

# Combating Anti-Asian Racism in the Age of Coronavirus



Illustration by Catherine Buchaniec

## Curriculum Guide

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## MATERIALS

- “Anti-Asian Racism Education CFA” video by Dr. Russell Jeung and Matthew Ewearitt.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop understanding of the types of anti-Asian racism that emerge as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Identify the cultural and political factors throughout history that enable the most recent iteration of anti-Asian racism, including political rhetoric, media representations, historical stereotypes, and racial profiling of Asian Americans.
- Explain the processes and tactics by which COVID-19 is racialized.
- Describe the institutional, interpersonal, and individual impacts of anti-Asian racism on Asian Americans.
- Articulate Asian American community resistance, throughout history and most recently in response to COVID-19 racism.
- Apply and synthesize how students have experienced and responded to anti-Asian racism.

## MAIN CONCEPTS

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Political Rhetoric	The scapegoating and blaming of China, Chinese people, and Asian Americans for the virus in politics.
Media Representations	Mainstream and social media creating an association between the coronavirus and China and Asian Americans.
Historic Stereotypes: Yellow Peril	The yellow peril stereotype persisted since the 19th century and depicts Asians as disease-ridden, dirty, immoral, inferior, licentious, heathen, violent, uncivilized, and feral. The stereotype is grounded in the fear that Asians are nameless, faceless threats that will dominate the West
Racialization of COVID-19	The processes by which coronavirus, a neutral disease, become affiliated with race and its associated meanings.
Racial Profiling	The overgeneralization of “Asian + mask = disease carrier” from the racialization of COVID-19. This leads people to make automatic assumptions about Asian Americans and to act on implicit biases.
Asian American Community Resistance	Historical legacy of Asian Americans resisting racism and discrimination through the courts, media, community organizing, and solidarity movements with other communities of color.

## **PART 1: STORIES OF ANTI-ASIAN RACISM (Video: 0-3:00)**

<b>Activity</b>
1. Watch video (0:00-3:00) and pay attention to common words and themes you hear.
2. Think/Pair/Share: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>How did you feel listening to the stories?</li><li>Did any of the stories surprise you?</li><li>What common words and themes did you hear?</li></ol>

## **PART 2: OVERVIEW OF DATA ON ANTI-ASIAN RACISM (Video: 3:00-6:15)**

<b>Lecture</b>
1. Introduction to study <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>In the first four weeks of launching the reporting site, over 1500 firsthand accounts of discrimination were submitted by Asian Americans. The issue is widespread and pervasive.</li><li>Asian American women are 2.3 times more likely to be harrassed than Asian American men.</li></ol>
2. Types of Discrimination <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Verbal Harassment and Shunning: From racial taunts to egregious and explicit verbal harassment, often in front of elderly and children.</li><li>Civil Rights Violations: Barred from establishments and public transit.</li><li>Hate Crimes: Physical assault and getting coughed/spat on. The latter is a public health concern and can qualify as terrorism.</li></ol>
3. Reasons for Discrimination <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Race and Ethnicity: 70% of those reporting are not actually Chinese, so anyone who “looks Chinese” is racially profiled.</li><li>Facemask: 17% of those reporting were attacked for wearing AND not wearing a facemask.</li></ol>
4. Sites of Discrimination <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Businesses were most common during shelter-in-place orders.</li><li>Schools, parks, and public transit were more common before shelter-in-place orders.</li></ol>

<b>Discussion Questions</b>
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- What is the difference between a hate incident and a hate crime?
- Why do you think Asian American women are 2.3 times more likely to be harrassed?
- What civil rights are violated when someone is barred from a business or public transit?
- How would you feel if you were coughed/spat upon? What does this act signal?

