

# Asian Studies and Black Lives Matter

July 22, 2020

0:12 Hilary Finchum-Sung

Welcome, everyone. My name is Hilary Finchum-Sung and I'm the Executive Director of the Association for Asian Studies. Thank you for joining us today for the second AAS Digital Dialogue. This is a new series some of you may have seen the one on call for proposals, and we are grateful to the Henry Luce foundation for making this digital outreach possible. So today, we take our first steps toward ongoing dialogues on equity and diversity in Asian Studies. As many of you are aware, Asian Studies has not been the most diverse field of study since its inception. Although contributing disciplines have expanded the field and new ideas have been formed new paradigms have emerged over the years, the demographics of participation in the field have varied little over time. In 2020, some of us have faced, er, have become faced with the sudden awareness of social and economic inequities that affect every aspect of our lives. Some of us have been aware of these inequities, yet the comfort of old hierarchies, identities, and power structures have been difficult to overcome. Today's roundtable represents a small step in the right direction, a beginning of sustainable change and equitable access to and support for Asian Studies. So thank you for being here for this today. This important event today.

We have four panelists and a moderator today. Will Bridges is a newly tenured professor. He is now Associate Professor of Japanese at the University of Rochester Department of Modern Languages and Cultures. Will is a Japan specialist whose research interests and publications represents an intersection of modern Japanese and African American literature. Keisha Brown is Assistant Professor of History at Tennessee State University (Go TSU!) I'm from Nashville love TSU in the Department of History, Political Science, Geography and Africana Studies. Keisha is a Sinologist specializing in modern Chinese history with research interests in networks of differences in China and the Black other. Yasmine Krings is a PhD student in UCLA, East Asian Languages and Cultures Department. Her current research focuses on conceptions and portrayals of mixed race ethnics or mixed race-ness in post war Japan across visual and textual media. Marvin Sterling is Associate Professor of Anthropology and the East Asian Languages and Cultures at Indiana University (and here's an Go IU! because that's I did my graduate work there so nice to see you represented.) His research centers on the popularity of a range of Jamaican cultural forms in Japan. Mainly roots reggae, dancehall reggae, and Rastafari. AAS president Christine Yano will serve as moderator. Christine is Professor of Anthropology in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Hawai'i in Manoa. Her research explores popular culture in Japan transnational flows and intersectionality, and her work on Hello Kitty is brilliant! Um, today, today's webinar is a dialogue of Black Lives Matter and Asian Studies. We've asked panelists prepare their thoughts on issues of race and equity in Asian Studies, and Christine will moderate the conversation.

Following the structure part of today's roundtable, we will open the floor to questions, so please submit questions via the Q&A box at the bottom of your screen. We don't have chat enabled because it might be a bit much, but towards the end of the Q&A session, I'm going to open up the chat box to allow those participating to discuss issues raised during the webinar and to present their thoughts. Um, the chatbox will remain open for 15 to 20 minutes after we close the webinar, so you all can continue the conversation, um, after we are done. Uh, so with that, Christine, I'll give you the reins.

4:23 Christine Yano

Yeah, thank you so much Hilary. And you know, thank all what is it 200 of you I believe, who are joining who we can't see, but you can see us. And, and first of all, I just want to acknowledge the kind of the impetus for, for what's going on today. And that is, was, is a petition submitted to the AAS board of directors in support of Black scholars of Asia. This petition was submitted on June 15th of this year. So you know, this this, that what we're doing today is in part, a response to that really valuable kind of stimu- that prod by, by the petitioners. The petition was signed by over 1400 scholars of Asia and the petitioners are Michelle Long, Jolyon Thomas, Kimberly Sanders and Levi McLaughlin. And I really want to acknowledge and thank those four, for starting this ball rolling. It's an important ball. And, um, we don't know exactly where it's going to go. But I think what the petitioners and I fully agree, and I think the, the people who signed the petition, find important is that not only do we raise the conversation, but we raise the bar of action. And that's, that's what's critical that this is not just a lot of words, a lot of words are start. And I think that you know, as scholars we dwell in words, don't we? So we dwell in the realm of ideas, but hopefully, as engaged scholars, we dwell in the realm of practice. And we see how our values um, can- can change things can change things up. Um, I also want to acknowledge that you know, Asian studies as a field has not always been thus, it's oftentimes it's been characterized as really a legacy of colonialism, a legacy of white dominated Empire. And and that is absolutely true. But that does not say that it has to proceed in that way in the future. And from today on perhaps.

Um, so, you know, I'm asking those in this webinar today and your friends, to help us co-create Asian Studies to help us co-create Asian Studies, especially with graduate students, perhaps at the helm. I'm looking to Yasmine, of course, but you know, the rest of us too from, from, to me from all sort of levels of those engaged and committed to Asian Studies from maybe even high schoolers or undergraduates to graduate students all the way up to, to professors. So from-from this, range of involvement and commitment. It would be great if we could think of ourselves as an evolving community, and an evolving community of commitment. And that's, that's what I'm so grateful for. I'm grateful to the four petitioners to starting that ball rolling and expressing that commitment so eloquently. And I'm grateful to the four panelists today, as well as those who are joining us for being sort of, I guess, you know, so so being willing to go public, a little bit more public with that commitment. And I want to say to that, when the petitioners the for petitioners, they were quite adamant that they would not be on your screens today. I hope they are listening and watching. But they wanted to kind of to spread um, the maybe the sense of responsibility

but also the kind of the public face of perhaps the beginning of a new wave for Asian Studies, we'll see. So with that, why don't we go to our first speaker. And that is Will.

8:22 William H. Bridges, IV

Thank you. So before I begin, I just wanted to take a quick moment to thank the petitioners and the Association for Asian Studies, just for giving us the space to have this important conversation. And I'd like to thank all of my fellow panelists, of course, whose insights I look forward to hearing and thinking aloud with, and of course, thanks to all of you for taking time in the middle of a pandemic, that to join us and kind of think together about the possibilities in the future of Asian Studies. So I've written something that I want to share with you. And I'll just basically read it as I've written it, um, it essentially has three parts. In the first part, I want to talk a little bit about the lived experience of being a Black American Asianist. In the second part I want to think about how Black Lives Matters matters to Asian Studies. And then finally, I want to think about what it would mean to seriously and genuinely have a new Asian Studies when that takes the proposition that Black Lives Matter seriously. So those are the three, three parts of what I have, and I'll just read it to you that written.

I am an optimist. Mine is a peculiar predicament. Be Black, and American, and an optimist is to navigate the world as a living contradiction. The realities of your existence constantly reminding you why you should sacrifice one of the trio if the other two are to survive. It's fairly easy to be an American and optimistic, and one can survive as a Black American if one stays in one's place, but to balance Blackness and American-ness and optimism, the cognitive dissonance of it all is often too much to bear. Now, how can you remain optimistic when you have, in theory, done everything right? The things keep going wrong? Yes, you have your shiny PhD in Asian Studies from an Ivy League institution. But an Asianist is not what the world sees when it looks at you. Your new colleague sees a janitor, and he will ask you if you were in the classroom to pick up the trash. Your students will see an anomaly and they will unenroll from your class in handfuls after they see a Black face at the front of their introductory Japanese classroom. The Tokyo Metropolitan Police force will see a face reminiscent of one of the boogeyman on their counterterrorism training videos, and they will detain you as you make your way to the National Diet Library. Your banker sees a risk to be redlined and he will reject your home loan application. Your family sees a desperately needed source of income. And they will ask you not about your research and Asian Studies, but about how much of your sm- salary you can spare. Nevertheless, with these experiences, I still approach our conversation today with a sense of optimism, of possibility. Now, my optimism is not naïve. I realize the price we're paid for this optimism is the last eight minutes and forty-six seconds of George Floyd's life, a timespan that serves as a microcosmic compression of centuries of Black oppression and broken bones. But I am optimistic nevertheless, because this moment in history has given us the opportunity to shift the parameters of the possible. It is now possible for example, for more of us than ever before to see that Asian Studies needs Black lives to matter if it is to be Asian Studies in the truest sense of the term. Let me repeat that, if Asian Studies is to be Asian Studies in the truest sense of the term, it needs to understand that Black lives matter, that Black existence has long been an integral component of the histories, presence and futures of our objective- object of study. Now,

I could make a theoretical argument to events this point, rather than making a theoretical argument on my own, however, I asked instead that we all make an archival argument together. By this I mean that I'm asking all of you to reread the archives of your subfield with two questions in mind. Question one: Are the moments throughout your archive in which Black lives matter to the very self conceptualization of your object of study itself?

13:19

And question two: If Black lives matter, if, in other words, the objects of Asian Studies cannot be properly understood without addressing the questions posed by Black and critical race studies, why has Asian Studies all too often proceeded as if Black lives do not matter to its object of study? Now, when you reread the archives against these two questions, you cannot unsee the new vision of your subfield this exercise will show you. My own research is concerned with the field of post World War Two Japanese literary and cultural studies. But when I was a graduate student in search of a Fulbright sponsor at a Japanese University, I met with a professor at a University in Tokyo. I gave the professor a synopsis of my research, which is interested in Blackness in postwar Japanese literature. He listened to the synopsis and he nodded along. But when it was done, he said that he could not sponsor the project I had in mind, because this project quote, "Would not be a study of Japanese literature." quote. This dismissal attempts to police the borders of Asian Studies to move my project to the realm of comparative literature or some other domain. But let us consider this dismissal against the archives of modern Japanese literature. If we reread modern Japanese literature with the two questions of our thought experiment in mind, we must take note of how Black lives have indeed matter for authors such as Kanagaki Robun, Nagai Kafū, Natsume Sōseki, Miyamoto Yuriko, Kijima Hajime, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Kawabata Yasunari, Abe Kōbō, Nakagami Kenji, Morimura Seiji, Ariyoshi Sawako, Endo Shusaku, Kojima Nobou, Tsutsui Yasutaka, Murakami Ryu, Tawada Yoko, and among others, Iwaki Kei. Now this is just a partial list. But this list cuts right through the heart of the modern Japanese literary canon, and it includes winners of the Nobel Prize, the Akutagawa Prize and the National Book Award for translation.

