Belonging does not mean always being attached to the same cultural or ethnic group, but instead feeling welcomed by people of other groups in various educational, social, political, and community settings...

Abstract: In this article, we address the three derogatory stereotypes and tropes of anti-Asian racism: model minority, perpetual foreigner, and yellow peril. We problematize how each of the three stereotypes was formed and has been sustained, affecting our art classroom and professional practices. After that, we offer the novel and futuristic conception of Asian American inclusivity as a critical project in our society. Lastly, in challenging the three Asian stereotypes and embracing Asian American inclusivity, we offer S-R-C teaching strategies (Sense of Belonging, Resist, and Coalition Building) to confront anti-Asian racism and violence. The strategies are designed to help art educators and students address the roots of anti-Asian stereotypes and remove anti-Asian racism in educational settings.

Correspondence regarding this article may be sent to the author: shin@arizona.edu
Introduction

In response to increasing anti-Asian incidents, prejudice, and xenophobia amplified by the COVID-19 global pandemic in the United States, we, as Asian American art educators, have paid close attention to recent violence and hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). According to a national report by Stop AAPI Hate, an organization devoted to both advancing equity and justice for Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and ending AAPI hate, a total of 10,905 hate incidents targeting Asian Americans nationwide occurred between March 2020 and December 2021 (Jeung et al., 2022). Further, researchers found that overall hate crimes in the United States decreased by 6 percent between 2019 and 2020, while those targeting Asian people rose by nearly 150 percent (Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, 2021). Other researchers have pointed out that many factors contribute to racism, such as implicit and explicit stereotypes, bias, misunderstanding, and cultural appropriation (Acuff & Kraehe, 2020; Ho, 2021). White (2018) urged educators, especially teacher educators and institutions, to provide learning opportunities and develop preventive interventions to combat misrepresentations, stereotypes, and racism. We echo this assertion, seeing that art has the power to disrupt silence surrounding gender, race, class, and sexuality privileges and to allow viewers to look deeply, think, feel, and respond (Kraehe, 2022). Art also prompts students to have difficult discussions for social changes (Buffington & Waldner, 2012). Our article advocates the power of art as a response to historically widespread and emerging racism against Asians.

In this article, we share our experiences and insights as Asian American art educators to address three derogatory stereotypes of anti-Asian racism: model minority, perpetual foreigner, and yellow peril (Tchen & Yeats, 2014). These stereotypes have been rooted in society and popular media for many years (Ifikar & Museus, 2018; Wu & Nguyen, 2022), laying the groundwork for recent anti-Asian racism and prejudice. First, we briefly introduce how each of the three stereotypes was formed and has been sustained and how it affects our teaching and professional practices. We then provide futuristic ways of conceptualizing Asian American inclusivity, challenging the constraints of a Western lens or hegemony. Asian American inclusivity is based on the Asian American experience and a vision of equality and inclusion for all minority groups (Chan, 2016; Shin, R., Lim, M., Lee, O., & Han, S (Eds.), 2022). Lastly, by reflecting on the three stereotypes and new Asian identities, we offer S-R-C teaching strategies (Sense of Belonging, Resistance, and Coalition Building) to confront anti-Asian racism and violence. The strategies are also designed to confront the roots of anti-Asian racism.

Stereotypes and Tropes of Asian Americans

In this section, we trace the historical origins and development of three stereotypes that affect Asian Americans in their lives, education, and work. We also share how these stereotypes have influenced our pedagogical experiences in the classroom, campus life, and professional development, offering our personal narratives of discrimination, jurisdictions and/or the diasporic communities of these geographic regions” (Asian Pacific Institute, n.d., para. 3). In this article, we distinguish the two terms: Asian Americans and AAPIs. We use the term, Asian Americans, in the context of discussing the stereotypes and myths of East Asians, such as model minority, yellow peril, and perpetual foreigner. AAPIs is used to address all Asian American and Pacific Islanders in discussing teaching strategies to address the racial violence and discrimination of AAPIs.
marginalization, and ostracization, both in our classrooms and on campus. At times these manifestations of anti-Asian racism are unspoken and latent, but they continuously serve as invisible walls to restrict our work and pedagogy.

