

# Tackling Racial Discrimination: Discussing Joe Biden and BTS Meeting on Anti-Asian Hate

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## ABSTRACT

Human beings are created equal to each other, with the best form and we deserve to get good treatment from anyone and have the privilege to ask for that. Because life is only transitory, people should take advantage of every chance to achieve their goals. However, there is a group of people who hate it and end up treating some individuals from certain groups or races in a bad way. The research approach used in this study is qualitative, this article uses descriptive qualitative research which is simply a descriptive analysis or interpretation. The subjects in this article are American people who doing racism to the minority. It analyzes the racism of minorities, especially Asians, and the object of this article is racial discrimination. The article focuses on the presence of BTS and the White House Press Secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre at the White House meeting on 31 May 2022 in the context of AANHPI Heritage Month. The data sources used in this article are journals about racial discrimination and the BTS visit to the White House. In this discussion, the authors find discrimination by Americans against Asians and Asian descent, the attitude that Asians show when they experience racism, the invitation of BTS to the White House in the context of AANHPI Heritage Month, speeches of Joe Biden and BTS, and Karine Jean-Pierre's presence as White House Press Secretary

**Keywords:** American, anti-Asian hate, BTS, Joe Biden, racism

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are created equal to one another. One thus deserves to receive good treatment from anyone and have the privilege to ask for that. Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (in Sigar, 2018) argues that as life is only transitory, people should take advantage of every chance to achieve their goals. However, there is a group of people who hate it and end up treating some individuals from certain groups or races in a bad way (Menggalo, Oroh, & Mamentu, 2020). In relation to race, the behavior of a group is often influenced by their perception of being the ruling majority over a minority group, which they do and maintain to protect their interests. The unfair and exclusive treatment of the dominant group shapes the conduct of minority groups. White people are the dominant group and are afraid of losing their possessions and privileges. Minority groups, on the other hand, think that by opposing the current social structure, they may better comprehend their interests and aspirations (Tuch & Weitzer, 2004).

Black people have been impacted by systemic racial discrimination in American society for many centuries. Racial discrimination, which manifests in differing treatment of Blacks and other people of color by Whites, is one form of this oppression. Racist oppression has many facets and manifests itself in different ways. White-power supremacies that take part in dominance,

discrimination, exploitation, and cultural appropriation are examples of racial oppression (Adhitya, Rosmawati & Fainnayla, 2022, p. 69). Additionally, white privilege and power contribute to this oppression. Major institutional areas like work, housing, education, health care, recreation, politics, policing, and public accommodations have all been affected by systemic racism (Feagin, 2006). Racial discrimination can be manifested in direct actions as well as in complex systems of social relations that result in racial inequalities in social outcomes. Some academics limit the idea to activities intended to limit group resources; others see racial inequality as an effect of discrimination. The first view is too broad, and the second is too restrictive (Pettigrew, 2015). Racial discrimination is a well-known thing that Americans did to people who are different from their majority.

Racial discrimination is defined as the unfair treatment of one group towards another group based on their race or ethnicity. The National Research Council distinguishes between differential treatment and different effects in defining racial discrimination, creating two parts of the definition: "(1) differential treatment on the basis of race that disadvantages a racial group and (2) treatment on the basis of inadequately justified factors other than race that disadvantages a racial group (differential effect)" (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004, pp. 39-40). The second element of this definition extends its scope to include actions and procedures that may not be specifically motivated by race but that systematically harm the group. Institutional practices such as these, which go beyond the more common types of intentional discrimination, are critical to take into account when analyzing how valued opportunities are affected by race (Pager, 2006).

Anti-Asian hate is one of the many cases of racism and discrimination by Americans against racial minorities. Recently, Anti-Asian hate is rife in America, due to Covid-19 cases that are known to come from China. Reporting from the BBC Indonesia news platform on YouTube uploaded on 27 March 2021, the news contains about Asian people, especially those with Chinese faces, getting hate speech like "you are a virus carrier" and the like. This anti-Asian hate is a serious matter because it interferes with the daily lives of Asians there, so they hold demonstrations to get justice for the treatment of Americans (Asians, 2021). Trump has publicly spread anti-Asian racist rhetoric by calling the COVID-19 virus the "China virus" (Adhitya & Wulandari, 2021, p. 27). Moreover, the term Trump repeatedly uttered during his campaign in Oklahoma (Ma'arif, Muhadjir, & Jose, 2022, pp. 10-12).

