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# **Pandemic drama as an anti-racism scream of Asian-Americans through COVID-19 crisis**

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**Abstract**---The readiness to see some lives as expendables grieve able than others is the theme around which this paper revolves. The discrimination as a concept reverberates throughout *Pandemic*, the radio play that this paper tries to analyse. Racism, this study hypothesizes, is dominant in the USA society, and it is inspired in difficult times such as the time of COVID-19. The study aims to answer the following question: Is it true that white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy are all old concepts? It starts with an introduction to the subject, then the methodology that the researcher follows to analyze the play and the discussion is the main part of the paper. It ends with the conclusion that sums up the results of the analysis.

**Keywords**---Pandemic, USA. formalistic approach, COVID-19, Postmodernism.

## **Introduction**

"Everywhere we look, we see signs that the systems we live under are collapsing, and something new must emerge if we are to survive."  
Dean Spade from Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis  
(And The Next)

COVID-19 has been a never-ending and voracious epidemic. It has taken over four million deaths throughout the world, a frightening figure that is still rising. Vaccines have helped in certain ways, but they have not been perfect. Optimism and relief for richer countries, inequitable access facilitated by morally reprehensible policies Corporations and governments that have gone bankrupt

have continued to wreak havoc on the economy of the vast majority of the globe. As a consequence of the virus, businesses have closed, and borders have been blocked. The precarity of systems sustaining society's everyday flows was highlighted by the unemployment of almost fourteen million people. The USA is already weary of unilateral and self-abusive politics, delusions of grandeur, institutional racism, and shattered social safety nets. It had essentially paralysed everything, arising from a poisonous nostalgia addiction. All of the country's flaws were worsened by the Epidemic. As a consequence, the situation has turned out to be a disaster. Except for workers, New York City remained closed on March 22, 2020. People would beat pots, clap, and yell at the peak of their lungs at night to support those working to clean the overcrowded hospitals' lung capacity. It served as a timekeeper for months. Following the lead of similar exhibitions took place in Italy and Spain, and it became a basic community gesture to participate in easing the anxiety of a health catastrophe that has robbed people of their security and freedom control. While the performance was intended for healthcare personnel, it seemed to become more for oneself and neighbours; a fervent supporter of the performance, Joya Powell, elaborates on the expressions of joy and perseverance. (The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, "Vaccine nationalism," COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic, May 2021, pp. 41–44.) People began to accept the Pandemic's long-term reality. Eventually, the habit wore off. Those who have the luxury of staying at home should use it after countless days of the same captivity. The terror was palpable among individuals who got the illness and those who worked in important fields such as healthcare, sanitation, transportation, grocery shops, and food manufacturing. The irony was not lost on anybody that in a country where the government has the positions designated vital were primarily held by immigrants, from farmers tending crops in California to pig factory employees, despite the president's frequent proclamations of white supremacist beliefs and harmful anti-immigrant policies in South Dakota, and New York delivery drivers. People wish they had more to say. They were taken aback by the readiness of individuals in positions of power to make sacrifices for the sake of a stock market in distress. Rather, people were reminded of the explicit expression of what Judith Butler calls the grievability of lives (Butler, 2020), the readiness to see some lives as expendables grievable than others. This concept reverberates throughout the selected play that this paper tries to analyse. Racism, this study hypothesises, is dominant in the USA society, and it is inspired in difficult times such as the time of Covid 19. The study aims to answer the following question: Is it true that white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy are all old concepts?

The capitalist engine that runs the USA nation is one of the causes that led to the continuity of racism. Consequently, a clear pattern appeared from COVID19 data, predicated on years of systematic propensity to claim. White lives are seen as grievable, whereas others are not, and this is amplified in the face of racial tensions and increased catastrophe. People of colour, Latinos, and Indigenous peoples have been much more affected by the Pandemic's health, economic, and social effects, a more serious educational crisis than their white counterparts. Although this is a broad statement, 1 out of every 500,000 American lives has been lost at the time of writing. The coronavirus has killed one out of every 1000 Black Americans in the United States in the previous two years, a number that all forecasts indicate will rise. In June of 2020, atrocity wrote:

