Essays in Asian American Social and Political Philosophy

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
(Philosophy)

At the
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
2024

Date of final oral examination: 05/07/2024

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For my parents, Cheng Khun and Sun Leng; and my brothers, Daniel and Joseph. By far my favorite Asian Americans!

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My time as a philosophy Ph.D. candidate at UW-Madison—including the many hours spent writing this dissertation—has been the most challenging phase of my life thus far. But it has also been the most rewarding by far, and there are many people that deserve thanks for this. First, thanks to my dissertation advisor, Russ Shafer-Landau, and the other members of my dissertation committee, namely, Jimmy Goodrich, David Kim, Farid Masrour, Viren Murthy, and Mike Titelbaum. I thank each of these individuals for taking time out of their jam-packed professional schedule to help me complete a dissertation in Asian American philosophy, especially because most of them do not specialize in anything close to that area of study.

Among my dissertation committee members, two should be singled out for special thanks. One is Russ for being all that someone could ask for in an advisor. Like most of Russ's other advisees, I originally expected to write a dissertation in Russ's own area of specialization, namely, metaethics. However, my primary research interests gradually shifted over the years, and I'm very thankful to Russ for accommodating that fact. The area of this dissertation—Asian American philosophy—is actually the third area I decided to concentrate on: in between metaethics and Asian American philosophy, for a time I worked on topics at the intersection of Chinese philosophy and philosophy of sport. Throughout all those changes in focus, Russ continued to lend me his full support, and I'm deeply appreciative of how he allowed me to let my evolving philosophical research predilections guide me wherever they may. I'm also extremely grateful to Russ for the copious amounts of feedback he has given me on the writing I undertook for my dissertation and for other projects. Nothing has helped me grow as a writer more than trying to satisfactorily respond to all the input Russ has offered me over the past few years.

I also want to thank Russ for inspiring me to pursue a career in academic philosophy in the first place even before he knew of my existence. He did so through authoring his widely used introductory moral philosophy textbook, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, which, at the time I write this, is on its sixth edition. I read one of the earlier editions in the first philosophy class I ever took and was so enthused by it that I decided I wanted to land a career dedicated to thinking about the sort of issues discussed in the book. Thanks, Russ, for lighting the philosophical fire within me and all the kindling you've added to it by never letting me sell myself short!

David also deserves special thanks for the impact he has had on my life in academic philosophy. The two of us actually will still have been acquainted with one another for less than a year by the time of my dissertation defense. This is because my decision to write on Asian American philosophy—an area for which David is a pioneer—was made quite late into my time as a Ph.D. candidate. In fact, I did not commit to that area until the summer of 2023, which is less than a year prior to my dissertation defense date. And I did not reach out to David for input on my dissertation until after the start of the final academic year of my Ph.D. program.

Despite our relatively brief time personally knowing one another, however, David has been an immensely positive influence on me in various ways. For one, it is through reading his work in Asian American philosophy that I first learned about the existence of that area of scholarship. Moreover, David has been as generous with his time as I could have asked for. In addition to helpful feedback on my writing itself, he has given me tons of helpful advice about how to develop further as a scholar of Asian American philosophy. I'm tremendously fortunate that I can count on having David's guidance throughout my career. Making the trip to New Orleans for the 2023

Central APA meeting on my own dime to meet David in-person for the first time likely will end up being the best decision I made to further my career in academic philosophy during my time as a Ph.D. candidate! David, I hope that you can fully appreciate that you deserve to eventually go into the record books as a major figure in Asian American scholarship—and, in my view, Asian America generally—for having trailblazed Asian American philosophy. Thank you for laying the groundwork so that the current generation of up-and-coming philosophy scholars who want to work in Asian American philosophy can get a running start!

My fellow philosophy Ph.D. candidates at UW-Madison also deserve thanks for making the university's philosophy program a joy to be a part of. I especially want to express my gratitude for two of those candidates. One is another member of my cohort, namely, Michael Bruckner. Besides becoming one of the closest friends I'll ever have, he was by far my greatest philosophical interlocutor during my time in the program. The many hours we spent discussing metaethics together—both within the metaethics reading group we organized and outside of it—helped me develop confidence that I can do worthwhile philosophy more than anything else during the early years of my Ph.D. candidacy. This is because Michael is a top-tier philosopher and his brilliance rubs off one anyone who spends enough time in philosophical dialogue with him. Michael, I'll always cherish the time we spent as roommates during the heady days of our Ph.D. lives, my friend! Thanks for letting me share my anime fandom with you and for being an awesome kickboxing training partner during the pandemic! I'll never forget all those sparring rounds we put in together in our apartment complex parking lots like a couple of lunatics.

Speaking of anime, the other philosophy Ph.D. candidate I want to spotlight is Donghoon Lee. Though our philosophical research interests widely diverge, we fully converge in our love of anime and manga. Thanks, Donghoon, for all the time we spent idly geeking out about things we read or watched! Thanks also for the thoughts you shared in our many conversations about Asia or Asian peoples. As readers of *Shōnen Jump* understand, the value of an adventure lies primarily not in the final destination, but rather the friendships formed during the journey to it. I'm lucky to have become friends with you during my Ph.D. saga and to have had your support throughout it. I'm looking forward to seeing your own reach a storybook ending!

Last but certainly not least, I owe many, many thanks to my parents, Cheng Khun and Sun Leng; and my big brothers, Daniel and Joseph for supporting me in innumerable ways throughout my life. Mom and dad, I know you're proud of me for what I've accomplished in my academic career. But I am just as proud of *you* for having raised me into someone capable of those accomplishments despite all the hardships you both had to endure as Cambodian refugees. Nobody else could've done it: you two are truly one-of-a-kind. Daniel and Joseph, thanks for making my life so much fun and for being my biggest role models. I don't know whether you two could have tolerated me even as a mere acquaintance if we were biologically unrelated. So I'm immeasurably grateful that whatever forces govern this universe linked us together by the bonds of brotherhood. The four of you are by far my favorite Asian Americans, and I dedicate this work to you!

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on issues in the unexplored area of Asian American social and political philosophy. Its constituent essays illustrate that greater scholarly attention to that area is worthwhile for at least two reasons. First, various forms of stigma and disadvantage that beset Asian Americans are similar to, though importantly different from, the sorts that affect other minorities in the U.S. This distinctive social location gives rise to issues that call for serious philosophical engagement. Second, the standpoints of Asian Americans are helpful for theorizing concepts—such as culture, domination, race neutrality, and solidarity—of interest to social and political philosophers.

"**Asian Americans, Negative Action, and Racial Indirection**" seeks to determine the morally optimal way of responding to recent Asian American opposition against measures for increasing racial equity in educational access. Inspired by Derrick Darby's defense of "postracial remedies," I argue that the morally best response acknowledges that race-based educational access barriers remain. However, it seeks to address those barriers primarily through race-neutral policies of a specific sort. Namely, they are ones that—despite not issuing race-specific directives—disproportionately improve educational access for Asian Americans and other people of color in a highly transparent way.

"**The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans as a Basis for Afro-Asian Solidarity: A Civic Republican Defense**," draws on work in the African American civic republican tradition and sociologist Claire Jean Kim's influential racial triangulation framework. I argue that Blacks and Asian Americans morally ought to cultivate a form of Afro-Asian solidarity that helps dismantle cultural elements highlighted by Kim's framework that raise the vulnerability of both Blacks and Asian Americans to racial domination. I also argue that such Afro-Asian solidarity is congenial to socialist civic republicanism.

I argue in "**Pan-Asian Solidarity in Asian America: A Moral Philosophical Conception**," that the ethical value of forging pan-Asian solidarity among Asian Americans stems from how it promotes three things: morally desirable preservation of Asian cultures, ethnoracial self-respect and self-esteem among Asian Americans, and political engagement among Asian Americans. I also argue that the ethical value of such solidarity makes Asian Americans *pro tanto* morally obligated to forge it.

CHAPTER 1

Asian Americans, Negative Action, and Racial Indirection

Introduction

Asian Americans have been at the center of two recent major controversies over educational access. The more high profile of the pair concerns the use of race-conscious admissions policies (RCAPs) by institutions of higher education to enact what is commonly known as "affirmative action," i.e., taking positive steps toward increasing enrollment of underrepresented racial minorities. RCAPs permit admissions officers to treat an applicant's race as a "plus factor" that counts in favor of admitting her. The legal viability of such policies was recently dealt what likely is a death blow by the landmark decision of the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 600 U.S. __ (2023) and it's companion case, *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina et al.* Ruling in favor of Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) and holding that the RCAPs used by Harvard and the University of North Carolina are constitutionally intolerable, SCOTUS overturned its own established affirmative action jurisprudence by declaring that the use of RCAPs violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. A noteworthy feature of *SFFA v. Harvard* is that unlike past affirmative action cases heard by SCOTUS, it included Asian American plaintiffs and focused largely on how Asian Americans are impacted by RCAPs (Harpalani 2022a, 237-238).

The second controversy has received much less attention, although it has the potential to culminate in legal action with results that are at least as consequential as those of SFFA's efforts. It concerns attempts by both institutions of higher education and selective high schools to increase

enrollment of racial minorities (hereafter, "minorities"), especially those who are significantly disadvantaged, by replacing the use of standardized entrance exams in admissions processes with other selection methods. Standardized entrance exams are a kind of high-stakes exam, where the stake is (eligibility for) admissions to some educational institution. In the U.S., such exams usually test for knowledge in mathematics, English language arts, and sometimes various sciences. The exams are "standardized" in that they have all examinees answer the same questions under similar testing conditions. Examples include the SAT[1] and ACT[2] exams, required by many colleges and universities, and the Scholastic High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT), required by eight of the nine specialized high schools in New York City.

Many Asian Americans have opposed attempts to replace standardized entrance exams on the grounds that the proposed alternatives discriminate against Asian Americans even when framed in race-neutral terms. A group composed primarily of Asian Americans, the plaintiffs in *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board*, No. 22-1280 (4th Cir. 2023) pursued legal action to prevent the prestigious Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology from replacing its standardized entrance exam criterion with alternatives. An important feature of the case for my purposes is that all parties to the litigation agreed that the alternatives whose legality were challenged by Coalition for TJ are facially race-neutral. A consequence of this is that although SCOTUS recently rejected Coalition for TJ's attempt to get *certiorari*, the dissenting Justices set a precedent according to which the considerations advanced by the Coalition should inform how we assess the legality of a race-neutral policy. Thus, Coalition for TJ's lawsuit may have laid some

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[1] Formerly an abbreviation for "Scholastic Aptitude Test" and "Scholastic Assessment Test."
[2] Formerly an abbreviation for "American College Testing."

of the legal groundwork for significantly curtailing the use of even race-neutral measures for increasing enrollment of disadvantaged minorities (Harpalani 2022b, 786-787).

These two instances of potent legal opposition by Asian Americans are my impetus for addressing the following question in this paper: *How should efforts to increase educational access for disadvantaged minorities reckon with the fact that many Asian Americans are politically active in opposing both race-conscious and facially race-neutral means for pursuing that aim*? There is a large amount of social scientific and legal scholarship that examines disputes over educational access *vis-à-vis* Asian Americans (much of it focused specifically on RCAPs in higher education).[3] However, besides a brief discussion by Linda Alcoff (2003, 25-27) and a recent paper by Michele Moses and colleagues (Moses et al. 2019), Asian Americans have not been a focus of philosophical work on RCAPs. And, to my knowledge, currently there is no published scholarship in academic philosophy that addresses the use of standardized entrance exams in a way thatbpays special attention to Asian Americans.

This paper addresses those research gaps. It does so by drawing on the "postracial remedies" approach to addressing social issues defended by Derrick Darby in his recent book, *A Realistic Blacktopia: Why We Must Unite to* Fight (2023; see also Darby and Levy 2016). My aim is to show that such an approach is a normatively attractive way to pursue greater enrollment of disadvantaged minorities in light of the staunch resistance many Asian Americans have raised against prior and current attempts to do so. Darby describes postracial remedies as those "that seek pragmatic race sensitive but not race specific solutions for the economic, social, and structural

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[3] See, e.g., Tsuang (1989); Matsuda (1993); Chew (1994); Wu (1995; 2002, ch. 2); Kang (1996); Chin et al. (1996); Kidder (2000; 2006); Liu (2002); Chung Allred (2007); Lee (2008); Liu (2008); Park and Liu (2014); Chu (2016); Leong (2016); Zia (2016); West-Faulcon (2017); Chiu (2018); Garces and Poon (2018); Poon et al. (2019); Feingold (2019); Gee (2019); Lee (2021); Harpalani (2022a; 2022b).

problems that disproportionately burden African Americans without treating people differently because of their race" (2023, 103). While Darby focuses specifically on African Americans, his postracial remedies approach can be adapted to address problems faced by minorities more generally. I thus will understand such remedies as ones targeting problems that disproportionately burden any group of minorities "without treating people differently because of their race."

I argue that in the contemporary moment, a postracial remedies approach morally ought to be utilized in developing educational reform policies for increasing enrollment of disadvantaged minorities. Such policies are justified partly because of the current opposition by many Asian Americans to the variants of such policies that have been pursued thus far. However, I contend that to have a good chance at being efficacious and morally justifiable, that approach to achieving this enrollment goal needs to meet certain conditions. One is that it must not neglect considering ways of benefiting Asian Americans, even if the solutions it settles on ultimately have a greater positive impact on other minorities. The other is that it must involve a willingness to be transparent about the sort of "racial indirection" it involves. By "racial indirection," I mean the practice of achieving racially disproportionate results without overtly relying on race (Joshi 2019, 2497), something which all postracial remedies approaches attempt to do. My view is that a postracial remedies-oriented methodology for pursuing greater admissions of disadvantaged minorities that satisfies the two conditions just specified is what we morally ought to use at present, because it is better than other approaches at circumventing the tough obstacles to achieving that aim some Asian Americans raise. Hereafter—as a nod to the influence of Darby (2023) on this paper—I refer to such a methodology as the "Realistic Blacktopian (RB) Approach."

I proceed as follows. In §1, I describe Darby's defense of postracial remedies in more detail. In §2, I draw on his defense to argue in favor of the RB Approach. In §3, I provide sketches of some concrete strategies that such an approach might involve. In §4, I conclude.

1. Darby on Postracial Remedies

Postracial remedies are achieved via pursuing plans of action or policies that articulate race-neutral goals and means for pursuing those goals. Darby (2023, 119-123) provides several examples to illustrate these features. Those examples include the following—I italicize the race-neutral policy elements to help distinguish the ultimate goal of the remedy from the postracial means of pursuing it:

- Closing wealth disparities between Blacks and Whites *by expanding job training programs and implementing national service requirements to enhance individual employability, increase number of job opportunities, and lessen competition for available jobs*.

- Reducing the rate of unjust incarceration of Blacks *by de-escalating the war on drugs to reduce the number of overall arrests for sale, production, or use of drugs*.

- Improving educational achievement among Blacks *by providing more public funding for before- and after-school programs that promote student success*.

- Mitigating the detrimental effects of residential segregation on Blacks *by increasing public investment in neighborhood development to improve the livability of those neighborhoods for all*.

These examples illustrate an essential feature of postracial remedies, namely, the use of racial indirection. Each example articulates a kind of race-neutral policy whose successful implementation would disproportionately benefit Blacks because of their greater representation in

the policy's specified target group of beneficiaries. Hence, each involves generating racially disproportionate results without overtly relying on race specific measures.

Darby maintains that while postracial remedies are not *race-specific*, in that they are pursued via policies that are framed in race-neutral terms, such remedies are *race-sensitive*, since they recognize and aim to ameliorate "the salience of race in American society, including *both* the existence of racial disparities and the reality of racial polarization." (2023, 103). Postracial remedies are thus part of the toolbox for addressing the burdens suffered by Blacks and other minorities despite heavily emphasizing race-neutrality.

It is worth pausing here to stress that postracial remedies are intended to be race-sensitive solutions. Due to being race-sensitive, postracial remedies *do not* advocate abandoning race-conscious approaches to identifying and theorizing about social or political issues. In fact, the main selling point of postracial remedies is that they are supposed to be the most effective means of addressing problems with racial dimensions under conditions in which there is widespread polarization over racial matters. To advocate for a candidate postracial remedy thus involves acknowledging that a person's race remains a powerful determinant of her quality of life and that racial differences continue to feature in various kinds of injustices. It thus would be a mistake to claim that methods of philosophical theorizing about solutions to social or political problems that rely on postracial remedies—such as the theorizing I engage in here—demand that we reject race-consciousness. Convincing work has been written on the problems with eschewing race-consciousness in philosophical methodology (Curry and Curry 2018). But such problems should not be seen as ones plaguing philosophical approaches that prescribe postracial remedies.

Darby also emphasizes the compatibility of pursuing postracial remedies alongside race-specific ones. The view he defends is not that postracial remedies should be the exclusive way we

tackle the disadvantages of minorities. Rather, he argues that such remedies are sometimes normatively preferable to race-specific ones and are in fact necessary for effectively addressing such disadvantages in the current U.S. context (2023, 124).

What explains why the normative value of postracial remedies sometimes outpaces that of race-specific ones? Darby identifies two reasons, one mainly strategic and the other a matter of democratic principles. The strategic reason is that postracial remedies are better equipped than race-specific ones to garner widespread political support under the current U.S. political climate and survive potential legal challenges (2023, 106-109). Regarding acquisition of political support, Darby notes that any proposals for sweeping actions to address problems confronting disadvantaged minorities must deal with the fact that what he calls the "postracial narrative" is widely accepted in the U.S. That narrative comprises a variety of claims about the declining significance of race in determining one's life prospects, the core of which are the following: *de jure* explicitly race-based exclusions no longer exist; the ramifications of past racism have largely been addressed; overt racism may still occur in private spaces but does not do so widely enough to cause persistent race-based disadvantages; racial disparities are mainly the result of agent-relative factors (e.g., personal deficiencies) rather than agent-neutral ones (e.g., systemic barriers); and race-specific remedies that may have been necessary to address discrimination, segregation, and general racial animus are no longer morally justifiable (2023, 109-113).

Darby (2023, 116-117) argues that a pragmatic advantage of postracial remedies is that they are much more likely to be endorsed by those who accept the postracial narrative (while still receiving support from those who reject that narrative out of the belief that minority status remains a source of disadvantage). One reason for this is that by advocating pursuit of race-neutral goals via race-neutral means, postracial remedies are less likely to provoke defensive reactions from

Whites who are sympathetic to the postracial narrative. Many such Whites might be well-meaning but also inclined to view ostensibly race-specific problems as unworthy of redress via sweeping policies (due to, e.g., being largely attributable to personal deficiencies of members of the relevant racial group). Another is that such remedies leverage the fact that people are motivated to address certain problems regardless of whether they are the result of racial discrimination or whether doing so would address racial disparities. Such leveraging occurs by addressing problems that, while disproportionately burdening some racial groups more than others, afflict large proportions of people from all (or at least most) racial groups. By not having to rely on people having or developing an interest in addressing the disadvantages of minorities *qua* such disadvantages, postracial remedies can acquire support for measures that highly benefit minorities from people who do not have a special concern for the plight of those groups.

Regarding legal viability, Darby (2023, 118-119) contends that postracial remedies are more likely than their race-specific counterparts to be found consistent with SCOTUS's equal protection jurisprudence. The reason is that the race-neutrality of the policies advocated by the former makes it so that if they faced legal opposition, the form of judicial scrutiny that they are likely to face is rational basis scrutiny, rather than the more severe strict scrutiny directed to race-specific policies (or policies that use "suspect classifications"[4] other than race). To pass rational basis scrutiny, a policy must pursue a "compelling" government interest via means that are rational to employ in pursuit of that interest, in the sense that the means reliably—though not necessarily optimally—advance that interest. Passing strict scrutiny—the highest standard courts use to assess discrimination claims—is much more difficult. That standard of judicial review requires that a

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[4] "Suspect classifications" single out for special treatment kinds of identity groups that historically have suffered widespread discrimination such as gender, national origin, racial, religious, or sexual orientation groups.

policy not only prescribe a rational approach for advancing a compelling government interest, but also be "narrowly tailored." To achieve that status, a policy's prescribed approach must be "necessary" for best advancing that interest, where this means that it achieves the greatest net balance of advancing that interest while minimizing potential undesirable consequences of doing so. To show that a policy that employs *racial* classifications passes strict scrutiny, one must show that it advances a compelling government interest better than feasible race-neutral alternatives. Strict scrutiny was wielded by SCOTUS in *SFFA v. Harvard* to legally proscribe Harvard's RCAPs and curtail the legality of RCAPs generally.

It is worth noting that the race-neutrality of postracial remedy policies does not *guarantee* that they will never be subjected to strict scrutiny in the courts. Darby (2023, 118) emphasizes that such policies might face strict scrutiny when there is evidence that they serve merely as a pretext for racially preferential treatment or are implemented in a race-based manner. This is an important point for my arguments in §3.

As noted, the second reason that Darby favors race-neutral remedial policies over race-specific ones is not based on strategic considerations, but rather on democratic principles. Darby (2023, 130-133) argues that there are circumstances where relational equality—i.e., the kind of equality that exists between people when they respect each other as democratic equals—is better promoted by race-neutral policies. One such circumstance is our current one in the U.S., under which the postracial narrative is widely accepted. Darby contends that in a social climate where many are sympathetic to that narrative, insistence on policies that carry with them polarizing conceptions of the social significance of race is inimical to forging the social bonds that both encourage recognition of one another as democratic equals and, concomitantly, foster social cooperation to achieve common ends. He maintains that in such a context, policies for ameliorating

the disadvantages of minorities that foreground the importance of pursuing equal opportunity *for all* are the ones that will be most conducive to the development of such social bonds. This is because, his thought goes, within that sort of context, policies with that sort of universalistic messaging are more likely to garner widespread support than race-specific ones. Such policies thus are also more likely to facilitate the sort of positive experiences of democratic cooperation that inspire concern to bring about the things needed for such cooperation to reliably occur. Among those things is widespread concern to foster relational equality throughout society (Darby 2023, 132).

Darby does not argue that race-conscious approaches should be eschewed altogether for the sake of promoting social cohesion. One reason for this is that some racial barriers likely cannot be effectively addressed without some degree of race-consciousness. For example, Darby (2023, 117) notes that race-based implicit bias likely cannot be effectively addressed in a wholly race-blind manner, because effectively combatting such bias likely requires acknowledging its existence and the importance of diminishing it. However, he cautions that we should circumscribe our reliance on race-conscious measures to minimize the risk of counterproductively using them. Specifically, he suggests that initial uses of them should be limited to cases where we are confident that the target audience is receptive; more expansive use of such measures should be taken only after less expansive use of them establishes a track record of their efficacy, which can be presented as evidence in their favor when they face resistance from less receptive audiences (2023, 117-118). Thus, for example, while effectively combatting race-based implicit bias might require the use of race-conscious programs, such programs should first be tested on people who are more amenable to such programs prior to any attempt to persuade the broader public to participate in them.

2. The "Realistic Blacktopian" Approach to Reckoning With Asian Americans Who Are Sympathetic to the Postracial Narrative

Drawing on Darby's defense of postracial remedies, I now argue for an approach to increasing educational access for disadvantaged minorities that prioritizes use of such remedies to overcome political resistance by Asian Americans—i.e., what I call the "RB Approach." Following his methodology, I contend that various facts about Asian Americans make it so that there are both strategic reasons and reasons stemming from democratic principles that morally favor using the RB Approach. My view is that so long as it meets two conditions, an educational reform approach that centers postracial remedies is better than a race-specific approach at developing educational access policies that effectively benefit disadvantaged minorities, while also avoiding staunch and inflammatory opposition from Asian Americans. The first condition is that the approach must aim to improve educational access for Asian Americans (in addition to other minorities), especially the socioeconomically worst off. Second, it must be committed to being highly transparent about the sort of racial indirection that it is aiming to achieve. Since the RB Approach satisfies both conditions, it is the pragmatically optimal way to develop policies for improving educational access for disadvantaged minorities that are legally viable and have great potential to achieve widespread durable support among Asian Americans. And it is also equipped to minimize racial divisions over how education policies impact Asian Americans that stymie the sorts of social cooperation that promote the common good.

2.1. The Strategic Reasons

The strategic case for such an approach stems from two things. First, race-neutrally framed educational access policies are the variant least likely to face widespread political or legal opposition from Asian Americans. Part of why this is the case is that this variant is most likely to

receive the greatest amount of support from Asian Americans. Second, race-neutral policies are far less at risk of being legally proscribed by the courts than race-specific ones.

The most obvious way in which race-neutral educational access policies are less likely to face resistance from Asian Americans is that such policies lack race-consciousness. Many Asian Americans have long suspected that RCAPs have been used to clandestinely discriminate against Asian Americans (Wang; 1988; Tsuang 1989; Chew 1994; Lee 2008; Wu 2020; Harpalani 2022a; 2022b). In earlier controversies, many Asian Americans believed that universities were using RCAPs to implement what Jerry Kang named "negative action" against Asian Americans. Kang characterizes negative action as "unfavorable treatment based on race, using Whites as a basis for comparison." (1996, 3). To implement anti-Asian negative action is to make an applicant's Asian American identity *detrimental* to her admissions chances when comparing her against White applicants. Negative action "can be implemented either by a 'hard' system of inflexible, numerical quotas, or by a 'soft,' unquantified, gestalt admissions calculation" (Kang 1996, 3-4), where neither of those processes need be intentionally discriminatory. It should be distinguished from (race-focused) "affirmative" action, which involves favorably weighting membership in underrepresented racial groups, without making any non-White identity disadvantageous for applicants.

In the 1980s-1990s, several elite universities—namely, Brown University, Stanford University, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, Princeton University, and Harvard—were accused of engaging in anti-Asian negative action through their RCAPs. At the time, prevailing affirmative action jurisprudence established by the ruling for *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978) had already prohibited race-based enrollment quotas. It also proscribed the use of RCAPs except for the

purpose of increasing campus diversity and required that an applicant's race be considered "holistically" alongside her other relevant attributes. Many Asian Americans suspected that excluding Asian identity from the set of conditions that could raise an applicant's admissions chances on diversity grounds was part of a larger set of practices for increasing enrollment of Whites at the expense of Asian Americans (Wang 1988; Tsuang 1989; Lee 2008; Wu 2020). Part of what drove those suspicions were public comments by university officials claiming that Asian American "overrepresentation" was a problem that needed to be addressed (Tsuang 1989, 672-673; Chew 1994, 62-64; Wu 2002, 143; Lee 2008, 136-145; Wu 2020). Growing wariness among Asian Americans culminated in accusations that the aforementioned universities were indeed engaged in anti-Asian practices. Notably, besides Princeton and Harvard, each university either was found by investigators to have engaged in anti-Asian negative action (as a result of either implicit or explicit bias), or issued public apologies for a lack of transparency and organization in conducting admissions (Takagi 1998, 60-79, 94-97).

