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Concept Paper

Latinx and Asian Engagement/Complicity in Anti-Blackness

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Abstract: We live in a world that desperately wishes to ignore centuries of racial divisions and hierarchies by positioning multiracial people as a declaration of a post-racial society. The latest U.S. 2020 Census results show that the U.S. population has grown in racial and ethnic diversity in the last ten years, with the white population decreasing. Our U.S. systems of policies, economy, and well-being are based upon "scientific" constructions of racial difference, hierarchy, Blackness, and fearmongering around miscegenation (racial mixing) that condemn proximity to Blackness. Driven by our respective multiracial Latinx and Asian experiences and entry points to anti-Blackness, this project explores the history of Latinx and Asian racialization and engagement with anti-Blackness. Racial hierarchy positions our communities as honorary whites and employs tactics to complicate solidarity and coalition. This project invites engagement in consciousness-raising in borderlands as sites of transformation as possible methods of addressing structural anti-Blackness.

1. Introduction

The 2020 Census findings have never sparked more interest in the future of race in the United States (U.S.) (Blake 2021), particularly with increased fears of race mixing and the reality of the white population becoming the minority (Joseph 2021). This fear is (un)real and is not new and has historically been related to delusions of degradation of the human race (Gobineau 1915, [1853] 2004), for example, the relationship between the U.S. and German eugenics movements (Lusane 2003, 2004). How the U.S. formed race is important to note because such racial formation and its associated racial hierarchy are interconnected with racial formation on a global level (Omi and Winant 2015). In the U.S., race and ethnicity are considered distinct categories. Interestingly enough, Omi and Winant (2015) distinguish the origins of ethnicity and race by concluding that "being 'ethnic' turns out to be about whether and how much an individual or group can assimilate into or hybridize with whiteness. Being 'racial' is about how much difference there is between an individual or a group and their white counterparts" (p. 46). Moreover, "simply trying to understand race is now, more than ever, an act of political resistance. We must undertake it with a new sense of urgency" (C. J. Kim 2022, p. 503).

For this Special Issue, we consider how to center the problematic ways the Black (and endarkened) body (people) are positioned that perpetuate anti-Blackness in U.S. society, while at the same time recognizing and affirming/humanizing the multiracial body. We do not wish to engage in an either/or, but rather a both/and onto-epistemology, with an understanding that white supremacy is the enemy (Stohry et al. 2021) and anti-Blackness persists. This, importantly, requires recognition of how privilege exists within our communities (Latinx and Asian), which thus leads to the continued perpetuation of anti-Blackness. We understand that "anti-Blackness [as] a product of white supremacy and cannot exist outside the social construct of a hierarchy based on skin color. Brown and

Black communities exist under this paradigm and, as a result, are pitted against each other" (Pérez 2020, para. 9).

Specifically, we are two multiracial scholars who are seeking to engage in a project of thinking about how our non-Black communities of color are engaging in the oppressive structures that we move through, benefit from, as well as critique. In this project, we introduce racial formation and the messiness of 'borders' in the U.S. to give context for understanding racialization in our communities of color. Next, we introduce anti-Blackness as a theoretical concept and then further elucidate this alongside the positionings of the Latinx and Asian communities, and our communities' historical and contemporary connections to anti-Blackness. Then, we conclude with implications for solidarity amongst our Latinx and Asian communities in such a concerted effort to assert existence, transformation, and responsibility to address oppressive, unjust anti-Black systems.

2. From Racialization of Bodies to Anti-Blackness Ideologies

We use the theory of racial formation in the U.S. to understand social organization as "the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 2015, p. 109). We understand racial formation through the processes of racialization, racial projects, and racist discourse (racial despotism, racial democracy, and racial hegemony) (Omi and Winant 2015, p. 109). The world operates according to particular social orders, with geopolitical trends of protecting white interests and maintaining anti-Blackness.

The process of racialization is the "extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (Omi and Winant 2015, p. 111). The U.S. allowed Western European scientists to dictate the social order of humanity by constructing categories in which humans were placed based on perceived racial ("biological") differences. These differences were outlined in a hierarchy where Caucasoids (white-presenting) were referenced as superior to Mongoloids and Negroids as inferior (Ifekwunigwe 2004). Black and other "races" are conceptualized, but what is most predictive, in terms of phenotype and one's life outcomes, is where one fits into the color scale, determined by one's distance from or closeness to whiteness (Telles and the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA), 2014).

Racialization was foundational by way of "the conquest and settlement of the western hemisphere, the development of African slavery, and the rise of abolitionism, all of which involved the profuse and profound extension of racial meanings into the new social terrain" (Omi and Winant 2015, p. 111) and "making up people or racial interpellation" (p. 111). What resulted was the sub-humanity of people who are not white, particularly those who are Black and from the African diaspora. Both racialization and the construction of racial categories in the U.S. have been highly influential in the division of resources, policy implementation, and access to education, health care, housing, and so much more.

The legal construction of race (as an ongoing process) in the U.S. reveals priorities to protect white structures and rights, with examples including naturalization restrictions, citizenship policies, and differential access to resources (Haney López 2006). In another nuanced way of protecting white interests, particular laws outlawing miscegenation (race mixing), called anti-miscegenation laws, emerged, with "miscegenation" first appearing in political elections in the 1860s, opposing what was considered unnatural. The natural aspects are actually white supremacy in such ongoing contexts, protecting against proximity to Blackness (Pascoe 2009).

While race is constructed as (un)real, we know "race as essence and race as illusion . . . is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of bodies" (Omi and Winant 2015, p. 110). We problematize racial categories and whether race is real or imagined, but our bodies are read based on the meaning and value we attribute to the physical body and its perceived differences (Omi and Winant 2015). We attribute physical differences to "such qualities as intelligence, athletic ability, temperament, and sexuality, among other traits" (Omi and Winant 2015). What has been

missing from mainstream or contemporary conversations on race in the U.S. is the scientists' clear delineation that race mixing (miscegenation) was considered a degradation of the human race (Knox 1850, 2004; Darwin 1871, 2004; Delaney 1879, 2004; Gobineau 1915, [1853] 2004). These values attributing to hierarchical differences serve to uphold anti-Blackness by supporting practices of hierarchy and duality (white versus Black) "that says we are able to be only one or the other" (Anzaldúa 2012, p. 41). This duality then creates an ambiguous middle space (what Anzaldúa calls nepantlas) for everyone else who is not white or Black. Nepantleras are the people who move and shape-shift through these middle spaces. These middle spaces (or nepantlas) and borderlands (Anzaldúa 2012) are not absent of activity; Latinx and Asian communities are simultaneously existing in a formal structure that does not recognize our experiences unless through the lenses of white or Black, which then creates divided loyalties (Anzaldúa 2012). In fact, "we are caught between cultures and can simultaneously be insiders, outsiders, and other-siders" (Anzaldúa 2015, p. 71). The opportunities in these middle spaces lie in revealing the nuances of anti-Blackness, and our multiracial and subsequent Latinx and Asian communities are also responsible for tearing down these legalized and informal systems and structures of anti-Blackness.

What Is Anti-Blackness?

