

Counter-frames: rethinking anti-Asian racism and diasporic visibility in Europe

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April 28, 2026



Forever foreigners or honorary white?

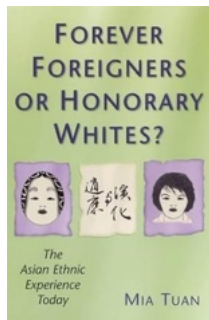


Figure 1: Mia Tuan, 1999

When I hear the phrase “Asians are next in line to be White,” I replace the word “White” with “disappear.” Asians are next in line to disappear. We are reputed to be so accomplished, and so law-abiding, we will disappear into this country’s amnesiac fog. We will not be the power but become absorbed by power, [...] we’re often listed as “Other” in polls and why we’re hard to find in racial breakdowns on reported rape or workplace discrimination or domestic abuse. (Hong 2021: 35)

Hypervisible or Invisible?



Figure 2: Poster, [Leh Hwang](#), Berlin, DE, 2021

- ★ *Nicht sichtbar heißt nicht nicht existiert*, 'Not visible does not mean not existing'.

EU's National Action Plan against Racism

- ★ The National Action Plan against Racism (NAPAR) 2020–2025 was adopted in response to structural racism as **the first** comprehensive action plan at **the EU level**.



Structural racism persists in our societies. Discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic origin – as well as religion or belief – remains widespread, as shown in numerous reports. [...] **It is not enough to be against racism. We need to talk about racism. We have to be active against it.** (European Commission 2020b: 1,16, 19)

Goals of NAPAR

The fight against racism must be **mainstreamed**: racism and racial discrimination must be tackled at **all levels of governance**, and across all policies. (European Commission 2020a: 18)

- ★ Promote anti-discrimination, equality, diversity, and pluralism.
- ★ Address the history of colonization and structural racism.
- ★ Law enforcement (e.g., racial profiling, excessive force), employment, housing, education, healthcare care.

Anti-Asian Racism in EU

- ★ AAR has had a long but largely undocumented history in Europe and was not even officially recognized as a distinct category of racism by the EU, either at the EU level until July 2022 (European Commission 2020a,b, Asian Voices Europe 2024).
- ★ No specific unit, coordinator or dedicated strategy framework for AAR at the EU level or national level as of now.
- ★ Yet, measures of anti-Asian racism are included as a national framework against racism by only 6 out of 14 member states of the EU, who adopted NAPARs.
- ★ EU Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030 has been launched in January 26, 2026. However, there is still no single disaggregated EU-wide data on anti-Asian racism, even after 5 years of the Action Plan.
- ★ In the year 2020, the number of migrants from Asia to Europe was around 23 million (McAuliffe, M. and L.A. Oucho 2024).

Anti-Asian Racism in NAPAR

- ★ EU-level surveys or data collection on AAR are either nonexistent or scarce.
- ★ (e.g., European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, European Values Study (EVS), European Social Survey (ESS), Eurobarometer)
- ★ Engagement with civil society organizations is not adequately facilitated.

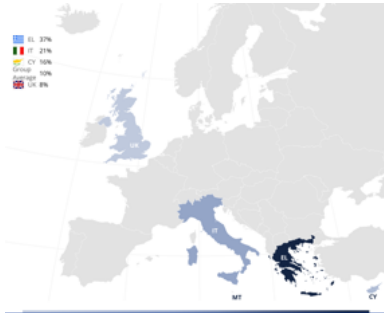


Figure 3: FRA's Survey on Minorities and Discrimination in EU - (South-)Asian Group

Being yellow

- ★ Modern European colonialism institutionalized racism as a system of governance, the [rule of colonial difference](#) ([Chatterjee 1993](#)), which justified economic and political domination by construing colonized peoples as biologically and culturally inferior ([Go 2004](#), [Stoler 1992](#)).
- ★ European perceptions of East Asians evolved from 'white' to 'yellow' and 'Mongoloid', and southeast- and south Asian to '(reddish-)brown' ([Keel 2017](#)).
- ★ Such imagery cast Asians as both hyper-foreign and colonial legacies still shape contemporary racial hierarchies and anti-Asian discourse.

