

Transcript: ANTI-ASIAN RACISM IS NOT NEW (PART ONE)

Producer, Angela Jackson: Warning, in this episode there are mentions of sexual assault and violence. Please exercise caution for all listeners under thirteen.

Archived Recording (Newscaster)

The suspect in the deadly Atlanta area shooting spree telling police he was motivated by a sex addiction. 21-year-old Robert Long charged with killing eight people in three separate massage parlors last night, 6 of them Asian women. Long telling police though that race was not a factor.

Archived Recording (Police Officer)

He claims that these, and as the chief said this is still early, but he does claim that it was not racially motivated. He apparently has an issue, what he considers as sex addiction and sees these locations as something that allows him to go to these places, and it's a temptation for him that he wanted to eliminate.

Dr. Crystal Han

I actually remember I think it was a Tuesday night that it had happened, and my sister texted me about it and what is kind of weird is my initial reaction was just kind of like well of course this happened. This is not news to me. This is an extreme version of news of anti-Asian like discrimination and like racism and violence that has been happening the whole year. On top of an invisible history of anti-Asian racism that's happened ever since Asian people came to America in like the 1800s. And so, I almost had a lack of reaction, until the next day everything kind of blew up in the media. And it seems like the rest of society kind of like caught up to some extent, that wow. And I think that in our groups there's been themes that are not new but resurfaced of, now maybe people can see the suffering that AAPI communities have been experiencing like this whole time.

Rosemary Ferreira

My name is Rosemary Ferreira.

Courtney Jones Carney

And my name is Courtney Jones Carney. Welcome to The Table podcast, where we unpack questions regarding race, ethnicity, culture, norms, and current events. That unfamiliar voice you heard was of Dr. Crystal Han...

Dr. Crystal Han

My name is Crystal Han I am a first-year Child and Adolescent Psychiatry fellow at the University of Maryland. I use she/her pronouns. My parents are originally from China and I was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin. And some of my academic interests are based around cultural psychiatry particularly in teens and young adults. And I am really excited to be here with Angeline.

Courtney Jones Carney

Dr. Han co-facilitates a monthly affinity group for Asian and Asian American students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore with Dr. Angeline Pham...

Dr. Angeline Pham

My name is Angeline and my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'm currently a third-year psychiatry resident here at the University of Maryland and both my parents are from Vietnam they immigrated to the US during the Vietnam War so I identify as a first-generation Vietnamese American. And I grew up in Northern Virginia and I still have some family there as well. And my interests include minority mental health, cultural psychiatry and forensics.

Courtney Jones Carney

We invited Crystal and Angeline to discuss the stark increase in anti-Asian racism and hate crimes in the U.S. over the past year and the impacts of racial violence on the mental health and overall well-being of Asians and Asian Americans. So, before we get started can we talk about the press conference clip that was played? What are your reactions to the claim that this was not racially motivated?

Rosemary Ferreira

I think that what stands out to me, and we didn't include this into the previous recording, but what stands out to me was also how the that same police officer or Sheriff stated that this young man was just having a bad day. Like, that just that makes me feel infuriated. And it just makes me feel like White men, who have clearly hurt and killed People of Color in this country get to routinely get away with their murders. And that's something that you're going to hear later on in this podcast, of the history of White men targeting Asian communities through violent acts, whether it was lynching or mass massacres here in the U.S. and abroad, violating Asian women. This is a routine. This is not new. This is something that continues to happen throughout American history

Courtney Jones Carney

So, it can be extremely difficult for me to digest the attempts to humanize someone who just took the lives of innocent folks. And so the way that sometimes, when I'm watching the news, particularly after a mass shooting, that lone White men have been excused for their behaviors because they're having a bad day, or because they have a sex addiction and honestly we don't really need to, I don't really need to unpack whether or not this was racially motivated, because it looks that way and if we just think about the increases in anti-Asian hate over the past year, we might be able to come to our own conclusions as to whether it's racially motivated. You know whether that Sheriff is willing to say in that press conference that it is.