**Model Minority**

Asian Americans are often depicted as a “model minority” (An, 2017; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Rodriguez & Kim, 2018), an idea that ties them together as a compliant, hardworking, law-abiding, and successful minority group (Lee, 2009). “Model minority” is a term coined in 1966 by American sociologist William Petersen to describe the success of the Asian American ethnic minorities in the United States. In it, Petersen mistakenly attributes such success to “Asian Americans’ ability to transcend historical racial antagonism, overcome systemic barriers, and achieve mainstream success” (Wu & Nguyen, 2022, p.1). This model minority myth selectively focused on a small group of high-achieving Asian Americans while disregarding the experiences of those facing poverty, discrimination, and other challenges. This narrative allowed for the tokenization of Asian Americans, reinforcing stereotypes, and obscuring the diversity of experiences within the community (Sions, 2023). It also created a false perception of homogeneity and ignored the structural barriers that many Asian Americans faced (Shin, R., et al., 2022).

The model minority myth emerged during the Cold War era when the United States was engaged in ideological competition with the Soviet Union (Lee, 2010). Portraying Asian Americans as successful and assimilated was seen as a way to demonstrate the superiority of American democracy and capitalism over communism (Lee, 2010). By highlighting Asian Americans’ educational achievements and economic success, it was believed that the myth could counter the negative stereotypes associated with other minority groups and present the United States as a land of equal opportunity.

Yet, the term suggests that successful Asian Americans do not face racism or discrimination or suffer tokenism in their communities or workplaces. In fact, many scholars have criticized the disrespect implicit in the tokenization of Asians and various other ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups (An, 2017; May & Sleeter, 2010). We agree that the model minority trope casts Asian Americans as a successful, well-adjusted minority group. At the same time, however, it blames Asians and other ethnic groups who do not fit this stereotype and characterizes them as problematic or socially maladaptive. One notable example can be found in the contrast between the academic success of many Asian American students in U.S. schools (Hartlep, 2015; Lee, 2009) and the Asian American students who do poorly in school (Lee, 2009). Students who do not live up to model minority expectations tend to feel especially inferior and embarrassed, leading them to negative self-perceptions, emotional turmoil, and low self-confidence (An, 2017). Lee et al. (2008) described the experience of living within the model minority trope in a case study:

...a student at a selective magnet high school expressed a great deal of anxiety about living up to the model minority stereotype. Although she earned outstanding grades, participated in extracurricular activities, and got high SAT scores, Mei Ling lived in fear of failure. (p. 69)

In universities and art education professional organizations, the model minority stereotype affects us as art educators, in that our voices are often silenced, neglected, or essentialized. People assume that successful Asian Americans, including higher education professors, do not face racism or discrimination in academia or other workplaces (An, 2017). However, we reject homogenous Asianization, which lumps all Asians together as a model minority and erases individual voices (An, 2017). We also reject the silencing and excluding our voices, which often takes the form of microaggressions that reflect
misassumptions about Asians’ lack of communication skills or failure to resist or complain about the loss of an opportunity. Often, discriminatory decision-making against Asian American workers in organizations or cooperation seem to be justified by misperceptions about a lack of their leadership potential (Hyun, 2005; Wayne, 2022). Just as the so-called “bamboo ceiling” barrier (Hyun, 2005) has prevented the advancement of Asian Americans in fields such as business and government, Asian American educators face challenges and impediments to their upward movement inside universities and professional organizations.

