Be Loud and Brace for Impact: Anti-Asian Violence, the Model Minority Myth, and the Martyrs of Revelation 7:9–14

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The title of this address, "Be Loud and Brace for Impact," is a prophetic call for Asian Americans *not* to forget our own activist history and acts as a warning to all God's people that a public witness against injustice invites retaliation.[1] When the preacher speaks loudly against injustice and exposes institutions publicly for their idolatrous practices, these fallen institutions (or what the Bible calls the "principalities and powers"; Col 2:13–15) will fight back. They will attempt to silence the prophetic challenge with intimidation and even violence. The antagonism of the powers should not, however, keep us from seeking God's kingdom first and God's righteousness for all humanity (Matt 6:33).

In Revelation 7:9–14, John, the seer and pastor of the seven churches in Asia Minor, beholds a vision of God's people from every generation, nation, tribe, and language who proclaim the whole gospel of Jesus Christ and suffer for their faithful witness. I will be reading and interpreting this biblical text from the social location and history of Asian Americans in the United States and focus on more recent events of anti-Asian violence since 2020 (in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic).

[1] This article is a modified transcript of the plenary address given by the author on the occasion of his installation as the Paul W. Brandel Chair of Biblical Studies at North Park Theological Seminary on February 16, 2024. It will be revised and expanded as a chapter in his upcoming, co-authored book on intercultural readings of the Bible with Dennis Edwards and Sophia Magallanes-Tsang (Baker Academic Press; forthcoming 2025).

Following the hermeneutical principles outlined in my article "Reading the Bible Interculturally,"[2] I begin my interpretation of Scripture using the traditional tools of exegesis and so locate the biblical text within its own ancient historical context. It is important, despite the challenge of historical reconstruction, to interpret Scripture within the sociopolitical and cultural location of the original author and readers, that is, to understand what the text meant to the first recipients of a given canonical letter, gospel, or—as in the case for this address—the visions of John in Revelation. But I also ask questions from my own current social location even in the very process of the exegetical enterprise. I ask: "What challenges and exhortations can be drawn from Scripture that speak directly to my personal identity and ethnic history as an Asian American Christian living out my faith in the United States?" Moreover, I think theologically with all of God's people so that any message I hear in my context is recognized as God's word to the whole body of Christ and not just to a specific cultural or ethnic group.

So, an intercultural reading of the Bible is always a conversation between the text and reader. I—as a biblical interpreter who practices historical criticism—seek to create a healthy hermeneutical distance between myself and the ancient text so that text can speak back to me as other. I recognize and respect the text's own voice. The text is living, not dead. Through the agency and inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Bible can generate new meanings for us today and address situations not anticipated by the ancient author and reader. Yet such new meanings ideally follow the grain (and theological trajectory) of the text, never flowing against the grain. I read the Bible with my communities of faith in all their cultural particularity and recognize every call to the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:25–26) in the "now" addresses the cultural location of these communities directly but also to the whole church of God.

Exegetical Observations on Revelation 7:9–14

I translate directly from the Greek text of Revelation 7:9–14 as follows:

> After these things, I [John] looked, and there was a great multitude (*ochlos polys*) which no one could count, from every nation (*ethnos*), tribe, people, and language. They stand before

[2] For a more detailed description of the method for intercultural biblical interpretation, see Max J. Lee, "Reading the Bible Interculturally: An Invitation to the Evangelical Covenant Church and Evangelical Christianity," *The Covenant Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2015): 4–14.

the throne and before the Lamb, having been clothed with white robes, and there were palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, saying: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

And all the angels stood in a circle around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures. Before the throne, they fell down on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

And one of the elders addressed me, saying: "These who are clothed in white robes (*stolas*)—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "My lord, you know."

And he said, "These are the ones who—having come out of the great suffering (*ek tēs thlipseōs tēs megalēs*)—have washed their robes (*stolas*) and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."[3]

Two quick exegetical observations should be noted before applying the text to the history of anti-Asian violence in North America. First, the "great multitude" (*ochlos polys*; v. 9) is a gathering of God's resurrected people. Justo González notes that at the resurrection, believers can still distinguish each other by their ethnicity, tribe, and language.[4] The word for "nation" (v. 9) is *ethnos* in Greek and does indeed refer to the ethnicity, geography, customs, culture, and religion of a people group in the ancient world.[5] So culture as a corporate expression of human beings made in God's image is retained at the resurrection. Our ethnic identity

[3] All English translations from the Bible are my own unless otherwise noted.

[4] Justo L. González, "Revelation: Clarity and Ambivalence: A Hispanic/Cuban American Perspective," in *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*, ed. David Rhoads (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 59–60 [47–61].

[5] See Steve Mason, "Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457–512, especially his definition of *ethnos* on p. 484 that: "Each *ethnos* had its distinctive nature or character (*physis, ēthos*), expressed in unique ancestral traditions (*ta patria*), which typically reflected a shared (if fictive) ancestry (*syngeneia*); each had its charter stories (*mythoi*), customs, norms, conventions, mores, laws (*nomoi, ethē, nomima*), and political arrangements or constitution (*politeia*)." Mason's definition should also include religion as a major component to ethnic identity in the ancient Mediterranean world, as rightly pointed out by Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race*, The Library of New Testament Studies (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 97–105; and David G. Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 47–65.

is not erased but preserved. So, although culture, like all things human, is tainted by sin, nevertheless God does not destroy what is human but removes sin's presence from it and transforms humanity. Sin gets expunged, but what remains is what was created as good (Gen 1:27). There is a continuity between the old and the new creation (Rev 21:4–5; cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Believers may not know in this present earthly life what resurrection will look like, but whatever composition our resurrected bodies might have, we will still be able to distinguish each other by ethnicity, tribe, and tongue.[6]

My second observation focuses on the basis of the unity for the great multitude, that is, their faithful witness to the Lamb despite persecution and suffering (v. 14).[7] God's call to testify and preach the gospel of Jesus means that our obedience will take us into dark spaces dominated by evil that will resist our work. Suffering (in Greek *thlipsis*, also translated as "tribulation," "affliction," or "trial"), even "great (*megalē*) suffering," is an intrinsic and unavoidable experience as we pursue God's calling in our lives.

