# Oriental Invisibility

#### 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.**

#### The current political system only uses Asian Americans as pawns to further their own political agenda while rendering them as the model minority -Kang ‘19

Esther Yoon-Ji Kang. “The Fight for Asian American Political Power.” NPR.org, 30 May 2019, www.npr.org/local/309/2019/05/30/728115121/the-fight-for-asian-american-political-power. Accessed 21 Nov. 2021.

‌On a bright, brisk Wednesday morning in May, about 45 members of the Chicago area's Filipino community waited inside a charter bus parked by Horner Park on the city's Northwest Side. Bound for Springfield, they wore matching periwinkle T-shirts with the word "Sulong" emblazoned across them — that's "onward" in Tagalog. "We got aunties, we got youth, it's a great mix of folks, so we're really excited," said Hannah Doruelo, a community organizer with the Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE). Her group was one of a dozen Asian American organizations that gathered on May 15, Asian American Action Day, for a rally in the rotunda of the state capitol. The community's theme this year was "Count Us In," asking legislators to pay attention to the country's fastest growing demographic — especially on issues related to immigrant rights and census outreach. Asians make up about 7% of Chicago's population and 5% of Illinois' population, but they are now the fastest-growing demographic in the city, state and the U.S. While more Asian Americans are running for office locally and in the state, the community is still underrepresented on all levels of government. For instance, there are none serving in the Chicago City Council, now that Ameya Pawar, the city's only Asian American alderman, [stepped down](https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/chicago-city-council-loses-its-only-asian-american-alderman/fe3f28e7-653c-43c6-9d57-98720c7d91da) after eight years leading the 47th Ward. In their fight to build political power, Asian Americans face several structural and cultural barriers. "I think we're invisible in the political world," said Dilara Sayeed, an entrepreneur and former teacher who ran for state representative in the 5th District in 2018, but lost the Democratic primary to the party-backed candidate. Sayeed and other Asian Americans involved in politics said that they feel disregarded by both ends of the political spectrum, by both the white majority and other minority communities. Asian Americans have been excluded from the political process for more than a century, said state Rep. Theresa Mah, D-Chicago, the first Asian American elected to the Illinois General Assembly. "If you go back to the beginnings of these political organizations in our cities, they were built on the recruitment of immigrants, but only certain types of immigrants," Mah said. "They were ignored and therefore excluded from all these opportunities to move up in the political realm." The perceptions of Asian Americans held by those outside the community as well as the expectations from elders inside the community have also presented barriers to attaining political power. "The 'model minority' is the idea that somebody comes to this country and does everything right and makes it," said Sayeed. "The 'invisible minority' is... you've got your head down and you're working hard and you're not making any waves. [Asian Americans] are supposed to do both." Tommy Choi, a former state Republican staffer, said that young Asian Americans often are influenced by their immigrant parents, many of whom came from countries with turbulent political histories. "We're just told to work hard, study hard, go to good schools, get good grades," he said. "We're not really raised to be part of the civic process, to organize, to mobilize the community." The end result is that political parties don't view Asian Americans as potential leaders, Choi said. "I think folks will kind of label us as just quiet and studious, and [that] this is not really the profession for us." Another challenge is the sheer diversity of the Asian American community. Collectively, its members speak a variety of different languages and represent dozens of nationalities. In addition, Asian Americans are overrepresented at both ends of the spectrum when it comes to education and income, according to a WBEZ analysis of 2017 census data. For instance, nationally, Asian Americans are more likely than Americans overall to be without a high school diploma. They are also more likely to have a four-year college degree. In both Chicago and Illinois, Asian Americans are more likely than the overall population to earn less than $10,000 a year. They are also more likely to earn more than $200,000 a year, according to the analysis. "I represent some of the poorest and least educated Asian Americans in the Chicagoland area," Mah said. "A lot of them are new immigrants, seniors, plenty of people who are either struggling to make ends meet, living below the poverty line." She added that political organizations need a specialized approach to reach Asian Americans. "There's a special way that you have to do that," she said. "You have to have phone bankers and people going out door to door who can speak the language who seem familiar and unthreatening." **"They're actively excluding us"** Historically, Asian Americans have had low voter participation rates. After reaching a [record low](https://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/01/19/looking-back-to-2014-latino-voter-turnout-rate-falls-to-record-low/) of 27% in 2014, Asian American [voter turnout rates](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/p20/583/table04b.xlsx) hover at around 30% today, compared to 50% nationally, according to data from the Pew Research Center and the U.S. Census Bureau. Former Ald. Pawar said that one major reason for the low rates is the lack of contact with elected officials and those running for office. "It's easy for powerful people and structures to say, 'Well, you guys don't vote so we're not gonna take you seriously.'" Pawar said. "That means they're also actively excluding us." The same goes for those seeking office. "We were on our own," said Lori Yokoyama, a 4th Ward Republican committeewoman who ran for Cook County State's Attorney in 2012. "And we pretty much found that the party was not supportive or not assisting us in our efforts." Yokoyama added, "I'm trying every which way I can to participate in the party ... to get more and more involved so that they can see that Asian Americans are a valuable asset to the Republican Party." Yokoyama said that the GOP is missing an opportunity to reach a voter base that she says [shares its values](https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/), especially on marriage and family. "The Democratic Party has been very good about reaching out, soliciting [Asian Americans] into the party, making them believe that their values are not in lock-step with Republican values," she said. Pawar, however, said the left hasn't incorporated the Asian American experience into its agenda, either. "I think there are a lot of people who talk about intersectionality in social justice, but they aren't necessarily interested in the Asian American experience," he said. "I feel like [we] are useful props in intersectionality in social justice, but our stories are not necessarily considered." Pawar brought up the topic of minority contracting as an example. "There are individuals in [the Chicago] City Council today who will be the first ones to stand up and say that Asian Americans are overrepresented and that perhaps they should be eliminated from the program," he said. Pawar continued, "We are still a minority. If you think that we are overrepresented in some places, then what we should be doing is increasing the representation of other groups. Carving Asian Americans out, segregating us ... is a really horrible and scary response." **Building power** "A very common story that a lot of Asian Americans share is this experience of living in America and being viewed as a foreigner," said Andy Kang, executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago. He said that despite the diversity within the community, bringing together the Pan Asian groups is the best path to political power. "When it comes to making sure that our issues ... are addressed, when it comes to our ability to understand that we're being perceived very much in the same way, there [are] a lot of reasons why us organizing ourselves as Asian Americans makes a lot of sense." Ram Villivalam, who last year became Illinois' first Asian American state senator, said the community should also partner with other minority groups to advance a collective agenda. "The current system is designed to pit minority group against minority group so that the people that are in power ... are the ones that are not from minority groups," Villivalam said. "We will all lose as minority groups, if we don't work together. We need to work together to broaden the pie so that we can all get more pieces of it." Villivalam said he is encouraged by the record number of Asian Americans running for — and winning — political office. He and Mah, along with state Rep. Jennifer-Gong Gershowitz, D-Glenview, are part of the state's Joint Asian-American Leaders Caucus, chaired by Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Josina Morita, another champion of Asian Americans getting involved in politics. Illinois also has two Asian American representatives in Congress: Sen. Tammy Duckworth and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi. Villivalam cited cabinet appointments of Asian Americans in the administrations of both Gov. JB Pritzker and Mayor Lori Lightfoot as additional evidence of progress. "They're going to be overseeing large agencies that will really impact the lives of everyone in Illinois, including Asian Americans," he said. The growing number of Asian Americans in office may encourage others to follow in their footsteps, Kang said. Still, he stressed that representation alone will not fully address the needs of Asian American communities. "We want to really get away from the idea that a few elected officials are going to save the day," Kang said. "What really is needed is more of our community members voting and being civically engaged, showing up and engaging their [leaders]."