Perpetual Foreigner
Another dominant stereotype of Asian Americans is that of the perpetual foreigner (Daley et al., 2022; Huynh et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2008; Murjani, 2015; Ng et al., 2007). Regardless of those who were born and raised in the United States, Asian Americans are forever viewed as foreigners, that is, as aliens who are outsiders to the dominant U.S. culture. This stereotype may exist for multiple reasons, including the history of Asian immigration, and differences in physical appearance and language because norms are white centric (Chung, 1999; Kim, 2008). With the stereotype of the perpetual foreigner comes the appraisal that Asian Americans are “inherently foreign and therefore not truly American” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 69). In the dominant White U.S. culture (Huynh et al., 2011, p. 133), the perpetual foreigner stereotype cements the position of Asian Americans as “the other.” Wu (2002) described this process of racialization and marginalization:

The perpetual foreigner syndrome suggests that to understand the complexities of race, we must use a paradigm that is not exclusively black and white in literal and figurative terms. In literal terms, if “American” means “white” and “minority” mean “black”, then individuals who are neither white nor black end up being neither American nor minority. They are excluded altogether as foreigners who lack rights, even if they are in fact native-born Asian Americans. (p. 22)

Seen as perpetual foreigners, Asian American art educators and students experience diverse racial microaggressions in their everyday life. Unlike other minorities, Asian Americans get challenged about their rights as citizens due to their “Oriental” and “foreign” Asian appearance (Chung, 1999). This physical characteristic contributes to the kind of racial other-ing that constructs racial boundaries and maintains a racial hierarchy in the United States (Kim, 2008). As Chung (1999) noted, because Asian Americans are visibly different, it makes it easier to exclude them from being members of the entitled group.

Research on the influence of the perpetual foreigner stereotype on Asian Americans reveals that this stereotype disrupts the connections between foreign-born and U.S.-born Asian Americans and eventually reduces their sense of belonging in the U.S. (Armenta et al., 2013; Huynh et al., 2011). The perpetual foreigner stereotype causes Asian Americans to experience conflicted feelings about their ethnic and national identity, as well as low self-esteem, and eventually, less life satisfaction (Armenta et al., 2013; Huynh et al., 2011; Wu, 2002). One of the authors explained:

On-campus, I am an Asian American woman faculty member. The first, and sometimes, only question I often encounter from the campus community is, “Where are you from?” I pause for a moment, asking myself, “Where am I from?” I think, “Should I tell them all of the places where I have lived/moved for more than 20 years in the U.S.?” Then, after a moment of silence, I usually reply with a smile, “I am from xxx (my current resident city), xx (the current resident state in the U.S.).” Then they ask me again, “No, where are you really (originally) from?” and/or “How long
have you been in the U.S?—questions I have never asked White, Black, or Hispanic Americans.

For Asian American students, the perpetual foreigner stereotype can have an even more harmful effect. According to a recent study of 308 Filipino Americans and 340 Korean American youths, Asian American youths’ awareness of the perpetual foreigner stereotype increased internalized problems such as negative affect, depressive symptoms, and suicidal thoughts (Park et al., 2021). The related treatment and expectations of others cause many Asian American children and youth to consciously and unconsciously internalize the sense that they are not a “real American” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 79).

Yoo’s (2020) focus group interviews also highlight the struggle of Asian American college students to deal with a sense of loss and belonging, even in a multiracial university. They see themselves as often left out of U.S. society and education, making it difficult for them to weave themselves into American society and their community. For instance, one female biracial student expressed that “I would never be enough to be an Asian and yet I would never be enough to be an American because I look Asian” (personal communication, December 2022). In a similar way, Asian art education faculty in higher education face the same significant issue—a sense of less belonging in our institutions and educational environments. One of the authors shared their personal experience regarding their applications for elected positions in their university and professional organizations:

Despite my efforts in applying for numerous elected positions at my university and various professional organizations, I have repeatedly faced rejection or my application materials have not been chosen. It is disheartening to suspect that my Asian name, coupled with English not being my mother language, has played a role in questioning my credibility and legitimacy for administrative and service positions.

It is worth noting that similar subjective experiences have been reported by many Asian American professionals in various fields, including business, government, and other organizations (Venkataraman & Yee, 2022).

