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Microaggression in the Age of "Anti-Asian Hate"

The Entangled Racial Politics of Asian, Black, and Asian American Studies

ABSTRACT The consolidation of Asian racialized subjects into a singular population and minority category—Asian American—is a process that has involved both external and internal forces. While the sociological construction of the category emphasized changing migration processes, especially after the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, from a psychological standpoint the curation of Asian Americans as a specific psychic archetype and a domestic population started in the 1970s during the height of the civil rights movement. This article explores the inseparable connections between Asian migration and Black revolts in the construction of the modern Asian American subject. While disciplinary divisions have curated different histories and epistemologies in the formation of Asianness, Blackness, and Asian Americanness, this article argues that it is necessary to look at the political and affective crossings that have constituted these modern subjects instead of treating them as disconnected subject matters.

KEYWORDS Asian American, psychology, Black-Asian relations, anti-Asian violence, anti-Blackness

Contemporary discourse around Asian American identity is heavily influenced by postwar psychological constructions of the racial minority subject in the United States. As a vastly diverse group with distinct cultural, linguistic, national, and regional backgrounds, the consolidation of Asian racialized subjects into a singular population and minority category necessitates both external and internal forces. The term "Asian American" was used primarily to refer to those communities who could trace family lineages from East Asia and were raised in the United States in the 1970s. This category construction process is often sociologically explained via changing migration processes, especially after the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, which significantly increased Asian populations in the postwar United States. From a psychological standpoint, the curation of Asian Americans as a specific psychic archetype started in the 1970s. Rehabilitating Asian racialized populations from the subject position of unruly foreigners, the psychological sciences have "domesticated" these populations as a racial minority with a specific cognitive style and set of cultural values. This article explores the inseparable connections between Asian migration and Black revolts

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in the construction of the modern Asian American subject. While disciplinary divisions have curated different histories and epistemologies in the formation of Asianness, Blackness, and Asian Americanness, I argue that it is necessary to look at the political and affective crossings that have constituted these modern subjects instead of treating them as disconnected subject matters. More specifically, post-COVID racial politics and US-China rivalry amid the "new Cold War" has pushed Asian Americanness onto the international stage and blurred the lines between Asian and Asian American once again. Rather than analyzing Asian Americanness as a US-based racial minority, I posit that it must be placed in the context of Asian studies and contemporary geopolitics.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the "Stop AAPI Hate" campaigns have popularized the social and cultural understandings of "microaggression" to describe the subtle yet detrimental effects of racial discrimination on Asian Americans. In fact, since the 2000s, the psychological concept of microaggression (Derald Wing Sue et al. 2007), which draws attention to the accumulation of subtle insult to minority subjects in daily interactions, has become a colloquial form of expression to describe Asian American experiences of racial experience. The widespread discourse of microaggression, given its focus on the micro and interactive aspects of minor assaults, points to how contemporary discussions of racial violence have moved from a radical critique of structural racism to individualized experiences. While the construction of Asian American psychology in the 1970s was indeed inspired by Black psychology, the push toward specification of a culturally and ethnically distinct Asian American psyche has produced a specific form of liberal minoritarian racial subject whose concerns depart from previous attempts to address broader structures of racial violence. In other words, Asian Americanness has become what Cathy Park Hong (2020) terms an embodiment of *minor feelings*—neither significant nor legible, and incapable of being properly expressed or resolved.

The inscrutability of Asian American pain has exceptionalized it as an object of academic and activist inquiry. In the COVID-19 era of increased racial attacks against Asian people, Asian American activists rehearse a series of spectacular events of suffering—the Chinese Exclusion Act, the internment of Japanese Americans, and the murder of Vincent Chin—to consolidate a pan-ethnic historiography of Asian American politicization. In March 2021, a protester at a "Stop AAPI Hate" rally at Foley Square in New York City held an iconic sign that read: "Chinese Exclusion Act 1882 / Japanese Internment 1942 / Trump Calls Us Kung Flu" (Protect Oakland Chinatown 2021). These three rows of text express this popular historiography of Asian American suffering through a liberal anti-racist framework that overlooks how these historical events have been produced by different mechanisms of racial state power and how the wounded subjects of these events do not see themselves through the same category of identity. As the current form of Asian American liberal anti-racism continues to invoke early nineteenth-century anti-Asian racism to justify its political demands, compounded by the fact that dominant global representations of Asianness are mediated by US-China rivalry, it seems counterproductive to treat "Asian" and "Asian American," as well as Asian studies and Asian American studies, as two disjointed subject matters. Despite the interventions of Asian diasporic studies (e.g., Parreñas and Siu 2007) or the increasing visibility of the studies in Global