#### The political movement is literally inaccessible to Asian women because of cross-cultural tension. Reject the resolution – it’s illogical to expect me to affirm something I can’t access and forces psychological violence for me to support a regime that oppresses my identity. - Chow ‘87

Chow, Esther Ngan-Ling. “The Development of Feminist Consciousness among Asian American Women.” Gender and Society, vol. 1, no. 3, Sage Publications, Inc., 1987, pp. 284–99, http://www.jstor.org/stable/189565.

Asiatic and U.S. cultures alike tend to relegate women to subordinate status and to work in a gendered division of labor. Although **Asiatic values emphasizing education, achievement, and diligence** no doubt **have accounted for the high aspirations and achievements of some Asian American woman**, certain Asiatic values, **especially when they are in conflict with American ideas, have discouraged Asian women from actively participating in the** feminist movement (Chow 1982, 1985). **Adherence to Asiatic values of obedience, familial interest,** fatalism, **and self-control may foster submissiveness, passivity**, pessimism, timidness, inhibition, **and adaptiveness, rather than rebelliousness or political activism. Acceptance of the American values of independence, individualism, mastery of one's environment through change, and self-expression may generate self-interest, aggressiveness, initiative, and expressive spontaneity that tend to encourage political activism; but these are, to a large extent, incompatible with the upbringing of Asian American women**

#### **Asian Women has been historically seen as docile and weak-willed in the workforce, therefore, when do they speak out of their oppression it is seen as odd -Aggarwal ‘11**

Manisha Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2010-2011, "Politics of Invisbility Changing Perceptions of British Asian Women in the Wake of the 1976" McGill University, https://www.mcgill.ca/history/files/history/historicaldiscourses2011\_1.pdf#page=39