Rosemary Ferreira

Yeah, Courtney I absolutely agree because I don't think that we can see these, especially the Atlanta shooting as an isolated incident, right? This plays into a larger history of anti-Asian racism. And what we need to acknowledge, and by we, I mean as a collective American society, is that anti-Asian racism is not new. In her response to the Atlanta shooting, Angeline highlights key moments throughout American history that have fueled anti-Asian hate and racism, from wars abroad to the depiction of Asian women in Hollywood.

Dr. Angeline Pham

The tension and like uneasiness that I've been feeling since the start of Covid, due to the escalation in like anti-Asian violence, I think it only became further intensified after learning about the mass shooting. And for sure, the Asian community is hurting and still reeling from that trauma. We've been suffering as a result of all the anti-China rhetoric, which of course as we know has produced the increase in anti-Asian hate, verbal, and even the physical attacks on our most vulnerable in the community. But I think it was really disheartening how the media was just very hesitant to call this a hate crime. When I felt like it

was just such a expression of very deep rooted like racism and misogyny. And instead of diving deeper into the history of anti-Asian racism in America, the media instead kind of chose to spin it and change the narrative and make it about the gunman having a sex addiction. And also in that same vein, sexualizing the victims for working at a massage business, basically totally denying the fact that misogynistic racism was what fueled their murders. And it just made me reflect on, it made me kind of become more interested in learning about Asian American history, the history of Asians in America, and from that I learned a lot. That we can't even blame the recent events of this past year as the reason for what happened. And I think it actually goes all the way back to as early as the time when the first Chinese came to America. And back then I had learned that there was like the Page Act in 1875, and that act had actually restricted immigration for Chinese women, and in it they even called Chinese women "immoral" and referred to them as "prostitutes." And then there was also Anna Mae Wong who I also learned was the first Chinese-American Hollywood movie star. But the interesting thing was she was only ever offered like these exotic supporting roles, usually playing like fetishized, subservient like seductresses and stuff like that. And I also reflected on how there was a lot of U.S. military presence in Asia during the war. For the Korean War, the Vietnam War. And of course during those times there was a lot of women who were doing sex work on the bases, but also there was a lot of rape and sexual violence towards Asian women. And at times that was actually used as like a weapon during the war to like pillage the villages. So all of that, I think contributed to the portrayals of Asian women in the general public as being subservient, exotic, hyper sexualized, and I think that history is what led to the violence that we saw towards those Asian women in Atlanta. And we've honestly never been treated as equal, because White men control our narrative and that's what led to the tragedy in Atlanta.

Courtney Jones Carney

You know a point that was made by both Angeline and Crystal in our interviews is the erasure and invisibility of Asian American history. We want to dedicate this episode to further unpacking the history of anti-Asian racism in the United States and how to build solidarity movements across racial and ethnic groups. We had so many great gems from our time with Angeline and Crystal that we are releasing a second episode that will focus on racial trauma and mental health for Asian and Asian Americans and People of Color more broadly. Make sure you check that episode out. So, let's delve into the history of anti-Asian racism in the United States.

[MUSIC TRANSITION]

Rosemary Ferreira

As Crystal mentioned earlier, anti-Asian racism began when Asians first came to this country around the 1850s. The first big wave of immigrants came from China to the west coast of the United States. At the time, there was a high demand for cheap labor in the gold mining industry and the construction of the transcontinental railroad. Chinese workers met this demand and proved to be integral to the establishment of the railroad. However, instead of being praised for their hard work, they were met with discrimination and violence. Chinese workers were given a much lower pay than their White counterparts and as Chinese migration continued to increase, White railroad workers and miners began to feel economically threatened. Terms we still hear today such as "they're stealing our jobs" were used to pit White workers against Chinese ones. And this wasn't only happening in the U.S. In other White dominated countries such as Canada and Australia, the term "Yellow Peril" soon became a popularized way to describe Chinese people and other Asians as primitive, diseased, and inferior. This Anti-Asian rhetoric continued to build and gain attention from newspapers and political figures. As a result, Chinese workers soon became targets of racially motivated violence. In 1871, 17 Chinese men were lynched in

Los Angeles by a mob of White men. Massacres also occurred in gold mining towns in Wyoming and Oregon, where 62 Chinese people were collectively murdered by groups of White men. Laws and policies legalized and further fueled anti-Asian racism. In 1854, the Supreme Court of California decided in the case *People vs. Hall* that Asian people could not testify against a White person in court.