While current instances of resistance by Asian Americans to RCAPs are still motivated by concerns about anti-Asian negative action (Ho 2015; Harpalani 2022a; 2022b), such resistance has also increasingly been driven by the thought that *affirmative* action policies to increase admissions of other minorities directly discriminate against Asian Americans. Scholars have noted that this thought is partially the result of people mistakenly conflating negative action with affirmative action. That conflation is due to misunderstanding the latter as pitting minorities against only one another for a limited number of spots, such that membership in some minority groups ends up making one's admissions chances lower than it would be if one were White (Liu 2008 416-418; West-Faulcon 2017; Feingold 2019; Moses et al. 2019). However, it is also the result of many Asian Americans believing that it is unfair for them to be ineligible to benefit from a diversity plus

factor while other minorities can. Starting with *Ho by Ho v. San Francisco Unified School Dist.*, 965 F. Supp. 1316 (N.D. Cal. 1997), legal opposition to educational reforms for increasing racial diversity has increasingly been spearheaded by conservative Asian American groups consisting mainly of Chinese Americans, many of whom are affluent first-generation immigrants (Kim 2023, 296). These groups often focus on criticizing affirmative action as such, rather than targeting anti-Asian negative action for being a source of discrimination. Their influence on SCOTUS's affirmative action jurisprudence has been pronounced. *Amici* briefs from those groups informed the dissenting opinions in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003), *Fisher v. University of Texas*, 570 U.S. 297 (2013), and *Fisher v. University of Texas*, 579 U.S. 365 (2016) (Kim 2023, 321-332) and were also filed in support of SFFA (Erskine et al. 2022).

A noteworthy impact of how conservative Asian American activists have shifted focus of RCAPs-related criticism away from negative action and toward affirmative action as such is that while earlier opposition to affirmative policies by Asian Americans usually involved calling for greater inclusion of them in such policies, later opposition typically seeks to end the use of RCAPs altogether (Wu 2020, 205-206). There is reason to believe that this shift has largely been facilitated by increasing pessimism among Asian Americans about receiving affirmative action benefits. For example, some conservative Asian American groups at the forefront of current opposition to affirmative action were originally formed by those who had been members of Asian American organizations that support the aim of increasing Black and Latina/o/x enrollment (Kim 2023, 300). That aversion to affirmative action by Asian Americans might mainly due to worries about the exclusion of Asian Americans, rather than animus toward improved admissions chances for other minorities, is a reason for optimism. This is because that being the case suggests that much support

from Asian Americans for future educational access reforms to increase enrollment of minorities can be recovered merely by ensuring that those reforms clearly benefit Asian Americans.

Consequently, the RB Approach to developing such reforms can go beyond merely shielding them from opposition. It can also enhance support for them by making them focus on policies that are not only race-neutral, but also target factors that impede educational access for wide swaths of Asian Americans. I will elaborate more on what such policies might be in §3. For now, I note here one example, namely, a policy that forbids use of "legacy" preferences in admissions processes. Such preferences are used by a college or university to increase the admissions prospects of applicants with certain sorts of relations to people affiliated with the institution, e.g., children of donors, alumni, or faculty members. While facially race-neutral, legacy preferences in practice are a source of racial indirection that advantages Whites over all minorities. Hence, it is plausible that Asian Americans can be persuaded to support curbing such preferences to improve the admissions prospects of all minorities.

However, an approach to enhancing educational access for disadvantaged minorities that prioritizes postracial remedies cannot de-motivate opposition and garner support unless it involves transparency about the sorts of racial indirection its policies involve. The reason is that many Asian Americans suspect that facially race-neutral methods for increasing minority enrollments in fact serve as conduits for discriminating against Asian Americans (Kwok 2020; Harpalani 2022b). Those suspicions are likely to erupt into intense opposition against attempts to employ such methods if not preempted by clear assurance that those methods do not involve clandestine anti-Asian practices. This is especially so for versions of such methods that involve discontinuing the use of criteria that Asian Americans historically excel at, such as standardized entrance exams.

Perhaps the strongest evidence for the prevalence of such suspicions among Asian Americans are the current efforts among some of the group's members to block the use of alternatives to standardized entrance exams. This is exemplified by the plaintiffs in *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board* and by Asian American residents of New York City opposed to initiatives for replacing the SHSAT (Kwok 2020; Harpalani 2022b, 773-778). But the seeds of such distrust were sown long ago through several facially race-neutral measures undertaken by universities to increase diversity. For example, as far back as the late 1980s, many Asian Americans were already on high alert about race-neutral conduits for anti-Asian discrimination. The primary focus of concern were various race-neutral policies implemented by UC Berkeley's admissions program. Those policies included ones that implemented a minimum verbal SAT score, favored applicants who were exempt from needing to take remedial English classes, and favored applicants who had studied a foreign (European) language for at least four years (Wang 1988, 197-199)[5]. Various comments from university officials expressing concern about "overrepresentation" of Asian Americans seemed to make it clear that such policies were adopted precisely because they would drive down admissions of Asian Americans (Wang 1988, 200-202). Asian Americans also remain concerned about anti-Asian racial indirection being practiced under race-neutral cloaks because of the ongoing use of legacy preferences. SFFA cited Harvard's use of such preferences as one of the mechanisms through which the school discriminates against Asian Americans (Harpalani 2022a, 284).

The sort of transparency that could mitigate the sort of worries about race-neutral educational access reforms raised by the cases just described would involve openness about the

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[5] UC Berkeley also converted, without public announcement, some of its race-neutral programs into race-based ones that decreased admissions of Asian American applicants (Wang 1988, 197).

aims of those reforms and their racially indirect methods. Such openness consists of both proactive dissemination of information about any such reform and responsiveness to questions that people might have about it. By being up front in these ways, an attempt to initiate such a reform reform would minimize the likelihood that it is rejected out of suspicions that it discriminates against Asian Americans, provided that it is in fact designed in a way that clearly makes such suspicions unjustified. Moreover, this salutary effect of such transparency is amplified in cases where a race-neutral policy would clearly improve the admissions chances of Asian Americans. So to maximally achieve that effect, a race-neutral policy for increasing educational access for disadvantaged minorities should be designed so that Asian Americans are beneficiaries of its racial indirection, and this upshot should be well-publicized.

Thus, I submit that the RB Approach is strategically optimal for minimizing resistance by Asian Americans, because it involves such transparency and also benefits Asian Americans. The race-neutrality of the policies advocated by the approach enables sidestepping worries about race-consciousness. Transparency about the workings of such policies addresses residual concern about them providing cover for clandestine anti-Asian discrimination.

Similar points apply when it comes to maximizing the legal viability of race-neutral policies under prevailing SCOTUS jurisprudence. Facial race-neutrality on its own goes a long way to inoculate a reform from having to face strict scrutiny at all, something which all RCAPs must deal with in the courts. However, there are conditions under which a race-neutral policy can be subjected to strict scrutiny. One, established in *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, 118 U.S. 356 (1886), is that there is credible evidence of its having been applied in an intentionally discriminatory manner. Another, established in *Village of Arlington Heights v. Metropolitan Housing Development Corp*, 429 U.S. 252 (1977), is that, even if it is implemented without intent to discriminate, its

evenhanded implementation has a racially disproportionate impact and at least part of what motivated its *adoption* was invidious discriminatory intent. Of course, a race-neutral policy can survive strict scrutiny, just as race-specific ones have. But ensuring that a policy does not face such scrutiny in the first place helps to safeguard its legal standing.

To avoid activating either of these conditions, proponents of the RB Approach not only make sure to avoid any race-neutral policy that somehow licenses invidious discrimination. They are also transparent about how their policies are applied and the kinds of racial indirection at issue. As established by SCOTUS's prior affirmative action jurisprudence (Joshi 2019) and reiterated by the majority and concurring opinions in *SFFA v. Harvard*, a race-neutral educational access policy intended to disproportionately benefit minorities is on constitutionally safe footing if it meets three conditions: (i) its employment does not involve invidious forms of racial discrimination; (ii) its own design does not in fact permit such discrimination, and (iii) it was not designed with the intention to carry out such discrimination.

Texas's "Top Ten Percent Plan" (Joshi 2019, 2504) is an example of a race-neutral policy intended to improve enrollment of minorities that satisfies those conditions in the eyes of SCOTUS. The plan guarantees all Texas high school students who graduated in the top ten percent of their high school class a spot at a publicly-funded university in Texas. Although it is race-neutral, it leverages *de facto* racial segregation between high schools to increase admissions of minorities in Texas universities. So if a proponent of the RB Approach can transparently show that the design and implementation of her race-neutral policy proposals makes them relevantly like Texas's Top Ten Percent Plan, she does much to ensure that those proposals can withstand challenges in the courts.

The litigation of *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board* is instructive about what steps should be taken to protect a race-neutral policy from being challenged on the grounds that discriminatory intent went into its design. The plaintiffs and those sympathetic to them drew on jurisprudential doctrine from *Arlington Heights* regarding how the background from which a policy developed is relevant to discerning whether it was adopted partially out of discriminatory intent. They alleged that several aspects of the developmental process behind the eventually chosen alternative to Thomas Jefferson's standardized entrance exam requirement render that alternative constitutionally intolerable (Harpalani 779-787). One aspect includes the lack of public transparency in the planning of alternatives to Thomas Jefferson's standardized entrance exam requirement. Another is the heavy attention the school board paid to racial demographics in developing such alternatives that, according to the Coalition for TJ, suggested intention to engage in constitutionally prohibited "racial balancing"—i.e., directly ensuring that specific proportions of admitted applicants are from certain racial groups. A third is disparaging comments about Asian American families by people affiliated with the school board (Harpalani 2022b, 779-787). Each of those three things was stressed in the dissent of the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruling on the case. That ruling upheld the constitutionality of the school board's alternative to Thomas Jefferson's former standardized entrance exam requirement.

As noted above, although SCOTUS recently rejected Coalition for TJ's attempt to get *certiorari*, the dissenting Justices set a precedent according to which the considerations advanced by the Coalition should inform how we assess the legality of a race-neutral policy. In particular, the dissent established that Coalition for TJ's arguments should guide our evaluation of whether the background context of a race-neutral policy undermines its legality. As a result, we can

justifiably assume that such considerations about background context have a high likelihood of featuring prominently in SCOTUS's future assessment of race-neutral policies.

To preempt such background-based objections to the legality of her policy proposals, a proponent of a RB Approach needs to strike a fine balance. One one hand, her proposal must wear the form of racial indirection it aims for on its sleeve. On the other, she must show that she is not prescribing any unconstitutional means for achieving that aim and is not motivated by racial animus. Part of what striking that balance will involve is clearly communicating that she is not enjoining any sort of racial balancing policy. This sometimes may be difficult to pull off, but it is not impossible.

One thing that likely makes doing so much easier is advocating policies that do not *guarantee* the sought-after racial indirection, even if they raise the likelihood of such an outcome. Such policies leave room for all sorts of racial distributions in the admitted class, and so block objections that they are merely tools for illegal racial balancing. An example might be one that evaluates individual applicants in a way that is not only race-neutral, but also race-*blind*, insofar as it conceals both the race of individual applicants and statistics on the racial distribution of the pool of finalists from which last decisions are made. Such policies minimize the potential for intentionally predetermining the racial demographics of an admitted class of applicants. The majority and concurring opinions of the Court of Appeals of the Fourth Circuit regarding *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board* in fact favorably discussed that Thomas Jefferson's new admissions process achieves such race-blindness in judging the process to be legally permissible.

However a proponent of postracial remedies goes about defusing suspicions that the policies she advocates should be liable to strict scrutiny, my point here just is that she ought to, because such scrutiny is severe. And the best way for her to do so is to be transparent about the

racial indirection those policies are aiming for, just as the RB Approach prescribes. Such transparency should preempt concerns about racial balancing or racial animus.

I anticipate several objections to my strategic defense of the RB Approach. First, one might object that even if it faces less opposition from Asian Americans than race-specific approaches, the difference in opposition faced is not large enough to make adopting it pragmatically worthwhile. The thought is that support from Asian Americans for affirmative action is already high enough to make it strategically unwise to abandon it in favor of postracial remedies. In support of this objection, one could cite data from a recent survey conducted by Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote (2022), which shows that 69% of the overall Asian American population favor "affirmative action programs designed to help Black people, women, and other minorities get better access to higher education." A proponent of the objection could argue that it is doubtful that the percentage of Asian Americans who would support race-neutral alternatives is larger by a margin wide enough to make it advisable to no longer give RCAPs pride of place in our educational access reform efforts. This is especially so, she might add, given that the racial *directness* of RCAPs gives it advantages over race-neutral ones, such as being more reliable at actually bringing about desired increases in enrollment of minorities.

Even granting that RCAPs have such an advantage, there are two problems with the objection. One is that support among Asian Americans for affirmative action may not be as widespread as the objection needs it to be. While the 2022 Asian American Voter Survey does suggest that a significant majority of Asian Americans support affirmative action, 2023 studies by the Pew Research Center (2023a; 2023b) suggest otherwise. One study finds that among Asian American adults who have "heard of affirmative action," 53% say "affirmative action is a good thing." Tellingly, that study also finds that only 21% of Asian American adults agree that "colleges

should consider race or ethnicity in admissions decisions" when that possibility is brought up *without* explicit mention of affirmative action (Pew Research Center 2023a). A separate study finds that only 37% of Asian Americans "approve of selective colleges and universities taking race and ethnicity into account in admissions decisions in order to increase the racial and ethnic diversity at the school" while 52% disapprove (Pew Research Center, 2023b).

These results suggest confusion about what affirmative action involves: since affirmative action does permit considering race or ethnicity, everyone who responded that affirmative action "is a good thing" should also approve of colleges and universities taking those things into account in admissions decisions. And it should be noted that the studies do not make it clear whether the rate of Asian American adults who express support for affirmative action would decrease such that it more closely resembles the rate of those who express opposition to race (and ethnicity) consciousness in admissions decisions if respondents were made aware of what affirmative action involves. But even if it would not, Pew's data suggest that at most only about half of Asian American adults currently have a favorable view of affirmative action. That being the case raises the plausibility of the claim that support among Asian Americans may be *much greater* for race-neutral educational access reforms than for affirmative action.

Pew's data is suggestive about how wide that gap might be. This is because the fact that there is currently far greater support for policies framed as "affirmative action" rather than ones framed as permitting "taking race and ethnicity into account" among Asian American adults might be due to many of them supporting use of *race-neutral* means for increasing admissions of minorities and mistakenly believing that this is what affirmative action involves. I do not endorse this interpretation of Pew's data here, since further empirical studies are needed to confirm whether it is accurate. But if it is, then it suggests that race-neutral educational access policies for increasing

the ranks of minority students already receive much more support than RCAPs just among Asian Americans who support what they believe to be "affirmative action." The overall size of that gap in support would likely be further compounded when we account for Asian Americans who *oppose* what they believe to be affirmative action but could be persuaded to support a race-neutral alternative.

The other problem with the objection is that even if we grant that the proportion of Asian Americans who oppose RCAPs is currently at least as small as the most optimistic data suggests, it is still the case that such a proportion is large enough to mount potent political and legal opposition, as evident just from how *SFFA v. Harvard* played out. Even if that group of Asian Americans is small at present, it is clear that it nonetheless is highly capable of thwarting attempts to implement RCAPs. So if there are race-neutral alternatives to RCAPs that can effectively boost admissions of disadvantaged minorities without having to confront resistance from that group, education access reform efforts should favor those alternatives.

A second objection maintains that the strategically best option for increasing admissions of disadvantaged minorities in light of opposition by Asian Americans to affirmative action is not to background advocacy of RCAPs in favor of race-neutral alternatives, but rather to bank on high support of the former by other constituencies. The thought is that we can count on non-Asian Americans to make up for the lack of support for among Asian Americans such that we ought to persist in trying to implement affirmative action, especially if it is more reliable than race-neutral alternatives in bringing about sought-after gains in minority enrollment.

Pew's 2023 studies of public opinion on RCAPs suggests that the prospects of this objection are very dim. Pew found that 50% of U.S. adults overall "disapprove of selective colleges and universities taking race and ethnicity into account in admissions decisions in order to increase

the racial and ethnic diversity at the school," while only 33% approve (Pew Research Center 2023b). As the discussion above indicates, we cannot straightaway read off from that datum that the same proportions respectively approve and disapprove of "affirmative action." But it certainly gives us good grounds for believing that more people would oppose rather than support affirmative action if they knew of its race-conscious elements.

A third objection is modeled on recent work by David Simson (2022) in which he argues that SCOTUS should not favor race-neutral alternatives to RCAPs on the grounds that those alternatives are better able to avoid opposition by Whites. This is because, he contends, any alternative at best is only negligibly better at avoiding such opposition. To make his case, Simson (2022, 660-673) synthesizes a body of research suggests that hostility by Whites to minorities and policies that benefit minorities is significantly increased by the mere perception of threat to White social dominance. One finding that starkly illustrates this, which Simson (2022 667-669) takes to be especially important for his argument, is that greater anger, racial ingroup sympathy, and fear of minorities occurs in many White research subjects when they are made aware merely of the decline of their racial numerical majority status (Outten et al. 2012; Danbold and Huo 2015; Outten et al. 2018). The researchers interpreted these reactions in the research subjects as being due to fear of losing their position at the top of the social racial hierarchy and, concomitantly, facing greater anti-White discrimination. Simson also cites research demonstrating that aversion by Whites to a facially race-neutral welfare policy increases when they perceive it as disproportionately benefiting minorities (i.e., Wetts and Willer 2018).

Simson argues that such research findings suggest that a significant amount of Whites will oppose *any* educational access policy, race-conscious or otherwise, just in virtue of the fact that it disproportionately benefits minorities. He contends that for that reason, an educational access

policy's being more race-neutral than its rivals is unlikely to make it non-negligibly better at avoiding opposition by Whites. So, the thought goes, it would be a mistake for SCOTUS (and anyone else) to prefer race-neutral alternatives to affirmative action based on the claim that they likely will face less resistance from Whites. Hence, insofar as affirmative action more reliably achieves the race-related goals it shares with its race-neutral alternatives, it should remain the centerpiece of efforts to increase admissions of disadvantaged minorities.

Adapting Simson's argument, one might object that the proportion of Asian Americans who currently oppose affirmative action (or at least something close to it) would oppose *any* educational access reforms that benefit other racial groups more than Asian Americans out of fear that such reforms would diminish whatever Asian "social dominance" prevails in the academy. If that is the case, then race-neutral alternatives to affirmative action would be strategically worthless insofar as their pragmatic value stems from their capacity to better circumvent resistance from Asian Americans. Hence, the thought goes, those of us trying to initiate reforms to increase admissions of disadvantaged minorities have no better option than to try our luck implementing RCAPs, even if opposition to them from Asian Americans is stiff.

Against this objection, let me first acknowledge that there are extant structural pressures that drive many Asian Americans to be defensive about their access to educational resources (James 2021, Cheng 2022; 706-718; Park et al. 2022). Let me also state my belief that such pressures add to the plausibility of critical race theory's interest-convergence thesis made famous by Derrick Bell (see, e.g., Bell 1980; 2004). According to the thesis, institutional-level changes that advance the interest of subordinate racial groups almost always occur only if those changes also benefit more dominant ones. While it is usually employed to theorize about how benefits to minorities typically can be secured only through making concessions to Whites, I think it also can

be useful for understanding the dynamics of intra-minority group relations when one minority group is less subordinated than the others. Consequently, I believe that insofar as Asian Americans are less subordinated than their Black counterparts, interest-convergence considerations lend credence to the view that many Asian Americans will be reluctant to support initiatives—including race-neutral ones—that advance the interests of Blacks when those initiatives do not also clearly benefit Asian Americans.

Despite the preceding concessions, however, I think the objection is unsuccessful for at least two reasons. First, I still strongly doubt that there are enough Asian Americans concerned about maintaining "Asian social dominance" in educational contexts for the objection to succeed, even though interest-convergence considerations potentially undermine this stance. Since I do not know of any empirical studies that can determine whether my doubt is justified, however, let me grant for the sake of argument that there are in fact many Asian Americans who have such a concern and focus instead on a different point about the RB Approach. Recall that a feature of it is that one of the groups it aims to benefit via racial indirection is Asian Americans, even if it benefits other minorities to a greater degree. It is highly doubtful that Asian Americans who want to sustain Asian social dominance would be averse to such race-neutral policies, especially if how they benefit Asian Americans is made highly transparent. Moreover, while some race-neutral policies for benefiting minorities in racially indirect ways may be unable to significantly benefit Asian Americans, worries about those policies drastically reducing Asian American representation in the academy can be alleviated by transparency about how they are not detrimental to Asian Americans. Thus, the features of the RB Approach immunize it from the Simson-inspired objection.

2.2. The Reasons Rooted in Democratic Principles

The democratic reason to adopt the RB Approach stems from its ability to promote relational equality by fostering social cohesion among Asian Americans and between Asian Americans and other racial groups. It does so by sidestepping having to dissuade Asian Americans from opposing RCAPs, a process that likely would generate fraught ideological conflicts due to it involving the task of convincing others that the postracial narrative is inaccurate. By avoiding such conflicts and leveraging interests regarding educational access that are widely shared across all racial groups, the RB Approach is conducive to forging a durable multiracial coalition that consists of many Asian Americans, supports educational access initiatives that promote the common good, reflects the genuine democratic will of its constituents, and is one in which its members respect each others as democratic equals.

The importance of social cohesion among Asian Americans for ensuring that they experience relational equality both between each other and *vis-à-vis* the broader society is well-documented in scholarship on Asian American panethnicity (e.g., Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2014) and pan-Asian solidarity (e.g., Maeda 2012; Ishizuka 2016). Those two bodies of work together illustrate how political unity among Asian Americans has been crucial for enabling them to become invested in securing relational equality for each other. This mutual concern not only leads Asian Americans to respect each other as democratic equals. It also has had the important effect of fostering collective action among Asian Americans that enables them to acquire such respect from the broader society. This is evident from how such collective action has been successful at influencing the decision making of democratic institutions through either formal means (e.g., electoral politics) or informal means (e.g., protest). Pan-Asian political unity has been crucial for achieving things such as changes to census data collection and educational reforms. The former made census information more useful for addressing the needs of Asian Americans overall and

specific Asian American subgroups (Espiritu 1992, 112-133). The latter include reforms to educational curricula to make them inclusive of Asian American studies (Maeda 2012, 27-51) and other forms of scholarship that spotlights Asian Americans. It is clear that part of why those two things occurred is that collective action among Asian Americans increased the visibility of the group to a point where the broader society was compelled to democratically recognize the group's attempts to call attention to issues confronting its members.

In light of the importance of such unity to ensuring relational equality for Asian Americans have political influence, we should be vigilant about things that could cause political fissures among Asian Americans. Conflict with one another over affirmative action has serious potential to cause intra-Asian American political splintering, so much so that it has been described as generative of an Asian American "civil war" (Guillermo 2015; Wu 2020, 205-212). The RB Approach can avoid elevating intra-communal tensions among Asian Americans over affirmative action by steering clear of heated debates about RCAPs. It can even diminish such tensions by fostering agreement over policies that increase educational access for disadvantaged minorities, the possibility of which can sometimes be obscured when tempers flare over affirmative action.

Regarding social cohesion between Asian Americans and other racial groups, the value of achieving relational equality for all citizens should make us especially attentive to the ways that contentiousness over affirmative action threatens to cause divisiveness between Asian Americans and other *minorities*. Many scholars have written about affirmative action's potential to be a major wedge issue that impedes the formation of political unity between those groups (see, e.g., Matsuda 1993; Chin et al. 1996, 151; Lee 2009; Wu 2015; 2016; Zia 2016; Lee 2021). Though Pew's recent research on opinions about RCAPs finds that the rate of Asian Americans who approve of RCAPs (37%) does not lag far behind that of Blacks (47%) or Latina/o/x Americans (39%), it also finds

that the rate of Asian Americans who disapprove (52%) continues to outstrip that of Blacks (29%) and Latina/o/x Americans (39%) quite widely, nearly matching the disapproval rate of Whites (57%) (Pew Research Center 2023b). So it is likely that disagreements over affirmative action between Asian Americans and other minorities will continue to carry the potential for stoking widespread antagonism between them that demotivates democratic cooperation, insofar as it remains difficult to change peoples' minds about the ethics of RCAPs. The importance of positive experiences of democratic cooperation for fostering relational equality thus should encourage us to figure out if it is feasible for us to effectively increase educational access for disadvantaged minorities without embroiling ourselves in the sort of disputes over affirmative action that foment discord among minorities. The RB Approach provides a way to do so via its centering of race-neutral solutions.

Someone might object that while the value of relational equality should lead us to reject the RB Approach on the grounds that, unlike programs that prioritize RCAPs, it perpetuates endorsement of the postracial narrative. The thought is that widespread assent to the postracial narrative undermines relational equality, because it fosters lack of democratic recognition for those who try drawing attention to issues in the educational context that can only be addressed by race-specific remedies. Perhaps lack of democratic recognition for people who try to do so would not be morally worrisome if such issues did not exist. However, because they do, we morally ought to worry about failing to ensure that people who spotlight them are respected by others during collective attempts at democratic deliberation. Hence, the objection goes, because the RB Approach undermines relational equality for those people while RCAPs-centric strategies do not, the value of such equality morally favors the latter.

I acknowledge that there are many educational issues that can be effectively addressed only via race-specific policies, and so we morally ought to protect people who draw attention to those issues from losing democratic recognition. However, the RB Approach can avoid intensifying loss of such recognition, because it can be applied in a way that emphasizes the use of RCAPs when there are no race-neutral alternatives that can do comparably well at promoting educational access. When implemented in that manner, its preference for race-neutrality will not encourage its advocates to neglect use of RCAPs in a way that suggests that the postracial narrative is accurate. This is because the way that style of the RB Approach supports use of RCAPs strongly intimates that the postracial narrative is false. Moreover, at times when she *does* advocate for race-neutral measures rather than race-specific ones, a proponent of the RB Approach can make it clear that her support of the former is motivated in part by her belief that unjust race-based disadvantages remain rather than a lack of that belief. In other words, she could emphasize that her preference for using race-neutral measures to address an issue is partially grounded in how *mistaken* belief in the postracial narrative impedes use of race-specific ones. Thus, the objection fails, because, on one hand the RB Approach is compatible with use of RCAPs in a way that signals the falsity of the postracial narrative. And, on the other hand, advocacy of race-neutral measures can stress that part of why they should be favored is that they are often better able to circumvent the obstacle posed by widespread *false* belief in the postracial narrative.