Asias (e.g., Chen 2021), the separation of these two fields often places "race" as an Asian American concern comparable to Black studies, and "nation" or "geopolitics" as an Asian studies matter.

The conceptual division between race and nation, or between Asian/Black American and Asian is ahistorical since Asian American liberal anti-racism is mired in perpetual reference back to the 1960s era of "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power" solidarity. However, the lack of careful regional and transnational analysis resulting from a singular focus on "race" turns this nostalgia for the 1960s into a form of wounded attachment for Asian Americans. On the one hand, this nostalgia risks erasing the complex diasporic and geopolitical narratives of how different Asian ethnic groups became conceptualized together as "Asian American" in the postwar period; on the other hand, it flattens Black-Asian relations through a narrative of "shared racial suffering." Wendy Brown (1993: 390) is particularly critical of liberal identity formation based on "logics of pain." She observes that identity-based movements in North America, which also gave rise to the Asian American movement, largely deviated from a structural analysis of class and a critique of emergent global capitalism. She contends that these politicized identity movements, based as they are on the categories of gender, race, and sexuality, have been subsumed under a hegemonic liberal demand to declare one's suffering in order to legitimatize one's political position. Brown asks, "Where do elements of politicized identity's investments in itself and especially in its own history of suffering come into conflict with the need to give up these investments in the pursuit of an emancipatory democratic project?" (390–91).

The failure of identity politics to address global capitalism has led to its naturalization as a new hegemonic mode of self-professed radical politics, replacing structural class analysis with feelings of class resentment where the wounded subject abandons emancipatory goals for deeper investment in mourning the loss of privilege and even turning toward bourgeois white male privilege as the sole object of desire. In Brown's words, this article asks, When does this continued referencing back to the 1960s become a form of wounded attachment for Asian Americans? While Asian American politicized identity was indeed a radical project in the late 1960s, we must also confront how it may turn into a wounded attachment that holds onto noncathartic feelings as a source of subject formation rather than releasing them for other forms of radical potential. That is, by recalling and revisiting these past traumas and the specter of violence, the prediscursive feelings of alienation and rage from heterogeneous communities facing various forms of structural violence can be rearticulated and invested in the formation of the Asian American subject.

While the "anti-Asian hate" campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic has awakened the political consciousness of Asian/Americans on the issues of race and racial inequality, the oversimplification of Asian/American psychic injury weakens the potential linkage of Black-Asian solidarity. The liberal anti-racist impulse to exceptionalize Asianness and anti-Asian violence has generally produced arguments about Asian racialization as not the same as, but comparable to, Black racialization. As a result, the Black-Asian racial comparison is often simplified or deemed unproblematically comparable via the framework of "white supremacy" yet neglecting the racial power of anti-Blackness within Asian American communities. As Claire Jean

