

## #APISFORBLACKLIVES: UNPACKING THE INTERRACIAL DISCOURSE ON THE ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER AND BLACK COMMUNITIES

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*In this paper we use the Ecological Metaphor to illustrate a complex and multilayered picture of the relationship between Black and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities, exploring how different forces operate when two marginalized communities interact within an oppressive system. This frame highlights the impact of history and systems/community level adaptations that produced the current day interracial dynamics we see within the #BlackLivesMatter movement. More specifically, we shed light on a shared history of solidarity, the intentional puppeteering of AAPIs to uphold White supremacy and maintain a divide between racialized oppressed communities, and the internalized racialized images that inhibit community coalition building. Lastly, (1) we call to challenge the miseducation of our histories and one another's communities, lest we continue to perpetuate this history, (2) to prioritize the preservation and healing of communities and bodies of color, especially Black Lives, and (3) to stand in solidarity.*

**Keywords:** Black, African American; Asian Americans; Asian American Pacific Islanders; Black Lives Matter; Asian American Activism

### 1. Introduction

When New York City police officer Peter Liang killed Akai Gurley in the stairwell of a Brooklyn housing project (Maslin Nir, 2016), it ignited a conversation around the role of Asian

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Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs)<sup>1</sup> to the #BlackLivesMatter (henceforth referred to as Black Lives Matter) movement. The manslaughter and official misconduct charges against Liang in February 2016, which came with a potential 15 year prison sentence, divided AAPI communities. Many within the AAPI communities argued for the sentencing of Liang, that the courts punish him for taking an innocent Black man's life. Others in the AAPI communities organized rallies to protest against the charges, arguing that while Gurley's death was a tragedy, Liang should not be charged for his mistakes as a rookie police officer. These AAPIs claimed that the courts intended to use Liang as a scapegoat for the many previous police shootings, often committed by White officers that the courts dismissed. Ultimately, Liang was sentenced to five years of probation and 800 hours of community service on a diminished conviction of criminally negligent homicide (Weston Phippen, 2016).

This widely publicized event raised complex questions about where AAPIs fit with regards to the Black Lives Matter movement. While the Black Lives Matter movement sparked a conversation across the U.S. around systemic oppression, state-sanctioned violence against Black people, and brought together communities of color and other allies to stand in solidarity for Black lives, the voices and faces of AAPIs had arguably been absent from the conversation. How might we critically consider Black and AAPI intergroup relations in light of the Black Lives Matter movement? Furthermore, how might we examine this question from a systemic and community perspective, rather than focusing on individual experiences or cases? In this paper, we explore and make visible this missing conversation. We posit that AAPIs are largely absent due to historical adaptations that communities of color, including AAPIs, have made within an oppressive system that touts White supremacy. This system benefits when communities of color fight amongst themselves rather than coming together to disrupt it. We highlight these challenges and the consequences of these adaptations throughout this paper by using the Ecological Metaphor (cf. Kelly, 2006; Trickett, Kelly, & Todd, 1976) to understand the interracial relationships and discourse between the Black and AAPI communities, especially as they pertain to the Black Lives Matter movement.

## **2. Authors' Positionality**

We are five AAPI cis-women community and clinical psychologists who are immigrants or children of immigrants or refugees with different ethnic identities (i.e., Southeast Asian, mixed-race Asian, East Asian, South Asian). We use the term AAPI intentionally to be inclusive of all those who belong to the Asian diaspora with heritage to South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Islands. We come together to author this paper after three years of personal and collective conversations, struggles, and reflections on the topic of the role of AAPIs and the Black Lives Matter movement. We share common beliefs and values around our communities being historically interconnected with a shared fate and of education as the key to dialogue and progress. We identify as intersectional feminists and activist-scholar-practitioners striving for more interracial dialogue and coalition building. We write this paper from the lens of Asian American psychology, multicultural psychology, Asian American studies, and critical race discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> #APIsforBlackLives references a hashtag movement with Asian/Pacific Islanders. Here, we use AAPI to represent Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

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### 3. Ecological Metaphor

Psychology is a late-comer in exploring complex and nuanced interracial dynamics between Black and AAPI communities, in comparison to other disciplines, such as Asian American Studies. This is likely due to psychology's long history of focusing on individual-level variables, which can leave us viewing individuals acontextually and ahistorically (Bernal, Trimble, Burlew & Leong, 2003). Community psychology can uniquely contribute to the field by illustrating a complex and multilayered picture of the relationship between Black and AAPI communities, exploring how different forces operate when two marginalized communities interact within an oppressive system.