Yellow peril

- ★ The term 'Yellow Peril', since the 1890s, depicted Asians as villains or as undesirable members of society, who may pose existential threats (Keevak 2011).
- ★ Cf. "Hun Speech" in 1900 ; Kiatschou lease agreement in 1898; *Deutsche Zeitung* in 1925; Chinese/Samoa coolie in 1903



„Völker Europas, wahret eure heiligsten Güter!“
 “Peoples of Europe, preserve your most sacred goods!”

Gelbe Gefahr, Hermann Knackfuß, 1895

Model minority myth

- ★ Asians continue to be assigned to the 'model minority myth', which is used to stereotype Asians, who are considered to be financially successful, hard working and socially well-assimilated in White culture.

(Toupin and Son 1991, Daniels and Kitano 1988, Hsia 1988, Takagi 1992, Wei 2010, Hartlep and Bui 2020).

ZEITUNG ONLINE

Integration

Das vietnamesische Wunder

Die Kinder von Einwanderern aus Vietnam fallen durch glänzende Schulnoten auf. Ihr Erfolg straft Klischees der Integrationsdebatte Lügen

Von Martin Spiewak
22. Januar 2009 Quelle: DIE ZEIT, 22.01.2009 Nr. 05



The children of immigrants from Vietnam stand out with their brilliant school grades. Their success refutes clichés in the integration debate (Spiewak 2009).

Racialization hegemony

- ★ This dual portrayal, encompassing both the 'Yellow Peril' and 'model minority' myths, draws from [orientalist narratives deeply rooted in Europe's](#) (post-)colonial history
(Cho 2021, Hasunuma 2020, Kawai 2005, Shim 1998, Li and Nicholson Jr 2021).
- ★ These narratives, acting as instruments of [hegemony](#), reinforce simplistic stereotypes and overlook varied experiences of Asians in Europe (De Cook and Yoon 2021, Yeh 2014, De Leon 2020).

Experience of Discrimination by Asian Diaspora

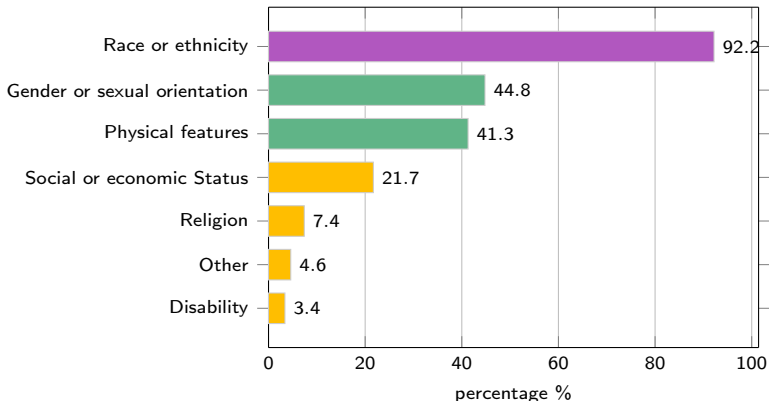


Figure 4: What type of discrimination have you ever been discriminated?

★ This figures (92.2%) surpasses figures from studies of Asian Americans, where 79.68% have reported personal experiences of discrimination based on their race or ethnicity in the context of the US (Borja and Gibson 2021), serving as a reference point.

Experience of Discrimination by Asian Diaspora

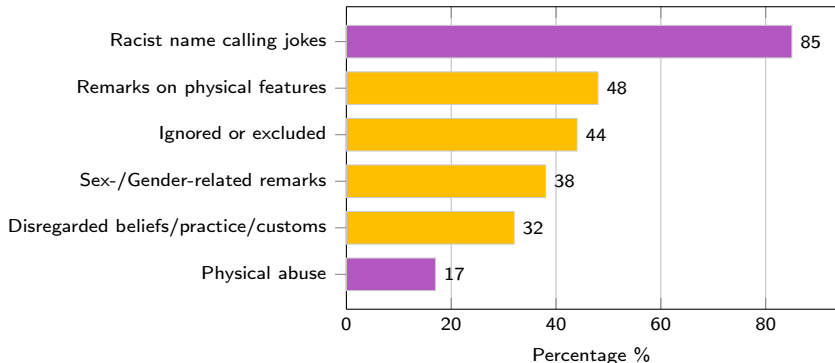


Figure 5: What kind of racial harassment have you experienced?

* Reported AAR incidents most frequently occurred on the streets (71%), public transport (61%), but also in educational institutions (14%) and the work place (25%).