Now, if we are to understand modern Japanese literature, a body of literature born in the wake of America's forced opening of Japan and its Imperial project, we will have to understand how Black lives matter to this body of literature. Now, I will not make a similar argument for your particular subfield of Asian Studies. I will ask instead, that you listen when the archive makes this argument for itself. Now let me turn to the question of how Asian Studies matter for Black lives, how Asian Studies matters for Black lives. I anticipate that Keisha will have more to say about this. So in order to not step on her toes, I will just briefly remind us of W.E.B. Du Bois' claim. That's a question the problem of the color line is to question quote, "the relation of the darker to the lighter races in Asia and Africa, and America and the islands of the sea." Quote. Now, if Black lives are to matter, we will have to both undo the pernicious legacies of the past and reimagine new models of shared human flourishing going forward. Now, for Du Bois, we must envision these paths and futures globally with Asia as a key interlocutor in our reenvisioned future. If this is the case, the building of a world in which Black Lives Matter requires the kind of imaginative inspiration provided by the study of Asia. This means in turn, that the

Association for Asian Studies has a keen role to play in Black Lives Matter. In order to meet this moment, however, AAS will have to fully open itself to the proposition that Black Lives Matter. Promoting Black flourishing in AAS will take much more than a sign in AAS' front yard, and a smile at the one black person who happens to live in its neighborhood.

17:49

In my experience, I found that AAS harbors what I call well-meaning racism, Now, everyone in AAS means well, but our structures and systems and cultures nevertheless reproduce the legacies of racist histories. Dismantling racial- racist inertia takes more than good intentions coupled with passivity. Dismantling institutionalized racisms require that the institutionalization of anti-racist policies. When we simply mean well, our commitment to Black lives ebbs and flows, as the visibility of Black suffering increases or decreases. The institutionalization of anti racist policies, by which I mean policies that work actively to undo the legacies, realities, products, of systemic racism, however, these policies remain in place, even if or when our attention turns elsewhere. Now, in closing, let me provide three examples of the kinds of policies I have in mind. One example here would be an AAS board seat devoted to enhancing inclusivity at AAS. A second example would be a committee charged with community outreach, with community here broadly defined. If Black lives are to matter for AAS they will have to matter even in the primary and secondary schools sitting in the shadows of our ivory towers, schools where aspiring Black intellectuals rarely have an opportunity to learn about Asia. Third, AAS should commit resources long term to encouraging Afro-Asian Studies. This commitment would include things such as offering travel grants to underrepresented scholars and HBCUs, sponsoring panels on Asia and critical race studies and research funds for doctoral students interested in Afro-Asian Studies. Now, the examples listed here are not exhaustive, but I hope they give you a sense of the reason I approached this conversation with optimism. To ab- to adopt policies such as this would be more than to simply say that Black Lives Matter. It would be to devote resources to the recreation of a world in which Black lives truly matter for both our scholarly society and the world with which it interacts. Thank you.

20:26 Christine Yano

Thank you so much Will, and and and some of those policies that you mentioned are reiterations of something from the petition, right from the petitioners. And so echoing those I think, is always useful. But I think it's clear to see the source of your optimism. That you know that you're, you're conceptualizing the conundrum, but also conceptualizing ways in which you can step beyond it. Without let's turn to Keisha.

20:54 Keisha A. Brown

Hi, thank you so much, um, for putting this panel together. So thank you to AAS as well as to the petitioners. When I first read the petition, I'm not going to lie, I was almost moved to tears because I never thought I would see kind of my experience and how I'll be seen, especially considering the enormous support the number of signatures that came in, in just a matter of hours. And so just to feel that my experience was seen was, in some ways, a first step for me. And so I'm appreciative of being asked to be on this panel today to speak to some of these

larger topics. And so thank you all so to my panelists, as well for this conversation that I hope moves to not just the confines of this webinar, but to all of those who are here that you also take critical steps to, to think about some of the methodologies and tools we're talking through today. And take it back to your own institutions as well as to your regional AAS clubs as well.

In thinking through what to provide today, I was kind of going back and forth about how personal I wanted to get and about how much I wanted to share about my experience as a Black woman navigating Asia and Asian Studies. And for me, I kind of want to start with why I began my research. Why was I researching African Americans and when I first began my project I was always told that that's interesting, but why is it significant? And it hurt because it was like, why are you saying that people who look like me, my experiences are not valid? Why can't I research African Americans? Why are we not doing this work? And why is this something that is seen as interesting, peripheral. And in some ways, I've met other students on the way who were like, I was discouraged, and therefore I did something else. And that, for me is something that I hope that we're able to remedy. But I began my research because I was traveling in China and I was just trying to understand about the Black experience in China in different ways and kind of thinking through my own experience in the 20th century, but also going back and once I realized and learn more about people like Du Bois and his wife Shirley Grant and Robert F. Williams and his wife Mabel, and their two sons, and Vicki Garvin, Aubrey Pankey, and others who are traveling in Mao's China, Taiwan, China was closed off to most Americans. You have Black Americans who are going to China and China as a space for opportunity and hope. And I think for me, it's like, you know, when I began that research, it really made me realize that we are missing so much in historical narrative when we don't put those perspectives together. When you think about what we talked about American history with China was closed off. No, it wasn't. It was open, but why these particular voices not included in historical narrative, and we include those voices, what can that mean?

For me, especially thinking through Afro-Asian Studies, as some other scholars have mentioned, it very much isn't sometimes a fraternal, a lot of the images and kind of discussions and so for me trying to locate Black women in particular was even harder, trying to find their archives and going back to what William was saying, and it brings to the piece I wrote recently about Unita Blackwell for the Association of Black Women Historians where, how we think about who are we talking about and thinking about the archives and thinking about these forces and how her tremendous work and really helping US-China bilateral relations once China and US relations kind of opened up again, post 1972 how that labor of love was in some ways lost, even though it made it possible for our later scholars to actually go to China because it was the organization that was the first organization she started going to China People's Friendship Association. They allow for Americans to go to China that make China seem a normal and safe space to go on from this Communist Boogeyman. And now, we have relations with this particular country. And what do we do? How do we make this seem accessible to the average American? And so thinking through those two particular narratives and thinking through those stories, it made me also come to the question of a question I was asked about is why there's so few Black China experts, or Black Asianists. And we're not just few of us. It's just that we're here.

But we're not getting the recognition. We're both visible and invisible at the same time. Our diversity that we bring to the spaces we're invited to is welcome. But in many cases our voices or the questions we pose, or the challenges we're pushing others to go through, in some ways are not welcomed and we're sometimes silenced, even in spaces that are supposed to be a space for us to have this critical inquiry. And so for me, it was very much about how do we reframe the question to not where there's so few Black China experts. But why is there a lack of recognition of the historical of Black China experts we have thinking about what Du Bois did for thinking about China and Chinese relations, thinking about Robert Williams did and others and how Robert Williams was also instrumental in Nixon's visit to China, how those particular experts. And so for me and some of the work I'm doing now is, how do we frame who's a China expert, and why we're not calling some of these African Americans, China hands to kind of honorific giving to individuals who are seen as experts and thinking through why we need more diversity, and thinking through not just diversity, not just equity, but also inclusion, how those three together can really lead to some instrumental changes.

25:53

I think one other thing to think about is when we talk about the need for race and racial discussions in Asian Studies, the problem that I think myself and I think others might have, as well as we're trying to find theoretical frameworks of language to talk about some of the areas of research and we have to go outside because we don't have critical engagement within Asia study spaces, we're looking elsewhere in other fields. And we should be in some ways at the forefront and not the ones who are catching up from behind. It also, in some ways, we don't have these conversations, we're not addressing the experience of those who have to live it. We're not talking about what it means to be a Black person who has to navigate certain spaces in Asia, what it means when it's different for you going somewhere and your nationality or your identity is always questioned are seen as secondhand or in some ways, also seen as, in some ways, you know, kind of understanding what it means. And for me as a Black woman in China, it's very interesting because there are a lot of images of Black men, but not very many Black women. So I know of Michelle Obama and her daughter, Sasha, Malia, went done when Obama's presidency I was excited because I was like, now here is another image of a Black woman that goes beyond, say, pop culture presentation that we see in some of the films. And to give an example of just kind of some of the circulation of American films. I wasn't trying to research you know, I was reading some work about Robert Williams and actually translating a Negro guide from Chinese to English, the day that the Trayvon Martin verdict came down and George Zimmerman was acquitted, and at the same time there was Norbit in Chinese on the TV. And I was just overstimulated, and I was like, this is a lot happening. And this moment, where is this the image in some ways I have to navigate. This overly aggrandized image of a Black female that has to navigate in this Chinese space as well, in the midst of in some ways was happening to US where Black men and young Black boys and women are being killed indiscriminately by, you know, just citizens who decide they want to, you know, to use to stand your ground law to question a Black young boy in a hood and going to do about his daily business. And so for me in thinking through those, those moments and those experiences, it leaves me to kind of another point of thinking of when we talk about and engage these

conversations, not just be reflective, but be receptive. And some ways think about ways into how we can redress these moments. And one thing to do is think about global anti-Blackness addressing anti-Blackness anti racism because racism, I'm in a great piece in the *New York Times* recently. Um, by I think Dr. Rose who mentioned how anti-Blackness is its own separate form, we can talk about racism. And that is important, but particularly think about anti-Blackness and what that means engage in those conversations, do the readings and do the work so that we can have conversations in these shared communal spaces when we come together as a large community, not just in the national international conference, but also in the regional conferences, at universities in your departments, and thinking through those particular conversations as well.

And last, but not least, I kind of wanted to add one more maybe suggestion to William's list is thinking about how we can really use the local chapters or regional chapters to be another space for critical engagement at the regional level, we can have more communal ties between different organizations. One of the reasons why I was excited by being invited to be on the executive committee and in the regional conference, I'm going to start this conference. Um, years ago, I was first-year or second year tenure-track. And I was like, this is one more thing to put on my plate. But I think the reason why I accepted the invitation to run for the at large member, first year position was because representation matters. And I wanted other scholars who looked like me who might be doing work like mine to feel that this is a welcoming space, because sometimes it does not feel welcome, but to maybe know there's someone else there. And so I think you'll be have some more critical engagement and use the local chapters to also echo or somebody kinda really push, the conversations can be really fruitful discussion. Thank you.

29:42 Christine Yano

Yeah. Thank you so much Keisha. And it's a great reminder of the importance of those regional meetings. You know, we all know that the annual conferences is a zoo, right and, and, and people just cluster to people they already know. But I feel like in the in the local regional chapter meetings, then you can you can sit down maybe with someone you don't even know and engage in conversation, and I think it's a great reminder. Thank you, Keisha. With that we'll turn to Yasmine.