The U.S. is built on white supremacy and anti-Blackness (Costa Vargas and Jung 2021; Spears 2021). With Blackness often seen as "the antithesis of whiteness," in the U.S., there is a hierarchy of racial classifications, with Black being in the "bottommost status group" (Spears 2021, p. 158). To understand anti-Blackness one must understand its relationship to white supremacy, or, as Spears (2021) calls it, *capitalistic, anti-Black, racializing, systemic white supremacy* (p. 157, emphasis added). The historical connection to Black bodies is directly related to the U.S.'s wealth accumulation (Kendi 2016), and the U.S.'s origin story is rooted in the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the exploitation of Black labor for economic gain (Warren and Coles 2020).

The burdens put on the Black body are both visible, symbolically violent, and enduring. The associated legal, implicit, and explicit actions are functions of a larger system of anti-Blackness. Warren and Coles define anti-Blackness as

> the socially constructed rendering of black bodies as inhuman, disposable, and inherently problematic endures in the organizational arrangement and cultural ethos of American social institutions, including K–12 schools, colleges, and universities. The origins of antiblackness are rooted in plantation and chattel slavery, and its logic endures to the present day. (Sharpe 2016, p. 2)

These daily assaults mentioned in the definition of anti-Blackness can be seen throughout the world and "contribute to the collective trauma of being racialized Black and having to navigate an anti-Black world" (Ross 2021, p. 7). The racialization of Black bodies directly relates to all experiences in society—schools, healthcare, policing, etc.—making it essential to interrogate the manifestation of anti-Blackness. In particular, Ross (2021) argues that " . . . blackness marks a particular ontological position" and that we have to "interrogate the ways the Black body is read in a society whereby it is legitimately owned" (p. 8). Furthermore, Ross states, "anti-Blackness indexes the structural reality that in the larger society, blackness is inextricably tied to slaveness" (p. 8). Slavery officially ended with the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 but lived on de facto during the Jim Crow Era, particularly in the South, and continues de facto today with a new system created out of labor in prisons (Spears 2021). Additionally, in schools, there is video footage capturing Black children being abused or even murdered (Aronson and Boveda 2017). While this all does not mean that Black people are still *literally* enslaved today, the legacy of enslavement "does mean that slavery marks the ontological position of Black people—that is, the relationship between humanity and blackness is an antagonism, is irreconcilable" (Ross 2021, p. 8).

Subjectivity is necessary for white supremacist structural power to rely on anti-Blackness, evidenced by "how central racial reproduction remains for white supremacist anxieties" (Fielder 2020, p. 233) and that "by creating interracial families, classrooms,

institutions, or communities, we threaten the white supremacist nation" (p. 233). Costa Vargas (2018) argues that "research and progressive multiracial[1] efforts that address Black suffering are often unable to engage foundational, structural, multigenerational, and ubiquitous forms of antiblackness . . . calls into question a progressive canon of multiracial analysis and mobilization" (Loc 54) and that Black self-determination is key to overcoming anti-Blackness. Thereby, we expand this project to inquire about what we can build from our own multiracial[2] standpoints, as we are rooted in Asian and Latinx communities where we face our own communities' engagements with anti-Blackness. We are left with a concept of oblique identification, defined by Costa Vargas (2018) as "the central concept I utilize to make sense of these curious social processes through which are manifested, on the one hand, a seeming empathy toward Blacks' victimization by the empire-state, and on the other, a refusal to engage with the foundational structural aspects of antiblackness" (p. 5). Therefore, non-Black people like ourselves cannot fully engage Black processes because they are "recognized only partially, belatedly, indirectly, reluctantly, or even unknowingly" (p. 5). We as a society and non-Black peoples have a growing awareness of Black suffering, but we continue to struggle to grasp the anti-Black logic and the extent to which we are participants in its reproduction. Therefore, what does that mean for our multiracial Latinx and Asian bodies when we are working against the inevitability of Black subjugation and disposability, and how do we do away with the structure (Costa Vargas 2018)? Costa Vargas (2018) suggests that we focus on anti-Blackness and then we can move on to non-Black experiences and multiracial possibilities. Additionally, Grimes (2018) suggests that "rather than attempting to move racial conversations "beyond black and white," scholars ought to let antiblackness supremacy occupy the sole focus of a single conversation, at least for now" (p. 515).

To further expand on anti-Blackness, anti-Blackness supremacy seeks to preserve the relation between slavery and human parasitism, even in the example of the U.S. political blackface, equating taxation as a form of slavery, for example (Grimes 2018, p. 510). Anti-Blackness supremacy also "aims to deny both Blackness and Black people lives of their own; it prefers that they live primarily in, through, and for the sake of those who enlist them in their service" (Grimes 2018, pp. 510–11). Grimes further explains that "the universalization of the struggle against slavery makes everyone simultaneously deserving of and deprived of freedom, except for actual slaves." "Since black people already have freedom, they are not entitled to more of it" (p. 511). It is an ugly "deeply rooted U.S. American desire to position mistreated social groups as analogous to black people" (Grimes 2018, p. 498). Grimes raises the juxtaposition of how mixed people, or "cultural *mestizaje*" (p. 503), are *problematically we* posed as the solution to the problem of racism by perpetuating colorevasiveness and post-racial society ideology (Lee and Bean 2012; Stewart 2022), and this whitening approach in the U.S. is dangerous (Mitchell 2022).

Of note, in 2016, House of Representatives Bill 4238 amended and recharacterized terms used for "minorities" by "striking a Negro, Puerto Rican, American Indian, Eskimo, Oriental, or Aleut or is a Spanish-speaking individual of Spanish descent" and inserting "Asian American, Native Hawaiian, a Pacific Islander, African American, Hispanic, Puerto Rican, Native American, or an Alaska Native" (HR Bill 4238, 20 May 2016). In *our* attempt to disrupt the Black–white binary, in what ways are we essentializing, over-simplifying, or generalizing that do not point to the roots of "the problem"? In this project, we are trying to point out the uniqueness of racism experienced by non-Black people of color (Grimes 2018), particularly within the Asian and Latinx diaspora. We do not wish to displace Blackness or dismiss the importance of the absolute complexities of the Black–white binary. However, we wish to reveal and produce more conversation on how our communities uphold this binary and reveal other ways to address this ongoing dialogue/experiences of upholding anti-Blackness.

3. Anti-Blackness in Latinx Communities in a (Mainly) U.S. Context

3.1. Who Are Latino/s/Hispanic/Latinx Peoples?

Delgado and Stefancic (2011) ask, how Do Latinos See Themselves? Are They One Group, or Many? White? Brown? Black? Or Something in between? (p. 1). The history of Latino/a/Latinx/Hispanic origins can be difficult to trace. As Bebout (2019) explains, "the five hundred years of ethnoracial mixture and hierarchy in Latin America render Latinxs a multiracial, ethnic community," and the past two hundred years in the U.S. have witnessed Latinx peoples racialized in a variety of ways, including being "legally white to perpetually foreign" (p. 9). The term "Hispanic" became popularized through the U.S. Census in 1980, and it typically refers to those whose origins are from Spanish-speaking countries (Salinas 2020). As a result, millions of "Hispanics" from diverse racial, class, linguistic, and colonized backgrounds became lumped into a single "ethnic" category. Oboler (1998) explains, "the term ignores the distinct and diverse experiences of descendants of U.S. conquest, such as the Chicanos and those of the Puerto Rican populations, colonized by the United States at the turn of the century" (p. 8). Furthermore, the term "Latino" emerged in the 19th century as a shortening of the term "*Latinoamerico*," or Latin America, for occupants of former Spanish colonies that now are the colonized "Americas." Most recently, the term "Latinx" has been used in both U.S. popular culture and academic spaces as a means to disrupt the gendered language and inclusion within the terminology (Milian 2017). Important to note is that there have been critiques regarding a lack of understanding of the origins of the term "Latinx" and also the Indigenous connections to the use of "X" (Salinas 2020). These understandings are important to acknowledge, but they are also beyond the scope of this work. In this article, when citing terms, we are consistent with the language the authors use. Given our situatedness in the U.S., we will continue to use Latinx to disrupt problematic binary notions of gender as opposed to Latino/a, while recognizing this is still a privileged term in Global North (and English-dominant) scholarship in some capacity.