Kim (2022) argues, the Asian American outcry over their "racial invisibility" during "anti-Asian hate" protests, in fact, plays into the racial sentiments of mainstream white society that has been too uncomfortable to talk and think about anti-Black violence, especially after the death of George Floyd and the widespread protests since the summer of 2020. Moreover, the emphasis on "anti-Asian hate" as a form of liberal racism has forced Asian/American communities to create a sense of solidarity under the category of race rather than paying attention to stratification over lines of nationality, migration status, and social economic class. As I will illustrate through a critical review of psychological literature, the creation of the Asian American subject from the "perpetually foreign" Asian is best conceptualized as a form of racial domestication grounded in separating Asian Americanness from Asia's regional conflicts and Black racial subjecthood. This phenomenon can be partially traced to the shift in generational time that has created more distance from Asia. Yet, as the number of foreign-born Asian migrants surpasses the number of US-born Asian Americans (Ruiz, Noe-Bustamante, and Shah 2023), scholars of Asian studies and Asian American studies may need to rethink the validity of categorical differences between the two identities in strictly generational terms. By integrating the focus on history and geopolitics in Asian studies, the attention to racial power and structural racism in Black studies, and the process of racial subject formation in Asian American psychology, I aim to demonstrate the linkage between these seemingly distinct fields and the consequences of treating them as separable subjects of inquiry.

LIBERAL ANTI-RACISM IN PSYCHOLOGY

Distinct from its earlier use of immutable biological notions of race, modern US psychology's experimentation with antiracism was key to distinguishing itself from the Fascist and Communist Other after World War II. Modern psychology's anti-racism posits that there is no inherent racial difference but only psychological and cultural variation, and thus, racial subjects are considered ultimately moldable (Richards 2012). Race psychology, a subfield that was founded from concerns around "Negro education" and advocated for the benefits of educating African Americans in the fight against scientific and eugenic racial thinking in the 1930s, emphasized innate racial differences, specifically in the realm of intelligence (65–68). John Dollard's *Class and Caste in a Southern Town*, first published in 1937, opened up social psychology's inquiry on prejudice research around the emotional consequences of the unjust racial caste system in a segregated society, which was both deeply psychological and placed-based. Another groundbreaking example was psychologists' involvement in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which ultimately resulted in a decision that was in favor of racial desegregation (Fine 2004). Black psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark's "doll study" showed how Black children suffered psychologically from segregated environments and became a catalyst for a radical paradigm change (Clark and Clark 1950). In Michelle Fine's (2004: 503) words, the social psychological intervention in the *Brown* case uncovered how "threats to sustainability" were "built into structures, policies, and practices of historic and persistent inequality." Black psychology articulated a racial egalitarian vision of psychology that privileged the environment more than innate differences as leading factors regarding the achievement gap and drew attention to psychological pain.

By the 1950s, race was considered a core object of study in US social psychology, from both the conservative angle that emphasized racial differences and the progressive angle that investigated racial prejudice (Richards 2012: 138). However, race psychology did not contest the concept of "racial groups" and treat it as a normative category of inquiry, and hence it was criticized for further essentializing race as a fixed population. Led by figures such as Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead with interdisciplinary trainings in both psychology and anthropology, the school of "culture and personality" flourished around the 1940s and advocated for understanding personality type through "national character" in place of "race character," which they viewed as backward and deterministic (Richards 2012: 144; Benedict 1946; Mead 1935). The culture and personality approach, compared to race psychology, was capable of producing psychological generalizability and consisted of a methodological flexibility to move beyond the genetic and biological questions with which race as a concept was burdened. Therefore, it became increasingly dominant in psychology, replacing the previous concern about *racial* difference with *cultural* difference.

Liberal anti-racism in psychology and the social sciences at large reached its historical peak specifically during World War II as Fascism rose across Europe. Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish (1943: 1) published a Public Affairs Committee pamphlet titled *The Races of Mankind* in 1943, which signaled solidarity against the common cause of battling fascism: "White men, yellow men, black men, and the so-called 'red men' of America, peoples of the East and the West, of the tropics and the arctic, are fighting together against one enemy." They argued that the United States could not defeat their war enemies if they did not tackle the issues of racism, not just abroad but at home. The pamphlet steadfastly rejected the concept of innate racial differences and attributed the variations in human bodies to learned behaviors and cultural customs. As Asian people were involved in the US war effort in large numbers for the first time, the authors mentioned the "Chinese," along with "Indians and Mexicans," and reminded the public that they were also citizens of the United States subject to draft and thus should not be treated differently (1).