Trade unions also expressed ambivalence about issues of race in the workplace, in keeping with what Sheila Patterson calls “the attempt to reconcile the principles of universal working-class brotherhood and non-discrimination with the fears and antipathies of rank-and-file members.”21 As Pratibha Parmar points out, “in contrast to West Indian women, the majority of Asian women came to Britain as the dependants of male workers… [and] were never drawn into the metropolis as wage labourers.”22 **This legal categorization of Asian women as dependents** had **encouraged the emergence of** persistent **stereotypes that classified them as docile and weak-willed**, and scholar Avtar Brah shows that **although Asian women had been organizing in the workplace for almost ten years prior to Grunwick, stereotypes of Asian women as passive beings lingered in the minds of employers at the time of the strike**. This stereotype had been embedded in the attitudes of factory employers for many years and became increasingly prevalent in the early 1970s. During this time, a large number of Asian women began to work in factories across Britain, following a decline in the immigration of Asian men.23 Many scholars of Asian women’s employment in this period argue that **factory owners deliberately hired Asians based on assumptions that they were quiet, efficient workers who would not demand special privileges from their employers.**24 These beliefs were drawn from additional suppositions about the women’s educational backgrounds and cultural values, for Parmar observed that the specific literature on Asian women conceptualizes them as non-working wives and mothers, whose problems are that they do not speak English, hardly ever leave the house, and find British norms and values ever more threatening as their children become more ‘integrated’ into the new surroundings.25 Parmar’s findings are echoed in the words of many Asian immigrants to Britain, and especially the words of women involved in mid-century labour struggles. In Finding a Voice, her seminal work on Asian women in Britain, Amrit Wilson interviews a number of Asian migrant women employed in factories across the country. In many of these interviews, the women reported discrimination and poor conditions in their workplaces. Wilson interviews a laundry worker named Prabhaben, who declared that “the trouble is that in Britain our women are expected to behave like servants, and we are not used to behaving like servants and we can’t. But if we behave normally like saying a few words to each other, the supervisors start shouting and harassing us.”26 Another interviewee, a women named Surinder, said: For a long time I never realized how badly paid and overworked I was, but what made me feel bad in those days was the rudeness and lack of respect with which I and other Asian women were treated by the supervisors. Now I have begun to understand, bad pay, rotten conditions and this insufferable contempt shown to us, it is part of the same picture.27 Corroborating workers’ testimony about management attitudes, Wilson reports that **a mill manager** in Bradford, England **referred to his Asian employees as “so well behaved. They have no complaints… but lately these ladies** in the Spinning department, they **seem to be rather odd. They can be rude.** It concerns me because it is unusual for an Asian lady to be rude, to answer back, to be a chatter-box.”

#### Asian Women are silenced when do they try to strike and this furthers their invisibility -Aggarwal ‘11

Manisha Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2010-2011, "Politics of Invisbility Changing Perceptions of British Asian Women in the Wake of the 1976" McGill University, https://www.mcgill.ca/history/files/history/historicaldiscourses2011\_1.pdf#page=39

In a pair of articles published on June 22, 1977, a reporter writes: “the dispute originally involved just **over a hundred people of Asian descent** (the number has since diminished) who were not unionized when they **went on strike**… The pickets’ banners held aloft every day carry allegations of low pay, exploitation, bad conditions, intransigent management and anti-unionism.”62 While the reporter acknowledges the role of Asian workers as instigators of the strike, he neglects to incorporate any of their perspectives into his text. Instead, in the companion article, “Owner of Grunwick says he will never give in,” the reporter includes an extensive interview with George Ward. Among other examples, these articles signify how Grunwick managers were given a prominent venue to express their opinions on the dispute, often in the place of worker perspectives.63 The Times also reports a great deal on Conservative reactions to the strike in Parliament and in public, despite the fact that the Labour government, under Prime Minister James Callaghan, was in power for the duration of the strike.64 For example, on June 28, 1977, the political editor of The Times quotes a Conservative spokesperson calling Grunwick a “constitutional crisis” and goes on to illuminate the arguments presented by the government on the strike and its merits.65 In another feature on the same page of the newspaper, reporters use a photograph of an Asian striker alongside the article “Pickets jeer Mr. Rees on visit to factory.” **However, the article fails to include any input from the striking women** on the arrival of Rees, the British Home Secretary. **Instead, the reporters use a quote from Jack Dromey** to illuminate the other side of the debate.66 The Times presents **Dromey as one of the key spokespeople for the strikers during this period,** and touts him as a “father figure” in a June 1977 article profiling his participation in the Grunwick dispute.67 **Although Dromey was a union representative and not a Grunwick employee, he emerged as the representative voice of the workers in mainstream press coverage of the strike. By placing him in this position, media actors endowed him with the legitimacy and power to speak for the workers and by extension muted the voices of the Asian women who had begun the strike action a year earlier**. In an article published on August 19, 1977, an unnamed “representative” of the striking workers remarks on fears that extremist groups such as the right-wing National Front could wage violent attacks on Grunwick pickets, but no name for the speaker is given.68 Based on the The Times’ precedent of naming its union and management interviewees and representatives in the coverage of this dispute, it is possible that the “representative” in the article was an Asian woman who had requested her name be withheld, or who had not been identified by the reporter.69 At the end of the strike, when four remaining pickets staged a two-day hunger strike, they were referred to in The Times’ short write-up not by name, but as “woman strikers.”70 Much like The Times, **the Sun appears to virtually ignore the women strikers in its coverage of the Grunwick dispute**, and often focuses mainly on the actions of the factory’s management and the police as described above. While **these practices effectively rendered Asian women invisible**, it is difficult to determine whether it was the intent of institutional representatives to undermine the contribution of these women to the struggle at Grunwick. It may have been common to employ male representatives for both sides of labour disputes such as Grunwick during this time, and as such it would have been considered standard to have leaders such as Jack Dromey represent the interests of the Asian women involved in the dispute. The omission of names and other identifying markers of the women in question may also have been done at their own request in order to protect their safety while on the picket line. In an interview with Wilson, Jayaben Desai argues that Our Gujerati women are often weak, weakened by the acceptance that their life must revolve round dressing up, housework, wearing jewellery and other things like that. Often it does not occur to them that they can speak up, raise their voices in front of people. Personally, I don’t think it is traditions which are weighing them down but the fact that they have no support at home.71