Physical assault



Figure 6: The photo shows a scene of the hate crime site, captured by a neighbor of the victim in Duisburg, Germany. A witness and one of the two men who assaulted the victim are shown in the photo.

Institutional racism

- (2) When I told my daughter's kindergarten about racist remarks other children made toward her, they suggested we find another school where there are more Asians. [...] On the street, people sometimes shout Hey Corona or Ching chong at us. My daughter doesn't yet understand what those words mean, but I worry for the day she does.
30s, women, Germany (Asian Voices Europe 2024)

Media representation

1988: Maggi advertisement; "*China-Pfanne*", 'Chine frying pan'.



Media representation



Figure 7: 06.03.2020: ZDF Heute Show, "Ching Chang Chong Leer ist der Karton", 'Ching chang chong is empty in the box'


Media representation

Frankfurter Allgemeine
ZEITUNG ● FAZ.NET

Politik Wirtschaft Finanzen Feuilleton Karriere Sport **Gesellschaft** Stil Rhein-Main Technik Wissen Reise **Abo**

LIVEBLOG ZUM CORONAVIRUS

Über 150.000 Corona-Nachweise in Deutschland



Merkel: Weitere Entscheidung über Lockerungen am 6. Mai +++ Ausgangssperre in Tschechien aufgehoben +++ Boris Johnsons will wieder Regierungsgeschäfte führen +++ Intel als Gewinner der Corona-Krise +++ Alle Entwicklungen im

Media representation



Figure 9: 15.10.2020: Tagesschau,
 „Rekord bei Neuinfektionen in Deutschland“,
 ‘Record number of new infections in Germany’

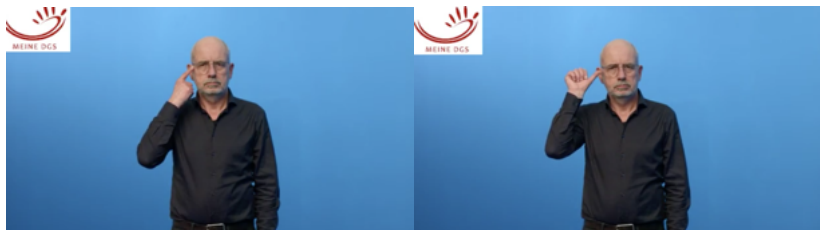
A kindergarden material with racist remarks



Figure 10: Three Chinese Men with a Double Bass. Kamishibai Picture Card Set

★ The chant relies on a [pseudo-Chinese gibberish](#), mocks languages spoken in Asia and Asian's appearance, teach children racialized stereotypes as humor, and reproduce a [colonial gaze on Asianness](#).

Sign languages



Asiat, Asiatin, 'Asia(n)' in German Sign Language (deutsche Gebärdensprache)

Löffler et al. (2020)

Frequency of Racial Discrimination and Harassment

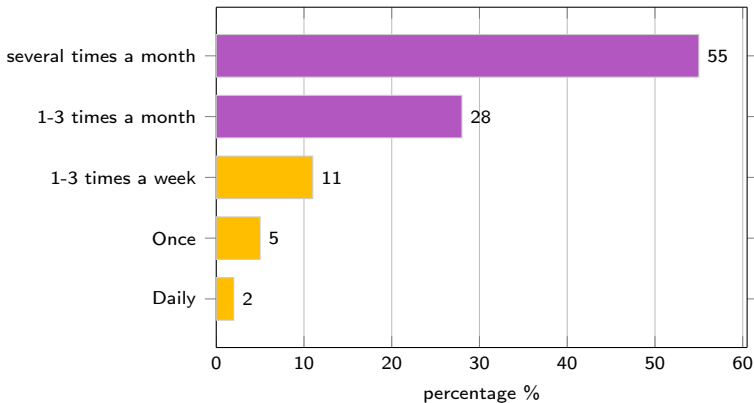


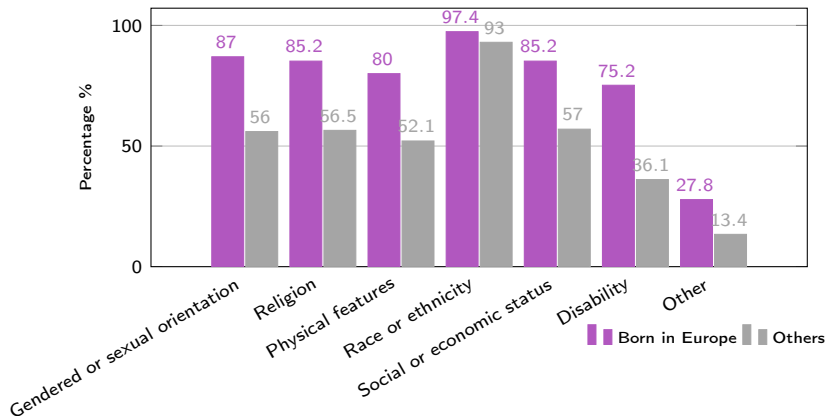
Figure 12: How many times/often have you been harassed?

