

# Future First Education

Equitable Teaching Closing the Divide

## The Rise of Asian Racism... Again

Britta Livengood

On March 16, a white man shot and killed eight individuals in an Atlanta spa, six of whom were Asian. Authorities did not label this as a hate crime, and are claiming that the shooter was just “having a bad day”. It’s baffling to not consider this a racist attack against the Asian community especially given the significant increase in hate crimes committed against Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in the last year.

Since last March when COVID-19 swept the nation, Anti-Asian hate crimes have increased by nearly 150%. In the last year, there have been 3,795 reported cases by the AAPI community, 1,700 of those reports coming from California alone. Being spit on, having tires slashed, and many acts of physical violence are just some of the things that the Asian community has been experiencing since the start of the pandemic.



Sam and Maggie Cheng on the street where their mother was attacked last week in Flushing, Queens.  
Andrew Seng for The New York Times

Unfortunately for the AAPI community this is nothing new. Discrimination against the Asian community is a problem our country has been experiencing for centuries. We are simply repeating history.

### Upcoming FFE Circle Time Broadcasts



**April 6**

Helping Students  
Understand  
Cultural  
Appropriation  
8:30 pm EST



**May 4**

Engaging Families  
in School DEI  
Efforts  
8:30 pm EST

## Chinese Exclusion Act

In the mid 1870s there was an economic depression in our nation. Many people accused Asians of stealing jobs from working Americans. This led to discrimination and violence against Asians. In 1875, the Page Act was enacted banning Chinese women from immigrating to the United States, which led to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, banning all immigration of Chinese laborers. This law remains the only law implemented in our country to prevent all members of a specific ethnic or national group from immigrating to the United States.



Chinese women detainees at Angel Island in San Francisco, hoping to immigrate to America.  
California Historical Society

## 1900 Plague in San Francisco

In the early 1900s, Chinese immigrants were blamed for an outbreak of the bubonic plague in the San Francisco area. The plague was centered in San Francisco's Chinatown, creating huge racial tensions against the Asian community. Chinatown was stereotyped as dirty and diseased. Believing it was necessary to keep themselves safe from the plague, many denied Chinese people standard social rights and privileges. The majority of housing for Chinese immigrants was inadequate, and landlords were unwilling to provide equal and fair housing. An extended quarantine of Chinatown was put in place more by racist ideas of Chinese Americans as carriers of the disease than by actual evidence of the disease's presence.

## World War II

Prior to World War II, many Asian Americans had homes and businesses in the Sacramento area. During and after the war, 3,000 citizens of Sacramento from Japanese descent were forced into internment camps. Many of these individuals were American born United States citizens. Once they were released, many returned to pick up where they left off, but it was extremely difficult to recover their homes and businesses.

With geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and China, along with economic hardships many are facing with the recent pandemic, Asian Americans are an easy target for blame. Jokes and phrases like “Kung Flu” or “Chinese Virus” do nothing but amplify racial tensions in this country. The first step to dismantling racism is acknowledging that it has been a part of American history. Only then can we work together to move on and stop ourselves from repeating our past.

### So what can you do in your classroom?

1. Educate yourself. Understand what Asian Americans have gone through in our country, and that while hate crimes are on the rise, anti-Asian racism is not new.
2. Talk about it with your students. Show pictures from the past, and compare them to pictures from our recent pandemic. Don't just brush past these topics of blatant racism in our history. To you it might just be something that happened years ago, but some of your students may picture their parents or grandparents in these situations as they learn about racism in our past.
3. Check in with Asian-American families in your school. Whether it be providing support in attending a local event, or just providing a check-in to know you are there if they need you. Let these families know that they are supported inside and outside of school.
4. Share any resources you can offer to families in need or who have experienced racism. This could include language translation, mental health services, legal services, childcare resources, or food assistance.

### Need lesson plans?

Check out our [TPT page!](#)



### Need Books?

Visit the [MAR Bookshop!](#)



Sources: Yam, Kimmy. 2021, March 9. “Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Increased by Nearly 150% in 2020”. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asia/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-nearly-150-2020-mostly-n-1260264>

Boudreau, Emily. 2020, November 2. “Combating Anti-Asian Racism”. Useable Knowledge at Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/11/combating-anti-asian-racism>

## Teacher Spotlight

### Joan Dien

Each month, FFE spotlights a teacher who excels at cultivating inclusion or antiracism in their classroom. This month, Joan Dien shared some insight.

**FFE:** How long have you been teaching and what grades do you teach?

**JD:** Hi, I am Joan! An ESL teacher in South Korea, but I am originally from Kansas. I moved to Busan, South Korea in February 2019, and have been teaching for 3 years now. I teach conversational English at an elementary school, 3rd-6th grade.