### Further Reading

#### Visuals

- 4/7/20 – [STOP AAPI HATE Infographic](#)

#### Stop AAPI Hate Reports

- 3/19/20 to 3/25/20 – [STOP AAPI HATE Report](#)
- 3/26/20 to 4/01/20 – [STOP AAPI HATE Report](#)
- 3/19/20 to 04/15/20 – [STOP AAPI HATE Report](#)

#### Press Releases:

- 3/26/2020 – [PRESS RELEASE: In STOP AAPI HATE’S First Week, Asian Americans Report Over 650 Incidents of Verbal Harassment, Shunning and Physical Assault](#)
- 4/3/2020 – [PRESS RELEASE: STOP AAPI HATE Receives over 1,100 Incident Reports of Verbal Harassment, Shunning and Physical Assault in Two Weeks](#)
- 4/23/2020 – [PRESS RELEASE: In One Month, STOP AAPI HATE Receives almost 1500 Incident Reports of Verbal Harassment, Shunning and Physical Assaults](#)

#### In the News:

- PBS Newshour: [Asian Americans report rise in racist attacks amid pandemic](#)
- New York Times: [Spit On, Yelled At, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for Their Safety](#)
- Huffington Post: [This is what it’s like to be an Asian woman in the age of the coronavirus](#)
- MSNBC: [Asian Americans Report Rise in Assaults Amid Virus](#)
- San Francisco Chronicle: [Coronavirus: Asian American groups compile hate crime reports as Trump persists in ‘Chinese virus’ attacks](#)
- Forbes: [How COVID-19 Coronavirus Is Uncovering Anti-Asian Racism](#)

## PART 3: WHY ANTI-ASIAN RACISM NOW? (Video: 6:15-14:00)

### Lecture

1. Political Rhetoric
  - a. Trump calls COVID-19 the “Chinese virus,” despite WHO advising him not to.
  - b. Scapegoating is a persistent theme and tactic of the Republican party. In this case, the scapegoating of China and Chinese people for the virus.
  - c. China bashing and scapegoating has become part of the political rhetoric of campaign season.

## 2. Media Representations

- a. Mainstream media associates the disease with China and Chinese people in facemasks.
- b. Social media representations link China to the virus.
  - i. Viral memes and images of Chinese people eating bats.
  - ii. Coronavirus party with students wearing masks and drinking Corona beer at University of Albany, posted on Instagram.
  - iii. Social media posts circulate faster than mainstream media. Youth are particularly affected.

## 3. Historic Stereotypes

- a. Yellow Peril: Historical stereotype to depict Asians as nameless, faceless threats that will dominate the West, specifically with their diseases.
  - i. Yellow peril stereotype has persisted since the 19th century and depicts Asians as disease-ridden, dirty, immoral, inferior, licentious, heathen, violent, uncivilized, and feral.
  - ii. Yellow Peril used to justify the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, a part of a series of legislation barring Asian immigration to the U.S.
- b. Chinese as “disease-ridden.”
  - i. Disease outbreaks trigger socio-political crises and fears of the “other.”
  - ii. The 1900 Bubonic Plague was blamed on Chinese immigrants. The plague case of a deceased Chinese man in San Francisco on March 6, 1900 caused near hysteria. Overnight, officials quarantined San Francisco Chinatown with ropes and barbed wire. Approximately 25,000 to 35,000 Chinese residents were kept inside in densely populated and slum-like conditions, while white residents were escorted out. Honolulu’s Chinatown was also quarantined and eventually set fire. The fire burned for 17 days and destroyed 4,000 mostly Chinese and Japanese homes.
  - iii. Disease used as a reason to detain and ultimately exclude Chinese migrants at Angel Island.

## 2. Racialization of COVID-19: Neutral disease associated with race and its associated meanings.

- a. Process of racialization:
  - i. General truth: virus is in China
  - ii. Political rhetoric: virus associated with China, “Chinese virus”
  - iii. Media framing and rhetoric: virus associated with Chinese people in facemasks
  - iv. Implicit bias: the virus is associated with China and Chinese people, Chinese people in facemasks are diseased
  - v. Racial profiling of Asian Americans

## 3. Racial Profiling of Asian Americans

- a. Schema: associations, categorizations, and patterns developed to organize information; cognitive scaffolding of past experiences into current perception.

