

Vietnamese Dialogue: Issues of Anti-Black Racism and the N-Word Facilitation Notes

This document is intended to be used as facilitation notes to compliment the [“Vietnamese Dialogue: Issues of Anti-Black Racism and the N-Word” presentation](#) created by the Union of North American Vietnamese Student Associations (UNAVSA). It is our goal to create more dialogue within the Greater Vietnamese community. This presentation was created for VSAs to focus specifically on addressing the derogatory use of the N-word and how to dismantle anti-black racism within their communities.

Please reach out to the UNAVSA Civic Engagement committee (civic.engagement@unavsa.org) if you have further questions!

Slide #1

- Introduce yourself.
- Tell the audience that the presentation has 2 main goals:
 1. Promote dialogue and a greater understanding of the issues of anti-Black racism and the impact of language.
 2. Empower VSA members to address problematic behaviors in the community and dismantle anti-black racism within the Vietnamese and Asian-Pacific Islander (API) community.
- Set workshop guidelines and community norms/rules.
 - Let audience know that you are speaking not necessarily from a place of expertise but from a desire to promote dialogue and empower the community to be allies for the Black community and other marginalized groups.
 - Would recommend writing this on a big poster-note paper or on a different screen.

Slide #2

- Ask the audience what solidarity means to them and try to elicit a couple responses.
- Play the video and ask the audience to think about why solidarity with other marginalized communities is important.
- After the video, ask the audience if anything in particular stood out.
 - Share with them something that stood out to you from the video
 - Example: “Racism relies on distance and mistrust to keep revolving”
- Provide them this definition of solidarity:
 - “Solidarity is the unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards.”

Slide #3

- Let the audience have a moment to digest the phrases on the slide. Tell them to think about words and phrases that may hurt, devalidate someone's experiences and feelings, disempower, or even scare you or someone you know.
- Ask the audience a question:
 - "Why might these words or phrases hurt?"
 - If after a brief moment no one volunteers, offer up the notion that it's because these words might be something audience members have experienced; that it attacks their gender, race, culture, sexuality, mental health, family, loved ones, and other personal aspects/identities of one's life.
 - "So then why is it that some Asian people believe it's okay to use the N-Word? A word rooted in the dehumanization of Black slaves...? Hold onto this question as we move through the presentation."
- "Now some of you might be thinking, 'What if my friends and I call each other the N-Word as a form of endearment?' or 'What if I have a Black friend who says it's okay?'"
- "Let's transition into breaking down these problematic behaviors by examining some historical context and then providing alternative language."

Slide #4

- When presenting each individual box on this slide will appear as you hit next.
- Black Friend Pass
 - The weight and impact of this word continues to affect an entire group through various systems of oppression. One should not pick and choose when to be an ally. Choosing to accept one person's indifference over the history and lived experiences of an entire group is a reflection of one's own character. Elevate your character behind closed curtains and in front of others by standing in solidarity regardless of who is around.
- Term of Endearment
 - The word has been used in ways to dehumanize and oppress Black lives throughout U.S. history. By co-opting, or stealing the word as one's own to use freely, we are inadvertently erasing the history of this word. In effect this perpetuates the idea of a post-racial society that is blind from the racial injustices that still persist.
- The "Soft" A
 - Cultural appropriation refers to both tangible objects and intangible ideas. When a non-black person repeats this word, even in a song lyric, it changes the meaning and weight of the word. Think about examples when Vietnamese and other Asian traditions and cultures have been appropriated. How does that make you feel?
- Let the audience know that this is not just about one word, but about what we can do to stand in solidarity.

Slide #5

- Let the audience digest this question.
- Push the audience to walk in the shoes of solidarity by getting them to think about other situations:
 - “Can we preserve the Vietnamese culture with no allies? When our culture is appropriated, would we want other communities to stand in solidarity with us?”
 - “Can we tackle issues of mental health within the Asian culture without destigmatizing it in broader society?”
 - “What if no one was talking about the deportation of Southeast Asians from the U.S.?”
 - “The educational, health, and income gap in North America affects Southeast Asians, Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans and Indigenous people. Should we be fighting separate battles?”