**FFE:** What's your favorite way to cultivate diversity, inclusion, or anti-racism in your classroom?

**JD:** I mainly teach conversational English, but teaching about being anti-racism is pretty tough because of the language barrier. I do have a co-teacher who does help me when the conversation gets hard to understand. Reading stories on different backgrounds has definitely helped me as a teacher to get the message across. That's how I bring in the inclusion and the diversity. I try my best to translate the words in English to Korean so that they know what the meaning is. At the beginning of the school year, I always read, "Whoever You Are," by Mem Fox. It's a great read about different cultures around the world. It depicts diversity and reinforces how important it is to teach others, no matter where they come from. My students do understand the insight of the meaning, which is; we may look different from the outside, but we're all the same on the inside.

Last school year was my first time ever teaching about Black History Month, and the best conversation that we had about anti-racism was through Rosa Parks. I don't know why, but my students were so intrigued by her and her story. One of my 4th graders even named herself after her. I call her Rosa now instead of her Korean name. I did have a 6th grader that said, "Teacher we might have different skin tones, but it is not right to judge others by their skin. It is not okay. We are all equal." He said that in Korean, and my Korean co-teacher translated it to me. I think it was easier for me to choose an influential figure to talk about so that I can hone in and teach about how significant they were. It was easier to get the message across.



**FFE:** What advice do you have for teachers who are just starting out when it comes to prioritizing inclusion or anti-racism?

**JD:** My advice for teachers who are new and want to bring in diversity, inclusion and anti-racism always mention to the parents that you're a teacher that includes all. It will help you stand your ground and it will help the parents where you are coming from. If a parent has a problem with that, then they are the problem, not you. Other advice is to plaster a lot of influential figures that promotes anti-racism. Have an array of books in your classroom library that promotes diversity and inclusion. Most important, learn about the history and understand about equity. If we don't take time to educate ourselves on history, then we will have a tough time confronting the systems (inequities and racism).

**FFE:** What is your favorite book?

**JD:** The book that I enjoy that makes good connection is, "The Day You Begin" by Jacqueline Woodson. It's about social justice and staying true to yourself. Other books I recommend are:

- Whoever You Are by Men Fox
- My Name is Yoon by Helen Recorvits
- All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penhold
- Eyes That Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho
- My Name is not Refugee by Kate Milner

Thank you so much for letting me share how I teach and promote inclusion, diversity and anti-racism in my Korean-English classroom!

\*Nominate a teacher by emailing Britta at [brittalivengood@gmail.com](mailto:brittalivengood@gmail.com).

**“If we don't take time to educate ourselves on the history, then we will have a tough time confronting the systems.”**



# How to Respond to Racism

In the last year more reports of racism and discrimination are being reported. Use these “Speak Up” strategies from Learning for Justice to let people know that racism is not acceptable.

- **Interrupt:** Interrupting means taking a time out. It shows the person you’re talking to that what they’ve said is important enough that you need to address the racism before you talk about anything else. Here is an example: “Hang on. I want to go back to what you just called the virus.”
- **Question:** The goal of questioning is to better understand why the person said what they did, and what they meant by it. Asking someone to explain why a racist joke is funny is a great way to stop them from making racist jokes to you again.
- **Educate:** The goal isn’t to just provide facts about the topic, but to explain why what they’ve said or done needs rethinking. If someone tries to play down racist phrases as “just a joke,” you can educate them about the racism many AAPI people are facing right now, so they better understand the impact of what they say.
- **Echo:** It takes effort to speak up against racism. That’s why we need to have each others backs. If someone speaks up about racism and discrimination, echo them. Thank them, and amplify their message. This will encourage others to speak up as well.

## WORD WATCH: CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Cultural appropriation is the taking of “creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another,” according to Oxford Reference.

“It is in general used to describe Western appropriations of non-Western or non-white forms, and carries connotations of exploitation and dominance,” the definition says. An example of this would be a white woman dressing up in a Native American “costume” that is not an accurate depiction of what a true Native American would wear.

There is a difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. Cultural appropriation is simply taking, adopting or “cherry-picking” one aspect of a culture that is not your own and using it for your own personal interest. Cultural appreciation is when someone seeks to understand and learn about another culture in an effort to broaden their perspective and connect with others



Sources: Oxford Reference. “Cultural Appropriation”. 2021. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095652789>

Mercado, Mia. “7 Things You Might Not Realize Are Cultural Appropriation, But Are.” Bustle. 30, May 2016. <https://www.bustle.com/p/7-things-you-might-not-realize-are-cultural-appropriation-that-are-60679>