It is unfortunate that many churches today often use the Revelation 7 passage as a kind of tokenism which celebrates the diverse or multicultural composition of God's people without understanding what the vision celebrates as the basis for their unity. It is our fidelity to the Lamb and our willingness to suffer for Christ that makes the church one body, baptized with one baptism, and servants of one Lord (1 Cor 8:5–6; Eph 4:4–5). We seek God's kingdom first and his righteousness, including God's justice for the world (Matt 6:33). As a corollary to our faithfulness to God's whole mission, we will be hammered by a broken, fallen world that wants us to recant our obedience to Christ. Even family, friends, and neighbors might misunderstand—and even attempt to hinder—our work (e.g., Mark 3:31–35). Nevertheless, we are called not only to endure suffering but not to let it misshape us, so that we emerge through the fires of affliction as blameless, washed in the blood of Christ and wearing white robes. The image of being clothed or wrapped with priestly robes (*stolai*) symbolizes our roles as a priesthood of believers (cf. 1 Pet 2:9) to mediate a message of peace to our neighbors and even our enemies.[8]

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6 See also the comments by Brian Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 149–51.

7 Blount, *Revelation*, 154–55.

8 Greg Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 434–37.

Reading Revelation 7:9–14 Interculturally in Asian American Contexts

Suffering is not foreign to the experience and history of Asian Americans living in the United States. Before interpreting Revelation 7 interculturally in a way that the text speaks to and from this history, I pause to give a brief description of what the designation "Asian American" means.

What is an "Asian American"? Most Asian Americans do not identify themselves as "Asian Americans." We identify ourselves by ethnic lineage, that is, as Korean Americans, Chinese Americans, or Filipino Americans. We usually refer to our ethnicity as an identity marker. The term "Asian American" originated in 1968 at Berkeley as part of a wider ethnic studies movement in the University of California educational system. It is a geopolitical term that acknowledges and describes how among East Asians, South Asians, Southeast Asians, and Pacific Islanders (collectively known as AAPI) who immigrated to the United States, though their histories and experiences are diverse, they nevertheless share a common struggle with the racial bias and prejudice lodged against them from a dominant, centrist European American culture.[9] No one of these ethnic groups with roots in Asia is large or influential enough to fend off marginalization on its own agency. Collaborative measures among Asian Americans of diverse ethnic descent are needed for social and political engagement. "Asian Americans" are a very broad collective who demonstrate solidarity in political, social, cultural, and economic concerns.[10]

I am a Korean American born in San Francisco, raised in California, yet I also self-identify as Asian American in solidarity with other Asian ethnic groups. I have experienced bias, prejudice, suffering, and threats of violence since childhood up until today. Anti-Asian bias and violence is a very real experience for many Asian Americans growing up in the States, regardless of their specific ethnic descent. According to the Pew Research Center, more than twenty-two million Asian Americans are liv-

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[9] From henceforth, the acronym AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) will be used to describe all Asians living in North America. Where a particular region or ethnicity is highlighted, such groups will be identified by their ethnic descent, e.g., Korean American, Filipino American, and so on.

[10] For a more complex description of "Asian American" as a sociopolitical as well as cultural designation, see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, rev. ed. (New York: Back Bay Books, 1998), xi–xv; Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 1–11; Tamara C. Ho, "The Complex Heterogeneity of Asian American Identity," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics*, eds. Uriah Kim and Seung Ai Yang (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 18–26.

ing in the United States, about 7 percent of the nation's population and growing since 2021. The largest group are East Asians, about 8.6 million people. The second largest group is South Asians, about four million.[11]

So Asian Americans are not a monolithic group. Jordan Ryan at Wheaton College has made an important point that the model minority myth, for example, tends to affect East Asians—that is, Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and Japanese Americans—but is generally not embraced by Southeast Asians (e.g., Vietnamese, Filipino, Indonesian, Burmese, Hmong, among others) who, upon immigrating to the States, tend to take jobs in the service industries. Many Southeast Asians live at poverty level and struggle to ascend in the American educational system. They do not subscribe to the model minority myth. This myth has actually been weaponized against them and has primarily been embraced as an East Asian experience.[12]

The False and Divisive Narrative of the Model Minority Myth

To introduce what the model minority myth is,[13] I encourage the reader to watch Canwen Xu's full TEDx Talk on YouTube (link in the notes). She shares her personal experience of growing up as an Asian American in predominantly white Midwest circles. She names stereotypes that are hard for Asian Americans to shake off. Here is a partial excerpt:

> My name is Canwen, and I play both the piano and the violin. I aspire to someday be a doctor, and my favorite subject is calculus. My mom and dad are tiger parents, who won't let me go to sleepovers, but they make up for it by serving my favorite meal every single day: rice. And I'm a really bad driver. So, my question for you now is, "How long did it take you to figure out I was joking?"
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> As you can probably guess, today I am going to talk about race. I moved to the United States when I was two years old, so my entire life has been a blend of two cultures. I eat pasta

[11] Abby Budiman and Neil G. Ruiz, "Key Facts about Asian Origin Groups in the U.S.," Pew Research Center, April 29, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-origin-groups-in-the-u-s/.

[12] Jordan Ryan, "No Model Minority, Part 1: Invisible Asian Americans in the Midst of a Season of Apocalypse," Asian American Christian Collaborative, January 5, 2020, https://www.asianamericanchristiancollaborative.com/article/no-model-minority-invisible-asian-americans-apocalypse.

[13] On the origins of the model minority myth, see Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 474–91.

with chopsticks. I'm addicted to orange chicken, and my hero is Yao Ming. But having grown up in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Idaho, all states with incredibly little racial diversity, it was difficult to reconcile my so-called exotic Chinese heritage with my mainstream American self. Used to being the only Asian in the room, I was self-conscious that the first thing people noticed about me was that I wasn't white. And as a child I quickly began to realize that I had two options in front of me: conform to the stereotype that was expected of me or conform to the whiteness that surrounded me. There was no in-between....

For me, this meant that I always felt self-conscious about being good at math, because people would just say it was because I was Asian, not because I actually worked hard. It meant that whenever a boy asked me out, it was because he had the "yellow" fever, and not because he actually liked me. It meant that for the longest time my identity had formed around the fact that I was different. And I thought that being Asian was the only special thing about me....