The Ecological Metaphor (cf. Kelly, 2006; Trickett, Kelly, & Todd, 1976) provides a helpful framework for understanding the relationship between Black and AAPI communities. It explains that human experiences are embedded in relationships, historical contexts, and adaptive functioning. In the biological sciences, ecology refers to the context where animals and their environments coexist. Kelly and colleagues (1976; 2006) began to use this metaphor to understand the high school context and the impact of school-based interventions on the school, teachers, and students. Since his original writings, the Ecological Metaphor continues to guide the work of community psychologists seeking to deepen their understanding of the interaction between people and their environment to enhance their intervention and change work (cf. Ryerson Espino & Trickett, 2008 for listing).

We ground our paper with the foundational understanding that race is a socially constructed concept. Thus it is best understood within the historical and local context by which it functions, and from which the racial categories themselves were created, changed, and re-formulated (Omi & Winant, 2015). In this process, the ways different racial groups interact with one another also adapt to sociohistorical and political contexts. As individuals and groups perform their meaning-makings (i.e., the notion of "doing" race; Uba, 2002), they enact meanings and assumptions about racial groups. Through exploring the Ecological Metaphor's four main principles of succession, interdependence, adaptation, and cycling of resources, we highlight how historical adaptations and survival mark the Black-AAPI relations, and what this may mean for the present and future of these two racialized communities.

#### 2.1 *Succession*

The principle of succession asks us to consider the history of the current phenomenon. In this case, we consider how the current dynamics within and between Black and AAPI communities are a product of historical events, crises, and White supremacy. In this section, we provide a short overview of notable historical events that lay the foundation for understanding other events discussed throughout the paper. The history of AAPIs in the U.S. is marked by three significant periods: political/governmental exclusion, post-1965 immigration and refugee resettlement, and the model minority myth period.

The presence of AAPIs in the U.S. goes back to the 18th century. However, the first significant wave of immigrants came from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and India in the latter part of the 19th century and the early 20th century to work on farms in Hawaii and

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construct the railroads in California (Chan, 1991). From early on, AAPIs faced systemic discrimination, exemplified by exclusionary Federal laws that locked them into being “perpetual foreigners” with no hopes of naturalizing as U.S. citizens (Lee, Wong, & Alvarez, 2009), and immigration laws that barred them from being able to bring their families to the U.S. State and local laws, such as the Foreign Miners’ tax and the Alien Land Laws, further imposed discrimination to AAPI immigrants by imposing extra taxes to non-citizens and banning non-citizens from owning land, respectively (Ancheta, 2006).

Individual attempts to gain citizenship through legal proceedings were denied. In *Ozawa v. the U.S.* in 1922, the Supreme Court ruled that Takao Ozawa, who was born in Japan but lived in the U.S. for over 20 years, was ineligible for naturalization (Chan, 1991). At that time, only “free White persons” and “persons of African descent” were eligible to naturalize, and the Court ruled that he did not qualify as a free White person. Three months later, another AAPI man, this time an immigrant from India, sued the government in *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* to allow him to naturalize based on the Court’s previous ruling of White being Caucasian. Thind lost his case and was not allowed to become a naturalized citizen (Chan, 1991). Note that neither of these plaintiffs argued to be recognized as Black, despite Blacks already having the right to being citizens. Access to the full rights of U.S. citizenship meant proving one’s Whiteness. Here, we see the U.S. government grapple with how to define AAPIs in a system that was only set up to recognize Blacks and Whites for citizenship.

The largest waves of AAPI migration came during the first half of the 20th century when the U.S. was either at war with, allied with, or the colonizer of countries in Asia. It was not until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that U.S. immigration law became more favorable to AAPIs with the repeal of strict quotas that previously stymied their immigration. Immigration policy now explicitly allowed skilled workers and a family reunification, which was actually a provision designed to encourage more immigration from Europe. These changes led to significant increases in immigration from Asia. Another wave followed after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 with refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia (Rumbaut, 2000).