Frequency of Racial Discrimination and Harassment



Experience of Discrimination by Asian Diaspora

This suggests that those who have lived in Europe for a longer period of time are more likely to be exposed to situations of racism and discrimination.



Gendered Discriminatory Experiences

The AAR trends have **intersectional** faces: **Women & Non-binary and gender diverse (NBGD)** groups more often, severely experience racism and discrimination.

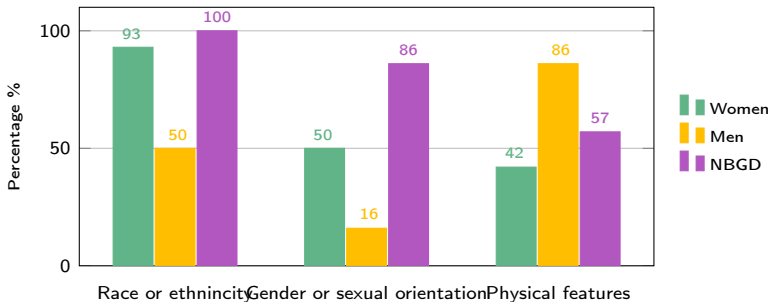


Figure 15: How do individuals across gender groups experience the top 3 forms of discrimination?

Gendered Discriminatory Experiences

There were clear gendered patterns of AAR, in particular with regard to incidents of sexual and physical remarks.

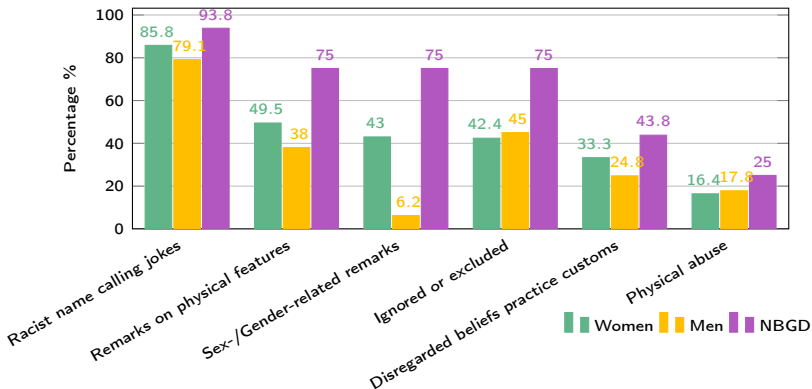


Figure 16: Forms of Racial Harassment and Discrimination - by Gender

Gendered Discriminatory Experiences

Country	EU Survey (2017) [†]	AVE Survey II (2021)
The Netherlands	44.9%	44%
France	44%	40%
United Kingdom	43.9%	62%
Germany	35.1%	63%
EU average	33%	50%

[†] Violence; Gender Equality Index, [European Institute for Gender Equality, \(2017\)](#)

Figure 17: Comparison of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Index

cf. See [Aldemir \(2024\)](#) for sexism and racism in NL

Racialized Queerness

Queer spaces in Europe are created predominantly White circles, which were deeply ingrained in [systematic racial biases](#) and the subsequent [exclusion of racial minorities](#) from queer communities have enforced discriminatory practices against people of color (Monro 2020, Knoll and Hiery 1983, Ghaziani 2021, Walcott 2007).

- (3) I've thought for a long time why I was never active in queer groups in Europe. There are plenty of youth groups and clubs for queers, but I realized that they are predominantly whites, and [I didn't feel like I belonged](#) as I often received [racial slurs](#) there [...] I've come to understand that it means a lot to me to identify as non-White individuals in a White society, especially in terms of our queerness. - *20s, NBGD, in Germany* (Gang 2023)

Impacts of racial discrimination

The cumulative effect of such seemingly minor, insidious acts can lead to significant psychological and emotional distress for those targeted.

