Migration, Mobility, & Displacement

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Cover image - detail of "Fire", a collage of documentary photographs by Yafang Shi. Full image p. 144

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Introduction

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Xiaobei Chen is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. She served as President of the Canadian Sociological Association (2020-2021). Her research and teaching interests include: sociology of childhood and youth, governance and power, citizenship, racism, colonialism, citizenship, Asian diasporas especially the Chinese diaspora, and Buddhist social thought. Her latest book is a co-edited volume *The Sociology of Childhood and Youth in Canada*. Her current research and community engagement are focused on anti-Asian racism and Sinophobia.

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The COVID-19 pandemic that swept through the world laid bare the deeply rooted anti-Asian racism in North America and made it particularly visible in hate attacks and the inequalities in the provision of health care, public services, and vaccine access. Importantly, though less noted, even before the pandemic the worsening geopolitical tensions centred around the China-US rivalry have already fueled the Sinophobia mentality since the 2008 financial crisis. These served as a reminder that W.E.B. Du Bois's famous line, "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line," still stands today in the twenty first century, thereby debunking the myth of 'post-raciality' that was widely spread especially after the election of the former American president Barack Obama.

While the COVID-19 pandemic imposed an unprecedented global restriction on people's movement, global connections and a collective desire for racial justice have unprecedentedly emerged at a larger scale. During the pandemic and particularly after the tragic incident of the Atlanta Shootings in 2021 that specifically targeted Asian women in the spa business, #StopAsianHate protests took place across North America. Significantly, in the year before, the death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin brought the problems of systemic anti-Black racism to the fore and re-ignited the global Black Lives Matter movement which resists the colonial legacy of anti-Black racism stemming from the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and tackles the racist association between Blackness and criminality.

The historical intersection of these two global anti-racist movements calls for local and global level discussions and interventions to dismantle systemic racism and build inter-racial solidarity. The local and global desire for racial justice is the foundation of this special issue, which aims to demonstrate a bounded effort of academic and grass-roots movements to critically examine anti-Asian racism which had culminated during the pandemic, and to keep a record of Asians/Asian Canadians resistance in their fight against anti-Asian racism.

Drawing on critical race scholarship, we situate anti-Asian racism in the context of white settler-colonial and racial politics in Canada: from the history of racial exclusion during the white settler nation building process (e.g. Chinese Head Tax, Komagata Maru incident, the internment of Japanese people during the WWII, etc.) to contemporary forms of exploitation of Asian temporary migrants in the low-wage service industry (e.g. care work, meat-packing factories) and oppression of Asian women working in massage parlours and sex industry. Furthermore, we analyze anti-Asian racism in Canada through the history of European colonization of Asian regions and Orientalism as a major colonial discourse combined with the continuing American imperialism and militarism in Asian regions (e.g. American military bases in the Philippines, Japan and South Korea to today) as well as recent geopolitical changes such as China's rise in economic, political and technological areas.

Postcolonial feminist scholarship also inspires us to examine the intersection of gender and anti-Asian racism such as the feminized construction of an Orient and fetishization of Asian women as objects of white men's sexual fantasy. As McClintock (1995) astutely points out, sexuality works as a trope for imperial power relations. Asian women have been variously portrayed as objects to be saved from their culture by white men, as being exotic and easily available for pleasure and fun, or as targets of sexual violence. One example of such sexualized discourses of Asian women is the travelogues that were popularized among American soldiers occupying Japan and Korea, where military duty in East Asia was treated as "first and foremost a sexual adventure (Kindig 2016, p.151)".

Drawing on critical race and postcolonial feminist scholarship, in this special issue, we introduce academic journal articles and grassroots activism reports from Asian community that provide a multi-faceted analysis of anti-Asian racism in a variety of contexts.

Xiaobei Chen's article takes a historicizing and structural approach to anti-Chinese racism. Chen is critical of current discussions about anti-Asian racism that are often narrowly focused on individual acts of hateful attacks, overlooking the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse that is at the root of discriminatory and hostile treatment of the Chinese, particularly those with Mainland Chinese background. Using textual data, observations, and interviews and drawing on literature on scapegoat racism and the sacrificial politics of threat and security (Girard 2021[1977]), the article argues that the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse has revived the anti-Communist Sinophobia during the Cold War with exaggerated claims about the threat of China and perceives the "Bad Chinese" in the Chinese diaspora as threats to Canada. The anti-Chinese scapegoating

discourse not only fuels racist and discriminatory treatment of the Chinese, but also diverts our attention away from serious issues in Canada that do not have much to do with China or the Chinese diaspora.

Wu et al.'s article reminds readers that Asians are diverse and have different geopolitical and historical backgrounds, immigration histories, and generational differences. In their article, they call for a nuanced analysis of differences among Asians living in Canada using two surveys conducted in 2020 about their experiences of racism after the COVID-19 outbreak. Their findings demonstrate that native-born Asians reported encountering more instances of discrimination than their counterparts born abroad.

The experience of racism is not limited to offline spaces. Kao et al.'s article asks for the expansion of our awareness about anti-Asian racism to virtual social media platforms. Whereas the online social media space has been an active terrain of social interactions, sufficient academic attention has not been paid to online spaces. To contribute to this area of study, these authors present a conceptual framework to analyze the potential impact of racial discrimination in the social media space and the impacts on the health and mental well-being of Canadians. They draw our attention to a variety of online actors (victims [both direct and indirect victims], perpetrators and bystanders) and focus on the roles of cyber bystanders as a potential actor that can both positively and negatively affect the victims.

Hijin Park's article is a timely intervention to capture the global moments for racial justice and discuss the directions of inter-racial solidarity. In her analysis of public and media discourses of Asianness surrounding the death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, she questions and challenges the ways in which the Asianness of Tou Thao and Kellie Chauvin is constructed as one intrinsically contradictory to Blackness. In order to present the direction of inter-racial solidarity, she situates anti-Asian racism and anti-Black racism within the context of white settler colonialism and racial capitalism that have been fundamental structures for racial oppression and structural violence. She argues that the attention towards anti-Asian racism can be a catalyst to build collective momentum towards re-envisioning political advocacy and community actions for prison abolition and defunding police to rectify structural violence and systemic racism.

Elene Lam examines how Asian migrant sex workers are targeted by Canadian laws and policies and how they continue to be targeted by the "carceral web" of policies at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels today. A case study of Newmarket, Ontario's municipal council's recent "crackdown" on personal wellness establishments illustrates how systematic racism and "whorephobia" are embedded in the regulations targeting low-income Asian migrant women, particularly those who work in massage parlours and the sex industry. The article ends with a discussion of how, rather than passive trafficked victims, Asian workers in massage parlours and the sex industry are actively working to resist, fight for their rights, and build solidarity to push back against racist ideas about them.

One strength of this special issue is the pairing of academic articles with reports from activist groups fighting anti-Asian racism on the ground. Justin Kong shared his experiences with organizing Chinese communities around anti-racism, workers' rights and social justice during the COVID-19 pandemic during his term as the Executive Director of the Chinese National Council Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO). Kong revealed the challenges of working with different views within the community and balancing between community needs and public health directives in a time of crisis. Teresa Woo-Paw reported on how the ACT2Endracism National Network was organized to respond to anti-Asian racism in year 2020. Ines Huang, Xiaobei Chen, and Jiyoung Lee-An shared their experiences involved in organizing a vigil for the Atlanta shooting victims in Ottawa in March 2021. Elene Lam focused on the advocacy work undertaken by Butterfly, Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network to speak out about the oppression and violence faced by sex workers and the heavy economic, social, and mental impacts of COVID-19. In the last community report, Yafang Shi reflected on the online, non-for-profit news and commentary website Loving Sister's coverage of intersectional and transnational experiences of anti-Asian racism and other oppressions.

Together, the academic papers and the reports about community organizing highlighted a number of important insights for academic analysis and concrete activist practice: first, they demand an intersectional analysis of historically and contemporarily nuanced impacts of systemic racism on Asian groups. Second, Asians'/Asian Canadians' experience of oppression requires attention to both the local and the global perspectives and practice: in times of crises, the anti-Asian racist logic sees their transnational connections as danger and threats to hate and to curtail; globalized racial capitalism positions racialized masses against each other, as well, they can be targets of exclusion and suppression of more than one state and society. Third, struggles against anti-Asian racism must not leave out groups experiencing multiple exclusions, most notably, working class migrant workers such as migrant massage and sex workers and must include their concerns and needs as part of the struggles. Last but not the least, histories of joint struggles against racism and present social justice movements #blacklivesmatters and #idlenomore have made possible the scope and reach of our struggles against anti-Asian racism, including #StopAsianHate, and demonstrated the importance of interracial solidarity.

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Crises, Scapegoating, and Anti-Chinese Racism[1]

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Abstract

This article takes a historicizing and structural approach to anti-Chinese racism, a stream of anti-Asian racism, understood as a system of meaning making for power advantages in changing contexts (Hall 2021[1997]). Based on textual data, observations, and interviews and drawing on literature on scapegoat racism and the sacrificial politics of threat and security (Girard 2021[1977]), it advances the following arguments: first, current discussions about anti-Asian racism are often narrowly focused on individual acts of hateful attacks, overlooking the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse that is at the root of discriminatory and hostile treatment of the Chinese, particularly those with Mainland Chinese background. Second, the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse has revived the anti-Communist Sinophobia during the Cold War with exaggerated claims about the threat of China and perceives the "Bad Chinese" in the Chinese diaspora as threats to Canada. Third, the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse not only fuels racist and discriminatory treatment of the Chinese, it also diverts our attention away from serious issues in Canada that do not have much to do with China or the Chinese diaspora.

Introduction

> *"millions of sleeper cells"*
>
> *"commies!"*
>
> *"intern all Chinese nationals"*
>
> *"you must go back now!"*

These chilling, hateful, anti-Chinese, mostly anonymous comments appeared on the YouTube page of a Global News TV broadcast segment on April 30, 2020 (Global

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News TV 2020). The segment, based on the then Global News investigative journalist Sam Cooper's account (Cooper 2020a), reported a news story about the Chinese diaspora in Canada helping China's Communist government stockpile PPE supplies and sabotaging Canada's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Chinese Canadians were alarmed by the anti-Chinese undertone of this untrue and inflammatory news report. Some individuals and at least one group wrote letters to Global News to demand an apology and corrections. However, Global News rejected all demands. I open this article with this incident because it is a good case for understanding how a scapegoating discourse against the Chinese diaspora has been built, the significant role that some journalists and news outlets have played in the emergence and persistence of this discourse, and the 'binary conceptual map' ('Good' Chinese vs 'Bad' Chinese) applied to the Chinese diaspora.

The main purpose of the article is to sketch the emergence of the scapegoating discourse targeting the Chinese diaspora that is specific to our present time and to identify some of its conceptual characteristics. It is based on my research, personal experiences, and community engagement as a public sociologist around anti-Chinese, anti-Asian racism since 2020. There are three main sources of data for this article. The textual data was collected from print media, broadcast media, and social media since early 2020. It includes Cooper's report on April 30th, 2020 and other writings, as well as texts generated on the Internet (YouTube, Twitter, WeChat, Change.org) in response to his report. Observation data was collected from public events related to the topic of anti-Asian racism such as online rallies and panels, which were organized by community organizations, advocacy groups, or networks of professionals. I also included interview data from my ongoing research project on Mainland Chinese Canadians' experience with racism prior to and during COVID-19 times.

When reflecting on these experiences, it seems especially relevant to remember British sociologist Stuart Hall's conception of 'race' as "the floating signifier" (Hall 2021[1997]). What insights from critical theory about racism via British cultural studies, in particular the idea of race as a discursive construct, may be helpful here to reveal and dislodge "common-sense assumptions and everyday ways of talking about race, and making sense about race in our society today (Hall 2021[1997], 359)"? Of relevance to this article is Hall's rejection of an essentialist understanding of race and racism. Hall subscribes to the discursive concept of race, which understands racism as a language, a discourse, that organizes certain differences into systems of meaning and is "subject to the constant process of redefinition and appropriation …in different historical formations at different moments of time (p.362)". Hall's discursive concept of race has several implications to the analyses developed here, against the grain of much prevailing views about anti-Asian racism: firstly, there is no generic racism, there is no generic anti-Asian racism, and there is no generic anti-Chinese racism that totally traces itself straight back to the 19th century. We cannot properly understand anti-Asian racism in the 21st century by only, or mostly, referencing the history of anti-Asian racism in the past. We must historicize anti-Asian racism in our analysis, in the sense of analyzing the specific set of contemporary conditions within which the old ideas are

woven together with new ones. Secondly, racism is not a slur or a fist; those are but the overt effects of racism. Racism is a language, a system of concepts and classifications that construct/produce discursive meaning-making about different groups. A discourse of racism circulates and gathers force through mass narratives in news broadcasting, social media, and public documents. It structures discursive meaning-making like "a texture of life" (Arendt 1973; Stanley 2011) on diffuse sites: street corners, office hallways, playgrounds, broadcasting, social media, policy deliberations, and governance measures such as risk assessment and registry. Racism, in this case against the Chinese, is a systemic condition, that is, anti-Chinese racism is pervasive, deeply rooted in the culture of a society, and imbricated with the system of power and privilege. Thirdly, racism says more about the projectors' fear and anxiety than about the targets of racism. The discourse of racism organizes select differences into systems of meanings, through which the targeted audience find the world intelligible and identify consequent solutions to perceived problems, especially in times of crises.

The notion of systemic racism has several layers of meanings and scholars using this term may refer to one or a combination of these: racial prejudice and discrimination is not limited to a few prejudiced or ignorant individuals, rather these ideas and practices are enduring parts of a society's or an organization's culture; racial hierarchy is structurally related to material, political, and cultural inequality between groups; social and political institutions (e.g. systems of schools, governments, policing, the labour market, the media, and the popular culture) interact to produce outcomes that have widespread impact on racialized groups (James 2023). Covert and subtle forms of racism, racial prejudice, racial harassment have become more prevalent. Instead of seeing racism only in its direct and explicit forms and as a result of individuals' prejudice or ignorance, it is important to recognize systemic racism that is resistant to change. The anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse, which I define as a prevailing narrative in the west in the context of US-China rivalry that blames the Chinese diaspora for crises ranging from national debt, housing affordability, to public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, is a core, structural element of our contemporary anti-Asian racism and it manifests at societal, institutional, and individual levels.

I have also drawn on the small but important literature on scapegoat racism (especially Allport 1959[1948]; Girard 1986, 1987, 2021[1977]; Brown & Stivers 1998; O'Flynn et al. 2014; Denike 2015; McClain 2021). Girard identified a series of key components in scapegoating: social crisis, accusation, and choice of victim (Girard 2021[1977]; Brown and Stivers 1998). In white settler colonial societies, racialized differences from the white norm have been organized into signifiers, or packages of meanings, and racialized minorities made into convenient scapegoats for many of the crises that these societies have experienced, as Paula McClain observed in her 2021 Presidential Address for the American Political Science Association (McClain 2021). Scholars (e.g. Hoffman & Modi 2012; Denike 2015; McClain 2021) have documented that immigrants in the United States and Canada have long shouldered the blame for any kind of real or perceived threat. The current trend of blaming the Chinese diaspora is the latest in the tradition of race-based anti-immigrant scapegoating in the wake of social and political

crises (Allport 1948/1959; Girard 2021[1977]; Li 2009; McClain 2021). In times of acute international tensions and conflicts, an ethnic or religious minority group is particularly at risk of becoming scapegoats. In Canada's history and present, scapegoats for a faraway enemy that cannot be reached include the Ukrainian immigrants in the Great War (Kordan 2002), the Japanese communities in the 1940s and 1980s (Adachi 1991, Oikawa 2012), Canadians with Arab and Muslim backgrounds after 9/11 (Arat-Koc 2006; Hage 2002), Russian Canadians since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (CBC 2022; Jenkins 2022; Pringle 2022), and, as I argue in this paper, the Chinese. Girard's analytical framework about the dynamics of scapegoating is useful for understanding the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse in the 21st century.

The following sections highlight different aspects of analyses in turn. First, I examine the recent narrative about anti-Asian racism that should be by now familiar to many readers. I argue that these discussions about anti-Asian racism often tend to narrowly focus on individual acts of violence that are easily recorded and attributed to, often disregarding the central existence of the specific anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse. This discourse, which blends deep-rooted anti-Chinese racism and anti-communist Sinophobia during the Cold War (Li 2009), targets more recent immigrants from Mainland China, who are seen as either "victims of China's Communist government" and thus "with us", or "puppets of China's Communist government" and thus "against us". In the second and third sections, I argue that the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse is articulated with broader, structural conditions of widespread crises caused by neoliberal financial capitalism, the impact of defunding public institutions, and the erosion of democracy and the US-China rivalry. Using Girard (2021[1977])'s analytical framework, I discuss examples of government debt crisis, housing affordability crisis, and Cooper's Global News story of the PPE crisis as incidents through which a second crisis of accusing a scapegoat takes shape. The fourth section concludes by arguing for critical awareness of and resistance against the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse.

Anti-Asian Hate Attacks, #StopAsianHate, and Beyond

Following Hall's view about the discursive nature of racism, it is important to observe and diagnose what is particular about a racism targeting a group and responses to it in any given set of historical conditions. In the case of anti-Asian racism in our time, a sharp rise in hate attacks against Asians and, in response, protests rallying around the message of #StopAsianHate are the most visible characteristic of this particular current of racism and community resistance against it. To both the Canadian public and the Asian diasporic groups, anti-Asian racism in the last several years has been overwhelmingly associated with hate. Going against the grain, I problematize this narrow focus on hate, which, I argue, prevents us from understanding anti-Asian racism as a systemic phenomenon that is discursive and inextricably connected to structural economic, political, and cultural conditions of our time in North America.

To be sure, one widely noted feature of the recent wave of anti-Asian racism is the frightening rise of direct, hateful attacks by strangers in public places since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hateful attacks on Chinese Canadians, Asians Canadians because of similar physical features, and even Indigenous peoples mistaken as Chinese skyrocketed since 2020. There has been a continuous stream of reports about people being refused service, coughed at, spat at, pushed, beaten, and threatened with violence. An Angus Reid Institute survey in June 2020 estimated that 50% of Chinese Canadians routinely experience verbal assaults and 60% of Chinese Canadians change their routines to avoid attacks (Angus Reid Institute 2020). A follow up survey in June 2021 showed intensification of anti-Asian discrimination (Angus Reid Institute 2021). Vancouver, despite its reputation as the most Asian city outside Asia and supposedly "the bastion of progressive multiculturalism", registered more anti-Asian hate crimes reported to the police than in the top 10 most populous US cities combined; it experienced a 717% increase in anti-Asian crimes, despite underreporting, and was thus dubbed the world's capital of anti-Asian hate crimes (Pearson 2021; Baylon and Cecco 2021). A 2022 Statistics Canada study reports a 301% increase in the number of police-reported hate crimes against East or Southeast Asian population across Canada from 2019 to 2020 (Wang and Moreau 2022).

This wave of anti-Asian hate crimes is often explicitly, though not exclusively, associated with blaming the Chinese diaspora and by extension Asians for the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in one of the well-reported cases, photojournalist Justin Tang, when entering an Ottawa downtown mall, was threatened by a man that wearing a mask made him want to "kill Asians" (Cotnam 2020). Some Chinese Canadians were fearful that threats would escalate into real violence (field note, February 6, 2021). Tragically, on March 16, 2021 a perpetrator drove to three different businesses in Atlanta, United States to kill Asian spa workers. This sparked continent-wide protests against anti-Asian racism. These killings are widely seen in Asian communities as the culmination of growing hate and hostility against them. These appalling and reprehensible racist hate crimes are the face of what has been described as anti-Asian hate. Indeed, the hashtag #StopAsianHate quickly became the slogan for many protests across North America. Hate and how the government should respond to hate through stronger legislation and policing emerged as central concerns to many individuals and advocacy groups. In 2022, the Canadian federal government launched consultations for the National Action Plan on Combating Hate to "address the troubling rise of hate and hate groups" (Canadian Heritage 2022). However, its stated focus only on hate crimes and hate groups already indicated a narrow and likely ineffective focus for addressing pervasive racism.

There are several problems with the preoccupation with only hate. First, contrary to many people's perception that we can fight hate crimes with law enforcement, the legal tools against hate are very limited. Canada's Criminal Code does not explicitly define hate crime; in other words, a person cannot be charged with a hate crime. The few sections concerning hate are about the prohibition of hate propaganda and mischief motivated by hate. Hate as a motivation can factor into sentencing considerations,

however, Canadian police are known to rarely classify crimes as hate-motivated, partly because it is difficult to produce proof for motivation. Second, calling for hate crime laws and more policing are not only ineffective solutions, moreover, it may damage solidarity and a collective struggle against racism (Talusan 2021; 18millionrising.org; see also Park's article in this volume). Third, contrary to common understanding, these racist abuses are not the beginning but only a part of growing hostility in the last decade targeting the Chinese diaspora in Canada, who have been scapegoated for complex fiscal, financial, economic, and public health challenges (Yang 2016; Bui 2019; Ng 2019; Wu 2019), the latest in the tradition of race-based anti-immigrant scapegoating in the wake of crises. Social and political institutions including the media, popular culture, government policies, and organizational practices interact to produce and sustain an anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse. The preoccupation with hate crimes directs attention to the pathology of a few individuals or general remarks about a lack of education about the history of racism in Canada, while sidestepping the specific trend of anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse driven by the US-China rivalry.

The logic of the anti-Chinese accusation is comparable to that in anti-terrorism, Islamophobic hysteria (Denike 2015) and anti-Japanese hysteria in the 1940s and the 1980s, whereby a form of race-thinking translates collective anxiety about the foreign threat into a presumption of guilt-by-association and a desire to punish the surrogate victim in order to restore perceived control (Rothschild et al 2012, p.1149; Girard 2021[1977]). Girard (1986) observes that the scapegoat bears universal signs, in that they are always different ethnically, culturally, or physically, and they are marginal to society (Brown and Stivers 1998). In the case of anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse circulating in everyday life, institutional operations, and policymaking processes, the victim is identified through group/racial profiling criteria, i.e. through how they look, where they migrated from, and what they say or not say about the foreign country and government. Specific to immigrants from Mainland China and their children born in Canada, a prevailing prejudice they are faced with is a binaried conception of them as either victims of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or accomplices of the CCP, the latter being the scapegoat to be punished.

The set of binaries applied to the Chinese, especially immigrants from Mainland China, are organized with corresponding meanings:

good Chinese	vs.	bad Chinese
victims of CCP	vs.	agents of CCP
anti-China	vs.	pro-China
loyal to Canada	vs.	disloyal to Canada
free thinking	vs.	duped
grateful	vs.	ungrateful
defenders of democracy and human rights	vs.	enemies of democracy and human rights

This conceptual map is a key component of the structural, ideological framework of anti-Chinese race-thinking through which the Chinese diaspora are made sense of, evaluated, and reacted to accordingly. In the paradigm of "Good Chinese" versus "Bad Chinese", the "Good Chinese" are those who behave in ways that fit the image of victims of communism, who narrate only stories of communist oppression, who categorically take an anti-China position, and who profess the expected emotions of gratitude for Canada's rescue of them from the claws of communism. The "Bad Chinese" who deviate from these indicators are classified as "pro-China"; they are suspected as puppets and even accused to be communist agents, who collude with the Chinese government and sabotage the interest of the Canada. In this case, the scapegoat is racially and, importantly, also politically marked, in other words, they are Chinese and "pro-China".

This framework has pre-determined that only two subject positions are available for the Chinese; in other words, the Chinese are slotted into either of these opposite categories of victims or accomplices (Chen 2008). In reality, most of the Chinese diaspora would not see themselves as fitting either of these categories because they have complex and even contradictory views about China, that is, they are neither ideologically anti-China or pro-China. In many instances, because of pervasive traumatic experience during the Cultural Revolution and other brutal political movements in China and transgenerational transmission (Markert 2011), Mainland Chinese immigrants tend to go to extra lengths to be apolitical and distance themselves from politics. Nonetheless, this anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse structures how Chinese Canadians are seen, what stories can be told and heard, and what identity and life script (Appiah 2005) they are expected to take up. It is notable that to the western audiences the most desired, sympathized, and celebrated narratives about China by the Chinese diaspora are those that tell stories of suffering in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (Chen 2022). This racist binary construction as well as anti-communist logic of making meaning of Chinese immigrants is even present among children, as journalist Crystal Tai related in her article about the gathering force of the anti-Chinese sentiment. Growing up in Toronto, she was interrogated by her peers on the playground about "what kind of Chinese" she was: "'Good Chinese' (a liberal democrat at the age of seven), or 'Bad Chinese' (a communist)" (Tai 2020).

Racial profiling of the Chinese diaspora from Mainland China as communist spies sabotaging national interests is a direct result of the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse and is occurring with increasing frequency in the media, governments, and other institutions such as universities. This is especially the case for those with evident connections with China because of their immigration route and those who do not take a categorical anti-China position. As how racial profiling works, these biographical and political characteristics operate to mark Mainland Chinese Canadians as suspected agents of foreign interference for questioning, scrutinizing, filtering, and silencing. In ridings with high proportion of ethnic Chinese voters, many citizens' rejection of Conservative candidates in the 2021 federal election are simply red smeared as a result of Chinese voters being influenced by or even acting for the Chinese government (Ng 2022). My interviews with Mainland Chinese Canadians and participant observations so far show

that those who organized anti-racist protests were routinely suspected of being master-minded by the Chinese government and thus dismissed. STEM and even social sciences researchers with Chinese background are also profiled and targeted as agents for China (Lewis 2021; Lewis-Kraus 2022; Chase 2021; Ling 2022; Lorinc 2023).

The anti-Chinese scapegoating is a serious problem and is one of the main drivers of anti-Asian hate in the present. However, it is generally overlooked, not just by main-stream institutions but even by some veteran anti-racist activists and organizations. For example, at a webinar on anti-Asian hate, a question came from the audience: "The latest anti-Chinese hate crime in Canada was due to American anti-China policy and its misinformation/disinformation against China. How to tackle this type of hate crime in Canada driv[en] by macro political environment?" However, the response from the Chinese Canadian panelist referred to the history of anti-Chinese hate dating back to the 1800's, Head Tax, and Chinese Exclusion Act, eliding any mentioning of the broader anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse (field note, November 16, 2021). There are likely multiple factors involved in the unconscious or conscious avoidance of discussing the structural, pervasive anti-Chinese scapegoating and its connection to geopolitics, including the complex divisions within the Chinese diaspora. My argument, however, is that it is crucial to examine and understand western imperialist semi-colonization of China, settler colonial racial order, and contemporary geopolitical shift and ramifi-cations as conditions from which the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse emerge and functions as the core of systemic anti-Chinese racism at present (Chen 2021, 2022). Overlooking the problem of scapegoating, or worse, participating in it, assists the growth of the discourse and results in a dangerous situation for the Chinese diaspora.

Crises and Accusations

The anti-Chinese scapegoating perception of the Chinese as the culprit of social and economic ills is an enduring cultural tradition in Canada since the beginning of settler colonial state (Li 2009). Nevertheless, the current rendition of the yellow peril discourse (Yang 2016, Lou 2021) can only be understood properly when we also situate it in the new global political economy. Neoliberal deregulation and the unchecked growth of financial capitalism have resulted in stagnating economies and significant increase in income inequality and "the astonishing rise of the 1%" in Canada (Osberg 2018) and many other western countries in the last several decades. Relatedly, the marketisation of public institutions, including universities but also many others, has created commodi-fication of public goods, inequality, and precarity (Berman 2012; Brown 2013, 2022). Another major challenge that western liberal democracies face is the erosion of democ-racy. Many have cautioned about the drift of liberal democracies toward proto-fascism or authoritarian populism, accompanied by worsening political polarisation (Graves and Smith 2020; Reich 2021; Brown 2022). Distrust in corporate media, due to the competition of digital social and alternative media, right-wing strategic disinformation attacks (Freelon, Marwick, and Kreiss 2020), and credibility damages from journalist ethical blindspots (Mitrovica 2006; Mastracci 2020, 2023; Ng 2021a, 2012b, 2021c;

Sun 2021), is also placing democracy in jeopardy. These are what Girard describes as "the initial crisis." While "the initial crisis" could be anything, Girard observes that the real crisis is the reaction to the first one. The reaction, or the second crisis, is a social crisis of homogeneity where social differences are momentarily suspended and "virtually everyone acts the same in an emergency – hoarding food, looting, becoming violent or angry (Girard 2021[1977]; Brown and Stivers 1998)". The secondary crisis involves formulating an accusation and choosing a victim.

