



## Combating Hate via Coalition Building and Continuous Learning

by Elisabeth L. Chan and Kisha C. Bryan

As we were writing this article, another unarmed Black man was killed by the Minnesota police, an Asian American Pacific Islander 16-year old was shot dead by police in Honolulu, and a man in New York City was arrested for three separate attacks on Asian Americans.

This is too much.

While the global COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the levels of economic stress worldwide, the world is witnessing record numbers of mass murders and hate crimes and one of the largest movements for racial justice. It has pushed many to see “race” from new perspectives. More leaders are talking about racism and talking about it at a systemic level because of the tangible ways that the intersection of these two global events has shone light on racial disparities.

Because language and literacy education organizations understand that their memberships consist of people who have been historically marginalized, they have within the past year acknowledged the need to stand in solidarity with not just Black and Asian American Pacific Islander communities, but any community that has been targeted. It is our position that language teaching does not happen in a vacuum, and that language education organizations cannot be silent. Just as they provide an academic home and safe space for members of all walks of life to grow and learn, they must continue to provide safe spaces that allow for grassroots efforts to promote social justice and advocate for students and their families.

## Contextualizing Current Anti-Asian and Anti-Black Ideologies

Increased media coverage on race and racism has led to discourses, including those leading to a rise in or surge of anti-Asian hate, that often do not acknowledge the centuries of discrimination faced by the groups being discussed. For example, most Americans know that in the 1800s, Chinese men worked in gold mining and railroad construction in the United States, but many don't know that Chinese were exploited as part of the [trans-Pacific slave trade](#) and were labeled [carriers of disease](#). The [first federal immigration laws](#) were created to ban Chinese, including the Page Act of 1875 and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (the first and only federal immigration law to have banned an entire people based on race); The U.S. border patrol was also created to restrict Chinese immigration, which included the use of Angel Island as an immigrant detention center. Furthermore, [citizenship was not extended](#) to the Chinese despite their military

participation from the [Civil War](#) to World War II. During World War II, Japanese Americans along the West Coast of the United States were forcibly removed from their homes and businesses and detained in [internment camps](#).

The perpetual foreigner stereotype that Asian Americans face in the United States has deep roots, which are clearly present in COVID-19-related attacks, such as the [brutal New York attack](#) in March 2021 in which the perpetrator said, “You don’t belong here.” This stereotype is also responsible for [microaggressions](#), like “Where are you *really* from?” and “Your English is so good,” because the assumption is that the individuals are not American and not native English speakers.

In addition, Asians and Asian Americans also contend with the [model minority myth](#), created by a White psychologist in 1966. This myth promotes the idea that Asians are docile, and, because of their cultural values around family and hard work, that they have “made it” and overcome discrimination. This means the community’s issues are taken less seriously because those in power feel that the community has nothing to complain about or that they can be easily ignored because they won’t speak out about injustices, their long activist history having been erased. Furthermore, this stereotype is harmful in the ways that it positions Asians against Black and other minoritized communities; labeling a group as the model implies others are not.

The history of anti-Black racism in the United States has also been well documented. According to the [Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database](#), 12.5 million Africans were brought to the New World. Of the 10.7 million who survived the Middle Passage, 388,000 disembarked in the United States. The remainder ended up in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Neal (2020) argued that, through (un)written policies legislation and laws that systemically disadvantage minoritized peoples (including language norms), “despite the fact that Black people were forcibly brought here and have contributed to every aspect of society, when asked the questions ‘who belongs in this nation?’ and ‘to whom does this nation belong?’, America’s answer has been consistently and overwhelmingly – white people” (para. 6).

The United States continues to demonstrate it is unwelcoming to Black people, whether native born or immigrant. So, though the murders of Emmett Till, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Trayvon Martin, among others, have been the impetus for the fight for racial justice, we must not forget immigrants like Amadou Diallo, Botham Jean, Alfred Olango, Ousmane Zongo, John Deng, David Felix, and countless others whose national identities were sidelined as they became both immigrant and Black in the United States.

## **The Enemy Is White Supremacy**

The media often highlights the history of tensions between [Black and Asian communities](#). In fact, one common narrative of COVID-19 anti-Asian violence falsely blames the Black community for the attacks on Asians. However, the history of solidarity between the communities is often omitted, and the fact that the narrative of Black-Asian hostility is rooted in immigration and economic policies that have historically pitted these communities against one another is often ignored.

