

Call for Papers
Special Issue of *Educational Studies*

“Invisibility is Not a Natural State for Anyone”: The Fight for K-12 Asian American Studies

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Our current political moment is fraught with division deeply rooted in white supremacy. While the racial justice movements that emerged after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless Black folk offered hope that the Eurocentric narratives taught in school might be disrupted to present learners with more honest and pluralistic narratives and representations, the book bans, anti-critical race theory, and anti-transgender movements of the last two years have threatened the possibility of liberatory and justice-oriented curriculum in public schools.

In the meantime, the steep rise in anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic inspired the mobilization of Asian American communities to advocate for the teaching of their histories in K-12 public schools, hoping to reduce acts of violence against their communities. Against this backdrop, Illinois became the first state to require teaching Asian American history in K-12 public schools through the passage of the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History Act in 2021. New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island soon passed similar bills, and Asian American communities in other states have also joined the movement to include Asian American studies in PK-12 school curriculum.

While these efforts offer some possibilities for racially just education, some of the mobilizations are concerning because they prioritize Asian American histories to the exclusion of others. For example, in 2023 Florida signed into law the teaching of AAPI history— specifically the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II— in the midst of the state’s ban on Advanced Placement African American Studies as well as the banning of classroom discussions about sexual orientation and the interrogation of anti-Blackness. Therefore, the Florida mandate for AAPI history has been criticized for promoting the model minority stereotype and for failing to be in solidarity with other marginalized groups (Najarro, 2023).

Meanwhile, efforts for Asian American curricular inclusion in other Republican-controlled states like Texas and Virginia proved unsuccessful as school culture wars intensified. Indeed, there seems to be a clear line between Democratic-led states interested in exposing public school children to more diverse and inclusive education and Republican-led states that aimed to prevent classroom conversations about power and oppression, including but not limited to race/racism, gender, sexuality, and justice.

Also important to note is whether teachers are prepared to teach Asian American histories in their full complexity. While legislative mandates are important, teacher professional development is a vital component to the successful teaching of Asian American studies and this piece is an underdeveloped area even in states where mandates have passed. Indeed, research suggests most teachers lack in-depth knowledge of Asian American history (Rodríguez, 2018); even Asian American teachers, who make up only 2.3% of the teaching profession (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), tend to lack knowledge of their ethnic histories because of the omission of Asian American history in school. For teachers to successfully incorporate Asian American studies into curriculum, they need a strong preservice and inservice education for building content and pedagogic knowledge of Asian American studies (Curammeng, 2022; Sacramento et al., 2023; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014).

This special issue aims to highlight Asian American studies advocates, scholar-activists, and other efforts advancing the teaching and learning of Asian American studies in PK-12 schools across the United States. We draw inspiration from the words of Mitsuye Yamada (1981):

We need to raise our voices a little more, even as they say to us "This is so uncharacteristic of you." To finally recognize our own invisibility is to finally be on the path toward visibility. Invisibility is not a natural state for anyone. (p. 40)

We hope that this issue will be a unique opportunity for scholarship in PK-12 education, teacher education, and Asian American studies to come together in ways that clearly articulate the possibilities, challenges, and complexities of this emerging movement for Asian American studies in K-12 education. Submissions should center the stories and experiences of Asian Americans involved in these efforts, and may address tenets of Asian American critical race theory, including Asianization, transnationalism, strategic (anti)essentialism, (re)constructive history, intersectionality, and story, theory, and praxis (Iftikar & Museus, 2018).

To that end, we invite original manuscripts that have not yet been published on any website, journal, or book which address the K-12 Asian American studies movement in specific local or state contexts by responding to the following questions:

- How can we ensure that Asian American studies in K-12 classrooms goes beyond sheer representation and superficial multiculturalism and instead honors the anti-colonialism, liberation, and solidarity at the heart of ethnic studies?
- How have grassroots organizations and/or youth and community advocates pushed for Asian American curricular inclusion in specific school, district, and/or state contexts?
- What different strategies and challenges exist among efforts for Asian American curricular inclusion based on local and/or state political climates?
- When successful, what have been the outcomes of state-wide mandates of K-12 Asian American histories/studies education on various educational communities?
- How have students and teachers advocated for Asian American curricular inclusion and what different models for teaching and learning about Asian America exist?

Projected Timeline

- Call released on January 31, 2024
- 3-page proposals due March 31, 2024
- Proposal decisions made by April 30, 2024
- Full-length article due by July 31, 2024
- Peer-review completed by October 31, 2024
- Final revised manuscripts due December 31, 2024
- Anticipated publication in Spring 2025

Please send 3-page proposals to Sohyun An (san2@kennesaw.edu) by March 31, 2024. Invited, full manuscripts will be due for initial, editorial review on July 31, 2024, and should be no more than 25 double-spaced pages, not including references. All articles will undergo a double-blind external peer review process.

References

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