3. Some Inchoate Proposals

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a comprehensive account of the kinds of policies that the RB Approach would prescribe under the circumstances of the contemporary U.S., I want to now offer some rough sketches of what such policies might be. Hopefully these sketches

facilitate future scholarship that concentrates on thoroughly spelling out what the RB Approach might concretely prescribe.

As briefly discussed above, the elimination of legacy preferences is a plausible candidate for a race-neutral method of increasing educational access for disadvantaged minorities. And it likely would receive wide support from Asian Americans, including those who oppose affirmative action. Some studies suggest that being a recipient of legacy preferences raises an applicant's admissions chances far more than being identified by admissions programs as a "disadvantaged" applicant (Carnevale et al. 2023, 81). While race-neutral, such preferences generate negative action against Asian Americans and all other minorities. The reason is that the colleges and universities employing legacy preferences formerly were racially exclusionary such that, in the contemporary moment, the vast majority of applicants who have the institutional connections needed to qualify for such preferences are White. In effect, legacy preferences perpetuate the effects of past racism (Liu 2008 416-418; Leong 2016, 95-96; West-Faulcon 2017; Feingold 2019; Moses et al 2019). Thus, discontinuing the use of such preferences would raise the admissions chances of all minorities by getting of a structurally racist barrier. It is plausible that this fact alone makes widespread support among minorities for ending legacy preferences readily achievable. Here it is worth noting that Pew finds that only 10% of Asian American adults currently believe that legacy preferences should play a role in college admissions (Pew Research Center 2023a).

There are likely other sources of negative action that schools could address. For example, many schools utilize a variety of subjective admissions criteria (i.e., ones that do not involve a standardized scoring system) in addition to or instead of standardized entrance exams. Such criteria include interviews, personal essays, letters of recommendation, and records of involvement in extracurricular activities. Insofar as they are used, it is important to address prevent White-biased

implementation of them. Some research suggests there are various ways that such criteria, despite being facially race-neutral, are racially indirect detriments to many Asian Americans, especially those who are economically disadvantaged or are recent immigrants. As Chris Kwok (2020, 49) points out, many Asian American immigrant parents lack background knowledge of what it takes to do well in an admissions interview, and so are unable to help their children prepare for such interviews. It seems safe to assume that such lack of knowledge is often associated with lack of knowledge of how to advise their children about how best to present themselves through other mediums, e.g., personal essays. Poorer Asian Americans—and low socioeconomic status applicants from all other racial groups—arguably are structurally disadvantaged by an admissions criterion that focuses on extracurricular activities. This is because wealthier applicants are financially better able to build a record of extracurricular involvement that stands out to admissions committees (Zwick 2017, 157-158). Universities arguably impose a structural disadvantage on Asian American applicants by requiring letters of recommendation. This is because Asian Americans overwhelmingly attend public high schools. And research suggests that high school teachers (the main source of letter of recommendations for university applications) at public high schools tend to write letters of recommendations that are less personalized and descriptively rich than those written by their private school counterparts (Park and Kim 2020).

It is likely that if the implementation of those subjective criteria structurally disadvantages Asian Americans in those ways, it also does so to other minorities (and poorer Whites, although Whites in the U.S. on the whole typically do not have to face challenges stemming from being recent immigrants). So it seems plausible that minorities generally would be supportive of schools enforcing race-neutral policies for ensuring that such criteria are not sources of negative action, but rather facilitate greater enrollment of minorities.

One such policy might simply require a high level of transparency about how admissions officers are scoring the criteria, so that any biases affecting admissions decisions can be readily identified. Another might involve developing instructions for scoring the criteria that demand vigilance about overweighing things that wealthier applicants have far greater access to, such as participation in expensive niche sports. A third might involve pairing race-neutral subjective criteria that are proven to generate racial indirection in favor of minorities with a method of applying those criteria that is race-blind except in cases where applicants voluntarily share information about their racial background (as they might do, e.g., in their personal essays). This third policy would protect the benefits of such criteria from being offset by the racial biases of admissions officers, insofar as race-blindness prevents such biases from activating. However, because it allows for instances where the veil over race drops, it should include plans for ensuring that an applicant's voluntary disclosure of her racial background does not become disadvantageous to her. For example, it could mandate forms of race-conscious implicit bias training that focus on teaching admissions officers how to avoid assessing subjective criteria in ways that disfavor minorities. Such training would also facilitate effective implementation of the other two suggested policies.

I stress here that addressing potential anti-Asian biases in the use of subjective admissions criteria is especially important for schools that decide to entirely replace standardized entrance exams with such criteria. That reform to admissions procedures might turn out to be an effective way to boost admissions of disadvantaged minorities, and it can be made in a race-neutral way such that the RB Approach should, in principle, consider it. However, it would not achieve that boost if it does not preempt the sort of biases against minorities just described. Moreover, even a race-blind admissions process that uses subjective criteria rather than standardized entrance exams

is likely to be met with resistance by many Asian Americans if two things about it are true: (a) it results in a sharp decline in admissions of Asian Americans, and (b) insufficient steps are taken to quell suspicions about that decline being due to anti-Asian bias[6]. This is exemplified by *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board.*

Class-based affirmative action policies that favor socioeconomically disadvantaged applicants, such as a policy that requires enrolling a certain minimum of low-income students (Carnevale et al., 2023, 85-86), could also be part of the RB approach. Such policies would use the greater proportions of low-income minorities as a race-neutral means for increasing their enrollment. Any attempts to generate racial indirection on behalf of minorities through class-based affirmative action, however, should make sure to be well-informed by scholarship that highlights potential systemic barriers that prevent minorities from benefiting from such affirmative action (e.g., Park 2018 49-70; Feingold 2020). If a class-based form of affirmative action can get around such barriers, it likely would receive much support from socioeconomically disadvantaged Asian Americans, of which there are many[7].

Generally making higher education more affordable for all through public spending should lead to greater overall enrollment in colleges and universities by disadvantaged minorities. One

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[6] Thomas Jefferson's standardized entrance exam was replaced with a process that "dictated that'"[t]he top 1.5 percent of the eighth grade class at each public middle school meeting the minimum standards will be eligible for admission.' Admission for the eligible applicants would be determined by a holistic review process based on GPA; a 'problem-solving essay'; various attributes and experiences factors, including economic disadvantage; English speaking status; and representation from the schools attended by the applicants" (Harpalani 2022b, 780). The new process had the result that "[t]he admitted class [for 2021] saw increases [relative to the admitted class for 2020] in the percentage of Black students (>1.0% to 7.1%), Hispanic/Latinx students (6.0% to 11.3%), and White students (17.1% to 22.4%).177 Conversely, the percentage of admissions offers to Asian American students dropped from 73.0% to 54.4%—a decline of almost 20%" (Harpalani 2022b, 781).

[7] Poverty rates for several Asian American subgroups are among the largest for specific racial groups. Among those subgroups are Bangladeshi (22.1%), Burmese (30.1%), Cambodian (16.1%), Chinese (15.4%), Hmong (22.7%), Nepalese (19.8%), and Pakistani (16%) Americans (AAPI Data, n.d.). These rates are similar to that of Blacks (19.3%) and Latina/o/x (17.1%) Americans (Ross and Dorazio 2022).

reason, noted by Lawrence Blum (2016, 352-354), is that the vast majority of them attend "nonselective" or "not-very-selective" schools. That being the case, cost of attendance is a much drives down minority enrollment in colleges and universities far more than competitive admissions processes. If the costs of attending colleges and universities were not as prohibitive as they presently are, then such schools likely would receive applications from and admit many more disadvantaged minorities—including Asian Americans—than at present. Recent studies indicate that among Asian Americans enrolled at a higher education institution, over 40% of them attend a community college (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education 2011). Moreover, the rate of Asian Americans attending community colleges is growing at a faster pace than the rate attending four-year institutions (Teranishi 2010). One of the main reasons many Asian Americans choose to attend community colleges is inability to pay tuition costs at a four-year institution (Teranishi et al. 2015; Park and Assalone 2019, 283-285). It is plausible that a large chunk of that increasingly large group of Asian Americans would support greater government spending on higher education to make it more affordable.

Lastly, I want to note that the best postracial remedy for increasing educational access of disadvantaged minorities is likely some sort of reform that better provides access for all to a K-12 education that sufficiently ensures college readiness. Such an education would not only instill in students the intellectual tools and habits that are crucial to successfully navigating through the spaces of higher education. It would also include access to high quality counseling about educational and career opportunities. We can count on there being much support from Asian Americans for initiatives to expand the availability of such K-12 education, because many Asian Americans are among the minorities who would benefit tremendously from greater access to such

counseling and other resources for developing college readiness that it provides (Park and Assalone 2019, 285-286).

4. Conclusion

Drawing on Derrick Darby's defense of postracial remedies, I have argued that in light of staunch resistance by many Asian Americans to past and current policies for increasing educational access for disadvantaged minorities, efforts to increase such access in the contemporary moment should adopt what I have called the "RB approach." It prioritizes race-neutral policies that are equipped to enhance such access via racial indirection. It is also committed to benefiting Asian Americans and to being transparent about the kinds of racial indirection it aims to achieve. I argued that the moral case for it stems from two things. First, it is strategically optimal in that the race-neutral educational access policies it advocates strike the best balance between effectively increasing admissions of disadvantaged minorities and avoiding widespread opposition from Asian Americans. Furthermore, the way it does so is consonant with SCOTUS's prevailing equal protection jurisprudence. Second, it is superior to race-specific alternatives at fostering forms of social cohesion that are valuable for ensuring relational equality. If my arguments succeed, then the way to reckon with current resistance by Asian Americans against efforts to increase educational access for disadvantaged minorities is to focus primarily on developing race-neutral means for achieving that end via racial indirection.

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CHAPTER 2

The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans as a Basis for Afro-Asian Solidarity: A Civic Republican Defense

Introduction

A distinctive feature of civic republican political philosophy is the high moral value it attributes to freedom as non-domination, where someone is dominated to the extent that others can interfere in her choice-making on an arbitrary basis. Melvin Rogers, in "Race, Domination, and Republicanism" (2020) and *The Darkened Light of Faith: Race, Democracy, and Freedom in African American Political Thought* (2023), draws on various figures in the history of African American political philosophy to develop a conception of civic republicanism that he argues is better than prior conceptions at capturing what ought to be done to eliminate racial forms of domination. For my purposes in this paper, Rogersian civic republicanism has two especially noteworthy features. First, it is especially concerned with *cultural* sources of racial domination, such as pernicious stigmas about racial minorities. Second, it maintains that under conditions where Blacks are vulnerable to racial domination—i.e., conditions under which being Black makes one vulnerable to suffering arbitrary interference—civic virtue for Blacks requires that they cultivate Black racial solidarity (hereafter, "Black solidarity") aimed at dismantling culture-based threats to the republican freedom of Blacks.

"Civic virtue" is understood by civic republicans as encompassing the character traits that make one effective at promoting the public good, where one of the paramount goods is freedom as non-domination. Because civic virtue is instrumentally valuable for promoting such freedom, all agents at least *pro tanto* morally ought to develop it and hold each other accountable for doing

so. On Rogersian civic republicanism, under conditions that make Blacks vulnerable to racial domination, civic virtue for Blacks requires that they cultivate Black solidarity, because doing so is crucial to securing Blacks from racial domination.

My aims in this paper are twofold. First, I draw on Rogersian civic republicanism and research on the racialization of Asian Americans to develop a civic republican defense of the view that to achieve civic virtue at present, Blacks and Asian Americans must cultivate *Afro-Asian* solidarity to dismantle extant culture-based threats to the republican freedom of both groups. This is so, I argue, because Asian Americans remain racialized in accordance with Claire Jean Kim's (1999) influential racial triangulation theory, a fact that grounds cultural threats of racial domination against both Blacks and Asian Americans and so calls for resistance via Afro-Asian solidarity.

Second, I aim to show that the pursuit of such racial solidarity is both congenial to the normative aims of socialist strands of civic republicanism and compatible with acknowledging that anti-Black racism is more severe than anti-Asian racism. I do so because, on one hand, I am sympathetic to socialist civic republican accounts of how lack of public, democratic control over the means of production generates socioeconomic impediments to enjoying freedom as non-domination. And, on the other hand, I agree that a conception of Afro-Asian solidarity is inadequate if it does not account for anti-Black racism being more intense than anti-Asian racism in the U.S. at present. Thus I believe that, in addition to showing that the sort of Afro-Asian solidarity described in this paper is apt to protect Blacks and Asian Americans from cultural forms of domination, another way to illustrate the ethical value of that sort of solidarity is to achieve my second aim.

I proceed as follows. In §1, I elaborate on the Rogersian civic republicanism argument for the moral value of Black solidarity. In §2, I describe how the racial triangulation theorized by Kim increases the vulnerability to culture-based forms of racial domination of both Blacks and Asian Americans. I then draw on Rogersian civic republicanism to argue that insofar as Asian Americans remain racialized in the triangulated way Kim theorizes, civic virtue for Blacks and Asian Americans requires that they cultivate a form of Afro-Asian solidarity apt for dismantling the elements of civic culture enabling that racialization. In §3, I argue that such solidarity is conducive to the pursuit of public, democratic control of the means of production that socialist civic republicans favor. I maintain that it is also likely crucial at present for forging the sort of broader solidaristic working class culture that is vital for overcoming major impediments to achieving socialist reforms. To do so, I draw on Vivek Chibber's (2022) recent work theorizing how the class structure of capitalism often makes individualistic forms of securing personal well-being more prudentially attractive than collective forms. In §4 I argue that the Afro-Asian solidarity described in this paper can be pursued in a way that is consistent with acknowledging that anti-Black racism is more severe than anti-Asian racism in the U.S. In §5, I conclude.

1. Rogersian Civic Republicanism and Black Solidarity

Following Rogers (2020; 2023), I take Philip Pettit's influential conception of civic republicanism—especially as developed in Pettit (1997) and Pettit (2012)—as the sort that Rogersian civic republicanism aims to improve upon. Pettit's account of domination maintains that "someone [or some group] dominates or subjugates another, to the extent that (1) they have the capacity to interfere (2) on an arbitrary basis (3) in certain choices that the other is able to make" (1997, 52). By "choices," Pettit means "a set of mutually exclusive, jointly exhaustive options" (2012, 26). One can make a choice insofar as her objective circumstances allow it (i.e. she has the

requisite skills and resources) and she is aware of that fact (Pettit 2012, 25). The "capacity to interfere" consists of capacities to intentionally control what choices are available to another (Pettit 1997, 52-53). Pettit (2012, 50-56) specifies three forms of interference: "removal," whereby one makes an option objectively infeasible for another; "replacement," whereby one ensures that some options but not others are available to another by manipulating her objective circumstances; and "misrepresenting," whereby one does not alter the objective circumstances of another, but rather hampers her ability to understand her available choices.

The specification "on an arbitrary basis" singles out the capacity to interfere in someone's choice-making without her control. Pettit calls this the capacity to engage in "uncontrolled interference" (2012, 58; see also Skinner 2008). When someone licenses another to interfere with her own choice making in certain ways—e.g., by licensing another to limit her access to alcohol (Pettit 2012, 57)—interference in those ways is neither arbitrary nor uncontrolled. Normally, when an agent has control over a form of interference against her and she allows others to commit such interference, that act becomes morally permissible for those she grants that license, even if it otherwise would not be. For example, in the context of a voluntary basketball game, it is normally morally permissible to interfere with someone's attempt to dribble a basketball by stealing it from her, because consent to play the game involves agreeing to allow such maneuvers. This is so even though such interference is usually morally impermissible outside that context.

Importantly, one dominates another in Pettit's sense merely by having the capacity to interfere in her choice making in an uncontrolled way: dominating another does not require *exercising* that capacity. Hence, on civic republicanism, your freedom is curtailed the moment others can influence your choices in ways outside your control, even if they never do so. One thing that motivates the civic republican aversion to mere vulnerability to uncontrolled interference is

the view that experiencing such vulnerability is central to the badness of suffering enslavement (Boxill 2018; Rogers 2020, 77; 2023, 122). This view gains support from the intuition that slaves are morally justified in resenting their vulnerability to uncontrolled interference by their master, even if their master never exploits that vulnerability.

Like civic republicans in the African American political philosophical tradition such as Frederick Douglass (Coffee 2020, 55-56), Pettit (1997; 2012) contends that republican freedom is best realized within a state that is governed by certain kinds of democratic institutions and consists of a citizenry that upholds those institutions by adhering to certain norms of civility. So we morally ought to establish such institutions and norms. Those institutions would enforce a legal system aimed at maximally safeguarding each citizen from vulnerability to domination by either a fellow citizen or the state itself. They would have a mixed constitutional structure, which prevents lawmaking power from being held by only one individual or corporate body. They also would provide spaces for citizens to contest the laws they suspect fail to promote the common good. The norms of civility that complement such institutions are those that encourage us to internalize the value of republican freedom and identify with others so that we are motivated to help them enjoy such freedom (Pettit 1997, 241-270). Ensuring widespread adherence to such norms is important for promoting compliance with the laws implemented by civic republican institutions and discouraging citizens from seeking the power to dominate others when there are no extant legal barriers to doing so.

Rogers does not deny that the combination of such democratic institutions and norms of civility is important for maximizing freedom as non-domination. However, he argues that it is insufficient for combatting racial domination and part of why this shortcoming goes unrecognized by Pettit is that Pettit mistakenly believes that the only things capable of perpetrating domination

are *agents* who can *intentionally* dominate others (Rogers 2020, 76; 2023, 121-122). For Rogers, *the broader racial majority community*, while not a unified agent, threatens racial minorities with racial domination; and Pettit's prescribed combination is not apt for addressing the main source of its power to do so, namely, cultural conditions that encourage seeing racial minorities as lacking a moral right to republican freedom (Rogers 2020, 79-83; 2023, 124-130). Rogers's argument draws on works by Black republican-minded abolitionists David Walker (1829/2003), Maria Stewart (1832/1987a; 1832/1987b) Hosea Easton (1837/1999), Frederick Douglass (1848; 1848/1999), and Martin Delany (1852/1968; 2003). Each of their views of freedom was deeply informed by their experiences of how legalized chattel slavery curtailed the freedom of Blacks beyond merely denying them full-fledged citizenship. These figures maintained that besides denying Blacks citizenship, chattel slavery also limited the freedom of Blacks by upholding a culture that encouraged viewing them as naturally servile "slaves of the community" (Douglass 1848, 119) who are not moral equals of Whites.

Such a culture, these figures argued, renders even Black freemen vulnerable to domination in the following ways: First, it makes whatever extant formal legal protections Blacks have fragile, even when democratic institutions favored by civic republicanism prevail. This is because such a culture encourages lawmakers to overlook or misrecognize the interests of Blacks (Coffee 2020, 57), such that they have less control over what kinds of removal and replacement interference become legally sanctioned. Second, it conditions Whites to expect servility from Blacks in everyday life, such that Blacks suffer the domination threat associated with refusal to acknowledge their equal status. In fact, such expectations make it so that advocating for greater equality for Blacks is often seen as uncivil (Rogers 2020, 82). Cultures that promote viewing Blacks as naturally servile also encourage them to abet their own domination by internalizing a conception

of themselves as inferior to Whites, a self-conception that makes Blacks susceptible to uncontrolled interference by diminishing their capacity to recognize that they deserve republican freedom as much as Whites (Rogers 2021, 70-76; 2023, 81-90).

A lesson that Rogers draws from those republican-minded Black abolitionists is that, in addition to democratic institutions that promote freedom as non-domination and widespread concern among the citizenry to promote such freedom, civic republicans should also seek to establish a culture wherein someone's race does not impede recognition that she is morally owed such freedom. This has implications for how civic republicans should conceive of civic virtue— i.e., the trait of being able to effectively promote the public good. Specifically, it supports the view that civic virtue requires that one help combat cultural sources of racial domination.

Rogers believes this point about civic virtue provides a second lesson: for someone suffering racial domination, civic virtue requires that she cultivates a form of solidarity with co-members of her dominated racial group. Such solidarity should be aimed at building a civic culture that secures the group from racial domination. Rogers does not defend a particular conception of what such solidarity would concretely involve, but he offers two models of Black solidarity. One, advocated by Walker, Stewart, and Easton, involves building a culture that ensures that Blacks enjoy republican freedom within a nation-state co-inhabited by Whites, even a White supermajority (Rogers 2020, 69-72; 2023, 111-112). The other, defended by Delany, involves Blacks splitting from Whites to form a supermajority Black nation-state with a culture that secures republican freedom for Blacks (Rogers 2020 72-75; 2023, 112-121; Gooding-Williams 2021). Importantly, while differing in significant ways, both models enjoin Blacks to help one another develop themselves in ways that solidify their self-respect and enhance political agency. Both

models also enjoin Blacks to challenge the derogatory views about them that prevail in the broader society.

For the republican-minded Black abolitionists, there are two main reasons why such racial solidarity is important for combatting racial domination. First, like Pettit (1997, 121-124) they viewed racial domination as a form of identity-based domination from which one is secure only to the extent that others who share your *racial* identity are similarly secure. In other words, they took security from racial domination as a common good among co-members of a racial group. Thus, full liberation from racial domination for any member of a racial group is achieved only when it is achieved for all members. This not to say that, prior to full liberation, all members of a racial group are equally able to prevent exploitation of their race-based vulnerability. A very wealthy member of a racial minority group, for example, might be able to deter would-be dominators via bribery. However, as indicated by her need to protect herself via bribery, insofar as belonging to her racial group makes anyone else vulnerable to domination, it also makes her vulnerable.

Second, republican-minded Black abolitionists believed that such racial solidarity is an effective means of combatting racial domination. Its efficacy results from how it directly engages a linchpin of racial domination, namely, racist cultural norms. By unifying members of a racially oppressed group into a network whose members mutually support each other in developing racial pride and critical political consciousness, it enables members of that group to cultivate their human potential in ways that undermine the racist stigmas that underpin the group members' vulnerability to racial domination and acquire a sense of dignity that prevents complicity with racial domination of their group.

Moreover, even when the sort of racist culture that racial solidarity aims to dismantle remains, such solidarity can be leveraged to attain greater legal protections against racial

domination via formal democratic lawmaking processes. It also supports forming enclaves that minimize occasions where vulnerabilities to racial domination can be exploited.

2. Freedom from Racial Domination as a Common Good Among Blacks and Asian Americans

I now describe Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory regarding Asian Americans. Subsequently, drawing on Rogersian civic republicanism, I argue that the ongoing racialization of Asian Americans captured by Kim's theory grounds a civic republican case for why, at present, civic virtue for Blacks and Asian Americans requires that they cultivate Afro-Asian solidarity.

According to Kim's theory (1999, 106-107), the racialization of Asian Americans occurs against the backdrop of a "field of racial positions" that can be mapped along two axes: the "superior/inferior" axis, which ranks racial groups with respect to the degree to which its members possess normatively ideal character traits; and the "insider/foreigner axis," which ranks racial groups with respect to the degree to which they have assimilated to the U.S. Different racial groups are positioned relative to one another within that field and racialized accordingly. Public discourse about racial groups constructs each group's particular position. That discourse is most heavily shaped by members of the socially dominant group, i.e., Whites, especially those occupying a social role that enhances their capacity to shape public opinion (e.g., "elected officials, journalists, scholars, community leaders, business elites" (1999, 107)). Public discourse about race in the U.S. positions Whites at the maximum rank along both axes. It positions each subordinate racial group relative to Whites according to how much they approximate Whites on each axis.

The position of Asian Americans has resulted from two processes. First, "relative valorization" positions Asian Americans higher than Blacks (and other racial minorities) but lower

than Whites on the superiority/inferiority axis. Second, "civic ostracism" ranks Asian Americans lower than Whites and Blacks on the insider/foreigner axis (though, as Claire Jean Kim (2022, 505-510; 2023) acknowledges, and as will be discussed shortly below, Blacks do not have enough of an "insider" status to avoid significant civic ostracism as well).

Hereafter, I call the condition in which Asian Americans are racialized in accordance with Kim's theory as the "triangulation condition." I contend that there are grounds for a compelling Rogersian civic republican defense of the view that the persistence of the triangulation condition calls for Afro-Asian solidarity aimed at shaping civic culture in a way that undermines that condition so as to secure the republican freedom of Blacks and Asian Americans.

My contention rests on three claims. First, the triangulation condition facilitates White domination of both Blacks and Asian Americans through how it makes certain pernicious stereotypes salient in the broader civic culture. Second, although the triangulation condition does not threaten Blacks and Asian Americans in exactly the same way, security from it nonetheless is a common good for both that each can achieve only if they dismantle those stereotypes. Third, Afro-Asian solidarity can be effectively leveraged to combat those stereotypes. I will now substantiate each of these claims, in order.

To see why the triangulation condition facilitates White domination of both Blacks and Asian Americans, consider first its relative valorization component. That component underpins the model minority stereotype (Kim 1999, 118-122), which portrays Asian Americans as having overcome their past oppression to become socioeconomically successful, often more than even Whites. It maintains that this success primarily results from Asian cultures encouraging a strong work ethic, self-sufficiency, family cohesion, respect for authority, and pursuit of formal education. While ostensibly praising Asian Americans, one reason it is morally troubling from a

civic republican standpoint is that it encourages dismissing structural disadvantages that Asian Americans continue to face, which curtail their republican freedom by limiting their feasible life choices. These disadvantages include poverty-related ones, especially those of Asian American subgroups with large refugee populations (Espiritu 2013; Dao 2020; Yi et al. 2020), and ones arising in specific contexts, such as educational contexts (Lee 2009; 2022; Museus 2013). By encouraging society to overlook these disadvantages, the model minority stereotype diminishes uptake of attempts by Asian Americans to communicate about social justice issues confronting the group. (Museus and Kiang 2009; Grim et al. 2019). In doing so, it reduces the influence Asian Americans have over the democratic processes that dictate institutional action. It thereby makes Asian Americans more vulnerable to uncontrolled interference by the broader society by lessening their control of the powers of major institutions, and, consequently, entrenches structural disadvantages that additionally curtail the republican freedom of Asian Americans.

Moreover, by causing Asian Americans themselves to not recognize their own structural disadvantages (Museus 2022), the model minority stereotype increases the susceptibility of Asian Americans to uncontrolled misrepresenting interference. It does so by convincing them to view their choices as not unduly constrained. Such a misapprehension demotivates Asian Americans from addressing ho their republican freedom is unjustly limited.