Before the updated 2020 U.S. Census, it was determined that a person was of "Spanish/Hispanic origin" if the person's origin (ancestry) is Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan, Hondonian, Nicaraguan, Peruvian, Salvadorian, from other Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean or Central or South America or Spain (Oboler 1998, p. 8). However, more recently, the 2020 Census removed the option for Hispanic/Latino ethnicity to be considered a "race," leaving Hispanics to select one or more categories to define themselves. This has created a predicament, leaving many in the U.S. to ask: What does it mean to be Latinx? Is Latinx a race or an ethnicity? "Do Latinxs occupy a distinct racial location apart from whites and Blacks in the U.S. racial structure? Are Latinxs a multiracial community? Are Latinxs white?" (Bebout 2019, p. 10). One thing is clear: As the racial makeup of the U.S. continues to evolve, people from Spanish roots and/or of Latin American origin across the diaspora continue to define themselves differently, many choosing to identify with their countries of origin. Latino/a, Hispanic, and Latinx are often used interchangeably despite their distinct origins.

3.2. So What? What Does Anti-Blackness Have to Do with Latinx Communities?

All of these identifiers become important when we think about how anti-Blackness functions within the Latinx diaspora. Perhaps one of the most poignant examples of this within the U.S. is evidenced through the Census. Hernández (2021) explains, "While provided the ability to check as many racial boxes as apply in ways that could reflect a fluid mixed-race identity, the majority of Latinos instead prefer to check solely white" (p. 284). Additionally, Latinos are the largest racial/ethnic group to change their racial categories annually (Hernández 2021). In alignment with our argument,

> Latinos are not "confused," as the U.S. census wants us to believe . . . it is the preference for whiteness and its twin flight from Blackness that is a more accurate reflection than any presumed Latino cultural expression on the census form. (Hernández 2021, p. 285)

"There is a direct relationship between proximity and whiteness to ensure the distance created by Blackness." For U.S.-based Latinos, real Blackness is only imbued in African Americans, along with English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans and Africans. "Again, Blackness is always somewhere else" (Hernández 2021, p. 292). Some have argued that this Census data reveals a preference for a "white racial category" in its response to a "disdain for African and Indigenous ancestry" (Telles 2014, p. 285). Hernández (2022) argues that "Latino racial innocence" creates a facade that Latinx people cannot be racist, which undermines the complexities of U.S. racism and upholds white supremacy.

Important to note is that many Latinx populations across the diaspora can benefit from white or light-passing privilege. At the same time, with a rise in the population of Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S., there has been a rise in anti-Latinx sentiments resembling many patterns seen in anti-Black, anti-Asian, and anti-Indigenous sentiments (Casey 2020; Gómez 2022). The role whiteness plays within the Latinx diaspora is multifaceted and complicated. While lengthy, it is worth noting how Casey (2020) unpacks these contradictions:

> For one, about 10% of the population of the U.S. is made up of people who identify as white and Hispanic or Latinx. Thus, many people who are Latinx are also white. Yet Latinx peoples have faced a host of white supremacist discrimination, from segregated public facilities and schools to lynch mobs and forced deportation. However, Latinx people can be of any race; thus one must look further into the particular ways white supremacy shapes the life chances of Latinx people. Those who are able to pass as white are more often able to live more financially secure lives than those who are not. We can thus gain a glimpse of the schisms and tensions within Latinx identity. Latinx is simultaneously racialized in the U.S., meaning non-white yet inclusive of a wide range of white people. It further calls into question the seemingly stable racial categories of other people, such as white or black. Latinx identities reveal the impossibility of deriving race from biology or physiognomy. They also reveal how complex intra-Latinx solidarity can be. (p. 361)

What is more, due to the history of Latinx being seen as a "racial group" in the U.S., despite the privileges granted to light-skinned (European origin), Latinx people, they are still likely to experience identity-related oppressions in the U.S., particularly around language or culture (Casey 2020; Gómez 2018). Yet, despite these realities, we still see many Latinx populations internalize, accept, and uplift whiteness in disturbing ways. For example, recently, three Latinx Los Angeles City Council members were publicly scrutinized after a leaked audio recording caught them making racist, anti-Black, and homophobic comments. In an interview with the L.A. Times, Tanya Katerí Hernández explains that Anti-Black racism is not just a matter of a "few bad eggs . . . " and these comments do not exist in a vacuum; "they exist within a set of cultural and racial attitudes that are part of Latino culture" (Logan 2022). Hernández further explains that in the U.S., sentiments of racial prejudice toward Black people are comparable between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites, according to a recent study (Krupnikov and Piston 2016). This very explicitly highlights how anti-Blackness is a pervasive ideology that impacts not only white culture but Latinx culture as well.

Proximity to whiteness is something that privileges some within the Latinx diaspora more than others. Research shows that skin-tone and immigration factors can greatly influence one's ethnoracial categorization (Irizarry et al. 2022), and 'race shifting' is mostly associated with a Latinx phenomenon (Liebler et al. 2017), with far less research supporting this sort of shifting along a Black/white axis. This complexity of "choosing" your racial identification enables many Latinx populations to maintain their proximity to whiteness and further perpetuates anti-Blackness within the community. Irizarry et al.'s (2022) research of nationally representative longitudinal data found 60% of Latinx youth changed their racial classifications over time; specifically, darker-skinned Latinx were more likely to identify as Black over time, while those with the lightest skin tones identified as white.

This affirms that those with access to whiteness *choose whiteness*. In comparison to racial stratification in Latin America, Irizarry et al. argue:

> The United States does not appear all that unique. Much like what occurs across Latin America (even in countries with relatively high levels of "fluidity"), skin color is a major factor in ethnoracial categorization and has a powerful effect on how people choose to self-identify. (Telles and Paschel 2014, p. 15)

Similar to the dynamics that we see in the U.S., "traces of this racial stratification remain visible in Latin America today, with the wealthy being more phenotypically white and pervasive anti-Indigenous and anti-Black attitudes and policies across many Latin American countries" (Bebout 2019, p. 7). In the U.S., the experiences of Afro-Latinx are more similar to those of African Americans than those of other Latinos or non-Hispanic whites. This includes lower incomings, higher unemployment rates, higher rates of poverty, less education, living in more segregated neighborhoods, greater racial harassment from law enforcement, and adverse effects on physical and mental health (Hernández 2022; Logan 2003; López and Gonzalez-Barrera 2016).

It is important to analyze these patterns with Latinx communities (both in the U.S. and abroad) because, without further interrogation, we continue to grant an unwarranted "Latino racial innocence" that further harms Black bodies (both physically and spiritually). The legacy of U.S. anti-discrimination laws has typically been understood as a "people of color" vs. "white people" issue, largely ignoring the diaspora within the Latinx population, namely Afro-Latinos, and how anti-Black laws, policies, and structures are maintained. Hernández (2022) asserts that "assisting people in becoming literate in the existence of Latino anti-Black bias can be a tool for change only if it is accompanied by a critical engagement with how such bias adversely affects Afro-Latinos and African Americans in sustaining White supremacy" (p. 11).