The Yellow Peril

During the 19th century, European imperialists such as German Kaiser Wilhelm II invented a racially ideological trope (Tchen & Yeats, 2014), the yellow peril, to stigmatize Asians or Asian Americans as a potential threat to European civilization and provide a rationalization for the colonization of Asian countries (Wu & Nguyen, 2022). In other words, the unknown, oriental, or fearsome (yellow) were cast as dangerous threats (peril) to Western civilization and enlightenment (Said, 1978).

The Anti-Asian racism that accelerated after the global COVID-19 outbreak is a good example of the negative effect of the yellow peril trope. When racialization takes the form of pathologization of Asian Americans, either by politicians or media, racist acts or hate crimes occur (Cooper et al., 2022). For example, countless late-19th-century and early-20th-century posters, magazine covers,3 or newspaper graphics4 depict a yellow octopus that destroys Western civilizations and societies. They imply that a particular race is a threat to Western society. American popular media also has played an important role in the racialization and othering of Asians in a disaster-themed context, as seen in the movie Contagion (Soderbergh, 2011),5 which

---

3 “The Japanese brain trust” by Erich Schilling, Simplicissimus, 39(44), January 27, 1935. In this illustration, an octopus face with squinted eyes was featured as a metaphor for destroying the Western world, sucking and cracking it with arms and legs.


5 Directed by Steven Soderbergh (2011).
associates a deadly contagious disease with Asia as its origin.

For many years, Asian Americans have been victimized socially and politically by discriminative policies that were facilitated and impacted by the yellow peril trope in popular media and culture (Kuo, 1998). The idea of the yellow peril not only reinforces stereotypes but also opens spaces for the expression and spread of racism through mainstream culture and online spaces, where racist videos are easily dispersed and shared. While its consequences may be difficult to quantify, popular media seems to have contributed to recent anti-Asian violence in the United States, such as in the Atlanta spa shootings of 2021. For developing inclusive art lessons with antiracist approaches, it is essential for teachers to address how certain stereotypes are constructed and used to oppress other races of students and guide young learners to defy misrepresentations, stereotypes, and biases toward other groups of people.

Asian American Inclusivity

The three Asian stereotypes and tropes discussed in this discourse have caused suffering among Asian American art educators and students, who deserve equity and inclusion in U.S. education settings (An, 2017; Wu & Nguyen, 2022). Seeking inclusion and equity for Asian Americans means the outright rejection and removal of these stereotypes. We propose that breaking out of the model minority and perpetual foreigner stereotypes will enhance Asian American inclusivity. Due to the widespread and discriminatory model minority myth, immigrant and U.S. born Asian Americans have had a lack of voice and felt pressure to assimilate into White or mainstream U.S. culture (Li & Nicholson, 2021). The stereotype of the perpetual foreigner serves as a constant reminder of our foreigner status and limits our sense of belonging in the classroom and community. To address these biases and stereotypes, we advocate for Asian American inclusion that can break the existing barrier of racism. Asian American inclusivity means that Asian Americans are immersed systemically in their classrooms and professions without being treated as foreigners, and at the same time, not losing their individualities. Specific pedagogical strategies that help to achieve these outcomes are shared in the next section.

We believe inclusion goals can be advanced by cultivating a futuristic identity for Asian American art educators and students in the context of Asian Futurism (Chan, 2016), drawing on the realm of speculative fiction and forward-thinking ideas, which provides a space where Asian identities are defined not by historical prejudice or Western-centric views, but by their own diverse experiences, aspirations, and innovative perspectives. This visionary framework can be instrumental in overcoming the three stereotypes and tropes we have described, one of which is the yellow peril. The yellow peril has been a feature of various sectors of U.S. society and contributed to the development of a host of negative images as if Asian Americans pose a dangerous threat to White America and White identity, which has marginalized non-white people as inferior. In reaction to this discriminatory trope and challenge the normalization of White America, we argue that educators acknowledge the many ways Asian Americans have contributed to the diversification of American education and community. Redefining Asian Americans as individuals with a collective voice allows us to challenge prevailing notions of these stereotypes. Under the Asian Futuristic lens, we can develop Asian American art and pedagogical projects, free of stereotypes of Asian art, art history, and art pedagogies.