#### Asian American Women are 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 djusting 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—wome**n.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.

#### Therefore, reject the topic and thus: the I affirm active education and solidarity among Asian Americans to promote a sense of individuality and awareness which allows them to come together to create change. - Osajima ’07.

Osajima, Keith. “Replenishing the Ranks: Raising Critical Consciousness among Asian Americans.” Journal of Asian American Studies, vol. 10, no. 1, 2007, pp. 59–83, muse.jhu.edu/article/213033/summary, 10.1353/jaas.2007.0006. Accessed 18 Nov. 2021.

For the vast majority of respondents, developing an Asian American critical consciousness involved a process that was transformative, where knowledge of and commitment to Asian American concerns represented a significant change from earlier views they had held in their lives. Most had paid little attention of being Asian or to racism against Asians while growing up. With the exception of two respondents, all were “first-generation” Asian American activists, in that they were the first in their family to develop a critical awareness of issues. David Chan,17 for example, had grown up in a predominantly white neighborhood in Southern California. He had thought of himself as an “ultra-American” while growing up. In high school, he had clowned around, done drugs, dropped out, and dove heavily into the graffiti art scene. After a less than illustrious academic start, David had found his way to a community college, then to a university, and had ended up getting a master’s degree in Asian American Studies. Margaret Eu also had grown up in Southern California, in a traditional middle-class household where her Korean immigrant father worked in various entrepreneurial enterprises while her mother stayed home to raise the children. Through the seventh grade, the most significant influence in Margaret’s life had been the Christian church. Later, she had been a “super-active high school student,” involved in activities like cheerleading, student government, mock trial, and drama. She had gone to college with little awareness of Asian American issues. She now has a master’s degree in student development and is working in Asian American student affairs. Pearl Cruz, raised in affluent Marin County, California, described herself as “mega-apolitical” and “very, very, very apathetic” while growing up. She had been “very into my own little Marin lifestyle.” She had gone to a private elementary school and later to a private high school. Pearl had attended an Ivy League university for two years, where she got involved in feminist student activities, and then had transferred to the University of California where she majored in Asian American Studies. Raj Kapur was born and raised in the Washington D.C. area. Growing up, Raj described himself as shy and quiet. In high school, he had felt that he “had a real low self-esteem problem at the time, so that kind of caused some degree of low achievement.” He was not active in extra-curricular activities and pretty much stayed to himself. In college, Raj had become actively involved in Asian American student organizations and was one of the most articulate and outspoken members of the community. The fact that these young Asian Americans, from widely varying class, geographic, political, and ethnic backgrounds, could find their way to Asian American activism speaks to the real possibility that young people can become critically conscious and politically active. Their active involvement is especially noteworthy given the post-Civil Rights climate that surrounds them, where the political momentum has shifted to the right and hopes for student activism are often drowned in a sea of apathy or hopelessness. These **Asian Americans had gone against the grain and had become politically involved.** They had realized what Cornell West calls the “politics of conversion,” where the tendency toward nihilism is countered by “a chance for people to believe that there is hope for the future and a meaning to struggle.”18 So, what had happened to change and shape their views? What had contributed to the development of their critical consciousness? Analysis of the interviews reveals common patterns of factors and conditions that contribute to the development of an Asian American critical consciousness. **The Importance of a “Meaningful Education” In talking about how they had become interested in Asian American issues**, respondents invariably pointed to moments when **new information and perspectives** profoundly **affected their thinking by helping them to see how their lives**, as Asian Americans**, were shaped by larger historical and social forces.** In this way, the information had carried significant meaning and relevance, helping them to understand their lives in new ways. For Brian Kim, for example, conscientization had begun in an Asian American history course. It “really changed my view on how this society works and where we fit in.” He said, “I just never thought of what our history is here or what my, say our ancestors came here for, the first generation. I just never knew.” That first class had inspired Brian to switch out of his pre-med studies and declare a major in Asian American Studies. Echoing Cornell West’s notion of conversion, Brian says, “So that’s where I am now. So you see I’m a converted Asian.” An Asian American psychology class had exerted a transformative impact on Margaret Eu’s thinking. Information about the Asian American experience was meaningful because it had helped her to make sense of experiences in her life and family. It had offered language and concepts that explained why and how racism and sexism operated: That was the first time that academically I was reading something that was so relevant to my experience and my identity. . . .[E]verything made so much sense. It was like somebody was explaining my life history, my life pattern on paper, and in theory and in literature.19 David Tan echoes Margaret’s comments. Like many of his peers, David Tan had not been interested in political activism when he graduated from high school. He was “all about having fun.” When he had entered college, he said, “I was paying attention more to the women than to the professors.” But, information in an Asian American Studies class had resonated deeply with David; his professor had offered insights that not only helped him to understand his life experiences, but also inspired him to learn more: He went into the issues of family relations, generational conflicts, the model minority, anti-Asian violence. Just everything that happened in my life, he explained it. That’s when I realized, this is what I want to do. I need to learn more.20 While formal Asian American courses had played pivotal roles in conscientization, the classroom was not the only place where respondents had been exposed to life-altering perspectives and information. David Tan’s critical consciousness had deepened through his participation in a student group. The group had showed the movie, “Who Killed Vincent Chin,” about the 1982 slaying of a Chinese