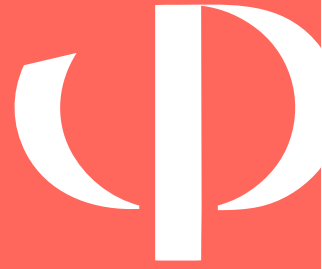


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SPECIAL ISSUE ON IDENTITY AND SOLIDARITY

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relations of power and how one acts on the basis of those relations and to change those relations.

To illustrate this conceptual point, Kong draws on the example of the Black and Asian Feminist Solidarities group, a collaboration between Black Women Radicals (BWR) and the Asian American Feminist Collective (AAFC). That collaboration foregrounds both the intra-minority conflicts between Black and Asian American communities and the histories of solidarity and community building that have accompanied those conflicts. AAFC, Kong notes, drew on those histories in order to define a way of being Asian American that is centered on resistance to oppression and solidaristic identification while recognizing and rejecting the insular and white-serving forms of Asian American identity captured in the concept of “the model minority.”

The papers and conversation in this issue exemplify a broad conception of philosophy as universal while arising from and speaking to situated problems and issues. Philosophy practiced in this way partakes in the challenges and the possibilities raised by the theme of “Identity and Solidarity.” It takes identity as a starting point without being limited by it, and seeks universality through something akin to solidarity, through speaking to and across differences to find and to build “heterogenous commonalities.” In that way, the theme of “Identity and Solidarity” not only comprises a particularly important pair of political concepts to be theorized for us today in light of the particular social and political challenges we face. But it also defines a larger methodological problematic for philosophical inquiry engaged with the world and its problems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ARTICLES

The Future of Black and Asian Solidarities

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a rise in harassment and violence against Asian Americans, and with it, a powerful protest movement. At the same time, millions of Americans took to the streets to protest the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. Both responses belie the power of racialized hatred in the United States. Yet, if we look at the forms of oppression that Black Americans and Asian Americans experience, one notices striking differences. Police brutality, for instance, affects more Black Americans than Asian Americans. Similarly, harmful tropes about Blacks and Asian Americans differ: African Americans are negatively portrayed as lazy or violent while Asian Americans, though touted as “model minorities,” remain caricatured in TV and film and experience the psychological downstream effects of their status as “model minorities.” These differences between the Black and Asian oppressions raise pressing questions: Should we combat these oppressions separately? Or can we form solidarity across these groups? What would be the basis for such solidarity? To shed light on the future of Black and Asian solidarities in the United States, I want to bring to the table three thinkers: Iris Marion Young, Audre Lorde, and Diane Fujino. Young helps bring out the differences between the forms of oppression Asian Americans and African Americans face. Lorde teaches us the importance of coalition-building. And Fujino’s work highlights the particularities of Black and Asian solidarities.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a rise in harassment and violence against Asian Americans, and with it, a powerful protest movement. At the same time, millions of Americans took to the streets to protest the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. Both responses belie the power of racialized hatred in the United States. Yet, if we look at the forms of oppression that Black Americans and Asian Americans experience, one notices striking differences. Police brutality, for instance, affects more African Americans than Asian Americans. Similarly, harmful tropes about Blacks and Asian Americans differ: Black Americans are negatively portrayed as lazy or violent while Asian Americans, though touted as “model minorities,” remain caricatured in TV and film and experience the psychological downstream effects of their status as “model minorities.” These differences between Black and Asian oppressions raise pressing questions: How do we combat them? Separately? Or can we form solidarity across these groups? What would be the basis for such solidarity? To shed light on the future of Black and Asian solidarities in the United States, I want to bring to the table three thinkers: Iris Marion Young, Audre Lorde, and Diane Fujino. First, Young helps bring out the differences between the forms of oppression Asian Americans and African

Americans face. Second, Lorde teaches us the importance of coalition-building. Third, Fujino's work highlights the challenges in forging Black and Asian solidarities.