- i. Racial schema: Association of COVID-19 with China, Chinese people, and Chinese people with facemasks.
- b. Automatic assumption
  - i. Racial schema primes us to assume “Asian + mask = disease carrier”
  - ii. Racial schema and the racialization of COVID-19 lead us to make automatic assumptions and quick reactions.
  - iii. In the U.S., we are socialized to notice age, gender, and race. Racial schemas frame the way we see and react to the world.
- c. Behavioral response: from feeling threatened
  - i. Flight: shunning Asians
  - ii. Fight: attacking Asians

### Discussion Questions

- What examples of political rhetoric and media representations do you see about Asians in the time of coronavirus? How do you understand and interpret these messages?
- Have you personally seen the yellow peril stereotype utilized? Where and how?
- What racial schema have we internalized at this time? What is your automatic reaction to an Asian wearing a facemask?
- How do these five factors connect to the histories and experiences of other communities of color in the U.S.?

### Further Reading

#### Political Rhetoric

- CNBC: [WHO officials warn US President Trump against calling coronavirus ‘the Chinese virus’](#)
- Science Mag: [Discovered a disease? WHO has new rules for avoiding offensive names](#)
- The Hill: [WHO official warns against calling it 'Chinese virus,' says 'there is no blame in this'](#)
- The Salt Lake Tribune: [Paisley Rekdal: I’m also Asian American. And ‘The Chinese Virus’ is racist.](#)
- Politico: [Trump on ‘Chinese virus’ label: ‘It’s not racist at all’](#)
- LA Times: [Op-Ed: Trump’s racist comments are fueling hate crimes against Asian Americans. Time for state leaders to step in](#)
- New York Times: [Opinion: Call It ‘Coronavirus’](#)
- Al Jazeera: [China emerges as coronavirus scapegoat in US election campaign](#)
- The Guardian: [Blaming China for coronavirus isn’t just dangerous. It misses the point](#)
- ACLU: [Let’s Stop the Scapegoating During a Global Pandemic](#)
- New York Times: [Senator Tom Cotton Repeats Fringe Theory of Coronavirus Origins](#)
- ABC News: [Pompeo pushes 'Wuhan virus' label to counter Chinese disinformation](#)

#### Historic Stereotypes

- Jezebel: [The Persistence of Yellow Peril](#)

- Pacific Historical Review: [The “Yellow Peril” and Asian Exclusion in the Americas](#)
- Beacon Broadside: [Yellow Peril, Again: Coronavirus and the Echoes of Chinese Exclusion](#)
- 18 Million Rising: [Unmasking Yellow Peril](#)
- The World: [Long before anxiety about Muslims, Americans feared the 'yellow peril' of Chinese immigration](#)
- Center for Global Education. [Asian Americans Then and Now: Linking Past to Present.](#)
- Nature: [Black Death at the Golden Gate: The Race to Save America from the Bubonic Plague](#)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases: [Plague in San Francisco: 1900, the Year of the Rat](#)
- San Francisco Gate: [San Francisco's bubonic plague epidemic has eerie parallels to modern day](#)
- PBS: [Bubonic plague hits San Francisco 1900 - 1909](#)
- Literary Hub: [Inside San Francisco’s Plague-Ravaged Chinatown, c. 1900](#)

Racial Profiling

- Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: [Self-schemata and processing information about the self](#)

**PART 4: IMPACTS ON ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY (Video: 14:00-16:20)**

Lecture
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Institutional Boycotts of Asian Businesses               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Restaurants in Oakland and San Francisco Chinatowns say their business has been slashed by 50 percent or more.</li> <li>b. Business decreases of 50 to 70 percent in New York’s Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn Chinatowns.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Interpersonal Attacks               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. FBI investigation of knife attack against Burmese family at Sam’s Club deemed a hate crime.</li> <li>b. Australia man had heart attack and died, nobody helped him because they thought he had coronavirus</li> <li>c. Bullying, verbal harassment, physical harassment, and more.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Individual Fear and Stigmatization               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Asian American youth and community internalize anti-Asian racism, and see themselves in the ways others perceive them.</li> <li>b. As a result of internalized racism, Asian Americans shun “Asian parts of themselves” and may experience increased rates of depression, stress, anxiety.</li> <li>c. 80 to 90 percent of Asian Americans fear experiencing racial bias.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>



## Discussion Questions

- Why do you think people began boycotting Asian businesses?
- If your family worked in the restaurant or hotel industry, what stressors do you think they would experience?
- In what ways have you internalized how others perceive you? In what ways have you internalized how others perceive you racially?

