

Social Justice Watch 0523

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Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, Queens Borough President Sharon Lee
and the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

PRESENT

VIRTUAL TOWNHALL

DOMESTIC

VIOLENCE

RESOURCES

DURING COVID-19

Thursday, May 14, 2020

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Learn about Queens resources for survivors
of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PRESENTERS:

Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence
Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz
Queens Borough President Sharon Lee
Safe Horizon
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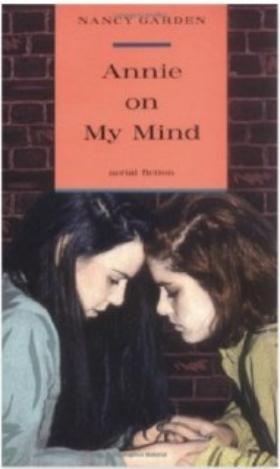
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Mayor's Office to
End Domestic and
Gender-Based Violence



OFFICE OF THE
QUEENS BOROUGH PRESIDENT
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Annie on My Mind

by Nancy Garden

★★★★★ 3.98 · Rating details · 39,850 ratings · 1,962 reviews

This groundbreaking book is the story of two teenage girls whose friendship blossoms into love and who, despite pressures from family and school that threaten their relationship, promise to be true to each other and their feelings. The book has been banned from many school libraries and publicly burned in Kansas City.

Want to Read

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Preview

Of the author and the book, the Margaret A. Edwards Award committee said, “Using a fluid, readable style, Garden opens a window through which readers can find courage to be true to themselves.” [\(less\)](#)

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Siddharth

@DearthOfSid



Men whine about "feminazis" essentially because equality feels like oppression to the oppressor. They define a "moderate" and an "extremist" feminist to discourage women from identifying as feminists. The "moderate" feminist has to disown the word and prove she doesn't hate men.

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Telegraph

Dirty money piling up in L.A. as coronavirus cripples international money laundering

Dirty money is piling up in Los Angeles. In the last three weeks, federal agents made three seizures that each netted more than \$1 million in suspected drug proceeds. The reason, according to the city's top drug enforcement official: The coronavirus pandemic...

【身体的语言：不想要自己的孩子是什么感受】

不论是兴高采烈地布置婴儿房，还是平静又期待地织着婴儿袜底，关于怀孕的一切似乎总是幸福而温馨的。而患有产前抑郁的孕妇所经受的煎熬，时常不为人知——孕期荷尔蒙的影响带来剧烈的情绪波动，对孩子满怀厌恨又抱有愧疚，未知的境况下内心的矛盾和挣扎从不停歇，与此同时还要应付不知情的善意祝福。

“这九个月，本该是自己人生中最快乐的时光，却一直在忧虑、憎恨你的孩子，无法倾诉，也难以承认。”

“我们需要接受并正视：不是所有人在怀孕期间都欢天喜地。我可以因为得了产前抑郁而责怪自己，但的确，这是一种疾病。我没有选择患上它，而是它选择了折磨我。”

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Ted

Confessions of a bad feminist

When writer Roxane Gay dubbed herself a "bad feminist," she was making a joke, acknowledging that she couldn't possibly live up to the demands for perfection of the feminist movement. But she's realized that the joke rang hollow. In a thoughtful and provocative...

telegraph.co.uk/Why-American-Students-Havent-Gotten-Better-at-Reading-in-20-Years-05-07-2

Telegraph

Why American Students Haven't Gotten Better at Reading in 20 Years

Schools usually focus on teaching comprehension skills instead of general knowledge—even though education researchers know better. NATALIE WEXLER APRIL 13, 2018

The Half of It: <https://www.netflix.com/title/81005150>

Director Interview:

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Netflix

The Half Of It | Netflix Official Site

When smart but cash-strapped teen Ellie Chu agrees to write a love letter for a jock, she doesn't expect to become his friend — or fall for his crush.

