

TRIGGER WARNING: Violence Against South Asians

Invisibility K

In the colonizer's attempt to "create a voice" for the subaltern, the colonizer starts to speak OVER them. Institutions cannot help the subaltern because there is too much space between the subaltern and the institution. Ross '10

Eleanor Ross, "Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflection," University of Nottingham. 2009-2010.
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/documents/innervate/09-10/0910rosssubaltern.pdf> (A.B.)

As Spivak warns, in the discourse on sati, **'One never encounters the testimony of the women's voice-consciousness'.** It must be remembered that however realistic the **widows' 'voices'** may seem, they **are merely representations**, created and **framed by a Western perspective**. Despite Sleeman's assurance that, 'the reader may rely upon the truth of the whole tale', the quintessential 'truth' of the widow's words may be lost in his translation, or even politically slanted; as a figure who represents British authority in India, **Sleeman debatably has a political agenda to protect the image of British presence in India.** Thus **a fissure emerges, creating a chasm between the 'true' history of the colonized and the myriad of 'invented' discourses by the colonizer.** This is exemplified in the sati poems in which there is a discrepancy between the poets' depictions of the sati's attire. Whilst Landon and Jewsbury clad their widows in 'the white veil' and 'the bridal veil' respectively, Roberts' widow has an "unveiled face". **The Western perspective, then, is crucially superior to that of the subaltern: those with the power to speak speak for those who cannot. Yet Mukherjee identifies this as a problem in Untouchable: 'This caste and class distance between the writer and the people he [they] represents results in the erasure in the novel of the voice of the untouchable community.'** The sati writers' 'imperial eyes' and Anand's Western education supersede and **quash the perspective of the subaltern for whom they ironically attempt to create a voice.** Emma Roberts employs direct quotations to give a 'voice' to the two widows in "The Rajah's Obsequies". However, Stephen Morton alerts us to the adverse effect of this: **'the benevolent impulse to represent subaltern groups effectively appropriates the voice of the subaltern and thereby silences them.'*** In the same way that the **'benevolent' colonizer, by prohibiting sati, 'silenced' the voice of the widow who 'chooses' to die on her husband's funeral pyre, the examined sati writers 'silence' the subaltern woman by claiming to represent and to speak for her experience. In terms of colonial discourse, then, white men are not 'saving brown women from brown men'; rather, they are hampering their freedom to speak.**

Asian women are historically ignored in the fight for justice – expressions of solidarity routinely ignore the plights of Asian women. Yamada '79

Invisibility Is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman. Yamada, Mitsuye Bridge, An Asian American Perspective, v7 n1 p11-13 Spr 1979

Last year for the Asian segment of the Ethnic American Literature course I was teaching, I selected a new anthology entitled Aiiieeeee! compiled by a group of outspoken Asian American writers. During the discussion of the long but thought-provoking introduction to this anthology, **one of my students blurted out that she was offended by its militant tone and that as a white person she was tired of always being blamed for the oppression of all the minorities.** I noticed several of her classmates; eyes nodding in tacit agreement. A discussion of the “militant” voices in some of the other writings we had read in the course ensued. Surely, I pointed out, some of these other writings have been just as, if not more, militant as the words in this introduction? Had they been offended by those also but failed to express their feelings about them? To my surprise, **they said they were not offended by any of the Black American, Chicano or American Indian writings,** but were hard-pressed to explain why when I asked for an explanation. A little further discussion revealed that **they “understood” the anger expressed by the Black and Chicanos and they “empathized” with the frustrations and sorrow expressed by the American Indian.** But the Asian Americans?? Then finally, one student said it for all of them: **“It made me angry. Their anger made me angry, because I didn’t even know the Asian Americans felt oppressed. I didn’t expect their anger.”** In this age when women are clearly making themselves visible on all fronts, **I, an Asian American woman, am still functioning as a front for those feminists; and therefore invisible.** The realization of this sinks in slowly. **Asian Americans** as a whole **are finally coming to claim their own, demanding that they be included in the multicultural history** of our country. I like to think, in spite of my administrator’s myopia, that the most stereotyped minority of them all, the Asian American woman, is just now emerging to become part of that group. **It took forever. Perhaps it is important to ask ourselves why it took so long.** We should ask ourselves this question just when we think we are emerging as a viable minority in the fabric of our society. I should add to my student’s words, “because I didn’t even know they felt oppressed,” that it took this long because we Asian American women have not admitted to ourselves that we were oppressed. **We, the visible minority that is invisible.**