But, as amusing as these interactions were, oftentimes they made me want to reject my own culture, because I thought it helped me conform. I distanced myself from the Asian stereotype as much as possible, by degrading my own race, and pretending I hated math. And the worse part was, it worked. The more I rejected my Chinese identity, the more popular I became....

The truth is, Asian Americans play a strange role in the American melting pot. We are the "model minority." Society uses our success to pit us against other people of color as justification that racism doesn't exist. But what does that mean for us Asian Americans? It means that we are not quite similar enough to be accepted, but we aren't different enough to be loathed. We are in a perpetually grey zone, and society isn't quite sure what to do with us. So, they group us by the color of our skin. They tell us that we must reject our own heritages, so we can fit in with the crowd. They tell us that our foreignness is the only identifying characteristic of us. They strip away our identities one by one, until we are foreign, but not quite foreign, American but not quite American....

I wish that I had always had the courage to speak out

> about these issues. But coming from one culture that avoids confrontation, and another that is divided over race, how do I overcome the pressure to keep the peace, while also staying true to who I am? And as much as I hate to admit it, oftentimes I don't speak out, because, if I do, it's at the risk of being told that I am too sensitive, or that I get offended too easily, or that it's just not worth it.[14]

I thought hearing her testimony from the grass-roots level would be a good way to introduce a problematic and false narrative of the model minority myth. Many (East) Asian Americans listening to this story can relate to her biography. The racial stereotyping Canwen experienced as a person of Chinese descent growing up in the Midwest is something all Asian Americans have experienced in some way, shape, or form. I have personally experienced what Canwen names. I cannot tell you how many times when I was growing up in elementary school, middle school, and high school in the 1980s when the world was just not as politically correct as it is today, I was called "Jap," "Chink," and "Gook." Non-Asians confused my ethnicity all the time. Almost everyone thought that I was Chinese American. When I said that I was Korean American, they had no clue where on the global map the nation of Korea was located, even though the United States fought in the Korean War.

In today's world, people's biases have changed little. Even my sons growing up in Chicago during the early 2000s experienced the same kind of racial bias. One day, when Zach and Jonathan were walking down the street from elementary school, they heard a neighborhood girl point to them and say, "There go the Chinese boys." My sons were outraged. Later, I tried to explain to her father why calling them "the Chinese boys" was not an appropriate way to address any Asian child (regardless of the fact that my sons are Korean), but the father did not understand the offense. No wonder his daughter did not either. Ignorance is contagious and passed down generationally through imitation.

Frank H. Wu, currently the William L. Prosser Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of California, Hastings Law School, writes in his book *Yellow* this description of the model minority myth:

> I am fascinated by the imperviousness of the model minority myth against all efforts at debunking it. I am often told by

[14] Canwen Xu, "I Am Not Your Asian Stereotype," TEDx Talks at Boise State University, April 29, 2016, 9:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pUtz75lNaw.

nice people who are bewildered by the fuss, "You Asians are all doing well. What could you have to complain about anyway? Why would you object to a positive image?"...

"You Asians are all doing well anyway" summarizes the model minority myth. This is the dominant image of Asians in the United States. Ever since immigration reforms in 1965 led to a great influx of Asian peoples, we have enjoyed an excellent reputation. As a group, we are said to be intelligent, gifted in math and science, polite, hardworking, family oriented, law abiding, and successfully entrepreneurial. We revere our elders and show fidelity to tradition. The nation has become familiar with the turn-of-the-century Horatio Alger tales of "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps" updated for a new millennium with an "Oriental" face and imbued with Asian values....

Thanks to their selfless dedication to a small business or an advanced degree in electrical engineering—or both—they are soon achieving the American Dream....Their no-nonsense regimen works wonders....In view of other Americans, Asian Americans vindicate the American Dream....They are living proof of the power of the free market and the absence of racial discrimination. Their good fortune flows from individual self-reliance and community self-sufficiency, not civil rights activism or government welfare benefits....Asian Americans do not whine about racial discrimination; they only try harder.... This caricature is the portrait of the model minority.[15]

The model minority myth claims: if I [as an Asian American] aim toward conformity, and I accommodate or even compromise my ethnic identity

[15] Frank H. Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 39–44. Frank Wu also does not fit the Asian American stereotype. He emphatically states: "I am Asian American, but I am not good with computers. I cannot balance my checkbook, much less perform calculus in my head. I would like to fail in school, for no reason other than to cast off my freakish alter ego of geek and nerd. I am tempted to be very rude, just to demonstrate once and for all that I will not be excessively polite, bowing, smiling, and deferring. I am lazy and a loner, who would rather reform the law than obey it, and who has no business skills. I yearn to be an artist, an athlete, a rebel, and, above all, an ordinary person" (pp. 39–40). A number of biographies reflecting intentional and unconscious engagement with the model minority myth can be read in the anthology collected by Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu, eds., *East to America: Korean American Life Stories* (New York: The New York Press, 1996).

to fit better with the larger dominant culture (as Canwen testifies above), there is a pathway to material, social, and economic success available to me through hard work. This is a myth. It ignores the reality of systems that marginalize people of color from succeeding by pure effort alone.

One result of COVID-19 and its tragic aftermath was the reawakening of a national collective consciousness to racial discrimination and violence which specifically targeted Asian Americans. John Cho, a well-known Korean American actor, most famous for playing the role of Lieutenant Sulu in the Star Trek movies, wrote an op-ed piece in the *LA Times* when COVID-19 hit. At the time, we had a US president who renamed COVID-19 "the Chinese virus." Other infamous nicknames include "Kung-flu." President Trump located the origin of the virus's widespread and destructive effect in China, and if the virus could be blamed on China, then people illogically blamed all Chinese people for bringing COVID-19 to the United States. Also troubling was that people could not distinguish between Chinese natives and Chinese Americans, or Chinese Americans from other Asian Americans. So John Cho offered this reflection in the wake of growing anti-Asian racial bias and persecution during the pandemic:

> Growing up…my parents encouraged me and my younger brother to watch as much television as possible, so that we might learn to speak and act like the natives. The hope was that race would not disadvantage us—the next generation—if we played our cards right....
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> Like fame, the "model minority" myth can provide the illusion of "raceless-ness." Putting select Asians on a pedestal silences those who question systemic injustices. Our supposed success is used as proof that the system works—and if it doesn't work for you, it must be your fault.
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> Never mind that 12 percent of us [Asian Americans] are living below the poverty line. The "model minority" myth helps maintain the status quo that works against people of all colors.
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> But perhaps the most insidious effect of this myth is that it silences us. It seduces Asian Americans and recruits us to act on its behalf. It converts our parents, who in turn, encourage us to accept it. It makes you feel protected, that you're passing as one of the good ones….
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> If the coronavirus has taught us anything, it's that the solu-

> tion to a widespread problem cannot be patchwork. Never has our interconnectedness and our reliance on each other been plainer.
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> You can't stand up for some and not for others. And like the virus, unchecked aggressiveness has the potential to spread wildly....If you see it on the street, say something. If you hear it at work, say something. If you sense it in your family, say something. Stand up for your fellow Americans.[16]

As noted by Canwen Wu and Frank Wu, John Cho also describes how the model minority myth has historically pitted (East) Asian Americans against other people of color—and as Jordan Ryan has noted—even against other fellow (Southeast) Asian Americans who labor in service industries rather than enter the education-oriented acceleration track to material success.[17] Therefore, it is fundamental for all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, especially in a post-COVID-19 era, that we—as those sharing an immigrant heritage—reject this false myth and recover truer narratives that describe our own histories and common experiences of suffering—narratives which not only unite AAPI diverse ethnic people-groups but connect them with other people of color who also experience suffering from a white dominant culture. A truer narrative that embraces our past history of suffering and discrimination, and actively fights against it, that refuses to be silent in the face of racial injustice provides essential points of solidarity with non-Asian people of color as well and with the wider global church.

It is hard to think of anything good stemming from the horror of the pandemic. But one important result of the coronavirus for Asian Americans in the United States was a growing national awareness of our own story of endurance through systems of racism. In a multi-page booklet, the nonprofit organization Stop AAPI Hate (co-founded by Russell Jeung, professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University) has analyzed the history of violence against Asian Americans

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16 John Cho, "Coronavirus Reminds Asian Americans Like Me That Our Belonging Is Conditional," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2024, https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-04-22/asian-american-discrimination-john-cho-coronavirus.

17 Ryan, "No Model Minority, Part 1." See also Jordan Ryan, "No Model Minority, Part 2: Filipino Americans, the Bible, and Resisting Racism," Asian American Christian Collaborative, January 12, 2020, https://www.asianamericanchristiancollaborative.com/article/no-model-minority-part-ii-filipino-americans-bible-resisting-racism.

before, during, and after COVID-19.[18] What the coronavirus did was to make the problem of anti-Asian bias and violence more visible. The coronavirus did not create the problem; rather, the problem was always there albeit hidden from public eyes. The problem is not being resolved either; in fact, in many ways it is growing worse. COVID-19 made more visible a crisis that has its own long history. It gave anti-Asian racial prejudice an occasion to be bolder and shameless in the public forum. Anti-Asian violence came out of the depths of invisibility and became exposed through journalistic reporting and social media. According to the two-year study, Stop AAPI Hate catalogs that:

> Over 11,000 acts of hate against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been reported to the national coalition Stop AAPI Hate since 2020 [i.e., March 19, 2020 to March 31, 2022], and [at] the start of the COVID-19 pandemic...nearly half (49%) of AAPI persons nationwide have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment that may be illegal.[19]

This discrimination and unfair treatment, according to the report, covered a broad range:

- harassment (67% of 11,467 incidents experienced by AAPI persons, 63% of which came in the form of verbal hate speech and only 4% were gestures, written, or other behaviors)
- physical assault (17%)
- avoidance and shunning (16%)
- online misconduct (9%)
- coughed or spat on (8%)
- job discrimination (6%)
- hostile work environment and job discrimination (6%)
- vandalism, graffiti, robbery, or theft (9%)
- refusal of services (4%)
- barred from transportation (1%)
- microaggressions and treating other people differently (3%)

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[18] Stop AAPI Hate (SAH), *Two Years and Thousands of Voices National Report: What Community Generated Data Tells Us about Anti-AAPI Hate*, through March 31, 2022, 1–17, https://stopaapihate.org/2022/07/20/year-2-report/. See also Russell Jeung's reflection on the important work of Stop AAPI Hate in his article "Asian Americans Are 'Bringing Heaven to Earth' by Fighting Racism," *Sojourners* (April 7, 2022), https://sojo.net/articles/asian-americans-are-bringing-heaven-earth-fighting-racism.

[19] SAH, *Two Years and Thousands of Voices National Report*, 10.

- threats or calling the police, and various negative interactions with people (1%)
- other forms discrimination and prejudice (2%)[20]

To reiterate, these attacks against AAPI persons are not new phenomena. Asian Americans have lived out a narrative of overcoming racial bias and even anti-Asian violence since the very beginning of their history on US soil. It is a narrative of faithful endurance against racial injustice, overcoming persecution, and prophetically calling out their persecutors to account for their evil.

A More Faithful Account of the Asian American Narrative

Mark Twain is credited for saying: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does often rhyme."[21] The more recent pattern of anti-Asian violence after the pandemic rhymes as part of a larger pattern of anti-racial bias and violence against Asian Americans in a much longer history. It is not within the scope of this article to retrace this history in its entirety, but highlighting selective events is possible.[22]

In 2021, Paula Yoo published the book *From a Whisper to a Rallying Cry: The Killing of Vincent Chen*, detailing not only the brutal attack on a Chinese American, that is, Vincent Chen, by white Chrysler autoworkers but also the activist work of his mother, Lily Chen. Vincent's death and Mrs. Chen's activist movement galvanized a generation of Asian Americans to engage justice work. They inspired the founding of American Citizens for Justice (ACJ), a nonprofit started in 1983 as an

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20 SAH, 10.

21 It is likely the axiom was inspired by Mark Twain but not actually written by him. For the history on its complex origin, see "Quote Origin: History Does Not Repeat Itself but It Rhymes," Quote Investigator, January 12, 2014, https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/01/12/history-rhymes/.