By labeling the sudden influx of highly educated new AAPI immigrants “model minorities”, the White media capitalized on the perfect opportunity to reinforce White supremacy. This positioned the new immigrants as a counterpoint to the Civil Rights Movement that fought for justice for systematically oppressed groups (Chan, 1991). In the 1960s (see Peterson, 1960; *Success Stories*, 1966) and then again in the 1980s (see Brand, 1986), popular media outlets began promoting images of successful AAPIs. The media touted them as hardworking, highly educated, successful, wealthy, and free of problems (Chan, 1991). This model minority myth continues to be problematic because it erroneously collapses all AAPI experiences into a single monolithic group, and because it has been utilized to pit Blacks and AAPIs against one another, particularly during the Civil Rights Movement (Chan, 1991; Tran & Birman, 2010; Wu, 2014), and continued during the “War on Drugs”. Subsequent sections will return to the model minority myth to reveal its longevity and impact on the Black Lives Matter movement.

## **2.2 *Interdependence***

The principle of interdependence reminds us to consider how people within a given context are connected and dependent upon one another. We posit that the myth of the model minority provides one way that the notion of racial hierarchy is maintained -- with Whites on the top and

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Blacks on the bottom -- and thus upholding White supremacy (Kim & Lee, 2001). In this way, the system can only exist because racialized groups are always in relationship with one another and with White supremacy. In other words, the system depends on the relationships and tensions within and between each racialized group to hold Whites at the top.

Take, for example, how the Chicago Tribune propagated this oppressive model to hold racial minorities in their place by comparing Blacks and AAPIs:

“There is another race that has been subjected to even greater prejudice and discrimination -- the Asians. Yet through quiet dignity, hard work, and an order of good citizenship higher than the average white, Asian children stayed in school, were not born out of wedlock, and did not grow up to be criminals or create slums” (Wu, 2014, p. 243).

This notion also suggested that when there is this “model of success” (i.e., AAPIs), systemic racism or discrimination could not possibly be the reason for failure to succeed. Therefore, the failure must reside inherently in the qualities or nature of the particular individual or group (i.e., Blacks). Despite critiques against the notion of the model minority, the myth lives on in popular discourse and AAPIs continue to be used as an example that success is possible if one is willing to work hard rather than demand social change.

A contemporary understanding of Black-AAPI relations can also be seen through the lens of the L.A. Uprising in 1992, which followed the verdict that exonerated officers who beat Rodney King. Instead of casting a shadow on the police who beat King and the justice system that decided no punishment for the abuse, the media depicted these scenes as a conflict between Black and Korean communities (Sharma, 2014). The White media again used AAPIs to spotlight tensions in low-income communities instead of wrongdoing by the justice system. Worse still was that these spotlighted tensions failed to highlight the role of a policing and justice system that had been set up to protect and serve White communities. Korean business owners calling for help received no response (Min, 1996; Yoon, 1997). Consequently, Black and AAPI communities missed the opportunity to see the shared experience of a failed justice system unwilling to protect people of color. Ho and Mullen (2008) describe this as

“...serv[ing] the purpose of victims blaming victims and letting white supremacy off the hook. The issues of bank redlining, the maldistribution of social services and resources, police brutality, narcotics trafficking, and impoverished education are conveniently deferred for sensationalistic headlines about Black and AAPI violence and altercations” (p. 9).

The intertwined nature of both the history and patterns of oppression highlight the extent to which the racial hierarchy can only be maintained when all communities play their role.

### **2.3    *Adaptation***

The principle of adaptation suggests that individuals and the environments where they live change and adapt to one another. The same is true of individuals within any given context; as one individual changes, the change impacts others. As changes ripple through an ecological system, people and communities must adapt to them in order to survive. For example, AAPIs are very diverse in terms of ethnicities, languages, religions, immigration experiences, and histories of inter-ethnic conflicts within and between their countries of origin and our experiences with being honorary Whites versus assumptions of Blackness. Despite this diversity, the shared experience of racial oppression in the U.S. led to a political movement to forge our identities as pan-ethnic AAPIs.