The relative valorization process also curtails the republican freedom of Blacks by diminishing their capacity to address their structural disadvantages via leveraging major institutions. It does so via perpetuating the model minority stereotype, which—as much of the scholarship on that stereotype argues (see the many studies cited in Poon et al. 2016 and Yi et al. 2020)—is seen by many as providing justification for the claim that no structural barriers to upward mobility for U.S. racial minorities remain. After all, the thought goes, that Asian

Americans are able to achieve widespread upward mobility without relying on sweeping institutional action is evidence that there are no structural barriers to upward mobility for any racial minorities. This thought underlies sympathies for deficit explanations of the disadvantages faced by Blacks. According to those explanations, such disadvantages are the result of personal failures rooted in adherence to deficient Black cultural norms, rather than, e.g., structural barriers to accessing high quality education (Ladson-Billings 2007; Dumas 2016a; 2016b). Deficit explanations characterize those cultural norms as being the polar opposite of those lionized by the model minority stereotype. The model minority stereotype thus supports entrenchment of anti-Black stereotypes that diminish concern for social justice issues confronting the group in the decision-making of major institutions.

Notably, the anti-Black aspect of the model minority stereotype also gets weaponized against Asian Americans who do not satisfy the stereotype. This is because, rather than take such Asian Americans as counterevidence to the stereotype, many instead draw on anti-Black stereotyping to take an "ideologically blackened" view of them. Doing so involves attributing the disadvantages of those Asian Americans to their adherence to Black cultural norms rather than to Asian ones (Chhuon 2014; 2015; Lee et al. 2017).

The model minority stereotype also increases the vulnerability of Blacks to uncontrolled misrepresenting interference that exploits internalized anti-Blackness. This is because the stereotype encourages viewing adherence to Black cultural norms as detrimental to achieving socioeconomic prosperity (Wu 1995; 2002; Chin et al. 1996; Kim 1999; Lee 2009; Wu 2014; Moses et al. 2019; Poon et al. 2016; Yi et al. 2020; Yi and Todd 2021). In doing so, it pressures Blacks into dissociating from Blackness by depicting such distancing as necessary for achieving upward mobility.

Consider now the civic ostracism component of the triangulation condition. This component underpins the perpetual foreigner stereotype, which portrays Asian Americans as essentially non-American. This stereotype underpins another, more pernicious one: the "yellow/dusky peril" stereotype, which portrays Asian Americans as an essentially foreign threat to "real Americans." The most significant way these stereotypes affect the republican freedom of Asian Americans is by encouraging, and diminishing institutional protections against, anti-Asian violence. This was recently evidenced in the spike in such violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (Li and Nicholson Jr. 2021) and attempts to downplay the racially-motivated nature of that violence (Ramiro 2022). These two stereotypes also encourage racial shame and self-contempt in Asian Americans by making their inclusion in society contingent on dissociating from their Asian heritage (Kim, D. H. 2014). Those stereotypes thereby increase the vulnerability of Asian Americans to misrepresenting interference that exploits internalized racism.

While not as directly as with Asian Americans, the perpetual foreigner and yellow/peril stereotypes also similarly threaten the republican freedom of Blacks. This is because these stereotypes bolster a broader ideology that equates "American" with Whiteness (Tran and Paterson 2015). That ideology drives civic ostracism of *all* non-White Americans and so helps explain why recognition of the citizenship status of Blacks in particular historically has often been precarious (Davies 2022). Awareness of how Whiteness is privileged in the White supremacist conception of Americans is in fact reflected in the works of Black political thought on the issue of the relationship of Blacks *vis-à-vis* the U.S. Such works include those of the republican-minded Black abolitionists and later ones in the Black civic republican tradition (e.g., those of Stokely Carmichael (Terry 2021)).

Some readers may have already discerned *that* Asian Americans are threatened by the triangulation condition's directly anti-Black aspects and Blacks are threatened by its directly anti-Asian aspects. But it is important to explicitly note *how* these threats come about, since doing so reveals that security from the triangulation condition is a common good among Blacks and Asian Americans. For Asian Americans, the anti-Blackness of the triangulation condition contributes to the durability of their model minority racialization. It does so by preventing incongruence between actual Asian Americans and the stereotype from being seen as disconfirming the stereotype, because it enables depicting Asian American "failures" as culturally more Black than Asian. For Blacks, the model minority stereotype perpetuates anti-Blackness by encouraging deficit explanations of Black disadvantage. Additionally, the perpetual foreigner stereotype reinforces equating "Americanness" with Whiteness, an ideology that puts Blacks at risk of civic ostracism. It is for these reasons that security from the triangulation condition is a common good among Blacks and Asian Americans.

The efficacy of Afro-Asian solidarity for dismantling the stereotyping wrought by the triangulation condition is illustrated by relevant empirical work. First, there is a long history of Afro-Asian solidarity movements (see, e.g., Prashad 2001; Ho and Mullen 2008; Maeda 2012; Onishi 2013; Blain 2015; 2021; Fujino 2015; Ishizuka 2016; Horne 2018). It includes the legacy of the Asian American Movement, which was the progenitor of the "Asian American" identity label (Maeda 2012; Ishizuka 2016). And it is still unfolding through the efforts of contemporary Afro-Asian solidarity initiatives (Hope 2019; Lee et al 2020; Gonzalez 2022; Wong 2022). In addition to raising the general political initiative among Blacks and Asians, tangible impacts of Afro-Asian solidarity movements include the establishment of the first U.S. university ethnic studies departments (Maeda 2012, 27-51). Ethnic studies have been shown to facilitate positive

racial identity formation (Osajima 2007; Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015; Trieu and Lee 2018). Part of what explains this is that one's racial self-image tends to be promoted by high exposure to three things: positive representation of co-ethnics, one's own racial group's history, and the nature of structural racism (Bailey et al. 2014; Trieu and Lee 2018; Mosley et al. 2021). Ethnic studies provides such exposure, as do contemporary Afro-Asian solidarity organizations outside the academy (Lee et al. 2020; Wong 2022). By helping Blacks and Asian Americans resist internalized racism and politically mobilizing them, Afro-Asian solidarity building is apt to generate activism among Blacks and Asian Americans that is crucial for driving the cultural shifts needed for dismantling the triangulation condition.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a thorough account of what concrete actions should be taken to build Afro-Asian solidarity or dismantle anti-Black and anti-Asian stigma, philosophers do have a role to play. Those trained in ethics and social and political philosophy are equipped to help forge such movements and develop their plans of action by refining the potential ideological bases of Afro-Asian solidarity—a project that this paper itself pursues. All successful activist organizing requires rallying people to commit to a core set of goals and principles. Knowledge of relevant scholarly work is especially apt to help one become skilled at clearly articulating candidate goals and principles and at identifying their best sources of normative justification. By conducting such intellectual work, philosophers can clarify and establish the normative attractiveness of different conceptions of Afro-Asian solidarity and thereby help ensure that efforts to forge such solidarity are committed to such conceptions. One fruitful way philosophers can approach such work is by critically appraising and building on the ideologies of actual Afro-Asian solidarity movements, which are described in some of the works noted above. However, drawing from philosophical traditions that have not yet served as the intellectual

scaffolding for actual Afro-Asian solidaristic activism—something that I have done here with Rogersian civic republicanism—can also generate novel insights that usefully inform such activism.

3. Afro-Asian Solidarity and Socialist Civic Republicanism

I have argued that Rogersian civic republicanism enables a compelling defense of the ethical value of cultivating Afro-Asian solidarity to resist the culture-driven racial domination perpetuated by the triangulation condition. I now argue that the case for such solidarity is enhanced by the fact that it is also conducive to addressing *socioeconomic* threats to republican freedom that socialist civic republicanism is concerned with.

That variant of civic republicanism has two distinctive features. First, it maintains that the class structure of capitalism inherently subjects those who do not have private ownership of the means of production (members of the working class) to domination by those who do (members of the capitalist class). That society's assets for generating goods and services are privately owned by the latter enables them to impose their will on the former in an uncontrolled way. It does so by making working class members' well-being contingent on their ability to remain in the good graces of capitalists. And since capitalists own society's productive resources, someone outside the capitalist class who is unable to sell her labor power to capitalists is likely to lack the ability to reliably acquire the material goods on which her well-being depends. For socialist civic republicans, the paradigm of capitalist domination involves forcing workers to accept an unattractive labor contract by exploiting their lack of better alternatives for protecting their own well-being (O'Shea 2020, 553-557).

According to socialist civic republicans, the socioeconomic domination enabled by capitalism has a "structural" dimension. By this they mean that capitalism positions each worker such that she is dominated twice over. First, she is dominated by the individual capitalists with whom she forms a labor contract. Second, she is dominated by the entire capital class in that, even though the members of that class do not comprise a unified agent, each has a similar power over her in virtue of their shared social position. The worker's lack of republican freedom thus stems not only from her relation to her employer. It also stems from her social standing relative to the entire set of capitalists (Gourevitch 2013, 602; 2015; 109). For Rogersian civic republicans, this is strikingly similar to the vulnerability of a racial minority vis-à-vis the entire racial majority community.

The second distinctive feature of socialist civic republicanism is its proposal for how to address capitalist domination: replace private ownership of society's means of production with public, democratic ownership of them and implement a social safety net that unconditionally affords everyone access to a certain economic minimum (O'Shea 2020, 564-565). The latter form of ownership can take various forms; it need not involve consolidating legal ownership rights in a democratically elected centralized government. For example, different kinds of such rights over an industry can be reserved for those occupying certain positions, such as a worker in the industry, a private citizen not employed by the industry, or a government agent (O'Shea 2021, 1058). The aim of any socialist civic republican approach to dividing up legal ownership rights is to ensure that every industry is democratically accountable to every person whose well-being it affects. Among these are current workers in each industry, jobseekers, and ultimately the broader citizenry (O'Shea 2020, 564). Socialist civic republicans maintain that achieving such democratic control over the means of production is the best way to curtail socioeconomic structural domination,

because it is the most effective way to ensure that no particular agent owns society's productive assets in a way affords her control over whether others can acquire the material resources that are crucial for sustaining human well-being.

Socialist civic republicans agree that transitioning away from prevailing capitalist modes of production to achieve an ideally socialist form of society requires cultivating a solidaristic ethos among members of the working class, one that galvanizes them to collectively pursue realization of such a society (Gourevitch 2013, 609-610; 2020; O'Shea 2022). I contend that the sort of Afro-Asian solidarity for combatting culture-based forms of domination described in this paper is not only conducive to forging such working class solidarity, but also is likely to have an important role in making sure that process unfolds in the contemporary moment. Thus, socialist civic republicans should also advocate building such Afro-Asian solidarity at present. I will defend this contention by responding to an objection from scholars with socialist sympathies who doubt the utility of culture-focused racial solidarity movements, at least when it comes to addressing contemporary socioeconomic sources of structural disadvantage for U.S. racial minorities. Presenting that objection will provide a useful prelude for articulating the core ideas of my defense.

The objection is exemplified in the works of scholars such as Adolph Reed Jr. (1999; 2000; 2018), Cedric Johnson (2007; 2022; 2023), Walter Benn Michaels (2016), and Touré F. Reed (2020). It maintains that in the contemporary context, what are most detrimental to U.S. racial minorities are socioeconomic disadvantages generated by the operations of the U.S. capitalist economy. Thus, the best political strategy on behalf of U.S. racial minorities is one that prioritizes enacting various sorts of economic reforms of a broadly socialist character. However, the objection goes, political movements that make highly prioritize combatting racist aspects of culture will not generate the mass political mobilization needed to implement socialist reforms. This is because

emphasizing the challenges faced specifically by racial minorities is currently an ineffective way to build multiracial political coalitions, which are needed to achieve socialist reforms in the contemporary U.S., given the nation's racial demographics. The thought is that heavy emphasis on race-specific issues not only fails to galvanize Whites to politically mobilize in ways that benefit racial minorities, but actually obscures the fact that it is in the prudential interest of each member of the working class—regardless of her race—to pursue socialist reforms.

Instead, proponents of the objection de-emphasize attention to race and prioritize making members of the working class conscious of their shared socioeconomic plight. The latter sort of politics emphasizes what Derrick Darby (2023, 103-104) calls "postracial" solutions to addressing the disadvantages of racial minorities, i.e., solutions that are facially race-neutral yet sensitive to factors that are especially detrimental to racial minorities. An example would be healthcare policies that, while designed explicitly to focus on increasing healthcare access for low-income earners, significantly benefit racial minorities because of their high representation among the poor and working class. The objection implies that cultivating the sort of Afro-Asian solidarity described in this paper should not be one of our political priorities at present, because its focus on racial stigma would distract from political organizing that highlights the attractiveness of facially race-neutral socialist reforms for members of the working class. For proponents of the objection, culture-based racial solidarity movements may have some value for ensuring that racism does not prevent racial minorities from enjoying their fair share the fruits of *already achieved* socialist reforms. But such movements are not effective for bringing about such reforms in the first place.

I do not reject the view that in the contemporary moment broadly socialist reforms would benefit U.S. racial minorities more than any other wide-scale social measures, including ones focused on affecting cultural changes. Nor am I opposed to using race-neutral measures when they

are poised to assist racial minorities. But I argue that the prospects of achieving socialist reforms in the contemporary context are *better* overall if we forge the culture-focused Afro-Asian solidarity described in this paper than if we do not.

A core contention of my response is that developing a solidaristic working class culture is crucial for implementing socialist reforms. But merely making workers aware of their shared class-based socioeconomic vulnerabilities is not an effective way of actualizing that sort of culture. This is because that by itself would fail to encourage workers to resist pressure to take an individualistic approach to improving their own socioeconomic circumstances under capitalism—such as improving their own standing in the eyes of their employer—while eschewing ones that involve organized collective action with other workers. Two reasons explain why.

First, when reliable labor unions or other similar institutions do not already exist, several factors usually make it *rational* for each worker to aim at securing her material well-being via individualistic strategies, rather than through attempting collective worker action. As Vivek Chibber (2022, 62-67) argues, each worker faces rational pressures against collective action emanating from at least three sources. One is the precariousness of her employment, which likely would be exacerbated were her capitalist employer to become aware that she has engaged in union organizing or other similar activities. Another is the heterogeneity of worker interests, which raises an obstacle to ensuring that everyone participating in an instance of collective action has their personal interests advanced by their participation—in fact, heterogeneity of interests may sometimes entail that some individuals are made *worse off* at least in the short term by the intended action. A third source is the incentive for free riding, which stems from the fact that one's net benefit from an instance of collective action is greatest when one does not expend any of one's own resources to ensure the success of that action.

Second, while a solidaristic working class ethos would help workers overcome the rational pressures in favor of eschewing collective action, those very pressures make it unlikely that simply raising workers' awareness of their structural vulnerabilities under capitalism is an effective way of generating such an ethos. For example, it seems implausible that sufficiently many workers would be moved to develop altruistic attitudes that counteract temptations to free ride simply by gaining greater understanding of the working class's precarious structural position, especially because free riding is often the most rational choice for those occupying that position. Were it that easy to overcome pressures to free ride, it would not have developed a reputation as a difficult obstacle to collective action in the first place.

One might push back by defending the classical Marxist view that the material conditions of workers *does* make it generally rational for them to pursue collective, rather than individual, forms of resistance to capitalism. According to that view, the class structure of capitalism alone makes collective worker action likely to arise, because widespread recognition of the rationality of such action among workers will quasi-deterministically tend to spur such action. Drawing on that view, a proponent of the objection could argue that insofar as such widespread recognition does typically lead to collective worker action, we should also expect it to generate the sort of worker solidarity that is vital for such action to occur at all. However, as Chibber argues, that classical Marxist view lacks empirical support. This is most evident from the fact that collective worker action has not in fact been common under capitalist regimes: such action should be common if the class structure of capitalism inherently makes it *likely* to occur (Chibber 2022, 61-62). Chibber's alternative materialist analysis of behaviors that are rationally incentivized by capitalism is superior because it better aligns with actual patterns of worker organizing.

If Chibber's analysis is correct, what is the best path to generating working class solidarity? He suggests that building a culture of solidarism among workers is vital, where a "culture" is a value orientation that leads one to adopt a certain normative code (Chibber 2022, ix). Such a culture would encourage workers to be concerned with each other's well-being for its own sake, such that they are less tempted to pursue an individualistic approach to safeguarding their well-being that would be detrimental to other workers. Chibber (2022, 67-75) contends that forging a working class culture of solidarism would involve getting each worker to adopt a working class identity that disposes her to view collective working class struggle against capitalists as crucial for maximally defending her own and her fellow workers' well-being.

I contend that the culture-focused Afro-Asian solidarity described in this paper can greatly contribute to forging a broader solidaristic culture among workers, provided that it emphasizes that achieving socialist reforms are crucial for eradicating anti-Black and anti-Asian stigmas. To ensure that it does, those trying to cultivate Afro-Asian solidarity can draw on scholarship that identifies how capitalism-friendly ideologies play a major role in sustaining those stigmas by, for example, ostensibly justifying things like the model minority stereotype (Au 2022; Park et al. 2022). Some of that scholarship actually has been produced by those sympathetic to the objection against culture-focused solidarity currently under discussion (see, e.g. Reed 2022; Reed and Benn Michaels 2023). Efforts to forge Afro-Asian solidarity that see how capitalism-friendly ideologies uphold anti-Black and anti-Asian stigma are poised to ensure that at least some initiatives taken to dismantle those stigmas will push for socialist reforms. Those efforts can receive some guidance about effective steps from the literature covering actual attempts to build Afro-Asian solidarity in ways that center economic concerns (e.g., Kim 2004; Liu 2018).

Afro-Asian solidarity movements focused on both culture and elevating working-class consciousness not only help increase the ranks socialist reformers, but also are likely crucial for addressing at least two historical impediments to establishing the sort of multiracial working class coalitions that presently are vital for achieving such reforms in the U.S. One is racism among White workers (Takaki 1998, 197-201; Gourevitch 2020; Bogues 2021; Moody 2022, 113-138). The other is antagonisms between Blacks and Asian Americans that, among other things, stymies both groups from recognizing their shared socioeconomic interests (Kim 2000; 2004; Liu 2018). These two impediments should not be viewed as entirely independent of one another. This is in part because those conflicts between Blacks and Asian Americans very plausibly are partially fueled by White supremacist racial triangulation processes that taint various labor practices, including the hiring and promoting of workers[8]. Such processes solidify White dominance within labor contexts by pitting racial minorities against one another in competitions for work opportunities, preventing the groups from uniting on the basis of shared interests in dismantling White supremacist gatekeeping of society's productive assets and their fruits.

Thus, I submit that the culture-focused Afro-Asian solidarity that I have argued is supported by Rogersian civic republicanism, insofar as it emphasizes the importance of socialist reforms for dismantling anti-Black and anti-Asian stigmas, are conducive to achieving the normative ideals of socialist civic republicans. It is worth stressing once more that in defending this claim, I am not arguing that facially race-neutral approaches to advocating socialist reforms should be discarded. I have no doubt that the optimal way of addressing most extant disadvantages of racial minorities involves combining "postracial" and race-conscious approaches. Here I argue merely that forging culture-focused Afro-Asian solidarity is one race-conscious approach that we

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[8] See Cruz (2016) for an informative overview of such processes.

should employ to address the current socioeconomic disadvantages of Blacks and Asian Americans.

4. Accommodating the Greater Severity of Anti-Black Racism

Another objection to the culture-focused Afro-Asian solidarity I advocate contends that we ought not pursue it, because it will likely obscure the fact that U.S. anti-Black racism is more severe than anti-Asian racism. Kim (2001; 2018: 2023) herself has expressed worries about how some rhetoric portraying Asian Americans as a disadvantaged minority group obfuscates the intensity of the racial domination suffered by Blacks in the U.S and has recently published a comprehensive account of the ways Asian Americans have benefited from perpetuating anti-Blackness (Kim 2023). In light of such worries, one might argue that calls for Afro-Asian solidarity that attribute to Blacks have a civic virtue-based duty to help combat anti-Asian stigma facilitate failure to appreciate that anti-Black stigma should be addressed with greater moral urgency.

I do not deny that U.S. civic culture poses a greater racial domination threat to Blacks than to Asian Americans. But that fact is consistent with the claim that fully securing Blacks from racial domination in the U.S. requires—due to the triangulation condition—dismantling stereotypes about Asian Americans. The triangulation condition can make liberation from racial domination for Blacks dependent on such liberation for Asian Americans and *vice versa*, without equally burdening both groups. In fact, the triangulation condition plausibly makes it so that Blacks and Asian Americans often would positively *worsen* their own circumstances if they employ anti-oppression strategies that are complicit in injustice toward the other group. In other words, it creates a context in which Blacks likely would exacerbate their own oppression if they tried to free themselves of it through pursuing something like the "Black Orientalist" strategy that some Blacks in the U.S. historically have pursued, a tactic that involves positively depicting Blacks by stressing

that they are not essential outsiders to the U.S. polity in the way Asians are (Jun 2011). And, to a similar extent, Asian Americans likely would make themselves worse off if they tried to address anti-Asian social forces through, for example, leaning into the model minority stereotype and its derogatory implications about Black cultures.

Of course, the greater severity of anti-Black racism has normative implications for what a culture-based Afro-Asian solidarity concretely demands. One is that Asian Americans (and others) must be sure not to draw false equivalencies between anti-Black and anti-Asian forms of racism in their attempts to combat the former by doing things like making misleading comparisons between instances of police violence against Blacks and Asian Americans (Kim 2023, 342-343). Another is that the weightiest consideration for assessing an approach to addressing pernicious forms of Asian racialization likely will often be how that approach affects Blacks rather than Asian Americans. We should not overlook such implications even when we acknowledge that anti-Asian stigma is a crucial cultural enabler of the racial domination of Blacks.

For illustrative purposes, it may help to have before us one potential example of when the interests of Blacks should be especially salient in the assessment of a strategy for undermining anti-Asian sentiments. So consider how some scholars have advocated that Asian men embrace the kinds of "soft" masculinities already widely attributed to that group (see, e.g., Chan 2001; Shimizu 2012). Some research suggests that those masculinities already are gradually coming to be viewed as romantically desirable (Chong and Kim 2022). Underlying the call for promoting them is the thought that making them aspirational not only would undermine racist caricatures that demean Asian men for allegedly being physically inept, sexually unappealing, and unfit for leadership roles. It also, the thought goes, would help shape the broader culture so that *all* men do not unduly suffer social costs when embracing a softer form of masculinity.

While I agree that there is significant liberatory potential within movements to make the soft masculinities associated with Asian men aspirational, I believe that those movements need to be cognizant of how they may fail to benefit—and perhaps even exacerbate the harms suffered by—Black men. As Tommy Curry (2017; 2018) makes clear in his forceful scholarship on the unique kinds of oppression that Black men experience as a result of their particular form of racialized maleness, Black men are often essentialized as embodying bestial and domineering masculinities that are the antithesis of soft ones. Curry argues that such a portrayal of Black men has various insidious effects, including downplaying the immorality of violence perpetrated against the group. I maintain that one priority of any effort in the contemporary context to elevate the social cachet of soft masculinities associated with Asian men should be figuring out ways to avoid entrenching that pernicious portrayal of Black men when advocating those masculinities. In other words, any such effort needs to be attentive to how promotion of those masculinities could reinforce the view that they are essentially inaccessible to Black men. A detailed account of what steps must be taken to avoid that outcome is something I leave for future research. However, I want to note here that, at minimum, one would be to avoid depicting Asian men as being the only individuals who can embody the soft masculinities associated with the group, since that depiction contributes to essentializing non-Asian men as unable to enact those masculinities.

5. Conclusion

I argued that on Rogersian civic republicanism, civic virtue for both Blacks and Asian Americans requires that they cultivate Afro-Asian solidarity aimed at combatting the triangulation condition, because security against the racial domination threat it poses is a common good for them. I also argued that such Afro-Asian solidarity—provided that it stresses the importance of socialist reforms for dismantling anti-Black and anti-Asian stigma—likely is crucial at present for

achieving the normative ideals of socialist civic republicanism. It is also consistent with acknowledging that, in the contemporary U.S., anti-Black racism is more severe than anti-Asian racism.

Future research can build upon this paper in at least two ways. First, it can develop more detailed accounts of the specific actions that such Afro-Asian solidarity calls for. Second, it can explore whether other minorities are racialized such that they also have civic virtue-based moral obligations to cultivate race-based solidarity alongside Blacks and Asians. It is worth stressing that such an exploration can take a more globalized approach to examining relative racialization processes rather than a U.S.-centric one (Kim, N. Y. 2022). I strongly suspect that from a Rogersian civic republican standpoint, wherever White supremacist cultural norms persist, civic virtue for each person who is a member of any racial minority group requires that she pursues cultivating "pan-racial-minority" solidarity to counteract those norms. And I aim to thoroughly argue for this claim in a sequel to this paper that is thoroughly informed by social scientific work on how Asians and Blacks are racialized relative not only to each other, but also all other people of color.

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CHAPTER 3

Pan-Asian Solidarity in Asian America: A Moral Philosophical Conception

Introduction

Pan-Asian solidarity movements feature prominently in the political histories of Asian peoples. Those movements involve forging coalitions of individuals from every Asian ethnoracial group that are (at least partially) based on shared adoption of a pan-ethnic Asian identity. The formation of a pan-ethnic identity occurs when "multiple ethnic groups relax and widen their boundaries to forge a new, broader grouping and identity . . . [the groups] come to share interests and a collective history and build institutions and identities across ethnic or cultural boundaries" (Okamoto 2014, 2). Consider, for example, the notion of an "Asian American." This pan-ethnic identity is meant to be one that can be adopted by any person who is American and has any sort of Asian ancestry. While some efforts to forge pan-Asian solidarity were actually oppressive to certain Asian peoples—such as those that were undertaken in the first half of the twentieth century to facilitate Japanese imperialist expansion (Hotta 2007; Saaler and Szpilman 2011a; 2011b; Kishida 2020; Yin 2022)—others have been liberatory, especially for diasporic Asian communities (Espiritu 1992; Maeda 2012; Okamoto 2014; Ishizuka 2016).

One way pan-Asian solidarism has benefited Asian peoples is by supporting the development of healthy ethnoracial pride that shields one's self-respect from the threat posed by anti-Asian prejudice. Another way is by fostering their political consciousness such that they organize as needed to effectively sway the broader society to take action on issues confronting Asian communities. For example, the Asian American Movement that arose in the 1960s inspired ethnoracial self-respect in part by originating the very identity "Asian American" and encouraging

its adoption as a defiant act of self-determination against the colonially-inflected labelling of Asian peoples as "Orientals" (Ishizuka 2016, 60-62). It also rallied newly self-identified Asian Americans to collectively advocate on their own behalf in ways that had tangible results, including the establishment of the first university-level Asian American studies programs (Maeda 2012, 27-51).