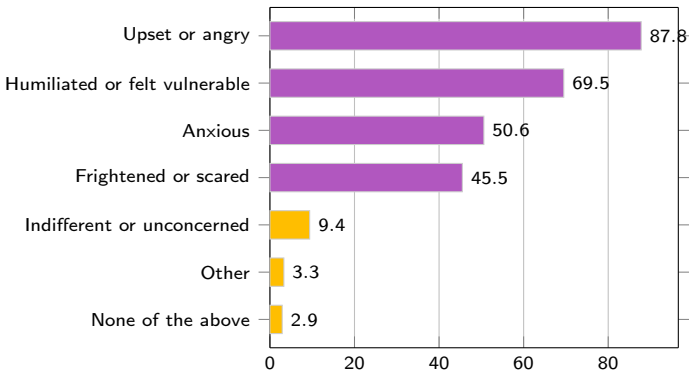


Figure 19: In general, how did you feel when you were harassed? Select all that apply.

Existential Impact of Racial Prejudice

Confronted with constant marginalization, individuals may **internalize these biases, leading to self-blame**. In an effort to assimilate into predominantly White societies, they may suppress their identities and conform to Western cultural norms, perpetuating feelings of invisibility and exclusion.

- (4) Reflecting on my background as the child of Vietnamese guest workers, [...] I wasn't even conscious of it, or of how I had **internalized racism** to the extent that I now understand. [...] I always **avoided (asian) community events** and any contact with Asian-looking people to **deny my origins and blend in with White people**. I even longed for a German name and resented my parents for not being German. [It was a result of] what I learned from my surroundings and society - this **persistent desire to fit in the White society**. [...] When I realized early that I looked different from my peers, I was frustrated [...] You had to prove your worth], so to speak. [...] The confirmation that my value is solely tied to my productivity has always forced me to **justify my existence**, especially under such princely guilt. - 30s, NBGD, Germany (Gang 2023)

Normalization of embodied racism



Figure 20: Poster by [Leh Hwang](#)

Microaggressions are not abstract offenses but embodied racialized experiences that influence how individuals repeatedly perceive themselves and navigate their identities and senses of belonging ([Park et al. 2024](#); [Lee et al. 2024](#)).

Normalization of embodied racism

- ★ The **persistence** of racial discrimination **reinforces** new form of racism and social dominance.
“[R]ather, racialized identities embedded in other salient social categories such as migration status, religion, or cultural heritage” (Juang et al. 2021: 186).
- ★ The **systematic denial of AAR** disrupts inclusive societal structures by positioning Asian individuals as outsiders to the discourse on racism. They are not recognized as equal participants in this social dialogue, and their voices are often **dismissed or minimized**.
- ★ Systematic denial of racism acts as a **strategic adaptation** that enables exclusionary practices to continue in seemingly less discriminatory ways (Bonilla-Silva 2015).

Neo-racism

- ★ Scholars of racism have highlighted the ambivalences of antiracism, arguing that it can sometimes serve as a strategy to immunize racism from criticism, thereby contributing to its perpetuation (Kim and Steinhilper 2025).
- ★ It may turn out as a *neo-racism* where traditional racial hierarchies are recast as narratives of incompatibility, maintaining the same exclusionary racial ideologies while escaping direct references to the discredited idea of biological race (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, Wolgast and Wolgast 2024)

Reaction to AAR

The discrepancy between the high rate of experiences of racism and the low rate of access to the police may contribute to individuals' hesitance in seeking intervention from official authorities, such as law enforcement, due to limited confidence in the effectiveness of these measures.

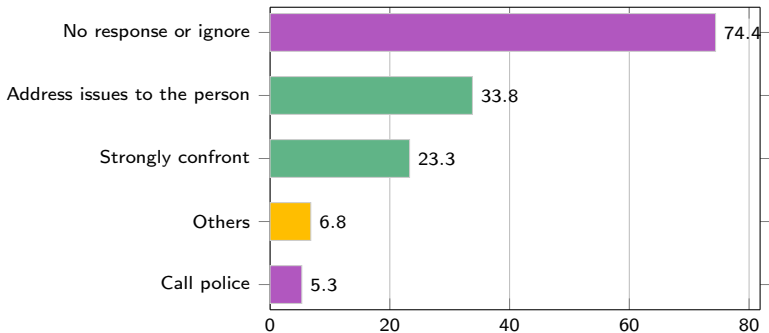


Figure 21: In general, how do you respond to racial harassment?