From within the Asian Futurism perspective, we also suggest that art educators deeply investigate and celebrate Asian Americans’ diversity in art education. Currently, there is an ironic coexistence of racial discrimination toward Asian Americans and the great
consumption of Asian pop cultures in the United States. Thus, art educators need to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the rich cultural backgrounds of the Asian. To achieve this, we value the presence of Asian American students in art classrooms from the perspective of asset-based inclusion. Rather than seeing Asian American students in terms of a group that needs support for assimilation, we should focus on their contributions to the diversity of thought, culture, and traits in the art classroom (Romero & Reyes, 2022). These cultural assets can function as valuable means and resources in art classrooms. Among the various Asian American ethnic groups, there are diverse heritage backgrounds, which can be seen as cultural assets that can bring unique approaches to art education pedagogical praxis. Specifically, Asian American students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, Filipino, and many others. Each of these ethnic groups has its unique artistic traditions, techniques, and aesthetics that can enrich the art classroom. For example, Malaysian shadow puppet play (Pillai, 2012), Japanese calligraphy (Nakao, 2012), Tibetan mandala (Graham, 2012), Korean traditional architecture (Yi, 2017), and Chinese literati painting (Wang, 2022) are all distinct art forms that can be shared and explored. Asian cultures are often rich in symbolism and iconography. Asian American students can introduce unique symbols, motifs, and meanings associated with their cultural backgrounds (Chung, 2012). For instance, the lotus flower symbolizes purity and enlightenment in Buddhism, while the dragon represents power and strength in Chinese culture (Hu, 2022). These symbols can add depth and layers of meaning to artistic creations.

While advocating for a new Asian American identity, we also acknowledge that Asian Americans have a long history of fighting for civil rights and equity in education (Kuo, 1998). The history of Asian American resistance against oppression is not often recognized or heard about in schools (Hartlep, 2015). For instance, in the case of Tape v. Hurley (1885) during the dangerous anti-Chinese immigration climate in the late 1800s, the Chinese-American family of Joseph and Mary Tape took legal steps to dispute the denial of their daughter Mamie, who was born and raised in the United States, to Spring Valley Primary School in San Francisco, California (An, 2016; Kuo, 1998). Recently, in Wisconsin, Hmong community members and state education policymakers worked on a bill that would add Hmong, AAPI, and the history of other Asian American communities to the Wisconsin public school curriculum (Scarborough, 2021). The bill requires schools to teach about the role of the Hmong people and AAPI in fighting for the United States during many wars involving U.S. military interventions. These cases clearly illustrate how Asian Americans have challenged educational inequalities in U.S. public schools.

Moving one step further, we imagine Asian American art teachers and students becoming an integral moving force for Asian American inclusion in schools. As one of the minority groups that has been deeply affected by hate crimes and violence, we as AAPIs raise our voices to call for respecting and valuing our voices as well as collaborating and coalescing with the racially marginalized groups, including Asian, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Black, Hispanic, Multiracial, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander. Within Asian American inclusivity, we value coalitions with other minority groups. For example, By Us For Us (BUFU) is an excellent Afro-Asian futurism project aimed at redressing interracial conflict. Created by African American and Asian American artists, BUFU facilitates conversations between African Americans and individuals of Asian diaspora to ease the sociopolitical tensions between the two groups (Gaillot, 2017). The project highlights the lived experiences of those in the two marginalized communities, told in their own voices. Our approach to inclusivity relies on the long history

Shin, R., Lim, M., Koo, A., Hsieh, K., Gu, M., Bae, J. / A Critical Discourse on Asian American Stereotypes
The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education / Volume 43 (2024)
and lesson of multiracial coalition among various races (Mantler, 2013; Márquez, 2014; Tulloch, 2020).