22 For a longer history, I leave it to the reader to pick up and study Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore* (1998), or Erika Lee's *The Making of Asian America* (2015); these works are cited in the notes above. See also the collection of essays from John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, eds., *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (London/New York: Verso, 2014).

Asian Pacific American (APA) civil rights advocacy group.[23] The story begins in June 1982 when Michael Nitz was laid off from Chrysler. He blamed the Japanese automotive industry for flooding the US market with its cars, resulting in massive layoffs of workers in American-made auto factories and the declining state of the American auto industry. Nitz and his stepfather, Ronald Ebens (a plant supervisor for Chrysler), targeted Vincent (even though he was Chinese American not Japanese), and beat him unconscious with baseball bats outside of a Detroit restaurant where he was attending his own bachelor party among Asian and non-Asian friends. Vincent subsequently died in the hospital. His murder was brutal. Instead of attending his wedding, his friends and family attended his funeral. When the perpetrators were tried for murder, they received no jail time and a fine of only $3,000 each. Not until Lily Chen and the ACJ led civil rights protests in the streets and campaigned for a retrial was the case against Nitz and Ebens tried in a federal civil rights court in 1984 with Ebens sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. Nitz was acquitted, only to have the federal appeals court overturn the Ebens conviction in 1986. Both have remained free ever since.[24] Their case is a glaring example of civic injustice and the failure of the US judicial system to indict hate crimes against people of color. It is a reminder that Asian Americans remain "the perpetual foreigner" amidst a majority European American white society.

But this is one story of many. A longer history exists of Asian Americans experiencing racial bias, unjust legal rulings, hate crimes, and violence. There is also a concurrent history of Asian Americans marching against injustice and nonviolently engaging systemic racism. The history of Asian American discrimination is not new. As far back as the late 1800s, the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited citizenship to "whites" only, meaning only European immigrants could become US citizens, barring all non-white immigrants. The Naturalization Act remained in effect until 1952. First-generation Asian immigrants who built our transcontinental

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23 Paula Yoo, *From a Whisper to a Rallying Cry: The Killing of Vincent Chin and the Trial that Galvanized the Asian American Movement* (New York: Norton Young Readers, 2021). The summary of events which follows comes from Yoo's book, but see also the fortieth-year remembrance by Wynne Davis, "Vincent Chin Was Killed 40 Years Ago. Here's Why His Case Continues to Resonate," NPR News, June 19, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/06/19/1106118117/vincent-chin-aapi-hate-incidents, and especially the legacy guide by the Vincent Chin Institute, https://www.vincentchin.org/legacy-guide/english. For the work of the ACJ, which continues today, see https://www.americancitizensforjustice.org/.

24 Yoo, *From a Whisper*.

railroads, farmed, and worked in factories and service industries (e.g., restaurants, laundry, and cleaning, to name a few) were from the beginning excluded from citizenship on the basis of their color.[25] They were "yellow," and not white.[26] It is a label with a racially constructed social agenda. As Keevak notes: "To call East Asians yellow, in other words, was a means of ensuring that while they might not be as dark-skinned as Africans, they could no longer be considered 'white' either," and therefore were prevented from experiencing any privileges inherent to whiteness.[27]

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 further prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years; only certain classes of Chinese (e.g., diplomats, merchants, teachers, students, and travelers) were exempt. The Geary Act of 1892 extended the prohibition. The Chinese Immigration Act was renewed and made permanent by 1904.[28] The National Origins Act of 1924 prohibited all Japanese immigration and also had the sinister agenda of preventing the growth of Asian families by prohibiting women from China, Japan, Korea, and India from entry and marrying Asian men.[29]

The earliest Asian immigrants were farmers who experienced "ethnic antagonism" from white workers in California when they moved there from Hawaii to the mainland. In 1910, Korean harvesters hired to pick oranges for Mary Steward's farm in Upland, California, were pummeled with stones by white laborers and told to leave the country or be killed.[30] Yet Japanese and Korean farmers were clearly industry leaders revolutionizing agriculture in the state. Agricultural entrepreneur Hyung-Soon Kim along with an employee named Anderson experimented with crossbreeding plums and peaches to produce a "fuzzless peach" called the "nectarine."[31] Despite such accomplishments, many Asian American farmers were unwelcome. The California Land Act of 1913, which stated that property could not be owned by "aliens ineligible to citizenship"—while specifically targeting Japanese farm workers, eventually forced not only Japanese but almost all Asian farmers out of the industry.[32]

The honest reader only needs to read the horrid accounts of the deten-

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25 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 14–18.
26 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 109–36.
27 Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 43.
28 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 94–95.
29 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 14–15.
30 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 14–15.
31 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 276.
32 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 203–4.

tion centers at Angel Island in San Francisco Bay for Asian migrants—especially Chinese (70 percent of the detainee population)—to understand that their experience was not the welcome which white European immigrants received at Ellis Island in New York. It was not atypical for a detainee to be held twenty months in substandard living conditions only to be sent back to their native country.[33] Over two hundred poems were written on the walls of Angel Island's barracks,[34] one of which laments: "Imprisoned in the wooden building day after day / My freedom withheld / How can I bear to talk about it?"[35]

Probably the most overtly oppressive chapter in Asian American history was Executive Order 9066, which authorized the internment of Japanese Americans on US soil during World War II.[36] On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed the order without putting it before Congress, and subsequently 122,000 Japanese Americans lost their homes, businesses, jobs, bank savings, property, possessions, and their entire livelihood as they were forcibly migrated to ten "relocation centers" in remote, desertlike areas across the nation, including among others, Manzanar, California, and Rohwer, Arkansas. First-generation immigrants (*Issei*) and second-generation Japanese Americans (*Nisei*) were deemed "enemy aliens" and their "evacuation" a "military necessity." To the Japanese, their living facilities were nothing more than "crude, incomplete, and ill-prepared camps" and their migration was to them a "desert exile" with little protection against the elements.[37] One inmate lamented that it "felt as if we were standing in a gigantic sand-mixing machine. Sand filled our mouths and nostrils and stung our faces and hands like a thousand dart needles." Behind barbed wire fences, daily life was characterized by "monotony, anxiety, and growing discontent" for the next four years (1942–46).[38] When the detention centers were

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33 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 230–69; Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 96–100.