American man by two unemployed, white auto workers. It had struck a deep nerve. As David had watched Vincent Chin’s mother fight to win justice for her son, David had thought of his grandmother and the struggles she faced as an immigrant, non-English-speaker woman. Here, the content of the movie and articles had intersected with David’s life and led him to make new connections: That’s an example of that sort of connection, of seeing things and knowing how race played a part and seeing how those kinds of elements played itself out in my life and my family’s life, especially for my grandmother.21 Pearl Cruz had begun to change when a friend invited her to attend a meeting to organize a campus protest. Watching and listening to powerful and articulate women of color speak out about racism and sexism had inspired Pearl: I went home that summer and devoured every piece of feminist literature I could get my hands on. So I’m just sitting there reading like a maniac all summer long, just digesting what had happened that year. . . . It was really something, it hit me all at once.22 Ryan Suzuki’s interest in issues of oppression had first been piqued in diversity training workshops he took as a resident advisor. Later, in graduate school, a key mentor, Ricardo Munoz, had helped Ryan to develop his conceptual and analytic understanding. Munoz had pushed Ryan to do more reading about the systematic nature of oppression in the United States. Ryan describes Munoz’s influence as follows: He really put a much more intellectual analysis to things. . . . It was more about the systematic things that were going on, about changing structures, about resources, those kinds of things, rather than just that a person needs to be sensitized.23 In these cases, we begin to see more precisely what it means to have a “relevant” and “meaningful” education. For Joe, Ryan, and David**, conscientization meant being able to see themselves in larger social structural** **contexts**, not simply as individuals but as people whose lives intersect with and are shaped by race and racism. For Brian, **information about the history of** **Asian Americans had prompted critical reflections** on two levels. First, because he had never known about the history of Asian Americans, the class had given him new information that had helped him to understand his family history. Second, it had led him to critically reflect upon his previous education. He questioned why he hadn’t learned any of this before? Why was his experience absent from U.S. history courses? This process had led him to think more critically about the racism embedded in his educational experiences. Margaret had experienced a similar reaction. She had realized that her education had only taught her about European American history, prompting her to ask, “how many students were out there who never would take this class. . . and would never really know more than one version of history?” Her Asian American courses had provided the analytic tools and language needed to see the reason and logic of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. **Conscientization for these respondents meant being able to “name their world.”** That is, a meaningful **education had helped them to recognize and understand the impact that societal conditions and forces of** **oppression have on their lives and the lives of others**. As Freire writes, the process of conscientization, or education for critical consciousness, **“involves a** **constant clarification of what remains hidden within us while we move about in the world**,” and it provokes “recognition of the world, not as a ‘given’ world, but as a world dynamically ‘in the making.”**24 Such recognition often inspires people to work against that oppression, thus beginning their active efforts to transform the world**.25 **Naming the world was an important step toward actively changing it.**Conscientization as Social Process - Breaking Isolation While the respondents identified “relevant” information as a key to their development, exposure to information on racism and Asian Americans is not the only element of an education for critical consciousness. The interviews reveal that conscientization is a social process, where connections, support and encouragement from others play a critical facilitative role. For many respondents, the development of their critical consciousness had not happened in isolation, working or studying on their own. Instead, relationships with other people had contributed to their growth in a variety of ways. First, **contact and conversation with others had helped respondents to break a sense of isolation in their lives.** The chance to talk to other Asians about their lives and experiences with discrimination had helped respondents to see that their individual experiences were not unique. As they had seen similarities and patterns, it was easier for them to see how broader forces, like racism, shaped their individual lives. Their descriptions of this process were quite consistent and similar. Joe Yamamoto, a third-generation Japanese American, had grown up in central California. In high school, Joe had liked to party and had come close to not graduating. After working a series of jobs, he had decided to head back into school, first at a community college and then at a University of California campus, to pursue his interest in math. Joe had not identified as a Japanese American. He had been aware that things happened to him, perhaps because he was Japanese, but did not make any connections to racial discrimination. At the University of California, Joe had enrolled in an Asian American Studies course, mainly because it fulfilled a general education requirement. During the class, interactions with fellow Asian students, along with information on racism against Asians in the United States, had led Joe to realize, for the first time, that he was treated differently because of his race. Describing an in-class interactive activity where students were put in pairs and asked to interview each other about their lives, Joe articulated this process of self-discovery: We found a lot of similarities between ourselves. . . . That was the first time I got a chance to hear other people say the exact same things that I had gone through. . . it’s because I’m Asian, because I’m Japanese that I run into different kinds of experiences than my Caucasian friends do. And it’s because of my race. It’s not because I wear blue jeans or anything else, it’s because of how I look.26 Pearl Cruz’s understanding of Asian American women’s issues had been formed largely in conversation with other women in an Asian American Studies class: It was like therapy, group therapy to sit around and swap stories about when I was growing up. So that was great, sharing things that everybody had experienced and thought they were the only ones who had experienced.27 Soon Park had developed a stronger understanding of racism through her interactions with others in an Asian American student organization. I asked her what it was about being in the student group or being in classes that had helped her to develop a commitment to working in the Asian American community, Soon offered the following response: I think more understanding how other Asians have the same experiences as I do, and I’m not the only one. I remember going to one of my first meetings and there’s maybe 10 people, and it was more like a rap session. I remember people talking about their experiences about racism, what happened to them and thinking that’s really awful. I can’t believe that’s happened to that person and thinking all these things happened to me. We’re all in the situation where we all share this common kind of pain and experience.28 In the context of American society, it is understandable how **breaking through the sense of isolation can facilitate the development of critical consciousness.