

Jones Center News Digest, Issue 8

March 2021

Statement in Solidarity with the Asian and Asian American Communities (March 19, 2021)

"You don't choose the times you live in, but you do choose who you want to be. And you choose how you think."

--Grace Lee Boggs (1915-2015), Chinese American writer, philosopher, activist

The escalation in violence against Asians and Asian Americans since the start of the coronavirus pandemic finally is making headlines, tragically in the wake of the recent murders in Atlanta of six women of Asian descent. The Nathaniel R. Jones Center for Race, Gender, and Social Justice condemns this hatred and violence and stands in solidarity with our students and all members of the Asian and Asian American communities in this time of fear, pain, anger, and activism.

This racist targeting of members of the Asian and Asian American communities is not new. The law aided and abetted white supremacy and anti-Asian violence in, for example, the 1854 case *People v. Hall*, in which the California Supreme Court held that persons of Asian descent could not testify against a white person in court. In 1900, the Chinese were blamed for an outbreak of the bubonic plague in San Francisco (that likely started in a ship that had arrived from Australia), with a resulting lockdown of Chinatown that allowed white people to come and go freely while persons of Chinese and Japanese descent needed a health certificate. Chinese exclusion acts were an integral part of American law from the 1850s until 1943; and, of course, from 1942-1945, American citizens and others of Japanese descent were rounded up and incarcerated in internment camps, the constitutionality of such removals being notoriously upheld by the Supreme Court in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944). Racist claims of Asians taking jobs and opportunities away from whites has fueled violence against, among so many others, Filipino agricultural workers, Vietnamese shrimpers, and South Asian politicians. In 1982, Vincent Chin was beaten to death with a baseball bat by two autoworkers who were heard shouting racist obscenities, blaming Asians for the plight of the auto industry. Since 9/11, it has been dangerous to be or to look Muslim in the United States.

Gender plays a significant role in the historical and present-day violence and discrimination against the Asian and Asian American communities. The specific targets of the Atlanta attacks were Asian and Asian American women, who face unique dangers and challenges in the racialized patriarchy of American society. Often eroticized, Asian and Asian American women report rampant sexual violence and harassment, with perpetrators counting on them as "model minorities" to keep quiet about it. Asian and Asian American women have faced exclusion based specifically on gender, as well as exploitation and sexualized racism in the workplace.

So, what to do in these times? The Jones Center was founded to cultivate scholars, leaders, and activists committed to social change—and there is an urgent need for all of us to "choose to be" people who take action to make a difference. So how should we "choose to think"? A guiding principle of the Jones Center is that activism should be productive, constructive, and healing. What might that mean in the context of addressing the multiple and overlapping systemic inequities that result in tragedies like the Atlanta murders, the rate of suicides in the trans community, endless victims of racist policing, and the "new Jim Crow" that is mass incarceration? An activist like Grace Lee Boggs, with more than 80 years of experience on the ground in the struggles for equality at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, might suggest a few things like this: read, learn, teach, listen, step up and step back depending on the circumstances and your

own positionality, critique, illuminate the wrongs you see in society, and be brave enough to turn the mirror – honestly – back on yourself, put in the hard work, be open and supportive, make connections, build community. Or as she actually put it: “Become more ‘human’ human beings.”

The Nathaniel R. Jones Center is committed to participating in and furthering conversations and activities that seek to shine light on and work to eliminate the racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other inequalities so rampant in our local, national, and global communities. We believe sharing information that highlights the intersectional nature of historical and present-day inequities matters and makes a difference in advancing our shared goals for social change.