South Asian Americans are “symbolically annihilated” and erased from history. Caswell '14

Caswell, Michelle. “Seeing Yourself in History.” The Public Historian, vol. 36, no. 4, 1 Nov. 2014, pp. 26–37, online.ucpress.edu/tph/article/36/4/26/89418/Seeing-Yourself-in-HistoryCommunity-Archives-and, 10.1525/tph.2014.36.4.26. Accessed 19 Nov. 2021.

Despite the historical significance of these little-known stories, only a **few museums** ever had **organized exhibitions on South Asian Americans** and no archival repository was systematically collecting materials related to South Asian American history. None even had South Asian American history as a collecting priority. Searching through archives, Mallick did not see himself or his community reflected. It was as if **South Asian Americans** had been **symbolically annihilated.**

Symbolic annihilation, a concept first developed by feminist media scholars in the 1970s, **describes what happens to members of marginalized groups when they are absent, grossly under-represented, maligned, or trivialized by mainstream** television programming, news outlets, and magazine coverage. Applying this concept to the archival realm, Mallick and I found that **American repositories** were **ignoring** or overlooking materials that document **South Asian American history**, **treating the community** simply **as if did not exist**, despite the fact that there are currently almost 3.5 million South Asians in the United States and that one in every one hundred Americans can trace their lineage back to South Asia. For us, the archival absence was astounding. Power is central to this conversation; the need to uncover and provide a platform for previously marginalized voices distinguishes community archives from local geographically based historical societies. Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd's findings that political activism, community empowerment, and social change were prime motivating factors undergirding these fiercely independent archival efforts confirm this. Indeed, the creation of community archives can be seen as a form of political protest in that it is an attempt to seize the means by which history is written and to correct or amend dominant stories about the past. Flinn and Stevens assert: **"The endeavor by individuals and social groups to document their history, particularly if that history has been generally subordinated or marginalized, is political and subversive. These 'recast' histories and their making challenge and seek to undermine both the distortions and omissions of orthodox historical narratives, as well as the archive and heritage collections that sustain them."** In this way, community archives are responses not only to the omissions of history as the official story written by a guild of professional historians, but the omissions of memory institutions writ large, and can thus be read as a direct challenge to the failure of mainstream repositories to collect a more accurate and robust representation of society

Model Minority puts Asian American Women in a double bind which renders them as invisible to society. - Lee '14

Lee, Emily S. "The Ambiguous Practices of the Inauthentic Asian American Woman." *Hypatia*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2014, pp. 146–163, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/hypatia/article/abs/ambiguous-practices-of-the-inauthentic-asian-american-woman/4404F724545260C0B097455FCFC31FCC, 10.1111/hypa.12070. Accessed 18 Nov. 2021.