34 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 96–101

35 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 238.

36 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 213–218. For context, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States declared war against Japan on December 8, 1941. This declaration triggered a series of events that led to the unjust detention of Japanese Americans. It is a matter of record that at the time US government surveillance reported to the Roosevelt administration there was "no Japanese problem" and that 90–98 percent of Japanese Americans were loyal to the United States. In fact, Japanese American newspapers proclaimed that loyalty and mobilized groups to support the US war effort against Japan.

37 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 229.

38 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 236–37.

finally closed at the conclusion of the war, many Japanese Americans were relocated to other parts of the United States, and a good number settled in the Midwest, including Chicago.[39] It was not until 1988, when President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act, that the US government made a national apology for the "grave injustice" done against Japanese residents.[40]

This is the Asian American story—not the model minority myth which should be renounced, but one of survival and endurance through racial bias, discrimination, and violence. It is a story that should unite not divide Asian Americans of diverse ethnic descent, as well as create bonds of solidarity with other people of color. Yet solidarity is not automatic; it must be pursued intentionally because the very structures of racism oppose it.

Racism's Strategy of "Divide and Conquer" Yesterday and Today

In the previous sections of this address, I described how one strategy of systemic racism is to divide people of color, pitting them against one another. The model minority myth—a racial construct from a white dominant cultural center—has historically pitted Asian Americans against non-Asian people of color, faulting the latter for not "pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps" when the education acceleration-tube seems to pave a pathway to material success for the former. It has also divided East Asians from Southeast Asians, the latter of whom tend not to be included with the former as "model minorities." History might not repeat itself, but it does rhyme, and so we find that in today's world we have new strategies of division.

During the pandemic in 2020 when many non-Asians illogically scapegoated anyone of Chinese descent for bringing the virus to US soil, *all* Asians were indiscriminately targeted with violence. My own parents who live in the East Bay of Northern California—while eating at a restaurant—were screamed at, and threatened by, a white person mistaking them for Chinese immigrants. The incident produced real fear. As a result, my mother decided to accentuate her Korean ethnic descent in order to dissociate herself from mistakenly being identified as Chinese. She started wearing a T-shirt which featured two heart-shaped flags which

[39] The story of Japanese American resettlement in Chicago and other parts of the United States has been archived and preserved by the JASC (Japanese American Service Center) in Chicago, which preserves primary source testimony from those who experienced the internment; see their legacy center archive at https://jasc-chicago.org/.

[40] Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 312.

overlapped one another in a show of solidary: a flag of the United States and a flag of Korea.[41] Its message is clear: "I am not Chinese; I am a Korean American." She not only started wearing this shirt whenever she ventured out into the public eye, but she also sent shirts to my wife and sister-in-law out of a fear that they too might be targeted. I share this anecdote not to blame but to name the sheer terror Asian Americans as a collective whole have experienced throughout the country. Stop AAPI Hate, as noted above, has documented more than 11,000 acts of hate against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders recorded since 2020, and many more are unrecorded.[42]

There is an unfortunate history of Asian Americans succumbing to this strategy of division where one Asian ethnic group dissociates itself from another to avoid persecution, rather than coming to the defense of the persecuted and joining their cause in solidarity. Such was the case of Japanese internment during World War II. Because the United States declared war against Japan, and anti-Japanese sentiment and violence were on the rise, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean Americans were quick to distinguish themselves as non-Japanese. Japan had invaded the Philippines just seven hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, so Filipinos were readily seen by the US public as allies. But Chinese and Korean Americans had to be much more vocal about their loyalty to the US war effort and their animosity toward Japan for them to also be seen as allies

41 For as long as it is available online, one can see a photo of the shirt advertised here: https://www.amazon.com/South-Korea-USA-Heart-Americans/dp/B07TZCF4ZV.

42 SAH, *Two Years and Thousands of Voices National Report*, 10. It is hard to believe that already the fourth anniversary of the Atlantic shootings on March 17, 2021, is fast approaching (at the time of this article's composition). Six out of the eight victims were Asian American women, and the shooter Robert Aaron Long had exoticized Asian women as objects of temptation and sex addiction. Long irrationally sought to "eliminate" the temptation through a shooting spree at two spas where Asian women worked. See Richard Fausset, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, and Mario Fazio, "8 Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings, With Fears of Anti-Asian Bias," *New York Times*, March 17, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/17/us/shooting-atlanta-acworth.

and not as "enemy aliens."[43]

The news media covering anti-Asian American violence during and after the pandemic has been mixed. On one hand, news agencies have done much to highlight cases of anti-Asian violence and spur public awareness as hate crimes occurred in New York City, Los Angeles, and other major urban areas. On the other hand, the same news coverage has focused unevenly on African American perpetrators even though a 2021 report by Janelle Wong at the University of Maryland points out that the majority of perpetrators in anti-Asian hate crimes are white, not Black. Social media "overreport and overrepresent black suspects."[44] Such biased coverage again pits one people of color against another—in this case, African Americans and Asian Americans—and distracts the public from the failure of the model minority myth to protect Asian residents. In a post-COVID-19 nation, it should be painfully clear that Asian Americans remain the "perpetual foreigner." It is about time and overdue that Asian Americans name, reject, and renounce such anti-racial strategies to "divide and conquer" and actively seek solidarity among themselves and with other people of color. Our ethnic histories are unique, but in our diverse experiences of suffering under the structures of racism we can nevertheless find a common calling.

Calling for Solidarity and Confronting Evil in Revelation

The grand vision of Revelation 7:9–14 focuses on the common calling of all God's people—a great multitude from every *ethnos*, tribe, people, and language—to endure suffering from the powers and principalities and proclaim the gospel that heralds: "salvation belongs to our God... and to the Lamb." It is a gospel message that confronts evil in a time of

43 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 258–63. It should be noted, however, that their stories are also complicated by a long history of brutal colonization by Japan of China (1937–45) and Korea (1910–45). One only need read Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking* (New York: Perseus Books, 1997); Sunyoung Park, trans. and ed., *On the Eve of Uprising and Other Stories of Colonial Korea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2010); or the testimonies of Chinese and Korean "comfort women" (i.e., women forced to be sex slaves for Japanese soldiers) to understand that deep hatred for Japan already existed among many Chinese and Korean immigrants in the United States. It was not too difficult for the *Korean National Herald-Pacific Weekly* newspaper to rage in their support of the war against Japan: "Is there in this world a worse Jap hater than a Korean?" (p. 261).