To redress the historical and contemporary practices of Asian American stereotypes and tropes, we propose Asian American inclusivity as an important direction or purpose in our pedagogical projects and efforts. To substantiate our vision and inclusivity efforts, we propose the following pedagogical strategies to address anti-Asian stereotypes and tropes in the classroom.

**S-R-C teaching strategies (Sense of Belonging, Resistance, and Coalition Building) Challenging Anti-Asian Racism**

Our pedagogical approach does not merely add more Asian or Asian-American artists to the school curriculum, but we rely on the transformative power of art that offers social practices and interventions that directly confront the racism rampant in U.S. society. Below, we share the teaching strategies we have used to challenge anti-Asian racism and underlying stereotypes and tropes. We call these S-R-C teaching strategies (Sense of Belonging, Resistance, and Coalition Building). As artists, activists, and educators, we have devised these teaching strategies specifically to build the inclusivity of Asian Americans.

**Sense of Belonging**

To challenge the stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners, we advocate that art educators should actively promote a sense of belonging among Asian Americans and all other minority students in art classrooms. A sense of belonging in schools, workplaces, or communities is a key cognitive and affective dimension of the need to find one’s place or space culturally or psychologically (Prince & Hadwin, 2013). The perceived stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners negatively affects this important sense of belonging in the dominant White U.S. culture (Huynh et al., 2011).

Belonging does not mean always being attached to the same cultural or ethnic group, but instead feeling welcomed by people of other groups in various educational, social, political, and community settings. In other words, a sense of belonging is different from a personal identity. Instead, as Paul Jones and Michał Krzyżanowski (2008) noted, “Individuals often express a sense of belonging with an ‘other,’ while remaining outside the bounds of the group” (p. 45). Although a similar concept, a sense of place, refers to emotional bonds and attachment to locations or spaces in home and nation (Foote & Azaryahu, 2009), the sense of belonging, in our view, is more significant in our classrooms and relationships with others. In particular, many Asian American students have expressed their struggle to find a sense of belonging within their identity development in educational settings (Wu, 2002; Yoo, 2020).

![Figure 1. Jiaqi Wang, Kevin Kwan’s Houston illustration. Asian American Federation’s I am Really From series. Courtesy of the artist](image)

We encourage art educators to share with their students the works of contemporary immigrant or

Shin, R., Lim, M., Koo, A., Hsieh, K., Gu, M., Bae, J. / A Critical Discourse on Asian American Stereotypes
The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education / Volume 43 (2024)
U.S.-born Asian American artists who struggle with a sense of belonging and express those experiences in their works, such as Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom, Monyee Chau, and Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya. These artists address the complexities of their sense of belonging or place in the context of their identity exploration and community connections, especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their artworks and experiences provide opportunities for students and teachers to unpack issues related to belonging and otherness. In particular, the Asian-inspired travel posters created for the Asian American Federation (AAF)’s “I am Really From” series (see Figure 1) can serve as an example of how we engage with our students. The AAF is one of the leading organizations serving various AAPI communities in New York. In November 2021, AAF released ten posters—designed as travel posters—to subvert the stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. All the posters address the common question “Where are you really from?” Ten Asian Americans, including Asian American celebrities and victims of anti-Asian hate violence and crimes, were selected to be featured in each of the ten posters. Each poster includes iconic images and symbols that honor them and represent their life and experiences in their city or community. For example, the poster in Figure 1 honors Kevin Kwan, the author of Crazy Rich Asians (Kwan, 2014), and shows his life experiences as a youth through images of an Asian grocery store with fluorescent lights, teacups, and a record shop that he frequented with friends.