分享一段黃阿麗Ali Wong的有聲書，討論她生完孩子放棄做全職媽媽的心路歷程。Ali曾經最大的夢想就是做全職主婦，她甚至提前排好了每天的日程。可等到孩子出生，她才遭受到現實的痛擊，那些名人ins里營造的一切都是虛幻，而最重要的是她需要自己掙錢。。。行文和舞台上的Ali一樣風趣老辣，但會更深刻地体会到生育女性在事業和家庭上的兩難，太難了。

t.cn/A6AWn7Qx source

Compared to cisgender men, cisgender women are more liberal, even within the LGBTQ community.

Within the LGBTQ community, bisexual people are less liberal than lesbians and gays.

transgender-identified individuals are less liberal than their fellow LGBTQ community members and even than cisgender men.

Conversely, non-binary individuals — who are often lumped in with transgender people under the “T” — are significantly more liberal than either trans men or trans women.

“This is a much understudied area and we just don’t know enough about these groups to make broad sweeping claims,” Worthen says. “This study is just one piece of the story.”

[telegra.ph/Study-finds-transgender-people-are-more-conservative-than-cisgender-men-05-13-2](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/Study-finds-transgender-people-are-more-conservative-than-cisgender-men-05-13-2)

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Study finds transgender people are more conservative than cisgender men
A recently published study on LGBTQ political leanings finds that transgender individuals are “significantly less liberal” than even cisgender men. The study, “A Rainbow Wave? LGBTQ Liberal Political Perspectives During Trump’s Presidency,” was conducted...

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你当然可以结婚，但别假装女权。

你当然可以享受婚姻，但别假装不受压迫。

做奴隶的人，别再假装自己不是别人的所有物。 [「假装在伦敦」的微博视频 source](#)

<https://youtu.be/ed4ryYokLzU>

YouTube

Why I Changed my Opinion on China

Hey Laowinners! I've lived in China for over 10 years, and over that time, my opinion of the Chinese government and society has drastically changed. Here's w...

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[#殊途同行# vol. 4 印度](#)

“在印度，每15分钟就有一起强奸案件发生，而这还仅仅只是上报的数据，很多女性选择沉默。”Aditi是Girl Up印度及南亚地区代表及TEDxDUCIC演讲者，本期她为我们带来身在对女性如此不友好的国家中，印度女性所面临的性别平等问题：

印度女性面临的挑战

有关强奸文化

获得资源的平等机会

家暴与新冠疫情

直播精华版送上，“家暴不应该成为禁忌话题”。[GPTE殊途同行的微博视频 source](#)

If someone says, “You Chinese are killing us,” I am in that moment Chinese. Whether I give the other person a piece of my mind or not — awkward, perhaps, from six feet away — my instinct should be indignation, not deflection. Because one of many lessons I’ve learned from the pandemic and its consequences is that

focusing on being misidentified by a xenophobe is nothing better than trying to negotiate a more accurate insult.

telegra.ph/Why-I've-Stopped-Telling-People-Im-Not-Chinese-05-20

Telegraph

Why I've Stopped Telling People I'm Not Chinese

Mid-February, when the world was starting to go pear-shaped, I had to travel to an area where I'd previously experienced anti-Asian sentiment. So a few days before the trip, I emailed my (white) hairdresser frantically: "I know this sounds crazy but can you..."

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Dirty money piling up in L.A. as coronavirus cripples international money laundering

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Dirty money is piling up in Los Angeles. In the last three weeks, federal agents made three seizures that each netted more than \$1 million in suspected drug proceeds.

The reason, according to the city's top drug enforcement official: The coronavirus pandemic has slowed trade-based money laundering systems that drug trafficking groups use to repatriate profits and move Chinese capital into Southern California.

With storefronts closed, supply chains in disarray and the global economy in peril, these complex schemes are hobbled and cash is backing up in Los Angeles, Bill Bodner, special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement

Administration's Los Angeles field division, said in an interview.

The recent million-dollar interceptions were reminiscent of seizures the DEA made before drug traffickers embraced trade-based money laundering, said Bodner, a 28-year agent.