## Further Reading

### Institutional boycotts of Asian businesses

- Today: [Amid coronavirus panic, Chinese restaurants in the US are emptier than ever](#)
- San Francisco Eater: [Novel Coronavirus Fears Cut Chinatown Restaurant Business by 50 Percent](#)
- Global Times: [Chinese restaurants around the world struggle to survive amid COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- New York Post: [Coronavirus taking a toll on Chinese restaurants in New York](#)

### Interpersonal attacks

- Huffington Post: [Stabbing Of Asian American Toddler And Family Deemed A Hate Crime: Report](#)
- Dallas News: [FBI says Texas stabbing that targeted Asian-American family was hate crime fueled by coronavirus fears](#)
- The Daily Beast: [Stabbing of Asian-American 2-Year-Old and Her Family Was a Virus-Fueled Hate Crime: Feds](#)
- The Daily mail: [TOO SCARED TO HELP: Bystanders 'refused to carry out CPR' on man who had a heart attack and died in Sydney's Chinatown over fears he had the coronavirus](#)
- Express: [Coronavirus: Bystanders too scared to help Chinese man as he dies of heart attack](#)

### Individual fear and stigmatization

- The Guardian: ['Coughing while Asian': living in fear as racism feeds off coronavirus panic](#)
- USA Today: ['They look at me and think I'm some kind of virus': What it's like to be Asian during the coronavirus pandemic](#)
- The New York Times: [The Slur I Never Expected to Hear in 2020](#)
- The New Yorker: [Confronting Anti-Asian Discrimination During the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
- Inquirer: [Asian Americans already face a mental health crisis. Coronavirus racism could make it worse](#)

## PART 5: ASIAN AMERICAN RESISTANCE (Video: 16:20-20:27)

### Lecture

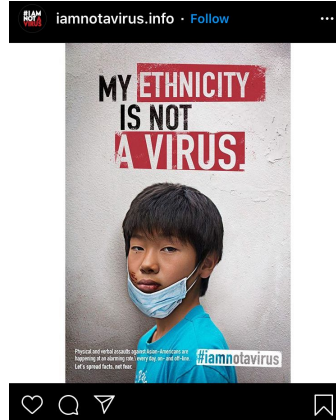
1. Legacy of Asian Americans resisting racism and discrimination throughout history.

<p>2. Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Over 10,000 Chinese immigrants filed appeals in court to protest the exclusion act.</li> <li>b. Chinese immigrants organized to boycott American goods.</li> <li>c. Largest case of mass civil disobedience of the time: 97% of Chinese in the U.S. refused government directions to register as “aliens.”</li> </ul>
<p>3. Flipping the Political Narrative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The CDC clarified that COVID-19 can make anyone sick, regardless of their race or ethnicity. Blaming Chinese and Asian people for the disease is a severe falsehood.</li> <li>b. Several congressional members and elected officials have led the way in holding government officials accountable for their hate speech and misinformation.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Counter Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Social media: #washthehate #racismisavirus</li> <li>b. Asian American celebrities and athletes join the movement to create media to counter the anti-Asian rhetoric and mainstream representations.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Community Resistance Among Nonprofits and Civil Rights Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), A3PCON (Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council), and Dr. Russell Jeung of San Francisco State University launched the STOP AAPI HATE CENTER to collect reports of anti-Asian racism.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Reporting Hate to Organize for Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Data from the reports is used to develop a collective understanding and voice on the issue, monitor hate incidents, create resources for resilience, and make strategic policy interventions.</li> <li>b. Organizers of the report called on Governor Newsom of California to create a task force on anti-Asian racism. The task force would make recommendations to schools (to institute Ethnic Studies), businesses (to protect the right to safe accommodations), and public spaces.</li> <li>c. Use your voice to report any anti-Asian hate crimes or discrimination to <a href="https://A3PCON.ORG/STOPAAPIHATE">A3PCON.ORG/STOPAAPIHATE</a></li> </ul>