When authors delivered a workshop for art teachers about anti-Asian racism, the attendees analyzed the AAF posters. They saw how the posters dealt with Asian American identities and sense of belonging, and imagined how students might research and explore their own sense of belonging, regardless of their ethnicity or minority background. Many attendees were interested in including this poster series in their art curriculum to help Asian American students to develop a sense of belonging. The art teacher attendees also considered keeping the posters’ format or using mixed media collages for all students to explore the complexities of identities. Some teachers also mentioned that they would love to work with local history museums and Asian American organizations to gain information about the immigration history of local Asians and local Asian cultural events. At the end of the workshop, the authors and participants agreed that school art curriculums need to include more contemporary Asian or Asian American artists in response to anti-Asian racism or stereotypes.

In our classroom practice, we invited students to explore their sense of belonging. For instance, an African American student from an urban city delved into her personal and cultural identities inspired by the AAF’s travel posters. (See Figure 2). She wrote:

My poster is about the significance of Black culture and my family and how that has impacted me growing up. Suki Terada, a Japanese American artist from Harlem, New York, inspired me. Growing up, she experienced a lot of racism and discrimination against herself and other Japanese American citizens, which led her to become a big advocate for the AAPI community. (personal communication, September 7, 2022)

The other student shared her insights on how her artwork captured the values of living in a small town. Inspired by Kevin Kwan’s I’m Really From poster, she said that “I am very proud to be from a southern small town. Through this assignment, I have found the importance of understanding and believing in where you come from”. (personal communication, September 7, 2022)
Resisting Anti-Asian Racism

Highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, recent anti-Asian incidents reflect deeply rooted stereotypes, tropes that suppressed voices, and misconceptions about Asian Americans. As art educators, we have been concerned with the recent negative and socially vile images. To challenge anti-Asian racism and race-based hate crimes, we offer the strategy of visual interventions.

An excellent example of a visual intervention designed to resist racism and prejudice is Red Hong Yi’s ten portraits showcasing the effects of anti-Asian racism. Yi is a Chinese Malaysian artist, who focuses on working with everyday materials, including soil, matchsticks, eggshells, teabags, and chopsticks (Yi, 2020). The title of her series is I am not a virus (see Figure 3). She noted that through her art and Instagram posts, “I recognize that racism exists in every country, every skin color. We must squash it so we can build a better world for everyone” (Yi, [@redhongyi], 2020). As with her social media commentary against Asian hate crimes, Red Hong Yi’s recent artworks speak to the power of colligated resistance against racial injustice among minorities. The art images Yi shares on various social media convey her critical views of racial and cultural diversity and inclusiveness. Several authors introduced the work of Red Hong Yi to their students and sought to engage them with Red Hong Yi’s thought-provoking art pieces and social media postings.

The students were inspired, and even researched racial-discrimination-related issues and topics about which they were most concerned. The students researched the historical backgrounds of their chosen topics and shared their personal connections to their research, as well as creating art pieces and demonstrating their perspectives (see Figure 4). The topics the students chose for their research included No Asian Hate, COVID-19, Black Lives Matter (BLM),...
Selma to Montgomery, the Tulsa Race Massacre, and the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing. Their artworks took various forms, such as drawings, paintings, digital collages, and filmmaking. Given our experiences of successful teaching about anti-Asian racism intervention artworks, we reiterate that artistic and visual interventions help students explore and understand the history and roots of negative representations, biases, and distortions about AAPI and other minority racial and ethnic groups.

Coalition Building

Along with both a sense of belonging among Asian Americans and artistic interventions to resist anti-Asian racism, we value and seek the power of inter-ethnic or inter-racial coalitions to confront and address racism and racial inequity in the United States. We believe that cross-racial and cross-ethnic solidarity is a shared goal that all minority groups should seek and expect, and we encourage educators and students of color to develop such coalitions. We believe that educators must break out of the divided and compartmentalized racial and ethnic walls defined by master narratives and White supremacy (Acuff et al., 2012; Lee, 2018, Rodriguez & Kim, 2018). Inter-racial conflict, distrust, and struggle among minority groups, such as Asian Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinx Americans, and others, have been mischaracterized as inter-racial crises and distorted by biased media representations, supporting the interests of White supremacy. When different racial and ethnic groups of students share and seek mutual understanding for the purposes of solidarity, it facilitates the development of more racially just, inclusive, and responsive classrooms (Lawton, 2018).