For weeks we have been sensitised to death and seen the massive inequality, injustice and racism at the core of this society revealed by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Black people dying from a virus at three times the rate of white people? "Essential workers" forced shoulder to shoulder to butcher hogs or ship Game Boys in virus-laden plants? Nurses at public hospitals wearing garbage bags when the wealthiest country in the world does not have enough PPE? (Scot, 2020)

This heinous tendency has been rendered even more heinous by the destruction of COVID-19 data that many state health agencies are undertaking. Individuals who identify as Native American have been demoted to the "Other" category in the census after April 2020 case tracking's racial demographics. Even New York City, the most populous city in the United States, has the country's biggest urban Native American population. Indigenous peoples are grouped as the homogeneous Other. ("The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010," 2010 Census Briefs (January, 2012), <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/c2010br-10.pdf> & "Details on Deaths," COVID-19 Data, NYC Health, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data-deaths.page>.) This data is statistically significant. The brutality underscores that the U.S. government's long history of abuse is over. In addition to a laundry list of ongoing crimes, the government has provided insufficient healthcare.

For Native cultures, this has resulted in numerous fatalities that may have been avoided. ("Covid in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count," The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html#states>.) Erdoes, The Navajos, are a Native American tribe that has been decimated by the virus, with case counts reaching a peak in April. It was only third behind New York and New Jersey at its height. (Donovan Quintero's moving photo essay "The COVID-19 Outbreak in the Navajo Nation," part of Developing Stories: Native Photographers in the Field, the Smithsonian and the National Museum of the American Indian, <https://americanindian.si.edu/developingstories/quintero.html> (accessed June 1, 2021).

The COVID-19 crisis gave a once-in-a-lifetime chance to address the issue of stolen lands. Add to the pre-existing pandemics of economic inequality and institutional corruption in the United States. There is racism. Eric Garner's last words as a police officer were, "I cannot breathe." In 2014, he was killed by a police chokehold, a statement that has since become a catchphrase. Has become synonymous with the Black Lives Matter movement. With a name like this, it is hardly a coincidence that a virus that targets the lungs and respiratory system in the United States of America did not need it.

Another illustration of how white supremacy will not go away in the blink of an eye because of a worldwide health epidemic, George Floyd was publicly lynched at the deaths of black people at the hands of white cops, sparked a new wave of national outrage. Notwithstanding the potential of viral spread, demonstrations and activities, demonstrations spreading with great power and speed, they have continued to grow and expand iterate, including numerous problems such as the continued abuse against women and children and housing and food insecurity among Asian Americans. Although people live in an unprecedented age, the underlying dangers of racism, colonialism, and other oppression continue to exist.

The Pandemic Performance project investigates this dynamic performance work (theatre, dance, poetry, music, and performance art) taking place in the United States, including contributions from many contributors. Work bridges the barriers between art and activism, combining performance with protest. While simultaneously addressing issues of struggle, movement, and livability, art is created via struggle, movement, and livability. (a)aliveness amid many pandemics. Diana Taylor (2003) defines performance this way, "Performances work as crucial acts of communication," according to the conventional definition from The Archive and the Repertoire. "Transmitting social information, memory, and a sense of self," she writes of one's identity." The transfer is a terrible concept in a pandemic, but it is still possible. Despite the dangers, it is necessary. It seems to be an impossibility for live performance. This tension defines the performative activities of pandemic performance. The three fundamental qualities discussed are interchange, liveness, and analogue. Existence is confirmed.

Despite having received the disease, the public was unmasked in a defiant display of courage. As if sheer willpower was enough to stop the infection from spreading. Likewise, President Donald Trump's willingness to use violent racial comments at the time, while denying and downplaying the coronavirus's hazards to avoid keeping the markets healthy at the time, "to induce fear" was an apparent technique. He considers human life to be disgracefully cheap. "Trump deliberately played down the virus, Woodward's book says," BBC News (September 10, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54094559>.