The fact remains that Asian Americans, Blacks, and other underrepresented racial groups have been subjected to the same forms of White supremacy. While Black people had to fight for an amendment to the Constitution to guarantee Black Americans citizenship, Chinese Americans had to take a case all the way to the Supreme Court in order to have their citizenship recognized. The historical fact is that both groups were brought to the Americas for labor, but were never intended to have citizenship. This belief persists in today's infrastructures where undocumented Black foreign-born people account for a disproportionate number of criminal-based deportations, Black Americans are being killed by the police and vigilante neighbors, politicians (who are well known for their racist discourses) continually refer to COVID-19 as "Kung Flu" and "China Virus," and news outlets run photos of Asians and Chinatowns alongside coverage of COVID-19 without consideration of the repercussions to these communities.

Between the racist stereotypes both groups have internalized and the cultural barriers separating them, there is little surprise that conflict exists. Indeed, White supremacy has intensified the levels of stress and trauma in minoritized populations. In June 2020, following the murder of George Floyd, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that [clinical anxiety and depression](#) in both the Black and Asian communities in the United States sharply increased, from 36% to 41% (+1.4 million) and 28% to 34% (+800k) respectively, while anxiety and depression in the White community remained essentially unchanged.

To fight for justice, we must work together. To be in solidarity, we acknowledge and empathize with one another's pain, trauma, and fear.

## **What We Can Do: Coalition Building and Continuous Learning**

### **1. Know Your Learners**

To be *effective practitioners*, we must first get to know our learners and create conditions for language learning (see [The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners](#)®, TESOL, 2018). We believe that in order to create an environment conducive to learning, educators must acknowledge the sociopolitical spaces that their students and families inhabit.

### **2. Practice Abolitionist Teaching**

We also recommend that practitioners subscribe to abolitionist teaching. [Abolitionist teaching](#) "comes from a critical race lens and applies methods like protest, boycotting, and calling out other educators and systems who are racist, homophobic, or Islamophobic" (Stoltzfus, 2019). It is always putting love at the center of what we do and becoming the change we would like to see.

### **3. Learn and Teach a Full View of History**

As educators, we should teach about the long history of activism and coalitions among communities in the United States: The Asian American community was part of the civil rights movement, the Black community fought for justice in Vincent Chin's murder, Filipino farm workers were instrumental in the United Farm Workers strike alongside Cesar Chavez, and the Third World Liberation Front bled for ethnic studies because representation matters.

We need to know our full and intertwining histories and draw upon them for inspiration and models of coalition building.

#### 4. Embody Solidarity

Stating that one stands with a community without saying why or showing how amounts to little more than lip service. “Solidarity is an embodied practice. It’s an embodied action. And it’s a relational action where we grow relationships with people in different communities” (Fujikane et al., 2021). We must do more than simply support or stand with. We must build coalitions by fostering authentic relationships built on trust, love, and empathy to ensure actions are taken with, not for, communities.

We cannot challenge White supremacy with liberal multiculturalism, because liberal forms of multiculturalism that celebrate heroes and holidays can perpetuate Otherness and do not seek to understand or disrupt the roots of inequities. Instead, to act in solidarity we have to be willing to put our economic, social, and political capital on the line by disrupting the status quo; transformational and liberatory education requires risk as it challenges the ideologies of White supremacy. Building coalitions among our communities directly threatens the tools and forces of White supremacy, which pit marginalized communities against one another in order to prevent the disruption and dismantling of White supremacist systems and institutions.

#### 5. Continually Self-Reflect and Learn

As with all social justice work, we must continually self-reflect and learn. We conclude this article with a call to action for just that. As dedicated language professionals who identify as Asian American and African American, respectively, we ask that you—our colleagues—stand in solidarity with us by acknowledging the systemic nature of White supremacy and the psychological and physical harm it causes, by calling out injustices in society, your organizations, and/or your classrooms and by arming yourself with resources (see the Table) that you can share with colleagues and students. In this way, we may better come together in coalitions to work together across borders, communities, and lines that divide us with a singular message—White supremacy is the enemy.

**Table. Resources for Combating Racism**

Readings	Videos	Podcasts and Other Resources
<b>Books</b>  <a href="#"><i>Color, Race, and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning</i></a> (Andy Curtis and Mary Romney, Editors)	<a href="#">Black Lives Matter and Asian Pacific Decolonization</a> (YouTube)  <a href="#">Far East Deep South</a> (New Day Films)	<a href="#">13 Brilliant TED Talks on Racism, Colorism and Prejudice</a> (Odyssey)  <a href="#">13 Podcasts that Can Help Us Learn About Race and</a>