Communities of *non-Asian* people of color have also been impacted by the pan-Asian solidarity movements of diasporic Asian populations when those movements were committed to forging multiracial political coalitions. The Asian American Movement here also provides an instructive example. Its participants, in addition to addressing issues that mainly pertain to Asian Americans, were also highly involved in multiracial political organizing. This was exemplified by the Asian American Movement's involvement in the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) (Maeda 2012; Ishizuka 2016). The TWLF was a coalition of various ethnoracial student organizations—namely, organizations centered on Black, Latin American, Native American, and Asian American students—that undertook various campaigns on university campuses. One result of those campaigns was the creation of the first ever university-level ethnic studies departments. Included in the offerings of those departments were the aforementioned Asian American studies programs and additional identity studies programs focused on the other ethnoracial groups represented in the TWLF. Such outcomes of the TWLF's efforts are an example of how pan-Asian solidarity movements have helped non-Asian people of color activists pursue their goals: participants in the Asian American Movement were able to help establish ethnic studies programs for other minority[9] groups by coordinating with those activists.

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[9] Throughout this paper, "minority" will always be used to refer to racial minorities.

The social and political effects of pan-Asian solidarity movements make such solidarity an apt topic for academic study. However, while scholars from a wide range of disciplines have written on such solidarity or the formation of pan-Asian identity more generally (e.g., Espiritu 1992; Aydin 2007; Maeda 2012; Okamoto; Ishizuka 2016; Lee 2019; Murthy 2023), to my knowledge, no works explore pan-Asian solidarity from a moral philosophical perspective[10]. This paper attempts to fill that lacuna by theorizing about the value of pan-Asian solidarism in the *American* context. In other words, my object of inquiry is the significance of ethnoracial solidarity for Asian Americans. The questions I seek to answer are methodologically inspired by prior philosophical scholarship on ethnoracial solidarity and cognate topics (e.g., Shelby 2005; Gooding-Williams 2009; Russell 2009; Papish 2015; Marin 2018; Reed 2022). Those questions include the following:

- Who are the peoples capable of standing in relations of pan-Asian solidarity to one another?

- Is there an ethically valuable form of pan-Asian solidarity that can be forged in the contemporary moment between all Asians who are part of the U.S. polity? If so, what are its characteristics?

- Are those who are capable of taking part in building pan-Asian solidarity morally obligated to do so?

I shall argue that there is a form of pan-Asian solidarity for Asian Americans that is not only ethically valuable under present circumstances, but also one that contemporary Asian Americans have strong moral reasons to cultivate. In my view, those reasons support a weighty *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge that sort of pan-Asian solidarity. While I also believe that this

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[10] Two pieces of scholarship that come close to doing so are works discussing Asian American philosophy by David H. Kim (2007; 2021). Kim (2007, 235) characterizes Asian American philosophy as a "philosophy of solidarity." My account of pan-Asian solidarity often draws on Kim's conception of Asian American philosophy.

pro tanto obligation typically ends up being an all-things-considered one, I will not try to argue for that view. This is mainly because there is so much variety in the specific circumstances of different Asian Americans that trying to anticipate all the ways that *pro tanto* obligation might get outweighed is pretty much an impracticable, never-ending task. However, my hope is that any reader who works through the arguments of this paper will come to share my view about the weightiness of that obligation.

I contend that the ethical value of the kind of pan-Asian solidarity that I shall describe stems from how it promotes three things: morally desirable preservation of Asian cultures, ethnoracial self-respect and self-esteem among Asian Americans, and political engagement among Asian Americans that protects both them and non-Asian people of color from having the issues confronting each group overlooked by the broader American society. Asian Americans, I argue, have *pro tanto* moral obligations to pursue achievement of those three things to counteract troubling kinds of assimilative pressures and threats of political domination that Asians (and sometimes non-Asian people of color) face in the U.S. And I contend that those *pro tanto* moral obligations give rise to a further one that prescribes forging pan-Asian solidarity.

I do not doubt that all Asian peoples are provided morally important benefits by each of those things, and so should be concerned to promote them by forming coalitions conducive to doing so. However, I focus on Asian Americans because I believe the minority status of Asians in the contemporary U.S context makes it especially pressing for them to undertake the formation of pan-Asian solidarity for the purpose of securing their heritage cultures, ethnoracial self-respect and self-esteem, and political efficacy. Philosophical explorations of whether non-American diasporic Asian populations (e.g., Asian Brazilians) also experience a kind of minority status that similarly raises the urgency of forging pan-Asian solidarism among them, or of the ethical value

of such solidarism for all Asian peoples generally, are worthwhile projects. However, I regrettably must leave them for future research.

One way my defense of a kind of ethnoracial solidarity significantly differs from several prior ones is that I do not argue merely that a person has a *pro tanto* moral duty to promote the kind of solidarity I defend *only insofar as she chooses* to dedicate herself to forging it or identifying with the relevant ethnoracial groups (see, e.g., Shelby 2005, 214-215; Papish 2015: Reed 2022). Instead, my claim is that, barring exceptional circumstances, each Asian American has a *pro tanto* moral obligation to help forge pan-Asian solidarity regardless of whether she has already committed herself to doing so. I contend that this obligation is derived from how developing such solidarity is important for satisfying other moral obligations that she has regardless of her own choices. This paper thus not only advocates a particular kind of pan-Asian solidarity. It also models a way to argue that a person has a positive *pro* tanto moral obligation to cultivate ethnoracial solidarity even if she decides not to.

Here is how this paper unfolds. In §1, after some clarifying remarks about the notion of "solidarity" that informs my arguments, I provide a working conception of who Asian Americans are. In §2, §3, and §4 respectively, I argue that Asian Americans are *pro tanto* morally obligated to forge pan-Asian solidarity, because such solidarity is an important resource for doing the following three things within the U.S. context: (a) sustaining and developing the worthwhile parts of various Asian subgroup-specific cultures as well as a *sui generis* pan-Asian culture (§2), (b) encouraging healthy ethnoracial self-respect and self-esteem among Asians (§3), and (c) politically empowering Asians such that they can make the broader society responsive to injustice against them and other people of color (§4). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer comprehensive solidarity building programs, part of making the arguments in §2 will involve providing somewhat concrete

suggestions about what promoting and enacting pan-Asian solidarism consists in. In §5, I conclude.

1. A Working Conception of Who Can Form Relations of Pan-Asian Solidarity

There is a substantial body of philosophical literature that theorizes the nature of solidarity (e.g., Shelby 2005; Blum 2007; Harvey 2007; Scholz 2008; 2015; More 2009; Stanley 2014; Marso 2014; Kolers 2016; Zhao 2019; Rogers 2020; 2023; Reed 2022; Zheng 2023). For this paper, I employ the conception of solidarity offered by Tommie Shelby in his seminal work on Black solidarity, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (2005). In that book, Shelby develops an account of what he calls "robust" solidarity (2005, 67-71). He characterizes it as a relation that is "strong enough to move people to collective action, not just mutual sympathy born of recognition of commonality or a mere sense of group belonging" (2005, 68). It obtains within a group when its members adhere to the following five norms (2006, 68-71):

1. *Identification with the Group*: The group members "regard themselves as sharing a special bond" in a way that gives rise to a sense of "we-ness."

2. *Special Concern*: The group members provide assistance and comfort to each other not merely out of a motive to fulfill impartial moral duties but rather to also express partiality toward one another.

3. *Shared values or goals*: On top of being committed to a common set of values or goals, the group members are confident that others in the group are similarly committed.

4. *Loyalty*: The group members are willing to exert extra effort to support other members of the group and to realize the group's shared values or goals.

5. *Mutual Trust*: Each group member believes that the others will act to advance the common values or goals of the group. Moreover, each member supports the others' attempts to.

In advocating for Asian Americans to forge pan-Asian solidarity, this paper calls for all Asian Americans to take the actions needed to build the relations necessary for there to be *robust pan-Asian solidarity*—i.e., robust solidarity built around shared possession of a pan-Asian identity. Among such actions includes self-conscious adoption of a pan-Asian identity in the first place. Hereafter, all references to pan-Asian solidarity or solidarism should be understood as speaking about a solidarity that displays all the qualities that would make it *robust* in Shelby's sense.

So who counts as "Asian American?" Answering that question requires an account of who "Asians" are more generally. The current "Asian" legal classification in the U.S., established by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (1997), categorizes an Asian person as one "having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam." This conception of Asian peoples is echoed in the views of ordinary U.S. citizens (though not perfectly so[11]). Contemporary social scientific research on Asian Americans, including those that focus on the formation of a pan-Asian identity (e.g., Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2014; Lee 2019; Lee and Ramakrishnan 2020; Wong and Ramakrishnan 2023) also typically adopts the OMB's way of categorizing people as Asian. Even pan-Asian organizing efforts in the U.S. context have tended to employ—and sometimes advocate for—conceptions of Asian peoples that accord with the OMB's (Espiritu 1992; Maeda 2012; Okamoto 2014; Ishizuka 2016). However, the U.S. formerly has legally enshrined alternative conceptions of Asian peoples that reflect how the one currently mainstream within U.S. society

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[11] Recent research by Lee and Ramakrishnan (2020) suggests that much of the overall American population tends to *not* see South Asian Americans as groups that are "likely to be" Asian. According to the study, Asians are the only pan-ethnic group in the U.S. wherein a majority of its members tend to view South Asian Americans as such. However, the study also finds that even significant proportions of non-South Asian groups of Asian Americans tend to *not* see South Asian Americans as groups that are "likely to be" Asian.

does not entirely align with previous versions. For example, while current OMB standards categorize persons of "Middle Eastern" descent as White, some within that pan-ethnic group—e.g., Syrians—have been deemed Asian by past U.S. legal standards (Aziz ms.). The OMB also formerly lumped Asians and Pacific Islanders together (OMB 1997).

For the purposes of this paper, I will employ a working conception of Asian Americans that mirrors both the OMB's current one and, concomitantly, the one assumed by most contemporary academic research on Asian Americans. In other words, the following discussion will understand Asian Americans as Americans of East, Southeast, or South Asian descent.

However, I think it is important to note here that there may be good reasons to adopt a more expansive conception of Asian Americans, namely, one that is inclusive of West and Central Asians. There is no officially standardized conception of who constitutes the West and Central Asian subgroups, though there tends to be significant overlap between the various mainstream views. West Asians are often thought of as peoples with historical roots in the "Middle East" and some nearby regions. These territories are generally viewed as including the Arabian Peninsula (e.g., Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen), areas of Asia near the border of Southeast Europe (e.g., Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey,), and Iran. Central Asia is typically associated with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. However, Iran sometimes is included within the scope of Central Asia, as are Afghanistan, some parts of China's western autonomous regions (e.g., Xinjiang and Tibet) (Cummings 2012, 11-33). Discussions about adopting a new conception of Asian Americans that would be inclusive of groups from other parts of Asia are in fact already being carried out at the U.S. Census Bureau. Those discussions have recently resulted in several Central Asian groups being reclassified from "White" to "Asian" prior to the construction of the

Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics File A, which provides a more granular look at the data collected in the 2020 U.S. census (Marks 2023).

While it is beyond the scope of this project, I encourage scholars to take part in seriously exploring the question whether Asian America should be re-envisioned as also encompassing Americans of West or Central Asian descent. The right answer to that question surely will have practical implications for the sort of pan-Asian solidarism that this paper argues Asian Americans have strong moral reasons to forge. To give just one example, I will argue below that part of what grounds those reasons is that the existence of robust pan-Asian solidarity spurs Asian Americans to pursue the preservation of Asian cultures. If West and Central Asian cultures are among those that pan-Asian solidarity projects should aim to preserve, then one thing that satisfactory versions of those projects must pursue is ensuring that those cultures flourish. Such considerations certainly should be theorized in greater detail if it really does turn out that West and Central Asians should be thought of as members of the Asian American category.

Now, given that understanding of Asians, who are Asian *Americans*? In his discussion of Asian American philosophy, Kim (2007) does not take Asian Americans to be only those Asian persons who at one point resided in the U.S. on a long-term basis. Instead, he understands Asian Americans to be all Asian persons everywhere whose lived experiences have been significantly shaped by elements of the U.S. polity, including its imperialistic activities. Kim's reason for adopting that internationalized view of Asian Americans stems from his characterization of Asian American philosophy as being a strand of what he calls "modern Asian philosophy," which he describes as the philosophical tradition that focuses on the experiences of Asians living in a world shaped by Western colonialism and ideological hegemony (Kim 2007, 227-238). For Kim, modern Asian philosophy is a "philosophy of solidarity" that is a "critical, ethical, and liberatory"

enterprise, the primary aim of which is to counteract how "Orientalist modernity" has impacted Asian peoples in morally troubling ways (Kim 2007, 235). Under his taxonomy, Asian American philosophy is the variant of modern Asian philosophy that concentrates specifically on Asians who have been impacted by the U.S.'s imperialistic activities. Since those activities reach beyond the borders of the U.S.'s fifty states and unincorporated territories, the group that Kim's conception of Asian American philosophy ends up being centrally focused on includes both individuals of Asian descent who are long-term U.S. residents and those who live in non-U.S. territories over which the U.S. has hegemonic influence (Kim 2007, 238-250).

The account of pan-Asian solidarity I defend here is offered in the liberatory spirit of Asian American philosophy described by Kim. However, while I am highly sympathetic to his internationalized view of Asian America, I will restrict my working conception of Asian Americans so that it encompasses only individuals of East, Southeast, and South Asian descent who reside within the U.S. (including its unincorporated territories) on a permanent [12] basis. An Asian individual can fall within that group even if she is not officially documented as a U.S. citizen. I adopt this narrower conception of Asian Americans for two reasons. First, although I agree that what counts as the "U.S. context" expands beyond the territories over which the U.S. state has formal dominion, my discussion focuses on anti-Asian injustices within the U.S. proper.

Second, I do find it plausible that Asians who live outside the U.S.'s official boundaries have some *pro tanto* moral duties to help mitigate anti-Asian conditions within the U.S. or at least provide a means of emigrating away from them (and that Asians who are U.S. residents have a reciprocal obligation to help protect their international counterparts from their local forms of anti-

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[12] In doing so, I will be setting aside discussion of complications raised by expat Asians who live outside the U.S. on a permanent basis after previously being long-term U.S. residents.

Asian injustice). However, I also think it is doubtful that the typical Asian living outside the U.S. will tend to have exactly the same moral responsibilities as the average Asian living within it regarding anti-Asian forces in the U.S. More specifically, it strikes me as likely that Asians living outside the U.S. will often either lack the sort of *pro tanto* moral obligations I will attribute to the U.S.-resident counterparts or will be much less strongly beholden to those obligations. So, to avoid suggesting otherwise, I will restrict my referent of "Asian Americans" to Asians who live in the U.S. on a permanent basis.

2. Pan-Asian Solidarity and Cultural Preservation

Over the next three sections, I argue that Asian Americans are *pro tanto* morally obligated to forge pan-Asian solidarity because doing so facilitates compliance with other sorts of moral obligations among members of the pan-ethnic group. These obligations are ones requiring cultural preservation, promotion of ethnoracial self-respect and self-esteem, and political empowerment of both Asian and non-Asian peoples. To make my case, I will consider each of those three things one-by-one, focusing on cultural preservation in this section, promotion of self-respect and self-esteem in §3, and political empowerment in §4. I will argue that there are *pro tanto* moral obligations to achieve each as a way of securing Asian peoples (and sometimes non-Asian people of color) from either morally troubling assimilative pressures or barriers to substantive political participation that arise in the U.S. Those obligations, I contend, ground a derivative *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity.

2.1. Core Contentions of the Cultural Preservation Argument

I follow Chike Jeffers (2015, 206) in understanding cultural preservation as involving "efforts by individuals or groups to maintain the distinctness and distinctiveness of a cultural group

to which they belong." Moreover, I endorse Jeffers's (2015) defense of the view that non-White people are morally obligated to pursue preservation of their heritage culture's morally benign aspects as a way of undermining the ideological components of White supremacy. Before explicating his defense, it would be worth making a few clarifying remarks.

For starters, also in line with Jeffers, I do not maintain that every element of the cultures of a racialized group—non-White or not—is morally worthy of being preserved (Jeffers 2015, 206, 217). Nor do I maintain that ethnoracial cultures are static and monolithic (Jeffers 2015, 217-218). So in advocating cultural preservation, I am not calling for uncritically valorizing every part of Asian cultures in a way that overlooks their moral flaws. Nor am I advocating that we demarcate what is genuinely part of Asian cultures from what is not in some quasi-essentialist way and then policing those boundaries so that they remain forever unchanged. Instead, like Jeffers, I understand the cultures of a group as consisting of the ways of life and thought that are widely observed among its members. Since there can be much variety among those things and they can change over time, cultures are dynamic and often internally diverse (Jeffers 2015, 218). I thus take the cultural preservation I am advocating to be mainly a matter of empowering the adherents of a culture to practice their autonomously chosen (and morally benign) unique customs and ensuring that changes the culture undergoes are self-determined by those adherents. I take it that the customs of each of our world's actual long established ethnoracial cultures exhibit a great deal of variety such that the practice of them is in fact consistent with a multiplicity of lifestyles. As Jeffers puts it, "the point [of cultural preservation] is to celebrate [the] cultural life [of an ethnoracial group's members] in general rather than prescribe its limits and essence" (2015, 218).

One of the central elements of Jeffers's call for preserving non-White cultures stresses our world's actual history of racism and colonialism. According to Jeffers, "racism and colonialism in

the modern world centrally involve the construction of the system of [W]hite supremacy and an essential component of that ideological, discursive, and institutional reality is the devaluation of cultures of non-[W]hite peoples, concomitant with the elevation of that which is associated with being [W]hite as culturally superior" (2015, 216). Thus, because a pillar of White supremacist racism and colonialism is its "Eurocentric privileging of that which is associated with [W]hiteness and the deprecation of that which is marked as non-[W]hite" (2015, 218) effectively combatting it involves sustaining and affirming the value of non-White peoples' cultures. By promoting appreciation of non-White cultures, we help ensure that we have readily available to us the sort of evidence that most directly reveals the ideological mistakes of White supremacism, namely, the fact that non-White cultures are just as worthwhile as those originated by Whites. I think it is clear that making sure that such evidence is not hidden from view is an indispensable part of undoing tendencies to denigrate non-White cultures. Hence, I maintain that one reason Asian Americans have a *pro tanto* moral obligation to pursue preservation of Asian cultures is that they are among the non-White ones contemporary White supremacism denigrates in order to sustain itself. By celebrating Asian cultures, Asian Americans would take part in supplying the kind of evidence that reveal the mistakes in the theoretical underpinnings of White-centric chauvinism.

Echoing the view of many past pan-Asianists (as described by Murthy 2023), I contend that a closely related second reason why Asian Americans have a moral duty to preserve Asian cultures is that they are equipped to help make societies that emerge *after the end of* White supremacism reliably secure from either birthing a new form of racism or lapsing back into White supremacism. This is because those cultures offer resources for envisioning societies that are not plagued by the sort of racialized thinking that spurred Western colonialism, according to which

racial distinctions track indelible ontological differences that morally justify according lesser regard to people of certain racial categories.

For example, Shuchen Xiang (2019a; 2019b; 2023) has recently written on how that sort of racialist worldview never arose within Chinese philosophical traditions. She contends that these traditions oppose the view that there are unbridgeable metaphysical differences—racial or otherwise—between people that permanently relegate some to a morally second-class status. Instead, Xiang argues, the conceptions of personhood in some major Chinese philosophical traditions (e.g., Confucianism) allow that all humans are capable of satisfying the conditions for deserving the highest level of moral regard. And she maintains that the history of how Chinese civilization has interacted with non-Chinese bears out the anti-colonial potential of those conceptions of personhood, thereby offering guidance on how to make future societies ones in which cosmopolitanism flourishes. Various prominent pan-Asianists (e.g., Okakura Tenshin, Sun Yat-sen, Yoshimi Takeuchi, Wang Hui) similarly argue that the history of interethnic interactions in Asia is instructive about how to bring about social harmony in multicultural societies (Murthy 2023). For these pan-Asianists, one tool we should include our anti-colonial arsenal is the use of what Viren Murthy (2022; 2023, 5 *et passim*) calls a "back-to-the-future" strategy. It involves studying the institutions and cultural patterns of past Asian societies, especially those within which tremendous ethnic diversity prevailed but was not a regular source of conflict. By doing so, we enliven our imaginations about how we can effectively transition away from the White supremacism of the contemporary moment into a genuinely post-racist future.

In my view, Xiang's work on conceptions of personhood in Chinese philosophy provides a nice contemporary example of the back-to-the-future strategy being employed by an academic philosopher. And the value of such projects, I contend, is another ground of Asian Americans'

moral obligation to preserve Asian cultures. This is because those projects become unworkable to the extent that we lose sources of knowledge about Asian cultures or enacting them becomes infeasible.

I should note here that in endorsing a pluralistic conception of ethnoracial cultures, I am not maintaining that such cultures are infinitely elastic such that they can undergo literally any kind of change while retaining their identity. No one who maintains that there are people who have a moral obligation to pursue cultural preservation should adopt such a capacious conception of ethnoracial cultures, since she could do so only on pain of being unable to deem anything a failure to satisfy that obligation. So even proponents of cultural preservation who endorse a pluralist conception of culture need a way to at least roughly demarcate ethnoracial cultures from one another. Shortly below, I will offer resources for that task after addressing an objection to my central contentions in this subsection. However, before doing that, let me state a few more of the claims that underpin the central contentions of this subsection. Those claims concern the utility of ethnoracial solidarity for cultural preservation efforts.

For starters, while it might be possible in principle for an ethnoracial group to preserve its cultures in the absence of robust intragroup ethnoracial solidarity, the cultures of such groups tend to be highly fragile when such solidarity does not obtain. This is because a lack of such solidarity entails that the members of the group neither have a common sense of identity-based "we-ness" that typically generates partiality and elevated levels of mutual trust, nor view each other as having shared values or goals, nor have established practices of encouraging each other to realize such values or goals. When such things are absent within a group, it may lack the sort of sense of community needed to make whatever commonalities exist between its members potentially count as a culture to begin with. However, even if we grant that a culture can appropriately be attributed

to a group if there is merely widespread adherence to similar lifestyles within it, such adherence is unlikely to durably persist when not reinforced by robust solidarity. For one, when such solidarity is absent, so is a communal infrastructure that encourages adoption of shared lifestyles by celebrating them. Concomitantly, there would be a lack of practices that shield the group's members from pressures to assimilate to the cultures of other groups.

Thus, in sum, my central contentions in this subsection are the following: One ground of Asian Americans' *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity is their *pro tanto* moral obligation to preserve Asian cultures. The latter obligation is grounded in a further one, namely, one that requires combatting White supremacist racism that persists in the contemporary U.S. context. Initiatives to preserve Asian cultures are important for addressing such racism, because they directly undermine its White-centrist ideological underpinning and help us envision how to make societies securely post-racist after White supremacism is rooted out of them.

Here I should stress that I am not arguing that *every* instance of a racial minority assimilating into White cultures is morally troubling. It is perfectly conceivable that a racial minority could do so not as a result of any kinds of morally objectionable coercive forces. However, I want to also emphasize here that an instance of someone undergoing such assimilation would not be totally morally benign just because she somehow benefits, materially or otherwise, from the process. For example, suppose that, as some studies suggest, Asian Americans face difficulties acquiring leadership positions in work settings partially because of the salience of stereotypes about Asians lacking the personality traits required to be an effective leader (Chou and Feagin 2015; Chin 2020) and because there continues to be a bias toward those who possess a stereotypically White appearance in the assignment of leadership roles (Williams et al. 2022). An Asian American might be able to get around the impediments those factors raise by trying to appear

more "White," thereby improving her material circumstances. However, even if that is true, we still morally ought to ensure that there are no work environments in which career advancement for Asian Americans is contingent on them demonstrating allegiance to White cultural practices in the first place.

Should pan-Asian solidarism be channeled toward fostering and preserving a *sui generis* pan-Asian culture that is not reducible to any particular Asian subgroup's cultures, or merely those subgroup-specific cultures? For several reasons, the right answer to that question is: both. First, since they are not identical, the promotion of each is a distinct form of preserving a non-White culture. So, by promoting both, it stands to reason that resistance to the morally troublesome aspects of White cultural hegemony would be more multifaceted. This is a desirable consequence insofar as greater variety in a person's positive exposures to different ethnoracial cultures tends to help diminish the likelihood of her becoming a chauvinistic adherent of any one of them. One explanation of how it might do so is that it helps awaken her to how cultural pluralism elevates the quality of democratic political interaction within a society. Consequently, she comes to view promotion of it as integral to forging the most desirable kinds of democratic polities (Orosco 2016).

Second, very plausibly, a pan-Asian culture is a syncretic amalgamation of various Asian subgroups' cultures. Consequently, the internal logic of preserving a pan-Asian culture seems to entail that in pursuing it, one must also encourage celebration of Asian subgroup-specific cultures. For example, because positively embracing the pan-ethnic dimensions of Asian American culture involves shedding a positive light on its various elements, and the building blocks of such a culture are derived from Asian subgroup-specific cultures practiced within the U.S. context, it seems that one cannot encourage warm reception of Asian American culture without also doing so for the

ways of life exhibited by particular Asian American subgroups. Thus, promoting a pan-Asian culture seems to require fostering appreciation for the cultures of specific Asian subgroups.

Third, while one might worry that pursuit of pan-Asian initiatives might cause a decline in ones geared toward specific Asian subgroups and *vice versa*, recent research on pan-ethnic Asian identity formation suggests that instances of each actually tends to *increase* occurrences of the other (Okamoto 2014, 85-111). This is another reason why a moral obligation to promote one of those sorts of organizing will often demand pursuit of both. For example, in metropolitan areas, when the number of pan-Asian organizations increases, so does the number of organizations focused on particular Asian ethnic groups (Okamoto 2014, 101). This is because, on one hand, the existence of groups of people who can be entrusted with pursuing pan-Asian endeavors frees up others to work on projects that concentrate on particular Asian subgroups. And, on the other hand, Asian subgroup-specific organizations provide the sort of infrastructure and networks upon which pan-Asian ones can effectively be built: under leadership that stresses the value of pan-Asian collectivities, an Asian subgroup-specific organization enable its members to develop a shared understanding of how their racialized experiences are similar to those of people from other Asian subgroups.

Regarding cultural preservation specifically, actual cultural celebration events held by pan-Asian organizations tend to spotlight how different Asian cultures mesh to produce a pan-Asian one *and* the ways in which Asian cultures are distinct from one another. Those events thus tend to favorably display not only the unique forms of life that emerge from interactions between different Asian subgroups, but also customs peculiar to those subgroups. In a similar vein, cultural events targeted at specific Asian subgroups also often facilitate greater occurrence of ones with a pan-Asian focus. This is because the former, through increasing familiarity with a particular Asian

subgroup, enables recognition of how its cultural practices overlap with those of other Asian subgroups. Such interactions between pan-Asian organizing and Asian subgroup-specific initiatives are another reason why the moral obligation to facilitate one tends to also require promoting the other.