Many scholars and pundits agree that the great power competition, especially that between the US and China, is the defining feature of the 21st century (Gains and Sinkkonen 2020). Indeed, in a short span of four decades China has quickly become an economic superpower; it is ruled by an authoritarian regime explicitly set against liberal democracy; it has ambitions that challenge the US interests as the singular, supreme dominating power. However, while the rivalry between the US and China is real, some argue that these are also utilized by demagogues to demonize China and to shift blame to China from real drivers of domestic crises (Yang 2016; Bui 2019; Luo 2021; Reich 2021; Wolff 2023). The Chinese state, Chinese money, Chinese people, and by extension the Chinese diaspora are blamed for growing national debt, runaway housing cost, competition over intellectual property, and since the year 2020 a public health crisis.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, China became the target of accusations in what Fan Yang described as "fiscal orientalism". Yang (2016) analyzed cultural artefacts such as a 2009 Super Bowl commercial sponsored by a conservative think tank, a 2012 Super Bowl commercial for a Republican candidate, and the widely circulated "Chinese Professor" advertisement by Citizens Against Government Waste. Concertedly these advertisements promoted the notion that "U.S. owes China most of its debt", which is blatantly untrue. In 2021, 25% of the total federal debt (28.43 trillion U.S. dollars) was owned by foreign investors. Japan and Mainland China were top foreign holders, with Japan holding 4.6% and China 3.9% (USAspending.gov). China's US Treasury debt purchases started to increase in 2000, peaked in 2014 and gradually declined since then (Lee 2020). US government debt is a reasonable investment destination for China's large foreign exchange reserves because it is widely considered as a "safe haven"; however, China is also becoming increasingly wary of risks associated such as low returns and threats of financial sanctions by the US government. Despite these facts, China has been consistently and successfully constructed in American public imagination as a "threatening foreign creditor (Yang 2016, p.377)." Relatedly, Long Bui (2019) also coined the term "monetary orientalism" to describe the representation of China as a "prime currency manipulator and cheater" when China was accused of devaluing its currency in the so called "currency wars (p.482)." China's currency intervention, a common practice that other countries have employed before, is singled out and interpreted as "foreign exchange dark arts" by the "Chinese red menace" to "drag currencies onto the battlefield" (Tom Rees 2018, quoted in Bui 2019). As Bui (2019) observes, "China's attempts to respond to global market pressures are not always viewed as rational approaches to deal with a fickle economy, but a mad dash by a one-party state to undermine Americans (p.487)." This indeed becomes the paradigmatic frame

for interpreting China as an oversized threat. To apply Girard's analytical framework, this marks the beginning of the second crisis whereby the consolidation of accusations against China and the Chinese diaspora occurs.

In Canada, a similar anti-China and anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse proved to be convenient for shifting blame for Vancouver's rising housing cost to Chinese money and Chinese immigrants since the 2010s. Canada's housing prices have been inflated by a range of factors, including a shift in housing policy away from social housing to home ownership, low interest rates over a long period of time, record lending by banks and other financial institutions, population increase, limited housing supply, and foreign capital from the US, Europe and Asia. However, there has been a persistent message from the media and even government officials that the cause of housing unaffordability is "Chinese money". While foreign investment, including investment from China, certainly contributed to the problem, with the exception of a handful of critics (e.g. Hern 2015; Ng 2019; Wallstam 2019; Smith 2021), the mainstream media, academia, and the public generally fail to examine the range of factors that are not as sensational and believable to the Canadian public as menacing Mainland Chinese investors. Far from being unique, Vancouver's housing cost problem is a symptom of what housing policy specialists call "housing financialization", a growing phenomenon in wealthy economies especially after the 2008 global financial crisis, manifesting in practices such as multiple property ownership and foreign investment. Decades of neoliberal economic and financial policies have produced unprecedented global inequalities, including in Canada (Osberg 2018). We see the global growth of the super-rich and an expanding global middle class, for whom domestic and foreign real estate investment is a popular choice; in other words, select cities have been used as a "safe deposit box" (Wallstam 2019). Furthermore, the steady and immense increase in the supply of money in the trillions because of US-led monetary policy and low interest rates over an extended period has also significantly contributed to wealthy elites' demand for investment housing (Ng 2019). Nonetheless, even though there is insufficient and unreliable data to prove it (Wallstam 2019), a scapegoating discourse about the housing cost crisis being caused by foreign, specifically Mainland Chinese, property investment solidified from 2015 onwards (see for example Cooper 2015). In contrast, the increasing and changing patterns of multiple property ownership, among other factors, had rarely been examined. In Canada, as in other wealthy economies, multiple property owners are a growing group and are concentrated in Vancouver (accounting for 20 per cent of homeowners) and Toronto (16.5 per cent) (Gold 2021; Lavery 2021). In fact, in 2022 news broke out that at least 20 per cent of Canadian Members of Parliament and about one-third of Liberal cabinet ministers hold rental and investment real estate, including the then Conservative leadership candidate Pierre Poilievre (Connolly 2022a, 2022b), whose decry about rising housing prices avoids pointing the finger at wealth polarization and housing financialization. Indeed, how lawmakers' financial interest may influence their analysis about housing issues and decision on housing policy has become an important question (Connolly 2022b). This new phenomenon of housing financialization is so notable that the *International Journal of Housing Policy* devoted a special issue on the

topic in 2020. Housing financialization, exemplified by multiple property ownership and foreign ownership, results in more macroeconomic instability, greater intergenerational, geographical and tenure-status inequality, and produces new political cleavages. Experts have called for it to be treated as a central subject of broad financial and social policy (Fuller 2020). The scapegoating narrative, however, "construes Vancouver as a 'victim' of foreign capital" and dresses the problem of housing financialization as a foreign and Chinese problem to be solved by restricting foreign investment (Wallstam 2019, p.92).

Anti-Chinese Scapegoating in Action: the COVID PPE Supplies Story in Global News

In this section, I examine Cooper's report about the Chinese diaspora in Canada helping the Chinese government stockpile PPE supplies as a critical incident in constructing the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse. I consider Cooper's report a paradigmatic case (Flyvbjerg 2011) because of its richness in illustrating the context to the scapegoating story, the developmental process of constructing and spreading the scapegoating story narrative, and the impact of inflaming hatred. One aspect of the context is the decade long topic of the China threat in Canadian media. As one of the most prolific journalists writing on this topic, Cooper has focused his journalistic work since about 2015 on how the Chinese government and its alleged "agents" have harmed Canada and Canadians through causing housing unaffordability (2015), money laundering (Global News 2018), stockpiling PPE (2020a), silencing Chinese dissidents (2020b), and engaging in foreign interference (Global News 2023). Even though his work has been challenged by critics (Ng 2021c), he had been afforded the platform of Globe News until 2023 (Mastracci 2023) and his influence in shaping the prevailing discourse is evidenced by his affiliation with the McDonald-Laurier Institute and his best-selling book *Willful Blindness* (Cooper 2021; for a critical review, see Ng 2021c). The narrative in Cooper's story about "millions of overseas Chinese" stockpiling PPE for the Chinese government exemplifies the "Good Chinese" versus "Bad Chinese" race-thinking in anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse in Cooper's other work as well as in much of the Canadian discourse on other incidents such as the detainment of Meng Wanzhou by Canada and of the two Michaels by China. Cooper's PPE story is also significant because it provoked the first large-scale and Canada-wide grassroots resistance to scapegoating by Chinese Canadians.

The first outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was in Wuhan in central China. In late January, 2020, China moved quickly to place Wuhan under a strict lockdown for 76 days. Across the country, effectively 50 million people were quarantined, and additional preventive measures were implemented, including mandatory face mask wearing, social distancing, massive contact tracing, severe restriction of population movements, and strict border control (Burki 2020). Through these measures, by the beginning of April 2020, the spread of the coronavirus in China was brought to a temporary halt (Uretsky 2020) and schooling, traveling, everyday going about was back to normal for almost

two years [1]. However, independent journalist Davide Mastracci (2020) noted, "towards the end of March [2020], just as it was becoming obvious that China's COVID-19 response, despite some flaws, was impressive, the amount of anti-China articles ramped up". In other words, the almost doubled output of anti-Chinese articles about China's COVID-19 response was not actually due to any new evidence about the Chinese government's wrongs, but rather, "the situation within Canada was just getting much worse, and so everyone was looking for someone to blame, including these columnists" (2020). Sam Cooper's April 30th, 2020 story was part of the spike of articles demonizing China in Canadian corporate press, presenting itself as an expose of nefarious activities of "millions overseas Chinese" to help China's communist government stockpile PPE supplies for exorbitant profits and sabotaging other countries' struggles with the pandemic.

A significant volume of face masks and other protective equipment was indeed imported to China in January and February 2020. To put that in context, it is important to remember that in those two months, China was the epicentre of the pandemic while there was hardly any infection in the rest of the world. Hospitals in Wuhan suffered from a severe shortage of protective supplies, so much so that Chinese doctors sent desperate pleas for help on the internet. There was also a severe shortage of face masks that ordinary people were required to wear. It is plausible that some Chinese Canadian associations responded to the Chinese consulates' and the central and local Chinese governments' call for help. However, it is crucial to note that these associations do not represent the vast majority of Chinese Canadians, even though they and the Chinese government may claim that they do in state propaganda. Furthermore, the Chinese government's open call for help and some associations' response to them are also normal behaviours in a public health crisis. Similar calls and responses occurred before in times of disasters such as Great Wenchuan Earthquake in 2008 and they are no different from actions of other embassies and diaspora communities.

My research on Mainland Chinese Canadian[2] participants mentioned that they purchased face masks to send to their family, friends, and hospitals in China, however, some also decided not to. In fact, they had different views and took different actions about PPE in January and February 2020. Those who sent face masks to China did so out of their own volition, not because the Chinese government asked them to. Most significantly, one finding that came out of my interviews is that private purchase agents (代购 daigou), grassroots Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who are typically women and who do transnational trade business using the social media platform WeChat, likely accounted for the most significant volume of the export of face masks to China[3].

However, in his reporting, Cooper did not mention these diverse contexts and varied actions of Chinese Canadians and he did not seem to be aware of the intense and significant activities of private purchase agents in those months. His article focused on painting a picture of the Chinese government directing the Chinese diaspora en masse. Cooper's report described the actions related to PPEs as being "quiet", "covert", "surreptitious", "underground", and "under the radar". However, the report did not provide

any evidence that any organization or individual tried to hide their action from public view. To the contrary, Cooper himself cited Chinese official statistics on the import, Chinese consulates' call for help, and Chinese news reports. Cooper also claimed to have exposed that the mobilization of "millions of 'overseas Chinese'" in a "state-level operation" made possible the import of 2.02 billion face masks to China in January and February 2020. He wrote: "through clandestine United Front networks run out of Chinese consulates in cities from Vancouver to Toronto to New York to Melbourne to Tokyo, the Communist Party urged millions of 'overseas Chinese' to bulk-buy N95 masks in order to ship 'back batches of scarce supplies for the motherland'". It should be noted that Cooper's source for the alleged massive scale of 'overseas Chinese' involved in "a state-level operation" is a Chinese state media article originally published in the municipal *Fuzhou Daily* and then republished in the national government news outlet Xinhuanet. This raises the question why Cooper, a major Canadian news outlet journalist who has been for almost a decade focusing on problematizing the Chinese government's interest in extending its influence abroad, readily accepted the reports from the Chinese government as plain facts, instead of what a rational and responsible person would scrutinize and qualify, if not reject, as Chinese state propaganda. In an ironic sense, it seems that the Chinese state media's propaganda - in this case, propaganda about its capacity to mobilize "millions of overseas Chinese" - is what Cooper apparently would like to believe. Clearly this is a classic case of confirmation bias, where one seeks out and readily accepts information that supports one's beliefs, without due diligence to discover other evidence.

The same confirmation bias is also evident in a critical error in the English translation of a sentence in the same reporting. The original sentence in Chinese in the Chinese state media article reads '每一位侨胞都是战 "疫" 者. The anonymous Chinese writer used a common literary device of homonyms and used quotation marks to indicate the substitution: '战 "疫" 者' (a warrior against the pandemic, 疫 means epidemic or plague) in the quoted sentence is a play on the more commonly used term "战役者" (a warrior, 役 means service in battle or war). A correct English translation should be "Every overseas Chinese is a warrior against the pandemic." The Global News report misleadingly printed "Every overseas Chinese is a warrior," dropping the key reference to "the pandemic," which distorted the meaning of the sentence to fit not just the hysteria of the story about PPEs, but also the broader anti-Chinese discourse about the disloyal Chinese diaspora. This mistranslation is a failure in meeting journalist standards of accuracy and contributes to the already growing discriminatory slander against Chinese Canadians. This mistake was pointed out by Chinese Canadians who wrote or called Global News but Cooper and Global News insist that there was no mistake (research field notes).

In the days following Cooper's defamatory report, a group of Chinese-Canadian professors in different academic disciplines and institutions launched a petition to demand corrections of the reporting[4]. The petition collected more than 8,000 signatures in merely a week, a remarkable success for a group who usually shy away from public actions. Others have also written to Global News numerous times to protest (See Ng

2021). However, Global News steadfastly refused to talk to petitioners about their concerns and to apologize for and to correct its serious editorial and factual errors (Ng 2021). Furthermore, Cooper went a step further by accusing those who stood up to voice objection as compromised individuals who acted for the Chinese government using the cover of anti-racism. In the summer of 2021 Cooper published a book about "how drug dealers, the CCP agents, and billionaire tycoons" have infiltrated the west (Cooper 2021). At the online book launch, the first example that Cooper gave about "the hand of Beijing" was the petition about his Global News Report that the Chinese Canadian professors' group organized. His framing of this grassroots petition in line with "drug dealers, the CCP agents, and Billionaire tycoons" shows how the anti-Chinese scapegoating discourse works in painting legitimate dissenters as puppets or, worse, agents of the Chinese government.

I argue that Cooper's April 30th, 2020 report, uncorrected and in circulation to this day[5] , contributed to distorting Canadian public view in believing that the Chinese diaspora as a collective are to be blamed for the public health challenges in Canada. It stirred up hostility towards "disloyal" Chinese Canadians and hateful remarks erupted in response to the report. As mentioned earlier, some readers of Cooper's report had no hesitation in describing the Chinese diaspora as "millions of sleeper cells" and demanding to "intern all Chinese nationals", which remained on the YouTube page of the TV segment for months before being quietly removed (research notes).

Conclusion: Countering the Scapegoating of the Chinese Diaspora

Anti-Asian racism has been part of the cultural tradition in white settler colonial societies since their beginning. A characteristic of racism targeting Asians is that it is intertwined with anti-immigrant sentiments and geopolitics. The content of racist ideas and actions against Asians tend to vary depending on the situation that provoked the wave of heightened hostility against a specific group. As "a floating signifier", racism against the Chinese in the opening decades of the 21st century must be understood for its meaning constructions in the context of both historical racist ideology about the Chinese and contemporary political economic conditions. Using Girard's (2021[1977]) insight about second crisis in scapegoating, i.e. the more serious social crisis of homogeneity through which societal reaction to the first crisis becomes uniform, typically expressed as suspicion, distrust, anger, and violence (Brown and Stivers 1998) and the accusation of a group supposedly of some moral failure is accused to have caused the initial crisis, I have discussed the emergence of a widespread discourse that scapegoats China and the Chinese diaspora as threats and causes of major problems in the US and in Canada. This discourse is a systematic anti-Chinese construction of China as a threatening foreign debtor to whom the "U.S. owes most of its debt", a "prime currency manipulator and cheater", Chinese investment as the cause of the housing cost crisis in Vancouver, and the Chinese diaspora as "warriors" commanded by the Chinese government to sabotage Canada in the COVID-19 pandemic. China "as a communist nation, a military power, and economic powerhouse (Bui 2019)", the Chinese investment, and

the Chinese diaspora are perceived by many individuals and institutions in the US and no less in Canada as posing the most significant threat in the twenty-first century; they are accused for having caused a host of major crises, despite evidence to the contrary. Scapegoating China and the Chinese diaspora may give some a sense of control and purpose, but it blocks us from understanding the serious structural problems we must address domestically. In other words, the scapegoating and racializing logic functions to divert attention from devastations caused by neoliberal financial capitalism, as seen through the case of the housing crisis in Canada, and precludes alternative visions for Canadian foreign and domestic policy.

No less importantly, scapegoating China and the Chinese diaspora fuels racist and discriminatory treatment of the Chinese and other Asians. The deafening silence around the structural dimensions of the anti-Chinese racist discourse sits in stark contrast to the hypervisibility of attacks on individuals by individual perpetrators. In discussions about anti-Chinese racism, our attention has consistently been directed towards the less educated, the working class, the mentally ill, fringe white supremacists, and sometimes other racialized minorities in the case of anti-Chinese hate crimes, missing the role of the racialized structure in producing and sustaining racist prejudices through news broadcasting, social media, and public documents. If we are to take anti-Chinese racism seriously and to contest it, we must recognize and refute the scapegoating discourse at the root of it and institutions, such as media, must be held accountable for its role in the perpetuating this discourse. The anti-Chinese racism that insists on a Manichean set of categories of either victims of communism or puppets of communism operates as a mental framework that organizes meanings for Chinese Canadians and dehumanizes them. The Chinese diaspora should be understood on their own terms who have their own history and multiple complex relationships with their country of origin, rather than being slotted into the west-centric, Orientalist, ideology driven categories of victims of communism or agents of communism. The current situation whereby taking the ideological position of being against China is considered the condition of belonging to Canada should be named and rejected. The Chinese diaspora's range of experiences, relations, beliefs, and positions deserve to be heard, understood, and accepted. They should not just be acceptable to Canada only when they present themselves as victims of the Chinese government. The Canadian society needs to resist applying this conceptual matrix of "Good Chinese" or "Bad Chinese" that refuses to recognize their rich lives, complex emotions, and importantly political agency on their terms.

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Endnotes

1   The two-year normalcy ended in early 2022 when, faced with Omicron variant, the Chinese government imposed what are seen by many as excessive and poorly managed restrictions.

2   The research project is on "COVID-19 and Anti-Chinese Racism", funded by a Carleton University internal grant.

3   The growing, gendered phenomenon of Chinese migrants mobilizing information and communication technologies for transnational commercial activities has attracted scholars' attention who characterized it variously as "petit capitalism", "digital migrant entrepreneurship", and "transnational entrepreneurship" (Zani 2022; Yang et al 2016; Chen 2006).

4   I was one of the few social science scholars in this group and took a lead role in organizing the petition.

5   In a recent story (Cooper 2022) about two murders in Vancouver, Cooper included a live link to his April 30th 2020 report defaming and accusing Chinese Canadians of working for the Chinese government.

6   I was invited to participate in writing this article after leaving my work at CCNCTO, and my reflections here represent only my personal opinions and do not reflect the views of any organizations.

Cary Wu, Eric B. Kennedy, Yue Qian, and Rima Wilkes - **"How have Asians experienced discrimination differently during COVID-19? The role of nativity"** *Migration, Mobility, & Displacement 7: 29-44*

MM&D

How have Asians experienced discrimination differently during COVID-19? The role of nativity

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Abstract

In this article, we consider differences in how native-born Asians and foreign-born Asians may have experienced rising anti-Asian attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic. We analyze Canadian data from a national survey (two waves conducted in April and December 2020) that includes a subsample of 464 Asians (native-born=178; foreign-born=286). Results from negative binomial regressions suggest that perception of anti-Asian racism is highly conditioned by nativity. Specifically, native-born Asians are significantly more likely than foreign-born Asians to report having encountered instances of acute discrimination during the pandemic. To explain the perceived discrimination gap, we test whether a stronger sense of cultural belonging and ethnic pride among native-born Asians contributes to their greater sensitivity to discrimination and thereby higher perceptions of discrimination. We measure sense of cultural belonging and ethnic pride using in-group trust (ethnic trust in Asian people). Although we do find native-born Asians show greater in-group trust, it does not seem to explain away the higher levels of discrimination perceived by native-born Asians.

Introduction

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a massive spike in anti-Asian hate crimes across the world. Canada is no exception. Across the country, between March 10, 2020 and February 28, 2021, the community-led "FIGHT COVID-19 RACISM" platform (https://www.covidracism.ca/), where individuals can voluntarily share their experiences of racism, recorded 1,150 instances of anti-Asian racism.[1] The number continues to grow. Official data show a similar trend. In British Columbia, for example, the Vancouver Police Department reported a 97 percent increase in the total number of hate crimes from 142 cases in 2019 to 280 cases in 2020. Anti-Asian hate crimes, however, increased by 717 percent (from only 12 cases in 2019 to 98 cases in 2020) (Vancouver Police Department 2020). These numbers may only reflect a small portion of actual anti-Asian attacks. Results from a June 2020 survey of Chinese Canadians (n>500) conducted by Angus Reid Institute (2021) found that, since the pandemic's onset, more than 50 percent of Asians have been called names or insulted, 40 percent have been threatened or intimidated, and 30 percent have been frequently exposed to racist graffiti or messaging on social media. This skyrocketing anti-Asian racism is taking a toll on Asian Canadians, endangering their health, and impacting their well-being (e.g., Mamuji et al. 2020; Yu et al. 2020; Wu et al. 2020; 2021).

It is also the case that Asians may not experience anti-Asian racism to the same degree. Even during the same set of events, individuals may report varying experiences of unequal treatment. Therefore, how individuals perceive unequal treatment could reflect how they experience discrimination differently (Vang and Chang 2019). A small body of research focusing on immigrants has shown that perceptions of discrimination vary across immigrant groups and also differ between immigrants and native-born people (e.g., Yip et al. 2008; Ray and Preston 2009; Mossakowski et al. 2018). For example, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) find that immigrants from different generations often report different levels of discrimination in Canadian society. Most recently, analyzing data from the Understanding Coronavirus in America survey, Wu and colleagues (2021) show that native-born Asians (Asian Americans) reported encountering more instances of discrimination than their foreign-born counterparts (Asian immigrants) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this article, we investigate whether Asian Canadians (native-born Asians) and Asian immigrants (foreign-born Asians) may have fared differently in the face of rising racist attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic. We analyze data from a national survey (two waves conducted in April and December 2020) and find that native-born Asians are significantly more likely than foreign-born Asians to report having encountered instances of acute discrimination during the pandemic. We then consider whether a stronger sense of cultural belonging and ethnic pride among native-born Asians may help explain the gap in perceived discrimination between native-born and immigrant Asians. We

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1 The platform was created by several community organizations including the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, Project 1907, Vancouver Asian Film Festival and Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice to track and record instances of Anti-Asian racism during COVID-19.

measure ethnic pride and cultural belonging using ethnic trust in Asian people (see also Uslaner and Conley 2003). We do not find that native-born Asians' higher in-group belonging (ethnic trust in Asian people) explains the gap.

Why do native-born Asians perceive more discrimination than foreign-born Asians?

Discrimination describes the experience of a person being treated unfairly by virtue of that person's ascribed status such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Heckman 1998; Quillian 2006; Wilkes and Wu 2018). Discrimination is manifested in many forms. Some manifestations are subtle and ambiguous, while others are explicit and overt. However, any form of discrimination can be harmful and endanger the health and well-being of those who experience it. When an individual, for example, is routinely ignored, treated rudely or with less courtesy, and threatened or harassed, it creates stress and trauma, thereby worsening that person's physical and mental health (Harrell 2000; Meyer 2003; Carter 2007). This experience of discrimination has, in turn, been linked to racial and ethnic health disparities (Essed 1991; Williams and Mohammed 2009; Williams et al. 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, ethnic and racial minorities' higher encounters of everyday discrimination have put additional stress on them, which in turn exacerbates the existing racial and ethnic inequalities in health (Mamuji et al. 2020; Yu et al. 2020; Wu et al. 2020; 2021).

In Canada, discrimination is widespread. Prior to the pandemic, about 23 percent of Canadians reported having experienced discrimination (Godley 2018), a figure that increased to 30 percent during the outbreak (Wu et al. 2020). Still, not all Canadians perceive discrimination to the same degree. Several scholars have considered how immigrants may experience discrimination differently. In this line of research, scholars find that not only do immigrants from diverse backgrounds perceive discrimination to different degrees, but that there is also a gap between how the native-born and the foreign-born perceive discrimination even in the same context. For example, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) find that visible minority second-generation Canadians report higher instances of discrimination than their first-generation counterparts. In contrast, white immigrants report higher discrimination than their white native-born counterparts (ibid). Ray and Preston (2009) show that, regardless of the racial and ethnic group, native-born Canadians tend to report higher perceived racial discrimination than immigrants, which seems to confirm Reitz and Banerjee's (2007) findings about visible minorities but contradicts their conclusion regarding white Canadians. More recently, Vang and Chang (2019) used data from the 2013 Canadian Community Health Survey to investigate how immigrants in Canada experience everyday discrimination compared to native-born Canadians. They show that recent immigrants report fewer instances of discrimination than their native-born Canadian counterparts and that immigrants who have lived in Canada for a longer period tend to report more instances of discrimination than more recent immigrants (Vang and Chang 2019).

Thus far, three major theories have been proposed to explain differences in perceived discrimination. First is straight-line assimilation theory. This theory posits that longer residence in the host society will diminish the discrimination gap between immigrants and the native-born. Succinctly put, the straight-line assimilation framework expects that the assimilation process culminates in the closure of the discrimination gap between the native-born and the foreign-born (Gordon1964; see also Vang and Chang 2019). While this might apply to white immigrants, for non-white immigrants in Canada, research has suggested that the longer they stay, the higher discrimination they perceive (Reitz and Banerjee 2007). The finding that the native-born perceive more discrimination than the foreign-born (e.g., Ray and Preston 2009) also represents a full rejection of this theory.

Second is the segmented assimilation theory. According to this view, immigrants of different sociodemographic backgrounds experience discrimination to various degrees in the host country since they often experience divergent assimilation pathways (Portes and Zhou 1993). In Canada, whites are the dominant group in terms of wealth and political power (Vang and Chang 2019). Thus, white immigrants can quickly become "white" Canadians and be fully accepted, whereas non-white immigrants are often seen as "perpetual foreigners" in Canada regardless of the duration of their stay, even after generations (non-white native-born individuals). In fact, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) have shown that race conditions how immigrants perceive discrimination in Canada, which seems to lend some support to this theory.

To gauge how people may experience discrimination differently, we rely on how people perceive discrimination. Indeed, if people perceive the same set of unfair treatment events to various degrees, this can tell how they may have experienced the unfair treatment differently. However, both the straight-line assimilation theory and the segmented assimilation thesis fail to differentiate between instances of actual and perceived discrimination (Vang and Chang 2019). A third alternative, a differential treatment to discrimination theory, suggests that some are more sensitive to instances of unequal treatment and thus more likely to attribute such treatment to discrimination (Vang and Chang 2019: 606-607; see also Yip et al. 2008; Mossakowski et al. 2018). In this view, a deep-seated racial or ethnic identity may exacerbate sensitivity to discrimination (Yip et al. 2008). Mossakowski et al. (2018:446) explain that native-born people may perceive more discrimination as a result of their generally "strong sense of cultural belonging or ethnic pride" or sense of affront at "unfair treatment". Such feelings which stem from and are bolstered by group membership can, however, intensify experiences of discrimination and condition individuals to harmonize cues in the environment with their racial or ethnic identity (Mossakowski et al. 2018). Native-born individuals' greater sensitivity to discrimination also comes from their higher expectations for membership in the receiving country, which are learned in the educational institutions early in life (Vang and Chang 2019: 606). Accordingly, greater sensitivity to discrimination and differential treatment to discrimination explain why native-born people perceive more discrimination than foreign-born people.