<p><a href="#"><u>Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship</u></a> (Edlie L. Wong)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa</u></a> (Yuichiro Onishi)</p> <p><b>Blogs</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>A List of Books About Racism, Films, and Other Anti Racism Resources</u></a> (The Write of Your Life)</p> <p><b>Academic Articles</b></p> <p>Guerrettaz, A. M., &amp; Zahler, T. (2017). <a href="#"><u>Black lives matter in TESOL: De-silencing race in a second language academic literacy course.</u></a> <i>TESOL quarterly</i>, 51(1), 193–207.</p> <p>Ibrahim, A. (2008). <a href="#"><u>Operating under erasure: Race/language/identity.</u></a> <i>Comparative and International Education</i>, 37(2), Article 5.</p> <p>Kubota, R. (2002). <a href="#"><u>The author responds: (Un) Raveling racism in a nice field like TESOL.</u></a> <i>TESOL quarterly</i>, 36(1), 84–92.</p> <p>Kubota, R., &amp; Lin, A. (2006). <a href="#"><u>Race and TESOL: Introduction to Concepts and Theories.</u></a> <i>TESOL Quarterly</i>, 40(3), 471–493.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Full Interview: Daniel Dae Kim On Anti-Asian Violence In The US   TODAY</u></a> (YouTube)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>How Coronavirus Racism Infected My High School   NYT Opinion</u></a> (YouTube)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Jim and Jap Crow: A Cultural History of 1940s Interracial America</u></a> (C-SPAN)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Leading Asian-American Voices Address Anti-Asian Racism • BRAVE NEW FILMS</u></a> (YouTube)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Mountains That Take Wing: Angela Davis &amp; Yuri Kochiyama (Full Documentary)</u></a> (FilmsForAction.org)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>OCA SUMMIT: Stop Repeating History: Asian Pacific Americans at the Dawn of a New Civil Rights Era</u></a> (YouTube)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>On GPS: How Covid-19 Has Fueled Racism in the US</u></a> (CNN)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>The Real Reasons the U.S. Became Less Racist Toward Asian Americans</u></a> (The Washington Post)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Vincent Who? The Murder and the Movement that Forged Asian America</u></a> (Documentary Film)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Xenophobia and Racial Profiling During the Coronavirus Pandemic w/ Russel Jeung &amp; Cynthia Choi</u></a> (YouTube)</p> <p><b>Other</b></p> <p>Article: <a href="#"><u>15 Movies and Documentaries About Race to Start</u></a></p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Racism in America</u></a> (PureWow)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Black &amp; Asian Solidarity with Alicia Garza and Shaw San Liu</u></a> (Black Diplomats)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Blood on Gold Mountain</u></a> (Huang &amp; Huang)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>A Conversation About Asian and Black Racism</u></a> (Asian Americans Advancing Justice LA)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>The History Of Anti-Asian Sentiment In The U.S</u></a> (NPR)</p> <p>Let's Talk! Supporting Asian and Asian American Students Through COVID-19 Webinar Series (MGH Institute of Health Professions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinar #1: <a href="#"><u>Anti-Asian Racism During the COVID-19 Pandemic</u></a></li> <li>• Webinar #7: <a href="#"><u>Anti-Blackness and Racism in the Asian Community</u></a></li> </ul> <p><a href="#"><u>Resources for Agitators</u></a> (Abolitionist Teaching Network)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Screams and Silence</u></a> (Code Switch; NPR)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Solidarity Research Center: Projects</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Somebody's Beloved</u></a> (MILCK)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Using Literature to Combat Racism in Young Children</u></a> (TESOL Blog)</p>
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<p>Von Esch, K. S., Motha, S., &amp; Kubota, R. (2020). <a href="#">Race and language teaching</a>. <i>Language Teaching</i>, 53(4), 391–421.</p> <p><b>Other Articles</b></p> <p><a href="#">43 Must-Read Books About Racism for Adults and Kids</a> (<i>Chicago Sun Times</i>)</p> <p><a href="#">Fighting Back With Books: 5 Nonfiction Works That Challenge COVID-19-Inspired Racism</a> (Book Riot)</p> <p><a href="#">Op-Ed: How African Americans and Chinese Immigrants Forged a Community in the Delta Generations Ago</a> (<i>Los Angeles Times</i>)</p>	<p><a href="#">the Conversation</a> (Good Housekeeping)</p> <p>Article: <a href="#">7 Movies and Documentaries About Racism That You Should Watch Now</a> (<i>NY Post</i>)</p>	
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*NOTE: The opinions expressed in this article reflect those of the individual authors, and may or may not reflect the opinions or official positions of TESOL International Association. We respect the rights of these authors to state their personal opinions and we are providing this forum in the spirit of academic freedom.*

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