



Dialogues in Social Justice

An Adult Educational Journal

Volume 9, Issue No. 2, Winter, 2024

Editors Notes - Moving Beyond Awareness: Exploring Social Justice, the Power of Education and Solidarity in the Context of Racism against AAPI Communities

Historically, anti-Asian sentiment in the United States can be traced back to the 19th century when Chinese laborers immigrated to the U.S. to work in gold mines and railroads along the West Coast (Gyory, 1998). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited Chinese laborer immigration until the Magnuson Act was enacted in 1943. The internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans following the Pearl Harbor attack, along with the racially motivated murder of Vincent Chin in 1982, underscores a persistent pattern of anti-Asian policy in the U.S. (Suzuki, 2002). Furthermore, the 1965 Immigration Act further shaped the context of anti-Asian sentiment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated anti-Asian racism and xenophobia in the United States, with Chinese, Chinese Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) disproportionately targeted (Lantz & Wenger, 2021). A national survey (SAH) revealed that nearly one in five Asian Americans (21.2%) and Pacific Islanders (20.0%) reported experiencing hate incidents in 2020 (Jeung et al., 2021). This wave of anti-AAPI sentiment has also permeated academia. Law Professor Amy Wax from the University of Pennsylvania made public comments that were described as "thoroughly anti-intellectual and racist," warning of the "danger of the dominance of an Asian elite in this country" (Kaur, 2022). The perpetuation of stereotypes that emphasize the foreignness and otherness of Asian American minorities contributes to the foundation for discrimination.

One of the primary purposes of adult education is to foster empowerment. As educators and practitioners in the field, we recognize the pressing need for comprehensive, systemic studies within the adult education community. Such studies are crucial for initiating critical dialogues, advancing beyond mere awareness, and thoroughly examining the pervasive issues of anti-AAPI racism and discrimination. These issues should be explored through multiple lenses, including socio-historical, cultural, and educational perspectives, as they manifest in the daily lives and work environments of AAPI individuals and their communities.

However, Asian American perspectives and experiences remain underrepresented in educational settings (Han, 2019). Thus, this Special Issue presents selected original research and innovative practices through critical analyses that contribute to the advancement of knowledge in adult and higher education, particularly at the intersections of race, learning, and social justice as they pertain to AAPI populations.

This special issue is structured into three sections. The first section comprises three articles addressing a distinct facet of anti-Asian hate. Jan Adversario's article employs narrative interviews to investigate the experiences of 10 Asian-American professionals both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on their perceptions of the escalation in anti-Asian hate incidents. The study's findings indicate that pre-pandemic workplace discrimination was influenced by factors such as gender and social class. The onset of the pandemic exacerbated fear and anxiety, resulting in the contraction of social networks. Participants expressed feelings of shock and guilt in response to these incidents, perceiving them as a resurgence of systemic racism. They demonstrated empathy toward other marginalized groups while simultaneously attributing blame to both the US and Chinese administrations.

Chinese international students (CIS), the largest cohort of international students in the United States, have encountered anti-Asian sentiments dating back to the nineteenth century. Hou Minghui's study examines the experiences of the first two waves of CIS (1872-1949) and investigates the historical foundations of anti-Chinese sentiment. Employing positioning theory and critical discourse analysis, the study scrutinizes power dynamics and social positioning. The findings illuminate the historical context of discrimination faced by CIS and provide valuable insights for higher education institutions aiming to foster more inclusive environments.

Amid the surge of anti-Asian hate speech on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, the study by Zhu et al. examines the prevalence, themes, and sentiments of such rhetoric from 2020 to 2023, with a particular emphasis on anti-Chinese sentiments. The research uses AI and sentiment analysis to inform the development of transformative adult education models that advance social justice and inclusivity. Through the examination of online hate speech, the study enhances our understanding of racial discrimination against Asian communities and proposes strategies for integrating social equity into educational practices.

Section Two comprises three reflective practice articles, which also went through peer review process as the empirical articles. In their article, Wang and Sun explored a new approach to cultural awareness through language learning and social interaction beyond classroom teaching to respond to the post-COVID-19 pandemic that exacerbated anti-Asian hate leading to hate crimes against the AAPI community. They highlight that the AAPI community must stand up and promote mutual understanding through education. This is exemplified by a Chinese program at a Southern U.S. university that integrates AAPI-inclusive practices into its curriculum to raise awareness of anti-Asian discrimination through cultural integration learning. Using local non-formal educational resources, alternative practices offer a novel platform for engaging learners with mutual learning and understanding of social issues, fostering intercultural dialogue, and promoting social inclusion and justice.

Brian Ahn's article focuses on a Korean American educator within California's Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) who pioneered a Korean American ethnic studies course in response to the surge in anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study also explores AUHSD's history of social justice initiatives and its collaborative efforts with various stakeholders to address these pressing concerns. The findings underscore the pivotal role of adult

learning in fostering collaboration between educators and the community to promote a more equitable society.

The underrepresentation of Asian Americans in K-12 history curricula often limits coverage to topics such as World War II incarceration and early Chinese immigrant experiences, neglecting the diversity and contributions of Asian Americans and thereby perpetuating stereotypes. Lihua Shang's and Lisa Baumgartner's article seeks to raise awareness among K-12 history educators about these curricular gaps and offers strategies for teaching a more inclusive Asian American history. The proposed workshop is designed to enhance historical accuracy and comprehensiveness by employing Vella's dialogue education principles and the 4-A learning sequence.

Section Three consists of two book reviews. Nakia Edmond reviewed the book titled *Black and Asian Solidarity: Exploring 150+ Years of Black and Asian Unity* authored by Love Journey and Randi Randi Bacdi, and published by AMBW press in 2023. Xiaomei Li reviewed a book titled *Identity and Belonging among Chinese Canadian Youth: Racialized Habitus in School, Family, and Media* authored by Dan Cui, published by Routledge in 2024. These two books introduce to our readers a valuable resource interested in understanding AAPI identities and the challenges they face.

References

- Gyory, A. (1998). *Closing the gate: Race, politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Han, K. T. (2019). Exploring Asian American invisibility in teacher education. In K. T. Han, J. Laughter, & T. C. Howard (Eds.), *Critical race theory in teacher education: Informing classroom culture and practice* (pp. 71–81). Teachers College Press.
- Jeung, R., Horse, A. Y., Popovic, T., & Lim, R. (2021). *Stop AAPI hate national report*. Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center.
<https://securservercdn.net/104.238.69.231/a1w.90d.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/210312-Stop-AAPI-Hate-National-Report-.pdf>
- Kaur, B. (2022, January 5). Penn law rebukes professor who said US would be 'better off with fewer Asians.' *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/penn-law-rebuked-professor-said-us-better-fewer-asians-rcna10905>
- Lantz, B., & Wenger, M. R. (2021). Are Asian victims less likely to report hate crime victimization to the police? Implications for research and policy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Crime & Delinquency*, 68(8), 1292–1319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287211041521>
- Suzuki, B. H. (2002). Revisiting the model minority stereotype: Implications for student affairs practice and higher education. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2002(97), 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.36>

Qi Sun
Haijun Kang

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA
Kansas State University, U.S.A.