30:10 Yasmine Krings

Hi. Thank you. Um, yeah, 10 minutes is not a lot of a lot of time. So I just wanted to use it to think about something that I've been thinking a lot about, which I think also, the panelists themselves have clearly been pushing for, and thinking about as well, which is about accountability. How do we hold our institutions and each other accountable? So we have all of these ideas and policies, but how do we actually make sure that people do what we want, basically. And I think one of the weird dissonant things that have perhaps been heightened in this moment, or in recent moments of a million letters and statements is seeing institutions and brands and people condemn racism or anti-Blackness and inequity while being racist and inequitable. And so racism and inequity, sorry, I'm like super nervous, but racism and inequity is



criticized and condemned and the abstract as this distant thing, but not as something that structures our everyday interactions. So it's something that's over there and not here, you know, it's right wing and not these, well-meaning as Will was saying, well-meaning liberals, when in reality, you know, of course, the institution and the structures themselves are very racist and inequitable. But as the people who make up that institution were a part of this, and that is something that we have to address. And so when I look at these letters and statements, one thing I think about is how often they don't make explicit or recognize their past or their present for that matter, an inability to list and own up to mistakes or complicity without hedging. Without legalese or like an attempt to protect your brand if you can't put privilege or your pride or benefits second to Black life and Black scholars to fighting inequity then basically those letters exist to say that everything is fine and good and Black lives only matter insofar as you can continue to profit or maybe profit even more. So, you know, in UCLA's case or at a university's case this racist in an equitable structure gets to put on diversity and equity like a little hats, you know, without making very much changes.

32:36

And so on the one hand, I think, of course, increasing the number of Black scholars in Asian Studies and in in the academy in general, is a necessity and every scholar regardless of subject matter should be learning about and given the tools to speak about race also, in general, but also Black, Black matters and anti-Blackness and in their respective areas gender and sexuality because I think obviously makes you a better scholar and a better person, to be able to challenge your position and your worldview, how you see and operate in this world. Which is far more useful than a second language that you'll never use, which is so often a part of Asian language programs. At the same time, of course, we have to address these institutional problems, but we also need to address sort of interpersonal issues. Because when you invite Black and other underrepresented minority scholars to come and try to survive this anti-Black, you're asking them to come to the space and survive this anti-Black and racist and queer trans homophobic space. Um, if you haven't had the chance to look at the #blackintheivory posts on Twitter, you definitely should. But if you have, then you know that the volume and severity, the volumes and speaks of the severity of everyday-ness and races- of racism and discrimination, and when you read those posts, you often also learned that those scholars left academia and yet the people who said those anti-Black and racist things who created environments so toxic that students and scholars flee, are still teaching classes and mentoring students, writing books, sitting on diversity committees, and these people are your colleagues and for the people watching they might be you. And I think academia is this weird place where its toxicity becomes a mark of pride. One's ability to survive being overworked, of experiencing racism and sexism are seen as a badge of honor because you're able to come out on top of this landscape. And it's certainly a skill and it takes a lot of endurance but I think when departments and institutions start or they already have are doing their big push and recruitment, they need to assess themselves and ask if a Black scholar cannot just survive here a Black scholarship cannot just survive here but thrive or in the words of well, Keisha, you know, flourishing can it flourish here.

35:08

As a graduate student, I recognize that what I see is very limited. I don't know how money works at the university, I have no idea about the bureaucracy and all of the institutional rules that might make faculty feel very constricted and unable to do very much. I also don't see very much of the conversations or the work that's done behind the scenes, and from my own interactions with my own department, I can also see that a lot of work is simply trying to keep things afloat. And so you're putting out one fire after another. And, you know, of course, all these results, I'd never also see all of the attempts that were done to try to change this reality. But one thing I think about and one thing I think, that I do see in academia that could be easily addressed is sort of how criticism is taken. In this regard, I think Sarah Ahmed's work and her many works on complaint have been very helpful and putting into words what I think lots of people have experienced over a lifetime. And I think part of what makes academia what might make academia a less claustrophobic and toxic space to be in is if we can check people, you know, regardless of rank and stature. And I think such checking needs to be done in the moment and not after the fact. I think oftentimes we let racist, homophobic, transphobic, what have you words linger in the air without being checked. We're basically creating an atmosphere where we're tacitly saying that that's okay. And I think this feeds into the experience of minority scholars who have to live in these fields where of course maybe in the moment in academia, we're not necessarily every moment experiencing racism but having to see people traffic and racist or you know, homophobic, transphobic ideas can be very claustrophobic and suffocating. And I think checking them publicly and making it something that we have a discussion or a teachable moment for everyone in attendance, rather than something that becomes like a personal one-on-one issue makes creates an atmosphere that wouldn't stifle criticism to uphold the status quo or to stifle criticism so that we don't make it weird. And I think everyone watching should should be doing this and it shouldn't just be on Black or other minority scholars to be the sole ones often doing this pushing back.

I also think there needs to be more open communication and atmospheres and departments between faculty themselves, but also faculty and students to register criticism and to advocate for themselves and each other in a way that everyone is assured of their place in the university. Oftentimes, criticism is kind of nipped in the bud because of precarity. A student won't register that someone has been racist towards them because it could affect their career as you can see in the #blackandivory posts. And more work needs to be done to ensure that as soon as place in the department doesn't just hinge on one person, which so often it does, I think. And also, you know, relatedly I think departments if you're going to continue to under pay or pay little to graduate students and adjunct lecturers, then you also need to be supportive of their union efforts. As a whole I think many of these sort of intersecting problems work to create an atmosphere that is not sustainable and is not desirable for minority scholars, and it's something that needs to be addressed. And I do think that doing these sorts of things, which doesn't really cost money, it's something you could do with your everyday life. And more would go a long way. But I also think at a certain point departments and various institutions need to rethink the purpose and the points of their existence and ask if it's really served by the people who are not just incidentally supremacists, not just well-meaning racists, but people who are also gleefully

and wholeheartedly, supremacists and racists. I think not everyone in this university wants a diverse and equitable space. And that is something that we all need to be able to reckon with.

39:15

Um, and sort of building on that, I think, of course, in addition to these more interpersonal reworkings, I think there are obviously other ways that you could say, as everyone on this panel has been trying to do, say Black Lives Matter and actually mean it. And of course, how you address anti-Blackness racism and equity will depend on where you are in the world. But if you are affiliated with an American institution, then likely there are divest investment movements, divesting from police and investing in university programs to support Black scholarship and abolitionists work at your university. And if you are not a part of that you should be a part of that that should be the top of your priorities. And I think regardless of where you are, if you are having a conversation about inequity, particularly in this now virtual world, I think that the event should be made free so that everyone can participate in the moment if they so desire, I'm sure presently I'm speaking to an audience that is composed predominantly of faculty and upper-level graduate students. When the university and Asian Studies in general, are comprised of way more than that, anyways, this is all to say that hopefully with the chaos of this year and the inspiration of Black Lives Matter, and many long years of abolitionist work, not enough of us are inspired to make it weird and have these uncomfortable conversations because nothing will change if we won't. Thank you.

40:40 Christine Yano

Thank you, thank you so much Yasmine. And you know, I think what's, what's key and what structures what you've just said, I mean, in effect, you're expressing a kind of optimism as as Will did, and that optimism kind of founded, centered upon the notion of accountability. And I think that's, that's extremely important. And you know, asking not only our institutions but also ourselves, and maybe some of our colleagues, whoever they might, they might be to look in the mirror to take a hard look at the mirror and to take a critical look. And to- to recognize sometimes the ugliness and and some of the beauties, perhaps, but some of the ugliness of what you might find there. So thank you. Thank you for that. Let us turn to Marvin.

41:25 Marvin D. Sterling

All right. All right. Thanks, Chris. I'd like to begin by thanking the petitioners, Hilary, Maura, Chris, of course, the panelists, and all the other folks who've been operating behind the scenes in organizing this event. And of course, most of all, I'd like to thank all of you out there in attendance today, I can't see you, but I know you're there. So thank you for being here in the middle, as Will noted of a pandemic so- so really impressive.

All right. So what I'd like to do is just to run through my reflections on a couple of themes that we were asked to consider in coming into our conversation today. And obviously, because we don't have a ton of time, I mean, these are really weighty, important questions. And so we won't have a ton of time necessary- necessarily to explore in depth, but hopefully that can come in the course of our discussion after this. So the three themes in questions I'm concerned the

importance of studies of race, in Asian Studies, the second concerns diversity in Asian Studies, and finally, the need for greater equity and in Asian Studies, so being a little bit of a stiff and, you know, following sequence of themes just to make sure that I hopefully touch on some of the concerns that we hope that the panelists will touch on in which you know, you guys have done a wonderful job of thus far.

Um, so one way to acknowledge the importance of studies of race in Asian Studies is, I think by considering the work that's already out there in relation to the work that needs to be done. And so for me, this includes work that reflect on the question of war and Empire and occupation, which of course, have significantly informed recent history in the region. I've, in the past, conducted research on Japanese interest in Jamaican popular culture and using that interest as a way of thinking about ideas of Blackness and transnational context. Like Yasmine, and I'm working on a project right now on mixed race. People who were both of African and Japanese descent, and so some of my comments are very much in line with you know, or emerging out of that research concern. Um, so forth many mixed race people across Asia were born of the encounter or an encounter with the American military presence in their country. And so while we all know that race is not viable as a scientific idea, people do continue to live their lives through this idea-(digital static) lives that are in some cases are to some degree acknowledged, and in other cases not acknowledged. And I think the latter often reflects the fact that mixed race people, by their very existence of self evidently defy the absolutism of racial and ethnic categorization in these countries. So I think there's value in attending to the idea of race and Asian Studies, even as a scientifically debunked idea, right, the fact that people live in acceptance of or interrogation of this idea, right? I think it remains important to acknowledge people's whose experiences as such as mixed race people as race to people more generally, are sometimes not fully acknowledged. And as I said, to the extent that the existence of many of these individuals can be tied to the legacy of war and occupation and Empire, their experiences potentially represent an important insight into the modern experience in Asia, right, so. So this may be is one way in which we can think about the importance of race, the continued importance of race in relation to, you know, stuff that's already been written, but also in relation to emerging scholarship, including on mixed race identities in Asia race, more broadly speaking.