Courtney Jones Carney

So how could the White men who massacred Chinese people ever be held accountable?

Rosemary Ferreira

Exactly, they never were. In all of the three cases I mentioned, no one was imprisoned or legally punished for their crimes. White railroad and mine workers continued to gain political backing from politicians who would eventually pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act halted immigration from China for 61 years and denied citizenship to people of Chinese descent living in the U.S. This legal exclusion eventually expanded to include other groups from Asia, such as Japanese, Indian, Filipino and Korean immigrants. But you know Courtney, as I was digging through articles for this episode, I learned that if it wasn't for a lawsuit from Wong Kim Ark, a Chinese American born in San Francisco, I, along with many other children of immigrants, would not be considered a citizen. It was after being denied entry back into the U.S. from China, that Wong Kim Ark's lawsuit against the U.S. government resulted in the establishment of birthright citizenship.

Courtney Jones Carney

That is an extremely important part of history that I know I didn't learn about in my history classes. Unfortunately, naturalized citizenship wouldn't be extended to Asians and other immigrants who at the time weren't considered White until 1952 with the passing of the McCarran-Walter Act. This makes me think about the connections between citizenship and race. For 150 years in this country's history, citizenship was tied to Whiteness, and later on Blackness. Indigenous folks were left out of the equation and as immigration increased, folks who were not Black or White and wanted citizenship had to petition for either Whiteness or Blackness. And while people probably could have received citizenship through petitioning for Blackness, when you think about the way that white supremacy and anti-Blackness have always worked in this country, what potentially would be the benefit for that? So, we saw countless court cases where individuals were petitioning for Whiteness in order to receive citizenship. In the early 20th century, there were two separate cases where Asian immigrants petitioned the U.S. government to grant them citizenship with the hope that they would then be considered White. Takao Ozawa, a Japanese man appealed for naturalized citizenship on the basis of his light skin and good moral character. But the Supreme Court rejected his case, stating that being White was connected to being Caucasian. With that argument in mind, Bhagat Singh Thind, an Indian man, argued that the definition of Caucasian included groups in India. But the Supreme Court rejected his case stating that being White was to be determined by the average man. And of course, at that time, the average man was White. The 20th century was also marked by several wars between the U.S. and countries in Asia that led to the violent and hostile treatment of Asians and Asian Americans in the U.S. and abroad. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order to imprison Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants into internment camps. From 1942 to 1945, around 117,000 Japanese people, including 60,000 children were forced to live in what were often reconfigured fairgrounds and racetracks featuring buildings not meant for human habitation, like horse stalls or cow sheds. There was also the brutal violence of the Vietnam War, which lasted 20 years. In that time span, more than 3 million people were killed in the Vietnam War, half of whom were Vietnamese civilians. On March 16, 1968, 53 years to the day of the Atlanta shooting, American soldiers killed 504 unarmed

Vietnamese civilians, most of whom were women, children, and elderly men in My Lai, a farming village. Although named as one of the worst atrocities in American military history, only one officer involved was imprisoned. He was eventually released on parole after serving 3 years.