** Isolation is closely tied to the powerful ideological emphasis on individualism in the United States. Andrew Barlow notes that Americans “are told that their well-being is up to them, that people must fend for themselves as far as their personal welfare is concerned.”29 A consequence of growing up with this view is implicit in the interviews. Respondents had interpreted their experiences, good and bad, through individual lenses, as events that happened, in isolation, only to them. **Through interactions with other Asian Americans, they had realized they were not alone**, that others had similar family and cultural experiences, and experiences with racial discrimination**. This discovery had led them to question their individualistic interpretations and had opened the possibility that their lives could be understood as part of an Asian American experience**. Given the profound change that conscientization had effected in the lives of respondents, it is not surprising that many of them wanted to be in positions where they could help to create for others the educational experiences that were so meaningful to them. **They took leadership positions in student organizations;** they helped to organize and put on educational programs; they worked in community organizations; they pursued graduate studies; and they took positions in student affairs to work closely with new cohorts of Asian American students. Pamela Kim, who wanted to become a professor of Asian American studies, best expresses their desire: One of the reasons why I want to be a professor of Asian American Studies is because I want to help these kids who are going through the same things that I did. I want to help them figure things out, to help educate them about these issues because I had no idea about them while I was growing up. I could see what these kids are all going through in college, and it helps to be where you can pop those bubbles that they have around themselves.37 As they go about the task of trying to replenish the ranks by raising critical consciousness amongst new groups of Asians, a number of lessons learned from their collective experiences may provide helpful guides. From the interviews, we can identify critical elements that contribute to conscientization. While these elements do not guarantee that conscientization will follow, incorporating them into one’s practice may enhance the possibility that efforts will be successful. First, respondents described the importance of obtaining information and conceptual tools that helped them to cognitively understand how their lives and the lives of others are shaped by larger historical and social- structural forces. An Asian American Studies course on a college campus was the most common source of relevant information, but as we have seen exposure can take place in many venues. People can learn from reading on their own, from student groups, and from multimedia sources. Second, breaking through isolation and interrupting the tendency to explain their life experiences solely in individual terms reflects a social dimension to conscientization. Contact and conversation with other Asian Americans was often the most effective way to help respondents make connections between their lives, the experiences of others, and information on the Asian American experience. Connections to key mentors and peers provided a safe environment in which to think and question further. Third, respondents described important affective aspects of conscientization. When respondents talked about important moments in their education or key social support that made a difference, invariably they referred to how they felt about these experiences. They were angered by the realization that their schooling had not taught them about racism or the Asian American experience. They felt inspired by the experiences of other Asian Americans who struggled to overcome harsh conditions. They were excited to learn more. Fourth, **respondents’ commitment** to Asian American issues **was deepened when they transformed understanding into action. Involvement in protests, organizing,** programming, teaching, **and research gave respondents a chance to extend their knowledge and learn from efforts to make change.** Finally, the study indicates that **conscientization occurs when the discrete elements work in combination.** No respondent described his or her conscientization in terms of a single element. It was not a purely intellectual or cognitive experience in a classroom, absent of social or affective elements. Nor was it a purely social or affective experience without information and conceptual tools. Instead, respondents described multifaceted and interrelated experiences that reinforced each other, inspiring further thinking and commitment to action. For activists seeking to raise the critical consciousness of Asian Americans, the study’s findings carry implications for practice. For some, combining elements in a single venue, like an introductory course or a training program, will be the main focus. In these cases, the study suggests that the course or program should offer substantive content and concepts to lay the cognitive foundation needed for people to see themselves in relation to the world. It also should include social activities to break isolation and opportunities for people to share stories with each other in a non-judgmental, safe environment. On a broader level, the study suggests that there is a value in and need to offer a range of experiences across campus and community to increase the likelihood that students will combine, on their own, elements that contribute to conscientization. Pressure to have one person, course, or program that single-handedly transforms students’ lives subsides when we recognize that the interrelated process of conscientization benefits from contributions across diverse segments of the community. The importance of combining influences also casts new light on how different parts of the campus and community can work collaboratively to raise critical consciousness. Breaking from binary constructions that often pit academic programs against student life activities, or divide academe from community, the study shows how conscientization arises when people are exposed to and combine lessons learned from a variety of sources. This process implies that increased appreciation for the work done across campus and community, along with greater coordination of influences, is an important dimension of conscientization.]