46:00

And so one of our priorities is Asianists in recent years I think has become thinking about the field not only in national or regional terms, but in more fully- more fully global terms. And I think exploring the Afro-Asian encounter one, which is significantly defined in racial terms, might be one way of doing this. So we can also think about not just such configurations as Afro-Asia, right, but also in relation to other, or- we can also think about other related configurations such as between Latin America and Asia, and also global indigeneities that might reflect on shared experiences between, for example, Native Americans and indigenous groups in places like Japan, and Taiwan. Right? So all of these in all of these cases of racialization, right, we might have something to work with as a kind of productive point of analysis and understanding the experience is shared by these different communities. Right? So, again, you know, this might be another way in which we can kind of think about the importance of race or using races, an

analytical point in forging a kind of transnational connection or transnational connections that include the region but also reach beyond the region.

So I'm in Tokyo right now. It is 8:47am. And so I'm gradually waking up the coffee is kicking in. And I mentioned Tokyo because I- that I am in Tokyo because I attended the Black Lives Matter march in Tokyo a few weeks ago, which for many reasons, for me was a really interesting experience, including because there were not many people of African descent and attendance which you know, it is not entirely surprising given that, you know, they're not many people of African descent in Tokyo in general. But it was good for me personally, just to be in a space where there were so many people who were, you know, chanting Black Lives Matter and no justice, no peace, no peace, and so on. So there were hundreds of really interesting signs. And one of the signs that really stuck out to me the most was one that said, "If you love Black culture, love Black people" and there are a couple of signs, reflecting that theme. So this, for me was a useful point of entry into the complexity of the idea of Blackness in Japan. And, you know, the, the challenge in some ways of really trying to understand what it means or what it could mean to say in a meaningful way that Black Lives Matter at least if you're, especially if you're not someone of African descent, right? Because what we do have in Japan, you know, is a- is a kind of a fascination with Black culture. I mean, that's a very broad term I realize but things like hip hop, reggae, you know, jazz, you know, athletes who are of African descent, there's a fascination with this stuff but, what the sign is getting at is that there isn't in many cases, a similar appreciation of Black people as, as people, you know, as opposed to that Black people is cultural products or producers of culture. So, you know, we were marching through Shibuya, which, you know, in which you might see certain kind of commercialized representations of Blackness, but not something, not Blackness represented as something overtly political. Right. No justice, no peace, that kind of message. So for me, it's an example of, you know, the complex flow of ideas.

50:10

You know in terms of how Blackness is understood in Japan, so Blackness can be something hybridized it can be playful, it can be a resource for creating means of cultural identities. It can also have an anti-colonial register, you know, Blackness is resistance. But then mixed in and all of this there's also the idea of Blackness as colonized as object as something readily reducible to caricature. And so you saw, I think a good example of this would be, you know, that controversial NHK cartoon, which attempted, I suppose to explain the unrest in the United States to Japanese audiences, but did that by rendering people of African descent in very stereotypical ways. So again, in line with the first theme, I think it's also important for us to continue to think about race in Asian Studies to engage with ideas of race are concerned with the race in Asian Studies, because the stakes are really quite high for Japan and other societies to get this, right, because there are more and more people of African descent more and more mixed race people in these countries, even if not presently, in numbers where, you know, majority peoples living in these countries might feel they really need to pay immediate attention. And so, you know, I know the Japanese case, best, but I'm also thinking about, you know, the case of, and I don't want to step on Keisha's toes here, but you know, the case of, you know-

the African entrepreneurs, migrants, people living in Africa who are students and so on, who have been targeted or stigmatized, you know, carriers of the Coronavirus, right? These are and so there was some reporting on this topic as well. So, so these kinds of issues, I think really speak to the urgency with which we as scholars who work in Asia, need to continue to address the kinds of issues that the Black Lives Matter movement has called to our especially urgently to our, to our attention. I know we're pressed for time. So I'm going to speak briefly to the two remaining themes. So the second theme is diversity in Asian Studies. I think it's important to acknowledge that there is a tremendous, tremendous amount of diversity within diversity. I think in many ways. You know, Asian Studies among other disciplines where people of color are not particularly well represented tokenism can feel like something like it's sufficient. Right? So there's like one Black guy in Asian Studies or the one, you know, African American woman in anthropology or whatever the case might be in our departments and our graduate programs. And we feel reassured that you know, this is sufficient, but, but it is not. And I say this, because we also have to acknowledge it's if we are talking about people of African descent, who has a tremendous amount of diversity within even that apparently fairly specific category, including not only African Americans, of course, but also continental African peoples, Afro-Caribbean, like myself and a Jamaican, Jamaican of Jamaican descent.

53:57

You know, Afro-Latinx people, mixed race people, and so forth. Because, you know, each of these different groups of people bring potentially unique perspective- perspectives to our field. So again, I think, just as a kind of a broad argument for the importance of diversity in Asian Studies, you know, we can't feel satisfied with, you know, one or two individuals who we happen to encounter, you know, who's you know, a person of color and say, okay, we got diversity covered here. Right? Because, you know, we, you know, diversity in the truest sense of the word is as complex and deep and, and so I think we need as a scholars to continue doing the work we need to do to not just again, have those obvious kind of, you know, one or two individuals who, you know, allow us to feel good that yeah, okay, we have some diversity here, we need to really push this idea of diversity, so that, you know, it comes into fruition in a more-meaningful way, in a deeper way, in terms of representation. And then finally, in terms of the need for greater equity in Asian Studies. I think one concern that we might address is that, again, this is kind of implied in my comment just now. Often students and faculty of color in our program feel the burden of representing diversity, right, and kind of gross terms. And so, you know, since there are even fewer, you know, people of color, maybe within Asian Studies programs, that burden becomes, in some ways even more intense. So I think I'm in some ways, you know, echoing what, Yasmine you know, sent so eloquently and in more detail in her comments, but if anything, I just like to reiterate, you know, her points about, you know, recognizing that burden that graduate students of color in particular face and again, you know, being representing diversity for their programs. And, you know, for us especially is, you know, senior colleagues to, you know, think about what work we can do whether in a way of, you know, financial incentives that acknowledge the work that our students do above and beyond, let's say what, you know, other graduate students might be expected to do, right? So maybe in the way of financial compensation in the way of mentorship or in the way of opportunities, right,

that we might offer these students and I guess one specific example I'm thinking of is, you know, if you happen to be putting together a, you know, a panel or symposium or something and you wouldn't ordinarily or necessarily think of including someone who does work, or especially a graduate student who does work on Afro-Asia, well, you know, think about that possibility or if you're putting together in an edited volume, you know, on an issue that isn't necessarily about Afro-Asia, but that, but in which the idea of Afro-Asia could be useful, then this might be an opportunity to again give graduate students or, you know, junior colleagues, that opportunity to contribute in that way to that end of the volume or, you know, a special edition of a journal or, or something like that, to kind of help get their names out there. And also to, you know, to kind of diversify the range of ideas that, you know, we tend to consider when we produce edited volumes, or especially at additions of journals, and so forth. So I'll stop there because I know again, we're pressed for time. I realize these are just some very cursory comments, but I hope we can kind of flesh them out in the upcoming discussion. Thanks.

58:11 Christine Yano

I'm muting myself- but thank you so much, you know, because I think you know, the kinds of things that you bring up from mixed race to what I'm calling Global Asia's thank you for thank you for that plug for Global Asia, to the kind of tokenism that perhaps many of many of us in academia especially if you are a minority, if you are the only say Black scholar in an AAS regional meeting, and, and, and the burden of that kind of tokenism what it means to be placed on that particular kind of spotlight and and how exhausting that spotlight can feel, you know, when you get trotted around from one event to another is, is a very real part of the experience of you know, being a minority in in a field. With that, I just wanted to- to very briefly allow any of our panelists the opportunity to respond to what someone else has said on the panel. If you have thoughts that might connect up with what has been said, and I know that we have questions waiting- waiting for us, we'll just keep them at bay for just a little bit. A little bit. But does anybody have any, any kind of comments that you might want to make?

59:35 Marvin Sterling

Well, I'll jump in question for Will. And, you know, I find it, you know, really interesting that I mean, I've known you for a while. And, you know, I think it's interesting that we frame at least some degree, our work as Japan studies scholars, and under the rubric of Afro-Asia, and I don't, I'm not necessarily saying that it's the singular way in which you define your scholarship. I understand that it is an important part of how you understand the work you do. And so I'm just being a little bit selfish here by asking you to, you know, are there examples of kind of contemporary works, whether by African American scholars or Japanese scholars who, whose work you would characterize, I'm assuming authors, I'm literary authors, novelists, and so on, right? Whose work you feel could be characterized in this way. And, and I guess as an anthropologist, I'm interested in the, maybe the, the, the experiences out of which these words emerge. In other words, can we use the experiences of these, these authors, the backgrounds of these authors, maybe the travels of these authors whatever- however you define that travel, as maybe a potential point of connection between our kind of shared understanding of, of what Afro-Asia is, which is yours as a literary scholar and mine as an anthropologist?

1:01:30 William H. Bridges, IV

Thank you for the question. And I'll try to be brief so we can kind of open the conversation up to other people. The term, kind of the conceptualization of my project is Afro-Asian is actually one that I came to, towards the end of the project, actually, with a bit of reticence, to be honest. Going into the project, it was very important for me to conceptualize this as a project in Japanese Studies, right as to say, I didn't want to make Japan travel to Africa or anyplace else. I wanted to show them the Africa was already there. That- I was simply doing Japanese studies, simply reading the Japanese archive, in so doing being kind of pushed towards thinking about issues, questions of Blackness and race and ethnicity and what have you.

And in my case, what that meant was reading works of literature really at the level of a sentence, right, going kind of sentence by sentence working through works of Japanese literature and thinking of people like Nakagami Kenji, and Ōe Kenzaburō and Murakami Ryū, Tsutsui Yasutaka, and some of these other people that I was- mentioned earlier, whose works if you're simply just kind of reading them sentence by sentence, you then have to start asking questions about, well, why is Ōe mentions of the Afro-Asian writers conference, right? So this works of literature by reading it kind of as a work of Japanese literature that kind of connects you to the Blackness that's within, right rather than kind of taking some other concept, kind of hybridizing the texts in that way. That is the way that I initially approached the conversation is kind of a naïve Junior scholar and realized that there wasn't fidelity in that approach. By which I mean, that's not the way it is my understanding that some of these authors like Nakagami Kenji, were thinking of themselves. They weren't limiting them to themselves on the level of the nation state. They weren't think- conceptualizing themselves as, quote unquote, "Japanese authors". And author like Ōe Kenzaburo or Nakagami Kenji is many things at once, there is a kind of plenitude in that work. That yes, of course, speaks to some of the trends and currents and contexts and histories of Japan. But we're also speaking to say their travels in the United States through Black America, right, or Ōe's interest in Cameroonian politics. There is a way in which kind of nation state conceptualization wasn't enough to capture that plenitude, so I kind of begrudgingly moved towards Afro-Asia, this kind of intentionally, ambiguous, nebulous term, right, which precisely by virtue of that kind of nebulous capacity seemed to me to have a bit more fidelity to the kinds of moves that these thinkers were making.