There are deceiving relationships amongst disguised activists, which might be a more useful force in the many public demonstrations that started in 2020 and continue to this day. They have kept going. In Taylor's understanding, any such occurrence might be deemed a performance "encounter" as a "theatrical situation organised in a certain way." "The fashion is predictable, formulaic, and so repeating." (13) فـ should not be the case. The term "safety" is sometimes mistaken to signify "artificiality" for the participants' conflict between theatricalities (i.e., activities that are recorded and streamed for entertainment purposes) and theatricalities (i.e., acts that are filmed and streamed for entertainment purposes) audiences via social media). It is just a matter of time until "the reenacted becomes real." "Bodies also represent conditions," says the author "new subjecthood's are created by activating a crucial tension with them"(13)

Pandemic Performance's theoretical framework comprises processes of decolonial "unsettling," desire-based narrative-making, and what Tiffany refers to as in *The Black Shoals* (2019), Lethabo King (2019, 115) alludes to "porosity" for inter/intrapersonal communication. These three methods provide power to the most vulnerable as a political and artistic vehicle, the body's resonant potential. People should start with the fact that the Pandemic is a global phenomenon & its disastrous consequences are not an outlier; they are the outcome of deliberate and sustained efforts.

The complicated systems and their tenacity set it apart due to human choices. As a result, the Pandemic has disrupted the normal flow of events existing quo in a variety of destructive ways without denying the fact that the status quo is bad.

The status quo must be disrupted (albeit very differently). As artists, people are involved (Referring to the COVID-19 health emergency intertwining with massive anti-white supremacist movements).

Early in the Epidemic, there were also restless appeals for a return to normalcy. "Normal," yet many people realised that any "normal" based on land theft was a lie. Slavery, patriarchy, and white supremacy have never served them well. Instead of returning to the "daily spectacle of death and conquest," people must consider how to rebuild. How do people imagine, create, and dream of and toward a new future in which Indigenous sovereignty, Black freedom, and women's liberation coexist? Its compass is queer rights, labour rights, and accountability cultures as the action-oriented movement for possibility.

Conor Tomas Reed pointed out that the only way to set limitations is to take action. It is possible to test the boundaries of possibility. (Reed, 2002, P. 196) "What should we build on the ruins of a city?" In her book *Freedom Dreams: The Radical Black Experience*, Robin D. G. Kelley wonders, Isn't it a nightmare? Imagination is important. "Unleashing our yearning and constructing a new world" is the solution in the present on the foundation of love and creativity."(2002, P. 193)

Because this kind of practical envisioning is an art form focused on interaction, exchange, and liveliness, it is classified as a performance. People who are making courageous efforts to pave the way for such decolonial futures are to be highlighted in the face of impending death. In their piece, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang argue that *Decolonisation is Not a Metaphor* (2012), that decolonisation must result in the repatriation of Indigenous land and life and cannot be construed otherwise.

Tuck and Yang's concept of settler colonialism as a structure rather than an event remains crucial to DTP's movement work, particularly regarding what it means to situate oneself within the entanglement of settler coloniality, re-arrange ties to power, and re-orient toward one another. One can recognise that the Pandemic will not result in the repatriation of land and life. However, people are convinced that the art (work) and struggle that is now taking place and how it is addressed inside those pages are part of a reckoning with this process. "Unsettle Everything" is one of DTP's call-to-action mantras. Decolonisation is a process of disruption, re-imagination, and profound questioning that influences what artists and activists undertake in situations particular to their positions.

One may see decolonisation as an essential framework for the intersection of art and struggle, not only because it helps people make sense of their places within settler coloniality but also because it informs how people might contribute meaningfully to the effort of repatriating land and life.

## **Methods**

This paper follows the analytical approach in analyzing the collected data which is related to the selected text as well as the text itself. The researcher tries to analyse *Pandemic* (2020), a radio play which depicts vividly Covid 19 crises and

its ramifications on the none-white American people, in general. and the Asian-American people in particular.