First, the identification of the Asian American community as the model minority applauds their ability to climb the economic ladder and to harness the opportunities of capitalism. Such ascendance in class requires cultural assimilation. Minority populations regard assimilation with suspicion because assimilation does not simply mean adjusting well to the culture of the United States, but covertly entails neglecting, if not abandoning, the practices of one's cultures of origin and conforming to the practices of the majority culture. In the United States, this is the culture of whites. As such, Sarah Ahmed writes, "you can move up only by approximating the habitus of the white bourgeois body" (Ahmed 2007, 138). Climbing the economic ladder constitutes the definition of success in the United States. Hence the depiction of Asian Americans as successful immigrants for economically advancing—for assimilating—implies applauding them for giving up their ethnic cultural practices in order to survive if not thrive in this new country. Essentially, Asian Americans sell out. The assimilation demanded for economic upward mobility results in the invisibility of Asian Americans. Arisaka writes, "[i]f they are assimilated, they are invisible as a group in the dominant culture as well as to the oppositional, 'racial minority' cultures" (Arisaka 2000, 214).¹¹ Scholars of Asian American studies have written extensively on invisibility as a regularly occurring phenomenon specifically of the Asian American community as a minority community in the United States (Yamada 1983). The possibility of achieving a sense of authenticity appears dim among these model minority but cultural "sellouts" in this condition of invisibility. Alternatively, the Asian American community is identified with persisting strong ties to their cultures of origin, so much so that they face accusations of insular, isolationist practices. Under this identification, because of their isolationist practices, Asian Americans lag behind in political participation in the United States. The insularity of the Asian American community has been pointed to as ultimately one of the reasons, if not the main reason, for inter-minority conflict, particularly in the analyses of the Los Angeles riots of 1992. So, in contrast to the invisibility of the assimilationist Asian Americans, the isolationist Asian Americans facilitate their own exoticism and their own hyper-visibility. Who are these isolationist Asian Americans? If the assimilated Asian Americans are economically upwardly mobile, then the isolationist Asian Americans must be the less economically mobile—those likely to live in poverty. For after all, within these circumstances, **if economic mobility requires assimilation, those who do not assimilate cannot participate in upward mobility.** Here I want to point out that **because women** (especially women with hyphenated identities or from immigrant communities) **are perceived as responsible for keeping alive their culture and** so are more often burdened with continuing the practices of their cultures of origin, **these isolationist poor Asian Americans are likely to comprise a specific gender—women.**¹² In failing as a model minority, these isolationist, poor Asian American women, also face dim prospects of achieving a sense of authenticity. These **two close identifications and over-determinations of the Asian American community lead to a dichotomous framework—a false dichotomy.** **Asian Americans who do not assimilate and who live in poverty closely align with authenticity through their group identity in the sense of culture, but the isolated and poor Asian American affiliates less with authenticity in the class criterion as a model minority.** The assimilated

Asian American, however, more authentically follows the group identity as a model minority, but less closely coheres with the cultural practices associated with the group. The false dichotomy invites ambivalent responses to the Asian American identity. **The Asian American woman whose group identity is dichotomously over-determined—as either assimilating and successfully climbing up the economic ladder or persisting in practicing her culture of origin with the consequences of isolation and poverty—faces a scenario in which all the available choices trouble her relation to her group identity, and to her ultimately developing a sense of personal authenticity.** Is the poor Asian American woman's sense of self structured through the understanding of the temporariness of her condition of poverty such that she will eventually conform to the majority culture's practices? Or, in realizing, through recognizing the dismal statistics on class mobility, that poverty is not temporary, does her sense of self become significantly damaged in facing the likelihood of failing as a model minority? Without poor Asian Americans, will the cultural significance of the Asian American identity disappear as an identifying feature of the group? What is the sense of self for the economically successful Asian American woman who conforms to the majority culture and lets go of her original cultural practices? Women carry the primary burden of culture, and women earn less than men; so are Asian American women more likely to be poor, tradition-bound, and isolated? If both practicing one's culture of origin and economically climbing is impossible, considering that succeeding as a model minority promotes the invisibility of one's identity, must one choose poverty and hyper-visibility to strengthen one's group identity? **For the Asian American woman endeavoring toward an authentic sense of self in both its class and cultural ascriptions, neither option allows for developing a coherent identification with one's group identity.** If the social empowerment of the group identity relies upon individuals identifying and participating in the formation of their group identity, the series of compromised choices within the group identity's class and cultural over-determinations clearly have disenfranchising political implications. Recall that the condition of minority identities is that their individual identities are undistinguished if not reductively collapsed to their group identities. With such intimate associations, the solution to escaping the false dichotomy of the group identity cannot only consist of distancing oneself from one's group identity. Instead, for the minority individual, for the Asian American woman to develop a sense of self true to herself—a sense of authenticity—she must work with and on the group identity to encourage and to develop understanding of the group identity.