United by warfare and the rise of fascism, postwar psychology was trying to look past domestic racial differences and create a universal "psychological subject" with fundamental, overlapping behavioral patterns. The Asian subject, one of the fastest-growing immigrant populations in postwar US society, became an exemplary subject of US liberal multiculturalism. Asians were considered a racial minority that was flexible enough to be assimilated and yet foreign enough to still warrant discipline and control. The construction of Asian/Americanness, however, is never stable but entangled with US military, labor, and geopolitical demands. During World War II, "Asian" was not thought of as a uniform racial subject but rather as distinct nationalities. The Japanese were considered exceptionally evil and psychologically pathological due to the United States' position against Japan during the war. The Chinese, however, were framed as much more friendly and assimilable in contradistinction to the Japanese. The US Army even produced pamphlets on how to distinguish between Japanese and Chinese people from eye shapes, facial structures, and walking styles, as seen in cartoonist Milton Caniff's (1942) "How to Spot a Jap." In fact, the United States' lifting of the Chinese Exclusion Act toward the end of the war was largely due to growing sympathy over the Chinese for their cooperation against

the Japanese military and the US desire to build strong allies in the Asian region (Ma 2000). In a presidential address in 1943, Franklin D. Roosevelt specifically attributed the removal of the Chinese Exclusion Act to the war effort: "An unfortunate barrier between allies has been removed. The war effort in the Far East can now be carried on with a greater vigor and a larger understanding of our common purpose" (Roosevelt 1943). The end of the immigration bans and the end of war both drew an increasingly large number of immigrants from the Asian region. Waves of immigration, the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement led by Black Americans in the 1960s eventually solidified a pan-Asian racial consciousness out of the growing US-born Asian American communities in the 1970s.

THE BIRTH OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN SUBJECT

It is in this milieu that, in the mid-1970s, the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) was established under the leadership of Chinese American psychologist Derald Wing Sue. Partly inspired by the postwar Asian American movements emerging out of the West Coast, Derald and David W. Sue, two Chinese American psychologists, published a formative essay titled "Chinese-American Personality and Mental Health," which described a new identity formation with a unique personality type distinct from the ethnonationalist subject termed the "Asian American." The Asian American, different from the culturally and unassimilable Chinese or the whitewashed immigrant, is extremely racially aware and politically motivated, yet is constantly struggling with intergenerational conflicts and effeminizing racial injury. The centering of racial feelings in studying Asian Americans was a powerful strategy for psychologists to craft new discourses of racism and thus making Asian Americans into a new "species," in the Foucauldian sense:

> [The] Asian-American may become extremely militant in his reaction to racism. While militancy may have valuable contributions in gaining civil rights, feeling of self pride and power, it may also make the Asian-American obsessively concerned with racism. He may become extremely sensitive and suspicious. . . . the Asian-American may experience a great deal of guilt and frustration in his relationship with his parents. . . . Thus the Asian-American may feel a real sense of loss. He is trying to help his people, many of whom do not understand his efforts. (Sue and Sue 1971: 43)

Here, different from the "Traditionalist" monocultural subject who only possesses their immigrant parents' culture (i.e., Chinese) and the equally monocultural "Marginal Man" subject who only adopts Western culture, the Asian American is someone who is consciously aware of their racial minority status and is in inner turmoil between mainstream Western culture and their parent's immigrant culture. By highlighting this particular affective struggle and cognitive style as "Asian American," the ethnic, national, and class differences all disappear into a specific mode of Asian American injury that is neither white nor Black. Asian American as a subject position was consequently constructed as not only distinct from perpetual foreigners lacking Americanness but also differentiated from the culturally unassimilable "Asian" who cannot fit into mainstream American society.

This paradigm was especially distinct from Edna Bonacich's (1973) sociological "middleman hypothesis," which characterized immigration as a specific mix of labor migration and ethnic nationalism that led to cross-generational wealth accumulation and class advancements among ethnic minority migrants including Chinese, Indian, and Jewish populations. Rather than situating the formation of Asian American subjectivity through structural factors such as changing migration and class mobility patterns, psychology specifically locates Asian Americanness in the cognitive-emotional development of the second-generation racial minority subject that is neither Black nor white. The 1970s, then, was a moment of *racial internalization* for the Asian American subject.