The shuttering of nonessential businesses has made a “tremendous impact” on a money laundering system dubbed the black market peso exchange, he said. In the fashion district in downtown Los Angeles — the exchange’s epicenter — drug trafficking groups from throughout the country use wholesalers to remit profits to Mexico, according to cases filed in federal courts in Los Angeles and elsewhere.



Steven Mygrant, a federal prosecutor in Oregon who charged six people with laundering heroin proceeds through Los Angeles businesses, said two primary factors drive the exchange: Drug trafficking groups need to convert dollars to

pesos, which is expensive to do legitimately, and they need to move money from the United States to Mexico, which is risky to transport in cash.

To accomplish this, Mygrant said, a broker pays pesos for the drug traffickers' dollars. The traffickers deliver cash to an exporter in Los Angeles, who ships goods — commonly clothing, cosmetics, jewelry or sportswear — to a retailer in Mexico. The retailer sells the goods for pesos and pays the broker.

Developed by Colombian cocaine traffickers, Mexican cartels initially did not embrace the black market peso exchange, Bodner said, finding it easier to simply smuggle bulk cash across the border and launder it in Mexico. That changed about 10 years ago, he said, when the Mexican government tightened financial regulations and restricted the flow of dollars into its banks.

California Man charged with trafficking millions of dollars worth of drugs via tunnel from Mexico



California Man charged with trafficking millions of dollars worth of drugs via tunnel from Mexico Rogelio Flores Guzman, a Mexican national with legal U.S.

residency, was charged Friday with trafficking five types of drugs.

Recently, with storefronts closed and agents seizing millions in cash packaged for transport, it appears drug trafficking groups are resorting to older, riskier ways of repatriating profits, Bodner said.

The coronavirus has also cooled Chinese capital flight, he said, which before the pandemic was the primary driver of international money laundering.

With the Chinese government curtailing the amount of money its citizens can shift overseas, drug traffickers and money brokers set up the following system, Bodner said: A Chinese national who wants to convert yuan to dollars and stash it in the United States will contact a broker. The broker instructs this person to pay a factory that produces chemicals used to make methamphetamine or fentanyl.

The factory ships the precursors to Mexico, where they're converted into narcotics, smuggled into the United States and sold for dollars. The broker directs the drug trafficking group to deliver cash to a relative or an associate of the Chinese national whose money initiated the entire sequence.

The money is now in the United States and in dollars, without ever entering the global financial system. "The more money that wants to leave China, the more chemicals go to Mexico and the more synthetic drugs end up in L.A.," Bodner said.

World & Nation Coronavirus chokes the drug trade — from Wuhan, through Mexico and onto U.S. streets



World & Nation Coronavirus chokes the drug trade — from Wuhan, through Mexico and onto U.S. streets The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted many industries, both legal and illicit. Production of fentanyl, which relies on chemical ingredients sourced mainly from Wuhan, China, has been particularly hard hit.

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But the pandemic has slowed the cycle significantly, he said. Most narcotics precursors from China are made in Wuhan, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, and factories there are shuttered or operating at a reduced capacity.

“When chemicals aren’t flowing from China, there’s no churn in the money laundering system,” Bodner said. Further, with global markets in upheaval, many of the Chinese nationals who were moving money through the system are now hesitant to stash funds overseas, he said.

Slowdowns in Los Angeles’ money laundering systems come as drug prices rise in the city. With supply chains in disarray, Bodner said, the wholesale price of methamphetamine has soared to about \$1,800 a pound, compared with about \$900 a pound five months ago.

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Study finds transgender people are more conservative than cisgender men

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A recently published study on LGBTQ political leanings finds that transgender individuals are “significantly less liberal” than even cisgender men.

The study, “A Rainbow Wave? LGBTQ Liberal Political Perspectives During Trump’s Presidency,” was conducted by a University of Oklahoma sociology professor Meredith Worthen in the weeks after the November 2018 elections.

Worthen surveyed an online representative sample of 3,104 adults in the United States to gauge their political beliefs and how strongly they embrace liberalism. About half, or 1,555 individuals, identified as LGBTQ non-heterosexual people.