1:04:30

My next project is interested in the Black Pacific, and metaphor of oceanics that really gets out to the heart of what I'm interested in, right, that you can dip a hand in off the coast of Chile, and you can dip a hand off the coast of Yokohama, and you're still dipping your hand into the same Pacific, but these are two wildly different bodies of water. Right? So that kind of connection that is both in richly global, but also very much attuned to the local. That is kind of the framework that I ended up with an Afro-Asian helps me get at that. The Black Pacific, I think helps me get at it a little bit more. Um, but again, that was a conceptualization that I was kind of pushed to, in order to be a bit more honest about what I was seeing happening in some of those texts.



1:05:21 Christine Yano

Let me just ask our panelists um, if there are any other comments that you want to make on each other's what each other has said. Before we turn it before we open it up to questions. Will?

1:05:30 William H. Bridges, IV

Since- since I am unmuted, if it's okay, I'd like to ask a quick question of Yasmine. I was really inspired by some of the things you said. So I just want to thank you for your contribution for being here.

I really see my position in the academy is that of a placeholder. That is a- it's already too late for me. I don't think that was kind of given the- the realities of my intellectual training and development. There was too much anti Black gravity right in the lack of resources starting in elementary school for me to ever, I think, honestly do the work of an Asianist to have that kind of capacity. But- and I suppose we're back at that optimism. I see the possibility of a next generation or two, who could seriously do that work, right, who could get to this idea of again, flourishing, an idea that I'm interested in pursuing. I mean, diversity is nice, but I'm much more interested in Black flourishing. And it seems to me that in a couple generations, if I can hold this place long enough, there will be a generation who could actually flourish. So with that in mind, I'm interested in hearing you say more about the kind of support you think the students of your generation might need to have that flourishing become reality. And you've spoken very, I think eloquently about some of that burden. But I'm interested in hearing more about what can we can do to support you taking the reins from us.

1:07:08 Yasmine Krings

Um, thank you. I don't know that I want to be able to speak on behalf of everyone. But I'll just put my thoughts on what I think would be helpful. I definitely think some of the AAS, what AAS laid out in terms of these networking events that are led by Black Indigenous scholars for Black Indigenous scholars would be very helpful. I think one of the things about academia is that it's so mass and enormous and people are not necessarily even in Japan studies like I also had not known about Marvin, prior to the Japan on the Record podcast, but also prior to this moment, who is obviously working on something I'm interested in. And so such events like that would be helpful to be able to meet people. Um, I do think there fundamentally needs to be a reworking, of course requirements. And so in my own department, you know, of course, we have to take off the Japanese classes, but if or whatever area you're in, you have to take a lot of that and usually that means you're just getting trained in the same thing and so it can be very hard for you to break out of that. And so I think, you know, as I was saying, oftentimes you have this second or third language that you have to you like learn in my case, I learned Korean, which I remember none of now. And I also learned reading German, which I also remember none of now. And I think it would have actually been helpful to have spent those three years or two years, um taking courses that are about race and queer theory more, I've only gotten the opportunity to take little bits and pieces where I can fit into my program or I can fit into my schedule. I think having that embedded in it would be helpful. At the same time, we have to recognize that not everyone in that department, as we said Asian Studies does not necessarily

have the facilities to be conversant with gender studies or with you know, ethnic studies. So it might be helpful for departments to develop relationships with those departments or other departments at the university to help create those classes for Asianists to take so that we can actually learn to be conversant. So I find that a lot of the times what I'm doing is having to read on my own. And when you do that you're like, I have no idea. You know, if you read Sylvia Wynter for the first time, you're like, what, what is going on? You know, and it takes many, many re-readings, and it would be helpful to have it sort of embedded in it and embedded as part of the curriculum. And I think it also would help if it was a requirement for everyone, because I think, as I'm sure you all you were all graduate students, at one point too. At one point you have to have these conversations with other students about why, why it matters. And rather than have you be the person that talks about it, maybe that could be a class where everyone just learns why it matters so that no one has to talk about it ever again. And we could just move on with our life and do better research. So I think sort of in those terms would be helpful.

1:10:07

Um, also, I think, at least for the faculty that I work with, I find that they're very open. So I think that's what makes me want to be in academia longer because I think I can more clearly advocate for myself and I could also, at times when necessary, provide criticism of them. And I think that is very empowering. It's not really a usual experience for most people to be able to feel comfortable, to be able to say those things and know that their place at the University is not jeopardized in any way. And I definitely feel that my faculty that I work with cares about my well being and so I actually feel very well supported. So I think in general, it would be best to ask those questions of graduate students, Black graduate students overall because I think their experiences can differ very widely and I don't want to have to speak exclusively on behalf of them and I also do not consider myself as part of the new wave like, I also feel like my world is done like I'm like I've already already follow the track. So I'm like, for the other people younger than me, who you know are contacting me from Japan on the Record who are like undergrads, I'm like, this is for you like, one day, you won't have to do this shit anymore. Like you could just do what you want. So, yeah.

1:11:27 Christine Yano

Okay with that, I think well, I'm sorry, with apologies to Keisha, Keisha did you have something burning that you wanted to- to mention here?

1:11:34 Keisha A. Brown

I will mention one thing, I think, something that Marvin touched upon. And I guess since I'm the the one scholar who focuses on China, I guess I speak to thinking about what was happening in places I think about anti Black racism is happening in China. And some of the recent events where you have this backlash against individuals in China who are African, African Americans as a result of kind of, you know, the COVID-19 has put pressures on everyone in different ways and those pressures are coming out. And this is not new for us who have studied China and studied on those communities. These African community has been growing for decades and many of them are in places in South China, in Guangzhou in Guangdong in those areas. And

they've experienced it in so many different ways in terms of being access to government resources, been able to register and get your hukou just trying to get employment of opportunities, being discriminated. And again, this is not new in those areas. It even goes back to even in the late 1980s. And you want to go back further look at Emmanuel Hevi's book where he talked about being African in China in the 1960s. And so I think there's a history of it, and it comes up with these moments of pressure. I think this was a little bit different, because I think social media and they really got out in a way. And I think also not just social media, but also the fact that COVID-19 has led to a rise of anti Asian racism and I think people are kind of concerned as to after experiencing this globally, how can you go back and now do the opposite to people like you scapegoat this whole group of people who you know, in some ways are not part of this process you have felt that particular state in yourself how is this possible to be both the victim and, and the aggressor in the same time? So I think in that case, that's why it's been so, so much attention recently. But it's not, it's not new. It's just, there's a new awareness of nothing. It's a new kind of context right now, what's happening with COVID-19 has put some really interesting awareness to what's happening. I think it's another really random point that while that was happening, Popeye's opened up in Shanghai, so there's a lot going on. And so what does that mean in terms of American globalization and consumerism, fried chicken is coming through, they opened up a new shop in Shanghai, in the midst of kinda this really cool and really heavy, anti-Black racism that happened in restaurants like, you know, different McDonald's chains in China. So-

1:13:57 Marvin D. Sterling

It's perfectly consistent. (laughing)

1:14:00 Keisha A. Brown

I guess my concern is what is the marketing? Is it the same marketing in the US and again, what does that mean for representations of Black women, especially Black Southern women, so how she identifies us how do I see myself at the moment, but is that representation? If you have that lack of one to one engagement subspaces, where the initial interaction is through this kind of, you know, one dimensional kind of, you know, this kind of one dimensional advertisement and versus, you know, a person, what does that mean in those ways as well?

1:14:29 Christine Yano

Yeah, thank you.

Keisha A. Brown

I'll be quiet, sorry.

1:14:32 Christine Yano

(laughing) With that, I'm going to ask Hilary, I know the questions have been pouring in. And I know that our time is short, but maybe if we could just pick two or three that we might address, Hillary.

1:14:42 Hilary Finchum-Sung

Well, we did open up the floor early for people to ask questions in advance. So I think I'll start with those. We have a lot of questions and I hope we can get to them and they're very, very good questions. The first one is from David Ludden of New York University. He's Professor of History there. He is basically asking like how far the discussions of racism can go to include its many forms in Asia and I think we've touched on this just yet Keisha brought this up and others on on the panel have brought this up as well. How can they bring up these forms of racism in Asia and facing Asians in America without diluting or even undermining the specific African American focus of Black Lives Matter? So that's also a different angle. Is Black Lives Matter weakened politically in the US by studies of racial capitalism that locate the legacy of plantation slavery in the US and more expansive historical frames? So, very complicated question.

1:15:40 William H. Bridges, IV

So I will begin the, very rich question, and I'll give a very poor answer to give some of my colleagues time to think of a better answer that doesn't just-justice to this very kind of rich and complex question. And I've actually recently written a piece that engages with this idea will be published in InVisible Cultures, momentarily. It's interested in the idea of extirpation, which is thinking about localized extinction events, right? And one thing that I argue in this piece, working primarily through 20th and 21st century African American literature, is that one thing that one finds in the African American literary canon again and again, is that if you read it closely, the argument is not solely about African American liberation. The argument is about liberation period. Right? That is to say, liberation is something that either we all get, or none of us get. Isonomia, equal equality in the eyes of the law. This is something that either we all get or none of us get. Democracy. It's something that either we all get it none of us get. It's not something that can be done in pockets. You have these localized extinctions, where you have democracy here, but you have disenfranchisement here, either it's there it's not. And you see that kind of argument happening again and again. The example that comes immediately to mind is actually Octavia Butler, an African American woman who writes science fiction. In her piece, the *Parable of the Sower*, she writes about this idea of hyper empathy. Let's say she has this African American protagonist, who can feel the pleasure and pain of those around her, literally feel it in her bones. She doesn't just feel it when there's African American suffering, but she feels it when there's suffering in her presence that I say that to say, I don't see connecting Black Lives Matter and its legacy upon which is built to other kind of sufferings and oppressions and legacies of imperialism and its structures abroad. I don't see that as a dilution of the message that Black Lives Matter is proposing. I see that as the foundation, right? It's suggesting that there's a way that American militarism fundamentally tramples Black life but that same trampling is happening elsewhere. Right? So to be attuned to some of the messages that Black Lives Matter is putting on the table is to be attuned, yes, to that Black suffering, but it's to be attuned to that suffering, wherever it may happen, right? Even if its target is different, the suffering is still the same. And so in that regard, I don't I wouldn't see it as a dilution to think, say Black Lives Matter through Asians.