Rosemary Ferreira

While we must name the harm, violence, and discrimination imposed on Asian and Asian Americans, we must also acknowledge that throughout Asian American history, there has always been resistance. For example, two thousand Chinese railroad workers organized a weeklong strike in 1867, demanding higher wages and shorter workdays that were equal to White workers, and the end to beatings. This was the largest worker strike of the era. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Asian and Asian Americans organized and joined other strikes with Latinx workers in the farming and garment industries, demanding the end of worker exploitation through increased pay, health benefits, and better working conditions. The Third World Liberation Front was another example of Asian Americans organizing together with other People of Color for equitable reform. The coalition consisted of the Black Students Union, the Latin American Students Organization, the Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE) the Filipino-American Students Organization, the Asian American Political Alliance, and El Renacimiento, a Mexican-American student organization. These student groups came together at the San Francisco State University and University of California, Berkely to demand the establishment of a Third World College with curriculum that centered the history and experiences of People of Color that would be taught by Faculty of Color. Although a Third World College was never developed, the first Ethnic Studies department in the country was established as a result of student strikers.

Courtney Jones Carney

As solidarity movements gained traction in the U.S. and communist regimes were rising around the world, the U.S. government needed to prove that the U.S. was a racial democracy worthy of being a leader of the “free world” while at the same time find a way to calm White American anxieties around the civil rights movement and stunt Black American progress. The model minority myth was created to do just that. This myth, which is still used today, perpetuates a stereotypical narrative that Asian Americans are intelligent and successful, particularly in the math and sciences while not accounting for changes to immigration such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which moved towards favoring immigrants who were highly skilled in fields and industries that were of need in the U.S. The model minority myth also positions Asian Americans as docile, obedient, and law-abiding people who value hard work and quote traditional family values. The stereotypes created of Asian Americans essentially erase or ignore the differences and complexities across race and ethnicity, while simultaneously holding Asian Americans as the model and placing blame on Black people for social problems, such as high rates of poverty and unemployment rates. Political figures determined that if Asians could find success within the system, why couldn't Black folks? These racist stereotypes can be internalized by Communities of Color and can cause deep harm and end with violence. The LA Riots of 1992 were an example of tensions between Black and Korean communities that resulted in the deaths of 63 people and injuries of more than 2,000 people. Thousands of people protested the beating of Rodney King by police officers as well as the death of Latasha Harlins, a 15-year-old Black girl who was shot by a Korean convenience store owner.

Rosemary Ferreira

We asked Crystal and Angeline to share their thoughts on the conflict that can arise between Black and Asian communities and how we can repair the harm generated by racist stereotypes.

Courtney Jones Carney

I just feel like there's a lot of tension surrounding like anti-Blackness and anti-Asian racism and like how attention is being paid to the two and so I feel like I've been in meetings or like Facebook conversations where folks were like oh now we're supposed to support and you know support efforts against anti-Asian hate like where Asian people when we... you know like it's just like this constant conversation where it seems like some folks are like how do we? How do we work against both of these forms of racism at the same time without maybe calling out the fact that there has been anti-Asian rhetoric in Black communities and there clearly has been like anti-black rhetoric in Asian communities. And so like how do we consolidate all of that for like joint liberation.

Dr. Crystal Han

Yeah, I mean, I definitely agree with the need to have that conversation. I think that in the spaces that I occupy in a lot of Asian communities there has been in the past year also a call to really confront and explore a lot of anti-Black racism within Asian communities like I it is there I think that it does have to be, you know, called out, I guess per say to some extent, because I think that any one groups, you know, oppression is indirect./ an obstacle to liberation period, and I think that in the Asian community a lot of people have experienced racism at the hands of people in the Black community too. And the trauma is real, the pain is real and it makes it really, really hard. It's just really hard, and I think that... I mean, I appreciate you bringing that up 'cause I feel like it's so hard but we really do need to like stand together in solidarity and it I think that the position that all oppressed communities are in really sets us up to be in conflict with each other like systemwide. And it kind of permeates a lot of people's individual like prejudices and discrimination as well and I mean, even the Atlanta shootings, of course, was really Trump traumatic and horrific and shortly after we've had, you know the murders of Daunte Wright and Adam Toledo and most recently you know the Indianapolis shootings killing people in the Sikh community like it's so hard when stuff keeps happening to like... You know it. It's like I feel like we're in this cycle of like different groups being traumatized, people showing up for different groups. People, you know, calling out other people for not showing up enough and at the end of the day it's so exhausting and we kind of have to like keep in perspective like the dominating like White supremacist structures that is the root of all of this, which is certainly easier said than done. But I agree, I think that there... like the one of the major steps towards healing is really coming together and everyone like supporting each other. And I also feel kind of uncomfortable with the responsibility and the idea of like, well, where's the Asian people when showing up for us. And like where is the where's the Black people showing up for Asians like everyone needs to show up for everyone and White people need to show up the most. If anything you know, because that's kind of the structures as we live in. What are your thoughts?