<p><b>Activity 1: Analyzing and Creating Counter Media</b></p>
<p>Prep:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Split class into groups of 3-4 students.</li> <li>2. Assign each group a counter media example. Allow students to use their electronic devices to look up their example.</li> </ul>



Group 1:



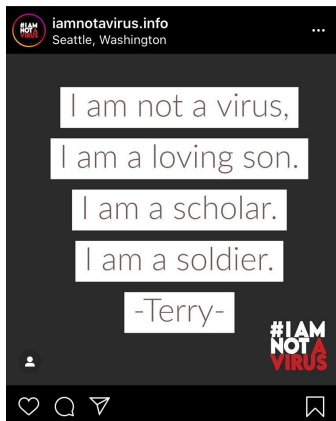
Group 2:



Group 3:



Group 4:



Group 5:



Group 6 (video):

Instructions to Students:

3. Analyze the counter media image/video:
  - a. What medium and strategy do they use?
  - b. What political rhetoric or media representations does this example seek to *counter*?
  - c. What is their overarching message?
4. Create your own concept for a counter media post.
  - a. Visuals: What would you utilize for visuals? This can be a PSA video, an image, a drawing, a recording of poetry or music, etc.

- b. Hashtag: What hashtags would you utilize?
- c. Message: How will you caption your post to share your message?
- d. Prepare to present to the class.

## Activity 2: Policy Making

Prep:

1. Split class into groups of 3-4 students.
2. Assign each group a site where anti-Asian racism happens:

Group 1: elementary school

Group 2: grocery store

Group 3: public transit

Group 4: on the internet

Group 5: public park

Group 6: vandalism on private property in a residential neighborhood

Instructions to Students:

5. Analyze the site of racism:
  - a. What types of discrimination might be happening at this site?
  - b. Who is targeted and impacted?
  - c. What can be enacted to *prevent* a racist incident from happening at this site?
  - d. What can be enacted to *intervene* when a racist incident happens at this site?
6. Create your own policy:
  - a. Choose one policy idea that would *prevent* or *intervene* in a racist incident, and write out a preliminary policy:
    - i. What problem does your policy address?
    - ii. How does your policy idea address the problem? What methods, strategies, and stakeholders are involved?
  - b. Present to the class.

## Further Reading

Resistance to Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

- Federal Judicial Center: [Chew Heong v. United States: Chinese Exclusion and the Federal Courts](#)
- American Journal of Chinese Studies: [The Making of a Chinese Boycott: The Origins of the 1905 Anti-American Movement](#)
- Immigration to the United States: [Chinese Boycott of 1905](#)
- Asian American Legal: [Key Historical Cases](#)
- Museum of Chinese in New York: [Anti-Chinese Legislation and Court Cases](#)

Flipping the Political Narrative

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Stop the Spread of Rumors](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Reducing Stigma](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [COVID-19 Coronavirus Disease: Share Facts, Not Fear](#)
- NBC News: [House lawmaker proposes legislation to denounce coronavirus-related racism](#)
- The Atlantic: [Gary Locke Is Mad About That Trump Ad](#)
- AsAm News: [California governor ends his presser by calling out racism, brings up The Chinese Exclusion Act.](#)
- Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus: [Letter to Governor Newsom Regarding Anti-Asian Racism Related to COVID-19](#)
- NBC News: [Politicians, journalists, celebrities call out racist remarks against Asians](#)