Latinx racial formation has demonstrated a racial hierarchy within the Latinx community that continues to support and uphold white supremacy, while at the same time reinforcing anti-Blackness (Bonilla-Silva 2002). Guinier and Torres (2002) explain that a racial bribe occurs as a strategy for racial/ethnic groups to advance in the racial hierarchy by essentially "becoming white." The ways that Latinx racial formation has manifested allow for a racial bribe where "lighter-skinned Latinos are offered a chance to be considered more acceptable to White non-Hispanics than darker-skinned Latinos" (Hernández 2022, p. 121). This allows for continued social distance from Blackness. We must consider how the positioning of Latinx communities as "consciously rejecting Blackness" is related to the "overarching Latino exaltation of Whiteness" (p. 121). This positioning directly reinforces notions and ideologies of anti-Blackness within the U.S.

4. Anti-Blackness in Asian Communities in the U.S. Context

4.1. Who Are Asians/Asian Americans?

Omi (2021) argues that Asian Americans have experienced a rather unique form of racialization, if you will, and it is fundamentally a history . . . of exclusion (p. 172). When talking about Asian Americans, race and ethnicity are conflated and often used interchangeably. Espiritu (1992) proffers that,

> In the nineteenth-century immigrants from Asian countries did not think of themselves as "Asians." "Coming from specific districts in provinces in different nations, Asian immigrant groups did not even consider themselves Chinese or Japanese . . . members of each group considered themselves culturally and politically distinct." (p. 19)

How Asians perceived themselves was very different from how U.S. inhabitants perceived them and how the U.S. subsequently treated and racialized them across history. Takaki (1993) reminds us of the impact of U.S. immigration policies, declaring that "the annexation of California led not only to American expansion toward Asia but also the migration of Asians to America" (p. 191). This immigration was followed by particular

racialized and gendered anti-miscegenation laws, positioning Asians as just as degraded as Black and Indigenous people in the white homogenizing mind (Takaki 1993). Following this migration, the U.S. colonial project spanned overseas like the rest of the Western colonial projects in India, Vietnam, the Philippines, and continued interference in the Korean peninsula (Diaz 2023).

With Western racial formation, people of the Asian diaspora were racialized as the Mongoloid race, laced with judgment by Western media such as author Jack London, "whose dispatches from Asia for the Hearst newspapers helped popularize the term "yellow peril" (Wu 2002, p. 13) and the yellow race (Takaki 1993). However, "today Asian Americans live in a very different America from the one the earlier immigrants entered." "They are no longer the targets of anti-miscegenation laws" (Takaki 1998, p. 473). What we now know as "Asian" and "Asian American" originates from what the West used to refer to as the "Orient," originating from Latin "oriens," meaning "east" (Wang 2016), creating what we know as "Oriental" people. The Western gaze gave way to a lot of ambiguity around which countries/communities make up Asia. Britannica (2022) also suggests that the term "Asia" originates from the Greek word "asu," meaning all lands that were east of Greece (Yefremov et al. 2022). What we gather is that it is a geographic term that cannot encapsulate the complexities of those that live within those ambiguous borders, and this term is historically and culturally situated and reimagined over time (Yefremov et al. 2022). An enduring constant is the ambiguity of how to locate such Asian experiences in the U.S. within other communities and geographic proximities. *How are Middle Eastern and North African peoples racialized in the U.S. if the west imagined "the Orient" and Asia as west of Greece?*

Civil Rights organizing and the Black Power Movement were influential in community organizing by university students at UC Berkeley to engage in activism for the adoption of the terminology of "Asian American" as a distinct category of pan-ethnicity (Kambhampaty 2020). A few years ago, the U.S. formally operationalized the definitions of who is racially identified as Asian by the U.S. Census Bureau as "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam," while determining that "categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups" (U.S. Census Bureau 2022). Chuh's (2003) work emphasizes the essentialist nature of such terminology and meaninglessness and the need to "imagine otherwise, in ways that immediately accord agency, complexity, and contradiction" (p. 150) that recognize the ongoing subjectivity of such an identity in the U.S.

Since it is challenging and reductive to define and name who is Asian American as well as what the Asian American experience is, we rely on Sue et al. (2022) to illuminate some connecting factors across the Asian American experience. Sue et al. note these connecting factors as (1) a process of projection, (2) a vicious cycle that is operating, and (3) a conglomeration (p. 691). With regard to projection, "to many Americans, Asian Americans are an ambiguous stimulus that allows them to project their own needs, wants, emotions, preconceived stereotypes, and societal values onto Asian Americans" (p. 691), and these experiences are cyclical and reinforcing. This conglomeration of identities is reductionist, but we recognize patterns that make the term "Asian American" "operative and consequential in the world in ways we need to understand" (C. J. Kim 2022, p. 2). These shared experiences within the Asian American community represent how Asian Americans are perceived in the U.S. Therefore, how do Asian/Asian Americans see themselves in the U.S.? Through a Pew Research study, Ruiz et al. (2022) found that Asian Americans articulate a "disconnect . . . between how they see themselves and how others view them." This study found that Asian Americans use the label "Asian" in formal settings because, within communities, they identify with their ethnicities. Many feel that the terminology does not fit and are proud of their cultural identities that are overshadowed by the umbrella terminology. Country of origin and immigration status are also indicative of how Asians identify themselves in the U.S. The divide between perceptions of Asian Americans and

how Asian Americans see themselves is overshadowed by perpetual foreigner experience, invisibility, and attributions to model minority status (Ruiz et al. 2022).

4.2. So What? What Does Anti-Blackness Have to Do with Asian Communities?

Further exploration around racial formation within Asia (as a continent) perhaps reveals a connection between anti-Blackness and racial categories, thus (non)human privileges and life course trajectory. The research on anti-Blackness within Asia is challenging to find, but not nonexistent. In another project, Stohry et al. (2021) express that how the U.S. forms race cannot be expressly applied in the same ways to other countries' racial formation, but that white supremacy as a system has global functions. It is challenging to identify research that identifies anti-Blackness within the Asian context and is more easily identifiable as racism within Asia. It has been our experience that these divisions in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia are explained as class conflicts. With differential racialization projects colonial, imperial, and diasporic histories, we know that there is a disconnect across racialized experience within Asia, across ethnic, inter-ethnic, and religious qualifiers, even in not being able to connect with(in) the larger Asian American narrative (Yamashita 2022). South Asians may identify as being Brown, but Harpalani (2015) suggests that skin color has nothing to do with this identity and has more to do with an alignment with other communities of color that is independent of white and Black as racial categories. Other clear distinctions would be colorism levels of Brownness attributed to less desirability, power, and privilege, evident in employment bias (Vijaya and Bhullar 2022); other distinctions are seen in plastic surgeries and skin whitening campaigns (Henley and Porath 2021), usually with lighter-skinned or multiracial models appearing in popular media culture (Okamura 2017).