We believe in the power of visual symbols via art, creation, and social media. Solidarity images and memes have flourished in social media to support the BLM movement, and they encourage coalitions and solidarity among all minority groups. For example, Monyee Chau, who was born and raised in Seattle, Washington, and who is a queer and of Taiwanese and Chinese descent, created an activism poster with a powerful graphic of a crouching tiger and black panther circumscribed within a yellow and black yin-yang symbol (see Figure 5). The poster bears the inscription “Black Lives Matter: We Stand in Solidarity,” as a way of supporting the protests against the murder of George Floyd (Shum, 2021). In the image, two animals, a yellow tiger and a black panther, powerfully represent Asian Americans and African American in support of BLM (Rainbow, 2020).
Chau’s poster affirms the meaning of solidarity to Asian Americans who seek ways to ally with Black communities. In our art classes, some students created an artwork featuring raised hands of three colors that signify the unity of different races, and other students created artworks expressing support for #StopAsianHate or BLM in the style of social media posters or memes. Sharing and understanding with others to build solidarity between and among different racial and ethnic groups of students facilitates the development of more racially just, inclusive, and responsive classrooms (Lawton, 2018; Woo et al., 2020).

From engaging students with these anti-racism artworks to encouraging students to create their own versions of artistic interventions against racism, we believe that S-R-C teaching strategies are crucial in addressing our concerns about anti-Asian racism and violence. Art teachers can apply all or any one of the three S-R-C teaching strategies to help students to explore racism and racial concerns in art educational settings.

**Conclusion**

This article addresses a complex and intricate task that we, as Asian American art educators, have faced in our schools, university campuses, and society. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we not only have struggled with pedagogical strategies to support our AAPI students but have found ourselves deeply affected by the turmoil and reality of AAPI hate crimes and violence (Roberto et al., 2020). We found it devastating to reflect on the lack of progress in equity and inclusion for Asian Americans as we face the reality of the ongoing spread of anti-Asian racism in this country (Ho, 2021). In our struggle to address this issue, we highlighted anti-Asian stereotypes and tropes and shared inclusive art pedagogical strategies that will reject widespread stereotypes and tropes about AAPIs. These teaching strategies support the positive perception and praxis of Asian American inclusivity.

A greater outcome of Asian American inclusivity would be the creation of a society where AAPI individuals are recognized, celebrated, and empowered as valuable contributors to the cultural fabric and diversity of the nation. By dismantling stereotypes and tropes through inclusive art pedagogical strategies, we can foster an environment that appreciates the richness and complexity of Asian American experiences, promoting empathy, understanding, and respect. Ultimately, this transformative approach to inclusivity can lead to a more harmonious and equitable society that values the voices and perspectives of all its members, irrespective of their racial and cultural backgrounds.

**Figure 5.** Monyee Chau, *Black Lives Matter: We Stand in Solidarity*, digital illustration, 2020. Courtesy of the artist.
References


Hu, G. (2022). Inheritance and integration: Weaving Quing dynasty imperial garments into a design curriculum. In K. Hsieh, Y. Cooper, & L. Lu (Eds.), *Teaching Chinese arts & culture: Content, context, and pedagogy* (pp. 177-204). International Society for Education through Art.


Shin, R., Lim, M., Koo, A., Hsieh, K., Gu, M., Bae, J. / A Critical Discourse on Asian American Stereotypes

The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education / Volume 43 (2024)


Yi, H. R. [@redhongyi]. (2020, April 8). This one’s dedicated to Jonathan Mok, the Singaporean college student who was punched in the face in Oxford Street, London [Photograph]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/B-uGvTHj3xE/