1:18:33

The only caveat I would add to that is that that is on the level of kind of the work of the intellectual when we switch domains to the work of the politician, I think there are indeed cases where in fact, this might be pertinent to Asian Studies. That is we start to rethink kind of in reimagining AAS there are instances when policies I think do need to be targeted. When you have the dearth of African American PhDs in East Asian Studies, that requires a targeted intervention, right? And so then say we went to boost the number of Asian Studies PhDs would tend to be to dilute, I think, the work that needs to be done. So when one begins to think in the realm of politics, there are moments when kind of targeted interventions, it seems to me became a bit more logical. But if we're thinking of the work of the intellectual, it seems to me that there's a kind of responsibility to think, as capaciously as possible. That is my unformed answer. I will now turn it over to my colleagues who have now had time to give you a better answer to that question.

I think you're muted, Chris. I think you might need-

1:19:52 Marvin Sterling

Um-

1:19:53 Christine Yano

Hillary, we hear another question. Just, you know, I know that we we're trying to do a semester's worth of work here in one and a half hours. So-

1:20:04 Hilary Finchum-Sung

One thing before Marvin, I know you're prepared to answer. I think Keisha was taking notes as well, and maybe Yasmine, I think that we can go a little bit later if you all are okay with this. So because we have so we have so many questions right now that are piling up, and I'd like to try to get to as many as possible, but please go ahead, Marvin.

1:20:25 Marvin D. Sterling

Sorry, I don't know if I cut the line there. But um, yeah, I mean, I'll agree with Will.

I think um, I'm kind of thinking about the moment that we're in. And I think one of the significances of this moment as opposed to, let's say other moments, in which, you know, people of color, African Americans in particular have protested against police brutality and systemic violence. I think this moment feels to me like it involves a kind of insistence on the particular ways in which Black people suffer and struggle in this country. And my feeling is that that moment should be sustained. For what good can come out of a sustained focus on a particular issue or a particular concern. But that said, especially given the second thing that this moment, you know, feels, why this moment feels unique to me. The second reason is that there's so many people with so many different backgrounds who are supporting this movement, not just you know, African Americans, you know, it's a movement that is truly global, right. There are people all around the world who are insisting in a very focused way on anti Blackness. And

so I think that it is important to kind of recognize this moment of critique of anti Blackness. But at the same time, I think it's also very important to kind of realize that the fate of, of all of us are interconnected. So that that say, you know, there there is another moment in which let's say someone who is the Asian descent, someone who's Asian American experiences some kind of, you know, incredibly, you know, just like, you know, I mean, the George Floyd murder really kind of got our attention if there's something similar, if something similar happens in the future, where, let's say someone -God forbid- of Asian descent experiences some horrible form of white supremacy or is victimized in a similar way or in some other horrible way, by white supremacy, there should be a similar outpouring of support by African Americans by, you know, all kinds of other people in support of, you know, Asian Americans who, let's say, are attacked or vilified. As you know, carriers of the so called kung flu right now we should we should support we should, you know, as African Americans provide or support for for other people who might find themselves in the situation that George Floyd found himself. So I guess I'm making two points at the same time. One is that it's it is important to insist on, you know, the the uniqueness of this moment to the extent that it is and a sustained critique of anti Blackness but at the same time, what goes around should, you know, what comes around should go around with it, I think is the expression of what comes around should go around, meaning that we as African Americans, whether scholars are in citizens or just as individuals, we should feel a similar investment in supporting other peoples who happen to not look exactly like us.

1:24:24 Keisha A. Brown

I might make a few comments and try to maybe add to this discussion that, and add to Wills' and Marvin's' really great comments. I think the first part, it has me thinking back to kind of the Bandung moment where a lot of the African Americans I research where they were part of this movement, but then in many cases, the movement kind of moves beyond where their voices were kind of, in some ways marginalized. And so I get to kind of cautious optimism, where we're in this moment, how does how far can it go without somebody losing those individual voices? And I think for me, the question is, how do we kind of address these larger systems of oppression versus getting into what we call the struggle Olympics and kind of comparing different struggles. If we look at the larger oppression systems, and think about these all these -isms and assemblies are affecting people in different ways, not just how it's happened to me. But what is a system that is putting pressure on me in multiple ways? How does my body in some ways being read and misread in these multiple spaces? And for the work I do, I think Black internationalism is a really great way to kind of think about and it kind of touches into what will listen about Black literature, where Black internationalism has the similar focus where it looks at Black people, not just in America, but kind of black diaspora and thinking about visions of a kind of transracial, transnational way of thinking and trying to put collaborations together to address our white supremacy and its multiple forms. And so Black internationalism as a kind of framework is a good way it's also looking at the Black internationalism work, especially out of the work coming out about Black internationalism and women by Ashley Farmer, Keisha Blain, by Tiffany Gill edited anthology. Other work like people like Dayo Gore he talks about Vicki Garvin in China really gets to this idea of why they searching, why they're looking beyond the US and beginning and what's happening when they're trying to find these collaborations. I think

this current moment is a little bit different because we have this kind of both the recognition of the local and the global, where they're trying to address both of these issues at once. But they're trying to address the domestic issues and problems trying to get to the roots of somebody's systemic issues that we're dealing with, how do we get here? And how do we change? How we work on multiple levels? And so I think that is a way to kind of really think about it. It's local and its global. And how that internationalism as a way of thinking through it kind of lets you know that you can kind of get into these conversations and think about the system of oppression, and try to deal and tackle with those and see how this is happening across different fronts. And people like Jennifer Ho, who's put together a really good PowerPoint where first he was doing what, anti Asian racism, but she's modified it to talk about also combating anti Asian, anti Black racism, as well as some resources as well. So that work is actually happening in many institutions and that's her work is in an Asian American Studies and thinking through how we can build these collaborative networks and where we're still addressing the specifics of the different groups, specifics in terms of local situation, but also how do we grapple with these larger issues that need to be addressed as well?

1:27:13

So I get the question about diluting because it has happened before historically but I think this is a very interesting moment where there is an awareness and a consciousness that collaboration and cooperation is in some ways going to be useful how we can do so and try to do some some really interesting systemic changes that can really uplift everyone and, and thinking about, you know, intersectionality in Kimberlé Crenshaw's work, like what does that mean when those of us who are in some ways intersection and in some ways of our experiences can be in some ways, not at the bottom, if we can, somebody is kind of going to- I just taught Marxism, and it comes in- infinitesimal ways I'm thinking about if we upload a little bit of temper, impose a whole structure that we take the base in some ways uplift the base, then the whole structure to something coming structure can in some ways topple, and that can be something we can think about, as well as those of us who were, in some ways been marginalized or in some ways been rendered othered if those particular voices become in some way I'm no longer seen as the other or the periphery, that can lead to a larger long term changes, not just individuals, but also thinking in institutions. We talk about the hiring practices, we talk about giving equity in different institutions and those different boards, we think about the pipeline, where do we begin by exposing different students of color to Asian Studies in Asian programs, Asian languages, and those kind of ways to kind of make those changes and thinking about racial capitalism, and does this weaken Black Lives Matter politically in the US? I don't think it does. Because again, I think goes back to the first point about there is awareness of the local and global but I think that we talked about the legacy of plantation slavery in the US in more expensive historical ways, I think is really useful. I think some of the work I've done when we talk about the kind of the lack of awareness of what plantation slavery was in the Chinese context, where your initial exposure was primarily for the average Chinese populace was to the translation of Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1901. That does not really get to the legacies of what it is, I think a great place to really think about the huge impact of legacies of plantation slavery how we're still addressing those issues now is through the 1619 Project. I taught one of the episodes

today, and we're talking about the wealth that was just generated where people were using mortgages, against mortgaging slaves. So we're not mortgaging our home, we're using slaves, and we're getting loans off of bodies of people. And we see them as property and how the wealth of this country was very much tied to the cotton industry and tied to the slave labor in the way in wages that came from that. So I think kind of exposing that, and kind of looking at those kind of roots of American capitalism that come out of that particular moment. And looking at that project, we looked at 1619, when the first, the first group of enslaved Africans made their way to the British North American colonies. And how those legacies persist would be another great place to really kind of think through how that understanding can really greater to note is not just enterprise, there are people working for free, or was not just something where we talk about these legacies, but he really increased the understanding of how slavery really impacted this country really putting that understanding out there for people to kind of really understand why it was so in some ways deeply entrenched or how we're still combating those those issues where it's a new forms were necessary but not necessarily being seen as as, you know, the pipeline, the prison and how this is kind of new form how we had these issues today.

1:30:29 Hilary Finchum-Sung

Okay, yes, I don't want to usurp your opportunities to answer but I'm going to move ahead to another question. And perhaps maybe you can address that one. So, we did get a question from Ron Richardson of Boston University about collaboration, I think partly that was addressed. So I'm going to move on to a question that's, that talks about a different issue. And this is actually there are two comments, one from Lorenzo Peryou and then one from Taylor Atkins dealing with the representation of areas, regional areas within Asian Studies. Noticing, of course that, you know, three fourths of our panelists today are in Japanese Studies, and one is the Sinologist. That question deals with issues of regional inequality, and the- the conversations in diversity, race and Empire. And the recommendation that there are folks or there are people the languagist folks doing Black work, work on Black Ameriasians, for example, in Southeast Asia, an example cited is Angelica Allen, from, in- at UT? Taylor's follow up to that, and I'm scrolling down. I'm so sorry. Gosh, there's so many questions and comments. I'm so sorry. I don't think we're going to be able to get to all of these. I love this. I love that you're asking. And so Taylor's question is sorry, but looking at the composition of the panel, "I'm wondering if East Asian Studies in Japan in particular are somehow more appealing or welcoming to Black students and scholars in the South Central and Southeast Asian fields? If so, why?" And that's an interesting question.

Um, maybe, I don't know. I don't know. But if anybody has thoughts on that, and would like to answer really quickly, and then we can. Yeah, thank you.