Taken together, while it is important to acknowledge that all Asian Canadians have greatly suffered from the spike in anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, we do expect that some perceive racism more than others and therefore could suffer more. We consider how Asians from different ethnic categories perceive anti-Asian racism differently. In particular, we test whether native-born Asians perceive a higher degree of anti-Asian racism than their foreign-born counterparts. To explain this potential gap in perceived discrimination, we test the differential treatment to discrimination theory. Specifically, we consider whether native-born Canadians show more in-group pride and, as a result, are more sensitive to discrimination and perceive more discrimination than foreign-born individuals, leading to their higher perceptions of discrimination encounters.

Data and Methods

As part of an ongoing national study tracking social perceptions, behaviours, and decision-making (Kennedy et al. 2020), we conducted a series of surveys with Canadian respondents. In March 2020, using all national postal routes as a sampling frame, we conducted a stratified random sampling matching provincial, urban/rural, and metro area parameters to national statistics. Prospective respondents received bilingual postcards requesting their participation via a URL or QR code, with a survey platform hosted at Qualia Analytics. This initial contact (154,758 households) yielded a cleaned and validated set of 1,969 responses. In December 2020, we invited those households who had provided an email address to participate in a follow-up survey (n = 624). Concurrently, we also recruited a further 3,056 completed respondents through the Leger web survey panel, using a quota-based approach matching the Canadian public with respect to age, gender, province, and visible minority status. The sample sizes above reflect post-cleaning numbers, which involved using a combination of attention check, consistency check, and minimum response standard verification.

For this study, we focus on Asians only, including both those respondents in the mail sample (March) and web sample (December). We include respondents who self-identified as any of the following ethnic groups: Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Western Asian, Southern Asian, Southeast Asian, and Filipino. Listwise deletion based on our key variables yields a final analytical sample that includes a total of 464 respondents.

Measures

Our dependent variable is perception of discrimination encounters. We combine five questions that ask, in the past month, whether the respondent was treated with less courtesy, received poorer service, was threatened or harassed, was the subject of other people's fear, and was subjected to negative reactions from strangers in public spaces (Williams et al. 1997). Responses are coded as 0=I wasn't treated this way during this month, 1=At least a few times in the month, 2=At least once a week, and 3=At least once daily. We combine these items to create an index of perceived discrimination

encounters, ranging from 0 to 15. Higher scores indicate higher perceptions of discrimination encounters (see also Wu et al. 2020). Scholars have debated whether these items should be used to compare perceptions of discrimination across diverse racial/ethnic groups since they may not be able to capture the underlying construct of perceived discrimination equivalently (Kim et al. 2014; Bastos and Harnois 2020). In this study, we focus on Asians only and this may help minimize the problem of measurement equivalence.

The major predictor variables include nativity, ethnic background, and ethnic identity. To measure nativity, we separate between native-born Asians and foreign-born Asians based on the country where they were born, in Canada or outside. For our main analysis, we obtain 178 native-borns (38%) and 286 foreign-borns (62%). Still, Asians are not a monolithic group. In fact, because the COVID-19 outbreak started in Wuhan, China, the vast majority of the attacks have been directed against people of Chinese descent or people who look Chinese including people of Japanese or Korean descent. According to the first national report based on over 600 racists incidents and attacks collected via "FIGHT COVID-19 RACISM" platform across Canada, 83 percent of the incidents and attacks targeted East Asians.[2] Accordingly, Asians from different ethnic backgrounds likely have experienced anti-Asian racism at different levels in different times. To control this effect, we create an ethnic background variable. Specifically, we separate East Asian respondents who identified as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese from Western Asian, Southern Asian, Southeast Asian, or Filipino. While our data are limited in assessing Asians' sense of cultural belonging or ethnic pride, we are able to use Asians' trust in Asian people (in-group trust) as a measure to reflect how strong they identify with and trust in their in-group fellows (see also Uslaner and Conley 2003). The question item simply asks respondents "do you trust Asian people?". Response categories include five levels from "1=not trust at all" to "5=a great deal of trust". High scores mean more trust. Given our focus is on Asian respondents only, we define Asian trust in Asian people as ethnic trust among Asian Canadians.

In our analysis, we also control for several key demographics. Respondents' level of education is measured in terms from 1=no school to 7=post-graduate level. Household income is measured on a 1-13 scale, with higher scores indicating high levels of household income. Gender is separated between male and female. Age is calculated in years, ranging from 12 to 86. Wave of survey helps to account for both timing and survey mode variation. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for our key variables in the analysis. Please note that in Table 1, the total number of observations for both native-born and foreign-born Asians varies across variables. In the regression analysis below, we employ listwise deletion, resulting in an analytical sample of 464.

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2   Elimin8hate. 2020. More Anti-Asian Racist Incidents Reported Per Capita in Canada than US According to First National Report (September 2020). Accessed on March 3, 2021 from: https://www.elimin8hate.org/blog/more-anti-asian-racist-incidents-reported-per-capita-in-canada-than-us-according-to-first-national-report.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for key variables in the analysis

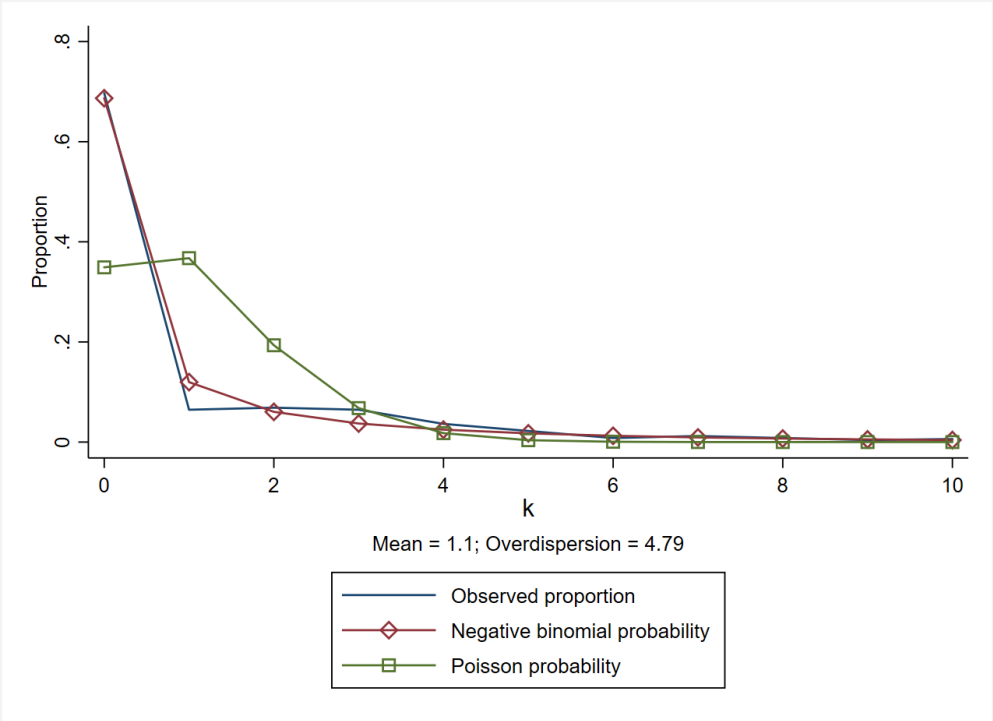| Variable	Native-born Asian			Foreign-born Asian			Min	Max
	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean (%)	Std. Dev.		
Perceived discrimination encounters	188	1.44	2.62	307	0.82	1.79	0	15
Household income	262	8.60	4.20	430	8.36	3.98	0	13
Level of education	267	5.18	1.71	437	5.30	1.62	1	7
Age	268	55.58	15.13	445	48.04	15.99	12	86
Female	269	49%	NA	451	53%	NA	0	1
East Asian	271	61%	NA	454	43%	NA	0	1
Trust in Asian people	99	3.60	0.91	191	3.36	0.91	1	5
Survey wave (0=Mar, 1=Dec)	271	89%	NA	454	83%	NA	0	1

Methods

Our dependent variable captures whether respondents experienced discrimination during the last month across five items, with responses counted as 0=I wasn't treated this way during this month, 1=At least a few times in the month, 2=At least once a week, and 3=At least once daily. The composite scale of perceived discrimination (0-15) largely follows a Poisson distribution, so we consider it as a count response. Because the dependent variable is over-dispersed (variance [4.68] > mean [1.05]), we account for over-dispersion using the negative binomial specification for statistical estimations (Long 1997). Figure 1 graphs the observed proportions along with the Poisson and negative binomial probabilities for perceived discrimination. The negative binomial shape parameter, k, describes the shape of a negative binomial distribution. It confirms that the negative binomial probability curve fits the data better than the Poisson probability curve. Our additional analysis using the OLS regressions shows consistent results.

Findings

Figure 2 provides a descriptive visualization of the gap in perceived acute discrimination between foreign-born and native-born Asians across two waves of data. Overall, we see native-born Asians have reported more encounters of discrimination. More specifically, when comparing the encounters of acute discrimination on the 0-15 scale, we find that native-born Asians have an overall mean of 1.44 (95% CI, 1.06-1.81), while foreign-born Asians have an overall mean of 0.82 (95% CI, 0.62-1.02). The 0.61 gap is highly significant (p=0.002). Due to the existence of excess zeros, we also compare the probability of reporting at least some encounters of discrimination (1 or more on

Figure 1. Comparing the fit for Poisson versus negative binomial predictions

Mean = 1.1; Overdispersion = 4.79

—— Observed proportion
—◇— Negative binomial probability
—☐— Poisson probability

the 0-15 scale). The results show that while 27% of foreign-born Asians (native=0) reported some encounters of discrimination, this number is 36% for native-born Asians (native=1). The 9-percentage-point gap is also significant (p=0.03). These descriptive results suggest that native-born Asians tend to report higher encounters of acute discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic (see also Table 1).

Next, we use negative binomial regressions to estimate the gap in perceived discrimination encounters between native-born and foreign-born Asians. Table 2 provides the results. The significant natural log of alpha (dispersion parameter) across all models indicates a significant selection of the negative binomial approach over a Poisson approach. Model (1) is a bivariate analysis between nativity and perceived discrimination encounters. It shows that the expected log count of perceived discrimination for native-born Asians is 0.626 higher than the expected log count for foreign-born Asians. The gap is statistically significant (p<0.05). Controlling for education, household income, age, and gender, as well as the wave of the survey, Model (2) shows that the expected log count of perceived discrimination for native-born Asians is still 0.428 higher than the expected log count for foreign-born Asians. The gap remains statistically significant (p<0.1). Furthermore, we also consider whether East Asians (e.g., Chinese, Korean, and Japanese) may perceive higher encounters of discrimination. Model (3) shows that there is no significant gap between East Asians and other Asians in perceived discrimination. In contrast, the negative coefficient indicates that, despite most racist attacks in news media having been directed against East Asians, they perceive a lower number of discrimination encounters than Asians from other ethnic categories such as

Figure 2. The gap in perceived discrimination encounters between the foreign-born and the native-born
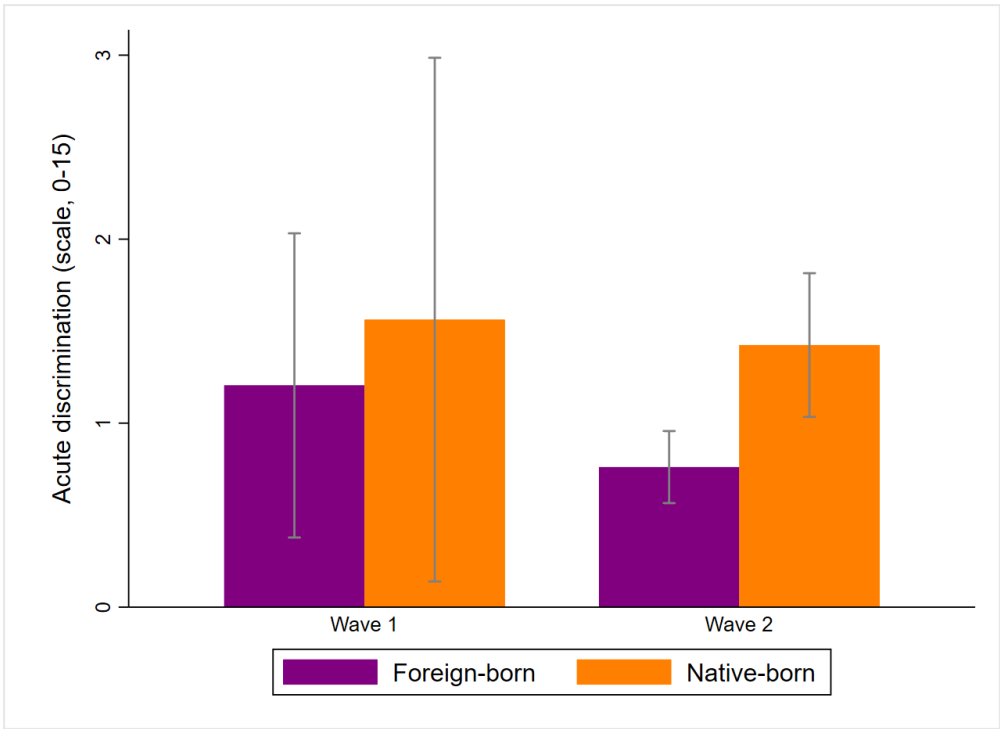
South Asia and Southeast Asia. In fact, adding East Asian in the model, not only has the gap in perceived discrimination between native-born and foreign-born Asians become greater (0.548), but the effect also appears to be more significant (p<0.05).

To explain the perceived discrimination gap, we consider whether native-born Asians have a stronger sense of cultural belonging or ethnic pride (e.g. in-group trust) and therefore are more sensitive to discrimination and perceive more discrimination than foreign-born Asians. Our final model considers whether higher ethnic trust in Asian people among native-born Asians may explain their higher perceived discrimination. We use data from wave 2 collected in December 2020 only because trust in Asian people was not asked in our first wave survey. When comparing trust in Asian people between native-born Asians and foreign-born Asians, we do find that overall, native-born Asians (3.60) show a slightly higher trust in Asian people than foreign-born Asians (mean=3.36), although the gap is insignificant. When including trust in Asian people, Model (4) shows no significant effect of trust in Asian people on perceived discrimination. However, the perception gap between the native-born and the foreign-born remains significant. In other words, higher ethnic trust in Asian people among native-born Asians does not seem to explain away their higher perceived discrimination and thereby the gap in perceived discrimination between the native-born and the foreign-born.

Table 2. Negative binomial models estimating the gap in perceived discrimination encounters between native-born and foreign-born Asians

	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)	Model (4)
Nativity				
Asian (1=native-born, 0=foreign-born)	0.626**	0.428+	0.548*	0.937*
	(2.84)	(1.91)	(2.31)	(2.44)
Ethnicity				
East Asian			-0.342	-0.610+
(0=no, 1=yes)			(-1.48)	(-1.71)
Ethnic identity				
Trust in Asian people (scale, 1-5)				-0.071
				(-0.38)
Controls				
Household income (scale, 1-13)		-0.017	-0.017	-0.012
		(-0.54)	(-0.54)	(-0.27)
Education (in degree, 1-7)		-0.101	-0.110	-0.071
		(-1.40)	(-1.53)	(-0.69)
Age (in years, 16-86)		0.026**	0.022**	0.011
		(3.08)	(2.58)	(0.88)
Female (0=no, 1=yes)		-0.506*	-0.460*	-0.547+
		(-2.33)	(-2.11)	(-1.67)
Wave of survey (0=April, 1=December)		-0.729+	-0.696+	NA
		(-1.87)	(-1.80)	
Constant	-0.235+	0.033	0.314	0.222
	(-1.67)	(0.06)	(0.53)	(0.18)
Dispersion parameter				
ln(alpha)	1.489***	1.389***	1.374***	1.162***
	(11.72)	(10.66)	(10.50)	(5.40)
N	464	464	464	187
AIC	1178.8	1172.4	1172.2	481.6
BIC	1191.2	1205.5	1209.5	510.7
t statistics in parentheses				
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001				

Conclusion

Canada is a nation of immigrants: more than one in five people in Canada are foreign-born. As a result, there is growing interest in understanding differences between the life experiences of native-born and foreign-born Canadians (e.g., Chen and Thorpe 2015; Man and Chou 2020; Wu and Wilkes 2017; Veenstra et al. 2020). In this study, we build on the specific literature that considers differences in how the native-born and the foreign-born experience and perceive discrimination (e.g., Yip et al. 2008; Ray and Preston 2009; Mossakowski et al. 2018; Vang and Chang 2019). Specifically, we considered how native-born Asians and foreign-born Asians may have experienced the spike in anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic differently. Understanding how individuals perceive discrimination differently helps us better understand how discrimination affects the health and well-being of those who experience it.

Our empirical analysis has several major findings. First, native-born Asians are significantly more likely than foreign-born Asians to report having encountered instances of acute discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous work has shown mixed findings. Some have argued that compared to the native-born, foreign-born immigrants tend to perceive more discrimination (Chau et al. 2018; Wilkes and Wu 2018), but stronger evidence shows that the native-born minorities often perceive more discrimination than their foreign-born counterparts (Kuo 1995; Wu et al. 2021). For example, using data from a 2017 Pew Research Center survey, Gecewicz and Mohamed (2017) also find that native-born Muslims in the US are much more likely than their foreign-born counterparts to say there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims (91% vs. 65%). The native-born Muslims also tend to report higher personal encounters of discrimination than the foreign-born (61% vs. 39%). Our finding that native-born Asians perceive significantly more discrimination represents a full rejection to the straight-line assimilation theory that suggests longer residence in the host society will diminish the discrimination gap between immigrants and the native-born.

Second, we also find that although anti-Asian hate crimes have been mostly directed against East Asians in Canada, they perceive lower levels of discrimination compared to their counterparts from other ethnic origins such as Southeast Asian Canadians. In a way, this finding lends support to the segmented assimilation theory that how individuals perceive discrimination is associated with their diverse backgrounds. Finally, we find little support that native-borns' higher in-group belonging (ethnic trust in Asian people) can explain their higher levels of perceived discrimination. Future research may also consider collecting more data or using qualitative interviews to unpack the mechanisms underlying the gap in perceived discrimination between the native-born and the foreign-born. More research is also needed to understand how the nativity may affect immigrants and native populations' other life experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic such as economic lockdowns, loss of job, and the post-pandemic recovery, and how these differential experiences may exacerbate inequalities in health and well-being (Shen and Bartram 2021).

This study has several limitations. First, we measure how people experience discrimination indirectly using their perceived encounters of discrimination. We have argued that when members of the same racial or ethnic group perceive different levels of discrimination in the same context, this could indicate that they may experience discrimination differently. Further, our survey questions about perceived discrimination did not refer to discrimination based on race or ethnic identity only (or anti-Asian racism specifically), but to more general discrimination (e.g., because of such things as gender, race, age, or appearance). Therefore, readers should be cautious when interpreting our findings. Finally, we also note that ethnic trust in Asian people may not be the best indicator of Asian Canadians' sense of cultural belonging and ethnic pride. Hence, future research should develop better measures of perceived discrimination and sense of cultural belonging and ethnic pride.

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Conceptualizing the Effects of Anti-Asian Racism on Health and Mental Well-being in the Social Media Space

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Abstract

Asian Canadians have a long history in Canada but continue to face racism and discrimination. The current pandemic has exacerbated and, in some way, normalized anti-Asian racism. This racism has also permeated social media, which has become an increasingly prominent source of information and space for communication. While the link between racial discrimination and one's health and mental well-being has been clearly established, less is known regarding the potential impact of racial discrimination occurring in the social media space and the health and mental well-being of Canadians—particularly Chinese and other Asian ethnic groups. This paper seeks to provide a conceptual framework to better understand the potential impacts of racism and discrimination on one's health and mental well-being in the social media space.

Asian Canadians – or persons of Asian descent – represent a significant presence in Canada, accounting for 13% of the nation's population in 2016 (Statistics Canada 2017). Throughout their history in Canada, Asians have faced a long history of "othering" and xenophobia, racism and discrimination (e.g., Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 and internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II). Despite their long history, tremendous population growth, and prominent presence in today's Canadian society, Asian Canadians continue to be viewed as "perpetual foreigners" (Cui and Kelly 2012) and face both overt and subtle forms of discrimination, such as microaggressions (Edge and Newbold 2013; Houshmand et al. 2014; Noh et al. 1999).

History has clearly shown that xenophobia is often exacerbated during challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented time in history, resulting

in economic turmoil for millions of Canadians, increased sickness and deaths, and high levels of anxiety and uncertainty, and consequently, the scapegoating of Chinese and other Asian communities. The unfortunate framing of COVID-19 — as "the Chinese virus" by some global leaders — may all be contributing to this increasingly anti-Asian sentiment. Similar hostility towards Chinese and Southeast Asian communities also emerged during the outbreak and aftermath of SARS, which like COVID-19, first appeared in China in the early 2000s (Lee 2013; Leung and Guan 2004; Person et al. 2004).

Since the pandemic started, Asian Canadians have and continue to face increased incidences of racial discrimination, ranging from verbal harassment to violence. This has not only impacted Chinese Canadians but also other ethnic groups who may be perceived by others as being Chinese. While the term "Asian" is often used an umbrella term to represent anybody of Asian descent, Asian Canadians encompasses a tremendously heterogeneous collection of countries, histories, cultures, and languages. However, Asians are often viewed as a monolithic population, although individuals may be attacking or blaming China for the virus, the attacks often impact Asian Canadians more broadly. For example, the Fight COVID Racism project (https://www.covidracism.ca) has collected over one thousand incidences, reported by individuals of East, Southeast, and South Asian descent alike. Based on its crowdsourcing data, Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada 2020) found the majority of Koreans (64%), Chinese (60%), and Southeast Asians (53%) reported experiencing discrimination or being treated unfairly during the pandemic.

At the same time, we have also seen a similar rise in the anti-Chinese and broader anti-Asian sentiment across the various social media platforms. For example, in just the five months between December 2019 and March 2020, there was a 900% increase in hate speech on Twitter/X towards China and/or Chinese persons (L1ght 2020). In the past decade or so, social media has increasingly been used as a forum or space for a broad range of voices and discourse, including ones of a racially discriminatory nature. While the link between racial discrimination and one's health and mental well-being has been clearly established, less is known regarding the potential impact of racial discrimination occurring in the social media space and the health and mental well-being of Canadians—particularly Chinese and other Asian Canadians.

The goal of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework to better understand the potential impacts of racism and discrimination on one's health and mental well-being in the social media space. In doing so, we hope to provide a framework that can support further research, as well as help to inform practice and policymaking. The paper is divided into several sections. First, we highlight the rise of anti-Asian racism on social media during the pandemic, specifically on Twitter/X. Second, we examine the link between racism and health and mental well-being, followed by specific discussions regarding the broad impact of racism on social media—an area of limited research—and the potential role of bystanders in the social media context. Finally, we present our conceptual framework that builds upon and brings these topics together.

Rise of Anti-Asian Racism in Twitter/X

A growing body of research has emerged that documents the significant rise of anti-Asian sentiment on Twitter/X specifically (Darling-Hammond et al. 2020; Nguyen et al. 2020; Tahmasbi et al. 2020). These studies utilize a sentiment analytical approach to distinguish between negative and positive tweets, but for the most part, are focused on documenting the numerical or percentage change of tweets. For example, Tahmasbi et al. (2020) found a rise of Sinophobic slurs among English-language tweets during key moments between December 2019 and March 2020, specifically two peaks corresponding to when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a public health emergency and when then-US President Donald Trump tweeted the term, "Chinese Virus."

Hswen et al. (2021) found that half of the hashtags with #chinesevirus showed an anti-Asian sentiment in the week after former President Trump's "Chinese Virus" tweet. Nguyen et al. (2020) also found that the share of posts negatively referencing Asians increased by 68.4% between November 2019 and March 2020, from 9.8% to 16.5%. Among tweets referencing COVID, 13% include the term "Chinese virus" and based on a thematic analysis, they found about 20% of a random sample of tweets expressed racism or blame, which was directly not only to China or Chinese nationals but also US-based Chinese persons and other Asian groups (e.g., Vietnamese, Koreans, etc.). In contrast, Nguyen et al. (2020) also found increasing levels of "anti-racism" tweets, i.e., posts that were critical of former President Trump's use of "Chinese virus" or spoke out against racism towards Asians. By April 2020, they observed more posts that condemned anti-Asian racism, vs. racist or scapegoating-related posts.

Racial Discrimination, Health and Mental Well-Being

The link between racism and health and mental well-being is well-documented in the literature (Lewis et al. 2015; Paradies 2006). Experiencing racial discrimination has been linked to worsening mental health, e.g., in the form of increased rates of depression in African Americans (Chou et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2007), Pacific Islanders (Allen et al., 2017), Indigenous women (Benoit et al., 2016), and Latinx populations (Araújo & Borrell, 2006; Chou et al., 2012; Pieterse et al., 2012). Indeed, ongoing experiences of racial discrimination have been described as resulting in a chronic state of "racial battle fatigue" that taxes the mental and emotional resources of people of color (Smith et al., 2011, p. 64). Racial trauma, or race-based stress, carries deep psychological and physiological effects on the human body such as: hypervigilance, flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance, suspiciousness, headaches, heart palpations (Comas-Diaz et al, 2019). These symptoms worsen when there is constant direct or indirect re-exposure to racial trauma and minority stress, which ultimately creates hidden wounds in people and communities (Comas-Diaz et al, 2019).

Whenever trauma is experienced, shame also becomes part of a victim's lived reality. Bullying, discrimination, and violence are forms of aggressive assaults on people's identity. When victims feel labelled as inadequate or deficient, these feelings become

inscribed on their psyche and neurocognitive functioning (Martocci, 2021). Trauma and shame have the potential to sever connections, isolate people from their families and communities, and break important social bonds that humans need to survive. Ruptured connections that come from rejection, public humiliation, and shaming ultimately leave victims feeling like social pariahs.

Less research has focused on how racism affects the health and mental well-being of Asian Canadians, but still, there is sufficient evidence to its negative effects (Edge & Newbold, 2013). More research has been conducted with Asian American (vs. Canadian) populations, highlighting a clear relationship between racism and mental health (e.g., Lee & Ahn, 2011). A few studies also found significant correlations between racism and mental well-being among specific Asian ethnic groups living in Canada, e.g., depression among Korean immigrants (Noh, Kaspar, & Wickrama, 2007) and Southeast Asian refugees (Noh et al., 1999). Wu, Kennedy, Qian, and Wilkes (2022) have also found that native-born Asians had a higher level of sensitivity towards discrimination, compared to foreign-born Asians.

While much of the literature focuses on mental health, there may also be detrimental effects on one's physical health. Discrimination is a significant social determinant of health inequities (Davis, 2020), impacting one's health via one of three potential mechanisms or pathways: psychosocial stress, access to services, and violence. Discrimination has been found to be associated with poorer health outcomes and/or health-related behaviors, e.g., poorer self-rated health (a strong predictor of mortality) (Nicholson 2020), negative eating behaviors, such as consumption of sweets (Nadimpalli et al. 2017), avoiding needed health care (McMurtry 2019), substance abuse (Tran, Lee, and Burgess 2010), and less sleep (Ogbenna et al. 2021). The resulting stress and/or anxiety can lead to further diminishing health outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, and hypertension,

Minority stress theory draws attention to the social environment in which minority group members have to contend and cope with the conflict between their values and dominant values (Dentato 2012). For example, this theory would posit that racial/ethnic minorities – and Asian Canadians, in this case – live in a racist, xenophobic culture and external stressors, such as incidences of racial discrimination, can eventually lead to a broad array of health and mental health problems. Meyer (2003) further argues that both major incidents and "daily hassles" (which tend to be pervasive) can impact one's health and mental well-being. These daily hassles or microaggressions are "brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities" (Houshmand et al. 2014, 378), such as being treated as a "second class citizen" or being made to feel overlooked or invisible (Sue et al. 2009).

Building on the minority stress theory's notion of the social environment, one can argue that incidences of racial discrimination can also indirectly impact the health and mental well-being of individuals, including those who weren't involved in the actual incidence. Either watching and reading about incidents in the news can also cause stress

and anxiety. This "chilling" effect, in turn, can also contribute to an increasingly hostile environment that can have a detrimental effect on the health of a broader community (Meyer 2003). For example, incidences reported in the media can cause individuals—not directly experiencing the incidences—to become more anxious and stressed, leading them to alter their behaviors or to become more vigilant. Under the COVID context, such events or conditions—whether directly experienced by an individual or not (e.g., reading about an incident in the news)—could further exacerbate already uncertain circumstances. This increased stress, in turn, could lead to diminishing levels of health and mental well-being.