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Historically, the racial discourse focused on Black and White communities. Immigration led the way to a new tri-racial model (Bonilla-Silva, 2004) that expanded to include “honorary Whites.” The tri-racial model suggests that the migration of Latinx and AAPI communities into the U.S. requires them to strive for whiteness through honorary White status or to settle into being “of color.” Applying Bonilla-Silva’s argument, AAPIs are at crossroads in adapting to the notions of racial hierarchies in a seeming dichotomy. And indeed, research has identified this very pathway among AAPI youth who may choose to identify with whiteness or blackness (Marinari, 2005). Reflecting on this binary is made complex by aspirations many immigrants have about “succeeding” in the new country, and as a result, the idea that whiteness and the privileges of whiteness are obtainable further amplifies the anti-blackness within the AAPI communities. Arguably, the elusive “American Dream” is one means by which the premise of honorary whiteness and meritocracy are perpetuated (Ojo-Ade, 2001).

Internalized oppression is one adaptation that racialized minorities often use to survive in a racist system (Poupart, 2003). The shadow side of the model minority myth is that at first glance it appears as if it is complimenting the hard work of AAPIs. Hence, unfortunately, many AAPIs buy into and end up internalizing this myth (Kim, 2015; Kim & Lee, 2014). They end up believing that hard work is all that is necessary to achieve success in the U.S., overcoming even racial discrimination. To keep the model minority myth alive, when racialized discrimination occurs towards AAPIs, those who endorse the myth might blame the individual victim (i.e., themselves), or worse still, not recognize the incident as part of the AAPI community experience (e.g., attacks on Sikhs; cf. Inman, Tummala-Narra, Kaduvettoor-Davidson, Alvarez, & Yeh, 2015).

The introduction of the model minority narrative did not merely impact AAPIs into working to obtain the elusive honorary White status; it also may have caused other communities of color to distance themselves from AAPIs by holding beliefs that AAPIs are in fact “honorary Whites,” who hold privileges of whiteness and immunity to racial discrimination. Interestingly, both Black and AAPI communities may believe this notion that AAPIs are immune to racial discrimination. As various racialized groups sought legitimacy for their experiences of discrimination, struggles, and pain, they may find themselves engaged in “oppression olympics” (Hancock, 2011) whereby groups compete against each other rather than against White supremacy.

Limited inter-group relations and limited knowledge about histories and struggles of both AAPI and Black communities pose even further complexities. It is not enough for AAPIs to reject the honorary White status because as some AAPIs seek to claim identities as people of color, other communities of color (including Blacks) are simultaneously attempting to define the boundaries of inclusion about who belongs in communities of color. Are AAPIs “of color” and oppressed? With the model minority myth looming large, AAPIs are often not included in race dialogues or seen as communities of color. In this way, other communities of color legitimize the idea of an honorary White status. It begs the question of whether the recent changes in terminologies from “communities of color” or “people of color” to one that discusses “Black and Brown” are adaptations to a social and political climate that places AAPIs in the category of honorary White, not “of color.”

Ultimately, both strategies have fit and served the White supremacist agenda of pitting communities of color against one another and creating suspicion and competition between racialized groups. For example, at the introduction of the model minority image, *Ebony*, a Black-centric magazine stated, “Orientals faced intermittent barriers in house and job hunting, but they were ‘more acceptable to white people’ than Native Americans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and

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blacks” (Wu, 2014, p. 243). The strategy of White supremacy to divide and conquer communities of color, through the notion of one group being the model minority, effectively diverted attention away from the systemic nature of racism (Chou, 2008). The divide and conquer technique has been used again and again to create competition between communities of color and has been successful when communities must compete for resources while lacking political consciousness. Without the interactions between both groups, however, misunderstandings or lack of empathy for the struggles of both groups persist.

Adaptations are not all negative. The power of historical knowledge and awareness about strategies used by oppressive systems may also lead to productive adaptive strategies such as one seen by college protesters. In the late 1960s during the San Francisco State College strike, the college president, a Japanese Canadian man, attempted to divide the Third World Liberation Front student protesters by pitting them against each other. He held AAPI students up as “model minorities” that other ethnic and racial minorities should emulate, but the AAPI student protesters had the political consciousness to denounce him (Ho & Mullen, 2008). AAPI students, alongside Black, Native American, and Latinx students, engaged in protests and sit-ins which ultimately gave birth to the nation’s first School of Ethnic Studies (Omatsu, 2000; Sharma, 2017).

