic reportedly asserted that saying “anti-Asian is antiblack.”
54. Nearly all the units she supervised had difficulty with her. Two other directors of centers quit and left Brown. Another was seeking a way to get out from under her supervision.
55. No other colleague went to talk to the staffers (of the Brown Center for Students of Color, formerly known as the Third World Center) throughout the ordeal. Some instead gave a sympathetic ear to the supervisor.
56. The supervisor prevaricated from the get-go. Because she thought I didn’t know any better, she told me that the staffer had “left the university because he wanted to seek new opportunities.” But I knew that she had called him into her office on a late Friday afternoon to tell him that his job was terminated effectively without severance pay. He was to turn over his computer and his keys immediately. When I let her know that I knew her statement wasn’t true and asked for the real reason for the termination, she stated that privacy issues prevented her from discussing the case. She thus intimated that the staffer had been guilty of some inappropriate behavior or malfeasance. This was simply not the case. The staffer showed me all his performance reviews and communication from his supervisor and Brown’s HR. Also, there was not a hint of inappropriate behavior on his part, according to the remaining staffers and the tight-knit student group associated with the center he ran.
57. A first-generation college graduate with a JD, the staffer had been underpaid for most of his time at Brown and was finally earning a middle-class income when he was unjustly fired. He went from supporting his sister and her family to becoming dependent on them for housing.
58. This incident was reported by a Black undergraduate student who happened to still be in the classroom and also heard the students in the conversation supporting the supervisor’s statement. “They’re talking about my friends,” she reported tearfully to a staffer.
59. The supervisor was eventually removed from her supervisory position and given a face-saving position as an adjunct lecturer.
60. Zhang, Zhang, and Benton, “Hate Crimes against Asian Americans” (above, n. 26), 17–19.
61. I was so disturbed and shaken at this humiliating rudeness to an Asian Americanist elder that I went to her house later that afternoon with a big bouquet of flowers. I wanted to express how sorry I was that she was treated this way. But she didn’t seem shaken. She came to her door with a phone glued to her ear; she was doing some planning with a scholar in Cuba. It reminded me: to have been a vanguard in our field, especially a female one, you had to have been as tough as nails.
62. Lorde, “Uses of Anger” (above, n. 3), 131.