PRESENT: RACIALIZED OPPRESSION IN ITS MANY FORMS

To elaborate on the differences between Asian American and African American experiences, I here appeal to Iris Marion Young's classic essay "Five Faces of Oppression." According to her, oppression is a structural phenomenon.¹ This implies that power is not necessarily concentrated in the hands of one individual or group of oppressors. Rather, our institutions and everyday relations serve to oppress different social groups. According to her, oppression can consist of violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism. For Young, whenever a social group experiences any one of these facets, that group is oppressed.² Thus, social group X may be subject to violence while social group Y may encounter cultural imperialism. Still, both groups would count as oppressed. While she leaves open the possibility that hers is not an exhaustive list, it offers a fruitful starting point to examine the similarities and differences between the oppression of Asian Americans and African Americans.

Let me begin with violence since this facet of oppression has come to the forefront in recent discussions of African American and Asian American experiences. In particular, I would like to focus on two types of violence: the use of excessive and sometimes fatal force by police officers and hate crimes. As I noted above, African Americans face greater violence at the hands of police officers than Asian Americans do. According to one source, "the rate of fatal police shootings among Black Americans was much higher than that for any other ethnicity, standing at 38 fatal shootings per million of the population as of March 2022."³

Of course, this data does not imply that Asian Americans live free of violence. One form of anti-Asian American violence that has garnered increased attention is hate crimes. By this term, I mean crimes that originate in a bias against an individual based on their perceived belonging to an oppressed social group. As the federal government defines it, "hate crime laws include crimes committed on the basis of the victim's perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability."⁴ Although on average the incidence of hate crimes against African Americans is higher than that against Asian Americans, the reported number of hate crimes against Asian Americans rose by 7 percent from 2019 to 2020, with 116 reported simple assaults and 47 reported aggravated assaults.⁵ During the same period, the rate of hate crimes against African Americans rose by 40 percent.⁶ The uptick in hate crimes against Asian Americans at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic speaks to the biased and hateful associations made between the illness and Asian descent.

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to present more detailed statistics, the above-mentioned numbers already indicate that the patterns of violence against

African Americans and Asian Americans vary in kind and have evolved differently over time.

Let me now turn to another face of oppression discussed by Young: cultural imperialism. Young writes:

To experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other. Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm.⁷

For example, heteronormativity upholds that only heterosexuality is normal and casts other forms of sexuality as deviant. First, heteronormativity erases the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer individuals, and then it condemns their sexual and/or romantic lives as abnormal.

African Americans and Asian Americans both face cultural imperialism in the United States today. Yet, the shape that this aspect of oppression takes is different. Consider stereotypes of both races. Stereotyping is a useful entry point as it is a significant manifestation of cultural imperialism. When a dominant social group imposes its cultural values, it marks other social groups as deviant and reduces individuals to tropes.⁸ More specifically, let us zero in on stereotypes about Black and Asian masculinity. As many Black thinkers, ranging from Frantz Fanon to George Yancy, have said, Black men are stereotyped as hypersexual and primitive.⁹ Susan Bordo, in her work on masculinity, emphasizes that with this stereotype comes the association between Black masculinity, sexual excess, and large genitals: "White Europeans have performed the same projection onto racist stereotypes of the overendowed black superstud."¹⁰ By contrast, Asian male bodies are stereotyped as feminine. Indeed, in "From 'Little Brown Brothers' to 'Queer Asian Wives,'" C. Winter Han observes, "[e]arly European writings about the 'Orient' were filled with the sexual politics of colonization that marked 'Oriental' men as feminine while at the same time constructing European men as masculine."¹¹ He adds that "[c]ontemporary media products also achieve the feminization of Asian male bodies by often juxtaposing a large white male body with a small Asian male body, thus using the smaller Asian man to highlight the masculinity of white men."¹² The framing of white masculinity as normative casts both Black and Asian masculinity as deviant: "While on the surface, the way that black male bodies and Asian male bodies are portrayed in popular media may represent polar opposites, they both help to mark white male bodies as the 'norm' by which others are compared."¹³ Thus, we see that stereotypes about Black and Asian masculinities originate in white cultural imperialism.