As previously mentioned, adaptations made within an ecological system are often necessary for survival within hostile systems. Therefore, as some AAPIs felt safety in distancing themselves from communities of color towards whiteness, other AAPIs adapted by aggressively fighting in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement as some AAPI activists had during the Civil Rights Movement (e.g., Richard Aoki, Yuri Kochiyama, Grace Lee Boggs). As a result of this adaptation, #APIsforBlackLivesMatter, #AsiansforBlackLives (<https://a4bl.wordpress.com/>), and #APIs4BlackLives were born. Returning to the Gurley-Liang case that opened this paper, the AAPI community continues to be divided. On one side stands AAPIs who feel betrayed by the justice system that revealed how honorary White status would never be White; and on the other side stands AAPI activists attempting to highlight the flawed logic of fighting for white privilege. Esther Wang of CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities wrote,

“I get why, when the vast majority of mostly white officers aren’t indicted when they shoot to kill, one might be upset that an Asian cop is the one who is. But at its heart, this argument is deeply flawed. Rather than calling for accountability for all police officers who kill, regardless of their race, this sentiment is rooted in the belief that no officers should be held accountable for their actions” (as quoted in Jung, 2015).

## **2.4 *Cycling of Resources***

Using the principles of succession, interdependence, and adaptation discussed earlier, we outlined the disparate and shared experiences of AAPI and Black communities that result from our oppressed realities as people within the broader system of racial oppression. As highlighted earlier, tensions and rifts between these communities are portrayed by the media and often perpetuated throughout each community. However, a focus on the cycling of resources also sheds light on the shared experiences of coping with oppression and the resiliency within individuals and communities that must exist to have survived through the centuries.

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The principle of Cycling of Resources reminds us to consider formal and informal resources and how they are identified, developed, allocated, conserved, and transformed. Such resources may exist within a system, community, or individual. The historical and structural contexts that have impacted the lives of both Black and AAPI communities have influenced both the allocation of resources, and how communities have come together to generate resources in resisting some of the oppressive forces in the larger system. The labeling of AAPIs as honorary Whites has sometimes resulted in the exclusion of AAPIs from programs designed to provide resources and opportunities for equal access hard fought for by racially marginalized communities. For example, many U.S. college institutions do not consider AAPIs to be racial minorities (Pak, Maramba, & Hernandez, 2014) and at the curricular level, colleges that offer Ethnic Studies courses may sometimes systematically exclude Asian American Studies courses from their listings. Lack of access to these courses prevent AAPIs and other students of color from learning about AAPI histories and interracial movements and increase the chances of history repeating itself.

Resistance and the strength of community is an often neglected, yet is a critical part of AAPI history. AAPI immigrants have resisted their oppression since the 19th century when they went on strike against the working conditions during the building of the transcontinental railroad and in the early part of the 20th century working on plantations in Hawaii (Chan, 1991). It also ignores the AAPI movement for civil rights and Black liberation that included AAPIs from all walks of life (Omatsu, 2000) and erases AAPI activists such as Richard Aoki, Yuri Kochiyama, and Grace Lee Boggs. Most recently in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, AAPI community organizations and activists from across the U.S. and Canada created the Letters for Black Lives Project, which created “crowdsourced, multilingual, and culturally-aware resources aimed at creating a space for open and honest conversations about racial justice, police violence, and anti-Blackness in our families and communities” (<http://lettersforblacklives>). These letters provided allies for Black Lives a means to speak to their families and communities about Black Lives. What began as a letter by AAPIs for other AAPIs in support of Black Lives has expanded to include other immigrant groups, languages, and communities of color. Neglecting AAPI resistance conforms to the image of AAPIs as model minorities. By excluding imagery of AAPIs as disruptors of White supremacy, AAPIs will continue to be used as a tool to divide communities of color.

Resources may also bring communities across racial lines into solidarity with one another when seen through the lens of intersectional identities and shared strength. Current discussions of undocumented immigrants provide us with one such example. There are an estimated 1.7 million undocumented AAPI immigrants in the U.S., which accounts for one out of seven AAPI immigrants overall (Yam, 2017a). However, the national debate about immigration is largely focused on Latinx immigrants. This allows AAPI undocumented immigrants to fly under the radar and not be subjected to the racist vitriol that Latinx are subjected to in the current immigration discourse. It also means that AAPI undocumented immigrants may not have the same community support as their Latinx counterparts, including access to materials in AAPI languages. For example, it is estimated that there are 120,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) eligible AAPI immigrants but only 16,000 have applied (Huang, 2017).