Can we attribute this challenge of locating scholarly thoughts on anti-Blackness in Asia to the experience of race being reduced to a Black–white binary and the U.S. context (Raghuram 2022)? Perhaps understanding anti-Blackness in an Asian context can be accomplished by first understanding race in Asia as impressed upon the body, contextual within Asia as well as inseparable from global racism, and requiring more research on the racialization projects with the understanding that national identities are dependent on the function of race (Kowner and Demel 2013). There are further opportunities to identify neo-racism and neo-nationalism within East Asia (Lee et al. 2021).

South Korea (to be named "Korea" throughout), for example, can help explain how anti-Blackness was very clear in the formation of race as a representative of globalized white supremacy. Korean racial formation cannot be known without anti-Blackness or anti-Indigeneity (Kim and Jung 2021), in that "the construction of imagined racial inferiors, including foremost people of African descent, centrally shaped Korean identity formation, tracing it and focusing on the precolonial era" (p. 144). The racialized Korean self was constructed with racism, and "antiblackness has been the fundament, the bottommost bedrock, of Korean identity formation, one that lives on" (Kim and Jung 2021, p. 149). The racial formation included fear of assuming the status of Black people and American Indians (Kim and Jung 2021), coupled with the threat of coloniality by Japan and fear of becoming enslaved, resulting in internalized anti-Blackness. It is worth exploring how other Asian entities formed race and the subsequent relationships with anti-Blackness.

Asian/Asian American communities have been positioned as the "honorary whites" (Bonilla-Silva 2004) and as the invisible buffer to uphold white supremacy (this invisibility hides power as a function of white supremacy) with contextual indirect advantages (Oh and Eguchi 2022). This prevents Black success and maintains Black subjectivity. Politicians and media from the 1960s to the 1990s claimed Asians as the "model minority," a myth that attributes hard work by Asian communities as the reason for their higher income and education levels (Hsu 2017; Takaki 1998; Yellow Horse et al. 2021; Wu 2002). Importantly, the "model minority" was put into motion by replacing Black laborers with Chinese laborers and reinforced by U.S. national efforts to relax previous harsh immigration laws to recruit scholars from Asia to excel in technological contributions (Nguyen and Quang-Dang 2022;

Wu 2002). The positioning of Asians as model minorities positioned Asian communities in direct contrast to Black communities. These pronouncements were a very successful way to devalue the Black Power Movement (Hsu 2017). However, this is a myth that glosses over the disproportionate experiences within and across communities of color, much of which lingers in present-day challenges around education and access to healthcare (Covarrubias and Liou 2014; Nguyen and Quang-Dang 2022).

Some scholars suggest that this has led to indifference and a lack of connection to anti-Black racism (Young et al. 2022) and the Black Lives Matter Movement because of a lack of belonging (Yellow Horse et al. 2021) and perpetual foreigner experience in the U.S. (Ruiz et al. 2022; Wu 2002). This perpetual foreigner existence is linked to a history of denial of immigration to the U.S., even for "native-born individuals of Asian ancestry" (Wu 2002, p. 93). It is also maintained by many everyday examples of people, including Asian natives, asking Asian Americans about their identities and where they are from, demonstrating not only a differential divide across the Pacific, within our diasporic connections (Wu 2002). This continued "Where are you *really* from?" behavior from the U.S. and Asia can possibly be "signaling an effort to separate individuals within society based on race but may deny doing so" (Wu 2002, pp. 82–83).

Asian/Asian American racial formation has been rooted in upholding a white supremacist and anti-Black political structure, and knowing how we are positioned is key to a disruption of the state-controlled maintenance of violence. Racial formation within the U.S. has a connection with racial formation within Asia as a continent, and both racial formations have a relationship with anti-Blackness. We must consider the racialization of Asian Americans and our positioning in the U.S. as clearly positioned proximate to whiteness and in opposition to Blackness, and how this works through, for, and against us.

5. The Racial Hierarchy

We came to this project given our shared multi-racial/ethnic proximity to whiteness and also our shared responsibility in dismantling anti-Blackness in our respective Latinx and Asian communities. In many non-Black communities of color, we as multiracial Latinx and multiracial Asian scholars often fall in between the dichotomy of Blackness and whiteness, our presence and existence problematizing the tidy "(n)either/(n)or." Bow (2007) introduces the term "racial interstitiality," or "the space between normative structures of power" (pp. 4–5). This interstitiality exists within/between/among whiteness and Blackness, and is "a site where identifications with power go unrecognized or remain incomplete" (Bow 2007, p. 26). This project was prompted by our own conversations about how we have seen anti-Blackness taken up in our communities and families and recognize the ways this reinforces the internalization of whiteness.

Prominent race sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2004) introduced a tri-racial hierarchy, highlighting the manifestations of the social constructions of race through racialization, hierarchy, and status in the U.S. nearly twenty years ago. Bonilla-Silva predicted this tri-racial hierarchy would continue to expand membership into the first group, the "white racial" group, which is positioned at the top of this hierarchy. History has already documented the shifting of racial/ethnic groups such as the Irish or Italians from *non-white* to white (Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 2006). There was once a period of history within the U.S. where Mexican Americans were classified as white simply because of the ways the laws were interpreted (Gómez 2018). This group includes "traditional" whites, new "white" immigrants, assimilated white Latinos (i.e., Cubans), some multi-racial, some assimilated Native Americans, and a few people of Asian origin. It has been documented many times that members of this "white racial group" benefit from passing or lighter skin privileges and access to economic mobility (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Telles 2014).

The second group, the "honorary" whites, includes other light-skinned Latinos, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Asian Indians, Chinese Americans, Filipinos, and most Middle Eastern Americans, who phenotypically cannot pass as white per se but also have access to economic mobility. This "honorary white" group is positioned in the

middle of this hierarchy. The last group, "collective black," includes darker-skinned Asians and Latinos, Black/African populations, and Native Americans living on reservations (pp. 932–933). This group is positioned at the bottom of this tri-racial hierarchy. While this perceived hierarchy does not account for the intersection of identities, experiences, and other factors that certainly impact these many different communities, it does highlight how proximity to whiteness (or honorary membership) enhances one's privilege in the U.S. and creates a separation from the endarkened, or Blackness. From this tri-racial hierarchy framework, we see that many of these communities that are not part of "traditional" white groups have climbed the hierarchy. In our argument, those across the Latinx and Asian diasporas have learned and perpetuated anti-Black sentiments within their communities as a means to achieve access to the "white racial" group. In another sense, Lee and Bean (2012) suggest that the boundaries of the white racial category are being pushed back to include Latinx and Asians, and within this, multiracial Latinx and Asians.

Moreover, this racial hierarchy framing is helpful in understanding not just how racialization happens in the U.S. across racial groups but also within racial groups. We posit that while there are similarities between Latinx and Asian communities, we cannot exactly parallel these experiences because their colonization projects are different. Within the Latinx diaspora, anti-Blackness is rooted in the origins of the creation of *Latinidad* as part of the colonial project (Flores 2021). Latinidad creates the illusion of a panethnic Latino community (Hernández 2022). From mestizo, to mestizaje (racial mixture discourse), to mixedness, to multiraciality, anti-Blackness has been built into the construct of Latinx identity.[3] As discussed, Latinx backgrounds are diverse. Some are Native Americans, some marked by histories of European colonization and U.S. imperialism, and some with African origins via the Slave Trade (Gómez 2022). This explains why there are so many disagreements as to what binds Latinx communities together. Is it culture, ethnicity, or race? While ethnicity refers to a group's cultural markers (i.e., language, customs, geography, etc.), race is associated with a human-created social hierarchy based on physical differences (i.e., skin color, hair texture, body shape, etc.). Therefore, "all Latinos are nationally oppressed, but not all Latinos are racially or ethnically oppressed" (Quesada 2020, n.p.). "Unlike ethnicity, race is always creating and maintaining a caste system" (Hernández 2022, p. 5; Wilkerson 2020). Although Gómez (2022) argues "viewing Latinos from an ethnic rather than a racial frame" pits them against Black people in a way that continues to support white supremacy (p. 14).