While I cannot examine each face of oppression within the space of this paper, one point emerges from this discussion: there is overlap between the faces of oppression that African Americans and Asian Americans are subject to. Nonetheless, my analysis has also revealed that within each category, the experiences of these races diverge. What unites the Asian American and African

American experiences is the positioning of whiteness as dominant. Both Blacks and Asian Americans are cast as Other and are vulnerable to violence, cultural imperialism, and other types of oppression. Even seemingly “positive” stereotypes—think of the trope of Asian Americans as “model minorities”—originate in white domination and are harmful.¹⁴ Not only do experiences of oppression differ, but the called-for responses to these different experiences may also lie in tension with one another. As I shall soon explore through Diane Fujino’s research, the rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans has fueled a call for greater policing. At the same time, Fujino argues that an increased police presence can harm Blacks because they already face disproportionate police violence. How, then, can we build solidarity across oppressed social groups that face different forms of oppression? Should each social group only fight for its own freedom?

FUTURE: FREEDOM, SOLIDARITY, AND NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCES

To respond to these questions, we need to take the argument a step further and study a second feminist theorist: Audre Lorde. In her 1981 address “The Uses of Anger,” Lorde contends, “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.”¹⁵ Lorde’s point is this: enjoying freedom, in a true or authentic sense, depends on others’ having freedom too. In her talk, directed at a feminist audience, she claims that when feminists sow divisions between themselves—for example, when white feminists only attend to issues relevant to them—they fail to recognize aspects of their own lives that others embody. Specifically, Lorde says that when we fail to recognize others, when we silence their concerns, we both contribute to their oppression and risk furthering our own oppression. For instance, Lorde explains that if she were to dismiss Black lesbians who, unlike her, choose not to become mothers, she would be dismissing a part of herself: “if I fail to recognize them as other faces of myself, then I am contributing not only to each of their oppressions but also to my own.”¹⁶ Lorde concludes that we need to recognize the interrelations between different forms of oppression. And as a corollary, we must combat not only the forms of oppression that affect us but also those that affect others.

Let me add that this is a point made by other Black feminists, such as bell hooks. While Lorde, in “The Uses of Anger,” worries about white feminism’s failures, hooks takes aim at Black male authors who focus exclusively on dismantling racism without heeding the ways different forms of oppression coalesce. As a result, many of these thinkers become complicit in sexism or classism, to name a few forms of oppression. Commenting on hooks’s works, Maria del Guadalupe Davidson writes, “On hooks’s view, the struggle against oppression cannot be piecemeal but instead must grapple with the matrix of all types of oppression.”¹⁷ Thus, for both hooks and Lorde, liberation, when not combated in a spirit of solidarity, alienates us from one another.

To return to Asian American and African American experiences, Lorde’s point is all too salient. Suppose, for

the sake of argument, that Asian Americans were freed from oppression while African Americans were not. In such a situation, I submit that Asian Americans would be vulnerable to racism. Why? If Black Americans are still subordinated, then given the history of racialization in the United States, this would imply that whites would still enjoy racial privilege. If white domination persists, then by the same token, Asian Americans would risk seeing their oppression reappear. For example, if whiteness were to remain enshrined as the culturally dominant way of understanding society, then Asian Americans would not truly be free from cultural imperialism and thereby from oppression. And by the same token, African Americans would not be free either. In this case, according to Lorde’s logic, only when we dismantle all racial hierarchies in the United States will all oppressed groups enjoy freedom.

Thus far, I have claimed the following. First, Black Americans and Asian Americans are both unfree in the United States today, as both races face various forms of oppression. Second, based on the empirical research I have cited, their shackles, to borrow Lorde’s expression, differ from one another. Third, if Asian Americans were to be liberated and Blacks were not, or vice versa, then neither group would be truly free. If these claims are correct, then fighting oppression and forging intergroup solidarities go hand in hand. Yet, *how* do we forge solidarities when groups have different experiences of oppression? Here, I will ground my argument in the work of Diane Fujino.