The survey examined people’s self-reported ideologies, asked them whether they identified as “feminist,” and gauged their support for laws and policies that support people in poverty, racial or ethnic minorities, immigrants, and women.

According to the study’s findings, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual people are significantly more liberal than their cisgender heterosexual counterparts.

Compared to cisgender men, cisgender women are more liberal, even within the LGBTQ community.

Within the LGBTQ community, bisexual people are less liberal than lesbians and gays.

But perhaps the most surprising finding is that transgender-identified individuals are less liberal than their fellow LGBTQ community members and even than cisgender men.

Conversely, non-binary individuals — who are often lumped in with transgender people under the “T” — are significantly more liberal than either trans men or trans women.

Worthen notes that there has been a shift among younger generations toward identifying as non-binary, particularly among those who are more liberal.

In the sample, the mean age of non-binary individuals was 33 years old, yet just over half (50.5%) of non-binary individuals were under age 35.

Worthen hopes to further examine the difference between non-binary and trans-identified individuals in a yet-to-be-published article.

In 2018, Worthen proposed a dual-layered social justice and empathic concern theoretical framework that she utilizes in her analysis.

That framework proposes that liberal perspectives among LGBTQ people are constructed from personal experiences with stigma, and their empathy for other stigmatized people.

As such, LGBTQ people writ-large may be more likely to identify with an empathize with other “underdogs” who lack power or influence when considering social justice issues.

That may translate into stronger support for policies geared towards uplifting historically marginalized groups such as racial or ethnic minorities, immigrants, and women.

Asked why transgender people do not align as strongly with liberal attitudes as other LGB individuals, Worthen suggests that trans people may have a different

relationship with liberalism than cis men or women do.

She notes that if younger, more liberal people are identifying more with the “non-binary” label, that may result in making the group of people who identify exclusively as trans more conservative.

She says more research is needed to delve into the details of transgender versus non-binary people’s political attitudes.

“This is a much understudied area and we just don’t know enough about these groups to make broad sweeping claims,” Worthen says. “This study is just one piece of the story.”



Meredith Worthen – Photo courtesy of Meredith Worthen.

That said, just because someone has a more conservative ideology doesn’t mean they necessarily wholeheartedly embrace conservative candidates when it comes to voting behavior.

For example, she says, someone who identifies as conservative may be more liberal when it comes to LGBTQ issues or other social policies.

Worthen clarifies that her survey did not specifically ask about party affiliation or support for Trump.

But, she notes, the Trump administration's record of action against transgender people — from the ban on transgender troops to efforts to its proposal to eliminate transgender nondiscrimination protections in the Affordable Care Act by defining "sex discrimination" as based on a person's assigned sex at birth — may push some transgender people to vote for Democrats.

"The point of this research is to take a look at what's going on with these differences," she says. "It's surprising that this came about. But just because trans women are less liberal than these other groups doesn't mean they're conservatives voting for Trump.

"There is something going on here, where trans women are not feeling that their needs are best met by liberalism," she continues. "It doesn't mean they're running over to Trump, it just means these examinations of their liberal identities are revealing these types of differences. ... I do think that the voices of trans people need to be heard, much more so than they have been. We really just need more research about this topic generally."

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Why American Students Haven't Gotten Better at Reading in 20 Years

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Schools usually focus on teaching comprehension skills instead of general knowledge—even though education researchers know better.

NATALIE WEXLER

APRIL 13, 2018



GERI LAVROV / GETTY

Every two years, education-policy wonks gear up for what has become a time-honored ritual: the release of the Nation's Report Card. Officially known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, the data reflect the results of reading and math tests administered to a sample of students across the country. Experts generally consider the tests rigorous and highly reliable—and the scores basically stagnant.

Math scores have been flat since 2009 and reading scores since 1998, with just a third or so of students performing at a level the NAEP defines as “proficient.” Performance gaps between lower-income students and their more affluent peers, among other demographic discrepancies, have remained stubbornly wide.