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi. "Displaced Persons: Symbols of South Asian Femininity and the Returned Gaze in U.S. Media Culture." *Communication Theory*, vol. 11, no. 2, May 2001, pp. 201–217, academic.oup.com/ct/article-abstract/11/2/201/4201774, 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2001.tb00239.x. Accessed 20 Nov. 2021.

Asian Americans are forced into the 'bicultural middle', where despite how much they conform, they aren't considered to truly be 'American' by the white social body - Dang '03

Pyke, K., & Dang, T. (2003). *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(2), 147–172. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1022957011866>

The most assimilated tend to regard "whitewashed" as a favorable identity and "FOB" as derogatory. The more ethnically-identified tend to deride the "whitewashed" for forgetting their roots and being under the illusion that they can actually join the white race. They tend to be a little more sympathetic toward those labeled "FOBs" but still avoid using the label to refer to themselves, even when acknowledging that others label them that way. While they assume a stance of resistance to derogations of ethnic immigrant culture, they still did not provide positive descriptions of the "FOB." The **majority** of respondents **who fall in the bicultural middle regard both "FOB" and "whitewashed" as derogatory identities**, which they relied on in constructing a positive self-identity as biculturals. **The bicultural middle is a site of constant accommodation. It is a place where individuals can claim an ethnic or an Americanized identity as the situation requires in order to avoid stigma and criticism, without challenging the larger racial order.** Biculturals retain a link to their ethnicity and **acknowledge that, as Asian Americans, they can never join the white world.** They charge those who attempt to do so, **the so-called "whitewashed," as deluding themselves. They assume essential differences between whites and Asians,** and that as non-whites Asians **can never really be "American."** Hence they regard racial/ethnic distinctions as immutable. This view complies with the **racial classification schema and**

ideology of the dominant society that mark Asians as forever ethnically distinct from whites. In this particular instance, the biculturals are allied with ethnic traditionalists who likewise denigrate the whitewashed for ignoring their ethnicity. However, unlike ethnic traditionalists, biculturals also claim a comfort and ease with mainstream American culture and an ability to also “identify with whites.”

The matrix of domination of Indian society and caste hierarchy is based on Aryan supremacy. It demonizes “lower-caste” folks and disproportionately oppresses womxn, Ayyar & Khandare ‘13

Varsha Ayyar, & Lalit Khandare. (2013, August). Mapping Color and Caste Discrimination in Indian Society. Retrieved September 14, 2021, from ResearchGate website:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285414433_Mapping_Color_and_Caste_Discrimination_in_Indian_Society

The Indian ideal of female beauty is largely defined **based on skin color. Fair or lighter skin color is considered** the most **vital** because it is believed that light skin color has the ability **to override** all the other **facial and bodily defects**. This idea of feminine is based on features such as lighter skin color, lighter eyes, a sharp nose, and delicate nostrils. This perception of ideal womanhood and **beauty is** clearly **constructed on the foundation of color and caste nexus**. It is evident that varna-caste supremacy not only influenced the past but also influences notions of beauty and femininity in contemporary India. **Those who do not fall under these standards of Aryan are deemed ugly and** made to **face discrimination** and condemnation. The trend of discrimination has continued and evident in different kinds of manifestation. **The matrix of domination of Indian society is embedded in caste hierarchy;** thus, there is **asymmetry of burden/exploitation/social location/oppression**. Invariably, **women of "lower caste"** continue to **face more burden than** other **women of "upper caste"** locations due to entrenched sociocultural hierarchies. [...] Those who have defended for the rights of consumers and MNCs have suggested that MNCs should not be held entirely responsible for racism but just as actors who are acting on existing prejudices and preferences but giving "affordable choice" to people to alter skin color (Karnani 2007). It is a fact that **MNCs** are **profiting from** and taking advantage of **societal perceptions** but at a serious cost of **compromising on ethics** and larger public welfare (Karnani 2007). Most of these **advertisements** have portrayed dark women and men in poor light at the cost of **condemning** the **darker skin tones** and **projecting them as unwanted, disdainful, and cursed**. It is thus important to understand and draw our attention to the role played by MNCs and in perpetuating color discrimination. Considering the preference for lighter skinned women in India, there is an additional concern related to gender inequality. The 2011 Census on gender inequality shows that the sex ratio (914 female against 1,000 male) is skewed and lowest since independence (Economic Times 2011). Besides, the alarming **female feticide is more common among the educated middle-class than rural and poor families**. In doubling the burden of gender and color, it may be said that **dark-skinned women** perhaps have to **face the brunt of social damnation** in far severe ways than one can imagine.