One of Fujino’s starting points is the observation that treating anti-Asian and anti-Black racism separately neglects *intersectionality*—the fact that certain groups experience multiple forms of oppression. We cannot neatly separate individuals using racial categories alone since they may belong to multiply oppressed social groups. For example, treating these forms of racism separately would disregard any overlap between the oppressions of LGBTQ Asian Americans and LGBTQ African Americans. Consequently, we would not recognize the common experiences that these groups share and thus the preexisting bases for Black and Asian solidarities. On this point, the experience of “coming out,” while fraught with difficulties for individuals of any race, can be especially trying for members of racial minorities. This is supported by evidence that non-White individuals are less likely than Whites to come out to parents and more likely to experience depression.¹⁸ In this example, treating African American and Asian American oppressions as neatly separate would prevent us from understanding the commonalities in these groups’ experiences of anti-LGBTQ oppression and the solidarity that they could forge from their shared experiences. More generally, if we neglect intersectionality and overlook similarities between Black and Asian American experiences of oppression, then we are left with an impoverished understanding of Black and Asian solidarities.

Building on this observation, Fujino makes a noteworthy point about policy. She asserts that taking intersectionality into account implies prioritizing the experiences of the most vulnerable groups. She rightly points out that we should shun any idea of “oppression Olympics”—that is, the ranking of different groups as more oppressed than

others. Nevertheless, we may need to organize our activism in a way that recognizes intersectionality and starts with those groups that are most disadvantaged. Take the case of sexual violence. This is a form of violence that affects Black and Asian women, among other populations. As we know, Black trans women are a particularly vulnerable population. According to the Human Rights Campaign's 2020 report on violence against trans and gender-non-conforming individuals, the "epidemic [of anti-trans violence] disproportionately impacts Black transgender women, who comprise 66% of all victims of fatal violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people."¹⁹ And as the shooting of six women of Asian descent in 2021 in Atlanta demonstrates, sexual and racial violence also come together for Asian Americans. If we take Fujino's point on board, then forging Black and Asian solidarities would involve bringing to the fore and finding solutions to these different forms of sexual violence. This is not to disregard other types of oppression and the need to combat them. However, it is to say that these instances of violence are especially alarming and demand our attention. In sum, when we take intersectionality into account, we gain a better sense of the vulnerabilities of groups that are multiply oppressed.

In addition to intersectionality, Fujino contends that we need to consider the *structural nature of oppression*—a point that dovetails with my earlier discussion of Young. For Fujino, when we think of oppression in structural terms, we can better understand the sources of different forms of oppression and better appreciate the challenges in combating them. Instead of targeting instances of oppression piecemeal, we can grasp their underlying logic and craft more sophisticated solutions to them. Consider the cases of police brutality against African Americans and military interventions in Asian countries.

With regard to police violence, let me return to a problem that I alluded to earlier: the tension between addressing hate crimes and leaving certain communities vulnerable to police brutality. Commenting on the idea of hate crimes, Fujino claims, "the narrative of 'hate crimes' fosters a problematic focus on the individual—their attitudes, feelings, bigotry—and thus erases the structural violence of policing, militarism, White supremacy, racialized heteropatriarchy and more that fuel individual attacks."²⁰ If we focus on addressing anti-Asian hate crimes by increasing police and thus better targeting individual perpetrators of such racism, we risk solidifying an institution—the police system—that harms African Americans more than any other race. And this is a point to which some Asian Americans have become increasingly sensitive. As *The New York Times* has recently reported, there is a growing rift between older Asian Americans, who favor increasing police presence in areas affected by anti-Asian hate crimes, and younger Asian Americans, who want to find solutions outside of traditional policing, such as addressing homelessness and mental health issues.²¹ The question raised, then, is how to protect marginalized groups from violence while acknowledging the realities of police brutality. While there is no easy answer to this question, the point is that by thinking of violence against Asian Americans structurally rather than at a surface level, we can recognize the broader

context of these forms of violence and the probable effects of different solutions to them.