During Trump's presidency, racial discrimination is at an alarming level. Trump has changed racism from euphemism to more overt, by frequently making racist remarks towards minorities and classifying racial minorities into three major groups; Hispanics, blacks, and Muslims. The practice of white supremacist politics and Trump's racist rhetoric at the beginning of his leadership has made racist behavior and hate crimes increasingly flourish in the United States. Based on data from Pew Research, nearly two-thirds of Americans, or about 27 percent, said the racial conflict between people of color was "very strong", 38 percent said it was "strong", 26 percent said "not very strong" and only about 4 percent. which states "no conflict".

Racism has become an integral part of American society. Trump's racist narrative has created the toxicity of racism and increased anti-migrant sentiment, black sentiment and other racial sentiments. And the culmination is the incident of racist demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia and the incident during demonstrations over the death of George Floyd (Ma'arif, Muhadjir, & Jose, 2022, pp. 2-4). The victory from Biden itself is expected to be a breath of fresh air for the problem of racism against minorities in the United States. Firstly, Joe Biden on 31 May 2022 invited Bangtan Sonyeondan (abbreviated as BTS), one of the most successful Korean boy bands of all time (Ribeiro, 2022), as Asian representatives to a meeting at the White House in Washington D.C., US for Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month. This reason behind the decision taken by Joe Biden is interesting to analyze because in the past the hatred of Asians raised

during Trump Administration was very rampant and evil. Therefore, the invitation of BTS to the government event was enough to seize the public's attention.



Figure 1: Joe Biden with BTS at the White House

The second is the presence of a black woman at the meeting. She is White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, and her presence also seized the attention of the public. As we know that America is famous as the place where the women's movement began, better known as feminism. This movement initially occurred because of the inequality of views about the position of women and men in society. Therefore, various efforts have been made to examine the problem of inequality. (Meiliana, 2011). With these two unusual phenomena, of course, this era of President Joe Biden's leadership is full of curiosity and interest from the public, especially Asians and blacks. It raises the question that "where do you want to take Joe Biden's leadership?", which appears to bring hope to the minorities in America. This paper aims to find out Joe Biden's reasons for this step and also the contents of BTS's speech at the meeting.



Figure 2: BTS with Karine Jean-Pierre during the speech at the White House

This study is influenced by two previous journal articles. Dairatul Ma'arif, Muhadjir, and Hino Samuel Jose (2022) conducted a study, which focuses on the differences between Donald Trump's and Joe Biden's presidencies. It was found that there were contrasts in the leadership of the two presidents. It concludes that systemic racism has been deeply rooted in U.S. society. Although Biden has not been able to eliminate systemic racism in the U.S., his anti-racist policies have indirectly presented better prospects for the future of the U.S. nation. Biden's agenda in restoring the nation which is implemented in the executive order policies and other anti-racist work programs have had a significant impact in realizing racial equality in the US. Moreover, Biden is fully supported by the multi-racial community in the US, so it can make it easier for Biden to eliminate all forms of racial injustice in the US. The difference with this research is that this one focus more on Afro-American hate, which is different from the research that the researcher will do in this article, which focuses more on Anti-Asian hate which is currently rising.

A study by Menggalomo, Oroh and Mametu (2020) discusses racial discrimination as seen in Stockett's *The Help*. The findings of the article are (1) racial discrimination in social life, such as the

Blacks cannot touch the Whites, the Blacks and the Whites cannot use the same bathroom and the Blacks take care of the White children; (2) racial discriminations on Human Rights; (3) the cause of racial discrimination; (4) the Whites' perception on the Blacks as the inferior and dirty race; (6) the impact of racial discrimination on the Black community., what makes it different from this research is that this one analyzes Biden's campaign in voicing anti-racial discrimination by attracting members of the Korean boy band BTS and also the spokesperson for the white house, which is a black woman. Therefore, this research focuses on the authors collecting information about Anti-Asian hate in the U.S.

## 2. METHOD

A research method is a strategy, process, or technique used in collecting data or evidence for analysis to discover new information or create a better understanding of a topic. There are different types of research methods that use different tools for data collection. Based on the type of data collected, the research approach used in this study is qualitative.