It encourages Latinos to see themselves as distant from Blacks by adopting the dominant racial narrative that African Americans "deserve" their place at the bottom of the hierarchy, while in contrast, putting Latinos into the dominant ethnic narrative in which striving "immigrants" overcome the odds to assimilate . . . "The reality is that ethnic and racial frames are anything but mutually exclusive" (Gómez 2022, pp. 14–15).

Latinx people all look different, and those who might be perceived as "white" (whether or not they identify in this way) can benefit from "passing privilege" in a racial hierarchy society such as the U.S. This proximity and access to whiteness have shifted the Latinx psyche *for some,* who feel it is better to fit into whiteness than to have ties with Blackness or Indigeneity. It is through this logic that "Latino *mestizaje* situates anti-Blackness as a culturally foreign North American construct learned only once in the United States when "racial innocent" Latinos encounter racist thinking for the first time" (Hernández 2022, p. 7). Latinxs can be either a race *or* an ethnicity (this is debated in the scholarship), whereas Asians are *both* a race and an ethnicity.

In describing the Asian American context and the everyday lived experiences of being racially interstitial (or a middle space), Bow (2007) reminds us to consider a systematic and historical context by asking, "How did Jim Crow accommodate a supposed "third" race, those individuals and communities who did not fit into a cultural and legal system predicated on the binary distinction between colored and white?" (p. 3). Asians were considered "partly colored" during the Jim Crow era, which complicated Black–white segregation realities. Bow (2007) suggests that the Black–white color lines were dependent

upon Asians moving toward whiteness and other color groups begrudgingly accepting this in order to uphold whiteness and Blackness distinctions. Bow suggests, inspired by Judith Butler's ideas of forcible approximation, that Asians were forcibly approximated into the two race categories at the time and that the "near whiteness" meant a devastating outcome of "white identification and black disavowal" (pp. 6–7). Bow (2007) further suggests that

> racial ambiguity became adjudicated, disciplined, rationalized, or subject to divination in disparate cultural forums; what remains constant . . . are the narratives in which this interstitial community was placed: they were represented as either backsliding into blackness or extolled as exemplary citizens "accepted" by southern whites. (p. 12)

Therefore, this "honorary whiteness" state/trait is precarious, unstable, and multi-directional because there is an assumption of absorption into the white–Black abyss without the complication of said interstitial experience. The U.S. amplified its contemporary legal disregard for the interstitial by enforcing anti-Muslim bans, inciting racist blame (e.g., "kung flu virus") for COVID-19, and displaying national indifference toward the increased visibility of anti-Asian violence (N. Y. Kim 2022).

Unlike some within the Latinx diaspora, Asian communities mostly cannot phenotypically "pass" as white, even though they might be considered privileged in many ways due to the economic mobility and success some groups have secured within the U.S. However, just as economic mobility does not erase the racism Black/African Americans still experience, the economic mobility achieved by some groups in the Asian American community also does not dismiss the racism this community has faced. That particular whiteness, in the Asian American experience, "is not an independent indicator of social status and does not guarantee entry among social elites" (Bow 2007, p. 17).

Latinx and Asian communities do share parallels in negotiating identities "within an inadequate and reductive Black–white dichotomy and white hegemony" (Page 2014, p. 181). Other research on our communities confirms that economic mobility is directly correlated with skin color (Telles 2014; Bonilla-Silva 2004). It is no surprise that in the U.S., the Latinx and Asian communities that tend to hold the highest socioeconomic status tend to be ethnic groups with lighter skin (Hernández 2021). This directly correlates with the racial hierarchy that Bonilla-Silva (2004) outlines and demonstrates the extent to which skin and phenotype matter in the U.S. Maintaining access and/or status (to the white racial group or honorary white membership) further exacerbates the intensity of anti-Blackness. It exacerbates why it would benefit one to be anti-Black and why one would hold allegiance to whiteness (e.g., as in the case of white women voting in the interest of white men; Sawhill and Welch 2022).

A function of the racial hierarchy is perhaps understood through the process of racial triangulation (C. J. Kim 1999), which positions a third party as a buffer or source of blame, an immovable position. N. Y. Kim (2022) summarizes this concept as follows:

> two different types of racialized hierarchies, thereby allowing more than the metrics of standard anti-African American racism ("the color line") to be theorized. Not only did it achieve this by giving primacy to the "citizenship line," one marked by the poles of "Foreigner" and "Insider," but also by racialization processes that triangulate groups into their respective social positions, such as "relative valorization" and "civic ostracism." (p. 468)

This assumes our differential yet linked racialization process and the particular positioning of Asian Americans in subordination to white people and in the domination of Black people (C. J. Kim 1999). The Asian community during the Jim Crow era struggled with such conundrums because of its association with Blackness while not having the same privileges that come with proximity to whiteness, resulting in anxieties about status and anxieties about how Asians were fitting into the racialized hierarchy (Bow 2007). Asians' status in the U.S. continues to be "uneasily positioned in American culture as American but not quite; as middle class—almost; as a minority but not one of "those" minorities; as

like us but not like us" (Bow 2007, p. 26), due to the inability to separate Asia from Asian America (N. Y. Kim 2022).

C. J. Kim (2022) speaks to the limitations of the application of racial triangulation by redirecting focus to larger structural powers, as Hooks (1994) does when consistently pointing toward white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. C. J. Kim (2022) explains that "since whiteness, Blackness, and Asianness did emerge in the context of global slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and migration, the analysis of racial triangulation would clearly be enhanced and perhaps importantly changed by attention to these phenomena" (p. 504). The issues continue to be structures of white supremacy and anti-Blackness, and racial triangulation through this racial hierarchy is a distraction from these larger structural functions.

Much of the research about racial triangulation happens to be about the Asian American experience, but we suggest that this is a function that can also be extended and interrogated with/in the Latinx community because of how the hierarchies are maintaining and guaranteeing opposition to Blackness and attribution to whiteness. Therefore, we cannot simply understand race or anti-Blackness without pointing toward systems that reinforce and reproduce racial hierarchies and methods of maintaining racial hierarchies (racial triangulation). Nor can we discuss racial triangulation without globalizing its function (N. Y. Kim 2022). It is also worth exploring racial hierarchy through the functions of temporary and/or permanent aversion, in that not all racial groups demonstrate an aversion to Blackness, suggesting that we cannot fully adopt a white–Black hierarchical continuum (Gayles and Tobin 2006)[4]. Multiracial people and our relationships around racial categories can contribute to this work, and we must emphasize the importance of paying attention to how racial categories shift because the meanings attributed to race shift our understanding and experiences of racialized hierarchies (Bashi 1998).