Among the likely culprits for the stalled progress in math scores: a misalignment between what the NAEP tests and what state standards require teachers to cover at specific grade levels. But what’s the reason for the utter lack of progress in reading scores?

On Tuesday, a panel of experts in Washington, D.C., convened by the federally appointed officials who oversee the NAEP concluded that **the root of the problem is the way schools teach reading**. The current instructional approach, they agreed, is based on assumptions about how children learn that have been disproven by research over the last several decades—research that the education world has largely failed to heed.

The long-standing view has been that the first several years of elementary school should be devoted to basic reading skills. History, science, and the arts can wait. After all, the argument goes, if kids haven’t learned to read—a task that is theoretically accomplished by third grade—how will they be able to gain knowledge about those subjects through their own reading?

The federal No Child Left Behind legislation, enacted in 2001, only intensified the focus on reading. The statute required states to administer annual reading and math tests to students in grades three through eight and once in high school, and attached hefty consequences if schools failed to boost scores. The law that replaced No Child Left Behind—the Every Student Succeeds Act, enacted in 2015—has eased the consequences but has hardly weakened the emphasis on testing.

What is tested, some educators say, gets taught—and what isn’t doesn’t. Since 2001, the curriculum in many elementary schools has narrowed to little more than a steady diet of reading and math. And when test scores fail to rise after third grade—as they often do, especially in high-poverty schools—subjects like history and science may continue to be relegated to the far back burner through middle school.

To some extent, it does make sense to focus on reading skills in the early

years. One component of reading is, like math, primarily a set of skills: the part that involves decoding, or making connections between sounds and the letters that represent them.

But educators have also treated the other component of reading—comprehension—as a set of skills, when **in fact it depends primarily on what readers already know.** In countries that specify the content to be taught at each grade level, standardized tests can test students on what they've learned in school. But in the United States, where schools are all teaching different content, test designers give students passages on a variety of topics that may have nothing to do with what they've learned in school—life in the Arctic, for example, or the disappearance of Amelia Earhart. The tests then ask questions designed to assess comprehension: *What's the main idea of the passage? What inferences can you make?*

On a daily basis, teachers have their students practice skills and strategies like “finding the main idea” or “making inferences.” And teachers select books that match the given skill rather than because of the text’s content. Rarely do the topics connect: Students might read a book about bridges one day, zebras the next, and clouds the day after that.

Cognitive scientists have known for decades that simply mastering comprehension skills doesn’t ensure a young student will be able to apply them to whatever texts they’re confronted with on standardized tests and in their studies later in life.

One of those cognitive scientists spoke on the Tuesday panel: Daniel Willingham, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia who writes about the science behind reading comprehension. Willingham explained that **whether or not readers understand a text depends far more on how much background knowledge and vocabulary they have relating to the topic than on how much they've practiced comprehension skills.** That’s because writers leave out a lot of information that they assume readers will know. If they put all the information in, their writing would be tedious.

But if readers can’t supply the missing information, they have a hard time making sense of the text. If students arrive at high school without knowing who won the Civil War they’ll have a hard time understanding a textbook passage about Reconstruction.

Students from less educated families are usually the ones who are most handicapped by gaps in knowledge. Another panelist—Ian Rowe, who heads a network of charter schools serving low-income students in New York—provided a real-life example during his remarks. A sixth-grader at one of his schools was frustrated that a passage on a reading test she'd taken kept repeating a word she didn't understand: *roog-bye*. The unfamiliar word made it hard for her to understand the passage. When Rowe asked her to spell the word, it turned out to be *rugby*.

The implication is clear. **The best way to boost students' reading comprehension is to expand their knowledge and vocabulary** by teaching them history, science, literature, and the arts, using curricula that guide kids through a logical sequence from one year to the next: for example, Native Americans and Columbus in kindergarten; the colonial era and the American Revolution in first grade; the War of 1812 and the Civil War in second grade, and so on. That approach enables children to make sense of what they're learning, and the repetition of concepts and vocabulary in different contexts makes it more likely they'll retain information. Not to mention that learning content like this can be a lot more engaging for both students and teachers than the endless practice of illusory skills.