Qualitative studies are a shape of social movement that emphasizes the manner human beings interpret, and apprehend their reports to apprehend the social fact of the individual. It uses interviews, diaries, journals, study-room observations and immersions, as well as open questionnaires to obtain, analyze and interpret visible facts as well as evaluate text materials, and oral history (Mohajan, 2018, p. 2). This is immediately or potentially observable and it can be concluded that there was no manipulation of the treatment. In addition, statistical analysis and empirical calculations are not included in qualitative research (Mohajan, 2018). This then article uses descriptive qualitative research which is simply a descriptive analysis or interpretation (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 338).

According to Arikunto, the subject of research is "the limitation of research where the researcher can determine it with objects, things or people to attach research variables" (Karim, 2021). The research subject is closely related to where the data source research is obtained. Something that sticks inside of 'them' is the problem you want to research and the place to get the data in the research will be the subject of the research (Rahmadi, 2011, p. 62). The relationship between the subject and the object of this research cannot be separated. According to Arikunto, the object of research is a variable or what is the focus of a study (Karim, 2021). The subjects in this article are American people who doing racism to the minority. It analyzes the racism of minorities, especially Asians, and the object of this article is racial discrimination. The article focuses on the presence of BTS and the White House Press Secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre at the White House meeting on 31 May 2022 in the context of AANHPI Heritage Month.

Data is a collection of information obtained from observations where the data can be in the form of numbers and can also be symbols or characters. The definition of data based on the Webster New World Dictionary is something known or assumed to be a fact (Situmorang & Lutfi, 2014). The data source is the subject from which the data is obtained, which can also be defined as the object or person where the researcher observes, reads or asks about information specific to research problems. Information obtained from the source of this research is then called data (Rahmadi, 2011, p. 60). The data sources used in this article are journals about racial discrimination, racism and the BTS visit to the White House. The author's focus is on analyzing the BTS speech at the White House and Joe Biden's administration plan. All data used are taken from journals on the Internet in form of journals, as well as documentation and interview videos on YouTube. To investigate the government meeting between Biden and BTS which discussed Anti-Asian Hate, the data are analyzed together with an Indonesian who lived in the U.S. These data can be used as a reference for the discussion of this article.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researchers found several points that matched the purpose of writing this paper. The discovery of these points is accompanied by the author's discussion of the statements presented. The findings are as follows.

#### 3.1 Discrimination by Americans Against Asians or Asian Descent

Discrimination seen in American Society against Asian descent is by committing violence, both verbal and physical. Anti-Asian violence is a hallmark of settler societies like the United States founded on Indigenous dispositions and the freedom of property ownership. Rough patterning, the capitalist mode of production based on the expropriation of customary lands, extracting resources and exploitation of labor fails to generate profits, threatening individuals to emerge in times of crisis. Expressions of discomfort are depicted through violence directed at those who are considered 'foreign', figures who occupy the space of illegality and threaten 'order', or the governance of property relations, and thus exist to be contained, excluded or eliminated. 'The Chinese Must Go!' is an appeal to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century 'worker', a racist and gendered figure who aspires to be incorporated into US market society (Man, 2018, pp. 1-2).

During Trump's presidency, he often gave speeches that led public opinion to take racist actions, as if it was not a mistake. What is happening is that discrimination against Asians in America is increasing, for example; Racist rhetoric "Covid-19 virus" as "China Virus", "Wuhan Virus" and "Kung flu" (Ma'arif, Muhadjir, & Jose, 2022). Iona Cheng's statement in an interview by Kompas daily news media on March 22, 2022, about how Americans treated him as a victim of Anti-Asian sentiment in America. He was abused and robbed, his credit card was used for shopping in San Francisco, where the perpetrator was 12 years old (Cheng, 2021). *"As they approach me, they put me to the ground, they punch me. I was resisted with them, I was yelling and screaming."*

The shooting incident on 16 March 2022 by a White citizen killed 8 Americans of Asian-American descent (Cheng, 2021). The incident, which was broadcast on television and in videos, showed how violent acts were carried out brutally against the target without choosing the age and gender of the victim, including the elderly and women. In addition to shooting attacks and leading to murder, reports reveal cases of verbally racist attacks against Americans of Asian descent, especially ethnic Chinese. The incident is visible on the streets, in public facilities, and in front of crowds (BBC News Indonesia, March 4, 2021).