Moreover, such degrading advertisement underpins inferior social status as a burden to dark-skinned women and men. This kind of continued **condemnation** of dark-skinned women **adds several layers of cultural and psychological disadvantages to their lives** and can have detrimental impact on societal well-being. In retaliation to such racist slurs and extremely humiliating advertisement, a handful of women's organizations in India have taken up a stand and underscored this as a sexist and gender issue rooted in backwardness and "cultural bias" (BBC 2003). However, this superficial understanding essentially eliminates the possibility of identifying intersections of caste, class, and gender that all multiply, which produce differential outcomes, intensity, and magnitude of experiencing color discrimination

Honor based violence occurs from the ostracization of women who bring “shame” to their families and community in fear of *Log Kya Kahenge* (what will people say), - Rahman ‘21

Rahman, Afrin Naz. (2021). Log Kya Kahenge (What Will People Say): Honour-Based Violence as a Response to Community Influenced Control and the Fear of Ostracization. Ucalgary.ca. <https://doi.org/http://hdl.handle.net/1880/113062>

The phrase **log kya kahenge** or ‘what will people think’, has been a repetitive tool used to **enforce cultural gender norms** deemed appropriate by the surrounding community. The **intense pressure** and fear of log kya kahenge, **especially for women, where honour and shame** have considerable consequences, have **resulted in**, some communities, **extreme measures and mental conditioning**. [T]his perception and conceptualization of honor has resulted in such cultural norms for women as confining women to the four walls of the house, a harem mentality that regulates social life in accordance with sexual segregation, and finally the necessity for a woman to be escorted by a male or a menopausal female chaperon who has stopped menstruating. Through such **cultural norms**, men have on one hand attempted to prevent the potential threat of dishonor outside the house and, on the other hand, they have **sustained** the values of **patriarchal ideology**. These examples painfully demonstrate the means taken to safeguard the honour of the family. It also showcases measures used to prevent exposure and criticism from the community. The fear of communal awareness and eventual ostracization from society, for any female transgression, creates the pressure to kill and regain the honour lost. Unfortunately, this fear is not unfounded. Perpetrators talked about events leading up to their decision to murder their female relative, and many of those events had to do with the reactions of their surrounding community. These events or situations that “[F]orced the defendants to kill...was the escalating effect of continued insult, taunting, belittling, exclusion and explicit and implicit family and social pressure”. Honour is so fragile in these communities that the shame of being ignored and taunted is pressure enough to retaliate, not against the community, but the source of the dishonour. In essence, the **community acts as a societal form of control** for both the victim and perpetrator. The authority of the community needs to be addressed in greater detail and condemnation. Its influence on this form of violence implies that certain sociological ideologies are imbedded within the mindset of these populations. **Shame is** then **a consequence of patriarchal normative behaviours** with **in society**. Essentially, such honour is not a private matter. [...] In honour-based communities, benevolent sexism is based upon attitudes and behaviours that encourage and enforce women and men to conform to traditional heteronormative dialogue and ‘good’ behaviour. ‘Good’ behaviour for women is avoiding the possibility of shame, thereby ensuring their honour and that of the family is preserved. Being ‘good’ is synonymous with a woman’s ignorance of anything sexual in nature. If women are ‘good’ they adhere to certain dress codes and conduct themselves in a modest manner. This includes limiting themselves to private space, as women in the public domain are subject to social influences and scrutiny. There is also the fear of being subject to the male gaze, which would not be a worry if they remain in their private domain. If a woman maintains these particular traditional feminine norms, she is rewarded with her continued security and assurance that her value, and that of her family has not been compromised.