2.2 On Demarcating the Boundaries of Ethnoracial Cultures

Now, the fact that the sort of robust pan-Asian solidarity that I am arguing for is supposed to aid with cultural preservation has concrete upshots regarding the sort of attention to culture that it should motivate. Those upshots in turn are suggestive about further ones pertaining to what producing and sustaining such solidarity involves. Here I want to note that the pan-Asian solidarism that I am encouraging would be concerned with establishing a common intragroup culture at both the pan-ethnic Asian level and within Asian subgroups to a degree that may worry those who endorse accounts of the value of ethnoracial solidarity like Tommie Shelby's. This point brings me to an objection I alluded to earlier but have not yet described. I will now elaborate on and respond to that objection. In the course of doing so, I will offer a way of demarcating ethnoracial cultures from one another.

For Shelby, the sort of ethnoracial solidarities[13] that are morally most suitable for the contemporary world are ones that do not require members of the relevant ethnoracial community to cultivate a "thick" ethnoracial identity, but rather demand merely that they recognize how their shared "thin" one makes them similarly susceptible to certain kinds of injustices. He characterizes a thin ethnoracial identity as one that an individual has due to established practices of categorizing

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[13] While Shelby (2005) specifically focuses on Blacks in his discussions of ethnoracial solidarity, I take his discussions to be relevant for thinking about ethnoracial solidarism among other groups as well. Accordingly, his views that I articulate here will be described as applying to all ethnoracial groups generally, not just Blacks.

people according to shared heritable phenotypic profiles and ancestry (Shelby 2005, 207-208). For example, that some people have a thin Black identity is the result of the longstanding practice of categorizing people who have the following features into a distinct ethnoracial group: (a) sufficiently overlapping genealogies that trace back to sub-Saharan African peoples and (b) certain somatic features attributable to that lineage (Shelby 2005, 208). Thick ethnoracial identities, in contrast, are possessed only by those who satisfy some other criteria in addition to, or instead of, those that must be fulfilled to possess the counterpart thin identity (Shelby 2005, 209). Those other criteria specify things such as a very specific genotype, a shared combination of cultural and ancestral heritage, or a common culture comprising an "ensemble of beliefs, values, conventions, traditions, and practices (Shelby 2005, 209-212). So, for example, on some conceptions of thick Black identity, such an identity is had only by those who, in addition to being "thinly" Black, adhere to certain cultural practices.

Shelby notes that because biologically essentialist accounts of thick ethnoracial identities are untenable, most who believe that ethnoracial solidarities ought to be developed around and promote thick ethnoracial identities typically favor a cultural conception of such identities. Such conceptions maintain that to be a member of an ethnoracial group, one must embrace certain ways of life in addition to fulfilling the criteria for "thin" membership in the group (2005, 217-218).

On the basis of two claims, Shelby objects to ethnoracial solidarity initiatives that insist on the adoption and maintenance of distinctive ethnoracial cultures. First, he maintains that robust ethnoracial solidarism can be forged among members of an ethnoracial group even when they do not jointly adhere to a shared distinct ethnoracial culture (Shelby 2005, 219-223). Second, he contends that there are good reasons to believe that insistence on developing such a culture is typically counterproductive to building ethnoracial solidarity.

Regarding the first claim, Shelby argues that each component of robust solidarity could be achieved by an ethnoracial group without reliance on intragroup cultural conformity when its members recognize that their common *thin* ethnoracial identity makes them share vulnerability to certain kinds of injustice (2005, 237-238). He maintains that such recognition can motivate members of the group to empathetically identify with one another as people who share that vulnerability and to collectively pursue addressing it (Shelby 2005, 220-221). Moreover, he contends that even when co-members of an ethnoracial group do not view each other as practicing the same culture, they can develop intragroup loyalty and mutual trust merely from seeing each other struggle to protect the group from injustice (Shelby 2005, 222-223). Shelby cites the collective action by Blacks during the mid-twentieth century American civil rights movement as an example of when robust Black solidarity arose due to mutual recognition of thin ethnoracial identity-based vulnerabilities to injustice rather than to a joint commitment to some conception of a distinctively Black culture (Shelby 2005, 223).

As for why Shelby believes that attempting to establish collective adherence to a particular culture is counterproductive to forging robust ethnoracial solidarity, one thing he claims is that attempting to do so probably would intensify extant intragroup conflicts and may even generate new ones. This is because, the thought goes, it would likely embroil people in the fraught task of trying to demarcate what genuinely counts as part of a culture, as well as stoke class, sex, gender, and generational divides that tend to correlate with differences in ways of life and thought (2005, 224-230). Moreover, Shelby contends, insistence on subscription to a specific culture might alienate persons of an ethnoracial group who are committed to seeking social justice for the group even if they do not adhere to the group's dominant culture (2005, 230-233). And he also argues that cultural conformity can cause an ethnoracial group's members to become epistemically

blinkered about possible solutions to issues confronting the group. This is so, the thought goes, insofar as the common culture involves endorsing a particular narrative about those issues, e.g., what primarily causes material deprivation among the group's members (2005, 233-234). Shelby in fact is so concerned about the potential anti-solidarism effects of trying to bring about allegiance to a shared culture that he is averse even to styles of ethnoracial solidarity that advocate practice of "a pluralistic and nuanced conception of [ethnoracial] identity, rather than a monolithic and unduly restrictive one" on the grounds that "no matter where one sets the boundaries of [any given] thick [ethnoracial identity], if it is meaningful enough to have normative, and not merely descriptive, force, some [people possessing the thin version of the identity] will be left out or forced into submission" (2005, 235).

Do Shelby's worries about advocating a shared culture vitiate my defense of pan-Asian solidarism that seeks preservation of a common intragroup culture (supporting instead solidarisms that make their political centerpiece mere recognition of common thin ethnoracial identity and its experiential consequences)? No, but his concerns inform what a morally permissible approach to building and maintaining a shared ethnoracial culture would involve. My negative answer rests on two contentions.

First, as argued by many scholars who have responded to Shelby (e.g., Russell 2009; Gooding-Williams 2009, 210-256; Papish 2015; Marin 2018), it is questionable whether robust solidarity can be formed merely on the basis of mutual recognition of shared thin ethnoracial identity-based vulnerability to injustice. One reason why is rooted in the intersectional nature of ethnoracial identities: due to how non-ethnoracial aspects of a person's identity (e.g., her gender or socioeconomic status) influence how her thin ethnoracial identity impacts her life, for any given ethnoracial group, the racialized experiences of its members might be highly heterogeneous.

Consequently, for any such group, there might not be a set of thin ethnoracial identity-based vulnerabilities to injustice shared by *all* its members such that it could serve as a basis of robust solidarity within the group (Gooding-Williams 2009, 230-234; Marin 2018, 589).

Moreover, even granting that all who share a thin ethnoracial identity similarly experience certain kinds of injustice, the members of such a group likely face anti-solidarism pressures to adopt divergent methods of shielding themselves from such injustice. Certain kinds of intersectional considerations are the source of those pressures. Robert Gooding-Williams (2009, 288-230) provides an instructive example. He notes that even if all Blacks are impacted by a form of anti-Black stigma, a class divide among them regarding how to respond could arise in the following way. Suppose it turns out that increasing economic equality between Blacks and Whites stokes anxiety among Whites that in turn leads them to ramp up their unjust stigmatization of Blacks.[14] Poorer Blacks might be willing to trade off facing that increased stigmatization to secure such equality. However, the thought goes, wealthier Blacks might not, because they are already economically prosperous. Differences in economic precarity between poorer and wealthier Blacks thus might prevent robust thin Black identity-based solidarity between them even if they all agree that merely being thinly Black makes one susceptible to certain kinds of stigma.

The second reason why Shelby's concerns do not undermine my view is that, even granting his claim that robust ethnoracial solidarity could be based on mere mutual recognition of the social and political salience of a common thin ethnoracial identity, such a solidarity would be less effective at supporting cultural preservation than one that encourages practice of a distinctive shared culture. This would be the case provided that Shelbyean solidarism does not take

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[14] Some research indicates that such a reaction among Whites actually takes place (Wetts and Willer 2018).

maintenance of an ethnoracial group's cultural distinctiveness to be crucial to securing it from injustice. Shelby's presentation of it suggests that it indeed does not. Moreover, it *should not*, on pain of having to concede that morally worthwhile ethnoracial solidarism does in fact involve building a common culture. So, given that that non-Whites are *pro tanto* morally obligated to pursue cultural preservation in the contemporary moment, forms of ethnoracial solidarism that are equipped to facilitate satisfaction of that obligation are morally preferable to ones that are not.

Thus I maintain that Shelby's worries about ethnoracial solidarities that are built around and advocate practice of a shared culture are insufficient to undermine my view that a cornerstone of pan-Asian solidarity morally ought to be fostering communities whose members jointly participate in distinctively Asian cultures. However, I also acknowledge that it is reasonable to be concerned about the anti-solidarism risks of advocating for cultural conformity—even to a pluralistic culture—for the reasons he identifies. In other words, I believe that proponents of cultural preservation ought think about how to approach building robust ethnoracial solidarities in a way that channels their political energy toward cultural preservation without doing any of the following: stoking or creating intragroup antagonisms, alienating individuals whose lifestyle is unorthodox relative to the rest of the group, or generating collective close-mindedness that prevents recognition of solutions to issues facing the group.

It seems clear that an approach capable of doing so would have to endorse a capacious conception of ethnoracial cultures according to which they are hospitable to tremendous pluralism. This is because that sort of conception seems necessary for ensuring that calling for the formation of a shared culture is not tantamount to insistence on adherence to a narrow range of lifestyles that would produce the sort of problems described by Shelby. However, as noted above, proponents of cultural preservation should seek a way to at least roughly demarcate the boundaries of an

ethnoracial culture if only to be capable of judging some things as failures to achieve cultural preservation. So, on one hand, the conception of ethnoracial cultures that should inform solidarity projects aimed at cultural preservation allows that such cultures can encompass a highly diverse range of practices. Yet, on the other hand, it must also include a plausible conception of things that fail to qualify as "authentic" parts of such a culture.

I want to now draw on work by Kim (2007), Camisha Russell (2009), Kristie Dotson (2013), Jeffers (2013), and Laura Papish (2015) to develop a conception of ethnoracial cultures that I believe satisfies the two desiderata just specified. Papish develops an account of what she calls "Black social identity" as part of her theorizing about what is crucial for forging robust Black solidarity. She describes it as an identity that those who are thinly Black in the Shelbyean sense (Papish 2015, 19) can acquire through engaging in a discursive practice that is "fundamentally about social engagement and not specific doctrines and ideologies" (Papish 2015, 14) and "involves assuming a position of creative, attentive, and morally informed engagement with the experiences and proposals of other [thinly Black peoples]" (Papish 2015, 15-16). In other words, a thinly Black person can take on a Black social identity by committing herself to regularly deliberating with other thinly Black people about a shared set of questions in a manner that acknowledges that such people have perspectives worthy of respect.

Papish stresses that Black social identity "does not prescribe or proscribe any specific set of beliefs about the nature of [B]lackness or the causes of or solutions to anti-[B]lack racism," (Papish 2015, 14). In fact, it does not require that Blacks concentrate their collective deliberations on such topics or any others specifically: what the focal points of those deliberations should be is itself something to be determined by the discursive activity that Blacks engage in with one another

(Papish 2015, 16). Moreover, Black social identity enjoins Blacks to "commit themselves to mutual criticism" (Papish 2015, 14) regardless of what they choose to converse about.

I agree with Papish's claim that the "ideological, cultural, and political neutrality of [B]lack social identity stops it from being exclusionary" (Papish 2015, 14). I propose to adapt and partially revise her view to develop a conception of ethnoracial cultures generally that, on one hand is friendly to the view that such cultures can contain much internal diversity yet, on the other hand, also accommodates a defensible view about the borderlines of such cultures. My proposal models cultural belonging on Papish's claims about the identity-shaping role of joint discursive activity. Call it the "Social Identity Conception of Cultural Practice (SICCP)." Its core idea is the following:

> **Social Identity Conception of Cultural Practice (SICCP):** Adherence to the culture of an ethnoracial group is mainly a matter of *reverential* and *consistent* participation in the discursive practices and associated customs originated by communities of people whose shared thin ethnoracial identity is paradigmatic of the group's members.

Thus, for example, on this conception, someone practices Chinese culture if, motivated by respect for it, she regularly takes part in, and shapes her everyday life according to the upshots of, deliberative traditions inaugurated by people who are racialized as archetypally Chinese. An instance of doing so would be participating in the sort of moral and aesthetic philosophical discussions that partially animate the Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, and Legalist systems of thought and adopting modes of life that reflect endorsement of views defended by those systems.

While the SICCP is similar to Papish's account of Black social identity with respect to emphasizing that engaging in certain kinds of discursive practices is crucial to achieving membership in the relevant group, it importantly differs from her account in two ways.

First, there is what I will call the *historical rootedness condition* to the deliberative activities central to the SICCP that is missing (or at least not clearly present) in those that are central to Papish's account. This condition makes ethnoracial cultural belonging contingent not on social engagement with people living at present who have a certain thin ethnoracial identity. Instead, it makes that depend on participating in, and living in accordance with the views countenanced by, ongoing discussions that began among people who share(d) a thin ethnoracial identity. Notably, because such activities can be performed by people who lack that thin ethnoracial identity, the SICCP allows that one can be a practitioner of an ethnoracial culture without possessing the thin ethnoracial identity that is paradigmatic of the culture's progenitors. While one might have reservations about an account of participation in an ethnoracial culture that allows such a possibility, I believe that such a feature should be viewed favorably, especially by those concerned with cultural preservation. After all, it seems highly plausible that the most successful sort of cultural preservation efforts would encourage adherence to the culture not only among the descendants of the thin ethnoracial identity group that first brought the culture into existence. It would also encourage those outside that pool of descendants to respect and adopt elements of that culture.

Now, since my view allows that non-Asians can take part in preserving Asian cultures, it is worth pausing here to consider whether it can maintain that there is something *unique* about Asian Americans' *pro tanto* moral obligations to do so. This is because, presumably, non-Asians—including Whites themselves—should assist with dismantling White supremacism. Hence, if they can do so through celebrating Asian cultures, non-Asians also have at least some kind of *pro tanto* moral obligation to help preserve those cultures.

Even granting that non-Asians might also have a *pro tanto* moral obligation to help preserve Asian cultures, I maintain that the *pro tanto* moral obligation of Asian Americans to preserve Asian cultures differs from the sort potentially had by non-Asians in at least two ways. For one, it typically will be stronger, and so less easily overridden. This is mainly because of feasibility considerations. Just as a matter of the conditions under which Asian Americans are likely to be raised, they are often more likely to have greater default familiarity with Asian cultures. Thus, Asian Americans' *pro tanto* obligations to preserve Asian cultures will tend to be less easily overridden by considerations of difficulty. For example, a non-Asian could more easily justify foregoing engagement in Asian cultural practices on the grounds that doing so is a less efficient way for her to help dismantle White supremacy than participating in some other non-White culture that is more familiar to her.

There are also non-feasibility reasons why it is important that Asians themselves participate in preserving Asian cultures. One is that, due to often having greater familiarity with those cultures, Asians will usually be better equipped to express what is distinctive of those cultures, thereby enhancing the value of their continued existence for fostering a multicultural world. Another is that Asians themselves taking part in preserving their heritage cultures sends the message that those cultures are worthwhile when enacted by Asians themselves. In other words, its not the case that those cultures are worthy of preservation only if the trajectory of their development is bequeathed to non-Asians. This should be communicated to counteract what me might call, borrowing a phrase from Kim and Sundstrom (2023, 420-421), a kind of "xenophilic" anti-Asian chauvinism that attributes value to Asian cultures but only insofar as they are appropriated by some non-Asian group. To address that sort of xenophilic perspective, it is important to foster recognition that Asian

cultures are worthwhile even if how they are expressed and change over time continues to be stewarded by Asians themselves.

The second way in which the discursive engagement spotlighted by the SICCP differs from that of Papish's account is that it is characterized by what I will call *the historical reverence condition*. It restricts the set of people who qualify as practicing a given ethnoracial culture to those who accord sufficient respect to past participants of that culture and their specific expressions of it. Such respect does not involve uncritically valorizing the questions those individuals focused on, their proposed answers, and the ways of life that arose in light of those answers. Instead, it is enacted by treating those individuals' deliberative projects as ones that, while perhaps flawed in certain respects at present, at least have propounded some rough insights about important truths and can be refined to sharpen those insights. At minimum, historical reverence for a deliberative tradition is incompatible with treating it and its adherents as totally worthless or misguided. It involves extending the sort of "family and community love" that Camisha Russell argues is crucial to successfully forging ethnoracial solidarity among living members of the group so that it also encompasses the group's antecedents. She characterizes such love as a non-colorblind sentiment that one can direct toward another to provide her "color-specific proof" of her humanity, thereby encouraging her to see herself and others who share her ethnoracial status as "deserving of the justice to be pursued in a solidarity project" if the need for one arose (Russell 2009, 77). I take it that such love sometimes calls for well-intended criticism of the beloved, but never for complete contempt or disregard for her or her ways of life.

Kristie Dotson's (2013) and Jeffers's (2013) conceptions of Black philosophy and Kim's (2007) account of Asian American philosophy are useful for illustrating what the historical

rootedness and historical relevance conditions look like in practice. Before I say why, let me first describe their views.

For Dotson, Black philosophy is an approach to doing philosophy that exhibits "radical love" for Black people, where "radical" love is love that involves "steadfast commitment, unwavering trust, and, in some contexts [such as ones suffused with anti-Black racism], a daring that defies current dominant reason" (Dotson 2013, 38). According to her, the reason that engagement in Black philosophy involves conveying radical love for Black people is that it requires "performing acts of inheritance of theoretical production created and maintained by [B]lack peoples" (2013, 38). By "theoretical production," Dotson means "a kind of cultural product that hearkens to organizing principles, discursive strategies, and/or broad observations for explaining or orienting phenomena" (2013, 39). And she characterizes the act of inheriting Black theoretical production as "the activity of stripping, shifting, and re-creating [B]lack cultural production to identify theoretical positions and/or orientations" (Dotson 2013, 40). Such activity, the thought goes, requires enacting radical love for Black peoples because, to perform it, "[o]ne must trust [B]lack people to have lived deliberately in such a way that one understands that [B]lack cultural production, in all its many forms, *does* hold the potential to carry theoretical production; that [B]lack people's practice ought to be read to hold principles" (Dotson 2013, 40-41, italics original).

Jeffers (2013) offers a similar conception of Black philosophy. His is inspired by Cornel West's (1977) view that "Afro-American philosophy is the interpretation of Afro-American history, highlighting the cultural heritage and political struggles, which provides desirable norms that should regulate responses to challenges presently confronting Afro-Americans." Drawing on this claim, Jeffers describes Black philosophy as having intertwined backward- and forward-

looking orientations (Jeffers 2013, 25-27). The backward-looking aspect studies the history of Black peoples—paying special attention to their cultural heritage and political struggles—to develop an account of the intellectual resources Blacks have relied on to navigate through their lives. Part of what such studies consists in is the building of a canon that displays the philosophical insights of Black peoples. The forward-looking aspect critically draws on those insights to address the contemporary circumstances of Blacks, revising and refining those insights as necessary to improve them.

As noted in §1, for Kim, modern Asian philosophy is a "philosophy of solidarity" that is a "critical, ethical, and liberatory" enterprise the primary aim of which is to counteract how Asian peoples have been impacted by imperialistic activities (Kim 2007, 235). And Asian American philosophy is the variant of modern Asian philosophy that concentrates specifically on U.S. imperialism. On Kim's view, one engages in Asian American philosophy by reflecting on how to overcome the oppressions wrought by U.S. imperialism over Asian peoples by building on prior efforts to do so. Most of those efforts were carried out by Asian people themselves, and Kim takes the theoretical work done by members of the Asian American Movement to offer one paradigm for Asian American philosophy (Kim 2007, 246-247). However, he notes that the canon of Asian American philosophy (and modern Asian philosophy more generally) is also inclusive of works by non-Asians who have significantly influenced how Asian Americans have approached resisting U.S. domination of Asian peoples. These non-Asians include activists, scholars, and revolutionaries who helped inspire the Asian American Movement such as W. E. B. Du Bois, and the Black Panther Party (Kim 2007, 247).

Given the eminently plausible assumption that Black philosophy and Asian American philosophy are aspects of Black and Asian American cultures respectively, I consider the practice

of Black philosophy or Asian American philosophy as described by the preceding accounts to be paradigms of discursive activity that demonstrate an historically rooted and reverent way of taking part in an ethnoracial culture. Each involves engagement in conversations began by a specific racialized group of people in a manner that is critical yet deferentially treats earlier participants in those conversations as having provided fruitful points of departure for further discussion. Such engagement is compatible with jettisoning or revising views put forth in earlier parts of those conversations, but not with dismissing all those parts as lacking value altogether.

In light of my taking the doing of certain kinds of philosophy as paradigms of participation in an ethnoracial culture, some might worry that the SICCP offers an implausibly intellectualized picture of what such participation involves. The core idea of the worry is that the SICCP ends up implausibly ruling that many kinds of mundane activities—such as enjoying a certain kind of cuisine or mode of entertainment—that seem to be obvious forms of practicing an ethnoracial culture are not in fact ways to do so. To quell this concern, I want to stress here that the notion of "discursive activity" that informs the SICCP is capacious enough to be inclusive of such everyday forms of cultural engagement. Clearly, an ethnoracial culture is not merely the philosophical traditions associated with it. Other things like culinary styles, sartorial preferences, entertainment media, or leisure activities also are elements of a culture. On the SICCP, pairing consumption or production of such things alongside regular interactions with a community of others who also do so is a way to achieve cultural participation. Thus, for example, the SICCP would count someone as taking part in Chinese culture insofar as she does things like participate in communities that enjoy and further develop Chinese fashion sensibilities even if she does not at all engage in anything recognizable as academic Chinese philosophy.

However, I take it that the intellectual traditions of an ethnoracial culture—where such traditions include articulations of ethical and aesthetic systems and ways of life congruent with them—have a special level of centrality. This is because those traditions have a principal role in shaping the life plans of that culture's members. Hence, any activity that counts as enacting an ethnoracial culture has to be at least somewhat expressive of its intellectual heritage, even if such expression does not occur through a mode characteristic of philosophy. Thus, for example, on the SICCP, promoting music featuring sounds of the *guqin* or *guzheng* (zither instruments of Chinese origin) counts as a mode of participating in Chinese culture insofar as doing so is a way of enacting aesthetic or ethical ideals first forged by Chinese peoples and subsequently refined by later inheritors of those ideals.[15]

We are now in a position to answer this question: how does the SICCP enable a conception of cultural preservation that is friendly to expansive pluralism yet includes a plausible view of when things fail to count as part of a culture and so does not contribute to preservation of it? Its pluralism-friendly aspect arises from how, despite its emphasis on historical rootedness and historical reverence, it does not insist that the only way to practice an ethnoracial culture is to adhere to an ossified set of customs modeled on those of the culture's originators. Instead, it allows that practices that deviate from earlier customs can count as *evolutions* of the culture insofar as those practices developed through appropriately deferential engagement with the peoples and their traditions that gave rise to those earlier customs.

The conception's plausible borderline-drawing aspect stems precisely from those same pluralism-friendly historical rootedness and historical reverence conditions. This is because they

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[15] For discussion of links between the Confucian tradition's aesthetic and ethical ideals, see Lambert 2020.

have the substantive implication that adherence to a given ethnoracial culture is incompatible with having certain kinds of dismissive attitudes, and those attitudinal restrictions in turn impose limitations on the internal diversity that culture can display.

For example, consider Chinese cultures once more. I take it that the various offshoots of Confucianism are central to such cultures. That being the case, an upshot of SICCP is that adherence to Chinese cultures requires regularly engaging in the deliberative traditions initially developed by the earliest Confucians and refined by subsequent generations. Moreover, the SICCP's historical rootedness and historical reverence conditions requires that such engagement be in a manner that celebrates those traditions and peoples as having valuably contributed to humanity despite also being critical of their shortcomings. The crucial point here is that one cannot plausibly celebrate those two things—in a critical fashion or not—if one treats the central elements of Confucianism and their associated ways of life as being totally unworthy of consideration. So, for example, according to the SICCP, one cannot plausibly be said to be adhering to any permutation of Chinese cultures if one maintains that the Confucian project of theorizing about virtues like *ren* (人) (i.e., "humaneness," "benevolence") or *xiao* (孝) (i.e., "filial piety") and living in accordance with that theorizing is utterly devoid of value. In this way—i.e., through taking certain kinds of dismissive attitudes as being incompatible with cultural adherence—the SICCP places substantive restrictions on what ways of living could count as enacting adherence to Chinese cultures. It similarly does so for other ethnoracial cultures.

Admittedly, the borderlines that the SICCP draws around ethnoracial cultures are fuzzy rather than clear cut. This is mainly because it is not always obvious if a kind of critical resistance to elements of a culture's prior permutations is compatible with forging and adhering to a novel

version of that culture. However, I take the sort of rough boundaries posited by the SICCP to be one of its attractive features. This is because that roughness enables the SICCP to optimally balance specifying intuitively obvious cases of cultural non-adherence with allowing for a plausibly wide range of what potentially counts as a variant of a culture. Allowing for much contestation about the thresholds of ethnoracial cultures is the SICCP's way to avoid mistakenly foreclosing certain kinds of cultural diversity while maintaining that there are limits to what counts as cultural adherence.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a comprehensive account of how to determine the content of moral obligations to preserve Asian cultures in different sorts of highly specific circumstances. However, for an initial heuristic regarding what one morally ought to *avoid* when attempting to foster a *pan-Asian* culture, consider the following anecdote drawn from Kim (2014, 124). He notes that some young Asian Americans in the San Francisco area are very averse to being considered a "Fresh Off the Boat" (FOB) Asian. That appellation is often used to derogatorily label Asians who recently immigrated from their home country and have not yet attained fluency in their new nation's dominant culture. Kim observes that while San Francisco area Asian Americans who fear being considered a FOB typically are happy to associate with other Asians who are fluent in dominant U.S. cultural norms, such fears drive members of that group to dissociate from recently arrived Asian immigrants who have not yet achieved such fluency. He notes that one way in which this dissociation manifests is that some Asian American students on his college campus are complicit in perpetuating the notion that the college's Asian immigrant students are fittingly labeled FOBs. Those Asian American students do so in tandem with emphasizing how they are distinctively American, so as to protect themselves from being lumped together with the Asian immigrants as FOBs.

Kim notes that one consequence of these actions is that many of his college's Asian immigrant students felt more comfortable participating in the college's International Student Association than their respective ethnic clubs. This is because a non-negligible amount of the ethnic clubs' more Americanized members often take part in the othering of alleged FOB Asians. (For research on how Asian Americans view Asian immigrants that also illustrates the sort of dissociative behavior described by Kim, see Kibria 2002; Pyke and Dang 2003; Jones 2005; Quach et al. 2009; Chou and Feagin 2015, 141-184; Trieu 2019.)