Because of the Anti-Asian hate, many Asians in America get mental illnesses. There are previous studies that have linked increased anti-Asian discrimination with increases in mental symptoms such as anxiety, depressive symptoms, and sleep problems in those subjected to discrimination. Getting help isn't always straightforward. The AAPI (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders) itself is less likely to provide mental health services in contrast to other racial groups, partly because of the cultural bias towards it but also because of the lack of a culturally relevant approach to mental health treatment (Abrams, 2021).

*It's almost as if the public just discovered that there's anti-Asian bias, discrimination, and hatred in this country,"* said Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D., a professor of psychology and education at Columbia University's Teachers College. *"What's upsetting is that it took so much violence for people to take the discrimination seriously."*

Psychologists state that it will not be simple to reverse decades of relative obscurity in the struggle for racial justice, despite their optimism regarding the rising focus on the AANHPI experiences.



### 3.2 The Attitude That Asians Show When They Experience Racism

Based on the video uploaded on 27 March 2022 by the BBC News Indonesia channel on the YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/yR0drdyjFxy>, it is shown there that Asian people demonstrate to get their right to be respected. It can be seen that the response from Asian people there is not silent, but also makes an effort to get equality in treatment in the country where they live (Asians, 2021).



Figure 3: Demonstration of Asian in America.

The resistance in the form of demonstrations is not without reason, it is done because the Asian-Americans also get racism because of their Asian feature and the food they eat. Just a simple thing like that can make Americans easy to judge and bully. In this pandemic, Asians getting more bullied than before, it is very rude actually. Americans always say “get out of here” and “go back to your home”, even though the U.S. is their home how can they leave their house, it confuses me. In the last clip, a child says that he wants everyone to be brave and stand up, which means they do not lose and never stop for justice and equality between Americans and Asians.

Of course, those things make Asian angry and do not have the extra patience to deal with the insults they receive whether verbal or physical. The researchers find that the attitude shown by Asians is a form of scientific defense, where when they get a threat, they want to protect themselves.

### 3.3 The Invitation to BTS in time for the AANHPI Heritage Month

In celebration of AANHPI Heritage Month, BTS will be visiting the White House to discuss Asian inclusion and anti-Asian hate crimes with Biden (YeEun, 2022). People know BTS as a Grammy-nominated international icon, but they also play an important role as young ambassadors spreading a message of respect and positivity to the world (Briefings, 2022). In discussions about Asian inclusion, representation and diversity, as well as tackling hate crimes and anti-Asian discrimination BTS joins President Biden as Asia representative.

Since his first week in office, when he issued a presidential memorandum leveraging the power of the federal government to stand against this hate, the President has led a historic whole-of-government approach to combat racism, xenophobia, and intolerance [sic] — intolerance having to face AANHPI communities. In addition, the President established the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act into law, and sponsored vital research to stop and address prejudice against AA and NHPI populations (Briefings, 2022).

The arrival of BTS to the White House in Washington D.C. is a form of celebration of AANHPI Heritage Month, to establish American relations with Asia and discuss Anti-Asian hate in America. With the presence of BTS, it is hoped that the stereotype about it will decrease and disappear. This event is a form of imagery by Joe Biden during his leadership, by holding this event, the public will perceive that Joe Biden will care about the issue of racism and as if making a campaign for the

eradication of racism. However, it goes hand in hand with the system that Biden sets up during his reign. BTS is the right icon to represent Asian people who often get hate.

### 3.4 Speeches of Joe Biden and BTS

Biden and BTS aim to tackle hate crimes that target Asians and people of Asian descent. White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre, who was on the press conference podium with BTS members, said many people in the world know BTS as an international icon, but not many know that they also play an important role as young ambassadors promoting the sense of belonging, respect and positive values. Jean-Pierre said BTS will meet with President Joe Biden and to discuss the inclusiveness of representation and Asia's diversity, as well as to deliberate efforts in tackling the hate crimes and anti-Asian discrimination (Lana, 2022).

BTS members eloquently put forward their concerns and suggestions for a better future, earning praise from the POTUS himself. The 35 minutes long meeting was started by President Biden, who while addressing the recent rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, said, "Hate only hides. When good people talk about it and say how bad it is, it goes down." He continued with a compliment for BTS, who have long been global ambassadors and youth icons. "People care a lot about what you say, and what you are doing is good for all people, It's not just your good talent. It's the message you are communicating. It matters." Group leader RM as spokesperson responded to this by appreciating the President's proactiveness in addressing the issues at hand. "We want to say thank you, sincerely, for your decision such as signing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act into law. So, we just want to be a little help and we truly appreciate the White House and government's (efforts) trying to find solutions."