As a person perceives their own environment as increasingly hostile, the consequences can be that of increasing social closure, a process in which they begin to participate less in society (Muntaner et al. 2013). Increasing fear and anxiety can often lead to a person neglecting their own emotional or physiological health needs, due to fear of going out to access services. Simple chores, such as grocery shopping or banking, become increasingly more challenging and stress-building. Over the long-term, this can begin to have a wearing effect on a person. Further, this type of environment can also lead to increased social isolation among the population, which in turn can result in poorer mental and physical health, such as increased anxiety, depression, poorer sleep quality and decreased physical activity (Jang et al. 2021; Sepúlveda-Loyola et al. 2020).

Racial Discrimination in Social Media Spaces

Social media may also have a significant influence in creating or contributing to the hostile environment for Asian Canadians. With the pandemic, the slew of social distancing measures, travel bans, self-quarantine, and business closures are changing how individuals communicate with one another. Prior to the pandemic, social media platforms, such as Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook, etc. were already becoming more widely utilized spaces for users to communicate publicly and anonymously providing a platform to discuss politics, news, and various agendas (Chen, Lerman and Ferrara 2020). Thus, more people were already connecting to others online and getting their news through social media platforms (Hitlin and Olmstead 2018). Recent data shows that 75% of Canadians were using the internet more since the pandemic began (Bilodeau, Kehler and Minnema 2021) and 47% reported that most of the time was spent going on social media (CIRA 2021). Like most other spaces in one's life, social media platforms also reflect the pulse of the society. Unfortunately, the past several years have seen a rise—and normalization—of racist and discriminatory values and behaviors, which coupled with the racial undertones of COVID and the pandemic. This, in turn, has led to a rise in anti-Asian sentiment and the social media space is no exception.

Social media has become a prime space for hate speech. While the large majority of Twitter/X content is harmless, Ott (2017, 60) argues that "the danger arises from the other 20% when issues of social, cultural, and political import are filtered through the lens of Twitter/X, for Twitter/X infects public discourse like a social cancer". This is a

consequence of several key features of Twitter/X, i.e., simplicity, impulsivity and incivility. Because tweets are short (due to character limitations), it is challenging to convey detail and complexity. The ease with which someone can post a message can also result in impulsive responses, which eventually can evolve to incivility due to the informal and depersonalized nature of Twitter/X.

Online users may perceive that the internet provides a space of anonymity and safety, which has allowed social media to become a prime forum for hate speech (Keum and Miller 2018). The internet tends to be a refuge for many to express themselves. With this anonymous self-expression comes the lack of civility and public awareness when compared with offline face-to-face interactions. Coupled with the lack of content moderation on the internet, online anonymity has allowed users to freely disclose their racist ideologies with little accountability or supervision (Hughey and Daniels 2013; Tynes, Reynolds and Greenfield 2004). These conditions may influence people who may have otherwise restrained themselves from making racist comments in offline in-person interactions. Communication methods employed by many social media platforms for their users—such as comments, likes, retweets, shares etc.—can influence the popularity of certain posts that can negatively impact concerned communities. In most cases, perpetuators may not be directing their posts at a specific person, but simply posting or endorsing a particular opinion or viewpoint. Therefore, whether they are the direct recipient or not, social media users can experience racial discrimination and virtual trauma through the constant exposure to micro or macro aggressions like stereotypes or explicitly racist online content about racialized groups (Criss et al. 2020).

Online racism is a universal, enduring, and evolving phenomenon, which can have chronic and detrimental impacts on people's mental well-being (Keum and Miller 2018). A study conducted by Kerum (2017) suggested that online racism is experienced frequently on a daily basis due to the greater accessibility and convenience that is found on the web. It has been contended that racism persists more visibly and commonly on the internet. Finally, the solitary nature of internet use can leave victims of racial harassment feeling isolated and fending for themselves, which in turn affects their health and mental well-being and potentially may lead to increased fear and anxiety in engaging with the offline world. In the online space, the same harassment can be replayed, saved, liked, retweeted, and live online for days or weeks. This chronic exposure means that people may not only witness them conveniently on the internet but also potentially be exposed for prolonged periods of time.

Research in coping with racism in the social media space is lacking. The internet provides some level of control for users who are navigating various social media platforms. Most social media platforms allow users to selectively limit the information they access (e.g. Twitter/X allows users to "mute" other users or limit responses from those outside their network). The user may also engage directly with the perpetrator or organization by responding to the message or educating the perpetrators. The act of making a stance and entering a dialogue of racial conflict is not for everyone. For some, this strategy may induce stress and anger in dealing with the perpetrator, as well as fear and anxiety of

subsequent responses by the perpetrator and others. However, the nature of anonymity may lead to the user having more "virtual courage", which in turn, may make it easier for them to respond to racist posts (Keum 2017). Users can also seek and find support from various groups promoting racial equity. These online spaces can provide a safe and empowering environment for people to share their experiences of racism.

Bystander Effect in the Social Media Space

Racist attacks, whether in-person or virtually, represent group processes involving three parties: the perpetrators, the victims, and the bystanders who witness the inflicted aggression and social pain (Byers 2016). Regardless of their response, bystanders to racism and discrimination (i.e., witnesses to violent behavior) play a critical role in further escalating or circumventing aggressive behaviors (Staub 2019). Overwhelming research suggests that in most circumstances and especially online, bystanders try to excuse themselves, pass responsibility onto other witnesses ("diffusion of responsibility"), or avoid understanding the impact of the violence which occurred (Byers 2016; Keum et al .2018; Murrell 2020; Staub 2019). The bystander effect posits that individuals are less likely to intervene as the number of bystanders in the group continues to grow larger (Byers 2016; Staub 2019). Like in-person situations, the fear of being judged or relying on the reactions of others on social media may also shape how a witness defines and responds to racism or violence. This phenomenon —"pluralistic ignorance" — describes how group cohesion pressures or conformity strongly influences bystanders and produces or strengthens racial biases (Murrell 2020).

Unfortunately, passive inaction allows the racist behaviors to occur without consequence and the victim is often left to fend for themselves. Thus, racism and discrimination are not only committed by perpetrators of violence, but also by well-intentioned witnesses who fail to intercede or act on behalf of the victim; a phenomenon referred to as "aversive racism" (Murrell 2020). While bystander dynamics in online settings are a relatively new area of research, many scholars note that cyber-bystanders are complicit audience members to witnessing aggression and social pain (Byers 2016; Keum and Miller 2018; Murrell 2020).

Arguably, the negative impacts of bystander effect may be much stronger in online spaces because of the pervasive reach of digital technologies and social media (Byers 2016). The bystander effect is also magnified on social media because of the public nature of online platforms and large group behaviors amongst online social communities. While anonymity enables people to engage in racist behavior with little perceived risk (Keum and Miller 2018), a racist undercurrent is further sustained through the influence of how other bystanders respond. Most commonly, bystanders fail to properly acknowledge or address racist social media posts (i.e. gaslighting), which can leave victims feeling invalidated and disconnected. This, in turn, may elevate and exacerbate racial trauma and minority stress because social media users with similar perspectives

follow and corroborate each other's views, which creates an echo chamber where racism is strengthened and normalized (Criss et al. 2020).

Thus, the bystander effect has a significant influence in contributing to minority stress and virtual trauma for racialized communities, which in turn impacts health and mental well-being. Bystander effects have an influence on the formation of hostile environments, which in turn contribute to social closure (Muntaner et al. 2013). Social closure is a serious issue, as it deters "victims" from a range of society's resources and opportunities. The narrower their opportunities are, the more different their communities become. And the more different their communities become, the narrower their opportunities. Therefore, bystanders have the power to either initiate or halt a cascading chain of events that leads to vicious cycles of marginalization. More research is needed to theorize how social media bystanders exert their effects in race relations, especially in scenarios where Asian Canadians are placed in the reticle of harm.

However, bystanders also may also play an important role in discouraging or buffering racism in the social media space, and in turn, contributing to an online environment where victims and the broader community can feel safe and supported. Unlike in in-person situations, the anonymity of the internet may also afford a certain level of safety or "cover" for bystanders to support victims and respond against racist postings. However, while many bystanders feel empathy and compassion for victims of violence and trauma, they may lack social self-efficacy or fear repercussions that may come with responding against a racist posting (Byers 2016). Bystanders are well-positioned to help and often see themselves as good, moral, and decent human beings capable of helping, but they have minimal awareness of themselves as racial/cultural beings implicated in systemic and institutional racism (Sue et al. 2019). Lack of self-awareness makes it difficult for bystanders to recognize bias or discrimination in others or see how institutional policies and practices disadvantage racialized populations. This often leads to bystanders dissociating from moral dilemmas to avoid the emotional discomfort they feel when witnessing conflict (Byers 2016). In the context of trauma, it is important for bystanders to focus on disrupting cycles of traumatic interaction within peer groups by providing empathic and accountable recognition for the victim's social pain.

Sue et al. (2019) provides a helpful framework that seeks to validate a victim's experiential reality, value them as a person, affirm their racial or group identity, and reassure they are not alone. This framework includes four specific strategies: 1) "make the invisible visible" (e.g., challenging stereotypes) 2) "disarm the microaggression" (e.g., expressing disagreement, interrupting, etc.) 3) "educate the perpetrator" (e.g., promoting empathy) and 4) "seek external reinforcement or support" (e.g. seeking counseling or spiritual support) (128). These intervention strategies can enhance psychological well-being and arm victims, allies, and bystanders with self-validation and control. The intention of these interpersonal tools is to counteract, change, or stop microaggressions by subtly or overtly confronting and educating the perpetrator. While these strategies could occur when witnessing in-person or online incidents, the online social media space may provide an opportunity for bystanders to support victims in ways that may be more

sustainable (e.g. sending a direct message of support, connecting them with services and resources, and/or checking-in at a later time). With in-person incidents, direct intervention is considered the riskiest (iHollaback 2021), but the online space may offer some level of safety for a bystander to directly address the posting and/or perpetrator.

Another potential model is currently being used in community-based advocacy and bystander trainings by iHollaback!, a global, people-powered movement whose mission is to end harassment in all forms by building the power of everyday people to create safe and welcoming environments for all (iHollaback, 2021). Their approach consists of the five D's: distraction, delegation, document, direct, and delay, which can also be applied in social media space. Bystanders are particularly important players because their response can serve to shift the burden of anti-Asian racism away from the victim or target (Nelson et al. 2011). Responses from bystanders (non-Asians, in this case) may also be effective because it helps to validate the reality of the victim(s) and challenges or disrupts what might otherwise be normalized thinking or sentiment (Nelson et al. 2011; Sue et al. 2019).

Bringing it Altogether: A Conceptual Model

Based on the previous discussion, we propose the following conceptual model to help our understanding of the relationship between racism and health and mental well-being in the social media space (see Figure below). For most users, the social media space is just one aspect of one's life, however, with the pandemic, the virtual or online world (including social media) has become more prominent. When a victim views a racist post put forth by the perpetrator, they may be impacted in various ways. Drawing from minority stress theory, this incident (or combination of incidents) could have negative effect on their health and mental well-being, e.g., via increased racial trauma or stress.

Most notably, we believe that the racist posts on a social media platform can have a "chilling" effect, fostering a hostile environment for not only the victim but indirectly affecting other Asian users (represented by the gray area). Moreover, this impact does not remain within the platform but can also permeate other aspects of the victim's and/or other users' lives, more broadly. Online racism can negatively affect the health and mental well-being of individuals, not only directly but also affecting their level or form of engagement with family, community, work/school, and other institutions (e.g., health care, shopping, etc.). For example, Asian Canadians may feel the need to be more vigilant when going out for medical appointments or even basic errands, such as grocery shopping, or avoid those activities altogether. Higher levels of vigilance during the COVID context have been shown to be significantly related to increased depression and anxiety among Asian Americans (Chae et al. 2021).

Unfortunately, there is very little research on the impacts of racism on one's health or health and mental well-being in the social media space. There are significant challenges, of course, in conducting research to directly assess the health or health and mental well-being of victims of racism on a social media platform, such as Twitter/X.

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework: Effects of Racism on Health and Mental Well-being in the Social Media Space
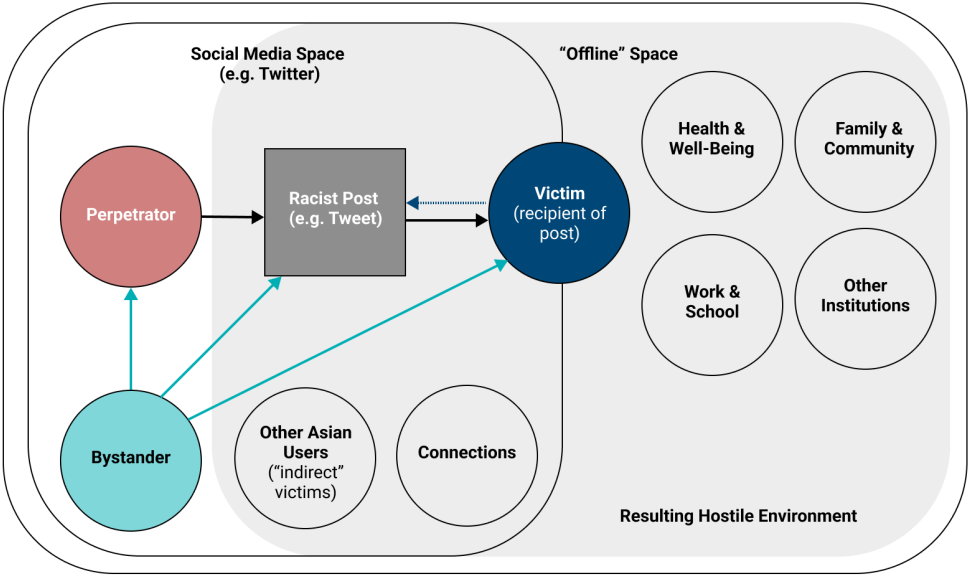
However, recent studies are starting to emerge. For example, based on a sample of Asian Americans, a recent study (Pan et al. 2021) found that a positive association exists between racism-related social media use and depression and that worry about discrimination moderated this relationship. Another study found that posting and commenting on social media was related to improved subjective well-being, while social media browsing was related to poorer outcomes (Yang, Tsai, and Pan 2020). Such studies highlight the need for more research in this area.

Victims can respond directly to the racist post or perpetrator, but this approach often requires some level of self-efficacy. While the anonymity of the internet provides some cover, the fear of further attacks or other repercussions may still prevent most victims from responding—especially given the unpredictable nature of the social media space. Other users (including the victim's connections) belonging to the same ethnic communities may also feel compelled to respond, but like the victim, may feel vulnerable. In contrast, bystanders are commonly not members of the victim's community (e.g., Asian Canadian) and thus, may be in a better position to respond and "push back" on the racist post and/or perpetrator directly, or try to support the victim.

Conclusion

Social media platforms, such as Twitter/X and Facebook, appear to be at a critical crossroads in determining its role in society. On one hand, these platforms have taken some steps to be more responsible spaces against hate speech. On the other hand, these platforms are facing pressure to be more open in the name of free speech. Whatever

direction these platforms take has real consequences and thus, serious implications for policy and practice. The first step, however, is improved understanding on the impact of racism in the social media space.

This paper presents a conceptual model that could potentially be helpful in informing future research. Asian Canadians have been facing racial discrimination and marginalization throughout history, but all of this has been significantly exacerbated during the COVID context. This anti-Asian sentiment has become increasingly prevalent in the social media space, which in turn, contributes to the overall hostile environment under which Asian Canadians are currently enduring. The associated stress and racial trauma can have adverse effects on their health and health and mental well-being. Interventions should seek to empower Asian Canadian social media users and help to increase their self-efficacy in navigating and responding with racism occurring in the social media space. Together, both Asian Canadians and their allies can help to push back on the rise of racism in the social media space. However, the impact of racism based on the social media space on the health and mental well-being of Asian Canadians is still not fully understood.

We developed this conceptual model primarily hoping to inform an emerging body of research, focused on the intersection of racism, social media, and health and mental well-being. We believe it does so in several ways. First, the conceptual model builds on the minority stress theory, drawing attention to the potential role of the hostile environment created within the social media platform. Once created, these external stressors remain not only within the platform, but can have a lingering effect on the health and mental well-being of the users. Second, this model distinguishes between the user who is the direct recipient of a hateful or racist post and the users who are indirectly impacted by viewing such a post. This "chilling" effect is particularly poignant in the case of social media, given its wider reach and accessibility. While the direct recipient is often (and understandably) the subject of broader research on racism, the broader indirect impact of racism warrants some attention. Finally, the model highlights the important role that bystanders can play in the social media space, an area that has garnered limited attention to date. Bystanders play an important role, either in their nonresponse (which further promotes racial trauma) or their response against racist posts (which could help to buffer the potential impacts on a victim).

The conceptual model has at least two key limitations. First, our conceptual model is largely based on our understanding of Twitter/X, its mechanisms, and how its users potentially interact with each. However, social media is a broad term that refers to a number of different platforms on the internet. One reason is that most research on social media has focused on Twitter/X, possibly due to the relative openness of the platform, followed by Facebook (Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas 2021). Second, our conceptual model was developed specifically within the context of the rising anti-Asian racism during the pandemic. Nonetheless, we would argue that basic concepts of the models, as discussed above, are similar and thus, generalizable to other platforms, such as Facebook. Similarly, we believe the conceptual model could be adapted to inform research on other racial/ethnic minorities and the effects of racism in the social media space.

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Asian Women Workers in Massage Parlours and the Sex Industry and Their Fight Against Anti-Asian Racism

Elene Lam

Elene Lam is an activist, artist, community organizer, and educator. For over two decades, she has been a dedicated advocate for sex workers, migrants, and gender, labor, and racial justice. She is the founder of Butterfly, the Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, and the co-author of Not Your Rescue Project: Migrant Sex Workers Fighting for Justice. Elene is a Sessional Assistant Professor in Critical Disability Studies at the School of Health Policy and Management, Faculty of Health, York University.

Abstract

This article examines how Asian migrant sex workers have continuously been targeted by the "carceral web" of Canadian laws and policies at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. A case study of Newmarket, Ontario's municipal council's recent "crackdown" on personal wellness establishments illustrates how systematic racism and "whorephobia" are embedded in the regulations targeting low-income Asian migrant women, particularly those who work in massage parlours and the sex industry. The article ends with a discussion of how Asian workers in massage parlours and the sex industry are actively working to resist, fight for their rights, and build solidarity to push back against racist oppressions targeting them.

Introduction

On March 16, 2021, a white man killed eight people in Atlanta, Georgia. They were Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, and Yong Ae Yue. Six of the eight victims were Asian women who worked in massage parlours in Atlanta, the United States. Many Asian people argue that the Atlanta shooting is part of the increasing anti-Asian hate crimes amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the tragic murders and in response to violence and racism against Asian Americans, the Stop Asian Hate movement has grown dramatically across North America. However, as explained in this article, the anti-Asian hate movement appears to generally leave Asian sex workers and massage workers behind (for a similar critique, see Huang, Lee-An, and Chen, 2024, this volume).

Organizations representing Asian and migrant sex workers, such as Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network) in Canada and Red Canary Song in the United States, both of which advocate for the rights of Asian migrant sex workers and massage workers, argued that this attack was not just the result of anti-Asian hate. The perpetrator targeted the Asian massage workers in Atlanta not only because of a

long and widespread history of anti-Asian racism in North America but also because, as massage workers, they were considered to be connected to sex work, regardless of whether they actually provided sexual services. The murderer said that massage parlours were a sexual temptation that he wanted to eliminate. He wanted to punish the women because they work in the sex industry (Fausset et al., 2021). Anti-Asian racism, misogyny, xenophobia, and whorephobia were all at play in the violence against these women (Lam et al., 2021; Shih, 2021a). The murderer explains his motivation by blaming the massage parlour for his "sex addiction" to cover up the imperialist white supremacy that allowed him to impose his power and violence against Asian women's bodies for his own salvation. The tragedy of the Atlanta shootings reveals the racialization and sexualization of Asian women that originated with imperial and colonial history and continues into the present (Chen, 2021; Lee-An and Chen, 2021).

Unfortunately, this shooting is not unique. The violence against Asian massage workers and sex workers is systemic. In the past decade, Asian massage and sex workers have been murdered in numerous Canadian cities, including Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, and Markham (Freeze, 2022; Lam, 2021). In response, Asian and migrant sex workers' rights organizations have called out and continue to denounce the violence and oppression that Asian women who work in massage parlours and the sex industry face and argue that the violence at the Atlanta spas should be understood in terms of intersecting racism and gender-based violence against Asian women and sex workers (Bowman, 2021). These organizations remind us that the fight against anti-Asian racism must not leave Asian sex and massage workers behind (Butterfly, 2021; Red Canary Song, 2021). While calls for increased policing are a typical response to this kind of violence—seen, for example, in the passing of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act in the US (Kim et al., 2021) and the launching of consultations for the National Action Plan on Combating Hate in Canada—community organizations such as Butterfly and Red Canary Song oppose this tendency that uses increased policing and criminalization to combat anti-Asian violence and hate. Rather, they argue that we need to end discrimination, criminalization, and policing as the root causes of the violence against Asian massage workers and sex workers, particularly the antitrafficking policies and raids that put the workers in danger, a position supported by progressive Asian and social justice scholars, activists, and organizations (e.g., Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, Project 1907, and Asian American Feminist Collective).

The term carceral web refers to the interconnected web of policies and laws at various levels of government that are used to entangle Asian massage and sex workers (Fudge et al., 2021). Bernstein (2010) used the term "carceral feminist" to describe a type of feminism that advocates for carceral and punitive politics in matters related to women and gender. These carceral feminists are particularly prone to the white saviour complex, believing it is their place, as people who have more power, experience, and education, to fight for the rights of people of colour and other marginalized people, who, they believe, are less capable of fighting for themselves. Carceral feminists have a long history of working with politicians and non-governmental organizations to call for an increase in policing and carceral responses to address the violence faced by women. For these

feminists, sex work is violence and oppression for women, and as such, they call for the criminalization of sex work. In this article, I argue that, instead of protecting women and ending violence, the carceral system supported by these carceral feminists, particularly the increase in policing, criminalization, and incarceration, not only upholds white supremacy and colonialism but also exacerbates racism and violence, particularly against Indigenous and racialized people and migrants.

There are an increasing number of abolition feminist scholars and activists, in particular, people of colour, criminalized people, and LGBTQ and queer people, who recognize the harms caused by the prison, police, and carceral systems and they are advocating for an end to all punitive systems and the dismantling of state violence, policing, and racial capital. They call instead for a non-policing and non-carceral approach to addressing violence against women and other marginalized communities (Bernstein, 2007; Capous-Desyllas et al., 2021; INCITE, 2006; Jacobs et al., 2021; Kim, 2020; Kim et al., 2021).

Critically engaging with the abolitionist feminist approach, this article aims to show the long history of anti-Asian racism that Asian sex workers face, particularly state violence, and how it continues today. The racial stereotype of Asian women as passive and docile is being used to support racist antitrafficking policies and programs. Instead of protection, this approach increases the vulnerability of the workers and manifests racism and state violence that are the root causes of this violence. This article also shows how, rather than passive trafficked victims, Asian massage workers and sex workers are active and autonomous agents in their own lives, organizing and building a movement to fight for their rights and against anti-Asian racism.

More specifically, I begin by examining how Canadian laws and policies have historically targeted Asian migrant sex workers and discuss how the "carceral web" works at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels to impact Asian migrant sex workers. I use the case of Newmarket's (a town in the Greater Toronto Area) municipal council's recent "crackdown" on "personal wellness establishments" to illustrate how racism and "whorephobia" are embedded in the regulations targeting Asian migrant sex workers. Finally, I discuss how Asian workers in massage parlours and the sex industry resist and build solidarity to push back against racist oppression and fight for their rights.

Methodology

This article is part of my PhD study,[1] which is informed by institutional ethnography and participatory action research. I use multiple data collection methods, including interviewing 25 sex and massage workers in Toronto, Newmarket and other cities in Ontario, Canada, and 15 stakeholders who were sex workers' rights activists and service providers. Participants were recruited through sex worker organizations using a snowball

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strategy to reach a wide network of eligible participants. In addition, I also collected documents from the workers and from the government and conducted participant observation of Toronto's and Newmarket's municipal council public discussions about regulating holistic centres and personal wellness establishments from 2018 to 2021.

The History of Discrimination Against and Oppression of Asian Sex Workers

The Asian community, particularly the Chinese community, has faced a long history of racism, xenophobia, and racist immigration policies in North America. The Yellow Peril panic was used to justify discriminatory regulations and policies against Asians, particularly surveillance, and restrictions on and control of migration to support white nation building (Daley, 2017; Lee, 2005, 2007), using discourses of national security centred around the trope of eradicating the "dangerous foreigner" to protect the homeland (Sharma, 2005, p. 88). For example, the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1885) justified restricting Chinese immigrants via constructing the Chinese as a racial problem. The commission described the Chinese as dirty, diseased, criminal, immoral, and uncivilized. After the consultation, the 1885 Chinese Immigration Act was passed to impose a head tax and other restrictions to limit or even outright ban Chinese people's immigration into Canada (Li, 2009; Roy, 1989). In addition to these federal laws, provincial and municipal bylaws are also being used to target and isolate Asian communities. For example, provincial laws have been used to ban Chinese people from voting, buying lands, and gaining employment (BC Redress, 2021). The discriminatory licensing regimes of municipal bylaws were imposed on a variety of Asian businesses, including laundries, restaurants, mining, and logging, in an effort to shut down or displace them.

Racial justice and civil rights activists and scholars have raised concerns about the racism and discrimination faced by Asian communities (Chan, 2014; Go, 1990; Taylor, 1991). These individuals and groups have fought against both the federal and provincial governments for the racist and discriminatory head taxes; segregation; prohibition of voting; imposition of labour, educational, and employment restrictions; and immigration bans, among other policies, that have adversely affected Asians. However, very few have been concerned with Asian sex workers, particularly Chinese sex workers, despite their long history as targets of racism, sexism, whorephobia, and other types of oppression (Backhouse, 1999; Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, 2022; Stanley, 2011; Wong, 2022).

Racism, sexism, xenophobia, and whorephobia against Asian migrant women were deeply embedded in 19th century immigration policies. Anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution policies and laws targeted, discriminated against, surveilled, and criminalized Asian migrant women. The racial and sexual discourses about immorality, sexual promiscuity, sexual disease, corruption of white men's morality, and human trafficking were used to justify the immigration ban and other repressive measures. This perspective was

then used to justify and impose racist immigration policy. Luibheid (2002) argues that, at this time, "Chinese prostitution had been newly conceptualized as a racial threat that was both internal and external to the settler regime" (p. 102). Asian women, particularly Chinese women, are construed as the sexual and racial "Other," which "reinforce[s] ethnic difference and sustain[s] ethnic segregation" (Nagel, 2003, p. 55). The Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1885) says this about Chinese women: "The Chinese are the only people coming to the continent the great bulk of whose women are prostitutes" (p. ixxix). These women were thought to introduce disease (e.g. syphilis), corrupt men, and demoralize the community. The same report cited a Methodist minister in Victoria, British Columbia, who advocated for the prohibition of Chinese immigration and said that the majority of white people had higher morality than Chinese people. Chinese women were being portrayed as unclean, deviant, domestically delinquent, immoral, backward, and not conforming to white standards. The Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration also reported that "Chinese prostitutes are more shameless" and "more injurious to the community than white abandoned women" (p. ixxviii).

Chinese women deemed prostitutes were the first racialized group of migrants to be explicitly banned from migrating to Canada. The 1885 Chinese Immigration Act ordered that no landing should be granted to "any Chinese woman who is known to be a prostitute." Later, it banned all Chinese women from migrating to Canada under the assumption that any Chinese girl or woman who came to Canada was either already a prostitute or destined for that role (Ikebuchi, 2013). The later Immigration Act of 1910 extended the immigration ban to all sex workers.