From the 1960s to 1980s, the Asian American "model minority" became a permanent fixture in the US national imagination (Petersen 1966). A 1987 *Time* cover story infamously portrayed a group of Asian American children as stereotypically geeky, clutching textbooks and wearing big glasses, under the title "Those Asian-American Whiz Kids" (Brand 1987). The story portrayed a stereotype of the overachieving Ivy League Asian American who excelled academically despite coming from an impoverished immigrant family background. It even quoted Harvard psychologist Jerome Kagan, who argued that Asian Americans succeeded simply because "they worked harder." Moreover, the model minority myth has been utilized by the US nation-state to discipline so-called underachieving racial minorities such as Black and Latinx people, pitting racial minorities against each other to ensure white dominance (G. K. Hong 2006).

Since then, many scholars have criticized how the model minority stereotype is simply inaccurate in describing the wide range of class status and educational backgrounds of Asian Americans and thus is ultimately a constructed myth (Lee 2009; Chou and Feagin 2015). Nonetheless, the model minority image and the "hardworking Asian American" stereotype was successfully built into the racial construction of Asian Americans, especially in psychology. Emerging out of the earlier culture and personality school, cross-cultural comparison studies in psychology attributed Asian American "success" to Confucian cultural tradition, loyalty to the family, and parenting styles (e.g., Leung, Lau, and Lam 1998; Nisbett 2009). The psychological thinking of race itself has also moved farther away from the 1950s and 1960s conceptualizations, which focused on contact (i.e., prejudice as produced through the lack of contact) and space (i.e., racism as a result of segregation), and more toward an analysis of the affective state of racial subjects. In a way, the wartime school of liberal anti-racism has already paved this development from the exterior attributes of racism toward the interior investigation of individual problem of prejudice and cultural characteristics. The paradigm shift in the 1990s further shifted attention from the wounding subject (i.e., a culturally insensitive white person holding biases and prejudice) to a wounded subjectivity (i.e., accumulated microaggressive injuries). In the meantime, the September 11 attacks and subsequent increase in Islamophobia have marked Muslim and South Asian communities as distinct from East Asian model minorities since the early 2000s (Fine and Sirin 2008). The category of Asian Americanness was thus further elevated as a unique psychological subject in contrast to other racial minorities, especially Black Americans. Amid geopolitical fissures, to resist the "perpetually foreign" stereotype threat, Asian Americans have claimed a

space in American national subjecthood and shifted its concern toward domestic racial politics. As a consequence, Asian Americanness is driven further away from previous transnational concerns via the "Asian" subject.

UNCONSCIOUS RACISM

By the 1990s, Asian Americans were transformed from a racial population marked by their different physical attributes and spatial segregation (in "ethnic enclaves"; Sue, Sue, and Sue 1975: 908) to a racial group marked by its distinct psychic interiority. At the same time, psychology as a field also underwent a paradigm shift from thinking of racism as blatant forms of assault and bigotry to new frameworks such as *modern racism* (e.g., McConahay 1983), *symbolic racism* (e.g., Kinder and Sears 1981), and *aversive racism* (Gaertner and Dovidio 1986) that emphasized the negative effects of ostensibly "nonracial" psychological injury on racial minorities coming from white liberal perpetrators. Studies of Asian American racism in psychology have largely derived its assessment tools from African American experiences of racism (Wang and Santos 2022). For instance, the widely used Asian American Racism-Related Stress Inventory (Liang, Li, and Kim 2004)—which measures sociohistorical racism, general racism, and perpetual foreigner racism—was initially designed to assess anti-Black racism (Utsey and Ponterotto 1996). While the above frameworks of subtle racism also targeted anti-Blackness in its design, *microaggression*, which describes similar forms of unintended negative racial affects. specifically included Asian American experiences as an exemplar subject who has endured daily microaggressive assaults rather than more blatant forms of racism. Derald Sue et al. (2007) emphasize how Asian Americans experience qualitatively different forms of racism that can be better captured through the framework of microaggressions due to the model minority stereotype that views Asian Americans as a group that has already "made it" and is "immune to racism," unlike African and Latinx Americans. Verbal statements such as "You speak such good English" or "Where are you really from?" can be incidents of microaggression that invalidate the identity of Asian Americans by treating them as aliens in their country.