On a similar note, Fujino suggests that US militarism is another institution that perpetuates racism. She shows that military interventions may be linked to violence against Asian Americans by appealing to the work of Christine Ahn, Terry Park, and Kathleen Richards. In "Anti-Asian Violence in America Is Rooted in US Empire," these authors explain that military interventions in Asian countries have destroyed lives, torn families apart, and impoverished communities. They add that "Asian women are particularly harmed by US militarism and foreign policy—economically, socially, and physically."²² For example, prostitution around US military camps in Korea has contributed to the exploitation and exoticization of Asian women overseas. These phenomena have had implications in the United States: "as the US military steadily reduced its troop presence in Asia, camptown establishments, facing social upheaval and economic uncertainty, began sending their madams and sex workers to US domestic military sites through brokered marriages with US servicemen."²³ This argument helps make sense of the Atlanta shootings. Instead of focusing on the bigotry and sexual repression of one individual, we need to step back and examine the conditions that lay the ground for such tragedies.

These observations about US militarism not only shed light on anti-Asian sentiment but also relate to my earlier points about police brutality. All in all, we need to target structural issues when dismantling racial oppressions. Racism—whether anti-Black or anti-Asian—is not merely a matter of individual hatred or bias; rather, it is sustained by institutions.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF BLACK AND ASIAN SOLIDARITIES

Let me conclude by reviewing some of the main points of this paper. To begin, by drawing on Young, I described how Asian Americans and African Americans experience forms of oppression that are both similar and different. For example, both groups face cultural imperialism, but the tropes about Asian Americans and those about African Americans diverge. Moreover, by appealing to Lorde, I claimed that we ought not to treat these forms of racism separately. Instead, we should think that the freedom from oppression of one group is connected to the freedom from oppression of another group. Finally, using Fujino's work, I have argued that part of the task of resisting these forms of racism will lie in prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable groups and recognizing the structural nature of oppression. Thus, the future of Black and Asian solidarities will lie in greater attention to intersectionality and structural racism. To be sure, we will face challenges in building coalitions since anti-Black and anti-Asian oppressions differ. But this is no excuse to abandon solidarity; rather, the need to combat race-based forms of oppression becomes all the more pressing.

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Acknowledging Intra-Minority Conflict, towards Heterogenous Commonality

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ABSTRACT

In light of the recent reports of increased rates of hate crimes, especially violent hate crimes, against Asian Americans, this paper examines intra-minority conflict. This paper focuses on intra-minority conflict because the videos that dominate incidences of violence against Asian Americans feature a young black male. White men still perpetuate the majority of the violence against Asian Americans, about 75 percent.¹ Yet, there is a tendency in the United States to focus on intra-minority conflict. Intra-minority violence comprises about 25 percent of anti-Asian hate crimes. This paper aims for developing solidarity among minority groups to work to counter such strategies of divide and conquer. This paper explores the intersectionality of race and class as the lens to better understand the intra-minority conflict and aims toward developing a heterogenous commonality among identity groups. Keeping in mind that the experience of one marginality does not guarantee understanding the experience of another marginal position, how can we promote recognizing our internal heterogeneity or heterogenous commonality?

INTRODUCTION

Considering the recent reports of increased rates of hate crimes, especially violent hate crimes, against Asian Americans, I am motivated to think about intra-minority conflict. I focus on intra-minority conflict because the videos that dominate incidences of violence against Asian Americans feature a young black male. White men still perpetuate most of the violence against Asian Americans, about 75 percent.² Yet, there is a tendency in the United States to focus on intra-minority conflict.

This focus coheres with a history in the West of promoting images of African American men as violent. I focus on this intra-minority conflict because 25 percent of anti-Asian hate crimes constitute intra-minority violence. I aim towards more solidarity among minority groups to work towards countering such strategies of divide and conquer.

PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

Let me begin with a broader picture of hate crimes in the United States. As much as the current focus is on anti-Asian American hate crimes in the wake of COVID-19 and the horrible naming and handling of the pandemic by the former president of the United States, I recognize that Asian Americans do not represent the predominant recipients of hate crimes. In 2019, "58 percent of reported hate crimes were motivated by anti-Black bias, while a far smaller proportion, 4 percent, were motivated by anti-Asian bias. About 14 percent were motivated by anti-Latino bias."³ And although Stop AAPI Hate's numbers list that, in 2020, the number of self-reported incidents of racially motivated attacks was 9,081, these numbers were from 2019 to 2020,