Dr. Angeline Pham

Yeah, I definitely agree with Crystal, and I think Crystal you echo a lot of what I'm feeling and what I'm thinking as well. And I think that it's so easy for us to get distracted and be pitted against each other and it's kind of like the oppression Olympics. But at the end of the day we have to reflect on what the greater reason for this is and it's because of what white supremacy has put in place for us to distract us from the bigger issue and problem at hand. The other day, during one of our like monthly discussion groups, I think it was the one with the Hopkins students. That was a very fruitful discussion and there was a lot of great resources that were shared and there was one in particular with the Washington Post I believe. Was that right, Crystal the one where it was they had come. The guy for let me look it up real quick. I can pull it up and share it with you guys as well, but I thought that they did a great job at modeling what it would look like to kind of bridge the gap between you know the Black community and the Asian community and show what it's like to kind of start having that conversation with each other and figuring out ways to work with each other to work towards trying to improve the just like really

intense racial tension that we're experiencing right now in this country. It was John Yang, he's the president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice and it was Sherrilyn Ifill, and she's the president and director, counsel of the NAACP, Legal Defense and Education Fund, and I thought that they had a very fruitful discussion with each other. And I learned a lot from that, and I think that that's something that I would like to model in our smaller community as well

Dr. Crystal Han

There is a website called Cross Cultural Solidarity and there's a lot of resources on here, both historically and kind of contemporary examples and ongoing projects of kind of like broader nationwide like Black Asian solidarities. And so I think a big part of what I've learned in my reading is like there is a lot of like history of like Black Asian solidarity that is just erased by our history books and the media and what is amplified is always so kind of like click baity, and like divisive of like who is not showing up for who and it gets people kind of like right righteously riled up. But you know, it's really counterproductive to to the the most important causes. I read something recently about how in the 90s during the Rodney King riots, you know there was of course a lot of conflict between Black and Korean communities after the incident and essentially, it was very sensationalized the kind of like destruction of Korean communities by Black communities at that time. But what was not reported on was how the community is really like, came together and with so much work from both leadership of both sides. Like they really like, did a lot of work healing the conflict there and like most recently in kind of like the recent polls of like the past year, Korean votes were more like Democratic and investing in like Black community support as well. So there's been like noticeable and like objective work and changes that have come from solidarity and coming together which we don't know about unless you go looking for it, because that's kind of just all part of the narrative that overwhelms our media and so I think that would be great too if I don't really know if there's like stuff going on, but it would be great for us to I don't know, maybe have like meetings with our group and like local kind of like Black community groups. I know that within. ACAP, the Academy of Child Psychiatrists, recently like the Asian Caucus and the Black Caucus like came together and had multiple meetings for like process groups of like the trauma that's been happening in both communities and coming together to figure out, kind of like academically and like scholarly, how can they make changes as well so yeah, I think that's super important.

Courtney Jones Carney

Thank you for that. So in order to understand racism, we generally have to talk about race and so I guess to understand the types of racism and oppression, then it seems like we categorize that oppression so anti-Asian, anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti-Latinx but it sometimes feels like in creating this categorization, it doesn't allow us to really collectively see the impact of white supremacy. So how do you prioritize in group conversations and healing, similar to the affinity spaces that you're creating while simultaneously focusing on the cumulative effects of racism across race and social identity?