In addition to the discourse of immorality, the trafficked victims discourse was used to justify the exclusion, surveillance, rescue, and rehabilitation of Chinese women, particularly sex workers. For the few Chinese women who managed to enter Canada, the Women's Missionary Society founded a Chinese Rescue Home in Victoria, British Columbia. Active from 1886 until 1942, the purpose of the home was to "civilize" fallen Chinese girls and women (Ikebuchi, 2015). As the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1885) described, "Chinese women have generally submitted passively and helplessly to this imposition, degradation, and slavery, to be sold and bought and transported at the will of their masters" (CCII). These women needed to be rescued and saved to support the white saviour complex's sexual and racial imagination of the "Other", which imposed both the control of and violence against racialized women's bodies. It was conducted in the name of an educational, training, rehabilitation, and religious mission to rescue and reform slave girls, Chinese prostitutes, and those who were deemed at risk. The Chinese Rescue Home was later renamed the Oriental Home and School when the services were also extended to Japanese women.

The rescue home policed the boundaries of race, gender, and sexuality. Chinese and Japanese girls and women who worked in the sex industry were arrested and "rescued." The rescue home was a form of incarceration because the agency, freedom, and autonomy of the women were denied. They were forcefully removed from their family

and community and segregated from Canadian society. They were forced to live in the custody of white female missionaries and their lives were strictly controlled. They had to learn about morality, Christianity, and white domesticity (e.g., cooking, cleaning, and sewing). They also needed to learn how to behave as proper women to marry Christian Chinese or Japanese men or become a servant to be an acceptable citizen.

Ikebuchi (2015) suggests that the focus of the Chinese Rescue Home was the "domestication of foreign subjects" (p. 89), transforming dangerous foreign bodies into domestic citizens, which supported white nation building. White women also produced the racial order that they then used to gain authority over the racialized Other (Ikebuchi, 2013). Although the Chinese Rescue Home embodied racism and sexism against Chinese and Japanese women and had deep ties to the social construction of a racial order that supported the nation-building of the settler-colonial state, very little attention has been paid to it. Some Chinese community members challenged the forcible confinement and custody of the girls and women, but they were not successful, with courts affirming the legitimacy of the custody and guardianship of the Chinse Recue Home over Chinese girls (Ikebuchi, 2013, 2015). I argue that the history of the Chinese Rescue Home is an antecedent of the 21st century carceral approach to regulating Asian migrant sex workers. The racist and sexist ideas from the Immigration Act of 1885 still exist in contemporary Canada.

21st Century Antitrafficking Rescue and the Carceral Approach

While the Immigration Act of 1976 removed all explicit restrictions based on country of origin and morality, Canada still effectively bans the entry of migrant sex workers by requiring economic and educational qualifications and prohibiting sex work. Migrant sex workers, including Asian migrants, face structural inequality, multiple layers of discrimination, social exclusion, oppression, poverty, racial profiling, and criminalization (Global Network of Sex Work Project, 2019; Goldenberg et al., 2017; Ham, 2017). The violence Asian women who work in massage parlours and the sex industry face is an expression of the racism, sexism, classism, ableism, xenophobia, transmisogyny, whorephobia, criminalization, and policing they encounter constantly (Anderson et al., 2016; Butterfly, 2021; Fudge et al., 2021; Red Canary Song et al., 2022; Shih, 2021b).

Carceral approach-based women's groups and evangelical Christian groups that oppose sex work are the driving force behind the criminalizing and policing of sex work and massage parlours in the name of opposing human trafficking and protecting vulnerable women. They continue to use human trafficking and the white saviour narrative to push a racist and moralist agenda by opposing sex workers and Asian migrants.

Moral panic about sex, gender, and migration undergird the antitrafficking "rescue industry" (Agustín, 2006, 2007). Some scholars argue that the antitrafficking movement not only upholds colonialism, racism, and white supremacy, but it is also being used to expand state power and the carceral system to surveil, control, police, criminalize, and exclude Indigenous, racialized, and migrant women and sex workers. The carceral

approach, which relies on control of migration, policing, prosecution, and imprison-ment, can harm the marginalized and the oppressed, particularly people of colour, sex workers, people living in poverty, migrants, people with mental illnesses, and people who use drugs. Rather than protecting and empowering, these measures all too often reinforce structural inequalities and increase marginalized communities' vulnerability to violence (e.g., discrimination, marginalization, poverty, and barriers to accessing basic services and supports; Beutin, 2023; Kaye, 2017; Kempadoo & Dozema, 1998; Kempadoo & Shih, 2023; Maynard, 2018; Roots, 2022; Roots et al., 2024).

Many of the most prominent and active antitrafficking organizations in Canada often have ties to fundamentalist evangelical groups, former law enforcement officers, or carceral feminists whose self-declared mission is to end the sex industry. Many of these organizations promote the evangelical, conservative idea that sexual services are sinful, immoral, dangerous, criminal, and a form of sexual exploitation and, therefore, should be eliminated. In their work, they often conflate sex work, massage parlours, and migration with human trafficking. Butterfly (2021) and the Asian women workers argue that these antitrafficking organizations "weaponize harmful anti-trafficking rhetoric to conceal their distinctly anti-migrant, anti-Asian, and anti-sex work agendas" (p. 1).

Social justice scholars, activists, and organizations advocating for people of colour, migrants, LGBTQ+ communities, people with mental illnesses, and sex workers have criticized the carceral framework and advocating for abolition, that is, an end to efforts to police, detain, deport, institutionalize, and otherwise control these target populations (Ben-Moshe, 2020; Cole, 2022; Davis, 2011; Fortier et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Maynard, 2018; Pasternak et al., 2022; Walia, 2013). Similarly, Asian and migrant sex worker organizations in North America strongly oppose the carceral approach, which includes over policing, the criminalization of sex work and massage work, punitive policies, and harsh licensing requirements that oppress and harm sex workers, particu-larly Asians and migrants. As this article shows, this wide-ranging carceral system is the source of violence and oppression for Asian massage and sex workers.

The Carceral Web and Its Impact on Asian Migrant Sex Workers

Echoing the moralistic and imperialistic overtones of the 19th and early 20th century, the discourse of preventing human trafficking and protecting trafficked victims from exploitation continues to justify systematic discrimination and exclusion of racialized people including Asians, criminalizing sex work, imposing an immigration ban on sex workers, passing repressive bylaws, and subjecting sex workers to racial profiling and aggressive policing.

Jeffrey (2005) observes that the Canadian government's response to the "rediscovery" of the issue of migrant sex work is "an exercise in maintaining a particular gendered and raced neo-colonial Canadian identity" (p. 34). Crime prevention and public morality continue to constitute the core concerns of antitrafficking discourse, which marginalizes the concerns that matter to these women, such as their work conditions.

The antitrafficking discourse portraying Asian women as "illegal and trafficked victims involved in organized crime" is often used to justify targeting them and shutting down their workplaces. Sex workers, particularly Asian and migrant sex workers, are caught in a carceral web, facing the intersection of criminal, immigration, provincial laws and municipal bylaws.

At the federal level, in 2013, the government introduced Bill C-36, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA), which criminalizes sex work, third parties, and clients. This followed the Supreme Court of Canada ruling that three sex work Criminal Code provisions were unconstitutional, resulting in them being struck down (Canada [AG] v. Bedford, 2013). Despite claims that the laws are intended to protect the exploited person, in actuality, the aim of the laws is to eliminate sex work (CASWLR, 2022). The PCEPA not only describes sex work as sexual violence but also as a public danger—a public nuisance that endangers the health and safety of the public—with the aim of preventing the public from being "harmed" by sex work.

The Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (2022) argues that "the interrelated operation of these laws speaks to the systematic nature of marginalization and exclusion that migrant sex workers experience through the law" (para 17). Asian workers in the sex industry are disproportionately affected by these laws because they "criminalize one of the few sources of economic livelihood for migrant sex workers" (Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, 2022, para 28). Due to the language barrier, lack of immigration status, and exclusion, Asian migrant sex workers often rely on third parties, including their coworkers, friends, and families, to support their work through, for example, advertising (including credit card payments), transportation, and communication with the clients. However, all of these activities are criminalized (Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, 2022). Research shows that criminalizing sex work prevents workers from accessing resources and protection and puts them in danger (CASWLR, 2022).

Lala, one of the participants in this study, shared her experiences of being arrested in an antitrafficking raid—a raid that was conducted despite the fact that there was not any evidence of human trafficking or exploitation. She was arrested and charged with sex-work-related offences. Her friends and family were identified as a criminal network and organized crime ring and were charged and convicted of helping Lala and providing support to a sex worker (e.g. paying for advertisements and bills, giving rides) despite some of them not receiving any material benefits.

Jane is another participant in the study who was convicted of a sex-work-related offence when she supported other sex workers and protected their safety. Jane is a retired sex worker, but she offered support to other sex workers at their request and connected them with clients. Jane said that the other sex workers liked her help because she had a good sense of the clients, which enabled her to help them screen out bad clients and also to negotiate services and price with the clients. Both Lala and Jane also shared their traumatic experiences of being incarcerated, including not being allowed to communicate with their loved ones and having their money and assets seized, as well

as the poverty and vulnerability they faced after the raid. June said, "I lost everything, I have even lost my dignity." Criminal investigations also often turn into immigration investigations. Instead of being offered protection, most of the Asian workers who were identified as victims in these investigations were deported.

Kumimoto (2018) argues that criminalizing sex work also facilitates racialized patterns of gender-based violence. In the case of Asian migrant sex workers, the intersection of criminal laws and immigration laws produces additional exposure to state and other violence. At the federal level, immigration laws and policies prohibit migrants (even those with a work permit) from working in sex work or other erotic industries. These workers would also be denied entry into Canada on the grounds that they are suspected of being involved in the industry or being trafficked. As well, they may lose their immigration status if they have convictions for sex-work-related offences (Burke, 2018; Fudge et al., 2021; Liew, 2020; Santini & Lam, 2017).

At the provincial level, Ontario is often described as a major "trafficking hub" by antitrafficking organizations, who lobby and urge the government to address the issue (Ingram, 2016). In 2021, the Ontario government passed Ontario Bill 251 (Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021) in the name of combating human trafficking, which not only requires that hotels keep a register of all guests but also provides additional powers to law enforcement to investigate. For example, inspectors are given unfettered powers to demand, review, remove, or copy records or documents and question a person on any matter they consider relevant to the inspection. However, in reality, this law does not prevent human trafficking or protect trafficked victims. Instead, it gives excessive and unchecked power to law enforcement to conduct sweeping surveillance and investigation, which puts sex workers, migrants, and youth, especially who are Indigenous, Black, and people of color at risk (Chu & Maynard, 2024; No Pride of Policing, 2020).

Municipalities are also heavily involved in the carceral web Asian migrant sex workers are caught up in. Municipal governments are responsible for parking, licensing business, and other local issues. Municipalities not only use bylaws to regulate strip clubs and massage parlours and target workers, but they also often collaborate with the police and immigration, turning bylaw investigations into immigration and criminal investigations. In the last two decades, antitrafficking organizations, municipal governments, and bylaw enforcement have targeted Asian massage parlours. At the municipal level, Asian massage parlours are often referred to as "illicit massage parlours" (Chin et al., 2019), which are associated with sex work and heavily regulated (Auger, 2014; Craig, 2011; Lam, 2016; van der Meulen & Durisin, 2008; van der Meulen & Valverde, 2013). As Shih (2021) argued, the regulation of massage parlours has criminalized low-income Asian workers, with law enforcement and antitrafficking organizations targeting them with surveillance, raids, and forced closures (Bernstein, 2010; Butterfly, 2021; Lam et al., 2021; Lam & Lepp, 2019; Shih, 2021a, 2021b).

I argue that the carceral web built with federal and provincial laws and municipal bylaws is one of the roots of the violence experienced by Asian migrant sex workers. For example, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, police carried out frequent raids against apartments and massage parlours in Toronto, Ontario, and Vancouver, British Columbia. They arrested, brought criminal charges against, and deported Chinese, Thai, and Malaysian women (Brock et al., 2000; Toronto Network Against Trafficking in Women, 2000). In addition, these establishments also experience excessive investigation, violence, and forced closures (Butterfly, 2021; Chuen, 2021; Fudge et al., 2021; Lam et al., 2021).

Most of the participants in this research who worked in Toronto and Newmarket as sex workers say that law enforcement was a major source of fear, regardless of whether they worked in massage parlours, in an apartment, or in hotels. While workers with precarious immigration status especially feared immigration officers, other workers also worried that they would be arrested, investigated, charged, and put out of business. Many workers in my research reported that they are afraid to report violence to the police for fear of being arrested and deported. Some of them also worried that their friends and family may be affected by the discrimination and investigation. Some of the workers even said that they would prefer to be robbed or even killed than be arrested or deported. Even those with immigration status worried that law enforcement would discriminate against them and that their work and identities would be disclosed. One massage worker, Mei Yi, described her interaction with law enforcement: "I would not call the police. I may be robbed [by robbers] and lose some money but I can avoid them. However, the police and bylaw enforcement can keep coming to rob you every day." Another massage worker, Lucia, shared her experience of interactions with law enforcement at massage parlours: "They [law enforcement] have power over you and they can ask you to do whatever thing they want you to do. They do not see you as a human. They see you as an ant, that they could kill you anytime." Several other workers also shared their experiences of law enforcement's excessive investigation, harassment, humiliation, and sexual abuse of them. Some of the workers suggested that law enforcement officers particularly target those who are perceived as offering sexual and erotic services.

Workers also described feeling discriminated because of their ethnicity and race. Ceci, a massage worker, said that law enforcement had investigated her workplace often— over 20 times in three months—and she found that the massage parlours with white workers nearby had only been investigated once in the last year. As Ceci put it, "This is racism…. Why do they come to our place so often? They are targeting us because we do not speak English. They think that we are not Canadian. Would they treat white people like this? Of course not." One stakeholder I interviewed who worked with law enforcement officers talked about the racism of bylaw enforcement officers, noting that law enforcement may feel suspicious when they see workers who do not speak English and do not fit their racist stereotype, for example, assuming Chinese women only work as waitresses in Chinese restaurants.

The Case of Newmarket

Despite the significant power of municipal bylaws to disrupt women's, and other marginalized people's lives, the carceral approach of municipal bylaws has received little critical attention. Municipal bylaws are indeed one of the powerful tools used to control Asian women who work in massage parlours (Lam et al., 2021; Red Canary Song et al., 2022). Licensing requirements and restrictive bylaws are designed to subject massage workers to the power of law enforcement. Shih (2021b) argues that the regulation of massage work shows "these mechanisms configure hierarchies of labor predicated on markers of race, gender, poverty, and citizenship" (p. 56). In this section, I provide a detailed discussion of the municipal regulation of Asian migrant sex workers using Newmarket's municipal council's recent introduction of "personal wellness establishments" as an example.

The Town of Newmarket passed the Personal Wellness Establishment bylaw in 2021, which, I argue, codifies systematic racism against Asian massage parlours. Since this new bylaw, all seven Asian massage parlours in Newmarket were shut down and received over $50,000 in fines, while massage parlours operated by English-speaking practitioners were able to obtain licences and continue to operate. Wong (2022) argues that "Newmarket's abuse of bylaws and licensing repeats much of what municipalities did to Asian people in this country a century ago during the era of white nationalist exclusion." He states that Newmarket has repeated the shameful history of targeting Asian businesses similar to how "racist bylaws and licensing regimes were deployed from Vancouver to Lethbridge, Toronto, Ottawa and Québec City to control, harass and push out Asian businesses like Chinese laundries and restaurants" (para 18).

The legislation of this new bylaw process began in 2019 when the Town of Newmarket began a review of the existing body rub parlours related bylaws with the intention of targeting these businesses in the name of addressing community concerns about criminal activity and public safety. Their claim of the goal was to create a licensing category that would allow legitimate businesses to operate while giving them the power to shut down disreputable businesses. Previously, in 2002, the body rub bylaw was passed to regulate and control the massage services which are offered by non-registered massage therapists. Body rub services were defined in this bylaw as "the kneading, manipulating, rubbing, massaging, touching or stimulating any means of a person's body or part thereof, but not included medical or therapeutic treatment given by a person otherwise duly qualified, licenced or registered to do so under the laws of the province of Ontario." In 2021, the previous Body Rub bylaw was repealed and a new Personal Wellness Establishment bylaw was passed to regulate the "alternative massage services' which are offered by non-registered massage therapists. The new bylaw does not only require proof of immigration status and criminal record check, but also proof of training from Canadian accredited education institution. In effect, it results in excluding the businesses run by non-English speaking low-income Asian women from obtaining the licence.

The racial bias and stereotype that Asian women are sex workers appeared in the bylaw review process (Gallant & Lam, 2022). The Newmarket staff and councillors described the massage parlours run by Asians as "disreputable", "illicit", "illegal", and "criminal" (Gallant & Lam, 2022) and the new bylaw aimed at excluding them from being licenced as legitimate businesses in Newmarket. These demonstrate how Asian massage workers are constructed as the Other of the Town of Newmark and disposable labor.

While the government claimed that the 2021 bylaw aimed to protect trafficked victims, I argue that the purpose of the bylaw was to "clean up body rub parlours" and get rid of sex work (Chuen, 2021; Gallant & Lam, 2022). For example, Deputy Mayor Tom Vegh explicitly stated, "I think we really just want to drive it out of our town, quite frankly. I don't think it's consistent with the values of our town" (Owen, 2021). It is also important to note the racial element of this case: most antitrafficking organizations, women's organizations, and religious groups are led by white people who advocate for repressive policies against massage parlours run by Asian in Newmarket. With their white privilege and political lobbying power, they have privilege of succeeding in persuading politicians and policymakers to impose repressive bylaws, increase punitive enforcement and prosecutions, and "clean up" and shut down Asian massage parlours (Gallant & Lam, 2022).

Anti-trafficking discourse also promotes the idea that massage parlours are illegal, illicit, and fronts for organized crime; it also espouses the racist notion that Asian women (particularly those who cannot speak English) who engage in this work are passive and ignorant victims of human trafficking in need of being saved rather than agents of their own lives (Kempadoo, 1998). Jeffrey (2005) argues that *"such a portrayal re-creates imperialist norms where rescue justifies intervention and control"* (p. 34). For example, during council meetings in Newmarket in 2021, Cassandra Diamond from the antitrafficking organization BridgeNorth stated,

> *"I assure you that the diploma mill is actually in Mainland China. That's why you have so many reiki, so many holistic, and so many these folks coming through."*

She further claimed,

> *"I know people who get off the plane as soon as they land in either Toronto or Vancouver and they are taken directly after the flight, not having eaten, to a massage parlour where they will start servicing men" (Chuen, 2021).*

This claim is based on a racist and moralistic agenda, not on facts. In the same meeting, Marnie Hill of the Council of Women Against Sex Trafficking in York Region, which aims to end sex work, stated, "They (Asian women) perform sexual acts without even being fluent enough in English to be capable to give proper consent. They find themselves in situations they could have never anticipated due to their language barrier and to their precarious financial situation."

However, massage workers are speaking out and rejecting the claim that they are trafficked victims. They proclaim their expertise and their desire to continue to work, which pushes back against racist ideas about them. Lisa (a massage worker) reported in the meeting,

> "I don't need fluent English to serve the customers well. With the experience, I can tell where my customer hurts just by touch. I already have a lot of experience and don't need the English exam and certificate. This is discrimination, bullying, prejudice against the massage industry, and ignorance. It is to oppress us."

Another massage worker, Ruby, said,

> "They keep saying we are being trafficked. We are all adults and I use my 'head to earn my living. We are old enough to know the stuff in the world."

However, these Asian massage workers' voices were dismissed.

The seemingly neutral bylaw creates racialized impacts on massage parlours. While predominantly white massage workers can easily fulfil the licensing requirements and continue their business with their language skills, educational background and resources, Asian massage workers, of which many are not able to access training from Canadian institutions, are systemically disadvantaged by this new licensing requirement. The differentiated impact of licensing requirements is a form of institutional racism and prevents poor and non-English-speaking Asian and migrant workers from working in massage parlours.

Ruby, who works in Newmarket, said:

> "I have been working in massage for over 10 years. It is the only skills I had. If you shut down my business, I would lose my livelihood and cannot take care of our family. Besides, massage has brought a lot of benefits to the people and society. We can help them release pain and enhance their physical and psychological well-being. The people, particularly low-income people, would also lose the care from us."

During the meeting in Newmarket, Mei, a self-employed massage worker, shared how the new requirements would affect her:

> "After hearing about Newmarket's new regulations, I was very angry. I think this is a double discrimination: racial discrimination and industry discrimination. We are old and have language barriers. How can we meet the new training requirements?"

For many Asian women, working in massage parlours is one of the most effective ways of making a living, having control over their lives, and escaping previous racial and sexual abuse and oppression. Ching, a massage worker, said that her partner abused her and the factory she worked at exploited her through long work hours and low pay. She

found that working in massage parlours was more flexible and provided a better income. She also had a better support system because she built relationships with clients, owners, and coworkers and received support from them.

In 2021, four massage workers spoke out and fought for their rights before Newmarket's council (Ivy et al., 2021). They explained how massage work provides better working conditions because it is less physically demanding, offers flexible working hours, and is empowering and less exploitative than other jobs. However, their voices were buried. Despite opposition from Asian massage workers, progressive critics, and legal, human rights, and racial justice organizations, the (all white) Newmarket Council passed the new bylaw to stop workers without professional credentials from working in massage parlours. After Newmarket passed the bylaw, Councillor Simon said, "This is a proud, proud day for all of us" (Quigley, 2021). In response to the outcry from Asian advocacy groups, Mayor John Taylor rejected the accusations of racism and said that many deputations and emails "were rude and disrespectful" (Quigley, 2021).

In 2022, as enforcement of the new bylaw came into effect, none of the Asian massage parlours were able to get the Personal Wellness Establishment licence. As a result, the Town of Newmarket issued notices for most of the Asian massage parlours in Newmarket, which were investigated, charged, and fined a total of over $50,000 in three months.

A group of 45 Asian massage workers and supporters rallied to urge the town to stop targeting them. The massage workers in Newmarket issued an open letter to call for support and to urge the Town of Newmarket to stop discriminating against them; they also asked the Town not to shut down their businesses so they can keep their jobs and earn money to support their families. Asian workers in massage parlours and the sex industry have stated explicitly and repeatedly that they are not trafficked victims and that they want to continue to work in massage parlours with safety and dignity:

> *"We are not dishonourable trash to be cleansed from the city. We are not expendable labourers who can be coerced into the back-breaking, low-paying jobs they think we deserve. We are not helpless trafficking victims in need of rescue. We are human beings who can choose our own path, make our own decisions, and support ourselves with dignity if they'll only let us."* (Massage parlour workers in Newmarket, 2022)

Over a hundred social services, racial justice, and women's organizations working on issues of human rights violations, violence against women, and racial injustice have signed a joint statement that raises concerns about the racism in the policy and urges Newmarket to immediately suspend the bylaw (Butterfly, 2022). National human rights organizations such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (2022) call on the Town of Newmarket to immediately suspend, repeal, and cease enforcement of the bylaw that imposes the new licensing requirement. They assert that the certification requirement based on race, gender, and place of origin is contrary to s. 15 of the Charter and therefore discriminatory.

As a result of the organizing and advocacy by Asian women in massage parlours and allies, the Town of Newmarket has amended the bylaw to recognize credentials from other countries. In addition, as another form of resistance, the workers proposed a seminar led by a scholar at York University for the purpose of obtaining the required credentials. Through this, some Asian women were able to satisfy the requirement of training in order to receive licenses. However, some workers, particularly those who are perceived as providing sexual services, are still targeted by the bylaw and bylaw enforcement.

Conclusion

The Atlanta shooting has intensified concerns about anti-Asian racism in North America; however, I argue that antiracism movements will not be successful until they address all intersected problems of sexism, xenophobia, classism, and whorephobia. The long history of immigration bans, criminalization, over policing, antitrafficking polices, and punitive enforcement of Asian massage parlour workers and the sex industry has continued today. Fighting anti-Asian racism requires actions to stop hatred and violence against Asian and migrant sex workers. They must not be left behind. It is important to understand how systemic racism targets and harms Asian and migrant sex workers and to advocate their rights with them.

The conservative antitrafficking movement has received enormous support from the government and general public because it fosters the illusion that these policies can stop exploitation and thus make the public safer. This is far from the truth; antitrafficking discourse disguises the real agenda of racism and anti-sex-work and anti-immigrant discrimination. It is time to end the danger that the antitrafficking movement and anti-sex-work policies pose by perpetuating systemic violence.

The anti-carceral, abolitionist feminist movement is growing and it has called for critical feminist reflections on the Atlanta murders: "White supremacy, the specifics of anti-Asian and anti-immigrant racism, misogyny, and the devaluation of working-class lives—especially among those assumed to be engaged in sex work—were tightly woven into the gunman's search for victims" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 269). Laws and policing themselves will never save Asian women or sex workers.

Working in massage parlours is an empowering way for some Asian women, particularly migrants with fewer resources, to resist systematic racism in employment and economic engagement. It also allows them to access income, gain social resources, and escape abusive relationships (Malla et al., 2019). Our goals should be to end violence against them and fight for the needs, safety, and self-determination of sex workers and massage workers. Asian workers in massage parlours and the sex industry will only be safe and able to have meaningful rights when they are free from discrimination, policing, and criminalization. What these workers call for is not the criminalization of unlicensed massage work and sex work (Butterfly member, 2021), but rather migrant and labour protections. Asian massage and sex workers are organized to protect and fight for their

rights in Canada and the United States. They work towards building their collective power, mutual support, and leadership to gain control over their working conditions and enhance their safety. Doing so requires a redefinition of the concepts of justice and safety to address systemic violence and oppression.

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Park, Hijin - **"Asian North Americans, George Floyd and the politics of anti-Asian and anti-Black racism in COVID-19 times"** *Migration, Mobility, & Displacement 7: 86-105*

MM &D

Asian North Americans, George Floyd and the politics of anti-Asian and anti-Black racism in COVID-19 times

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Introduction

A large marquee board outside a London, Ontario bar criticizing the Ford government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic read, "Mr Ford, history will show lockdowns caused more damage 2 the public then the China virus!" Posted in February 2021, approximately one year after the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Canada, this sign caused significant controversy. Within hours of its display, thousands of people had signed a petition demanding that the mayor of London have the sign removed immediately. Chinese residents of London argued that calling COVID-19 the "China virus" was racist and promoted hate crimes against Asians because it blamed China, and by extension all Chinese and Chinese-presenting people, for the virus. Alexandra Kane of Black Lives Matter London reached out to city councillors, the chief of police and the chair of the London Police Board to remove what Kane called "racist rhetoric" and "hate speech" that "shouldn't be allowed to be publicly displayed in our city" (Jabakhanji February 18, 2021). In addition to the dramatic rise in anti-Asian racism because of the virus' conflation with Asians, 2020 was defined by mass national and global protests against anti-Black racism due to a number of high-profile police killings of Black people in North America, particularly that of George Floyd. While solidarity has and does exist between Blacks and Asians against racism (as the above example reveals, see also Chang 2020; Roy and Constante June 12, 2020; Donato June 15, 2020; Zingel December 7, 2020), considerable public and media discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic attended to how Asians promote anti-Black racism, and Blacks exhibit anti-Asian racism (Anand and Hsu 2020; Gibson et al. 2020; Huang and Lee 2020).

This paper examines the intersections of the COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic of systemic racism by focusing on how Asians in COVID-19 times have been multiply constructed as the vectors of infection, national security threats, victims of anti-Asian racism, and harbingers of anti-Black racism. I do so by drawing on public and media representations of and Asian responses to the two Asian people directly implicated in the death of George Floyd: Tou Thao and Kellie Chauvin. George Floyd was killed on

May 25, 2020 by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin when Chauvin pressed his knees on George Floyd's neck for over nine minutes while Floyd was faced down on the ground. Floyd's killing sparked months of protests in the United States and globally. It is estimated that approximately 20 million people in the United States participated in protests regarding Floyd's death within the first month alone (Buchanan, Bui and Patel July 3, 2020).