On the one hand, the idea of microaggression has allowed the common racialized experiences of Asian Americans to be better captured and seen. On the other hand, the framework lifts Asian American racial formation outside of the heavy emphasis and debate around Black segregation and thus the racial infrastructures of space, economy, and class relations, as we saw in racial studies prior to the 1970s in the legacy of *Brown*, creating a paradigm shift in psychological racial studies toward the unconscious and unintended "mishaps" of racist acts (Sue et al. 2007). This shift was not only out of an academic debate within psychology but a reaction to the dismantling of the Keynesian economy under a globalized capitalist market. Critical race theorist Jodi Melamed (2011) argues that under the context of a rapidly downsizing social welfare state, the material demands of equality and radical racial politics in the civil rights era became increasingly about symbolic gestures of inclusion and multicultural tolerance. Liberal anti-racism gradually turns into a discourse of race that centers on white benevolence and sympathy, blaming racial prejudice on those with inadequate racial knowledge rather than recognizing structural inequality between white and non-white Americans (24).

Removed from the structural roots of dominance that have established the racial hierarchy of exploitation and spatial segregation, racism was no longer located in a specific historicized body from a particular subject location—it was simultaneously everywhere but nowhere and could be committed by any person without explicit motivation. Distinct from the claims of Asian American racial discrimination that were still largely rooted in structural inequalities such as income level and access to resources in the 1970s and 1980s, microaggression becomes an exemplary expression of postracialism, as it is more concerned with regulating people's performances and speech acts than with examining the whole of racial relations. To put it simply, through the psychological popularization of the microaggressions framework, Asian Americanness has allowed the production of a new paradigm of race that is no longer "burdened" by the definition of racism situated in the structural relations of anti-Black racism.

While the development of new analytical tools in psychology is certainly productive for critically describing hegemonic colorblind racism in a so-called postracial society, it has indeed moved psychological inquiries of race further away from any serious material analysis of racial power. As a result, different racial subjects, such as Black and Asian Americans, can feel "equally hurt" by racial slurs and harassments, but these analyses don't tell us much about the material basis and class qualities of racial violence directed at different groups. Whereas initially Asian American psychology was largely inspired by the civil rights movements and the development of Black psychology in the 1960s and 1970s, contemporary Asian American attempts to craft a new identity space *parallel* to Black experiences in the United States that is invested in its own racial specificity risk erasing anti-Black racism. More and more elite Asian Americans talk about their experiences of microaggressions and "positive stereotypes" (Cheryan and Bodenhausen 2000) than about their math ability, which locates the analysis of racism mostly in the narrow domain of speech acts and interpersonal relations rather than structural-material relations. As a result, the further internalization of the psychological analysis of racism vis-à-vis Asian American identity racial construction has obscured the characteristics and relations of racial power undergirding US society. This inward-facing psychologization pushes people to focus on the myopic dimension of racial discourses based on the logic of internal pain, which ironically strengthens the effects of racial colorblindness (Apfelbaum, Norton, and Sommers 2012). That is to say, to be anti-racist, we just need to say the right words.