I maintain that even if the sort of dissociation from recent immigrant Asians described in Kim's anecdote was done not to shun Asians *tout court* but rather to encourage adherence to a particular type of pan-Asian culture—namely, an American-inflected one—it almost always is a morally impermissible way of trying to build such a culture. Perhaps the only sort of case where it is morally permissible to dissociate from recent immigrant Asians because of their cultural practices is when those practices are morally reprehensible. However, I take it that the vast majority of allegedly "FOB" traits are not really morally problematic, but rather merely aesthetically distasteful to those who disdain bearers of those traits. And insofar as those traits are morally benign, pan-Asian culture building should involve incorporating them, because a morally worthwhile pan-Asian culture would be hospitable to every expression of Asian identity that is not morally problematic. Mere aesthetic preferences for certain kinds of Asian identity should not be the basis for excluding some Asians from the pan-Asian fold. This of course does not mean that moral duties to foster a pan-Asian culture require that one befriend every Asian person whose ways of life are morally permissible. However, those duties certainly entail that more Americanized Asians should not be complicit in perpetuating the view that those possessing allegedly FOB traits

are rightfully ostracized or any other practice that misleadingly suggests that an exclusionary stance toward those who embody such traits is morally justifiable.

In sum, my central contention in this section is that having a *pro tanto* moral obligation to pursue cultural preservation is one reason why Asian Americans *pro tanto* morally ought to forge pan-Asian solidarity. This is because when such solidarity is successfully fostered, Asian Americans will share with one another a commitment to celebrating their heritage cultures and forging a *sui generis* pan-Asian one. Moreover, under that condition, co-members of Asian America would recognize one another as sharing that commitment in a way that inspires mutual trust that each will do her part to realize the common cultural preservation goals. Such mutual trust is motivationally potent, spurring its possessors to confidently and consistently strive toward making sure that those shared aims are achieved. However, to ensure that it facilitates a morally satisfactory approach to fostering shared adherence to an ethnoracial culture, pan-Asian solidarity must be informed by the SICCP. This is because that conception of cultural participation supports significant cultural pluralism while also offering sufficient guidance about how to demarcate the boundaries of an ethnoracial culture.

3. Pan-Asian Solidarity, Self-Respect, and Self-Esteem

This section argues that the moral significance of self-respect and self-esteem provide another ground of Asian Americans' moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity. Philosophers have articulated those two concepts in a variety of ways. My understanding of them will be based on Shelby's[16] (2016) and Christian Schemmel's (2019) accounts. I will understand self-*respect* to be a matter of correctly recognizing oneself as being morally owed certain forms of equal treatment

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[16] Shelby's account of self-respect and self-esteem is largely based on the one offered by John Rawls (1999).

simply in virtue of being a moral agent (Shelby 2016, 98). Someone with a healthy level of self-respect will resist the efforts of others to deny her such treatment. She also will be motivated to act only in ways that accord with the source of her moral claims to such treatment—i.e., she will live in a way that affirms her status as a moral agent beholden to the sort of moral responsibilities and owed the moral duties attached to that status. I will take self-*esteem* to be a measure of someone's level of conviction that her chosen life plans are worth carrying out and that she is capable of doing so. The greater someone's self-esteem, the greater her confidence in her ability to achieve a life filled with worthwhile projects (Shelby 2016, 97; Schemmel 2019, 641).

While, in principle, gains or losses in self-respect need not respectively correlate with gains or losses in self-esteem, upward or downward changes in one can lead similar changes in the other. For example, someone who lacks proper self-respect could mistakenly believe that she is *not* owed certain kinds of regard. Consequently, her self-esteem may plummet due to believing that others will treat her in ways that prevent her from effectively pursuing valuable projects. Or someone could lose self-esteem due to being convinced that she lacks the rational capacities needed to perform the sort of activities that make human lives go well. Since that drop in self-esteem is rooted in doubts about her own agential capacities, it likely would correlate with a decline in self-respect.

I follow John Rawls's seminal discussion of self-respect and self-esteem (notions he treated as interchangeable) in treating those things as perhaps the most important of all the "primary goods" (Rawls 1999, 386)—i.e., things that it is rational for anyone to want, because they facilitate pursuit of a vast range of different life plans (Rawls 1999, 54, 78). As Rawls argued, the relative loftiness of self-respect and self-esteem among the primary goods is due to the fact that someone who lacks those two things either will fail to see value in any activity or will be unmotivated to

pursue the value she acknowledges, sinking into "apathy and cynicism" (Rawls 1999, 386). In other words, the moral significance of self-respect and self-esteem stems at least in part from how their absence results in the loss of confidence and drive necessary for living a worthwhile life.

Hereafter, following D.C. Matthew (2021), I will use the phrase "self-worth" as a shorthand way of referring to both self-respect and self-esteem.

Social justice efforts should be concerned with promoting self-worth for at least two reasons. First, ensuring that it is sufficiently widespread across a society is crucial for making that society one in which just practices are typically adhered to and injustices reliably get addressed (Shelby 2016, 98; Schemmel 2019, 635). This is because only individuals with a healthy level of self-worth will be motivated to act in accordance with their moral convictions. As Schemmel describes it, self-respect[17] "is intricately linked to an effective sense of justice: it constitutes the self-regarding part. By protesting injustices against them, individuals will contribute to the cause of those who suffer the same injustices. This is an important connection between the theory of self-respect and theories of just resistance" (Schemmel 2019, 635). Second, a less instrumentalist reason for why protecting self-worth is a matter of social justice is that it can be unjustly undermined, such as when someone loses it due to the psychological impact of racist stigma. And since it is a very important[18] primary good, things that unjustly diminish it should be at the forefront of our moral concerns.

Some scholars have argued that we have self-directed moral obligations to promote our own self-worth, especially its self-respect component (Hill 1973; Boxill 1976; 2010; Hay 2011; 2013, 117-157; Silvermint 2013). Such obligations include ones that require us to not act in ways

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[17] Schemmel (2019) uses the phrase "standing self-respect" to refer to what I call just "self-respect."
[18] Rawls (1999, 386) himself thought that self-respect might be the most important primary good.

that damage or are inconsistent with respect for ourselves, such as complying with social norms that subordinate one's ethnoracial group. I will not take a stand on whether we do in fact have such obligations, because the self-worth arguments that I am about to advance can succeed even if our moral obligations to promote self-worth are all other-directed. However, it is worth noting that if there are self-directed self-worth obligations, my arguments are the sort that would help establish that Asian Americans have (in addition to an other-directed one) a self-directed *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity for the purpose of protecting their self-worth.

One way that pan-Asian solidarity can promote self-worth is that it can be channeled to bolster the sort of cultural preservation efforts described in the previous subsection. By encouraging people to view Asian cultures favorably, such efforts help de-motivate practices that uphold anti-Asian stigma in the first place. Moreover, even if it does not eradicate anti-Asian stigma, cultural preservation efforts can at least help secure self-worth among Asian peoples by instilling in them confidence that protects against how that stigma encourages race-based shame and self-contempt. Various studies indicate that Asian Americans become well-equipped to develop a healthy level of confidence about their ethnoracial identity and the cultural patterns associated with it when they are exposed to positive imagery of fellow Asians, congenial interactions with them, and the study of Asian American history or ethnic studies (see, e.g., Osajima 2007; Chou and Feagin 2015; Trieu 2018; Trieu and Lee 2018). Pan-Asian solidary energy should be channeled to provide experiences of those things, as it can be a resource that supports, for example, addressing the present dearth of adequate content on Asian Americans in history or social studies classes in U.S. K-12 curricula (An 2016; 2017; 2020; 2022; Hartlep and Scott 2016) or building community organizations dedicated to providing Asian Americans a space in which they can learn about their shared racialized experiences through discussions with one another.

There is another way in which pan-Asian solidarism can be leveraged to protect Asian Americans from suffering unjust harm against their sense of self-worth—namely, by supporting the development of ethnic enclaves. I devote most of the rest of this section to discussing this possibility.

Ethnic enclaves enable Asian Americans to engage in forms of self-segregation that are protective against unjust race-based threats to self-worth that persist in the broader society. As Rawls (1999, 54) famously stressed, an individual's self-respect and self-esteem have "social bases" in the sense that she is unlikely to sustain those things unless her worth is duly recognized by others. In other words, it is far more difficult for someone to maintain her self-esteem and self-respect when she lacks access to a community of others who clearly acknowledge her worth.

Some have argued that when the broader society's social spaces are not ones that can reliably supply Blacks the social bases of self-respect, it is morally appropriate for Blacks to respond by self-segregating to build a solidary community in which a person's Blackness does not make her vulnerable to lacking recognition from others (Shelby 2016, 59-79; Basevich 2022). I concur and believe that a similar point applies to Asian Americans (and other non-Black people of color). A permanent retreat to Asian enclaves is not an advisable approach to eliminating anti-Asian stigma in the broader society altogether. But making it possible for an Asian person to at least temporarily benefit from the social bases of self-worth offered by such enclaves is important, if only because doing so enables her to recover from psychological bruising she might receive through struggling for racial justice outside the enclaves.

One particular way an Asian enclave is protective of the self-worth of its members is that the enclave gathers people together in a way that is conducive to the sort of cultural preservation efforts already discussed. A second is that it provides a context in which the group members are

free from the psychological burdens associated with acting in ways that are inconsistent with appropriate ethnoracial self-worth merely to avoid the disadvantages that attend not complying with racist social norms. Elvira Basevich (2022, 413-414) illustrates such burdens with the example of Blacks having to yield sidewalks to Whites on pain of suffering physical violence. As she argues, even if a Black person in that scenario is in no way morally blameworthy for complying with the prevailing anti-Black norms, she still is vulnerable to psychological injury from having to do so, especially if she regularly encounters such situations. While contemporary Asian Americans are unlikely to face reprisals for not capitulating to anti-Asian norms that are as deadly as those often levelled at Blacks in the Jim Crow south who refused to abide by anti-Black conventions, many still report feeling pressure to seek White adjacency and dissociate from all things associated with Asian peoples. Such pressure arises from how, for example, social inclusion among Whites or movement up the career ladder in White majority work spaces often still is contingent on one's ability to avoid being seen as embodying derisive stereotypes about Asian peoples (Chou and Feagin 2015; Chin 2020). Asian enclaves provide spaces where Asians do not need to perform demeaning acts of racial self-erasure to avoid social ostracism or impediments to material security.

A third morally significant aspect of Asian ethnic enclaves is that they are likely crucial for preventing Asian peoples from suffering the effects of what D. C. Matthew (2021, 3, 6) has termed "phenotypic devaluation." By that coinage, he refers to the aesthetic practice of judging the physical features associated with an ethnoracial group to be less attractive than those of other ethnoracial groups and also "unattractive below a certain minimum [absolute level]" (Matthew 2021, 6). The most common form of phenotypic devaluation in the North American context involves judging phenotypes of non-Whites to be both less attractive than those of Whites and unattractive on an absolute scale. Matthew contends that one reason phenotypic devaluation gives

rise to social justice concerns is that self-respect and self-esteem are morally significant in themselves, and phenotypic devaluation can unjustly undermine those two things in a person who embodies the devalued physical traits, especially when she ends up internalizing the negative judgments herself (Matthew 2021, 10-29).[19]

A central part of Matthew's discussion of phenotypic devaluation that is relevant to my case for the moral value of Asian enclaves are his contentions about racially integrated communities. He argues that when racial integration efforts exacerbate phenotypic devaluation, we morally should not pursue them. He also stresses that racial integration might increase phenotypic devaluation *even if it reduces racial stigma or racial animus more generally*. This is because phenotypic devaluation is not reducible to negative racial stereotyping or racial hostility: the physical traits associated with an ethnoracial group can be judged to be aesthetically subpar even by those who do not harbor any derogatory attitudes toward that group. As part of his argument, Matthew cites research (namely, Jordan 1968; Barker 1978) on ways Black phenotypes have been devalued even prior to the emergence of the various kinds of anti-Black stigma that have long burdened Blacks. Since that devaluation arose independently of those stigmas becoming salient, the thought goes, it is an example of phenotypic devaluation occurring in a way that is not based on racial hostility.

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[19] Another reason he notes is that there are opportunity costs to being someone who embodies phenotypically devalued traits, and one morally should not have to pay those costs when they result from morally unjustifiable devaluation. For example, Matthew cites research indicating that those who are seen as more attractive are more likely to receive votes, be hired, and receive favorable court rulings (Frevert and Walker 2014). If such findings are accurate, they provide reason to believe that those subjected to unjust phenotypic devaluation will be unjustly disadvantaged in elections, job searches, and legal disputes. Phenotypic devaluation of course also undercuts romantic partnering opportunities for those who possess the devalued traits. While I agree that these material costs are morally significant, I will not dedicate space beyond this footnote to discuss them, because they are not harms that arise specifically due to undermining the self-worth of the person harmed.

Drawing on various social scientific studies on how biases against outgroups get reduced (Pettigrew and Trop 2011, Dovidio et al. 2017), Matthew argues that the processes most likely to mitigate racial stigma/animus in fact are also ones that may exacerbate phenotypic devaluation of traits associated with the stigmatized group. In brief, the thought is that the forms of interaction that promote interracial social harmony could partially or entirely fail to address the sort of aesthetic preferences that drive phenotypic devaluation, even if it turns out that much phenotypic devaluation is driven by racial stigma about the stigmatized group. When such failure occurs, the thought continues, less hostility between ethnoracial groups could actually worsen the phenotypic devaluation of the subordinate group by making its members less resistant to adopting the aesthetic preferences of the dominant group. This is because, Matthew (29-33) argues, as that resistance drops, more and more members of the subordinate group become susceptible to being complicit in the phenotypic devaluation of traits associated with the group.

Matthew ultimately takes the view that even if an integration effort is effective at reducing negative racial stereotyping, it might spike phenotypic devaluation of one of the integrated groups to the point that, all-things-considered, it morally ought not be pursued. This would be so in cases where the integration-driven increased levels of interracial encounters intensifies phenotypic devaluation to levels that are seriously threatening to the self-worth of the devalued group's members.

While I am more optimistic than Matthew is about how well stigma-reduction can diminish phenotypic devaluation, I think his points about the independence of phenotypic devaluation from racial stigma are forceful and ought to factor into accounts of the moral importance of Asian ethnic enclaves. It is still the case that many Asian Americans feel pressured to lessen how Asian they appear, especially by approximating White aesthetic norms. While much of that pressure surely

stems from extant anti-Asian stigma (Cheng 1996; Chen 1999; Chan 2001; Eng 2001; Parreñas Shimizu 2007; Chou and Feagin 2015; Shek 2017; Ramiro 2022; Keum et al. 2023), Asian Americans ought to be on alert for ways that phenotypic devaluation of physical traits associated with Asian peoples might occur independently of anti-Asian attitudes. An Asian ethnic enclave can provide a space in which Asian Americans are safe not only from having anti-Asian stigma hurled at them, but also from pressures to develop a "less Asian" appearance.

To provide fully satisfactory protection from phenotypic devaluation, however, I contend that Asian ethnic enclaves should provide security against not only aesthetic practices that valorize certain kinds of White (or other non-Asian) phenotypes, but also *Asian* phenotypes. What I have in mind are ways of celebrating certain kinds of Asian appearances that encourage viewing other ones—such as those that are more stereotypical—as unattractive. My thought here draws on Matthew's (2021, 26) observation that not every person who wants to alter her phenotype also wants to change her race altogether. For example, a Black person might want a lighter skin tone but have no desire to stop being Black. Although her dissatisfaction with her actual skin tone is not rooted in internalized anti-Blackness, it can still generate self-worth harms associated with feeling unattractive. And phenotypic devaluation of dark skin Black phenotypes can spur such dissatisfaction even if it is linked with a broader practice that involves celebrating light skin Black phenotypes.

Such considerations compel me to stress that protecting Asian Americans from phenotypic devaluation is not merely a matter of relieving them of pressures to assimilate White (or other non-Asian) beauty standards. It also involves ensuring that Asian Americans are not vulnerable to having an unduly diminished sense of self-worth as a result of not fulfilling certain Asian body aesthetics. This point should inform the construction of Asian ethnic enclaves. A very specific

example of one of its practical implications is that those enclaves should be designed to ensure that they are spaces that do not exert pressure on Asian Americans to acquire "double eyelids" either to develop a more White-adjacent appearance (Kaw 1993; Ja 2004; Leem 2016; 2017) or to instead achieve a specific kind of Asian look (Kim 2003; Dobbke et al. 2006; Lindridge and Wang 2008; Luo 2012; 2013; Elfving-Hwang and Park 2016; Elfving-Hwang 2021). To tie in earlier discussion of the ostracism of allegedly FOB Asians, a more general implication is that the ideal Asian enclave in Asian America would pressure people to avoid body aesthetic practices associated with being FOB either because they fall outside of White ones or because they fail to align with some sorts of distinctively Asian American ones. All in all, a morally worthwhile Asian enclave is one in which all morally benign differences in phenotype between Asians are embraced.

Something my discussion of Asian enclaves has not yet addressed is whether, to have the moral value I have attributed to them, they need to be *pan*-Asian ones rather than merely subgroup specific. I think that both kinds are able to provide the sort of benefits I have attributed to Asian enclaves. Each is able to facilitate cultural preservation efforts and safety from being imposed upon by anti-Asian social norms and beauty standards. Moreover, as I noted above, research demonstrates that pan-Asian organizing efforts and Asian subgroup-specific ones tend to have a mutually reinforcing impact on one another (Okamoto 2014, 85-111). Given the veracity of those research findings, it stands to reason that the building of stably flourishing pan-Asian enclaves will promote the formation of similarly vibrant Asian subgroup-specific ones, and *vice versa*. This scholarship suggests that one reason why this mutualism is likely to occur stems from how the process of building the forms of culture crucial to one kind of enclave facilitates the development of the forms that are similarly important to the other. In other words, the process of forging a pan-Asian culture to bring about a pan-Asian enclave supports development of the more parochial

cultures whose persistence helps with sustaining enclaves for specific Asian subgroups. Thus, someone who prefers one of those two sorts of enclave over the other has reason to help build both, if only to ensure maximally efficient pursuit of her favored variant.

I have now enumerated various ways in which pan-Asian solidarity can offer Asian Americans morally valuable protections against unjust self-worth harms. I want to close this section by noting how that aspect of pan-Asian solidarity can help constitute another ground for the *pro tanto* moral obligation of Asian Americans to forge it. It does so when paired with the fact that the sort of mechanisms for protecting self-worth discussed in this section—resources for formal education about Asian Americans, community organizations that cater to Asian Americans, and full-blown Asian ethnic enclaves—are much less likely to materialize in the absence of pan-Asian solidarity. Just as I argued with respect cultural preservation efforts, it is hard to imagine how something like the sort of Asian ethnic enclaves I have advocated for in this section could arise in the absence of pan-Asian solidarism. This is because a lack of robust ethnoracial solidarism among people living in a shared space entails that, for example, they do not have a common goal of establishing beauty standards that promote the self-worth of all the group's members. In that case, it is doubtful that those residents will take that space to be one in which such beauty standards obtain. This clearly contrasts with an enclave in which there is widespread mutual recognition of a shared commitment to promoting such standards: under such circumstances, one can rest assured that morally benign judgments about attractiveness are widely shared.

So, in sum, the *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity as a way of providing security against unjust threats to the self-worth of Asian Americans stems not only from how such solidarity helps to produce various resources that offer such security. It also arises from how unlikely it is for those resources to come about in its absence.

Being able to substantively influence politically consequential decision making is also plausibly a pillar of durable self-worth: someone who is not able to substantively participate in her society's political processes might come to see herself as genuinely undeserving of equal moral regard (thereby losing her self-respect) or as lacking the social standing needed to pursue the ways of life she finds valuable (thereby losing her self-esteem). Thus, if robust Asian ethnic solidarities promote efficacious political agency, that would be another way in which they can promote self-worth in addition to supporting cultural preservation and the building of ethnic enclaves. I shall describe how such solidarities can enable greater substantive political participation in the next subsection, wherein I focus on the value of pan-Asian solidarity to Asian American politics.

4. Pan-Asian Solidarity and Political Empowerment

This section has two central contentions. First, I argue that another ground of Asian Americans' *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge robust pan-Asian solidarity is that doing so is crucial for politically empowering Asians residing in the U.S. By "politically empowering" a group, I mean making its members able to effectively exercise their morally deserved capacities for substantively influencing major political processes, especially those that constitute the formal lawmaking systems of the polity in which the group resides.

Second, I will argue that one other ground of Asian Americans' *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity is its ability to unite Asians against things that unjustly disempower *other* minority groups. More specifically, I will argue that pan-Asian solidary politics should be concerned with how the racialization of Asian Americans has been harmful to non-Asian people of color. For example, much research has detailed the ways in which Whites (and some non-Whites, including Asian Americans) who oppose racial equity measures attempt to derail their implementation by weaponizing the "model minority" stereotype about Asian Americans (Kim

1999, 118-122; 2023; Lee 2009; F. Wu 2002; E. Wu 2014; Poon et al. 2016; Yi et al. 2020; Lee and Hong 2020). That stereotype portrays that group as having uniformly achieved—with few exceptions—educational and socioeconomic success without depending on institutional-level assistance with addressing the disadvantages wrought by past anti-Asian racism. Below, I will argue that the detriments imposed on non-Asian people of color by the model minority stereotyping of Asian Americans is one thing that ought to be a concern of pan-Asian organizing.

Before diving deeper into how pan-Asian solidarity is poised to help bring about the forms of political empowerment that are the focus of this subsection, however, let me take a moment to elaborate on reasons why non-Asian minorities should be groups of special concern in U.S.-centric pan-Asian politics. There are both pragmatic and principled reasons. On the pragmatic side, it is doubtful that the race-based disadvantages of Asians in the U.S. proper can be addressed without also tackling at least some of those that afflict non-Asian minorities in the U.S. For example, consider "ideological blackening," the process of construing a non-Black minority as having adopted Black culture to denigrate that group's members as individual failures and justify refusal to help address their needs through institutional level reforms. Research has shown struggling Asian American students, especially those of Southeast Asian descent, being subjected to ideological blackening (Lee 2005; McGinnis 2007; Reyes 2007; Chhuon and Hudley 2010; DePouw 2012; Chhuon 2014; 2015; Lee et al. 2017). Such research illustrates how anti-Blackness can be weaponized against Asian Americans who are not individually successful as the model minority imagery portrays them to be. Hence, addressing anti-Blackness is strategically advisable even for those aiming merely to resolve issues facing Asian Americans.

Against my understanding of the pragmatic significance of ideological blackening, one might retort that Asian Americans need not worry about ideological blackening imposing barriers

on them if they merely conformed to the model minority stereotype. So, the thought goes, rather than trying to combat anti-Blackness, a pragmatically superior option for Asian Americans is to become the stereotypical model minority.

Now, to be sure, even granting that such an option is indeed the pragmatically better one, this consideration on its own is overwhelmingly unlikely to make it morally permissible for Asian Americans to lean into the model minority stereotype. However, whether that is indeed a more pragmatic choice in the first place depends on the prudential attractiveness of a life of constantly seeking to be such a person. I contend that such a life severely lacks prudential value. This is not only because it is often psychologically damaging to those who pursue it (Yu 2009; Wong 2015; Assalone and Fann 2017; Atkin et al. 2018; Nguyen 2018). It is also because when someone capitulates to pressures to conform to the model minority stereotype, she shores up the hegemony of White cultural norms. This is indicated by the "honorary White" status associated with the model minority profile (Tuan 1999; Wu 2015; Bonilla-Silva 2017; Lee 2021; Wong and Ramakrishnan 2023). That appellation gestures toward how uncritical attempts to achieve that profile are conducive to solidifying the dominance of mainstream White culture. For reasons already articulated above, it is clear that Asians should not find satisfaction in a mode of living that reinforces the view that non-White cultures are inferior. So I maintain that, for Asian Americans, the most pragmatically attractive option for dealing with ideological blackening is striving to eradicate anti-Blackness, not conforming to the model minority stereotype.

As for the principled reasons that U.S.-focused pan-Asian solidarity movements should be concerned with non-Asians, I will note two of them. First, there are no considerations that provide such movements moral justification for focusing on injustices only insofar as they befall Asians in the U.S. proper. Although the primary moral impetus for pan-Asian solidarity initiatives is their

utility for securing justice for Asians in the U.S. context, when those initiatives are capable of protecting a different group from injustice, typically they morally ought to. In other words, when pan-Asian solidarism *can* be leveraged to assist other ethnoracial groups, it morally ought to be (other things equal). Second, a morally justifiable solidarity project for any given ethnoracial group would avoid perpetuating injustices against those outside the group in its pursuit of benefits that the group's insiders morally deserve. This is because the anti-racism of such projects should extend to all ethnoracial groups: special concern for one group is not a moral excuse to disregard the plight of others.

4.1. How Pan-Asian Solidarity Politically Empowers Asian Americans

Having motivated the view that pan-Asian solidarity projects should seek to politically empower both Asian Americans and non-Asian people of color in the U.S., let me now detail some ways in which such projects can do so. I will focus on Asian Americans in this subsection. The subsequent one will concentrate on non-Asians.

For starters, pan-Asian solidarity can be leveraged to generate ethnic and pan-ethnic organizations that perform various kinds of politically significant functions. One of these is self-defense against anti-Asian attitudes and violence, which increased in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Tessler et al 2020; Hill 2021; Kim and Kesari 2021; Nicholson and Li 2021; Patchin and Hinduja 2023). Obviously, most people are significantly deterred from participating in politics when they can do so only by risking their own physical security. Organizations dedicated to shielding against and documenting anti-Asian violence can help minimize the threat of such violence, thereby enabling, for example, Asians to exercise their civil liberties. Pan-ethnic and ethnic Asian organizations also have historically been, and continue to be, crucial for generating the requisite critical mass of political participation among Asian Americans for their interests to

be advanced through both formal and informal politics. On the formal side, such organizations have spearheaded efforts to achieve things like legislative reforms to U.S. census data collection methods so that they provide better guidance regarding the extant deprivations experienced by Asian Americans (Espiritu 1992). The informal side includes things such as establishing and sustaining Asian American studies programs, which have been shown to raise political engagement among Asian enrollees (Osajima 2007; Trieu and Lee 2018).

