

Asian American Activism and Solidarity Movements

The term "Asian American" did not come into existence until the 1960s. Learn about the history of this term, with its inclusion of Pacific Islanders, as well as the legacy of Asian American solidarity movements.

Conversation Questions

- What are the benefits or drawbacks of having wide-casting terminology to describe identity, such as "Asian American Pacific Islander"?
- How does the model minority myth show up today?
- What examples of solidarity do you see in your community?
- What more would you like to see to further solidarity in your community?

Key Definitions

- **AAPI** - Stands for Asian American Pacific Islanders and technically includes people whose heritage is from the continent of Asia and the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia but there is ongoing discourse on the use of this term. (Adapted from AsianPacificHeritage.org)
- **Identity politics** - "Recognizing oneself and one's experiences in politics is a motivating factor for participation in [the political]...anyone looking to secure the participation of marginalized groups had better start acknowledging that they're marginalized in the first place." (Source: Other and Belonging Institute)
- **Solidarity** - To build community across identity lines and work towards a common goal.
- **Model minority myth** - Characterizes and stereotypes Asian Americans as polite, smart, and hardworking, therefore deserving of success because they are inherently different from other marginalized racialized groups. The model minority trope fails to consider the role of systemic oppression, which Asian Americans face. (Adapted from [Asian Americans for BLM & USC Pacific Asia Museum](#))





Listen

“The Non-United States of Asian America” from *Self Evident* hosted by Cathy Erway | 40 min

<https://bit.ly/3vIFrvl>

The *Self Evident* podcast's second season followed Asian Americans taking action during the pandemic to support their communities, fight racism, confront some very uncomfortable realities, and contribute to a pivotal moment in history. The second episode asks different listeners their take on the term “Asian American.”

“10 Essential Podcasts by AAPI Creators” by Justine Good for *Vanity Fair*

<https://bit.ly/3f0RE7W>

These podcasts explore the richness and complexity of Asian American identity and emphasize how AAPI history is integral to U.S. history.

***Solidarity Is This* podcast from *Solidarity Is This* | 30 min**

<https://bit.ly/3vL8bmZ>

Solidarity has become a buzzword, but what does it mean? What are solidarity values and how do we center them? How do we practice solidarity as activists, organizations, and people who care deeply about building inclusive schools, campuses, workplaces, and neighborhoods?

Read

“The Inadequacy of the Term ‘Asian American’” by Li Zhou for *Vox*

<https://bit.ly/3eXzhki>

The term “Asian American” aspires to unify a wide range of communities with common cause and shared experiences, yet many feel it flattens and erases entire cultures.

“A Different Asian American Timeline” from Change Lab

<https://bit.ly/3em1O3U>

This informative and heavily researched timeline accounts for the legacy of colonization and imperialism and how it connects to the Asian American experience.



"Debunking the Model Minority Myth" from USC Pacific Asia Museum

<https://bit.ly/3vNFINv>

Asian Americans are often stereotyped as studious, successful, smart—a “model minority” who excel in education and accomplish the “American Dream.” Despite its positive overtones, this stereotype is damaging for Asian Americans and other students of color, pitting them against each other and ignoring the reality of systemic racism that Asian Americans continue to encounter.

“The Asian-American Canon Breakers” by Hua Hsu for *The New Yorker*

<https://bit.ly/3tnLvrC>

Proudly embracing their role as outsiders, a group of writer-activists set out to create a cultural identity—and a literature—of their own.

“The Bookstore That Tells the Stories of Asian American Activism” by Pia Ceres for *The Bold Italic*

<https://bit.ly/3epicAH>

From the history of Japanese internment to Crazy Rich Asians, all in a tiny corner of San Mateo.

“Black and Asian Solidarity in American History” by Anika Raju for Asian Americans Advancing Justice

<https://bit.ly/3b8e4Tw>

This article highlights five historical events and figures showcasing solidarity between Black and Asian justice-seekers, from Frederick Douglass’s opposition to the Chinese Exclusion Act to the Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State University.





Watch

“Asian Pacific Americans: Identity, Politics & Identity Politics” by Jennifer Ho for World Channel | 5 minutes
<https://bit.ly/3tu8G3o>

Professor Ho talks about the history of the term “Asian American” and social justice, the connection between the immigrant experience and choosing a political affiliation, and representation by voting.

“Anti-Asian Violence and Black-Asian Solidarity Today” by Tamara K. Nopper for Asian American Writers Workshop | 2 hours
<https://bit.ly/3nRMFdN>

Examine the alarm and growing discourse regarding “anti-Asian violence” currently circulating in mainstream and social media among pundits, celebrities, and Asian American community organizers. This lecture examines the merging of fighting anti-Asian violence with the promotion of Black-Asian solidarity in the context of COVID-19, calling for defunding the police and for abolition.

Asian Americans by PBS | 5 hours
<https://to.pbs.org/3f2HFyG>

As America becomes more diverse, and more divided while facing unimaginable challenges, how do we move forward together? Told through intimate personal stories, *Asian Americans* casts a new lens on U.S. history and the ongoing role that Asian Americans play in the country.

Afro Asian Diasporas by Rujunko Pugh & Marie-Therese Png for International Curators Forum | 5 Chapters
<https://bit.ly/3b9TZfx>

Pugh and Png hold a conversation between their respective locations in Australia and the U.K. about Afro-Asian perspectives, reflecting on COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter. Opening with a discussion of their family histories as Afro-Asian diaspora, they reflect on structural and institutional failings brought to global consciousness by COVID-19 and the murder of George Floyd, and growing calls for Black-Asian solidarity—as well as historic legacies of solidarity.

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