Another panelist—Timothy Shanahan, an emeritus professor at the University of Illinois and the author or editor of over 200 publications on literacy—went on to debunk a popular approach that goes hand in hand with teaching comprehension skills: To help students practice their “skills,” teachers give them texts at their supposed individual reading levels rather than the level of the grade they’re in.

According to Shanahan, no evidence backs up that practice. In fact, Shanahan said, recent research indicates that **students actually learn more from reading texts** that are considered too difficult for them—in other words, those with more than a handful of words and concepts a student doesn't understand. What struggling students need is guidance from a teacher in how to make sense of texts designed for kids at their respective grade levels—the kinds of texts those kids may otherwise see only on standardized tests, when they have to grapple with them on their own.

That view was endorsed by Marilyn Jager Adams, a cognitive and developmental psychologist who is a visiting scholar at Brown University. “Giving children easier texts when they’re weaker readers,” she said during the

panel discussion, “serves to deny them the very language and information they need to catch up and move on.”

The failure to build children’s knowledge in elementary school helps explain the gap between the reading scores of students from wealthier families and those of their lower-income peers—a gap that has been expanding. More affluent students may not learn much in elementary school, but compared to their disadvantaged peers their parents **tend to be more educated and have the money to provide knowledge-boosting perks like tutoring and trips to Europe.** As a result, those wealthy children are far more likely to acquire knowledge outside of school. Poorer kids with less-educated parents tend to rely on school to acquire the kind of knowledge that is needed to succeed academically—and because their schools often focus exclusively on reading and math, in an effort to raise low test scores, they’re less likely to acquire it there.

The bottom line is that **policymakers and advocates who have pushed for more testing in part as a way to narrow the gap between rich and poor have undermined their own efforts.** They have created a system that incentivizes teachers to withhold the very thing that could accomplish both objectives: knowledge. All students suffer under this system, but the neediest suffer the most.

The NAEP is a valuable educational barometer, but it’s important to understand that while standardized tests can identify a problem, they can’t provide the answer to it.

While some elementary teachers have embraced the approach advocated by the NAEP panel, it’s clear that most have been trained to in methods that aren’t supported by research, and that many are resistant to change. The University of Illinois’s Shanahan noted that when he speaks to teachers around the country, they’re aghast at the idea of giving struggling readers grade-level books—even when their state’s literacy standards call for doing so.

Still, schools in some parts of the country are embracing the kinds of insights offered by the panelists. Louisiana has not only created its own curriculum but has also asked the federal government for permission to give tests based on that curriculum rather than passages on a variety of randomly selected topics. If that movement spreads, the National Assessment of Educational Progress may finally live up to its name and the American education system may at last be able to

unlock the untold potential of millions of students.

NATALIE WEXLER is a journalist based in Washington, D.C. She is the author of *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System—And How to Fix It*.

资料来源：The Atlantic

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/04/-american-students-reading/557915/>

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Why I've Stopped Telling People I'm Not Chinese

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When confronted with racism toward anyone, our instinct should be indignation, not deflection.

Mid-February, when the world was starting to go pear-shaped, I had to travel to an area where I'd previously experienced anti-Asian sentiment. So a few days before the trip, I emailed my (white) hairdresser frantically: "I know this sounds crazy but can you make me blonde? I'm traveling next week and I'm worried about being mistaken for Chinese and blamed for the coronavirus."

Let's skip the ridiculousness of the idea for a second to focus on the important bit: Why had I worded my request so offensively? I could have just said I was worried about xenophobia. Why was I throwing people of Chinese descent under the bus? It's like that old joke about the two people running away from a bear:

You don't have to outrun the bear, you just have to outrun the other guy. Except in this case: You don't have to deal with racism; you just have to make people racist at someone else.