Derek Chauvin and the three other police officers who were present at the time of Floyd's killing were all charged in Floyd's death. The most prominent of these three police officers is Tou Thao, referred to as the "bystander to Black death" (Coalition of Asian American Leaders Minnesota May 29, 2020). Kellie Chauvin is Derek Chauvin's wife. Both members of the Hmong community in Minneapolis, I argue that Asianness in general, and the representations of Tou Thao and Kellie Chauvin in particular, must be understood within the context of white settler colonialism and heteropatriarchal capitalism that inform all relations on the Indigenous lands (home to a multitude of Indigenous nations) now known as North America. I begin by providing a brief overview of the North American white settler colonial context and the importance of structural violence in COVID-19 times. I move on to examine Asians and anti-Asian racism and anti-Black racism in the context of the police murder of George Floyd by highlighting the responses of Asian community and activist organizations. I end with a discussion of police and prison defunding and abolition and how divesting from the police and prisons are central to reducing the harms of the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and white settler supremacy (see Shihipar March 7, 2021).

White settler colonialism and structural violence in COVID-19 times

This paper contributes to critical race feminist and white settler studies scholarship that argues that in white settler colonies such as Canada and the United States, all violence must be understood within the context of continuous Indigenous dispossession and resurgence, and a racial hierarchy of entitlements. In white settler colonies white people are positioned as the original and most entitled citizens, Indigenous peoples are pathologized and romanticized as relics of the past, and racialized Others are differentially dehumanized and constructed as disposable. Disparately termed differential racialization (Delgado and Stefancic 2017), racial triangulation (Kim1999), distinct and interrelated logics of the pillars of white supremacy (Smith 2006) and relational Othering (Dhamoon 2021), this diverse body of scholarship aims to expose and clarify how multiple and intersecting racisms structure marginalization and privilege in the contemporary North American context. Foundational to this work is an assertion that racialized groups are racialized differently, in relation to one another and often in opposition to each other, to uphold Indigenous dispossession, white supremacy and settler capitalism. Although there are key differences between Canada and the United States (particularly in relation to the Black slave economy and their distinct positioning in global wars and geopolitics), both countries are built on ongoing Indigenous genocide and share racist ideologies about Blacks and similar tensions surrounding white settler histories of Asian

exclusion and the neoliberal valorization and demonization of Asian capital (Amadahy and Lawrence, 2009: 114 and 123). In both countries, racialized violence and terror has been and is the norm under which white settler capitalism operates (see Park 2012).

The scholarship on Black/Asian relations in the United States is particularly useful in articulating how racialized minorities are disciplined through white supremacist narratives of the other. Blacks and Asians in the United States (and to a lesser extent Canada) have been positioned in contradiction to each other, from the model minority discourse starting in the 1960s, to the conflicts between Korean immigrant merchants in Black neighbourhoods in the 1980s and 1990s, and the continual negation of Blackness in the twentieth "Asia Pacific century". In white supremacist narratives, Asians are touted as mobile, independent, conformist, measured, efficient, cunning, competitive, family-oriented and forward-looking, whereas Blacks are vilified as poor, confined, pathological, criminal, dependent, stagnant, devoid of functioning families, and increasingly irrelevant. The discourse of Asians as model minorities – who labour and assimilate without complaint towards upward mobility – pathologizes all other minorities and economic poverty in general, while disavowing western imperialism in Asia. It does so by advancing the neoliberal logic of self-responsibility and independence from the state, and by disconnecting Asian migration from the wars that produced their resettlement in the west. Alongside the narrative of the model Asian minority, the demonization of Blacks obscures the extent to which white settler North America is built on Blackness as property and the continual social and physical death of Black and Indigenous peoples (see Jun 2011).

While the structural violence of indigenous dispossession and differential racialization undergirds all life in white settler societies, violence in western law and in dominant discourse is primarily individualized as illegitimate force that causes harm to persons or property. Currently, however, there is significant public engagement with systemic discrimination and structural violence due to the many systemic harms that the COVID-19 pandemic is revealing and accentuating. Structural violence refers to violence that is embedded in the structures of societies, materialize in inequitable power relations and life outcomes, and is typically routine and seen as natural (Galtung 1969). Structural violence is more common and more destructive than individual violence because it structures everyday life. The violence of racism, capitalism, colonialism, sexism and so forth are deeply embedded in social organizations, although experienced differently by disparately marginalized and privileged groups. Importantly, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) remind us that all forms of violence are interconnected and overlapping, and that everyday and individual violence (such as stranger assaults and domestic violence) are not separate from more structural forms of violence such as historical and contemporary forms of colonialism and slavery.

The differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities has received significant attention. A recent study published by The Lancet found that Black and Asian people are up to twice as likely to be infected with COVID-19 compared to white people (Sze et al November 12, 2020).

In the United States, Black people make up 30% of deaths but only 13% of the population (Ladimeji July 2, 2020). Race data is limited in Canada, but evidence shows that Black people in Canada disproportionately contract and die from COVID-19 (Chung, Adhopia and Glanz September 25, 2020). First Nations living on reserves in Canada contract COVID-19 at a rate of 40% higher than the general Canadian population (Somos January 25, 2021). These figures for Indigenous peoples are attributed to systemic health, racial and social inequities that existed prior to COVID-19 and have been magnified by crowded, inadequate housing, insecure access to health care and social services, excess of chronic disease, food insecurity, poor sanitation and inadequate access to clean water (Somos January 25, 2021). Similarly, in the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, Indigenous peoples in Canada comprised 28% of hospitalizations and 18% of deaths although they were 4% of the population in 2009. In Winnipeg, Manitoba 55% of hospital admissions for H1N1 were Indigenous peoples although they were 10% of the city's population (Palmateer April 30, 2020)

The largest COVID-19 outbreak in North America was at Cargill meat processing plant in High River, Alberta. 1500 of its approximately 2000 workers tested positive for COVID-19 (Press Progress May 14, 2020). 70% of the workers at Cargill are Filipinos; almost all of the workers at Cargill are racialized. Filipinos are also disproportionately front-line, precarious, health care workers. Essential workers, many rightly point out, are sacrificial workers. Race, class, gender and immigration status are key to their disposability (Mendoza May 28, 2020). The intersections of western imperial and colonial violence in Asia that frames Filipino migration, and Canadian settler colonial violence that frames their migration and settlement in Canada are fundamental to the expendability of Filipinos as sacrificial workers.

By and large less attention has been given to the vulnerabilities of low-pay, precarious Asian workers than to the rise of physical assaults against Asians, most often by strangers. This applies to both the mainstream media and politicians and Asian community organizations and activist groups. Both forms of anti-Asian violence, however, arise from white heteropatriarchal supremacy and racial capitalism that structures who belongs, under what conditions and whose lives matter. As Ghassan Hage (1998) argues in the Australian context, racial practices "are better conceived as nationalist practices; practices which assume, first, an image of a national space, secondly, an image of the nationalist himself or herself as master of this national space and, thirdly, an image of the 'ethnic/racial other' as a mere object within this space" (28). In thinking about both Asian worker expendability and the rise in anti-Asian assaults, one needs to conceptualize both as systemic, national and colonial violence tied to ongoing Indigenous dispossession.

In addition to the differential impacts of COVID-19 and the attention paid to the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, issues of race and everyday and structural violence are currently considered of import due to recent police killings of Black and Indigenous peoples. These killings, many argue, should not be viewed as the acts of individual police officers (a few bad apples) but as state violence and as representative of the role

of policing in upholding and legitimating slavery and colonialism (Maynard 2017). At least nine Indigenous peoples in Canada were killed by police in 2020, including Chantel Moore in Edmundston, New Brunswick, and Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto, Ontario. An Indigenous-Black woman who died during an altercation with Toronto police on May 27, 2020, Korchinski-Paquet's death and that of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota two days prior have, in particular, incited national and global protests.

How may Asianness and anti-Asian hate crimes be understood as part of the same analytical field of white settler colonial violence? The next section discusses issues of anti-Asian racism, and anti-Black racism by focusing on the two Asian people who are directly implicated in the death of George Floyd: Tou Thao and Derek Chauvin's wife, Kellie Chauvin. I examine the role of and the positioning of Tou Thao and Kellie Chauvin because media, activists, and the public have named their Asianness as significant.

Tou Thao, the Asian wife and the politics of solidarity

Literary scholar and novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen (June 26, 2020) writes of the Asian American experience:

> Situated in the middle of America's fraught racial relations, we receive, on the whole, more benefits from American capitalism than Black, brown or Indigenous peoples, even if many of us also experience poverty and margin-alization. While some of us do die from police abuse, it does not happen on the same scale as that directed against Black, brown or Indigenous peoples. While we do experience segregation and racism and hostility, we are also more likely to live in integrated neighborhoods than Black or Indigenous people. To the extent that we experience advantage because of our race, we are also complicit in holding up a system that disadvantages Black, brown and Indigenous people because of their race.

Speaking specifically about the role of Tou Thao in the death of George Floyd, Nguyen asserts that Tou Thao is "the face … [that] haunts me". Writer Anna Haines (June 19, 2020), who describes herself as half Asian-Canadian, is less empathetic and states that watching Thao emotionless as he stands with his back to George Floyd and Derek Chauvin filled her with rage. According to Haines the rage is "[b]ecause he symbolizes the passive approach to racism that is often all too common in the Asian American (and Canadian) community".

Of the four police officers involved in George Floyd's murder, Tou Thao and Derek Chauvin are the two whose race was deemed significant: Thao as Asian or specifically Hmong, and Chauvin as white. The other two police officers (one white and one Black) are largely represented as blue, as police officers primarily and whose race does not appear to be as relevant. While Derek Chauvin is singled-out as the white police officer

who caused George Floyd's death, Tou Thao is the Asian police officer who turned his back to George Floyd's pleas and kept the public at bay. The other individual whose race is cited as relevant to the death of George Floyd is Derek Chauvin's wife of over ten years, Kellie Chauvin. Tou Thao and Kellie Chauvin represent Asian complicity in supporting Black death, anti-Black racism and white supremacy.

Nguyen and Haines' visceral and intense reaction to watching Tou Thao is largely in response to experiencing this moment of Asian and Black interaction as yet another moment in which Asian and Black relations is marked by violence, tension, and discord. The mainstream media has continually framed relations between Asian and Black communities as troubled and in opposition. This includes reports of Black boycotts of Korean stores in New York City in 1990, the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, police officer Peter Liang's conviction in the death of Akai Gurley in 2016 and the recent Asian-led lawsuits against Affirmative Action in higher education for Black students (Chang 2020; Lee et al. 2020; Ho 2021). Asians are represented as more privileged immigrants who are exploiting and preying on poor Black communities, and Blacks are constructed as criminals victimizing Asians who are simply attempting to live the American dream (Lee et al. 2020: 405). Both representations support white settler narratives of Asians as the model and the foreign peril, and of Blacks as inferior, violent and the cause of their own misfortune.

The attention placed on Tou Thao for his role in Floyd's death has led to threats, harassment and attacks, online and in person, of other people named Tou. Tou is the most common Hmong name; Thao is a common last name (Hirsi May 29, 2020). The Hmong community is also being vilified because Derek Chauvin's wife is Hmong and her maiden name happens to be Thao. This led to numerous incorrect assertions that Tou Thao and Kellie Chauvin are brother and sister and are in cahoots in the murder of Floyd (Dupuy May 30, 2020; Pai June 3, 2020). Asians who are not Hmong are being harassed and questioned. Hoang Murphy, candidate for Minnesota House of Representatives, received a text from one of his Black friends the day after Floyd's murder asking, "What's going on in your community". Murphy is Vietnamese, and not Hmong (Hirsi May 29, 2020).

Kellie Chauvin, who has since filed for divorce from Derek Chauvin, is said by some on social media to be "morally responsible" for Floyd's death because she was most likely abused by Chauvin but never reported it and should have, or that Kellie Chauvin was not abused but must have known about his violent nature and should have acted on this knowledge (Conan Atlatis May 31, 2020; Larson June 6, 2020). Others debate the entity called WMAF or White Male Asian Female and how many of these unions consist of a white supremacist male and a self-hating Asian woman (Conan Altatis June 30, 2019). Although Kellie Chauvin worked as a radiologist for 13 years and is a real estate agent, most articles refer to her as Chauvin's "Asian wife" and as a beauty queen since she won the title of Mrs. Minnesota.

Asian Americans were already facing nation-wide attacks due to the belief that they caused the COVID-19 pandemic. An Association for Canadian Studies – Leger Marketing web survey of 1000 Americans and 1500 Canadians found that 51% of Americans believed that COVID-19 was created by the Chinese government. 33.7% of Canadians overall believed that COVID-19 was created by the Chinese government (Association for Canadian Studies June 1, 2020). The proposed Secure Campus Act bans all Chinese nationals seeking STEM degrees from entering the US. Trump banned entry of Chinese graduate students and researchers affiliated with seven Chinese universities. Chinese students are constructed as national security threats (VOA Student Union May 30, 2020). Anti-Asian attacks seem to reflect that for some the Chinese government is equated with all Chinese and also Asians in general.

Significant media attention has been placed on how many of the people attacking Asians in COVID-19 times are Black. This spotlight on Black violence against Asians (many elderly and women) has occurred before (as addressed by Freedom Inc. below), as well as after the murder of George Floyd. Asian and Asian American organizations quickly responded to denounce hegemonic representations and voice solidarity with Black communities. An "Open letter from Freedom Inc.'s Southeast Asian Team on COVID-19 and Black Solidarity" dated April 14, 2020, more than a month before Floyd's murder states:

> *COVID-19 is highlighting the historical conflicts between Asian American and Black communities. Though there is a long history of our communities building and supporting each other, we must acknowledge that our community has also contributed to anti-black violence.*

Specifically referring to anti-Asian violence and anti-Black racism, the open letter goes on to iterate:

> *As the visibility of hate crimes against Asian Americans heightens, we must question the high trending rates of anti-Asian hate crimes committed by Black people documented and published on public media platforms. These videos perform racial stereotyping of Black and Asian Americans in a time of instability, fear, and death to: 1) maintain the belief that Black people are inherently violent, 2) redirect the flow of outrage away from institutional failures and racist leaders to people of color, and 3) uphold white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism.*

Similar to Nguyen, Freedom Inc.'s Southeast Asian team declares that, *"Let us be clear … that while our oppressions are connected, our oppression is not the same. Black bodies are systemically and historically dehumanized in this country in ways we will never face".* The open letter ends by asking members of the Southeast Asian community to do the following:

- Stop sharing these videos that do nothing but increase division and anti-Blackness in our communities.

- Acknowledge that the Black community is disproportionately impacted and support diverting resources to addressing their needs.

- Redirect your anger from individuals to systems and racist leaders.

- Envision solutions that address violence that does not use the criminal justice system as the solution to addressing conflicts between us and other communities of color.

- Shift blame and responsibility from individuals to government and leaders that continue to invest in militarism and criminalization of people, instead of investing in people.

- Educate yourselves and your community on anti-blackness/colorism and deepen your analysis of oppression.

- Stand in solidarity and fight back with the Black community while they are mourning and fighting for the lives of their people.

A joint statement by Lausan Collective (a Hong Kong leftist press), Pacific Rim Solidarity Network (a global Chinese diaspora organization) and Seeding Change (an Asian American organization) (May 19, 2020) condemns all xenophobic attacks tied to the conflation of minorities with COVID-19 transmission. This includes the attacks of African migrants in China (see Ho 2021; Dionne and Turkman 2020) and Asians in the west. Highlighted are how structures of racial capitalism, that siphon wealth from poor countries to feed global capital, produce the conditions for violence. Titled "Asian leftists challenging global racial capitalism in the time of COVID-19: A joint solidarity statement on global anti-Blackness and racism against African migrants in China during COVID-19", the statement ends by affirming:

> As leftists, we reject global anti-Black racism and call on our communities to fight for Black lives against racial capitalism. Join us in challenging anti-Blackness as it shows up at home; to support anti-racist mutual aid efforts; to expand anti-imperialist efforts for mutual liberation. Anti-Asian sentiment may abate as the virus becomes contained, but Black people will still be barred from the privileges we enjoy through the ongoing institution-alization of anti-Black racism. Now is the time for creating, expanding, and strengthening international solidarity, thereby building power for Black, Asian, and all workers.

Following the murder of George Floyd on May 27, 2020, Asian American leaders urged their communities to stand in solidarity with the Floyd family and with Blacks against anti-Black racism (Hirsi May 29, 2020). On May 29, 2020, the Coalition of Asian American Leaders Minnesota published an, "Open Letter to Community: A Call for Unity and Solidarity in the Face of Violence". The letter was endorsed by 37 Asian Minnesotan organizations and 311 organizations outside Minnesota. It asserts:

> We also cannot ignore the role of Officer Tou Thao who stood watch as George Floyd was dying. To see someone who looks like us behave as a

> *bystander to Black death is devastating and painful. This is yet another*
> *reason that we must recognize our silence in the face of anti-Black racism,*
> *and commit to the ongoing work to dismantle anti-Blackness. Throughout*
> *history, there have been attempts to pit Asian and Black communities*
> *against each other, a tactic that encourages us to turn on each other rather*
> *than tackle our common oppression: the system of white supremacy. These*
> *efforts distract us from the real solution of building cross-racial solidarity*
> *to root out racist oppression. And while Asian communities have been*
> *rewarded for our assimilation into whiteness with the lie of the "model*
> *minority" myth, it is at times like this crisis that we should remember*
> *that our status is always conditional and subject to being taken away by*
> *xenophobia.*

In the Canadian context a webinar titled, "Asian solidarity with Black lives: Dismantling racial capitalism" held on June 29, 2020 is noteworthy. Organized by a number of labour organizations including Asian Canadian Labour Alliance, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and Chinese Workers Network, panelists Carol Wall and Winnie Ng and moderator Min Sook Lee named the current moment as one of clarity in which white supremacy can no longer be negated. The global pandemic has laid bare a multitude of systemic inequities that reveal the need for fundamental structural change; this change must centre the lives of Black and Indigenous peoples but will improve the lives of all equity seeking groups (see also Chang 2020: 742). Carol Wall highlighted as inspirational the extent to which the global protests against police violence and anti-Black racism were multi-racial and multi-generational events largely led by BIPOC youth. Implicit in many of the statements are an iteration of how the various forms of racial capitalism and white supremacy are both hierarchical and interconnected. Indigenous and Black peoples are by and large at the bottom of the hierarchy of white settler colonialism, and the marginalization of BIPOC peoples are disparate but interlinked (see Lee et al. 2020: 406).

This hierarchy and disparity also exists within and between communities categorized as Asian. Asian relationships to Blackness are not uniform and working through disaffinities and affinities may be different for disparate Asian groups. While the representations of Tou Thao and Kellie Chauvin affect all Asians in western white supremacist societies (see Ho 2021), significant differences exist between how white supremacy is experienced by different Asian groups. Filipinos and Vietnamese in Canada, for example, are often absent from both East Asian and South Asian categorizations produced in public and academic discourse. In speaking about anti-Asian and anti-Black racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, Vincent Wong of the University of Toronto argued that Southeast Asians, such as Laotians, Cambodians, and Hmong, do not have the same experiences in North America as people of Japanese, Koreans, or Chinese descent (Chan July 17, 2020). Cambodian, Lao and Hmong refugees, Aihwa Ong contends, are marked by an ideological blackening or association with Black communities due to their position as refugees, their rural backgrounds and their high rates of poverty. Hmong, more so than East Asian Americans have lower educational success rates and experience

more policing and surveillance (Lee et al. 2020: 407). Some members of the Hmong community insist that the Hmong "… should not be seen through the lens of the model-minority experience, should not be subject to liberal Asian-American guilt and hand-wringing over Tou Thao as a symbol of complicity" (Nguyen June 26, 2020).

To heed the words of Freedom Inc.'s Southeast Asian team on anti-Asian violence to "redirect your anger from individuals to systems" requires a de-centring of Tou Thao and an emphasis on the systemic violence of war and imperialism, its connections to migration and displacement and racialized poverty. As stated by Nguyen (June 26, 2020):

> To locate Tou Thao in the middle of a Black-Hmong divide, or a Black-Asian divide, as if race were the only problem and the only answer, obscures a fatal statistic: the national poverty rate was 15.1% in 2015, while the rate for African Americans was about 24.1% and for Hmong Americans 28.3% …. The problem is race, and class, and war–a country almost always at war overseas that then pits its poor of all races and its exploited minorities against each other in a domestic war over scarce resources.

Abiding by Freedom Inc.'s Southeast Asian team's recommendations also requires an analysis of stranger assaults and hate speech that ties these acts to a larger system of white settler colonial and neoliberal violence. Policing and the criminal justice system are key technologies by which settler and neoliberal violence is propagated and legitimated. Thus, Freedom Inc.'s Southeast Asian team's resolution that, we must "envision solutions that address violence that does not use the criminal justice system as the solution to addressing conflicts between us and other communities of color". This counsel continues to be timely as media reports of Black violence against Asians, many of them elderly, on both coasts of the United States garnered significant attention in the first few months of 2021 (Fernandez February 11, 2021; Kim February 12, 2021). Large monetary rewards provided by Asian American celebrities to catch the culprits has some accusing Asian Americans of supporting the racial profiling of Black people and akin to slavery, providing a bounty on Black people's bodies (Fernandez February 11, 2021). The last section critiques criminalization and punishment as solutions to violence and advances arguments for police and prison abolition and defunding, prevalent in the protests over the killing of George Floyd.

How to end the violence: Abolition and Defunding

In April 2021, Derek Chauvin was found guilty in a criminal trial on three counts of murder and manslaughter in the killing of George Floyd. Chauvin was sentenced to 22.5 years in prison. Subsequently, in December 2021 Chauvin pleaded guilty to federal charges of violating Floyd's civil rights. The city of Minneapolis settled a civil suit and awarded Floyd's family $27 million (Aguilar-San Juan 2021: 405). In February 2022, Tou Thao, J. Alexander Keung, and Thomas Lane were found guilty of federal charges of violating Floyd's civil right to medical care. Thao and Keung were also convicted of

failing to intervene to save Floyd's life. The three ex-officers have yet to be sentenced for their violation of federal civil rights. In June 2022 Thao, Keung and Lane will face state criminal charges for aiding and abetting in the murder and manslaughter of Floyd (Associated Press February 24, 2022).

Chauvin is the first white police officer in Minnesota to be incarcerated for killing a Black man (Chappell June 25, 2021). Black people in the United States are twice as likely as white people to be killed by police officers (Bunn March 3, 2022). Police officers are rarely held accountable for the death of people in their custody (Chappell. June 25, 2021; see also Razack 2015). The guilty verdicts for the four police officers are said to represent a step towards healing and accountability (Chappell June 25, 2021). For some, justice for Floyd can only occur if all four ex-police officers involved in Floyd's death are convicted and given prison sentences. Justice for some is ensuring that those who perpetrate hate crimes against Asians are arrested and brought before a justice. Key questions that arose in the context of the global pandemic and the rise of Black Lives Matter protests include, how can the lessons of the pandemic usher in social change? Can we dismantle current problems by using current solutions? Can justice be done by "locking them-up and throwing away the key"?

In an interview with Toronto Life magazine, Robyn Maynard, author of Policing Black Lives said this:

> The mass protests we're seeing right now are happening precisely because people don't want to go back to the old version of normal, which was so violent and exclusionary for Black people, for Indigenous people, for migrant communities. Do I believe we can have a police-free future? Absolutely. Do I think we can do that in our lifetime? Absolutely (Zarum quoting Maynard June 12, 2020).

An often-heard chant at anti-Black racism protests over the killing of Floyd was, "no justice, no peace, defund the police". Advocates for police defunding and prison abolition, many of them Black women, have been putting forth a call for divestment from carceralism for decades. One cannot end one form of violence -- police violence -- by using another form of violence, the violence of incarceration and punishment. Hate crimes legislation, for example, legitimates and expands the criminal punishment system and thus cannot produce less violent societies (see Spade 2015). Sustaining and expanding systems that police, surveil, incarcerate and detain people produces violence and cannot end violence.

According to Pam Palmateer, in Canada 30% of federally incarcerated people are Indigenous peoples, although Indigenous people are 5% of the Canadian population. For women 42% in federal prisons are Indigenous. 50% of the youth incarcerated nationally are Indigenous. In some provinces, it is much higher. In Saskatchewan, 92% of incarcerated male youth are Indigenous and 98% of incarcerated female youth are Indigenous (April 30, 2020).

Policing and incarceration are key technologies of colonialism in that they contribute to the destruction of marginalized families, communities and nations on local, national and global scales (Chartrand 2019; Davis 2003). Not going back to the normal, and "investing in people", as Freedom Inc. advances, necessitates divesting from punishment as the solution. The Toronto police budget is $1.22 billion per year (Zarum June 12, 2020). This $1.22 billion is greater than the funds allocated to paramedics, public housing, libraries and firefighters combined (Preville April 26, 2016). Veteran police officers across North America note that virtually all property crime would disappear if drugs were decriminalized and addictions treated as social, health and education issues and not criminal issues (Littlefield 2006). Allocating funds to adequately address addictions would virtually eliminate property crime. Many crimes are also poverty-related crimes, crimes that would not occur if people's basic needs for adequate and secure food, housing, child-care, community engagement and so forth were met.

In her book Golden Gulag (2007) Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as the, "state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (261). In other words, the design of society produces vulnerability, disposability and death for some, and valorization and increased life chances for others. White settler neoliberal societies are characterized by organized abandonment or austerity such as the privatization of land, social services, health, and education, and by organized violence such as policing, detention and deportation. Policies of organized abandonment leads to imprisonment. Thus, the call for abolition and defunding is less about removing people from cages and on to the street, and more about collective organizing to create another world. Rather than a simple reallocation of public funds, abolition requires a transformation of social and economic structures. According to Gilmore the purpose of her definition of racism is to assist people to think through how vulnerability is produced through systems, and to enable people to collectively join forces to overcome that vulnerability (Gilmore April 16, 2020). Hence, in ending anti-Asian racism it is imperative to seek solutions that account for and prioritize Indigenous and Black life since all forms of violence are overlapping and linked. Creating less violent societies for Indigenous and Black peoples requires that we "change everything" (Gilmore April 16, 2020). This will inevitably reduce the harms experienced by all life on Indigenous lands.

Conclusion

In a Time magazine article on Tou Thao and Asian Americans, Nguyen (June 26, 2020) writes, "Like many Asian Americans, I learned to feel a sense of shame over the things that supposedly made us foreign: our food, our language, our haircuts, our fashion, our smell, our parents." Nguyen goes on to refer to poet and essayist Cathy Park Hong:

> *What made these sentiments worse, Hong argues, was that we told our-*
> *selves these were "minor feelings." How could we have anything valid to feel*
> *or say about race when we, as a model minority, were supposedly accepted*

> *by American society? At the same time, anti-Asian sentiment remained a*
> *reservoir of major feeling from which Americans could always draw in a*
> *time of crisis. Asian Americans still do not wield enough political power,*
> *or have enough cultural presence, to make many of our fellow Americans*
> *hesitate in deploying a racist idea. Our unimportance and our historical*
> *status as the perpetual foreigner in the U.S. is one reason the President and*
> *many others feel they can call COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" or the "kung*
> *flu".*

I begin my conclusion with Nguyen's words because it captures a central experience of being Asian in North America: that of repeatedly experiencing multiple forms of anti-Asian racism and yet this anti-Asian racism is rarely recognized and legitimated as important. The current pandemic may be a rare moment in which there is some validation of anti-Asian racism, albeit it is primarily limited to stranger physical attacks and verbal assaults. These assaults are numerous; many of the attacks and robberies have been very violent and some deadly (Chen and Lee-An March 28, 2021; Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter and Project 1907 March 2022). And yet the unimportance of Asians for both mainstream society and social justice movements largely persists. As Michelle Kim (February 12, 2020) states, "The collective and intergenerational trauma Asians hold is vast and painfully deep. The erasure and silence around our struggles, from both of our own community and our allies, only deepen the wound while widening the gap between us and other marginalized communities".

This unimportance of being Asian and of anti-Asian racism is reflected in sentiment that Asians are an under-policed, under-protected group, a group defined as unworthy of police protection. East Asians specifically are under-policed and Black, Brown and Indigenous groups are over-policed (see Fernandez, Feb 11, 2021). In other words, Asian lives do not matter and anti-Asian crimes receive less attention and resources. This desire to be defined as a group worthy of police protection, or as Dean Spade (2015) states, "having the law say good things about you," fails to acknowledge how the police and the criminal punishment system are key purveyors of violence for most BIPOC people. Being unimportant cannot lead to fighting to get protection from the criminal punishment system.