Announcing the 2021 Inaugural Morelli Colloquy: “Belonging and Difference: Interdisciplinary Perspectives”

We are thrilled to co-host this first-ever event with our colleagues in the European Studies Program in the College of Arts & Sciences. Our efforts with this event are guided by our sponsor, Bill Morelli, '74, '78, who said, “At a time when national discussion—often divisive—is taking place on issues of race, gender and justice, it’s important for the legal profession to take the lead in framing issues and developing solutions.” Speakers in law, the humanities, and the social sciences will discuss their work on a wide array of topics including: immigration; policing; Indigenous law and policy; the history of the queer, Black, Migrant, and Refugee Movements of the 1980s Netherlands and their relevance to the present day; scientific racism; and colonialism.

Keynote Conversation: **Tiffany N. Florvil**, Associate Professor, University of New Mexico College of Arts & Sciences and **Natsu Taylor Saito**, Distinguished University Professor and Professor of Law Center for Access to Justice, Georgia State University College of Law;

Guest speakers: **Sahar Aziz**, Professor of Law and Chancellor’s Social Justice Scholar, Rutgers Law School; **Jeannine Bell**, Richard S. Melvin Professor of Law, Indiana University Maurer School of Law; **Manuela Boatcă**, Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg Institute for Sociology; **Matthew L.M. Fletcher**, Professor of Law & Director of the Indigenous Law & Policy Center, Michigan State University College of Law; **Tiffany N. Florvil**, Associate Professor, University of New Mexico College of Arts & Sciences; **Chandra Frank**, Taft Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Cincinnati College of Arts and Sciences; **Khary Oronde Polk**, Associate Professor of Black Studies and Sexuality, Women’s and Gender Studies, Amherst College, Departments of Black Studies and Sexuality, Women’s & Gender Studies; **Sunnie Rucker-Chang**, Assistant Professor of Slavic, Director of European Studies, University of Cincinnati College of Arts and Sciences; **Yolanda Vázquez**, Professor of Law, University of Cincinnati College of Law.

Register and See the Latest Updates: [2021 Inaugural Morelli Colloquy](#)

History Matters

The Jones Center was pleased to join UC’s Women’s Center and UC’s Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) in celebrating Women’s History Month. Our “Urgent Conversations” Zoom event for students in early-March featured a discussion on the activism of Grace Lee Boggs.

Read: [“Postscript: Grace Lee Boggs”](#)

Read: [“These are the Times that Grow Our Souls”](#)

Watch: [American Revolutionary \(documentary on Grace Lee Boggs\)](#)

Community Matters

Bad medicine and racial disparities in health care systems continues to be at the forefront of communities around the world, especially with the continuing pandemic. This issue was also the topic of our “Urgent Conversations” Zoom event for students in mid-February.

Read: [“A Covid-19 Relief Fund Was Only for Black Residents. Then Came the Lawsuits.”](#)

Read: [“Bad Medicine: The Harm that Comes from Racism”](#)

Perspective Matters

Four alumni shared their experiences in the public service sector with current law students at our “Making a Difference While Making a Buck” alumni panel discussion. The alumni participants were:

- **Jen Cuesta** ('14), Rural Pro Bono Program Attorney at Colorado Legal Services and Co-Founder of Lady Justice Brewing (Colorado)
- **Damaris Del Valle** ('09), Assistant Public Defender at Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office (Florida)
- **Alicia Miller** ('14), Lead Attorney for the Second Chance Clinic at the Ohio Justice and Policy Center (Ohio)
- **Jyoshu Tsushima** ('14), Staff Attorney with the housing team at the Legal Aid Society of Columbus (Ohio)

Upcoming Events

Watch your email for updates and Zoom invites. Join us!

Thursday, 4/1, 7:00 PM	Urgent Conversations on Zoom, hosted by Professor Yolanda Vazquez, Theme: “Belonging and Difference”
Thursday, 4/8, 9:00 AM	2021 Inaugural Morelli Colloquy. Learn more and register to attend at: 2021 Inaugural Morelli Colloquy .

Read, Watch, and Listen More

Visit the **Jones Center Website** for the [News Digest Archives](#), our [Social Justice Blog](#), and our [Statement: In Struggle and Solidarity \(June 4, 2020\)](#).