Challenges in the National Action Plan

- ★ **European Commission (2024)** calls for more comprehensive **data collection and structural analysis** regarding racism, highlighting a **lack of inclusion** in broader research frameworks.
- ★ Protection remains fragmented, and the anti-racism action plan strategy itself is non-legislative and not legally binding.



Figure 22: European Commission (2024): Report on NAPAR

[...] It is therefore important that Member States further improve the collection of equality data at all territorial levels and urge all stakeholders to cooperate in the collection of data for equality and non-discrimination purposes

European Commission (2024: 15)

Anti-Racist Initiatives

- ★ One of the adverse consequences of anti-racist mainstreaming is that policies are decontextualized from the lived experience of racialized peoples and promotes a 'universalized vision of equality' (Lentin 2004: 439).
- ★ Crenshaw emphasizes that if anti-racist initiatives only articulate racism along particular dimensions, anti-racist efforts employ 'strategic silence' (Crenshaw 1991: 1253), alerting that such interventions frequently perpetuate these silences.
- ★ *[W]ithout a detailed analysis of the role of anti-racism in contemporary societies [...] we shall not be able to understand the changing dynamics of racial ideologies and political mobilizations or the possibilities for defeating racist movements (Back and Solomos 1996: 103).*

Social Movements: Counterframes

- ★ Despite facing racism, discrimination and homophobia, many individuals of Asian diaspora are **empowered** and actively contribute positively to society **through their activism and advocacy efforts**, thereby facilitating a **counterframe** (Suda and Köhler 2023). ***

*** See also Blum (2007) for 'pluralistic solidarity'; Wang and Li (2023) for 'networked solidarity'; or Gould (2007) for 'overlapping solidaristic networks'.

Transformative counter-frames

- ★ ichbinkeinvirus.org started # ichbinkeinvirus, 'I am not a virus' campaign



Transformative counter-frames

- ★ Asian Raisins (the Netherlands) initiated the [Stop Hanky Panky Shanghai](#) campaign in public and in schools.



Transformative counter-frames

- ★ Association des Jeunes Chinois de France initiated the # We belong here campaign.



Transformative counter-frames



Figure 23: Podcast Rice and Shine



Figure 24: Bin ich süßsauer?

Transformative counter-frames



Figure 25: Advertisement by Hornbach

- ★ Hornbach presented an advertisement showing an Asian woman becoming aroused after smelling dirty laundry worn by white men, ending with a slogan saying: *That's how the spring smells.*
- ★ A [Petition](#) asked for apology for a public apology and the removal of the ad with the hashtag #ich_wurde_geHORNBAACHt; 42.404 co-signatories.
- ★ The German Advertising Standard Committee (Deutscher Werberat) objected to the ad,
- ★ See [here](#) for full infographic of the movement against the advertisement.

Transformative counter-frames

- ★ AVE successfully lobbied the EC to take its first steps in **officially recognizing AAR as a standalone category of racial discrimination** to be documented and addressed.



- ★ See [Asian Voices Europe \(2024: 56\)](#) for the list of organizations which works on AAR.

Transnational counter-frames



Figure 26: Korientation Demo 28.03.2021,
photo credit by Victoria Kure-Wu

Intersectional counter-frames

- ★ When social movements are intersectional, we can build collective power across differences (Lee et al. 2022, 2020, Kim and Lee 2023).



Figure 27: New women connectors's owning my story project for migrants and refugees

Cross-racial counter-frames

- ★ Solidarity must be reciprocal: Asian-led groups support Black-led movements and vice versa (Lee et al. 2022, 2020, Kim and Lee 2023).