Slide #6

- When presenting each individual box on this slide will appear as you hit next.
- Why should we care about these issues?
 - The progression and liberation of Black folks is the progression and liberation of Asian and other marginalized communities.
 - Normalizing one racial slur gives power back to the oppressor and is a step backwards from equality.
- What are we doing wrong?
 - Despite this shared interest, many are unaware of this commonality
 - Note here to the audience that while we share these interests and certain experiences, we also are dealing, healing, and experiencing differences.
 - We often are vocal about issues such as media representation, yellow fever, the bamboo ceiling, etc., but we choose not to fight against other issues that do not directly affect the API community.
- What needs to change in the API community?
 - While we share certain struggles, the API community resides in a grey area. We do not walk the streets fearing police brutality yet our issues are often dismissed, hidden, or grouped into one pan-Asian umbrella.
 - Encourage the audience to recognize that one of the first steps we can take is addressing issues of anti-Black racism within our own communities and calling out problematic behaviors.

Slide #7

- These are some suggested action steps that we can take as individuals or as a group/organization.
 - “A really important thing to recognize is that we are always learning. This presentation is not intended to isolate any person or claim that all Asians are

apathetic towards social issues. It's intended to educate and encourage people to recognize areas of growth and where we can stand in solidarity with Black lives."

- This presentation was created to help those who want to address problematic behaviors within their own local or regional VSA but do not know how to do so.
- Encourage the audience to participate, host, and seek out opportunities to further engage in dialogue around what was discussed throughout the presentation.
 - If you are presenting to your local VSA, invite members to continue the conversation outside of this presentation and to call out problematic behavior.
 - If you are a UVSA, encourage your partner VSAs and regional conferences to host workshops and discussions around these issues.
- The focus of the action steps listed on the slide revolve around education and mobilization. As post-secondary educated Vietnamese and Asian people, we have the power to educate and leverage our resources to advance and preserve not only the Vietnamese culture, but the lives of all marginalized communities. Go beyond sharing mainstream issues, examine historical context and unheard narratives, challenge yourself to use more inclusive language without shaming yourself or others in the process, and push the boundaries of what is expected of yourself and your community.

Slide #8

- "Speaking up can be scary at moments. You may not feel knowledgeable or have the language. Here are some examples of responses and questions you use to help address the use of the n-word in your community."
- "It's not always your responsibility to continue educating or responding to someone who is unwilling to learn. Sometimes posing a question or remark can get someone to at least think more critically about the situation. Remember that this is not just about the N-word, but about addressing issues of anti-Black racism in the Vietnamese and API community."

Slide #9, 10, & 11

- Tell the audience to form into groups of 3-4 people. Let them know that you will display a scenario on the slide that one might encounter within a VSA setting as a general member, staff, or officer. Give them 3-5 minutes to discuss in small groups and then spend 5 minutes to discuss as an entire group.
 - VSA Scenario #1 key takeaways
 - As an officer, you are responsible for making sure that the mission and standing of the organization be upheld. Think critically about how you would want members and other people to view your VSA.
 - Refer back to slide #4 when we discussed about how "the word has been used in ways to dehumanize and oppress Black lives throughout U.S. history. By co-opting, or stealing the word as one's own to use freely, we are inadvertently erasing the history of this word. In effect this perpetuates the idea of a post-racial society that is blind from the racial injustices that still persist."
 - VSA Scenario #2 key takeaways

- Referback to slide #4 when we discussed about cultural appropriation. Remind the audience that “cultural appropriation refers to both tangible objects and intangible ideas. When a non-black person repeats this word, even in a song lyric, it changes the meaning and weight of the word. Think about examples when Vietnamese and other Asian traditions and cultures have been appropriated. How does that make you feel?”
- For some folks in the Black community, it’s a piece of Black culture and acknowledgement of shared obstacles. Even then not every person in the Black community agrees with the use of the N-word.
- VSA Scenario #3 key takeaways
 - Affirm to the audience that not all situations can be confronted by yourself. If you see a situation in which you are not sure how to handle, you can always contact a figure of authority. In this specific example, it would be your director, executive director, or UVSA executive board.
 - You can always remind them that even though it is after programming hours, attendee behavior still reflects to the hotel staff and other people who may notice your behavior.

Slide #12

- Questions?

Slide #13

- Thank you!

Slide #14

- Citation and additional resources