The reality is that a racial hierarchy exists in the U.S., and while there are intersections that might privilege or marginalize groups further, we live in a society that reads our bodies, and there are differential and conditional implications for this. Our bodies are one of the first visual markers of identity (Ruiz et al. 2022), and the materialization of how our bodies are racialized matters in our everyday lives. The irony of the honorary white middle status is that it is consistently maintained yet erased as a function and form (racial triangulation) that maintains said racial hierarchical structures.

6. So What Now? Rethinking Solidarity and Future Possibilities

The disparities in Black and Brown communities are sobering and necessitate a broadened conversation that highlights solidarity as a tool. What is the rationale for this kind of solidarity? Put simply, we are one, a symbiosis of variables in a greater function; we are each other's keepers, and if they come for one of us, they come for us all. Within the nuances, Black and Brown people are biologically and culturally one entity. (Sankofa et al. 2022, p. 204)

By living on the slash between "us" and "others," las nepantleras cut through isolated selfhood's barbed-wire fence. They trouble the nos/otras division, questioning the subject is privilege, confronting our own personal desconocimientos, and challenging the other's marginal status. Las nepantleras recognize that we are all complicit in the existing power structures and that we must deal with conflictive as well as connectionist relations within and among various groups. (Anzaldúa 2015, pp. 82–83)

Within our larger monoracial (identification with one race) communities, we see the challenges of solidarity amongst racial groups. It is our respective Latinx and Asian imperative to address anti-Blackness. In this section, we share some of the challenges yet the interlocking necessity of solidarity, being in this middle position between the Black and the white.

In a racial hierarchy, we continue to be pitted against other communities in a triangulated fashion, displacing blame and not getting to the source of anti-Blackness. These tactics are impediments to not only addressing anti-Blackness but also engaging in solidarity

work. Society and white logic (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008) would have us believe our communities have never worked in sync with one another, but history has proven that is not true (Fujiwara and Roshanravan 2018; Wu 2002). Our Latinx and Asian histories have *always* been intertwined with (yet distinct from) the Black experience in the U.S. (Yancey 2003), and our human/civil rights have been tied to the movement for Black liberation. Additionally, even still, there are examples of Asian/Latinx/Black solidarity. This is important to acknowledge because, as Ortiz (2018) explains, "connecting Black and Latinx [and Asian] historical experiences draws on Kimberlé Crenshaw's idea of "intersectionality," as well as the timeless ideas that forms of oppression—as well as methods of resistance to that oppression—are linked" (p. 11). As such, we cannot acknowledge our privileges without acknowledging the indebtedness of the Black liberation movements (Ortiz 2018; Taylor 2016). It is imperative that we "name our indebtedness, our obligation to mutual reciprocity, and our internalized anti-Blackness," but we also need to venture out into the "keeling over and dying" space of coalition. Because coalition, similar to abolition, "is not an outcome" (Omi and Winant 2015; Rubio 2021, p. 15). In this section, though, we complicate and rethink tensions around solidarity and what solidarity means for our communities.

Refusing to engage or align with other communities (of color) because of histories of conflict dismisses layered histories of solidarity and the collective power of collaborative organizing (Ho and Mullen 2008; Lee and Huang 2021) that has occurred and is occurring. Lee and Huang (2021) suggest that the Black–Asian conflict (for example) serves as a trope and functions as another tactic to steal focus away from oppressive systems. One powerful example of cross-racial solidarity was the boycott of the grape industry in the late 1960s, led by the cross-racial alliances of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) and the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC). This movement was led by Mexican American farmworkers such as César Chávez and Dolores Huerta and Filipino farmworker Philip Vera Cruz. The AWOC and NFWA worked together to organize a strike and educate the public about labor. Chávez said, "We need the help of all to add power to the poor" (as cited in Ortiz 2018, p. 154). Soon, other supporters from the Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (CNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), who had worked in the South during the Civil Rights Movement, joined their efforts by educating consumers about the grape boycott. In a speech in Washington, D.C., Huerta observed that

> growers resorted to the well-known tactic of "divide and conquer" to undermine the union. The *Pittsburgh Courier* reported her speech: "Mrs. Huerta pointed out that "most of the field workers are Mexican–American, Filipino, Negro, and Puerto Rican." The growers, she said, "try to . . . play one race against the other . . . and actually perpetuate race prejudice . . . "It is not just a question of wages." "It is a question of human dignity and equality," she asserted. (as cited in Ortiz 2018, p. 155)

Miseducation also performs the function of unproductive division and negates how power works (Foucault 1982). Miseducation includes a lack of understanding of how our communities are hierarchically positioned; or, many communities are aware of this positioning and intentionally reinforce this hierarchical system. The history of cross-racial solidarity not being taught in K–12 classrooms is intentional in the reproduction of the status quo, in maintaining power structures (e.g., white savior), and in the hegemony of curriculum (Jay 2003) that does not allow for criticality or ambiguity, which is replicated in the larger public imagination. We should be teaching the roles of women/BIPOC in civil rights, with examples that expand on and extend past Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs' legacies (Roshanravan 2018).

The last several years have sparked an "anti-racist" movement, of which it is important to build anti-racist coalitions for matters of race (Raghuram 2022, p. 797). Many efforts have instead shifted into education spaces, branding "anti-racism how-tos" as the solution to racism. This is a lazy and performative effort that yields little results unless one exposes those performative gaps and causes good trouble (Ahmed 2006). Furthermore, conversations about whiteness focusing solely on white people dismiss the complicit roles of people

of color in perpetuating anti-Blackness (Aronson and Boveda 2017). Further complicating this matter, in understanding critical whiteness and having discussions on antiracism, conversations tend to focus on white communities as attached to "traditional whites" instead of addressing how whitestreaming has seeped into communities of color (Urrieta 2004). Rubio (2021) suggests that anti-racist "how-tos" actually undermine coalition, and on the other hand, if we *only* center Black voices in those spaces, it can deflect responsibility within our communities. C. J. Kim (2022) asserts that understanding racial triangulation (and racial hierarchy) is important for not only noticing Asian-Black solidarities (more broadly, cross-racial solidarities), but also understanding "why Afro-Asian alliances are not as common, enduring, or expansive as one might wish them to be" (p. 505). N. Y. Kim (2022) suggests that by understanding racial triangulation (as a mechanism of racial hierarchy), we can answer the question, "Why do all groups of color become perpetrators of White supremacist violence against one another?" (p. 473).

We do not claim that building solidarity is without tension or conflict. Solidarity has always been necessary, complicated, risky, suspect, and suspicious. Despite the tensions across color lines that have historically existed, we advocate for a future of solidarity building amongst communities of color. However, how do we build solidarity and coalition? As multiracial Latina and Asian researchers who identify on the fringes of our own communities and who are also positioned on the fringes of the Black–white divide in the U.S., we began with our understanding of how our respective Latinx and Asian communities of color are positioned. Our own understandings and our own consciousness-raising are still in the process of entering these conversations addressing anti-Blackness. Therefore, Sankofa et al. (2022) suggest that "Black and Brown[5] solidarity can be exercised when and only when all parties are made aware of the facts of identity" (Sankofa et al. 2022, p. 205). Now, we have to move beyond ourselves and think collectively. How do we *convince* our community to commit treason to whiteness (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996; Stohry 2020) and convince others of our collective humanity, particularly the humanity of Black people?