Dekoloniale Residency 2024

Artist Talk with C&
Künstler*innengespräch mit C&

Tonderai Koschke Theresa Weber Percy Nii Norty

Yangkun Shi Charlotte Ming

C&

So 17.11.24
 12:30 Uhr
 12:30 pm

Gropius Bau, Niederkirchnerstraße 7
 10963 Berlin

Figure 28: Decolonial residency in 2024, Berlin, DE

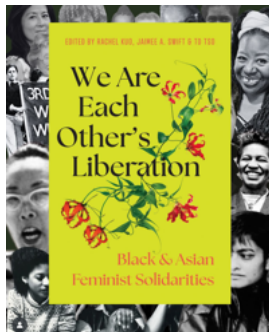


Figure 29: A collaborative project between Black Women Radicals and the Asian American Feminist Collective

Key Takeaway

- ★ Effective antiracism must confront not only overt acts of racism but also the cultural, policy, and institutional norms that perpetuate exclusionary practices (Goldberg 2008).
- ★ The anti-racist works should collaborate directly on civil society organizations from intersectional perspectives.
- ★ The superficial antiracist actions can unintentionally reinforce racism when they coexist with denial. In other words, saying 'I'm not racist' without acknowledging structural racism helps immunize racism against critique. That's a dissonance we see often: *antiracist opinions without antiracist accountability*.

Cross-Racial, intersectional, transformative and transnational anti-racism



Figure 30: Poster by [Leh Hwang](#)

Thank you!

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all of the respondents for sharing their opinions and experiences with us, to all volunteers for their amazing works and to AVE supports for their support and solidarity.

asianvoiceseurope@gmail.com



Your support helps us cover **small but essential costs** like mailbox, monthly maintenance for banking accounts, domain hosting, so we can stay **independent, sustainable, and community-driven.**

AVE club

Together, we are stronger. We need you.



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Appendix A: Impact of Pandemic

Our findings suggest that while the pandemic may have acted as a trigger and exacerbated AAR, it is not the sole or ultimate cause of racism against Asians in Europe.

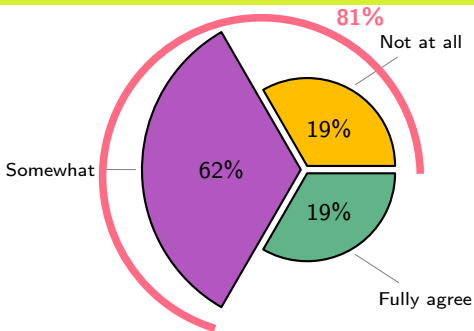


Figure 31: To what extent do you believe the racism you experienced in the last 12 months was the result of the pandemic?

Appendix B: Racism Denial Statements

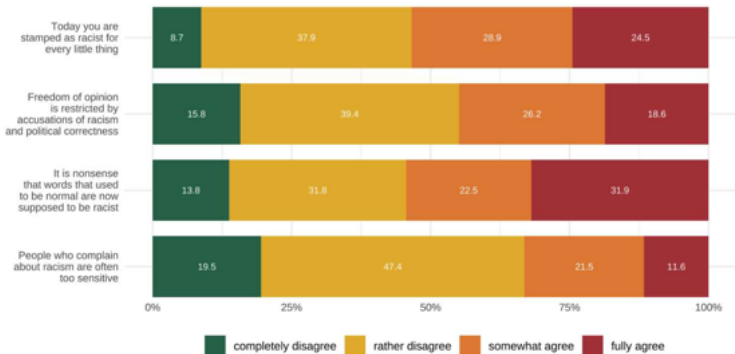


Figure 32: (Dis-)agreement with racism denial statements in Germany (N = 4.906–4.968).

- ★ Kim and Steinhilper's (2025) racism denial index revealed that 67% of respondents expressed agreement, which underlines that the majority of the population continues to harbour **defensive or dismissive attitudes** towards the existence of racism.

Appendix C: Verbal Abuse/Microaggression

- (5) a. Some people shouted at me “Nihao,” “Ching Chang Chong,” and other [derogatory] comments at me [in a] mocking [way]. - 20s, woman, in Germany (Asian Voices Europe 2024)
- b. It's so routine to hear the words “Hey Chin[ese] or Nihao” in a mocking [tone] countless times [...] Sometimes I was walking down the street and people shouted [at] me “Konichiwa!” or “Foreigner!” - 40s, woman, in the Netherlands (Asian Voices Europe 2024)
- c. Irrespective of the pandemic, [even] before the pandemic, it was very annoying to be ridiculed in France for the gestures by [slanting] eyes or making [fun of] by people [who used to] be good friends. -30s, woman, in France (Asian Voices Europe 2024)

Appendix D: Glasfäden, an interactive comic app

GLASFÄDEN

Aus dem Osten in den Osten



Figure 33: Glasfäden: an interactive comic about Vietnamese contract workers in the GDR

You can download app here: <https://glasfaeden.de>