1:32:15 Keisha A. Brown

I do agree I'm I think one of the really interesting and kind of fruitful parts of recently I was on the floor supposed to be AAS in Asia this summer, I was part of a panel that really did get to the kind of I was part of that was organized by Elizabeth LaCouture, who's out of University of Hong Kong, where we were talking about issues of race in Asia across the board where I was one of



the few who did East Asia, but you had scholars, especially as who covered South Asia, Southeast Asia, and so it's about singles about eight of us who were going to be part of this panel, and it came out of a project of critical approaches to race in Asia working group that came on University of Hong Kong. And so I think there is that work that's been done across I think across the board is happening in other places as well in thinking through these questions or races. And so you're right there is the work being done. I'm not sure how I got accepted or so like, what is this panel, but I agreed because this was something that's important to me. But, that can be another way we can maybe think about and have a follow up panel you can about regional ways how we think about, you know, within Asian Studies, are we prioritizing not just certain research topics, are we prioritizing certain regions or certain countries in those research areas as well.

1:33:24 Hilary Finchum-Sung

Great, thank you. And it's a concern just to follow up with the Association for Asian Studies, you know, and also, in terms of what panels are represented at the conferences, oftentimes, it's what we are given. So make sure your voices are heard. What Keisha did to prepare, you know, a panel unfortunately, with many of changes that took place with AAS in Asia, I think that's very, very important to, you know, to put it out there and put yourself in to that as well. So yeah, definitely regional balanced representation important. There are so many questions that are related to what people have already touched on. So I'm going to move to this question. How do we use and teach critical race theory effectively in Asian Studies?

1:34:16 William H. Bridges, IV

That question is still an experiment in my pedagogy. I'm not confident that I've done it effectively yet, but I've done it well, I think what's happened is that it's occurred organically. That is to say, for example, I teach a course on hip hop Japan. And in that course, if one is going to make sense, some of the the transnational confluences of hip hop, poetics and politics, it becomes in Japan, it becomes very difficult to do that without a kind of basic understanding of the critical race theory that's underpinning the study of hip hop in the academy. So within that context, then it doesn't feel like an imposition. It feels like the natural progression of the conversation. It's not the 'wow Asian critical race study is going to fall out of the sky,' it's instead, if we don't have this conversation, we can't make sense of these lyrics that we need to study next week. And so I say that to say, it seems to me that kind of, on the level of the syllabus, right, kind of the planning of the kind of the week to week building of the course, if you can find those kind of organic places to have kind of a scaffolded building block towards- towards going to critical race studies, that's when it's worked best for me. When I've had that I really want them to know critical race theory, so I'm going to do it for three weeks and then turn to something completely different and it doesn't stick. Right? There's- there's kind of confusion to why it was there and how it connected to what happened. It sticks, and then it's kind of lost in the in the jumble of it all to kind of claiming that on the week to week level of a syllabus. I found just kind of that nuts and bolts approach has been when it's come close to being effective, for me.

1:36:06 Christine Yano

Can I just interject something that Yasmine said, which is, you know, I think a lot of what I'll call "Asianists" are not necessarily trained, officially trained in something like critical race theory. So it's the kind of thing that many of us have had to read kind of catch as catch can, and just on our own, and you were kind of referring to that, yes, in terms of your own training, you sort of wished you could have shifted some of the language training to to maybe some theoretical training. But I think, you know, so- so this is a really tricky thing, right? Because many of us haven't been trained in these areas where we're trying to get school, etc, etc. But it's, it's, it's that as well as sometimes the students themselves at least for undergraduates, they may not be as interested. I mean, if you're just talking hip hop in Japan, they just want to know hip hop, and they may not be prepared to engage with the critical race theory that is actually quite important and foundational, so it works both ways, both in terms of the students and what they might expect from something called hip hop in Japan, as well as to me, our faculty training, but I'm looking to the the younger generation and hoping that Yasmine and those below, you know, the undergraduates that are coming up, are seeking out that that kind of very foundational theoretical apparatus.

1:37:30 William H. Bridges, IV

That's a very important point. Thank you for that, for that addition. And let me just say very quickly, before I pass the baton to my other panelists, we can push things off on the younger generation quite a bit. And to do that, of course, but I just want to very quickly in light of that comment, know that there's also kind of an intergenerational responsibility. That is to say, if we call this younger generation of scholars, rather than studying Korean, we want you to go study critical race theory. One day, that generation of scholars is going to show up, right, you're going to want jobs, they're going to want funding from the Japan Foundation, they will want all these things that we promised would be there for them if they did this training. So there will also I think, be a responsibility on the older generation kind of the gatekeeping generation to really reimagine what it means to make an important contribution to Asian Studies, right? If her contribution is that she studied critical race theory, and not picked up a second East Asian language, we will have to seriously kind of reimagine the metrics of what it means to be a productive scholar of Asian Studies. So just to make sure that even as I'm passing off the responsibility, there's intergenerational responsibility for this reimagining of Asian Studies.

1:38:47 Hilary Finchum-Sung

So I think I'm going to if it's okay, uh, leave, include two more questions, and then we'll leave the chat room open. I don't want to take any more of your time. I really appreciate you. We're already 10 minutes over the original plan time. So thank you so much for your generosity here.

There are so many great questions. One, and I will say that a lot of these questions are things that we can address. We'll include them when we post the webinar, the recording of this, online but also things that I can't answer I like perspective from the it's okay with the panelists to go ahead and share some of these questions and see if you all would like to add something after after the fact. So, there's Keisha had addressed this in, in her discussion and so there was a

question of gender. And I completely have passed over this. Oh, yes. So can any of the speakers address how gender especially having to do with how women in Asian Studies deal with racism within their focus Asian culture in other words, we need to deal diversely with a deep differences between men and women in these Afro-Asia, and Black Lives Matter in Asia. That's how the question is written, but I think you get the point. Yeah.

1:40:22 Keisha A. Brown

There you go. Um, I guess I'm thinking about gender and Asian Studies, I think of one point about gender, in Afro-Asia. And those are really great piece co authored by Vanita Reddy where she critiques Afro-Asian scholarship as a space where if you look at some of the images or some of the scholarship itself, it does have a very fraternal tone to it, where you have pictures of say, think about Mao Zedong, and Du Bois, and many times how sometimes his wife show the grandmas there, but she can sometimes cropped out of the picture. And so how this framing of Afro-Asian has become a very fraternal male leadership type of scholarship that's happening where the Black female voices or just the female voices in some cases on both sides of some of the discussions both in China and the US and to get the my research have been some ways of kind of, in some ways put to, as in some categories of support, but not necessarily been seen as integral to kind of continuing those organizations and those particular relationships, thinking, for instance, about Mabel Williams, this is a woman who was married to Robert Williams, she was in exile with him. She was on exile as a wife and a mother. They had two young boys. And so she's going from Cuba to China, trying to navigate being in exile, trying to raise children, trying to go back home and yet, the University of Michigan archives it's a great archive by Robert Williams, but there's very little of her in there except for letters back home, how do we find her particular voice? There are a few videos online, it was one interview done like late towards her life, you actually hear her voice, but it's very hard to find and locate some of these black females where she's not just a wife. She's not just a mother, she's helping to write the Crusader. She's editing. She's putting together some of the cartoons, she's helping ship it out. She's integral to the work that they're doing and yet how to locate some of those voices inside. I think that's one of the ways we kind of think about it is we think about Afro-Asia. And we think about these conversations a lot of times, conversations about, in some cases, race kind of take the forefront. We don't think about race and gender and sexuality and other differences that also come as we think about people. And so I think we kind of think that those complexities where we can start with race, but also think about the other layers of individual and try to find those particular forces and narratives and how we can really do so I think one of the things is that people like Vicki Garvin created her own to the great archive, but they're not other people who've had that fortunate way of doing so. Um.

Thinking about the difference between men and women. I can't speak to all of that. But I think that is something that we think about in terms of just our own experiences, how to navigate the different spaces and what it means where we think about how different ways in which different bodies are read. And I can think to my own experience and just the Black woman traveling in Asia and kind of different ways in which you go to different spaces, what the expectation is and how you have to sometimes confront and deal with those particular narratives in ways (no

audio) of moving. So, I had a Black male friend, he's from high school, he actually played basketball in China, which was interesting. So it's a different level of like celebrity. And we went somewhere he couldn't speak Chinese, I was like his de facto translator, which was very frustrating. But it was interesting because of the ways in which kind of people will talk to and navigated him and kind of thinking about his experience. And I talked to him about, you know, being a Black man in China, what that meant. And it was just an interesting kind of different perspective, but then he had a different level of notoriety because he was there because of basketball. And basketball is on the rise in China. So I can't speak to all that I just do know there are some ways you can think through it. But understand that there are some different experiences and just recognizing that it will be kind of engaged with experience to how to incorporate those whether it is on the basis of race, or gender, or other identity markers, we can really think about engaging some of these conversations in some, some more nuanced ways.

1:43:55 Marvin D. Sterling

Yeah, I'll hop in really quickly, if you don't mind. So I'm also not able to comment on the full scope of the question, but the question didn't make me think about the Japanese context and, and more specifically, the ways in which Blackness is gendered in terms of mass media representation. And I think I'm not the first person to note that much of the Japanese imaginary of Blackness seems to be dominated by masculinity, right? And so this might include, for example, representations of hip hop artists, or athletes, or military personnel, right? So this imagination of Blackness in Japan is very male dominated. And so I think, part of the the way in which we kind of unpack the assumptions that go in to that very singular, or almost very singular representation of Blackness as masculine is maybe ethnographic, right? Including, for example, considering the experiences of African American women in Japan, right? And that can include what, to look how are they seeing this kind of Japanese imagination of them as as woman? Alright, so I think ethnographic work can be one way into kind of kind of peeling back that that veneer that insistence right on a very kind of a homogenous or monolithic imagination of, of what Blackness is in the Japanese context to the extent that it is again dominated by this idea that to be Black is to be masculine or man and with comparatively little space for an imagination of, you know, African American woman in Japanese society and whether or not a female ethnographer might do that kind of work. I mean, obviously, I wouldn't assume that that wouldn't necessarily be the case. But I think it's fair to suggest that an African American woman whose an ethnographer looking at this particular issue, kind of unpacking some of those assumptions that might be might be a way of kind of thinking about the gendering of Afro-Asian the Japanese context.