As scholars who come from the fields of education and social work, we are accustomed to accomplishing the work around positionality awareness and the building of critical consciousness with our students. This is a necessary beginning in any attempt to work in solidarity with one another. However, the scholarship around anti-Blackness in Latinx and Asian communities is still limited and a newly budding topic in academia (i.e., Tanya Katerí Hernández writes about Latinx anti-Blackness in the legal field; political scientist Claire Jean Kim and sociologists Jae Kyun Kim and Moon-Kie Jung contribute scholarship about anti-Blackness and the Asian/Asian American experience). There is a need for this work to be a part of education discourse, both within and outside the academy, for us to foster the kinds of consciousness-raising we will discuss. Who is actually doing this work? This project has been informed by multiple disciplines (humanities, sociology, and so many more), and now we are adding to this conversation.

We need to be reshaping our solidarity engagement in structure-changing ways, first by acknowledging the complexities of the spaces we are positioned in. Roshanravan (2018) invites Bhabha's third space and Anzaldúa's third space as sites for interrogating the challenging positioning of Asian Americans in the racial state. In *Asian American Feminisms and Women of Color Politics*, Roshanravan suggests that Asian Americans weaponize our positionalities of invisibility as a coalitional tactic, as "the coalitional imperative of the racial third space" (p. 268). Speaking specifically about Asian Americans, Roshanravan suggests that

> because the black/white binary is central to the construction of our racial ambiguity, it necessarily shapes our resistant possibilities, both in maneuvering the model-minority construction to evade violent targeting by the racial state and in rupturing model-minority erasures of state-sponsored racism. (pp. 269–270)

This means that this space is tricky because Latinx and Asian Americans' simple resistance to the "honorary white" status can "reinscribe anti-Blackness" (Roshanravan 2018, p. 270). If these spaces are tricky, we want to further ponder "the politics of not

being seen" as an "important insurgent women of color strategy of survival against racist dehumanization and distortions" (p. 271). Our strategies for survival are many, but we believe that consciousness is a key component.

Consciousness is a tool of solidarity (Sankofa et al. 2022), and "the possessive investment in honorary whiteness must be critically interrogated, challenged, and further understood in reshaping and awakening critical racial consciousness" (J. W. Kim 2022, pp. 187–188). Consciousness is a deep, embodied, and felt experience of awareness. We define consciousness as not *just* awareness of injustice but a connection of these injustices to their respective systems. This consciousness is the connection of the individual within a community as responsible actors that move through multiple systems. Anzaldúa (2015) calls this *knowing* and knowledge "conocimiento," which is "profoundly relational and enables those who enact it to make connections among apparently disparate events, people, experiences, and realities. "These connections, in turn, lead to action" (p. xxvii). Consciousness is a tool of engagement in this third space, as long as we hold tension. Consciousness-raising is the action taken to raise consciousness, which entails holding these tensions as a requirement. It is also our (multiracial) reality to hold the realities of *both* pain and privilege as distinct yet intertwined components of our identities and experiences (Hurd 2019; Stohry 2019). It is a dialectical space that can be both oppressive and/or transformative, the way critical pedagogue Peter McClaren describes schooling. (McLaren 2002). How do we hold this space as transformative while also having the potential for harm? What a metaphor and reality where nothing is definite and nothing is binary!

Third spaces, or perhaps this middle status in the racial hierarchy, are ripe with transformative potential (Anzaldúa 2015). Anzaldúa (2012) elucidates that "from this racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollination, an "alien" consciousness is presently in the making—a new mestiza consciousness, una conciencia de mujer." "It is a consciousness of the Borderlands" (Anzaldúa 2012, p. 99). These third spaces have never been devoid of mixed collaboration and solidarity and resound with inherent interconnection. We argue that the metaphor of the third space can allow us to reimagine the resistance and coalitional efforts of Latinx and Asian Americans. Do we dare invite the honorary white (Latinx/Asian) communities to utilize this space as the sites of rupture, our turf as our own resistance? For example, Stohry (2019) had already begun exploring these third spaces as sites and generators of her multiracial Third Culture Kid consciousness-raising journey. Furthermore, we argue for the consciousness of a racialized hierarchy and its subsequent functions. From there, one must pivot this consciousness alone to the larger structures of anti-Blackness. What then do we do if we are considering that anti-Blackness is a system and structural production in which we are both used/using? We would never argue that the dehumanization of other racial groups is a solution for anti-Blackness. We posit that knowledge of identity and positionality is important and that consciousness-raising is not just internal work (Anzaldúa 2015), but is a multi-step extension of ongoing engagement in systems work. For example, "as Latinos and African Americans increasingly live in neighboring areas, voting rights lawyers have determined that working in solidarity across racial groups is crucial in helping ensure the political power of people of color" (Hernández 2022, p. 123). Showing Asian and Black (and Latinx) solidarity in such ways as exercising and protecting civil rights and structural level resistance is perhaps the strongest way of addressing anti-Blackness (Roshanravan 2018) that moves beyond identity and positionality consciousness.

7. Conclusions

We have argued in this article about the ways that whiteness has seeped into our communities, which intensifies the manifestations of anti-Blackness. Instead of creating more powerful solidarity movements, we in turn create more isolation, confusion, and disruption in ways that uphold white supremacy. Thus, in this conceptual project, we examined the roots of anti-Blackness within Latinx and Asian communities, which knowingly continue to perpetuate the racial projects of globalized white supremacy and racialization

around the world (Omi and Winant 2015). We aimed to decenter the whiteness within this paper, or a focus on "white people," but while we acknowledge systems of whiteness were created by white men with a white racial frame as a broad worldview (Feagin 2013), people of color can be complicit in whitestreaming (Urrieta 2004). We are not suggesting people of color are "racist," as communities of color do not hold the power to uphold systems of oppression. However, prejudices are a natural part of the human condition. We pause, though, as multiracial Latinx and Asian scholars whose existence weaves through and overlaps these ambiguous third spaces, and consider if we can take the metaphor of the third space and invite our communities to lean into these interstitial positionings as potential sites for transformation. Can the interstitial spaces be the sites of rupture for this insufferable system of anti-Blackness within and throughout our communities? Future projects should address nuances of anti-Blackness, especially within our respective communities, and perhaps explore the interstitial spaces we are relegated to and navigate as a part of our racialized experience as the key to our survival. This paper aims to take back power by highlighting our multiracial entry points to disruption of the Black-white binary, focusing on our Latinx and Asian histories of the convergent and divergent perpetuation of anti-Blackness, our legacies of solidarity in resistance to anti-Blackness, and opportunities for our communities to continue such solidarity and orientation to a life of resistance to racial domination through anti-Blackness.

Notes

[1] We believe that Costa Vargas (2018) uses "multiracial" to mean cross-racial solidarity or solidarity across groups that are constructed as monoracial. This is consistent throughout his work.

[2] We use "multiracial" to distinguish our mixed-race heritage, with parents and ancestors from different races.

[3] Importantly, anti-Indigeneity is also a problematic part of Latinx and Asian conceptions of identity, but the focus of this project is on anti-Blackness. We wanted to recognize that these overarching systems of oppression are connected to maintaining white supremacy (Kim and Jung 2021; Urrieta 2017).

[4] Sociological perspectives are generalized and have some limitations; we are looking at an argument that is more holistic in order to push our communities forward. This is nuanced and messy.

[5] We include this quote as an acknowledgment of Latinx and Asians as Brown, although not all Latinx/Asians identify as Brown. Race and color are conflated and assigned a consequent racial status, but they remain distinct and dependent upon local context (Harpalani 2015).

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