The South Asian Diaspora faces various manifestations of racism and discrimination which often remain invisible - Narra ‘12

APA PsycNet. (2021). Retrieved September 16, 2021, from Apa.org website: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2011-15713-001>

Experiences of **racial and ethnic discrimination among South Asians in the U.S. remain largely invisible.** Similar to other Asian American groups, **South Asians** tend to be **perceived as “model minorities,”** implicating a sense of **imperviousness to mental health problems.** The present study suggests otherwise, that South Asians’ experiences of discrimination are in-deed related to mental health. Distress related to **discrimination** may be even **more salient in** the present **sociopolitical climate,** in which **in-creased security measures against terrorist attacks and immigration law reform** are being debated in the U.S. While we were not able to attend to the full range of heterogeneity within the South Asian communities in the U.S., in-cluding differences related to generation (first,second, third), national origin, social class, and education, our findings suggest that researchers and practitioners should attend to the ways in which South Asians’ lives are impacted by dis-crimination. [...] For example, **first-gen** **eration South Asians** may be **more reluctant to seek help from individuals outside of their families when coping with** stressful situations, including **mental health** concerns, **in an attempt not to burden others** with their problems **to avoid the stigma** associated with talking openly about their psychological concerns. For many first-generation South Asians, it may feel stressful to disclose psychological distress to individuals outside of the family. This is especially important to consider in light of the fact that **many South Asians,** as other Asian sub-groups, tend to **underutilize mental health services** (Yang & Wolpat-Borja, 2007), even though they may benefit from increased support. Future research can clarify the nature of **social support** that **is** most **critical to South Asians’ psychological health.** Research can ex-amine specific family interactions that are ex-perienced as helpful to South Asians in coping with discrimination and related stress, espe-cially since some previous studies have indi-cated that family can be a source of stress as well as support (Thomas & Choi, 2006). Addi-tionally, future studies can examine the role of peer support in buffering against the negative effects of discrimination on other forms of psy-chological distress, other than depression, such as distress that does not meet the criteria for psychiatric diagnosis.

ALT

The alternative is active decolonization by changing the traditional model of education to liberate society, promote rhetoric, and remove the cloak of invisibility. Our advocacy rallies social support and is thus a method of creating spaces to increase conversation, reduce stigma, and better education.

Garavan, M. (2010, April). Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from ResearchGate website: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260297860_Paulo_Freire's_Pedagogy_of_the_Oppressed

The "banking" concept of education as an instrument of oppression— its presuppositions—a critique; the problem-posing concept of **education as an instrument for liberation**—its presuppositions; the "banking" concept and the teacher-student contradiction; the problem-posing concept and the supersedence of the teacher student contradiction; education: **a mutual process, world-mediated; people as uncompleted beings, conscious of their incompleteness, and their attempt to be more fully human.** [...] **Oppression**—overwhelming control—is necrophilic;

it is **nourished by love of death, not life. The banking concept of education,** which serves the interests of oppression, **is** also necrophilic. **Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects.** It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power. When their efforts to act responsibly are frustrated, when they find themselves unable to use their faculties, people suffer. "This suffering due to impotence is rooted in the very fact that the human equilibrium has been disturbed/'5 But the inability to act which causes people's anguish also causes them to reject their impotence, by attempting **Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world;** it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it.

ROB/ROJ

The role of the ballot is to promote visibility of South Asians. This requires our endorsement of deconstructing erasure through the subaltern's perspective and analyzing the consequences for South Asians, since we can't solve what we don't understand. More ballots allow us to spread our advocacy, thus being good for education and the debate space. We seek to insert historically marginalized voices into the mainstream to create a more equitable world that has been inundated with exploitation, poverty and oppression.