1:46:21 Hilary Finchum-Sung

And I promised one more question. So I'm there's so many great questions. And I'm very, very sorry. And again, we will post all of these in the on the page with the recording of the webinar, along, and along with the resources that many of you have so wonderfully suggested. The last question I have is sort of an overarching question, and I think it's a really good one to wrap up with. So this question is talking about incorporating comparative questions of race and ethnicity and perspectives from Black Lives Matter into classroom syllabi. And I know that Will touched

on this a little a little bit earlier. So what have been your experiences or challenges leading discussions on these topics, especially undergraduates? In undergraduates Asian Studies classrooms, that's the first part of the question. The second part is, are there Asian Studies in Black Lives Matter syllabus resources available to recommend? The latter part? I'm not sure. But I think the interesting part is really about your experiences bringing up these issues and discussions with students.

1:47:32

And Yasmine too, I know that you also probably are teaching I'm not excluding you. I know that you probably are engaged in discussions with peers in a, in a classroom setting. So certainly your experience here is very valuable.

1:47:53 Yasmine Krings

Um, yes, I did TA. (laughs) So I did teach undergraduates.

Um, I think my experience is mostly, mostly been positive. I think um, of course, I think students often will speak and different kinds of rhetoric that they don't realize are problematic. And what I like about the classroom is that it's often a space where it's very easy to point them out. So in particular teaching Japan studies, you get this kind of idea of what it means to be Japanese or what it means to be Asian that is very rigid, and they really believe in this East West dichotomy. And the way that they often talk about it is very problematic. And I usually use the- the space of the TA room, to the space of my TA-ing, to discuss why, you know why those ideas are a little bit weird. Like why would you... You know, why is it that every time you want to talk about Japanese culture, all of a sudden we're talking about the Tokugawa or we're talking about the Heian, in the right now, you know, I'm like, I think that's a common thing that happens. And I'm like, I don't know, how many times are we talking about Americans and talking about pilgrims? Like, why? You need to think about why that is. Or what do you mean when you say East versus West and it's something that even though it's not necessarily part of the syllabus is something I try to push against, because it's something they need to be thinking about. And because this rhetoric is also the way in which, you know, you perpetuate certain ideas about race and what have you, and I've been finding it very fruitful. I do think that it clearly like I one of my frustrations is that it's often not enough. Like, I'm like, I wish there was some sort of united effort by all the classes to do this, because, you know, they'll leave my class and then go to another, where, you know, the idea of this like unified native Japanese knowledge is, you know, used. So like, in my case, I am Japanese, but the idea that like, I wouldn't want my students to take my class and think they got native Japanese knowledge because I don't know that I want to consider it that way also obviously there are actual indigenous people in Japan.

1:50:11

Um, but in any case, I think I'm mostly I feel very, like failed, I guess because oftentimes I see that it's like, helping them rework the way that they think is like baby steps that need to be reinforced by all of their other classes. And it's not necessarily the case. I also once was a reader for Asia Now. And one thing I saw was how often students will, whose students believe

that property is more important than life. And so I had to read a lot of, you know, LA Riot papers that were about, you know, that were justifying various shop owners, violence towards Black people, and it was sort of just brushed aside you know, and I have to, I have to add, like, okay, think about why, you know, you are putting a life over property, like I can replace a property I can, I can get a new shop, I can't replace this person's life. And I think it's sort of embedded in the way that they think and it's something I think about a lot when I'm TA-ing. Anyways, I'm now rambling. So I don't want to have to talk too much.

1:51:15 William H. Bridges, IV

Let me just piggyback very quickly, on one thing that Yasmine said, and I'll add one thing to it. And one of the challenges that I've had and this speaks to Yasmine's point is that the project doesn't seem to be one of shared intellectual labor. That's to say, I feel like I'm fighting the good fight in my courses. But these come, it's not a conversation that's happening across the curriculum. It's happening in my class, and maybe Marvin's class, maybe Keisha's class, but it's not happening kind of across the curriculum. Right? So with that in mind, I realized that this is a conversation geared towards members of AAS, but we might need to start having some more kind of transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary conversations. And Yasmine's point to Asian Studies speaks to that. If we're serious about doing this kind of work, it can't happen and these siloed classroom moments are going to have to be a shared intellectual endeavor that's happening across classes. So again, just to reiterate that point, if I am saying x about the relationship between race and literature, and a student who's doing classes in English, has never heard this way of thinking about literature that makes the work almost impossible. So you can think of it as a shared intellectual project.

The second difficulty that I've had and this is probably more of a kind of an idiosyncratic concern. Given that I kind of embody authority when we start thinking about questions of Blackness in the classroom, sometimes students will hear my statements in the mode of the lecture when I intend them in the mode of dialogue. Right, I will say something intentionally to kind of provoke them into thinking about race in new ways. In-and they will be reticent to kind of to challenge the way I know they might be a little more willing to challenge if there wasn't this kind of embodiment of authority speaking of it's at the front of the classroom. So in that regard, the kind of, in this speaks to one of the questions in the comments about the liberal arts college, the kind of the seminar style conversation about race is something that has rule of thumb. Americans don't encounter, right. It's rare that we get a group of different people in a room and say, let's think critically about race and talk about it openly and honestly. It's just such a rare phenomenon, that when it does occur, students sometimes feel like it's a trick or a trap. They're not willing to kind of really engage. And so that's kind of the second difficulty that comes immediately to mind for me.

1:53:53 Keisha A. Brown

I think for me, one of the really good things about my program at Tennessee State is we have really strong African-American history faculty and really strong African-American history courses that our students like to take. And so because of the work that I do, I kind of start from that base

and then kind of open up because a lot of my students, the courses I teach is really their first engagement with Asia at this particular level, it might have had a few things in high school or might have been something in past and depending on how the textbooks they studied or written or the courses they've taken or their exposure. So a lot of my courses I'm actually introducing them to to Asia, and trying to destigmatize Asia, as I said, as an enigma in general, like what is Asian, unpack that, and then further trying to unpack the different places in Asia and kind of breaking those down. And so mine comes from the opposite, where I have students who are really engaged in talking about race, but when it comes to my race beyond the US, that's where it gets us some difficult and difficult challenges and how to kind of think through where, you know, they're so ingrained in kind of understanding of what happens in the US and not thinking through the ways in which it happens other places as well. And so mine comes from the opposite in and so I think some of the best conversations and moments in my class I've had is that we start with what they know and kind of started kind of their understanding and unpacking that and then moving outward to thinking about these issues of global, thinking about global issues. And so on the Black internationalism courses I've taught that's been really fruitful for the students to kind of really think through how we talk about difference, I would talk about othering, not just in the US, but kind of other places as well, and how that happens. I think I've taught an upper division race and ethnicity, East and Southeast Asia. And I started with just a whole unit on racism, this tea, and a lot of my students were like, I thought I understood what race was talking and a discussion about race terminology. But now I'm all confused. And I was like, great, now that you're confused, let's reveal, and let's restart. So now I've challenged you to the point to think through these theories and think through these concepts, and then think about these processes as happening. So we talk about ethnic minorities in China. How do we get at the nationalities? How do we count these 56? How do we talk about differences in place, how we talk about the Zainichi, Jainichi, community in places in China in places in Korea, how do we talk about this process, how we see these patterns? I think, for me, that's been useful to start with any kind of break it down, kind of start with a no kind of break it down and then kind of rebuild them back up.

1:56:10

I think one of the most fruitful discussions where we talked about the Chinese community in Mississippi, and how you know, the Chinese community is in a very Black and white space in a very racialized segregated Mississippi in the Mississippi Delta area. How do they kind of always kind of think through their own identity, and I had a student who was actually working on the Great Migration that was like, I wanted to talk to my project in terms of Black and white because that's all I understood about Mississippi history was in terms of Black and white didn't even notice a whole nother community there. And so that limit- the understanding where it opened up her understanding of just thinking about the Mississippi area, and thinking through the Great Migration project she was already doing, which is really something that was useful for me so it can happen but again, I agree with what was William was saying it does have to be just beyond the silos because while I'm the only one I'm the only one does Asian Studies in my department, which means everything about Asia, falls on me, which is, is fine. And I'm always learning. I'm always on my toes, I'm trying to stay abreast of everything. But it does need to be, you know, I'll

be doing the work in other places. And I think one of the really good kind of highlights for me right now is that we are in the process of trying to build an Asian Studies program. But we know that there are other folks and other departments and art and music in psychology and sociology who actually interested. And so now I feel like that the labor is not on me anymore. Just me and myself in my institution. But I do think that, that labor that work needs to be done, and we talking about these topics. And so if you look at the petition, I did have some colleagues who on this committee actually did sign themselves, we're happy, they're committed to not just the program we're doing, but also to these conversations about Asian Studies and staying abreast of this as well.

1:57:56 Christine Yano

I think with that, it seems like our time is, is up and it's well well past

1:58:02 Hilary Finchum-Sung

It's way up.

1:58:04 Christine Yano

But I just want to thank our pan- panelists sincerely, of course, thank again, the petitioners who started this off, but also just note that it's it's wonderful to be ending on a note of abundance. Because there's there's really too many questions, right? Too many, too many conversations that we need to have. This is the beginning. This is the beginning. And I really thank all of you for being for taking, helping us take this baby step if you want to put it that way. But I think it's an important step. And the importance is to bring race to the fore to bring race at center stage of Asian Studies and to bring Black Lives Matter into, into the conversation that's already occurring. It's already we're not creating it. We're acknowledging conversations that are already taking place. So thank you very much. With that I'll turn it back to Hilary.

1:58:51 Hilary Finchum-Sung

Thank you. And to build on what Christine said acknowledging, building on that really incorporating it into Asian Studies making Black Lives Matter a part of the institution of Asian Studies and the Association for Asian Studies. So again, this is a very, these are baby steps that we're taking. And we really appreciate y'all taking the time, getting up really early in Japan to be a part of this panel and contributing, contributing your thoughts, and your wisdom and your perspectives. For this very beginning, this is pretty historic for the Association for Asian Studies. So thank you very much.

And thank you, Christine, for moderating. And thank you all for being a part of this conversation and for adding your suggestions for adding your perspectives for, for sticking it out with us. Thank you very, very much. So I want to let you know that we're going to leave the chat function on for another 10-15 minutes. And you can continue a conversation if you'd like the chat is now on. And then we will post this video and the discussion and, and other comments and a transcript on the Digital Dialogues page within, within at least a couple of weeks to put pressure on our media manager. So I want to thank you all very much. Good health and peace to you all.



And at this, I'll ask the panelists to go ahead and, and sign off so we can leave the chat open.  
So thank you so much. Thank you. Much appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you.

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Edited by Molly DeDona