Dr. Crystal Han

I think that's a great question. In our group so far, I would say that the function as of now is to more so serve as kind of like a safe space and like supportive discussion group, and we've been primarily spending the time kind of like facilitating people processing their individual experience and like supporting each other through that and I think naturally, as we have conversations, we do work in and kind of like gain collective insight into the more systemic forces that has made our experiences the way that they are. For example, I remember well like we bring up our personal experience effects of the model minority myth all the time and we have discussed how the model minority myth serves systemic purposes to make Asian struggles invisible, pit Asian against Black communities against each other, and

all of that stuff too. And we also talk about I think we've talked also multiple times about White fragility and kind of like White people's inability to tolerate discussions about race as a systemic issue as well in, like personal, educational, professional spaces to force the silence to be maintained. So yeah, I think that's a great point. I think that we you know like I said, we end up talking about this kind of like systemic racism type things, and it would be really interesting if we did have maybe like a session or two, be more, maybe structurally dedicated to education about how these structures came about and in what ways they impact us both personally and in ways we might not be aware of. Angeline. What do you think?

Dr. Angeline Pham

Yeah, I think that that's a great point, Crystal, and we've had a couple sessions like although we targeted specifically towards like other Asian students, we have had people join in from other minority groups as well, and they offered their perspectives and they I actually really appreciated it, because they really offered us like their support and their comfort from those experiences that we were having those discussions and offered their perspectives as well so I'm interested in maybe we could always hold more groups that might be more inclusive and just make it broader because I think that we definitely could benefit from that as well.

Courtney Jones Carney

Yeah, it sounds like a good potential idea. If there were, if there are separate affinity groups that are operating, then maybe every once in a while they come together to kind of think about the ways that this the cumulative effects of racism and structures of white supremacy and how they work to harm all of us and how they limit our joint liberation.

[Music Transition]

Rosemary Ferreira

What does this internalized racism look like for us as People of Color. You know we touched earlier on the Black and Asian community and conflict there, but also the resistance and resilience there as well. And talking about White people and what white supremacy has done in terms of harming Communities of Color. And so, I want to like center Whiteness but also not center Whiteness in our conversation. But I think that, how do we work towards acknowledging the ways that that white supremacy is internalized by People of Color? And also not burden ourselves in trying to educate White people about White supremacy?

Dr. Crystal Han

Yeah, I think that is a very important question and I think, uh, you know, I do think that for change to happen, you know White communities have to be pulling their weight, if not more so you know because of the way that our system is set up. Like I know of like some like study groups that White people hold with other White people, exploring their Whiteness like I think that part of the problem is that as a society we see Whiteness as the default and like a lot of people don't think this is like a White problem, this is like the minority problem. And how do we solve the minority problem? But when so much of the quote unquote my, they can't see I'm doing quotation marks, but I keep doing quotation marks with the minority problem because at the end of the day, that problem is a White problem and that a lot of it I think does depend on that. And I don't think that you know, racially marginalized groups should hold the responsibility to make that happen. And at the same time, I feel like the reality is like a lot of the momentum does have to come from, like the marginalized groups because this is these are our lives and it's very unfortunate. I struggle myself sometimes with feeling like why do I have to be fixing the

problem that we are not like we're the victims of and shouldn't be hours to fix? And I think that a lot of the times it's just you know, this is how progress as I see it has to kind of happen and I think that a lot of what we're talking about in terms of what can people do who are part of Communities of Color is a lot of what we've touched upon, you know, like when you have the energy and like the time and the will to do it like use your voice and like amplify our experience and advocate for our communities and you know, look for ways to be allies to others, and like come together in solidarity for a common cause, and you know, I don't think that it is our job, but I hope that we can help the process of like educating broader society and advocating for representation in positions of leadership, representation in the curriculum, like the entire curriculum in every system, and just like yeah, education and awareness of all of our histories and our experiences and finding community within all of our communities and not feeling like you're operating in a silo. And I think that it's complicated and multi-pronged and I think that the anti-racist fight looks different for every person, and I think that every person can figure out what balance of whatever you can do works for you and I think that there's no right way to do it. And that yeah, it's complicated, but I have optimism. I think that the fact that we're having these conversations and that you like invited us is a testament to that. Angeline, what do you think?