Sociologist Rashawn Ray reminds us that:

> *A person gets killed by the police, on average, every eight hours. That's a*
> *normal thing. So police violence is an endemic, and when things are an*
> *endemic, it's kind of like Covid. People got used to it … That's how police*
> *violence is right now. We've been dealing with it ever since slave patrols*
> *(Bunn March 3, 2022).*

Data collected by The Washington Post reveals that police killings of Black people increased in 2020 despite the mass global protests over the killing of George Floyd. Ray asserts that the attention to police violence may have contributed to a hardening of the blue wall of silence (Bunn March 3, 2022). Similarly Canadian research points to an

increase in deadly police encounters over the past twenty years; Indigenous and Black people are disproportionately represented in these police killings (Singh July 23, 2020). While some United States cities vowed to reduce police funding in the aftermath of the Floyd killing, most of these police budgets have since been increased or reinstated (Bunn March 3, 2022). Recent reports pronounce that the significant increase in anti-Asian hate crimes continued in 2022 (Jabakhanji April 26, 2022).

Through an examination of the role of Asianness in the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism, this paper attempted to illuminate the multiple and often contra-dictory ways that Asians are positioned to support white settler colonialism and racial capitalism. Asians in COVID-19 times are multiply positioned as the vectors of infec-tion, as national security threats, as victims of anti-Asian racism, and as harbingers of anti-Black racism. Drawing on Asian community and activist organization responses to Asian involvement in the death of George Floyd, and representations of Black violence against Asian, this paper argued that the solutions to ending the pain of being Asian do not lie with inclusion and still lie with cross-racial solidarity and a divesting from systems that produce social and physical death of the most marginalized. Central to this articulation is an understanding that the oppression of disparate marginalized groups are connected and constitutive, but not equal and the same. Adhering to Gilmore's call to "change everything", a more just post-COVID-19 world on Indigenous lands requires collective action towards abolition and decolonization.

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Organizing for racial and economic justice during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Experiences from the Chinese Canadian community in Toronto

Justin Kong

Justin Kong is a labour and community organizer, he lives in Scarborough with his family.

In this article, I share my experiences involved in organizing around racism and for social and economic justice broadly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article specifically focuses on some of my experiences involved in a small, grassroots, community-based organization with a focus on anti-racism, workers' rights and social justice as the Executive Director at the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (hereafter CCNCTO) 6 from July 2018 to May 2021. CCNCTO is an organization of Chinese Canadians in the City of Toronto that promotes equity, social justice, inclusive civic participation, and respect for diversity. CCNCTO has an extensive history working in racial justice and advocacy including being a key part of the coalition for winning redress for Chinese head-tax survivors from the Canadian government.

Manifesting Histories of Anti-Asian Racism and Sinophobia in the COVID-19 Pandemic

It is hard to find a place to start when writing about racism in Canada and certainly the Asian Canadian experiences of racism. From the earlier histories of Chinese head-tax and exclusion to the ongoing scapegoating of Chinese and other Asian Canadians for some of the pronounced social and economic issues of our times, Asian Canadian communities have continued to migrate to Canada only to find an uneasy reception. Growing up in Toronto, I witnessed the ways in which anti-Asian racism manifested itself in social, economic and labour market exclusion of my own family and those around us. The occasional "Ch*** go back to China" by white people being only the most explicit expression.

It was my experiences with racism as a Chinese Canadian that drew me to working at CCNCTO. During my time working there, I learned about histories of Asian exclusion, but also the histories of resistance, of Chinese and Asian communities fighting back, often working in solidarity with other racialized communities, and how through those struggles ripped from the claws of white supremacy the many things we now enjoy: citizenship rights, human rights, economic advancement and many more. While anti-racism advocacy was always part of the work, when I started working at CCNCTO, I also found myself organizing to combat the rise of reactionary attitudes

in my own community: rising tides of Islamophobia, anti-Black racism and anti-refugee attitudes that were being fomented by far right forces often with discreet support from establishment Conservatives aimed at building support in suburban communities.

Justin Kong speaking at Toronto City Hall on concerns around the rise of anti-Asian and anti-Chinese racism along with other anti-racist advocates and elected city officials. January 29th, 2020, Toronto.

In January 2020, a mysterious new virus was just making the headlines. It was first detected in Wuhan, China and instantly, just as they had during SARs – Chinese and other Asian people, and those who could be confused for being Chinese, were immediately considered potential carriers of a newly found disease. Videos of supposed 'bat-eating' tapped into deeply held prejudices against Chinese and Asian peoples. Many anti-racist advocates and respected leaders from the Chinese community had seen this type of racism during Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and how it impacted Chinese and other Asian Canadian communities: the way in which our children were targeted, the way in which Chinese communities and businesses floundered as they were abandoned as danger zones and the general abuse of Chinese and Asian Canadians generally throughout society. There was quick community mobilization and we joined others at Toronto City Hall to denounce the rise of anti-Asian racism.

This denunciation was important in showing consensus and commitment that we would not allow anti-Asian racism to be accepted; the press event made news across Canada and the world – the fact that we had the reach it did was a result of the work of histories of struggles against racism.

Corresponding with the calls to stop the anti-Asian rhetoric around the new virus, were calls from Chinese Canadian communities that saw the Canadian government and our public health authorities not doing enough to combat and prevent the spread of this new virus. Through Chinese language media and news from family contacts in China, many Chinese Canadians already recognized the seriousness of this new virus and

the effectiveness of drastic action that was being taken in China to contain the virus. Therefore, it struck them as strange and frustrating as to why the Canadian government was not taking more decisive action to combat this new virus.

CCNCTO community Poster promoting a public health event, Feb 8th, 2020, Scarborough, Toronto.

Not too long after the event at city hall, CCNCTO organized a community meeting with Toronto's Chief Medical Officer at a local mall in early February which aligned with the last day of Lunar New Year celebrations. At that time there was vigorous debate around whether or not masks were effective at containing the virus and many people in the community had been actively pursuing masks. Our organization had been able to secure a shipment of masks, and was eager to distribute them at the event to get them into the hands of the community. However, at the same time, health authorities had not yet made a declaration on whether masks were helpful in combating the new virus. As organizers of the events we found ourselves in the uneasy situation of responding to community needs and ensuring we weren't undermining public health directives during this sensitive time.

Justin Kong speaking with CBC News about the report on the rise of anti-Asian racism during COVID-19. March 23, 2021, Toronto.

Whether it was differing views within the community about whether racism or public health should be the immediate concern, or the ordeal around the masks- these discussions served as an important lesson for me in reflection, on not only how migrant communities participate differently to shape civic society but also how essential that we have civic institutions and communities that are invested in mutual learning, dialogue and information sharing.

As the new virus quickly spread across the globe from novel virus into a global pandemic, our work around the issue of racism became enjoined by public health controls, shutdowns and pandemic support. Anti-Asian racism and other forms of racism however would intensify with the pandemic with continued blame on how Chinese people were the cause of the virus, to racist and absurd notions from leading Conservative politicians that Canada's Chief Medical Officer, a Chinese Canadian, was actually a foreign agent of the Chinese government. Beyond these high-level political incidents were the frequent and unabated everyday attacks on Chinese and other Asian

communities across Canada throughout the pandemic – from frontline workers to the elderly – our organization would go on to track thousands of instances of anti-Asian attacks and racism throughout our nation-wide platform www.covidracism.ca

It is also notable that as many Asian Canadians re-awoke to the rising tides of anti-Asian racism, long standing struggles for racial justice led by Black and Indigenous communities had also intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. I remember marches in solidarity with Breanna Taylor, George Floyd and others were some of my first-time taking part in mass actions since the onset of the pandemic. It is important to bear in mind that without #blacklivesmatters and #idlenomore, #StopAsianHate, our movement would probably not have had the scope and reach that it did. For Asian folks who are just re-awakening to anti-Asian racism, it is critical to understand how our struggles are intimately interwoven with those of other racial groups and oppressed peoples. Understanding this is, of course, easier than realizing it in practice. The very real contradictions of racial capitalism and how it manifests between racialized and working communities and the masses across the globe, where we are pitted at each other's throats for the table scraps, can only be resolved through practice.

During the pandemic, I felt really grateful for opportunities to begin some of that work locally, to address the anti-Black racism that exists within our community and also legacies of solidarity and joint struggle. At CCNCTO during the COVID-19 pandemic we started dialogue with members of our organization to learn about the history and struggle of Black communities for liberation. We invited guests from the US who had been long involved in doing the work of trying to build multi-racial, working class solidarity amongst Asian communities with Black and other racialized groups.

As we think how we must collectively fight against the rising tides of racism, the growing Sinophobia that arises from deepening geopolitical tensions and the deepening inequalities of our times, it dawns on me more than ever that our solidarity must be a practice. It must be grounded in the concrete real material concerns of working people and worked through the politics of the everyday: of work and livelihoods, of subways and LRTS, of rooming houses and NIMBYism in the politics of rent, mortgages and growing housing unaffordability -- just a few among many others. Only by asking how we build interracial solidarity through the material challenges and issues facing working people in a diverse space like Toronto can we build the power to fight to win and combat the crises looming on the horizon.

Organizing with Chinese Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to anti-racism work, a key part of our work during the pandemic was organizing in support of workers in the community. All of a sudden the pandemic transformed restaurant workers, grocery store workers, care workers, cleaners and other service workers into "essential workers". In fact, they were always essential and their labour was always critical to our society -- it just took a pandemic to make them visible. At CCNCTO we had been organizing with Chinese food workers prior to

the pandemic and the pandemic rapidly changed our work. While we had focused on organizing for addressing violations of workers' rights such as wage theft and workplace harassment, the pandemic required us to shift our work into a very different space. While wages and working conditions remained important as workers bemoaned low wages, it was ultimately survival in the workplace and ensuring that one was protected from the virus work that became the overwhelming prerogative that drove our work.

Press conference with the Decent Health Network, the Iranian Canadian Congress and CCNCTO calling on Premier Doug Ford for emergency sick leave, and the Federal government to expand EI Eligibility for all workers to stop the new virus. March 12, 2020, Queens Park, Toronto.

CCNCTO would support lobbying for paid sick days and income supports, organize information chat groups to share with frontline workers, lead frontline worker vaccination efforts and provide PPE and other protective equipment to directly support the 'frontline'. A report detailing some of this work and the experiences of these workers can be found here: https://www.ccnctoronto.ca/frontline-report.

Essential workers in the Chinese and other Asian communities were in the uniquely unenviable position of being both exposed to the virus in their workplaces and being seen as the cause of the virus. We heard from health care workers who were spat on after a long shift in the early days when PPE was still scarce in our hospital system; grocery store workers who faced down racist anti-maskers when they tried to keep their workplaces safe for coworkers and customers.

What was so frustrating about this was that despite how much essential work was being conducted by the Chinese workers and other Asian workers across the GTA, they

nonetheless remained marginalized and discriminated against. It struck me that the racial currents and logics were often unable to comprehend these subject positions of Chinese and other Asian frontline workers. While media and right-wing voices continued to blame Asian people for the spread of the virus, they also doubled down on how Chinese and Asians were the ones to be blamed, whether it was for housing prices, or growing unaffordability. When Chinese and Asians were not outright scapegoated, they were certainly not portrayed in the public imagination as 'proper' labouring subjects deserving of protection of the law, unions or government support. The organizing work that I encountered every day and public and media discourse that we heard were at constant disjuncture, the two often felt almost irreconcilable. A prime example of this was when the City of Toronto released data and noted that East Asians actually had lower rates of COVID-19 infection than whites.

As I look back on my work at CCNCTO, I thought of the many East Asian personal service workers, grocery workers and other frontline workers who I encountered during the pandemic (our organization outreached to more than five thousand frontline workers across the GTA throughout the pandemic) and the toll that the pandemic had taken on them, and how they worked throughout the pandemic with constant fear and uncertainty, sometimes wearing two, three masks, barely able to breathe. I thought of the people returning from China and other parts of Asia who voluntarily self-isolated for weeks and supported their neighbors in doing so – long before the government made isolation mandatory. I thought about workers from other racialized and working class communities who similarly worked through the difficulties of the pandemic and we had all been let down by our governments, sometimes taken advantage of by employers and neglected by those in power. I thought of all these people and above all I thought of how, throughout the pandemic, our governments and society at large failed racialized workers, how it failed working people, how it failed poor people and how it failed those who were the most marginalized. It brought to full relief for me that there can be no anti-racist, no social justice movement without these people at the core: the essential workers, the migrant workers, the undocumented and the masses labouring at the peripheries throughout our society and the world -- Let us never forget that it is these people that sustain us and that we have a duty to fight together to demand our collective liberation, to demand justice and to ensure that, as we leave this pandemic, we build a world of solidarity and not racial injustice, a world of peace and not war, and a world that works for the many and not just the few.

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Responding to Anti-Asian Racism through community organizing - ACT2EndRacism National Network

Teresa Woo-Paw

Teresa Woo-Paw is the Chair of Action! Chinese Canadians Together-(ACCT) Foundation, and Convener for the ACT2Endracism National Network. She is also the Chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and ECA (Executive Council of Alberta) and the first Asian Canadian woman elected as MLA and Cabinet minister.

2020-2021 was an unprecedented time from multiple dimensions. Unprecedented due to a major global pandemic, shifting political landscapes, and also to the marked convergence of all forms of racial discrimination and injustices in Canada. We saw the rise of anti-Asian racism in blatant, deliberate and hateful ways impacting both the physical safety as well as the social and mental well-beings of Canadians of Asian descent.

Racist attitudes, acts and attacks were emboldened by irresponsible, racist political rhetoric and the anonymity of racists on social media. The Canadian public systems' inabilities and inadequate commitments to address racial discrimination over the past decades perpetuated anti-Asian racism not only at the individual level but through institutional and organizational systems. Furthermore, the institutional denial and negligence of anti-Asian racism coalesced with the persistent underrepresentation of Asian Canadians in leadership and decision-making positions and the perceived inability and lack of capacity building for targeted Asian Canadian communities contributed to the storm of anti-Asian racism in Canada.

In March 2020, as Chair of the ACCT Foundation I convened meetings with organizations and community groups from across Canada to explore ways to respond to rising anti-Asian racism upon contacts from concerned communities and reporting of anti-Asian incidents. Ultimately, the shared belief in a collective voice to pursue responses from national leaders on the attack of the Chief Medical Officer of Canada, Dr. Theresa Tam propelled the formation of the ACT2EndRacism Network with thirty (30) organizations from five provinces within four weeks. Asian Canadian equity seeking organizations' quick responses reflect the communities' elevated level of concern and sense of urgency.

The ACCT established and supported the ACT2EndRacism National Network with funding from the Government of Canada. The Network is now an entity with over 45 organizational members from 9 provinces.

Members of the ACT2EndRacism National Network

- believe racism is entrenched in Canada's history and present, and is hurting all Canadians

- emphasize collective efforts to eradicate anti-Asian racism in Canada

- recognize and stand with other racialized groups while increasing the awareness of anti-Asian racism

- seek to educate and mobilize our own communities about the impact of this racism, and

- to raise awareness on our own societal contributions and civic leadership.

Core members of the Network met weekly for 2.5 years and organized 15 collaborative community projects including development of community tools and resources to tackle racism; racist incident report-line (text message line in 7 languages); press releases; community outreach, education and consultations; publishing community reports; national awareness campaigns on mental health and racism; launching ACCT's educational videos on anti-Asian stereotypes of the model minorities, yellow peril and perpetual foreigners; Asian Heritage Month's Let's Talk session featuring Chief Commissioner of Canadian Human Rights, the first and only Federal Deputy Minister of Asian descent Mr. Daniel Quan-Watson, Citizenship Judge Hon. Albert Wong, and Founder and Chair of ACCT Foundation Ms. Teresa Woo-Paw; other webinars focused on human rights and employment rights (in 6 languages) as well as sessions on Talking to Kids about racism; a multi-cities International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Solidarity Walk with almost 1000 participants from diverse backgrounds; and, a research project with the University of Calgary on Asian Canadians' experiences of racism and reporting.

The Network continues to be supported by the ACCT Foundation with a focus on building Network capacity because it is widely anticipated that anti-Asian racism will continue in the near future.

In July 2020, Statistics Canada reported that since the beginning of the pandemic, immigrants were (42%) more likely than their Canadian born counterparts (9%) to report that they feared being stigmatized because of their racial identity. Visible minorities were also more likely to perceive an "increase in the frequency of harassment or attacks based on race, ethnicity or skin colour since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (18% vs. 6% for other participants). This percentage was even higher among participants who identified as Chinese (30%), Korean (27%), and Southeast Asian (19%)."

Half of Chinese Canadian respondents to an Angus Reid survey (June 2020) experienced a racist incident due to COVID-19. The Vancouver Police Department reported (February 2021) a 717% increase in hate crimes towards Asian Canadians compared to the same time period in 2019. According to surveys by the Association of Canadian

Studies and Leger (2022), Asian Canadians are more worried about the degree of racism in Canada and are more likely to feel personally attacked on social media.

In the past year, approximately 25% of respondents to the ACT2endracism Network Reporting Line requested support. However, when ACT2endracism attempted to make external referrals to service providers, including settlement agencies, many were not prepared to assist those who experienced racism. Access to culturally sensitive, trauma informed practice for racism is almost non-existent. The effects of racism experienced by East and Southeast Asian Canadian communities is an area that has been neglected and omitted in public policy, academia, and the service sector.

Another area of challenge is the lack of awareness of the disturbingly high sense of fear amongst Asian Canadians, including being afraid to even pick up community resources on discrimination; let alone reporting their experiences. The ACCT Foundation and ACT2EndRacism Network are collaborating with the University of Calgary to examine the substantive under-reporting of racist and hate incidents by Canadians of Asian descent.

- The Network's strategic direction identified the following objectives moving forward:
- to address anti-Asian racism in Canada through collaboration and a collective voice;
- to provide anti-racism resources/ tools/supports for communities, general public and also for targets of racism;
- to monitor hate incidents/crimes through a national reporting line and text messaging system;
- to engage government to exercise their responsibility to protect the safety and security of all Canadians; and
- to influence public policy and affect systemic change.

The collaborations of the ACCT Foundation and the ACT2EndRacism Network continue with ongoing community outreach and strengthening working relationships with members from across Canada especially the Prairies and Atlantic Canada. Core members of the Network expressed strong interests and commitments to the building of the coalition focusing on multi-region and multi-ethnic collaborative projects that help to inform and address the complex needs of the diverse Asian Canadian communities through community capacity building and systemic change.

Members of the ACT2EndRacism Network are acutely aware that the answer to substantively address racism is through systemic change in public institutions. Moving forward the Network's priority will focus on our role in anti-racism systemic change in coordination and collaboration with stakeholders from various sectors. We firmly believe our public systems must be truly equitable and meaningfully inclusive so that all Canadians are afforded equal opportunities and experience true belonging and respect. We encourage those who are interested in learning more about the ongoing activities to join the Network.

Migration, Mobility, & Displacement is an online, open-access, peer-reviewed journal. It seeks to publish original and innovative scholarly articles, juried thematic essays from migrant advocacy groups and practitioners, and visual essays that speak to migration, mobility and displacement and that relate in diverse ways to the Asia-Pacific. The journal welcomes submissions from scholars and migrant advocacy groups that are publicly engaged, and who seek to address a range of issues facing migrants, mobile and displaced persons, and especially work which explores injustices and inequalities.

We welcome submissions and inquiries from prospective authors. Please visit our website (journals.uvic.ca/index.php/mmd/about/submissions), or contact the editor for more information.

MM &D

Reflections on Organizing Ottawa's Vigil for Atlanta Shooting Victims in 2021

Ines Huang, Xiaobei Chen, and Jiyoung Lee-An

Ines Huang is a trilingual professional with a Master's degree in Communication, Politics and Society, and a dual bachelor degree in History and Political Science. She is an avid practitioner of non violent communication and an active community volunteer supporting various causes. A former public servant, Ines currently dedicates her time as a gift planner to serve individuals, families and business owners navigate the Canadian philanthropic landscape and help bridge charities and nonprofits across divides to work collaboratively to create lasting impact.

Xiaobei Chen is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. She served as President of the Canadian Sociological Association (2020-2021). Her research and teaching interests include: sociology of childhood and youth, governance and power, citizenship, racism, colonialism, citizenship, Asian diasporas especially the Chinese diaspora, and Buddhist social thought. Her latest book is a co-edited volume *The Sociology of Childhood and Youth in Canada*. Her current research and community engagement are focused on anti-Asian racism and Sinophobia.

Jiyoung Lee-An is an Assistant Teaching Professor in Sociology in the Department of Environment, Culture & Society at Thompson Rivers University. Her teaching and research interests include Critical Race Theory, Marriage Migration, Transnational Feminism, Social Justice, etc. Dr. Lee-An is a co-founder of the Student-Faculty Support Group for Anti-racism at TRU and a co-chair of the TRUFA Equity Committee. She is committed to creating an inclusive and anti-oppressive learning environment for everyone.

In this article, we share our experiences involved in organizing a vigil for the Atlanta shooting victims in March 2021. We were part of a small voluntary community group that came together and took the name of Asian Canadian Community Group based on our shared desire to take actions against anti-Asian racism and misogyny, especially after learning about the targeted tragic death of Asian women in Atlanta, the United States, in 2021. The Asian Canadian Community Group is a mix of people, mostly women, who are first- or second-generation Asian immigrants and Canadians. While all members have had extensive engagement with diverse community demographic groups, we have very uneven experiences with grassroots organizing against racism and misogyny, with some being totally new to such grassroots activism and others being veterans bringing to the group rich experiences and deep understanding. Together, we shared a goal to have a collective voice heard and to increase understanding among members from diverse backgrounds on the issue of anti-Asian racism and misogyny.

Ines is a first-generation Chinese Canadian woman who settled with her husband in Ottawa in early 2010. She worked in the public sector at the time and had been involved in various volunteering roles, with a focus on work supporting victims of

violence, promoting crime prevention, and bridging services for newcomer seniors and parents of school-aged kids. She received training in nonviolent communication. Xiaobei is also a first-generation Chinese woman. She came to Canada in the 1990s as an international student and is a professor of sociology and actively participated in many community initiatives against anti-Asian racism in response to the spiralling anti-Chinese, anti-Asian hostility. Jiyoung is a Korean immigrant who came to Canada as an international student and now teaches sociology at the university. Both in South Korea and Canada, she has been involved in grassroots migrant justice activism.

The murders of eight people, six of them Asian immigrant women, in Atlanta spas in March 2021 sent the whole world into shock. For Asian Canadians, these killings are widely seen as the culmination of growing hate and hostility against them. However, over most of the day, the media was repeating over and over again explanations that mainly focused on the murderer Robert Aaron Long's "sexual addiction" and his inability to cope with "temptations". Xiaobei forwarded the news report about the Atlanta shootings to a WeChat discussion group of Ottawa-based Chinese Canadians with a focus on anti-racist discrimination, and she initiated discussions about what should be key points to convey in interviews with the media. One point that became clear very quickly was that "[w]e feel the fear among Asian Americans" as well as a sense of helplessness. Ines recalled that we asked ourselves: Is there anything we can do here to help? Another point that emerged from the discussion was that Chinese Canadians need to break free from the pattern of inaction and do something about anti-Asian racism, through concrete actions to empower ourselves and restore hope.

After that, Xiaobei was interviewed on CBC Alan Neal's All in a Day, in which she criticized the incredulous situation of the police and the media repeating the murderer's narrative, causing further harm to the murdered victims, their families, and Asian communities. The authorities' inability to see the tragedy from the perspective of the victims and their communities reinforced the deep-rooted and normalized prejudices against Asian women. Treating the tragedy as the individual male offender's problem effectively denied that the incident was hate motivated. To engage in public discussion about this issue further, Jiyoung and Xiaobei (2021) published an article in The Conversation, which brings attention to the intersection of gender, race and social class in anti-Asian racism, which "is intertwined with the sexualization of Asian women, a fetishization of Asian women's bodies and the stigmatization of sex work." While the concept of intersectionality has transformed a great deal of scholarship on critical studies of social injustice, Xiaobei recalled taking on intense and oddly bifurcated work in the days following the murders: on the one hand, explaining to Chinese Canadians that this tragedy was not just about anti-Asian racism and that these Asian women were stigmatized and targeted as Asian "women"; on the other hand, explaining to some feminist scholars studying gender based violence that it is very important to speak about the anti-Asian racism that produced this tragedy. Like many Asian scholars (Kang 2023), Jiyoung and Xiaobei found themselves having to explain to different audiences the historical and social factors that make Asian immigrant women, especially those in massage work and those in sex work, vulnerable targets of violence. They pointed out that the

sexualization of Asian women stems from a history of white imperial domination of the Asia Pacific as well as colonial ideas of Orientalism that constructed Asian women as "exotic" sexual objects. In North America, settler colonialism constructed Asian women as diseased bodies threatening the biological reproduction of the white nation.

In the Asian Canadian Community Group, we felt a strong interest to step up to connect with broader community members and to join the nation-wide momentum for collective voicing-out by taking swift and concrete actions. After hours of discussion, the format of vigil was chosen over others, in the hope to provide a safe and timely space for concerned community members to see, hear each other going through collective grief and healing. Within 72 hours, we had an open letter drafted, finalized, translated and disseminated in three languages inviting other Asian groups in Ottawa to join us and had many email discussions and online meetings to organize the vigil. On March 28, 2021, we held the vigil to commemorate the victims at the Ottawa Women's Monument near Elgin Street, with the central message identified as "to stop anti-Asian racism and misogyny". Despite the rainy weather, about 150 to 200 people from diverse backgrounds gathered to mourn the victims, expressing solidarity in fighting racism and misogyny. While this vigil itself was successful, given the short time of organizing the vigil with different groups, at many points we wondered whether we could really succeed in organizing. It was clear at the outset that we (different organizers) had very different, sometimes contradictory, views on a number of key issues, for example, the presence of the police. Organizing the vigil not only taught us much about the practice of anti-racism and feminist action, but it also raised questions for reflection about how we with different backgrounds and views can work together towards building solidarity. In this paper, we share some of these: practicing intersectional analysis, focusing on systemic racism rather than individualized hate, and dialoguing about a critical perspective on policing in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities.

Practising intersectional analysis of race, gender, and class

The Atlanta spa shootings prompted widespread protests by Asian American and Asian Canadian communities under the slogan of #StopAsianHate. While we support these protests, we observed that many of the #StopAsianHate protests focused on anti-Asian racism as a whole, and failed in highlighting violence against women, especially working-class Asian women in the spa and sex work industry. This failure must be understood as a product of class-based prejudices and misogyny against these groups of women within Asian communities. Grounded in an intersectionality analysis of this tragedy and in response to the majority of protests around us, we felt that it was critical that our vigil send the message that the horrific murderous acts in Atlanta were a result of misogynistic violence and anti-Asian racist violence. We highlighted this in our event poster (see Image 1). In our speeches at the event, organizers also emphasized the discrimination against working class Asians, spa workers and sex workers.