44 Janette Wong, "Beyond the Headlines: Review of National Anti-Asian Hate Incident Reporting/Data Collection Published over 2019–2021," UC Riverside, June 7, 2021, https://socialinnovation.ucr.edu/news/2021/06/17/most-anti-asian-attacks-committed-whites-new-study.

empire during the first-century church's day and ours.[45] It is our fidelity to proclaim this gospel and to endure the pushback by those who wish to silence our prophetic challenge that should be the basis of ecclesial unity. Since the model minority myth divides and does not unite, Asian American believers are called by God and the Lamb to abandon this false narrative. We instead tell our true history and testify to how Christ has empowered his people through every anti-Asian attack, obstacle, and barrier.

Isolated moments of Asian American solidarity with other people of color should be shared as part of our story. These stories bear a collective witness to the Revelation 7 vision of a united people of God. Takagi, for example, reminds us that in February 1903 Japanese and Mexican American farm workers banded together to strike in protest of wage cuts and unfair laboring contracts. The Japanese and Mexican Labor Association (JMLA) led by Kosaburo Baba, Y. Yamaguchi, and J. M. Lizarras organized a labor union that pressured the Western Agricultural Contracting Company to pay farm laborers fair wages and return the then $3.75/acre wage cut back to its original $5/acre rate.[46] Decades later, we witness how the now famous United Farm Workers (UFW) grape strike and boycott of 1956–66, successfully organized by Filipino union leaders Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz of the Agricultural Worker's Organizing Committee (AWOC) and by union leaders César Chavéz and Dolores Huerta of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), brought about labor reforms in the agricultural industry. The highly publicized boycott and marches by the UFW featured a unified Mexican Filipino activist front. Chavéz, a deeply devoted Roman Catholic, was instrumental in making sure the movement was committed to nonviolence, prayer, and even weeks-long fasts to challenge the nation's moral conscience. Together the combined Mexican and Filipino labor unions won contracts that gave farm laborers safer working conditions

[45] For Revelation's anti-imperial, or rather, alter-imperial message and theology of justice, Shane J. Wood, *The Alter-Imperial Paradigm: Empire Studies and the Book of Revelation* (Biblical Interpretation 140; Leiden: Brill, 2015); cf. Blount, Revelation, 1–14.

[46] Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*, 198–200.

and better wages.[47]

On April 29, 1992, a jury of twelve found four police officers, three of them white, "not guilty" for the brutal beating of Rodney King that was caught on video by a bystander. The verdict, in the words of one resident, was the "lighter" that "blew up" a class struggle in South Los Angeles—a poor urban area frustrated by decades of unemployment, a deteriorating economy, racial bias, under-resourced schools, and gang violence. African American protestors—ignited by the verdict and fueled by decades of anti-Black racism which exonerated white officers but incarcerated Black men and women—swept through south central Los Angeles and into nearby Koreatown. Years of misunderstanding between Korean business owners and Black neighbors who could neither be employed in the former's stores nor felt welcome as customers exploded in a human toll of fifty-eight deaths, 2,400 injuries, twelve thousand arrests, three thousand businesses looted and destroyed by vandalism and fire, and $800 million in property loss and damages.[48] For the first three hours of the riot, there was zero intervention by the Los Angeles police. As commentators retrospectively noted years later, it was almost as if the city allowed for the violence to spread unchecked in order to distract attention away from the systemic problem of racial profiling by the LAPD, anti-Black racial bias, and the unjust verdict.[49] Instead, news coverage focused on the violence between African American looters and Korean American store owners as an interracial conflict. Once again, the strategy of "divide and conquer" set one ethnic group against the other.[50]

As painful and traumatic as the riots were, African American and Asian American churches and community leaders nonetheless called for

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47 Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 252–53; Craig Scharlin and Lilia Villanueva with Elaine Kim, *Philip Vera Cruz: A Personal History of Filipino Immigrants and the Farmworkers Movement*, 3rd ed. (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2000), xxv–xxvi; Lisa Morehouse, "Grapes of Wrath: The Forgotten Filipinos Who Led a Farmworker Revolution," September 19, 2015, in *NPR Weekend Edition*, https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/09/16/440861458/grapes-of-wrath-the-forgotten-filipinos-who-led-a-farmworker-revolution. Also recommended is the 2014 film César Chavéz with Michael Peña in the lead role. The film highlights Chavéz's controversial fasting and hunger strikes.

48 Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*, 493–97.

49 Anjuli Sastry Krbechek and Karen Grigsby Bates, "When LA Erupted in Anger: A Look Back at the Rodney King Riots," April 26, 2017, in *NPR Special Series*, https://www.npr.org/2017/04/26/524744989/when-la-erupted-in-anger-a-look-back-at-the-rodney-king-riots.

50 Krbechek and Bates, "When LA Erupted in Anger"; Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*, 497.

and preached a message of peace. One African American minister called for an intercultural understanding between Blacks and Koreans, saying: "If we could appreciate and affirm each other's histories...there wouldn't be generalizations and stigmatizations, and we could see that we have more in common."[51] Rev. Paul Yung at Young-Nak Presbyterian Church in Lincoln Heights preached on the parable of the Good Samaritan the following Sunday and acknowledged that while many Korean families felt like the ransacked person left for dead on the road to Jericho, nevertheless, God's Word calls the Korean American church to cross the racial divide and love their neighbors. He exhorted: "I believe that is the time we should be united. United, not to condemn others, but united to care for others. United, not just to defend ourselves, but united to restore our community and rebuild our city."[52]

Churches and community leaders called for a peace walk a week after the riots. On May 2, 1992, thirty thousand Korean American marchers together with other non-Asian residents of the area walked through the streets of Los Angeles's Koreatown denouncing police violence and calling for peace.[53] Images of the march featured signs saying: "Love Your Neighbor—Jesus" and "We Can Get Along—Rodney King."[54]

There is a history of activism by Asian Americans whenever their civil rights are violated and, on each occasion, the model minority myth gets exposed as a lie. There is also a history of solidarity with other non-Asian groups who collaborate out of mutual regard for each other and a commonly pursued goal, as noted above.[55] Yet, in more recent years, we have also witnessed Asian Americans unite as advocates for, and in support of, non-Asian groups, out of a love for their neighbors. In the wake of what felt like a constant succession of Black lives ended needlessly and brutally at the hands of law enforcement officers in our nation—namely Trayvon Martin (1995–2012), Laquan McDonald (1997–2014), Michael Brown Jr. (1996–2014), and in more recent memory within the year of 2020

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51 Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*, 493.