## Discussion

The negative association between a person or a group of individuals that indulge in specific rates and a certain contagion is referred to as social shame about good. In the event of a flare-up, this may imply that individuals are singled out, generalised, victimised, treated singularly, and suffer the loss of status due to an apparent association with a contagion. A similar therapy may have the opposite effect on persons infected with the infection, just as it can affect their mother numbers, family, friends, and networks. People who are not afflicted with the sickness but who take part in the activity at varying rates with this group could still be exposed to the harmful effects of the shame. As a result of the present COVID-19 outbreak, individuals of certain ethnic backgrounds have been subjected to stigmatisation and discriminatory acts. It applies to everyone who has been shown to have come into contact with the contagious agent. The radio drama *Pandemic* serves as a time capsule for the anti-Asian hatred prevalent throughout its historical period.

Katie Lu, a student at Wissahickon High School, wrote the first play when she was 16 years old. The surge in anti-Asian sentiment that accompanied the COVID-19 Pandemic served as an inspiration for it. Cat Ramirez is the one in charge of the directing. *Pandemic* is a politically charged play that investigates racism, both personified and internalised, from the viewpoint of two eras that could not be more unlike one another: the 1930s and ultramodern day 2020. In the same vein, it shows how racism is still present today, not only in sneaky ways that are easily overlooked but also in vicious, hateful ways similar to those of a hundred years ago.

<https://www.phillyyoungplaywrights.org/pandemicteacherstream.html>

It also sheds light on the Chinese Exclusion Act, which is a frequently overlooked part of American history that is not taught in seminars, and it draws a parallel between those acts and the rise of anti-Asian-American sentiment with the COVID-19 extremism, making it one of the most important erudite pieces of the post-pandemic period. It is because it sheds light on the Chinese Exclusion Act, which is a frequently overlooked part of American history that is not taught. Despite this, the author views her play as a stopgap amid such a heartbreaking tragedy. The dramatist portrays the younger generations as responsible for turning the world upside down and igniting transformation. It is a work of erudition that is both provocative and successful in its writing.

The author of the play, *Pandemic*, which is a three-act play, was awarded first prize in the Philadelphia Young Playwrights' Annual Playwriting Festival in 2020. In addition, it was selected to have a high-quality production thanks to an entitlement provided by the Independence Foundation. The play tells the stories of two women: one in the year 2020, a naive Asian-American council pupil who is opened up to a world of ethnical prejudice when her forefather falls victim to a violent hate crime. The other is in the 1930s, a young mother-to-be who is attempting to keep her family together while facing the difficulty of expatriation. Both women are Asian-American. (Ibid.)

She said that she “knew I wanted to make a play that... highlighted multiple generations” and that “I was dabbling with numerous concepts... but none of them was striking.” There were also allegations that Asian Americans were being harassed and, in some instances, violently beaten by those who wrongly claimed that they were ever responsible for the Pandemic. It was another disturbing trend that emerged during this time. I had no intention of writing anything about the coronavirus or prejudice. In addition to that, I became doubly exhausted. “They were labelling us as nonnatives,” said Lu, whose parents, both computer programmers, emigrated to the United States from China before Lu was born. Lu's parents were the first member of her family to be born in the United States. As a result, I began to wonder what it meant to be an Asian American and identify myself in that way in this nation. In addition to this, I was having doubts about the history of Asian Americans. During the 19th and 20th centuries, China went through a period known as the Rejection of Chinese Rule (which began when the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 placed a doldrums on Chinese immigration and averted Chinese emigrants from getting US. citizens). Therefore, I tried to combine the two different backdrops into one cohesive whole in this painting. The young writer said she wanted to write a play that would resonate with people of many different generations; however, none of her first ideas were very fruitful. In addition to this, she witnessed the accounts of other Asian Americans being harassed and physically assaulted by individuals who wrongly claimed that they were the source of the infectious disease. Instead of sitting back and doing nothing, she channelled her frustrations into composing a play that won an award. In it, she combines contemporary concerns about hate crimes with the shameful history of the United States preventing Chinese immigrants from becoming citizens.