Dr. Angeline Pham

Yeah Crystal I totally agree with you there and sometimes I get really frustrated because I feel like I'm working at a system that's like already unjust. And it's like how can I claw my way up to like you know, like scream? Do I have to scream at the top of my lungs to be heard or what? And sometimes I just want to throw my hands up in the air and just be like this isn't my job like they are the ones that need to educate themselves, but at the same time we've left the ball in their court all these years and nothing has changed. And it's continuing to get worse so I think that we do need to speak up and use our voices and advocate for ourselves, because clearly, they're not doing a good job at recognizing us, and I think that once we get that momentum, I'm hoping that that will help things get better. And I think that by like what Crystal said you know, working towards being in those positions of power, like holding office positions and stuff like that and having more representation in those higher-level positions is one of the places we can also strive towards as well so that our voices are heard.

Courtney Jones Carney

Yeah, to Rosemary's point, I think this is a very complex time where it's like we don't want to lead the charge necessarily because there's a lot of work that a lot of White people need to do and like we did not create this mess. However, MLK talked about White moderates telling us to wait, it's time to wait, and I think that if we don't say no, now is the time and here are the things that you need to do and go do that over there in a group of White people, then perhaps we will just continue to wait and there won't be very much progress, and so while some people may think that that is centering the needs of White folks, I think it's centering our needs and recognizing that in order for us to meet our needs, unfortunately we have to make these demands. We have to say these are the things that we expect now can you please go over there and do it? And we're going to collectively work on ourselves at that same time. So yeah, it's complex, but otherwise I don't know that I have very much faith, very much faith that the work will happen if we don't, as People of Color provide the direction and the instructions.

Rosemary Ferreira

Courtney's point highlights the need for us to think about racism as a structural problem, not as a Black vs. Asian issue or the problem People of Color must carry. The U.S. has a history of atrocities against People of Color. This episode focused on those against Asians and Asian Americans. What is the best way for us to acknowledge this history?

Dr. Angeline Pham

When I think about it, it really goes back to the education system, 'cause I think that by learning the history, that's how you learn to move forwards and learn how the history shaped how things are in order to not make those same mistakes and fall into those mistakes. But if we're not being exposed to the mistakes that were made as a country, how are we ever going to learn and move from that, I mean. I remember learning about, uhm, you know. Like in history we do so much learning about you know all the great things that you know America has done as a country and we learn a lot about like European history but why aren't we learning about all the like you know not so great moments in history. I remember learning about the Vietnam War and it barely spanned a few pages in our American history textbook. Uhm, and it's I think that we just need more education about these things that maybe America might not be so proud of because those are the things that we need to learn how it led to that and how to prevent that from happening again. Like why aren't we like?... Another recent thing that I just learned from one of our discussion groups was that some of the first Chinese people in America helped make the right for like birthright citizenship, and I had no idea about that, so I feel like we need to be celebrating the resilience of all those that sacrificed everything to come to this country and build a new life from the ground up. But I don't think that we're doing that as much as kind of celebrating the achievements that the White man made.

Courtney Jones Carney

Yeah, I remember posing a similar sort of question to a class to students in a class that I was teaching about inclusive like the infusion of inclusive curriculum in schools and so this one student said, well, actually in my school it was really inclusive because people of different races and ethnicities they would get removed from class and then they go to a separate space to then talk about their race or their ethnicity. And I was like, well, that's interesting so do we think that that's like inclusive education because only that person is learning right? Only the people with that particular race or ethnicity are learning about their own race or ethnicity, and it's not infused into the curriculum. And it really gave that person some pause because they thought that they were participating in something that was pretty novel and pretty like inclusive and maybe a gold standard on how you do this, but I think what you're talking about is really infusing it into the curriculum for all. It's not just a month where we celebrate a particular group of people. It's all year. Every day we focus on this shared history that is American history, not from the lens of White supremacy.