My panic was a humbling reminder that I should never be overly confident that I would do the right thing in the face of fear. Sure, wanting to avoid racial profiling is a survival instinct. But survival instincts are often amoral and, if unchecked, can easily turn ugly.

I ended up not dyeing my hair because a sudden allergy attack made it ill advised. Also, it was stupid.

But I shared my anxiety with a half-Chinese-American, half-white friend. What if I get stopped at the airport for extra screening? I asked. She messaged, “Carry around a copy of your books to prove you’re Korean.” (Two of the books I wrote have the word “Korean” in the title.) She added: “I’m serious.”

I messaged “LOL,” dismissed her idea for about 10 minutes … and then put copies of my books in my carry-on bag.

What was my plan? To run up to someone hurling epithets and say, “Hey I think we can all agree this Covid stuff is all China’s fault, but good news, I’m Korean! You know, the ones who brought you BTS? So we’re good, right?”

This impulse isn’t exactly new, even if the pandemic has brought out its most sinister form. I’ve been doing it since I was a child. Worse, I was *taught* to do it.

When I was a kid in late-1970s suburban Chicago, anti-Chinese taunts were a daily occurrence. It was a frequent topic at Korean church — the only place we clapped eyes on other Koreans outside our own homes. Our parents and Sunday school teachers told us that the correct response was, “I’m not Chinese; I’m Korean.” (This didn’t even work, it should be noted: When I informed a mean kindergartner that I was Korean, he responded, “There is no such place.”)

None of us kids were proud of being Korean-American back then. The grown-ups tried to counter this shame by instilling ethnic pride. But despite their good intentions, they invited pride’s ugly sibling: implied permission to step on other people.

For an inarticulate child, maybe “I’m not Chinese” isn’t an especially

meaningful retort. But a grown woman should know better.

So what finally brought about my moment of self-reckoning? It was a T-shirt.

Last month, a Chinese-American friend of mine posted on social media about a targeted internet ad that had outraged her. In the wake of Covid-19, some clothing vendor saw a business opportunity: a series of T-shirts with slogans like, “I’m Asian but I’m not Chinese,” “I’m not Chinese, I’m Korean,” “I’m not Chinese, I’m Malaysian,” etc. Her friends’ comments under her post were equally indignant. (So much for predictive algorithms, by the way.)

My first thought was, “I wish we’d had these shirts when I was a kid.”

And then I stopped myself, horrified.

By way of context — not justification — Asians have been siccing people on other Asians for ages. In World War II-era America, some Asian-owned businesses posted signs in their windows specifying that they were not Japanese. I have even met a few Asians of that generation who currently believe that it made political sense for Franklin D. Roosevelt to put Japanese-Americans in internment camps. Just the Japanese.

Which is not to say that mislabeling isn’t dangerous; it can even be deadly. In Highland Park, Mich., in 1982, there was an incident that all Asian-Americans of a certain age remember vividly: A Chinese-American named Vincent Chin was murdered in a strip club by two white autoworkers who assumed he was Japanese — one of the people who, they believed, had destroyed the American auto industry.

It was a tragic case of mistaken identity. But to respond to that horrific incident with “Vincent Chin wasn’t even Japanese!” is to create a dangerous distraction from the core issue: It is never OK to attack anyone based on their race.

For as long as I can remember, I’ve bristled at the Asian-American label. I found it frustratingly meaningless, lumping together diverse groups under one heading in a way that promoted precisely the kind of generalizations we want to prevent. “You all look the same,” or, “I bet you love Excel and bad driving.”

But what I’ve come to realize over the past few weeks is that even if I don’t identify with that designation and find it overly broad, like it or not, it shapes

how people see me. The only path forward for any of us requires a united front.

If someone says, “You Chinese are killing us,” I am in that moment Chinese. Whether I give the other person a piece of my mind or not — awkward, perhaps, from six feet away — my instinct should be indignation, not deflection. Because one of many lessons I’ve learned from the pandemic and its consequences is that focusing on being misidentified by a xenophobe is nothing better than trying to negotiate a more accurate insult.

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