While AAPIs are largely absent from the discourse on undocumented immigrants, undocumented Black immigrants are also unrecognized in these conversations. In December 2017, AAPI and Black undocumented immigrants came together to rally in Washington, D.C. to support comprehensive immigration reform (Yam, 2017b). Jonathan Jayes-Green, co-creator of

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the UndocuBlack Network stated, “Black and AAPI immigrants are joining hands on this historic day of action to reject the lie that our people are disposable and that we are each other’s enemies.” Congresswoman Judy Chu said,

“Through coalitions, we are stronger. By joining together, we increase our power tremendously. That’s why it’s important to make sure every community is recognized, that they are seen for who they are and the whole span of Dreamers is acknowledged.”

An intersectional lens such as this one on immigration reveals cross-racial opportunities, coalitions, and solidarity across other important identities.

### **3. Implications & Looking to the Future**

Using the Ecological Metaphor, we highlighted the historical and transformative ways in which the Black and AAPI communities have adapted for survival within a racially oppressive U.S. context. We provided a brief overview of the AAPI history and adaptations in an effort to bring awareness to communities of color, especially those that are striving to come together for Black lives. To see ourselves as a unified community with a unified mission of liberation for all must mean that we stand together to demand that Black Lives Matter.

As community psychologists, we are pushed to consider the margins of the margins, hidden voices, and especially the impact of privilege and oppression. Therefore, AAPIs must ask in what ways are we supporting the dominant narrative of White supremacy and anti-Blackness. Simultaneously, the realities of AAPIs as oppressed and objectified “perpetual foreigners” need a space to coexist in the communities of color narrative. Historically, these communities have been used against one another to uphold White supremacy. And while it may not always be Black and AAPI communities that are pitted against one another, the strategies that uphold this oppressive system have been used repeatedly and will certainly continue. Consider how the “model minority” language has been used when describing Latinx DACA recipients who are often described as hardworking, having been brought to the U.S. “through no fault of their own” by their parents. This frames some undocumented immigrants as “good” and others (including their parents) as “bad.” Let us move forward cautiously to not be pitted against one another to reify White supremacy and repeat history.

To be sure, many AAPIs hold privileges that also exist in all other racial communities. Light skinned AAPIs hold privileges based on their skin color. Higher socioeconomic status, wealthier, and more highly educated AAPIs hold class privilege. Cis-gender, male, and straight AAPIs also hold privileges. These privileges should be acknowledged and owned. The AAPI community has certainly not been perfect in the ways that it has shown up in solidarity for less privileged AAPI communities and other communities of color. Silence and complacency make each of us complicit to the White supremacist agenda. The survival and fight for racial liberation may likely depend on the ability of communities of color being able to unite in solidarity (cf. Freire, 1968, 2000). As Gregory Cendana, executive director of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO said, “AAPI allies and co-conspirators, we won’t stand complicit in this system that disproportionately discriminates, devalues, and brutalizes folks who are unapologetically Black” (as quoted in Wang, 2016).

Looking forward, we suggest the following next steps. (1) We must challenge our collective miseducation of our histories, often told through the lens of the dominant White narrative. If we

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do not know our shared and unique community histories, we cannot determine our present, understand our communities, and effectively work across racial lines. Together, we must reclaim our history, education, and especially our communities of color. We cannot depend on the current oppressive systems to educate our most vulnerable communities. This may be especially important as the influx of immigrants and refugees continue to arrive in the U.S. and are taught to accept their new racialized identities and social status (see Tran & Birman, 2017). (2) Communities of color must value our own lives and healing. It is difficult to attend to another person or group's hurt when our own pain has not yet been acknowledged (Vasquez & Magraw, 2005). Unacknowledged pain can also lead to a sense of powerlessness, devaluation of our own voices, and divisions within our communities. We must strive to heal within our communities in order to join across racial lines to fight White supremacy. Therefore, we must challenge the dominant discourse that our lives, bodies, histories, and relationships are not worthy of being acknowledged or understood. This is where we can hope to overcome internalized oppression by creating space for ourselves and our communities to acknowledge the impact of white supremacy on our sense of individual and collective identities. And (3) we must stand in solidarity. There cannot be true liberation and freedom until those who are most devalued by the system are liberated. Together we must stand for Black Lives. As U.S. Representative Mike Honda puts it, "Your injustice is my injustice."

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