#### Asian American Women can only make decisions for themselves once they recognize their invisibility towards their identity -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.

Since even in light of these three difficulties—in which the social-structural or historico-material conditions permit only certain actions, the subject’s internalization of existing social meanings, and the difficulties of seeing actions as defying the existing meaning systems—somehow identities do change, a little phenomenological analysis may be helpful here. Phenomenologically speaking, in order for a subject’s hard-won actions to stabilize into the social meaning horizons, the actions must evolve into practices. For the actions to be stabilized into practices, they cannot remain isolated actions made by unusual women under exceptional circumstances; rather, they must be repeated in “regular” circumstances. Isolated actions do not create new meaning. Because the actions occur within a social milieu, others must recognize the meaning of the actions. I have already pointed out that there are difficulties of recognition and the likelihood of misrecognition. Only through repeated actions can meaning become ossified enough to be generalized and ultimately enfolded into the social meaning horizon by falling below the radar of resistance. Hence the dilemma and the tension, for although feminist theories of identity understand that identities, subjects, practices, and cultures change, acts need to ossify, to temporally stabilize, to effect such change. Actions need time and reiteration to transform into practices. Perhaps the stealth under which women are said to operate makes sense. At the heart of this tension between acts and grasping the meaning intended by the acts lies the further complexity that the subject of the act may not completely comprehend and foresee her own intended meaning. Because of the difficulties of self understanding, individuals may act with an explicit intention in mind and host other unconscious intentions. The acts’ meaning ultimately escapes the subject herself. Of course, she cannot fully control the acts’ ultimate meaning in society. Under such circumstances, actions—if recognized, repeated, and settled into practices—may ultimately develop into meanings the subject did not originally intend. The eventual meanings of a woman’s actions result from negotiations and judgments with other members of society. Much like epistemic claims that require group confirmation, because the repetition of actions by members of society sediments the acts’ meaning into the social horizon, the meanings of the acts, as well as their expressions, take on lives of their own. Asian American women do not only ambivalently assimilate or practice their cultures of origin; they do not only ambivalently economically succeed or isolate themselves into poverty and political disenfranchisement. Together, both options foreclose the possibility of an authentic relation to the Asian American group identity. Asian American woman’s actions could be criticizing, choosing, and mixing cultural and class practices in order to forge new identities and subjectivities. Asian American women living in poverty may act for the simple goal of survival, and at times survival in itself challenges injustice. Survival as a driving force should not be underestimated. Poor Asian American women’s actions require more than a hasty reading; they can ultimately surprise and lead to interesting circumstances. Pausing to recognize the phenomenological structure of meaning-making—how new meaning enters the world —demands recognizing the interrelatedness of the complicity and the role of other members of society. Much like an individual’s sense of authenticity develops in coherence with one’s group identity, the meaning of individual actions ultimately forms in time with the perception of and acceptance by other members of society

#### Thus the ROB Should be to endorse the team that gives Asian American Women a means to recognize themselves as individuals in society. Without, the self-recognition of Asian women, they will always be seen as invisible in society. Therefore, the unconditional right to strike cannot even apply to them, if they aren’t seen as workers.

## OFF CASE

1. Procedural fairness excludes the Aff
2. Exclusion destroys education
3. Aff a prereq to solving structural fairness
4. Structural fairness comes before procedural fairness
5. **Government policymaking in debate categorizes the white policy debater as the detached norm while alternative politics are uncivilized – that detachment is in the form of an imperialist persona that perpetuates colonialism**

**Reid-Brinkley 08**

Reid-Brinkley 08 (Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley, University of Pittsburgh Department of Communications, “THE HARSH REALITIES OF “ACTING BLACK”: HOW AFRICAN-AMERICAN POLICY DEBATERS NEGOTIATE REPRESENTATION THROUGH RACIAL PERFORMANCE AND STYLE” 2008)

So, within public discourse, how race is coded rhetorically in public deliberation is of critical import.