More generally in a way not tied to specific organizations, pan-Asian solidarism morally ought to be directed toward fostering a shared commitment among Asian Americans to dismantling pernicious stereotypes that stymie substantive political participation among Asians. As noted by various Asian American scholars, the two most salient pernicious stereotypes about Asians in the U.S. context construe them as model minorities and "forever [or perpetual] foreigners" (for just a few of many possible examples, see Tuan 1999; Wu 2002; Lee and Hong 2020; Harpalani 2022; Wong and Ramakrishnan 2023). Among the regrettable effects of model minority stereotyping is the way it obscures extant educational and socioeconomic difficulties among Asian Americans such that those difficulties get overlooked in American political discourse, including by Asian Americans themselves (Lee and Kumashiro 2005; Museus and Kiang 2009; Grim et al. 2019; Museus 2022). It also works in tandem with ideological blackening to pressure Asian Americans into seeking White adjacency, because that pairing bolsters the ideology according to which individual success is achievable only by developing character traits valorized by Whites.

To undermine the model minority stereotype, pan-Asian solidarity can be channeled toward raising awareness about how high rates of Asian Americans continue to face difficulties that belie the stereotype. These include various types of material insecurity, including lack of easy access to high quality educational opportunities (Lee 2009; 2022; Reina and Aiken 2021; Kim et al. 2021;

Yamashita 2022). A first step to ensuring widespread concern about the model minority stereotype is to make the existence of those difficulties common knowledge in the broader society. To best inspire rejection of the model minority stereotype, however, pan-Asian solidary resistance to it should harness the insights from studies indicating that shared experiences of anti-Asian racism often strongly motivates mutual adoption of a pan-Asian identity and engagement in pan-Asian political coalitions (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2014; Nicholson and Mei 2023). Those studies help us see that the most effective way to spur rejection of the model minority stereotype will go beyond merely pointing out the empirical inadequacies the stereotype's attribution of success to Asian Americans. More importantly, it would stress that the stereotype is a linchpin of how Asians and other people of color are racially subordinated in the U.S. context, rather than some mere unfortunate piece of ignorance about the circumstances of Asian Americans. The goal should be to get people to see that, as Kim (2014, 110) puts it, "one of the greatest of the most recent inventions of White supremacy as a political system. The model minority myth offers the polity a way to maintain racial hierarchy by partially incorporating Asians while deftly normatively containing them in ways that make them seem unthreatening." By making that view widespread, pan-Asian solidary action almost certainly would galvanize many Asian Americans to actively take part in dismantling the model minority stereotype and in encouraging fellow Asian Americans to do so as well.

The forever foreigner stereotype drives the xenophobic civic ostracism of Asians spotlighted in Kim and Sundstrom's (2023) account of anti-Asian racism. It construes Asian phenotypes as marking their possessor as essentially foreign and, for that reason, permanently inferior. It does so to politically subordinate her, treating her as undeserving of the same level of civic recognition as non-outsiders insofar as she continues to embody a variant of Asian

phenotypes. Of course, one way uptake of the stereotype is detrimental to the political standing of Asian Americans is that it prevents Whites and other non-Asians from being receptive to the attempts of Asian Americans to draw attention to their political interests.

However, forever foreigner stereotyping also discourages Asian Americans from voicing their political interests in the first place. As Kim and Sundstrom (2023, 417) write, "in the modern polity, effective agency is facilitated and meaningful identity affirmed by community-based entitlements, confidence about these entitlements, and social competencies regarding them . . . [P]rocesses by which people claim, enact, or insist upon these entitlements involve social competencies by virtue of which they can feel confident about eliciting appropriate regard from other denizens." In other words, in contemporary societies, how much a person can substantively compel the broader political community to respect her interests is largely determined by her having not only certain formal statuses, but also a kind of self-esteem, namely, confidence about being able to sway co-members of her community to accord her interests the recognition they deserve. Forever foreigner stereotyping undermines such self-esteem in a person by encouraging her to (often not unreasonably) think that others are unwilling to duly acknowledge her political input.

The endurance of the forever foreigner stereotype is partially due to the misimpression that the primary political loyalties of Asians will never be to the U.S., but rather to their nations of ancestral origin (Kim 1999; Wu 2002). Non-Asians who hold that erroneous view are likely to worry that Asians are "yellow/dusky perils" (Harpalani 2022, 249), whose prosperity always poses at least a latent threat to non-Asian Americans, especially during times of conflict between the U.S. and Asian nation-states. She may then try appealing to those worries to justify according lesser concern to securing substantive civil liberties for Asians and, in extreme cases, dropping such concern altogether. The event that best exemplifies that risk is the internment of Japanese

Americans during World War II. Anti-Asian attitudes during the COVID-19 pandemic provide more recent examples of such thinking (Tessler et al 2020; Hill 2021; Nicholson and Li 2021).

An important step to dispelling the notion that Asians are permanent outsiders to the U.S. polity who are inherently hostile toward it is raising awareness about Asian American history. One way to do so is to address the fact that Asian American history often is not adequately covered in U.S. K-12 curricula (An 2016; 2017; 2020; 2022; Hartlep and Scott 2016), such that even many Asian Americans themselves lack extensive knowledge of the group's history (Trieu 2018; Trieu and Lee 2018). A consequence of this deficiency in the formal education system is a widespread lack of knowledge that—as shown by comprehensive accounts of Asian American history (e.g., Takaki 1998; Lee 2015)—many Asian subgroups have long roots in the U.S., some spanning multiple centuries. Very plausibly, that sort of ignorance largely explains much of the tendency to associate Asian ancestry with being foreign to the U.S., a tendency exemplified in how commonplace it still is for Asians in the U.S. to be asked "where are you really from?" or some slight variant of that question, with the insinuation that someone's Asian heritage rules out the possibility that her place of birth is in the U.S (Tuan 1999; Wu 2002; Kim 2007, 240; Chou and Feagin 2015; Lee 2016). Thus, ameliorating that ignorance via reforms to formal education in the U.S. should go a long way toward diminishing the disposition to link being Asian and being foreign, and robust pan-Asian solidarism should be forged and leveraged to do so. Beyond formal education, such solidarism can also facilitate cultural preservation efforts that mitigate forever foreigner stereotyping by highlighting that American-inflected variants of Asian cultures have long existed. Such cultures exemplify how the practice of various Asian traditions is compatible with strongly self-identifying as an American.

One thing that Asian Americans should do to *avoid* entrenching both the model minority and forever foreigner stereotypes is to refrain from the aforementioned practice of characterizing some traits as "FOB" ones and dissociating from any person who seems to possess them. How that practice perpetuates forever foreigner stereotyping is clear: it affirms the thought that all things associated with Asian peoples and their cultures are essentially not American and, for that reason, ought to be shunned. While the way it exacerbates model minority stereotyping is more subtle, Kim (2007, 408) nicely articulates how it does so. He argues that the kind of Asian American nationalism exhibited by Asians who insist on separating themselves from those they consider FOBs reinforces a kind of model minority dynamic. In it, an Asian gets treated as a fully equal member of the U.S. polity only if she endorses U.S. hegemony over Asia. Such a dynamic encourages oppressively treating Asian individuals as morally deserving respect within U.S. society only to the extent that they support U.S. domination of Asian peoples.

To be clear, in arguing that Asian Americans should not be complicit in labelling certain traits associated with Asians as FOB ones, I do not mean to suggest that it is never morally impermissible to distinguish Asians from one another with respect to level of enculturation into U.S. society. Nor am I trying to discourage people from taking pride in an American-inflected Asian self-identity. However, I do insist that when an Asian person calls attention to or celebrates what she takes to be the distinctively American part of her self-identity, she does so in a way that avoids the politically disabling intimation that it is morally permissible for the U.S. polity to ignore the interests of Asians who lack that sort of self-identity.

4.2. How Pan-Asian Solidarity Politically Empowers Non-Asian Americans of Color

Let us now shift our discussion of political empowerment to focus on how pan-Asian solidarity morally should be pursued as a way of politically empowering non-Asians in the U.S.

Much scholarship on the racialization of Asian Americans points out how it impacts non-Asian ethnoracial minorities, especially Blacks (e.g., Matsuda 1993; Wu 2002; Leong 2016; Zia 2016; Lee 2021; Kim 2000; 2023; for helpful overviews of more of such literature, see Poon et al 2016 and Yi et al. 2020). The arguments I now advance draw on insights pertaining to the ways that the model minority and forever foreigner stereotypes are detrimental to non-Asian people of color. I contend that another ground of the moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity is that it can serve to protect non-Asian people of color from harms emanating from those stereotypes.

Consider first the model minority stereotype. While ostensibly it merely praises Asian Americans for having culturally-rooted habits that facilitate educational and socioeconomic success, it implicitly suggests that whenever a member of an ethnoracial minority group (including Asian Americans) fails to achieve prosperity, her failure is primarily due to personal deficiencies rather than flaws in major institutions. And, the thought goes, those deficiencies stem from her adherence to certain elements of her ethnoracial group's distinctive culture. That derogatory implicit part of the model minority stereotype has been present since the stereotype's inception, as evidenced by the fact that when it first appeared in the popular press during the early 1960s, it was weaponized by Whites to denigrate the cultural practices of Blacks and Latina/o/x Americans and obfuscate how they face structural barriers to material security (Wu 1995, 236-238; Ishizuka 2016, 52; Lee 2021 1494-1495; Harpalani 2022, 248). This implicit message remains part of the stereotype through the present (Lee 2009; 2023; Wu 2014; Poon et al. 2016; Yi et al. 2020; Lee 2021; Wong and Ramakrishnan 2023).

Many have persuasively argued that one of the most troubling effects of the model minority stereotype's pernicious messaging about non-Asian (and some Asian) people of color is that it obscures the fact that much of the ongoing material deprivations of minorities can reliably be

ameliorated only through institutional-level actions, because those deprivations are driven largely

by systemic factors[20] (Wu 2002; Lee 2009; 2022; Poon et al. 2016; Lee et al. 2017 Yi et al. 2020).

By masking that reality, it perpetuates ignorance of the importance of structural level reforms for

greater ethnoracial equity. Consequently, the stereotype demotivates advocacy for the relevant sort

of institutional action in the first place. Moreover, it also helps make conflicts between those who

engage in such advocacy and those who oppose it especially heated, because it leads the opposition

to think that what the advocacy asks for is, in addition to being morally unwarranted, a particularly

contemptible form of special pleading. In the opposition's view, the proposed reforms would

provide handouts for racial minorities that they do not morally deserve, because the sort of race-

based injustice that would morally justify those handouts no longer exists. For the opposition

convinced by the veracity of the model minority stereotype, racial minorities who ask for special

race-based dispensations (if not merely blamelessly but regrettably mistaken about current societal

conditions) are refusing to take responsibility for their own well-being in a way that reflects poorly

on their character.

Less scholarly attention has been paid to how forever foreigner stereotyping has been

detrimental to non-Asian racial minorities. This is perhaps due to the fact that much of the literature

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[20] Is my commitment to this claim about the importance of institutional-level actions in tension with all or at least some of my attributions of individual-level *pro tanto* moral obligations to Asian Americans? I do not believe so, because the following two things are consistent with one another: (a) many socioeconomic barriers that confront minorities in the U.S. can be reliably dismantled only through structural overhauls to major institutions, and (b) Asian Americans on an individual-basis often can bring about the various morally valuable things that I have argued Asian Americans morally ought to pursue, such as greater appreciation and knowledge of Asian cultures and Asian American history in the broader society. In other words, even if no individual on her own can effectively break down those socioeconomic barriers, this would not entail that individual Asian Americans are typically incapable of generating significant improvements in things like the self-worth and political involvement of fellow Asian Americans.

More generally, that institutional reforms are necessary for addressing a problem is consistent with there being individual-level obligations to help lay the groundwork for those reforms to emerge by, for example, promoting the political consciousness of co-citizens. I take the *pro tanto* moral obligations that I attribute to individual Asian Americans in this paper to be ones that, when satisfied, help establish social conditions that are favorable to realizing minority-friendly institutional reforms.

on how the racialization of Asian Americans impacts non-Asian people of color focuses on its effects on Blacks and also, until recently, tended to theorize Blacks as being not foreign to the U.S polity to the same extent as other people of color (Davies 2022; Kim 2023). Scholars are now being more critical of the attribution of U.S.-insider status to Blacks, pointing out things like the historical precarity of legal U.S. citizenship status for Blacks (Davies 2022).

I am sympathetic to this line of scholarship, and the point I want to stress here is that all non-White groups in the U.S. are vulnerable to forever foreigner stereotyping, even if some of those groups are more so than the others. The reason is that what underlies such stereotyping is a broader ideology that associates being a U.S. insider with being White: were it not for that ideology, the stereotype would be incapable of effectively racializing the non-Whiteness of Asians as something that at least *prima facie* justifies judging Asians to be not full-fledged Americans[21]. Such an equation of being "American" and being White remains prevalent, even among non-Whites (Tran and Peterson 2015). Discouraging it requires making the forever foreigner stereotype, and any other notion that associates some form of non-Whiteness with being foreign, no longer something that afflicts social interactions within U.S. society.

Some ways Asian Americans can leverage pan-Asian solidarism to dismantle the model minority and forever foreigner stereotypes are already elaborated above. Rather than add further elaboration, here I want to note just that pan-Asian solidarity initiatives should seek to ensure that the implementation of each of those ways is inflected as necessary to make them also protect non-Asians from the harms of those stereotypes. For example, those initiatives could advocate for kinds

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[21] A similar point is true regarding the non-Whiteness of those of Middle Eastern or North African descent (Fourlas 2022.

of formal educational coverage of the stereotypes that provide exposure to literature analyzing their anti-Black dimensions.

4.3 The Political Orientation of Pan-Asian Solidary Politics: How Much Pluralism?

Now, insofar as pan-Asian solidarism calls for political unity among Asian Americans, proponents of it must consider *how much* like-mindedness it should demand with respect to things like general ideological orientation (e.g., left or right), concrete goals to pursue, and preferred methods for achieving those goals. As a matter of fact, pretty much the entire political spectrum has at some point been represented in the thought of a prominent pan-Asianist (Murthy 2023). But it seems safe to say that a sizable majority of the most influential movements for fostering pan-Asian solidarity have left-leaning political sympathies, including most contemporary ones (Wang 1998; Maeda 2012; Ishizuka 2016; Murthy 2023). Should pan-Asian solidary politics encourage conformity to one side of the political spectrum, or should it be largely open to perspectives from all parts of the political spectrum?

In my view, just as it should be hospitable to large degree of cultural pluralism, pan-Asian solidarity initiatives should strive to accommodate much political pluralism. There are at least two reasons for this. First, a lesson that can be drawn from how the Asian American movement fizzled out is that ideological rigidity is inimical to building pan-Asian coalitions (Maeda 2012, 136-146; Ishizuka 2016, 189-207). Insofar as insistence on toeing highly specific political lines discourages Asians from cooperating in the first place, it is simply incompatible with pan-Asian organizing.

Second, recall the sort of "back-to-the-future" approach to theorizing solutions to contemporary problems described in subsection 2.1. That approach involves studying the ways of life and institutions that prevailed in past Asian societies to acquire ideas about how to make

contemporary societies more just. As Murthy (2023, 6-7) notes, back-to-the-future theorizing's combination of backward- and forward-looking orientations involves synthesizing progressive strands of thought with and conservative ones. This is because, on one hand, it involves a characteristically conservative mode of thought in which one attempts to restore the preeminence of traditional worldviews so as to counteract the issues stemming from novel ones. And, on the other hand, it has a progressive bent in the sense that its reason for drawing on insights from traditional worldviews is that it aims to use them to help societies transition from the status quo into adopting novel, more just forms of social organization. The novelty of those forms results from how they utilize insights from long established systems of thought to cope with indelible developments of the contemporary moment (e.g., new technologies that cannot be eradicated). While a society that results from back-to-the-future theorizing will in some ways resemble its predecessors due to the nature of the intellectual resources drawn on to design it, it will differ from those predecessors as a result of the uniqueness of the conditions those resources are being used to address.

I maintain that back-to-the-future theorizing's polymerization of conservative and progressive political tendencies is something that makes it valuable for mobilizing pan-Asian politics, because it offers a way of generating intra-Asian consensus across ideological lines. It does so by helping people see that a concern to usher in a new kind of society that lacks all the moral faults of prior ones is compatible with recognizing that those predecessors had laudable aspects worth approximating at present. By doing so, it can help bridge divides between, on one hand, Asian Americans who believe that addressing the group's contemporary plights requires reviving forms of society valorized by traditional Asian cultures, and, on the other hand, Asian Americans who believe that a radical break from the past is necessary to reliably secure the group

from injustice. Thus, that back-to-the-future theorizing is possible only if ideological tendencies across the political spectrum are taken seriously is another reason for favoring a pan-Asian solidarism that is hospitable to much political pluralism.

However, as was the case with cultural pluralism, I contend that there are at least rough limits to how much political pluralism is compatible with pan-Asian solidary politics. Those limits are set by the liberatory purposes of pan-Asian solidarity: since what morally justifies cultivating it is its conduciveness to securing all Asians (and, when it is able to, non-Asians as well) from race-based vulnerabilities to injustice, any forms of civic engagement that are plausibly inimical to that end are at least *prima facie* suspect by the lights of pan-Asian solidarity projects. At minimum, this means that any forms of Asian chauvinism that encourage either intra-Asian ostracism of those who enact morally benign expressions of Asian identity or disregard for the legitimate moral demands of non-Asians fall outside pan-Asian solidarism's range of tolerable political pluralism.

Of course, there likely are many gray areas about what constitutes such Asian chauvinism or some other form of civic engagement that is incompatible with pan-Asian solidarism. But, as I similarly argued above with respect to cultural pluralism, it is preferable to accommodate the existence of many such gray areas if only to minimize the risk of mistakenly foreclosing certain kinds of political pluralism without first seriously adjudicating its merits.

4.4. On Pan-Asian Solidarity's Utility for Motivating Asian American Activism

Now, it is in principle possible that many Asian Americans could be motivated to undertake the forms of political empowerment described in this subsection even in absence of a robust politically-oriented pan-Asian solidarity movement. Those forms include preventing anti-Asian

violence, mobilizing enough Asian Americans to draw meaningful political attention to them, dismantling stereotypes about Asians that are pernicious to both them and other people of color, and acting as solidary intermediaries. However, it seems clear that if there existed a pan-Asian solidarity movement that encouraged Asian Americans to enact those varieties of political empowerment, more Asian Americans would likely try doing so. This is because, in the absence of robust pan-Asian solidarism, there would be far fewer organizations that concentrate specifically on raising awareness about issues stemming from the racialization of Asian Americans and providing spaces for Asian Americans to collectively seek resolutions for those issues. And, judging from the history of Asian Americans, it seems doubtful that the functions of such Asian American-oriented organizations could be performed with similar effectiveness by ones that are not similarly oriented. On the basis of that historical record (see, e.g., Espiritu 1992; Takaki 1998; Lee 2015; Choy 2022), it seems safe to say that many consequential institutional-level changes in U.S. society that addressed morally troubling aspects of Asian American racialization would not have gone through as quickly or at all were it not for the efforts of pan-Asian organizations, Asian subgroup-specific ones, or both. Examples of these changes include ones regarding how the U.S. census collects data on Asian Americans, the creation of Asian American studies programs, and reparations for Japanese interment.

Moreover, Asian American organizations continue to play a significant role in providing education—to both Asian Americans and others—about the ways in which the racialization of Asian Americans has been detrimental to both them and other racial groups (Liu 2018; Trieu and Lee 2018; Hope 2019; Lee et al. 2020; Museus 2021; Gonzalez 2022). And it is unclear whether this function could satisfactorily be replicated by organizations that are not dedicated mainly to addressing issues confronting Asian Americans. Of course, improvements to coverage of Asian

Americans in formal educational settings could do much to enlighten the public about the circumstances of Asian Americans. But it seems doubtful that those improvements can be achieved in the first place without the advocacy of Asian American organizations that carry out pan-Asian solidary politics. Moreover, these organizations can reach audiences who are unable to study Asian Americans as part of a formal education, and so could still complement better formal coverage of Asian Americans if the latter obtained.

Thus, I submit that the moral obligation of to bring about the forms of political empowerment described in this subsection is another source of Asian Americans' moral obligation to bring about pan-Asian solidarity. This is because when such solidarity obtains, Asian Americans are more likely to pursue the sorts of civic engagement necessary to achieve those sorts of empowerment.

5. Summing Up

Let me now recap the main contentions §§2-4 provide a snapshot of the overall conception of pan-Asian solidarity I have defended.

§2 argued that one ground of Asian Americans' *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity is that it makes them much better able to satisfy a separate *pro tanto* moral obligation that prescribes preserving Asian cultures. The latter obligation stems from the importance of sustaining the distinctive cultures of non-White ethnoracial groups for undermining the Eurocentrism of White supremacist racism and envisioning how to forge future societies so that they neither give rise to new forms of racism nor regress back into being White supremacist.

I argued that to facilitate the preservation of Asian cultures, robust pan-Asian solidarism should be forged around and encourage each Asian American to foster shared cultural practices

both within her Asian subgroup and within the broader pan-Asian population. The shared culture among the broader group would be *sui generis* yet built upon elements of the cultures of the different Asian subgroups.

Ethnoracial cultural preservation efforts need a way to demarcate the boundaries of an ethnoracial culture and yet also should be hospitable to morally valuable forms of cultural pluralism. I offered what I believe is a conception of what practice of an ethnoracial culture involves that can account for the possibility of satisfying both of those desiderata. I called the conception the "Social Identity Conception of Cultural Practice" (SICCP). According to it, one adheres to an ethnoracial group's distinctive cultures by consistently engaging, with the appropriate level of deference, in the discursive traditions and associated customs originated by communities of people who possessed what is racialized as the group's heritable phenotype and ancestral links. The deference is owed to those originating communities of people and all other prior generations of participants in those traditions. It is compatible with criticizing those peoples' practices, allowing that they can be rejected or revised in ways that generate new permutations of the associated ethnoracial culture rather than merely discard it entirely.

However, the SICCP's conception of deference is incompatible with deeming every facet of an ethnoracial group's traditional practices as devoid of value, because doing so involves failing to respect past members of that group as a genuine inheritor of the group's culture would. I argued that, on one hand, the SICCP's conception of reverence for cultural progenitors that allows for criticizing them makes space for morally valuable cultural pluralism by accommodating the possibility that an ethnoracial culture can undergo many kinds of transformations while still retaining its identity. And, on the other hand, that conception offers a plausible conception of how to draw inexact yet meaningful borderlines around an ethnoracial culture, namely, by identifying

what kinds of discursive engagement with earlier practitioners of a culture sufficiently respect their ways of life.

§3 discussed the role of pan-Asian solidarity for promoting what I referred to as "self-worth" among Asian Americans. Self-worth has two components: self-respect and self-esteem. My arguments in the section relied on the view that there are general moral obligations to help uphold conditions that protect against unjust deprivations of self-worth. Those obligations are rooted in self-worth's intrinsic value and its instrumental value for ensuring widespread motivation to promote justice. I argued that the *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity partially stems from there being several ways it can be leveraged to shield against race-based threats to the self-worth of Asian Americans. One way is that it can lend support to the aforementioned preservation of Asian cultures. Another is that it can be channeled to support educational opportunities and community organizations that disseminate positive imagery of Asian Americans and knowledge of their histories.

I also argued that pan-Asian solidarism can also promote the formation of Asian ethnic enclaves that provide spaces wherein Asians can self-segregate so as to produce various kinds of things that protect or enhance the self-worth of Asians. One thing is a site at which initiatives to preserve Asian cultures can be concentrated together. Another is a context in which Asians are free from pressures in the broader society to abide by social norms that demean Asian Americans. A third is a social milieu that counteracts phenotypic devaluation of Asian-typical physical features.

§4 developed two lines of reasoning. The first sought to establish that Asian Americans' a *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity also arises due to the ways it facilitates political empowerment of the group's members. For one, such solidarity supports the formation of Asian community organizations that are poised to discourage anti-Asian violence, as well as

assemble the critical mass of Asians necessary for their interests to be given due consideration in both formal and informal political arenas. Moreover, it also can foster a shared commitment to dismantling the two stereotypes that likely have politically disempowered Asian Americans more than any other, namely, the model minority and forever foreigner stereotypes.

The second argumentative thread in §4 aimed to show that another part of why Asian Americans are *pro tanto* morally obligated to forge pan-Asian solidarity is that it is a useful resource for politically empowering non-Asian people of color in the U.S. This is because pan-Asian solidarism has the potential to address injustices that confront that group as well, and, other things being equal, the moral value of actualizing that potential is not outweighed by countervailing reasons. On behalf of non-Asian people of color, such solidarism should be crafted to galvanize Asian Americans to counteract the ways in which the racialization of Asians in the U.S. context has frustrated addressing injustices against non-Asian people of color.

In sum, the core idea of the conception of pan-Asian solidarity advanced here is that Asian Americans have a *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge such solidarity because when it prevails, they are better able to fulfill several other kinds of *pro tanto* moral obligations. These other *pro tanto* obligations are ones requiring that Asian Americans seek preservation of Asian cultures, implement initiatives that protect and promote race-based self-worth among Asians, and undertake efforts to ensure that Asians are not subjected to racialization that politically disempowers both them and non-Asian people of color in the U.S. context.

To my knowledge, this paper has offered the first attempt by an academic philosopher to defend a conception of the moral value of pan-Asian solidarity. I have argued that, Asian Americans have a *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity that is grounded in several other of their *pro tanto* moral obligations. These other duties are ones that prescribe (a)

preserving Asian cultures, where those include cultures of specific Asian subgroups and *sui generis* pan-Asian ones; (b) promoting ethnoracial self-respect and self-esteem among Asians; and (c) undertaking activities to ensure that Asian Americans and, when applicable, other people of color are politically empowered in the U.S. context. I argued that those three moral obligations generate Asian Americans' moral duty to foster pan-Asian solidarity, because the existence of such solidarism would facilitate their compliance with those three obligations.

Unlike several other accounts of the moral value of ethnoracial solidarity that currently exist in the philosophical literature, I have not argued merely that the sort of ethnoracial solidarity I focus on is one that a person has a *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge only insofar as she has already dedicated herself to doing so. Instead, I argued that even Asian Americans who have not already committed themselves to building pan-Asian solidarity are *pro tanto* morally duty-bound to do so. Thus, in addition to offering a defense of the moral value of pan-Asian solidarity in particular, I hope that this paper also provides a useful model of how to argue that members of any other ethnoracial group have a *pro tanto* moral obligation to foster ethnoracial solidarity within that group. Such an obligation arises, I have argued, when such solidarity would advance various kinds of liberatory projects.

I have not tried to show that the *pro tanto* moral obligation to forge pan-Asian solidarity this paper argues for typically rises to the level of an all-things-considered one for the average contemporary Asian American. However, I believe that it does, and hope that those who read this paper come to share that view. A project aiming to show that this view tracks the truth is a worthwhile way of building upon the research I have undertaken here.

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