In this regard, she touches on two significant events that impacted the lives of Asian Americans: the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. Face to face, both of Lu's parents worked as computer programmers in their home countries before moving to the United States of America. Lu was born in the United States. She focused on her identity and the history of Asian immigrants in America as she saw the continued sequence of assaults against Asian Americans. She said, “I was learning about the Chinese Rejection period of the 19th and 20th centuries -- which began when the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 placed a doldrums on Chinese immigration and prevented Chinese emigrants from getting U.S. citizens” She was referring to the time that spanned the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Characterisation** After the assault, the main character in Lu's ultramodern story, Esther, can be heard storming into the room where her grandfather is treated at the sanitarium. Esther is pleading with the medical monitoring organisation calling in the background to tell her whether or not her grandfather is doing well. He dismisses it with laughter and asks, “Who knew? To get my granddaughter to visit me, all it takes is a good spanking once in a while. Lu's grandfather is a genuinely happy person who enjoys telling jokes and was a source of comfort for her. She said that “I believe at times when awful impacts occur — like a hate crime — it is easier to dance around the topic”. She said this.

A sound montage of news advertisements about the discriminatory atrocities faced by Chinese immigrants in the 1930s is played for the audience when the

play shifts back in time. This situation alerts the audience that the performance has changed periods. The anxious American mother keeps in touch with her long-distance Chinese fiancé by exchanging letters in the hope that they will be able to be together one day. The happy pair ends up being married, but the mother is forced to give up her citizenship due to the Expatriation Act of 1907. Their kid, who is still a citizen of the United States, has been taken away by the state.

In the beginning, Lu intended for it to be a visual experience that took place on a stage; but, because of social distance limits, it had to be adapted for the radio. Initially, she was displeased, but in the end, she found the process of making an audio-only product to be enjoyable. Lu's original script called for the stage to be split into two corridors so that the different time ages could be easily distinguished from one another. However, since the radio play was being produced, she and her sound developer, Lucas Campbell, had to think creatively to achieve the same effect. Lu elucidates, "Aloud. We were working on the creation of an immersive experience." That meant hiring a shoptalk trainer to ensure you could bring the sort of musicality to a voice typical of the 1930s and focusing on effects such as accentuation work to attempt to transport the listener through the use of sound alone.

Lu was first sad that she would not be able to watch *Epidemic* perform live, but she later realised that going the path of audio-only had certain benefits. "There was much additional time to dive deeper into the details of each character and create out these backstories. She said that the players needed to know 'the life elements that do not make it into the play, but are crucial to flesh out the characters.'" The decision not to spend time on the facial expressions, posture, or gestures of the performers freed up time that could be spent concentrating on "the ups and downs of people's voices, and rhythms and whatnot." Drones were used for the sake of practising. Since literature is the mirror of reality, we may deduce that the topic of epidemics will be prevalent in the works published between 2020 and 2021. <https://www.theatrephiladelphia.org/whats-on-stage/pandemic-a-radio-play-0>

The drama can reflect all of the horrors that humans are subjected to at any one moment, particularly at the most extreme levels. The outbreak provides an opportunity to shed light on the less than appealing aspects of the American system and republic. Racism is a contemporary problem that requires constant attention and action. The popularity of this radio drama may be attributed, in part, to the fact that it employs solely sound fashion. It reflects the larger trend of social distance in today's society.

## **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 Pandemic was alluded to as a disaster earlier in this introduction, although it could not be regarded as one in the traditional sense. The term catastrophe was first used in the 4th-century Greek play to describe a world-changing overturning often followed by revelation. (Donatus, 1974, 48) However, no catharsis has occurred as of 2021, and the topic of insight remains unanswered. The *Epidemic* caused a societal disruption, and the terror-filled waiting period provided an opportunity for introspection.



The radio play *Pandemic* intends to reflect the suffering of the nonnative people in the USA. It is a play that discovers the illusion of equality that American politicians utilise to manipulate the whole world. Racism is a fundamental problem in American society that still controls the relations among the society's components. Is it true that white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy are all old concepts? It is the question that this paper tries to answer. The result is that it is not true. These concepts are not old, but they are lively and are still applied in American society. It is quite clear in the epidemic time.

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The authors claim that there is no need to disclose any competing interests since there are none.

### **Data availability statement**

The dataset that was used in this study may be accessed from the individual who functioned as the corresponding author if a fair request is made in this regard.

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