Mitchell observes that the stance of the policymaker in debate comes with a “sense of detachment associated with the spectator posture.”115 In other words, its participants are able to engage in debates where they are able to distance themselves from the events that are the subjects of debates. Debaters can throw around terms like torture, terrorism, genocide and nuclear war without blinking. Debate simulations can only serve to distance the debaters from real world participation in the political contexts they debate about. As William Shanahan remarks: …the topic established a relationship through interpellation that inhered irrespective of what the particular political affinities of the debaters were. The relationship was both political and ethical, and needed to be debated as such. When we blithely call for United States Federal Government policymaking, we are not immune to the colonialist legacy that establishes our place on this continent. We cannot wish away the horrific atrocities perpetrated everyday in our name simply by refusing to acknowledge these implications” (emphasis in original).116 118 The “objective” stance of the policymaker is an impersonal or imperialist persona. The policymaker relies upon “acceptable” forms of evidence, engaging in logical discussion, producing rational thoughts. As Shanahan, and the Louisville debaters’ note, such a stance is integrally linked to the normative, historical and contemporary practices of power that produce and maintain varying networks of oppression. In other words, the discursive practices of policy-oriented debate are developed within, through and from systems of power and privilege. Thus, these practices are critically implicated in the maintenance of hegemony. So, rather than seeing themselves as government or state actors, Jones and Green choose to perform themselves in debate, violating the more “objective” stance of the “policymaker” and require their opponents to do the same.

#### Education outweighs block

1. We are learning about the topic
2. Criticizing oppression is a better model of radical education
3. Radical education is more ethical than policy education

#### Extinction rhetoric causing desensitization to the public’s perception of extinction probability; it causes people to stop caring because we say everything causes extinction. Turns the impact because people not caring and not doing anything to stop extinction causes extinction.  Keller ‘96

Keller, Catherine. Professor of Constructive Theology at the Theological School of Drew University, Apocalypse Now and Then, p. 13-14)

So if the term "apocalypse" indulges in the ensuing text a certain looseness of self-reference, it means to connote always both an interpretive and a material set of collective habits, always some tense coupling of hope and despair—always an end of some world and a corollary vision. But context, proportion, rhetoric, and effects will vary bewilderingly. And, I hope, revealingly. We will trace effects of the apocalypse myth rippling through our history, revolutionary as well as reactionary, political as well as religious, the myth itself perhaps even prejudicing our attempts to dispel its more sinister effects. But it will not be enough merely to observe how the moral dualism "revealed" in Revelation has underwritten Western civilization, or how it ramifies in our social movements, how it pulses in motions of thought and feeling in what Jacques Derrida has delicately named "an apocalyptic toner '9 Such deconstruction of a pattern that habituates itself readily into metanarrative—into any form of grand, telic history—will itself serve apocalyptic ends if all it does is yield more academic distance: paralyzed by irony, deactivated, we collude with the cruder endtime scenarios of our period. Whatever arcane tales and veiled hermeneutics we may enjoy, the point is after all to struggle against the more obtuse apocalypses—the massive, monstrous, self' literalizing ones like the annihilation of peoples and species. These are processes of relentless termination, bringing down no New Jerusalem. Yet warnings of social, economic, ecological, or nuclear disaster have become **so numbingly normal** that they do not have the desired effect on most of us, who retreat all the more frantically into private pursuits. Apocalyptic discourse, even or especially in the form of various "anti-apocalypses," has been coming at us, and we flee inside ourselves. I want therefore to poke openings into the apocalypse pattern, to enter attentively into the gravitational pull of apocalypse. I want to invite the reader inside with me. Or, more accurately, to consider together how we might find ourselves already inside of it. What might keep us awake to the dimensions of the danger—so gruesomely literal, so massively material, that it can hardly be addressed without recourse to the phantasmagoric? How can we sustain resistance to destruction without expecting to triumph? That is, how can we acknowledge the apocalyptic dimensions of the late-modern situation in which we find ourselves entrenched without either clinging to some millennial hope of steady progress or then flipping, disappointed, back to pessimism? For within the U.S. context, there is a traditional tendency to get active, to get enraged, and then to give up, surrendering to the lull of the comforts and conveniences extracted from the tribulations of the rest of the planet. I do this too. We see ourselves (or perhaps others) as innocent victims, and hope for ultimate vindication, and are soon disillusioned with the prospects. We think that we must "save the earth.” Who can carry this? In other words, to the extent that we get uncritically hooked on apocalypse—not merely the situation but the habit—we contribute to it. We wish for messianic solutions and end up doing nothing, for we get locked into a particularly apocalyptic either/or logic—**if we can't save the world, then to hell with it. Either salvation or damnation**.