Alongside the meeting with Biden, BTS appeared with Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre for a special briefing where the seven BTS members took a moment to talk about rising anti-Asian hate crimes, diversity, and Asian inclusion (Blistein, 2022).

President Biden concluded the meeting by giving BTS members commemorative coins in marking the meeting (Waqar, 2022). From the discussion of the two parties above, it can be said that the presence of BTS members was requested by Joe Biden as an intermediary object of Biden's plan in eradicating racial discrimination. Because, BTS is intensely famous in Asia, America, and the world, they are good icons for similar anti-racism campaigns.

### 3.5 Karine Jean-Pierre's Presence as White House Press Secretary



Figure 4: Karine Jean-Pierre at Her First Press Briefing as at the White House Press Secretary

The presence of Karine Jean-Pierre before BTS did a speech at the white house really caught the writer's attention when he saw the video speech. His appearance is what makes people focus on his presence. Americans are very racist towards black people especially; since she is a woman. However, that can be seen from the appearance of Karine Jean-Pierre. Karine Jean-Pierre is a White

House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, her presence also seized the attention of the public. As we know that America is famous as the place where the women's movement began, or better known as feminism. This movement initially occurred because of the view of the unequal position of women compared to men in society. From these problems, various efforts have arisen to examine these inequalities (Meiliana, 2011). "I am obviously acutely aware that my presence at this podium represents a few firsts," Jean-Pierre said at the start of the afternoon briefing, per The Hill.

"I am a Black, gay, immigrant woman. The first of all three of those to hold this position. I would not be here today if it were not for generations of barrier-breaking people before me. I stand on their shoulders." Jean-Pierre had stepped in for former press secretary Jen Psaki in the past. Before taking on the position, she worked on the senior communications team at the White House under the Biden administration. She was also an adviser to Biden's and Vice President Kamala Harris' campaigns (Poonia, 2022).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, every human person in the world has the right and privilege to demand that they be treated fairly. Unfortunately, some people reject the notion of treating someone well simply because they belong to a different race or group of people. Racial discrimination occurs in society for a variety of reasons, including differences in appearance, skin color, education, belief, and IQ. Of course, hate speech is very common everywhere, but what is happening in America is very serious. Especially with Donald Trump holding the position of president, who often gives speeches that lead to hatred towards minorities, especially Asians, during the covid pandemic, he continues to ridicule the Chinese people, which causes the rise of hate speech received by Asians, even though they are of Asian-American descent, they are still the target of hate that is expressed in physical and verbal forms.

Racism in the U.S., cannot be said to be a light social issue. Because of their actions, these racist people cause harm to minority people, ranging from goods to lives. The racist acts that occur include pickpocketing, harassment, humiliation, and even murder. Many cases have taken a person's life, so this is a serious issue that if left untreated will have an impact on the comfort of other Americans. Therefore, when president-elect Joe Biden started leading their country, the public felt like they had a breath of fresh air in new leadership. Even after his tenure in office is still frequent and racism is soaring, Joe Biden is preparing a new system that will be implemented to eliminate the opinion drift created by Donald Trump to hate Asians and other minorities. One of the ways that Biden in this new plan is to invite BTS as the Asian representative at the AANHPI Heritage Month meeting at the white house, Washington D.C. With the presence of BTS, it is hoped that Anti-Asian hate in America will decrease and disappear, due to its undeniable popularity. The activity was categorized as a racial discrimination campaign with a meeting between Joe Biden and BTS who discussed Anti-Asian hate in America, which skyrocketed drastically due to the driving of opinion.

Biden is also getting attention for presenting BTS and a spokesperson for the white house which is a black woman who is very likely to be the target of hate in the U.S. The researchers think that this campaign is disguised as an image by Biden to attract public sympathy so that he can serve for two presidential terms. It is not wrong because it is in line with the plans of the presidential system. With this campaign activity, it is hoped that the American people will be aware and quickly fix themselves, so that there will be no more riots stemming from racism. Finally, the meeting held by BTS and Biden is an activity with a good cause which is a campaign to eliminate racism in America, especially against Asians. Further research can examine the effects of this meeting to the number of anti-Asian incidents.



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