Dr. Angeline Pham

Yeah, I just think it's so ironic that I remember growing up learning like America is the country that's like the melting pot and stuff and yet we don't even learn about what makes America a melting pot other than learning that you know a bunch of people are able to immigrate here. But it's like there's just so much more to it that I've really feel like I missed out on and I'm trying to catch up and learn it now.

Courtney Jones Carney

So can we talk about that melting pot theory? We might just go on a whole different tangent for this podcast, but like even thinking about then you think about like the assimilation process that takes place. Folks come to this country and then there's this process of assimilation that perhaps put you into this melting pot so then you become this thing that I guess again is steeped in white supremacy opposed to, I feel like when I was in school there was like this salad analogy, like perhaps we're not a melting pot, maybe we're a and there's all these different things that make up the salad, just like there are all these different groups and people that make up what is the U.S.

Dr. Crystal Han

No, I think that's a super good point. I went to a very interesting lecture as part of a conference called the Let's Talk Conference, which is centered towards basically improving mental health for Asian and Asian American students across the nation. And they were talking about kind of this model of acculturation and just like the different ways that people experience the spectrum of acculturation after they immigrate and essentially, I wish I could show this, but essentially, it's like this graph where on like the up and down axis it's like high versus low American identity and like left versus right is like is their example is like Korean identity and so the ideal for mental health wellness is if you have both integrated a high American and a high Korean identity where you take kind of values and cultural elements from both American and Korean culture and really feel like you understand it, you celebrate it, you can recognize it in yourself, and you feel like you know you've kind of feel at home with both of those identities integrated together. If you have a high American versus and a low Korean identity that is essentially like an assimilation to White Western culture, which happens by default in our society if you do not have the resources or experience to truly understand and explore and celebrate your Korean identity in this example, and this happens at a loss to their Korean identity, and that is has been a major factor in like mental illness and a lot of immigrant experiences, because you're essentially kind of like losing and not able to access a huge part of like what makes you and your family and your background who they are and rather if you have a high Korean identity and a low American identity here, that kind of results in a separation from you, and kind of like the rest of White society, which also has its like detrimental impacts. And if you have low self-ratings of both, you just feel completely marginalized and you don't like belong with either culture and so it's a really complicated spectrum, and as you said in terms of like America being sold as a melting pot, the ideal I think is for everyone in this country to reach an integrated state where you feel like I am American and I am XYZ and I imagine that I mean I have like Black patients too who kind of like echo this identity crisis, even if they and like multiple past generations, have been born here because this is not a safe society for Black people, even if they are from here compared to immigrants or not, and so it's just a really I don't know. I think that it's just a really interesting and important thing that you bring up of how do we get there as a society where people feel safe and celebrated enough and not have the pressure to assimilate and not be like I can only belong if I like assimilate into White culture and fit myself into the way White society wants me to be, but rather like truly feel like all parts of you in this like melting pot are like homogeneous and welcomed and like secure and not only conditionally accepted based on something.

[MUSIC TRANSITION]

Rosemary Ferreira

As a reminder, part two of our interview with Angeline and Crystal will focus on racial trauma and mental health for Asian and Asian Americans and People of Color more broadly.

End Credits (Producer, Angela Jackson): The Table is a production of the Intercultural Center in the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Maryland Baltimore. It's hosted and produced by Courtney Jones Carney and Rosemary Ferreira. This episode was also written by Rosemary. The show's executive producer and editor is me, Angela Jackson, senior marketing specialist in the Division of Student Affairs. A big thank you to our guests, Dr. Crystal Han and Dr. Angeline Pham for coming to our table and joining the discussion. For more information about the Intercultural Center, including events where students can learn more about race, ethnicity, culture, norms, and current, visit umaryland.edu/ile. Thanks for listening, see you next time.