#### Counter Media

- NBC News: [Asian Americans use social media to drown out bigotry](#)
- US News: [Asian Americans Use Social Media to Mobilize Against Attacks](#)
- NBC News: [NBC's Vicky Nguyen: Coronavirus is spurring anti-Asian attacks—It's time to stick up for those who are targets of racism](#)
- ESPN: [UCLA's Natalie Chou won't stand for anti-Asian racism related to coronavirus](#)
- The Hollywood Reporter: ["We Can't Be Silent": Asian Americans in Hollywood Denounce "Chinese Virus" and Racist Incidents](#)
- The Los Angeles Times: [Celebrities slam coronavirus-related racism towards Asian Americans: 'Call It Out'](#)
- The Christian Science Monitor: ['Wash the Hate,' Asian celebrities combat COVID-19 racism](#)

#### Community Resistance

- NBC News: [Nonprofits launch site for Asian Americans to report coronavirus-related racism](#)
- The Hill: [New York AG launches hotline to report coronavirus hate crimes, xenophobia against Asian Americans](#)

## PART 6: CONCLUSION (Video: 20:27-end)

### Lecture

1. As the current political rhetoric continues, shelter-in-place orders are extended, and the economic, health, and social impacts of COVID-19 worsen, anti-Asian hate is also expected to increase. We have to be vigilant, step up the fight to resist anti-Asian hate, and educate our communities to have empathy, patience, and tolerance.
2. We need to organize and work in solidarity with other communities of color. COVID-19 exposes structural racism, with Native Americans and African Americans dying at alarmingly high rates and the Latinx community taking the hardest economic hits. Asian Americans also face multiple stressors, including health, racism, and financial fears. As we understand how racial profiling and racism operate in the U.S., we need to build coalitions with other communities of color.

3. We need to ourselves in our own institutions (community-based organizations, nonprofits, unions, faith-based organizations, etc.) against COVID-19 inequities and anti-Asian racism.

### Discussion Questions

- What examples do you know of communities of color organizing across their different experiences for justice and equity?
- In your current context, what does it look like to educate and organize Asian American community?
- In your current context, what does it look like to organize and build coalitions with other communities of color?

### Further Reading

#### Covid-19 Inequities on Communities of Color

- Pew Research Center: [Financial and health impacts of COVID-19 vary widely by race and ethnicity](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](#)
- National Public Radio: [Why The Coronavirus Is Hitting Black Communities Hardest](#)
- Mother Jones: [COVID-19 Has Infected and Killed Black People At Alarming Rates. This Data Proves It.](#)
- CNN Health: [Black communities account for disproportionate number of Covid-19 deaths in the US, study finds](#)
- NBC News: [Native American health center asked for COVID-19 supplies. It got body bags instead.](#)
- CBS: [Longstanding issues put Native American communities at high COVID-19 risk](#)
- The Harvard Gazette: [For Native Americans, COVID-19 is ‘the worst of both worlds at the same time’](#)

#### Organizing with Communities of Color

- Washington Post: [Coronavirus is inspiring anti-Asian racism. This is our political awakening.](#)
- Overachiever Magazine: From Yellow Peril supports Black Power to #asians4blacklives
- [The Secret History of South Asian and African American Solidarity](#)
- Jennings, J. (1994). Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in urban America: Status and prospects for politics and activism. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Lee, G. (Director). (2013). American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs [Video file]. United States: Cherry Sky Pictures. Retrieved from <http://americanrevolutionaryfilm.com>
- PS: Political Science and Politics: [Interracial Politics: Asian Americans and Other Communities of Color](#)
- Denso Encyclopedia: [Little Tokyo / Bronzeville, Los Angeles, California](#)
- The World: [Despite history, Japanese Americans and African Americans are working together to claim their rights](#)

- Colorlines: [The Civil Rights Lessons of Vincent Chin's Murder](#)
- Washington Post: [The real reasons the U.S. became less racist toward Asian Americans](#)
- Thought Co: [Guide to Being an Anti-Racism Activist](#)
- Mashable: [6 ways to be antiracist, because being 'not racist' isn't enough](#)
- Racial Equity Tools: [History of racism movements](#)

## **APPENDIX: Further Assignable Readings**

Hsu, Madeline. *Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Anti-Racist*. Penguin 2019.

Lee, Erika. *The Making of Asian America: A History*. Simon & Schuster 2015.

Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton University Press 2014.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. Routledge 2014.



## **WORKS CITED:**

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