Image 1. Poster for the Ottawa Vigil for Atlanta Shooting Victims, March 28, 2021. credit - Ansari

Focusing on systemic racism rather than individualized hate

The Atlanta spa murders are widely seen as the culmination of growing hate and hostility against the Chinese and Asians since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This tragedy led to many protests across North America, united by the hashtag slogan #StopAsianHate. Hate and how the government should respond to it emerged as central concerns to many individuals and advocacy groups. However, some organizers questioned the narrow focus on hate crime alone and pointed out a number of other problems. First, organizers expressed the concern that the legal tools against hate are extremely limited. Second, the preoccupation with anti-Asian hate crimes follows a long-standing pattern of only noticing individual racism, where overt and dramatic racist acts are blamed on the pathology of a few individuals. This misses the structural and systemic nature of racism. The 2020 protests against anti-Black racism in the wake of George Floyd's killing by police have made mainstream the concept of systemic racism (James 2022). Ironically, little media coverage about anti-Asian racism has included the mention of this important concept, which understands racism as a systemic condition that is pervasive, deeply rooted in the culture of a society, and imbricated with the system of power and privilege (Chen 2021). Systemic racism has multiple layers of meanings. In the context of anti-Asian racism, this concept directs our attention beyond the exclusive preoccupation with policing anti-Asian hate attacks by individuals against individuals. Simply calling for hate crime laws and more policing are

not effective solutions, and moreover it may damage solidarity and a collective struggle against racism (Talusan 2021; 18millionrising.org). Social and political institutions including the media, popular culture, schools, and government policies, interact to (re) produce anti-Asian racism. To address anti-Asian racism, we must understand the roots of anti-Asian racism in North America as well as colonial and imperialist aggressions in Asia. On the ground, the structural analysis of systemic racism raised questions and led to debates about what messages we wanted to communicate through the vigil, specifically, whether we centre the prevailing slogan #StopAsianHate. Relatedly, some community groups in British Columbia contacted us because they would like to promote all the Canadian protests on that weekend as a nationally coordinated action of #StopAsianHate. Some vigil organizers were in favour of banding the actions together to show strength under the slogan of #StopAsianHate. However, some others were hesitant due to their reservations about these BC protests' focus on hate and a lack of attention to misogyny. Furthermore, we did not know the BC groups well enough to allow dialogue and potential coordination in a short time. After a long debate, we decided to decline the invitation to be publicized together as a coordinated national action.

Negotiating with divergent stances regarding the police

One issue that has caused major disagreements among organizers was whether to contact the Ottawa Police about the vigil for safety concerns. Given the murderous violence targeting Asian spa workers and the overall skyrocketing violence against Asians, we had some concerns about the safety of people coming to the vigil. Some organizers proposed that we contact the police to request police presence to keep order and prevent potential attacks on vigil participants. This was strongly opposed by others who saw the police as a source of violence against Asian spa workers and sex workers (see Lam 2025 in this issue). These colleagues felt strongly about committing to an anti-carceral and anti-policing stance in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities (see Park 2025 in this issue) and believed it is important to speak about the problems of policing against racialized communities at the event. Some others, while supporting a critical stance regarding policing because of the police's role in the colonial and racist state formation and its record of discrimination and brutality against Black, Indigenous and other racialized peoples, they nevertheless felt that this vigil should not centralize an "anti-policing" position categorically, recognizing that Asian seniors and older immigrants have different views about the police, especially in the context of a viral increase of hate crimes against Asians, often seniors and women. Frustrated by these disagreements, some on both sides of the debate decided not to participate in organizing further. Amidst these challenges, those who stayed to continue with organizing made two decisions: one, we definitely would not contact the police "for protection", instead we would develop community protection protocols; two, the vigil would not focus on an anti-policing position itself, rather it would be centred on honouring the victims and calling on actions against misogyny and anti-Asian racism.

In conclusion, despite the challenges and unresolved differences we face, our collective action under the umbrella of the Asian Canadian Community Group was a meaningful initiative to envision and practice a broader Asian solidarity beyond the boundaries of ethnicities, cultures, and diasporic cohorts. It was also an important reminder to recognize not only similarities as Asians but also complex differences between us who embody different migration histories and multiple social locations originating from colonial history and individual life paths. This action provided an opportunity for us to situate our fight against anti-Asian racism within a broader context of systemic racism against all racialized groups and to envision nuanced solidarity with other oppressed groups in order to move forward to achieve racial justice.

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Image 2: Ottawa's Vigil for Atlanta Shooting Victims, March 28, 2021. Photo credit: Susan

Image 3. Organizers for Ottawa's Vigil for Atlanta Shooting Victims, March 28, 2021. Photo credit - Jiyoung Lee-An

Image 4. An organizer making a speech in front of the Ottawa Women's Monument, March 28, 2021.
Photo credit - Jiyoung Lee-An

Migration, Mobility, & Displacement

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MM&D

"Stand With Us": Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Must Not Be Forgotten in Our Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Anti-Asian Racism

Elene Lam

Elene Lam is an activist, artist, community organizer, and educator. For over two decades, she has been a dedicated advocate for sex workers, migrants, and gender, labor, and racial justice. She is the founder of Butterfly, the Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, and the co-author of Not Your Rescue Project: Migrant Sex Workers Fighting for Justice. Elene is a Sessional Assistant Professor in Critical Disability Studies at the School of Health Policy and Management, Faculty of Health, York University.

Introduction

People all over the world have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, racialized, migrant, poor, criminalized, and otherwise marginalized people, including sex workers, have been disproportionately affected. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the inequality Asian sex workers continuously experience and how they have fallen through the cracks. The heavy economic, social, and mental impacts on them during the pandemic have exacerbated their exclusion from access to financial relief, social support, and health services. The stigma, discrimination, poverty, violence, harassment, surveillance, and repressive policing have also been intensified by government emergency measures. Despite the oppression and the challenges, sex workers' organizations all over the world have spoken out about their struggles, developed rapid responses to support their communities, and asked for support. In this grassroots community report, I illustrate the oppression and challenges Asian and migrant sex workers in Canada faced during the pandemic and examine how one Canadian sex worker organization, Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network), worked with workers, migrants, and racialized communities to support Asians and migrants and to build their resilience. Butterfly is a community-led organization that organizes over 5,000 Asian workers, including permanent residents, refugees, and non-status women, who work in massage parlours and the sex industry across Canada and provides them with crisis, social, health, and legal supports. Butterfly also builds the capacity and leadership of the workers, organizing them to fight for their rights. Butterfly is founded upon the belief that sex workers are entitled to respect and the acknowledgement of their human rights. In addition to the challenges faced by workers, including racism, classism, sexism, gender inequality, xenophobia, transphobia, language barriers, and other kinds of oppression, both undocumented and permitted workers have little to no

access to the health and social services needed to navigate their work safely, and they live in constant fear of being deported from Canada. They face surveillance, policing, and criminalization and, particularly, the harms done by the anti-trafficking movement.

Oppression and Challenges Faced by Asian and Migrant Sex Workers

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the Canadian government imposed a variety of emergency orders and restrictions, such as border control, travel bans, public health measures (e.g., vaccination, testing, and wearing masks), stay-at-home orders, and lockdowns, all of which worsened the vulnerability of Asian and migrant sex workers. With workplaces shut down, many Asian migrant workers in massage parlours and the sex industry were unable to work. The loss of income left them unable to afford basic needs and many even lost their homes. Some had to work in even more unsafe circumstances or go underground to avoid investigation. Travel bans and restrictions (including travel to other countries to work or back to their home countries) have adversely affected migrant sex workers because migration is an important way for them to obtain income, support, and resources.

A survey by Butterfly showed that over 80 percent of Asian and migrant workers in massage parlours and the sex industry lost their income as a result of the pandemic restrictions. In response to loss of income many experienced during the pandemic crisis, the federal government provided citizens with various forms of financial relief (Canada Emergency Response Benefit, Canada Recovery Benefit, Employment Insurance, etc.), but Asian and migrant massage parlour and sex workers either did not qualify or were afraid to apply. The twin requirements of immigration status and employment records exclude them because some of the workers are either undocumented or have precarious immigration status (Abji et al., 2020). Even those with immigration status are afraid to file their tax return and apply for the government fund because sex work is considered criminal (Amnesty International Canada, 2020; Lam, 2020a).

To support small businesses, the government provided funding in the form of, for instance, rental subsides and government loans; however, again, sex workers could not apply because the sex industry is regarded as organized crime instead of legitimate business. Butterfly's survey indicated that more than 40 percent of respondents were either ineligible or too afraid to apply; furthermore, the language barrier and discrimination by the Canada Revenue Agency also prevented some non-English speaking workers from accessing the funds (Lam, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

Lack of Access to Information and Loss of Social Safety Nets

Asian and migrant sex workers are also excluded from accessing formal social protection, including information, housing, social supports, and health care services. Asian and migrant sex workers, particularly those who are poor, unhoused, experiencing violence, and/or trying to cope with mental issues, often rely on public and social

support systems, such as harm reduction programs, shelters, victim support, and immigration services. Their vulnerability has increased their risk of being exposed to violence because they cannot access public services, health care providers, and social services organizations due to their reduced capacity, language barriers, stigma, discriminatory policies against migrants, fear of surveillance and policing, and other structural challenges (Benoit & Unsworth, 2021; Santini & Lam, 2017). Since many sex workers' support programs have been absorbed by the anti-trafficking program, many migrant sex workers are afraid to access those supports out of concerns about surveillance and profiling (Lam, 2020a, 2020b).

Anti-Asian Racism, Anti-Sex Work Sentiment, and Xenophobia

Asian communities have been especially scapegoated for COVID-19; the pandemic has fuelled the rise of racism and hate against Asians and migrants, particularly Chinese people. In Canada, over 1,150 racist attacks targeting Chinese people were reported between March 2020 and February 2021 (Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, 2021). There has, however, been very little attention paid to discriminatory policies against Chinese and other Asian sex workers.

Since the Atlanta shooting in which six Asian women who worked in spas were murdered, concerns over anti-Asian racism have grown and, as a result, Stop Asian Hate campaigns have been organized in Canada and the US. However, the Asian women were murdered not only because of anti-Asian hatred but also because of the hatred of sex workers. Together, these racist and sexist conceptions about Asian and migrant sex workers result in them being seen as illegal, disreputable, and dangerous. Anti-immigration sentiment and discriminatory enforcement continue to lead to unequal and harmful outcomes for the racialized community.

A report prepared by Butterfly and other sex worker advocates states:

> *This violence is not isolated and stems from a long history of fetishizing, hypersexualizing and marginalizing Asian women. Anti-migrant and anti-sex worker legislation promote and encourage hate towards Asian migrant sex workers, labelling them as undeserving and unworthy of rights and protection. (Butterfly et al., 2021)*

We believe that an in-depth analysis of the multiple forms of systemic injustice Asian massage parlour and sex workers face is needed.

Surveillance and Punitive Crackdowns

Racist acts against and attitudes towards Asian women not only undermine their safety, leading to physical violence against them, but they are also used to support raids, racist attacks, and the general targeting of Asians who work in massage parlours and the sex industry (Butterfly, 2021; Lam, 2018a, 2018b). During the COVID-19 pandemic,

instead of improving access to support during a difficult time, the extraordinary powers of the police and law enforcement were expanded and used to target racialized and migrant workers and sex workers, intensifying the stigma, discrimination, harassment, surveillance, racial profiling, and repressive policing (Lam et al., 2021; NSWP, 2021). For example, the Ontario government imposed regulations on social distancing and sharing of personal space and required proof of vaccination, negative tests, and IDs, all of which create a huge barrier for workers with precarious immigration status as merely producing an ID can have negative immigration consequences (Lam et al., 2020). Massage parlours and sex workers were disproportionally targeted by these regulations. One Asian worker in a massage parlour received five tickets for not complying with the stay home order despite the fact that she was staying at the spa not to run her business but to maintain social distancing from her parents, whom she lived with in a small apartment, because she was sick. A holistic centre in Toronto was charged with violating the stay home order, despite they were allowed to reopen her business at that time during end of pandemic (Lam, 2020a). When businesses reopened, the Ontario government required written documents outlining safety measures. Ten massage parlours in the York Region received tickets when the language barrier prevented them from providing written proof of safety measures.

According to the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, some anti-trafficking organizations have seized the pandemic as an opportunity to advance punitive anti-trafficking policies that isolate sex workers and drive them further underground (GAATW, 2021). The lockdown did not stop anti-trafficking investigations and anti-sex-work raids. In addition to the emergency order, government and law enforcement continued to use criminal, immigration, and provincial laws and municipal bylaws to target sex workers and massage parlours, particularly those run by Asians and migrants. In Ontario, their workplaces were investigated and raided in the police operation Project Crediton, which resulted in 32 criminal charges being laid against seven people who are being identified as an organized crime ring; the workers were intimidated, harassed, and arrested despite the police maintaining that they were helping the victims. Their money and personal property were seized, even though some were not charged (Davis, 2021; Kovach, 2021).

The Resistance and Resilience of Butterflies

Asian sex workers are marginalized, criminalized, and stigmatized. However, sex workers have been resilient and resourceful and quick to create a community. As marginalized people, instead of relying on the government, the community has started to develop their own response and show their resistance and resilience. Since January 2020, Butterfly has worked with community members to set up an emergency fund with Maggie's, a sex worker organization in Toronto, providing income support and helping workers' pay for rent, food, and other basic and essential needs. We have also developed mutual aid programs and other effective community responses to reduce the impact of the pandemic and address the challenges they face.

Butterfly helps community members access information, services, and support, including testing and vaccination. More importantly, the community members have come together with other allied organizations to express their demands to the government and advocate for income for all, rights for all, and rent relief and to fight racism and policing. Butterfly is using different tactics to build the resilience of the migrant sex workers, build the networks and power of the community, and organize the Asian migrant sex workers to advocate for their rights. These tactics include outreach, financial aid, and community advocacy.

Outreach, Accessing Information, and Building a Support Network

As a result of the pandemic, many Asian migrant sex workers were isolated, but the Butterfly team contacted the community members by phone and social media to give them information and visited people in person to provide supplies. Butterfly also maintains a 24/7 hotline where the workers can share their concerns and seek help and information. In one week, the hotline received more than 500 calls and text messages. To overcome the barrier of accessing information, Butterfly translated information on COVID-19 and government policies to ensure the community had up-to-date information. Butterfly and Maggie's also produced "Sex Work and COVID-19: Guidelines for Sex Workers, Clients, Third Parties, and Allies," which was intended to help sex workers develop health and safety measures they can use to protect themselves. With the increased policing and power of law enforcement, Butterfly promptly developed a training on policing and COVID-19 to help the workers know about their rights. Butterfly has also supported its community members, particularly those with language barriers and those with precarious immigration status, in accessing health services and protective supplies, such as masks.

Through a community support network, community members support each other by sharing information, concerns, ideas, and resources. Butterfly has developed chat groups to facilitate that process. Community members also help to share information and support other members in accessing resources and help. Some get help from their employers or clients, who are important sources of support at this difficult moment.

Financial and Crisis Supports

Most of workers were not able to work during the pandemic and faced a lack of income, food insecurity, and housing issues. However, in some cases, community members, particularly those who worked in massage parlours, were eligible to apply for various government funds, social assistance, and community resources so Butterfly provided accessible information and recruited volunteers to help community members apply for those funds and resources.

Since the majority of the migrant sex workers were not able or were afraid to access funding, Butterfly and Maggie's set up an emergency fund to put cash in the hands

of sex workers, particularly queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, and racialized workers. Migrants with precarious immigration status were also prioritized. Butterfly has provided crisis and emergency support to workers and their families who face violence, housing insecurity, and physical and mental health issues and has supported workers who are harassed, arrested, and detained. Butterfly also worked with a number of community organizations to support vaccination and testing.

Community Mobilization and Advocacy

To challenge systematic oppression and injustice, community members mobilize to convey their demands to governments. They sign petitions, write letters to the government, and share their stories, and they also work with allied organizations to argue for their rights and for justice and equality. For example, workers in massage parlours and sex workers speak to the public through the media about their situation and concerns, especially about the harms of the anti-trafficking movement. Despite the underrepresentation and undervaluing of Asian voices, some workers have also participated, with their allies, in city council meetings to fight for their rights.

Asian and migrant sex workers have taken different actions to advocate for their rights, such as launching a petition against policing and advocating for the decriminalization of sex work, stopping the harmful anti-trafficking movement, and eliminating the immigration prohibition against working in the sex-work-related industry. Butterfly has built an allyship with social justice migrant and sex worker organizations to advocate for income for all and health for all and to urge the provincial government to provide incomes to migrant and sex workers, as well as advocating for sex workers' and migrants' rights and fighting racism. Asian workers have also participated in the rallies and the campaign to Stop Asian Hate, for labour rights and migrant rights, and to call for support for status for all, health for all, and income for all!

Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian and migrant workers who work in massage parlours and the sex industry were excluded from government relief and other crucial social supports, increasing oppression and inequalities and widening the cracks in the social system. While it is important to support the Asian and migrant sex worker community in addressing the current crisis and meeting their immediate needs, there is also an urgent need to take action to end systemic oppression, including poverty, inadequate social assistance, racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and the criminalization of sex work, and to bring social justice.

Despite the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, migrant sex workers have organized to show their resistance and resilience. Using the experiences and skills gained through previous pandemics, including, for example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Asian, migrant, and sex workers not only survived this difficult time but

also built a powerful movement to fight against injustice and advocate for their rights, joining the long struggle to build a more just world.

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MM&D

An Intersectional and Transnational Feminist Perspective: Reflections on Loving Sister's Coverage of anti-Asian Racism and Thoughts on How to Address it

Yafang Shi

Yafang Shi is a Chinese settler who lives and creates in Aurora, part of the treaty lands of the Mississaugas and Chippewas, recognized through Treaty #13 and the Williams Treaties of 1923. As a journalist, artist and poet, her work considers gender, race, class, censorship, body, and identity from a decolonial, intersectional and transnational feminist perspective. She worked for various media organizations including CBC's Radio Canada International and is the founder and editor of www.lovingsister.com. Her works have been exhibited at art galleries, universities, public libraries, and other public spaces. She has a MSc in sociology from the LSE.

Introduction

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, the persisting but usually inconspicuous anti-Asian racism has become salient and Asians in North America have been subjected to aggressions from racial slurs to violent physical attacks, some of which were fatal. Loving Sister (www.lovingsister.com), a mission-driven, independent, not-for-profit news and commentary website, which aims to help build an equitable and inclusive world since its foundation in 2012, has paid close attention to this troubling social phenomenon and its root cause. Loving Sister's coverage draws upon an intersectional and transnational feminist perspective. Particularly, Loving Sister's editorial interest and content have been shaped by the lived experiences of women of color, especially those who are members of the Chinese diaspora.

My own lived experiences show that, as a Chinese Canadian journalist and feminist of color, I have faced barriers and challenges in Canada. Also, as a member of the Chinese diaspora I have suffered from and resisted censorship imposed by the Chinese authority. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these experiences have continued and even worsened. For example, after I was contacted by a frontline health worker in the community about their concern over unsafe working conditions, my first challenge was to fight for access to the Government of Ontario's virtual press conference to voice their concern and to hold the government accountable. On the other hand, Loving Sister has been censored by the Chinese authority since 2017 after it published a series of articles on issues of human rights and censorship in China.

Informed by intersectional and transnational experiences of oppression, Loving Sister aims to produce journalistic work that exposes these various forms of oppression and

contributes to raising the public's awareness of these issues in hopes of effecting changes. This article aims to reflect on Loving Sister's coverage of anti-Asian racism and discuss how the insights from the reflections can help address anti-Asian racism. The following discussions highlight Loving Sister's work during the pandemic around three main foci: intersectional analysis, resistance to transnational oppression, and a commitment to solidarity.

Intersectional Analysis

Loving Sister employs an intersectional feminist perspective to cover social and political issues, especially issues related to gender, race and class. When anti-Asian racism became rampant like the spread of COVID-19 virus, Loving Sister covered the issue from an intersectional perspective and therefore paid attention to race and intersectional issues of gender and class.

For example, Loving Sister covered the rally against anti-Asian racism organized by the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter and other organizations in Toronto in March 2021 in the aftermath of the Atlanta Shootings. Loving Sister published another article on a vigil that community groups in Ottawa organized to mourn the Atlanta Shootings victims from an intersectional perspective of race and gender. As an editor, I also pay attention to the factor of class that intersects with race, particularly workers' rights. Loving Sister published a series of narratives of Chinese Canadian frontline workers on their working conditions, anti-Asian racism they have encountered and their resistance to it during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to reportage of anti-Asian racism, Loving Sister shared scholarly articles on anti-Asian racism, anti-Asian racism intersected with gender and class, and anti-Asian racism as systemic racism rooted in white supremacy. Loving Sister also published an interview with a scholar on resources with regard to the history of anti-Asian racism and Asians' resistance to it, and resources to address anti-Asian racism in contemporary society and everyday life.

Resistance to Transnational Oppression

When talking about anti-Asian racism, many people tend to consider it as an issue within national boundaries. In reality, anti-Asian racism not only intersects with other factors like gender and class, but it also intersects with oppression across borders. Loving Sister covers the transnational activism of the Chinese diaspora feminists in North America.

Chinese feminists in the USA experience similar challenges faced by Chinese feminists in Canada. As Asian women, they are subject to racism in the USA and have to fight against it. Meanwhile, Chinese diasporic feminists have also been attacked by nationalist trolls and censored in China because they support feminists and their activism in China.

Top and above: Chinese diasporic feminist activists in the USA hold the exhibition "#MeToo in China" at the Access Theater Gallery in New York in October 2019. (Yafang Shi/Loving Sister)

Chinese diasporic feminists in North America have been supporting feminist causes such as the #MeToo movement in China. After exhibitions on the #MeToo movement in China were censored in China, Chinese diasporic feminists in the USA held an exhibition "#MeToo in China" in New York. Loving Sister covered the exhibition and also published a series of interviews with Chinese diasporic feminist activists in New York

Organizers and supporters held signs to show their support for #MeToo movement in China in front of the gallery (Yafang Shi/Loving Sister).

on the current status of feminist movements in China, how Chinese feminist activists outside of China could support the feminist movement in China, how to overcome the challenges of censorship, and their visions of the feminist movement in China.

In 2021, after feminist Xiao Meili in China was attacked by some Chinese nationalists, she and her fellow activists' feminist products were banned by Taobao (the flagship business of Alibaba Group listed on the New York Stock Exchange); Loving Sister published an interview with Xiao to raise the public's awareness of the issue. After Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai made a sexual assault allegation against former vice premier Zhang Gaoli, Loving Sister published a number of articles including the comments her supporters outside of China wrote on a virtual Feminist Wall. After Xuzhou 'Chained Woman' story had emerged, Loving Sister covered the Chinese diasporic women's petition for a thorough investigation of the matter.

Informed by my observations of local and global feminist movements and activism, and my own lived experiences, my 2022 photography exhibition "Women's Voices, Censorship and Resistance" was presented as part of the Aurora Public Library's "One Book One Aurora" program where my poem "Sister Flowers", a tribute to the #MeToo Movement", won the first prize of the writing contest a year earlier. This exhibition, which was also showcased at the CONTACT Photography Festival, sought to bring awareness to the censorship that authoritarian states impose on women's voices, as well as the institutional barriers that women, especially those of colour or immigrant women, face when they try to make their voices heard in Western democratic societies.

On May 3, 2024, to protest the Aurora Public Library's censorship and erasure of her feminist work and discrimination and reprisal against her as a racialized woman artist, Yafang Shi and her collaborator Susan Wu display their socially engaged installation and performance artwork "Screaming Red Lanterns" (Asian Heritage Month Edition) with two big red lanterns installed with Yafang's documentary photographs of the rally protesting anti-Asian racism in Toronto in 2021 (Susan Wu).

Ironically, in March 2023, the Aurora Public Library censored my exhibition on social movements for women's rights and social justice at the library and I have been fighting against its continued censorship, erasure, discrimination, and reprisal. The library deleted the very word "anti-Asian racism" in my artist statement for the exhibition. To protest the public institutions' censorship and erasure of my feminist works, I have collaborated with Susan Wu and displayed a socially engaged installation and performance artwork, "Screaming Red Lanterns" in front of the Ontario Provincial Legislative Building on International Women's Day and during the Asian Heritage Month, at the Kensington-Chinatown Local Immigration Partnership Network's Asian Heritage Month event "Art, Life and Love @Chinatown" themed "Celebration of Resistance", and at an exhibition by Women's Art Association of Canada.

Solidarity with other Racialized Communities

Since racism against various racialized communities operates in a system rooted in a mechanism of white supremacy, anti-Asian racism is not an isolated issue. Therefore,

Loving Sister covers not only anti-Asian racism but also racism against other racialized groups such as anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, and anti-Muslim racism.

During the pandemic, Loving Sister covered Black Lives Matter movement and the campaign organized by the Chinese feminists in New York and other cities to support the Black Lives Matter movement. Loving Sister has also spotlighted anti-Muslim racism, anti-Indigenous racism, and the legacy of the residential schools. Regarding Indigenous issues, Loving Sister has been sharing articles on colonialism and settler colonialism, Indigenous rights and the "long and complex history of Indigenous-Chinese relations". These articles are intended to help Chinese Canadian readers learn about the Indigenous people's history and rights, foster solidarity with Indigenous people and fight together against racism.

Discussion: A Transnational Human rights-based and anti-Oppression Approach

To address anti-Asian racism, we need to capture all forms of oppression that Asians in Canada and the USA, especially those of Chinese descent, have been facing and suffering from.

The history of imperialism and colonialism and a contemporary geopolitical context demonstrate how Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans have suffered from scape-goating and Sinophobia in Western countries. However, the analyses of imperialism and colonialism do not fully capture the contemporary state and nature of changing state powers. Nitasha Kaul argues that the historical West and East divide of the colonizer and the colonized cannot reflect the colonial power of contemporary rising non-Western countries like China and India (Kaul, 2021). Tomasz Kamusella posits that China has evolved into a state power with a new communism by "combining authoritarianism with capitalism" (Kamusella, 2021) China, the world's second economic powerhouse, is anticipated to overtake the American economy in 2028 (Guardian, 2020). Vincent Wong argues that state relations between China and the USA are competitive but also collaborative (Wong, 2021). He criticizes the campism of the Canadian left for being silent or even having advocated for the state and capitalists of China, a case in point being progressive NDP MP Niki Ashton's advocacy for Meng Wan Zhou. He also points out that the Chinese Communist Party "deliberately conflates legitimate critiques of Chinese state policies with Sinophobia". While we hold governments in the West accountable, we should critically examine state powers in other parts of the world including China.

To disentangle the complexity of all forms of oppression here and in other parts of the world including China, I argue that we need to bring a transnational human rights-based and anti-oppression approach into the conversation. This approach means that oppression from all sources is recognized and named and human rights are defined by grassroots activists and groups who seek human rights such as racial justice, gender equity, labour rights and democracy, rather than by states. While Chinese feminists

"Fire", a collage of documentary photographs of Women's Marches in Toronto in 2017 and 2018, Women's March in Washington D.C. in 2019, the rally "Speaking to Power" in London, UK in 2020, and the rally against anti-Asian racism in Toronto in 2021, paired with a poem, has been showcased at the Art Gallery of Ontario's online group exhibition "Portraits of Resilience" and won the York Region Arts Council's "Resiliency Award". (Yafang Shi)

have been deemed as "a foreign hostile force" by the state, Chinese feminist activist Lü Pin who currently lives in the USA after the Feminist Five incident (Wang, 2015) raises razor-sharp questions: "Do universal women's right standards and corresponding values that can test China's societal, legal and political systems exist? Or, between the opposing ideologies of the PRC and USA and the West, are women's human rights only manipulated as attacking tools from different sides? Isn't this situation excluding the legitimacy of women's lived experiences?" (Lü, 2021) On a more optimistic note, Women's Marches against sexmism, racism, and xenophobia of then-new president Donald Trump have revived a global feminist movement and promoted women's rights as human rights (Estévez, 2017). As a journalist I have documented the Women's Marches in three cities of three countries in four consecutive years and observed the movement's intersectionality: how women fought for gender equity along with other causes like racial justice, labour rights and democracy. (Shi, 2020) . My collage of documenaty photographs "Fire" on Women's Marches and a rally against anti-Asian racism that has been showcased at the Art Gallery of Ontario's online group exhibition "Portraits of Resilience" and won the York Region Arts Council's "Resiliency Award", further explores the intersection of women's rights with anti-Asian racism.

With a transnational human rights-based and anti-oppression approach, the lived experiences of the oppressed are recognized and respected and the demand for human rights becomes a source for solidarity among grassroots groups for different causes.

Conclusion

In summary, to address anti-Asian racism, we need an intersectional perspective to examine it by paying attention to intersectional factors like gender and class. To fight against anti-Asian racism, we need to recognize multiple forms of oppression that Asian women and Asian working-class people face and stand in solidarity with other racialized communities. We also need a transnational human rights-based and anti-oppression approach that allows us to disentangle, unpack, discern, articulate and address all forms of oppression and to align ourselves with those who are oppressed locally and globally including those in China. This approach can help strengthen our moral standing and legitimacy to speak and also foster solidarity with those oppressed locally and in other parts of the world when we articulate and address anti-Asian racism here.

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