ANTI-BLACKNESS IN THE AGE OF ASIAN HATE

From psychological studies of Asian American racial injury, we can see how the Asian subject has always been comparatively constructed vis-à-vis Black racial experiences. The desire to particularize a set of racial discourses intelligible to Asian American experiences that are "beyond" the Black-white binary have produced paradoxical results. On the one hand, the particular obstacles of Asian Americans being seen simultaneously as the model minority and disloyal alien are addressed in the new mode of colorblind racism; yet, on the other hand, the internal class differences within the Asian American communities are frequently sidelined, and the previous emphasis on racism as state-sanctioned exclusion by Black psychologists in the early

half of the twentieth century is rapidly transformed into unconscious forms of racial biases, as psychological understandings of racism are now no longer specific to a certain type of body, community, or history but are understood as a universalized cognitive-affective process. As Sherry Wang and Bianca Marie Santos (2022) point out, while recent psychological studies have started to gradually pay attention to how anti-Asian racism is manifested in different Asian American subgroups, this research is still largely derived from Asian American college student samples.

The US-based campaigns against "anti-Asian hate" during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2021 have arguably created a new wave of Asian American activism and collective identity for this younger generation. Activists and scholars are linking "yellow peril" stereotypes to the surge of anti-Asian assaults that stigmatize Asian people as disease-carrying aliens. The heated geopolitical tensions between the United States and China also make it impossible to ignore how domestic racial politics are entangled with issues of international relations. Despite the fact that the NAACP issued statements denouncing anti-Asian violence and showing solidarity with Asian American communities, prominent Asian American scholars such as Claire Jean Kim and Tamara Nopper (2021) also worry that the mainstream attention around "anti-Asian hate" campaigns is partly due to the American public's fatigue around Black racial justice struggles, especially after several intense years of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests (Lu 2021; Kim 2023). In this context, Asian American pain becomes a shortcut for white liberals to sympathize with and perform anti-racism while ignoring the radical structural changes and abolitionist politics that movements such as BLM demand. At the same time, we also see Asian American elites appropriating anti-Asian violence to push for deeply anti-Black measures that reinforce the carceral state apparatus, such as the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which was implemented last year. Furthermore, the call for "Asian Lives Matter" obscures the structural reality of whom the state protects and whom it punishes (Liu 2021).

Therefore, to foster Black-Asian solidarity, we must be careful with the current trends of particularizing Asian American racial injury. I echo Kim's (2023) call to locate both white supremacy and structural anti-Blackness in analyses of race in order to comparatively explore how Asian American racialization articulates with this broader construction, as well as Frank Wilderson's (2010: 269) warning that "shared experiences in the realm of the social do not necessarily index shared positions in the realm of the structural." The psychological subject construction that I have explored here mostly focuses on the former, white supremacy, as the overarching racial frame, yet it ignores other racial power dynamics that give rise to both the processes of Asian American resistance and assimilation. To put it differently, the fissures between Asian and African American studies of race cannot be forcibly repaired through a rhetoric of "shared racialized experience," nor can they be repaired through a nostalgic desire to return to the 1960s' "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power." Such repair attempts misplace our analysis of racial power and create ahistorical depictions of the changing structures of racial power dynamics. The seemingly radical slogan of "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power" drawn from the Third World Liberation Front evokes a romanticized vision of transnational Black-Asian solidarity and anti-colonialism that is largely absorbed into China's current

state-building project (Zhang, Liu, and Lee 2022). During COVID-19, the violent exclusion of African migrants in Guangdong in blatant racial terms also illustrates the tenuous relations between Black and Asian politics in the current era (Huang 2020). The Chinese state's discourse of Afro-Asian solidarity cannot be simply mapped on to the so-called New Cold War period. The Chinese regime, in its current form, can in no way be relied on as an anti-imperialist and socialist alternative to global capitalism.

As Jared Sexton (2010: 103) reminds us, the refusal to recognize or reference the significant differences between racial groups under the disguise of racial solidarity between non-white people can result in a form of "people-of-color-blindness," which insists on the "monolithic character of victimization under white supremacy." We must be cognizant that the actual existence of any "shared histories between Asian and African Americans" is incredibly tenuous, if not manufactured. Prioritizing Asian American racial injury without mobilizing a structural and class critique may in fact lead to anti-Black outcomes. We must apply the analytical tools both in Asian American studies and Asian studies to examine the geopolitical articulations of Asianness. Interdisciplinary dialogues and careful analysis of racial power and anti-Blackness are imperative to building cross-racial solidarity.

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