52 Jeffrey D. Brand, "Assurances from the Pulpits: The Churches of Los Angeles Respond to the 1992 Riot," *Race, Gender, and Class* 11, no. 1 (2004): 44–45 [39–55].

53 Kim, Rose M. 2011. "Violence and Trauma as Constitutive Elements in Korean American Racial Identity Formation: The 1992 L.A. Riots/Insurrection/Saigu." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35 (11): 2012-2013 [1999–2018]. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.602090.

54 Jessica Dickerson, "Remembering the 1992 LA Riots Over Two Decades Later," *Huffington Post*, April 29, 2015, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/1992-la-riot-photos_n_7173540.

55 For a longer history of Asian American activism, see Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 283–313, 373–402.

alone, Ahmaud Arbery (1994–2020), Breonna Taylor (1993–2020), and George Floyd (1973–2020)—the Asian American Christian Collaborative (AACC) organized a peace march through the streets of Chicago on Sunday, June 28, 2020.[56] President of the AACC Rev. Raymond Chang, along with local Asian American pastors and community leaders in the wider Chicagoland area and with the support of Rev. Charlie Dates and other African American pastors, led over one hundred churches to march with "Asian American Christians for Black Lives and Dignity."

The two-mile march began at Chinatown and ended at Progressive Baptist Church. I was there. I remember the march, stopping strategically along the way to pray, sing hymns, and hear from select preachers. It was a hard time for the Chinese American community who saw their own stores vandalized and looted during some of the previous Black Lives Matter protests in Chicago. Yet the Holy Spirit of peace led us to pray for bridges to be built between Asian American and African American communities, for justice and reform in our nation's law enforcement practices, and for works of mercy that address the needs of low-income families in our area. It was a solemn time of reflection but also of worship, much like it was for the first-century churches in the Book of Revelation, who praised God as an act of resistance against evil and in fidelity to the Lamb of God.

The hymns of resistance in Revelation (nine altogether, including 7:9–12; see also 4:8–11; 5:9–14; 11:5–8; 11:17–18; 15:3–4; 16:5–7; 19:1–4; 19:5–8) function to claim that all "Praise, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power and strength be to our God for ever and ever" (7:12). Power, worship, and glory are ascribed to the Lord Jesus, not to Caesar, or any other Greco-Roman authority, empire, institution, principality, or deity.[57] Hymns sung by the early church were weapons of worship against their Roman oppressors. Hymns, sung then and today, especially during protests as the "Asian American Christians for Black Lives and Dignity" peace march, function to empower the worshipers and interces-

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[56] For what follows, see Raymond Chang, "The Asian American Christians for Black Lives and Dignity March in Chicago," The Asian American Christian Collaborative, July 1, 2020, https://www.asianamericanchristiancollaborative.com/article/the-asian-american-christians-for-black-lives-and-dignity-march-in-chicago; and Curtis Yee, "Young Asian American Christians Are Finding Their Voice on Racial Justice," *Christianity Today*, July 15, 2020, https://www.christianitytoday.com/2020/07/millennial-gen-z-asian-american-christians-racial-justice/.

[57] Blount, Revelation, 95–98; Max J. Lee, "Revelation," in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, eds. Gary Burge and Andrew Hill (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 1585–1627.

sors. They are enabled by the Spirit through worship "to express—with the full range of emotion, volume of voice, mental acuity, and spiritual freedom—theological truths that speak to the reality of God in a sinful world" and invoke God's sovereign, justice-bringing actions into areas of life dominated by evil.[58]

Final Exhortations

Revelation 7 functions as an angelic trumpet call to all saints, including the Asian American Christian community, to clothe themselves with priestly white robes (*stolai*; vv. 13–14) and intercede on behalf others as a way to bear witness to God's love and justice for our world. It is no small task that requires nothing less than the blood of the slain Lamb (v. 14) covering over every priest and washing them of their own evils before trying to expose the evil of other external agencies. Anger can be a great motivator against injustice. In fact, something is wrong with the Christian if one is not enraged by the pain and suffering unjustly inflicted on others. In Ephesians 4:26, Paul exhorts the church: "Be angry and do not sin" (*orgizesthe kai mē hamartanete*). The church is commanded to be angry but not in an unfocused way that leads to vicious behavior. If anger is excessive, it spirals into revenge and undermines unity (Rom 12:17–19; Eph 4:26–27; 1 Pet 3:9; Jas 1:19–21).[59]

Thus, the intercessor must be washed by the blood of Jesus, repent and experience forgiveness, not so much for being angry, which we are commanded to become, but for those moments of weakness when anger takes over, spirals into demonizing others, and seeks revenge rather than justice. We all need the blood of the slain Lamb to cover us. We all need each other to expose evil. Evil fights back. Yet the church cannot be silenced when the Lamb of God has paved the way through the cross for victory over the powers.

So, with the great multitude, may all of God's people say, "Amen! Amen!"

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58 Lee, "Revelation," 1620–21.

59 Max J. Lee, "Moral Transformation and Ethics," in *Behind the Scenes of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, eds. Bruce Longenecker, T.J. Lang, and Elizabeth E. Shively (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2024), 341 [339–47]; Dennis Edwards, *Might from the Margins: The Gospel's Power to Turn the Tables on Injustice* (Harrisburg, PA: Herald Press, 2020), especially his chapter "The Power of Anger."