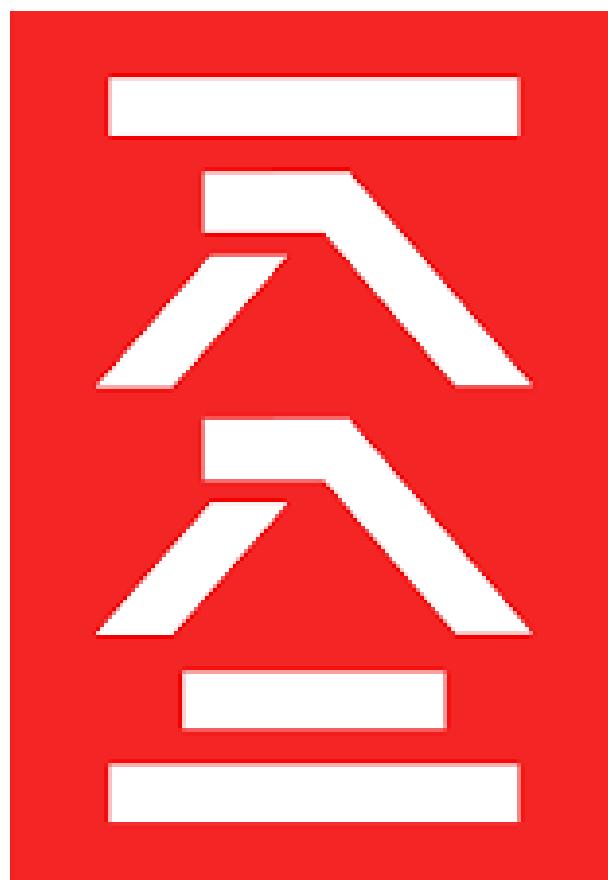




The 1882 Foundation Presents:

The Talk Story



"We gather together to tell stories because the life of our community lies in the power of our stories remembered and shared."

About:



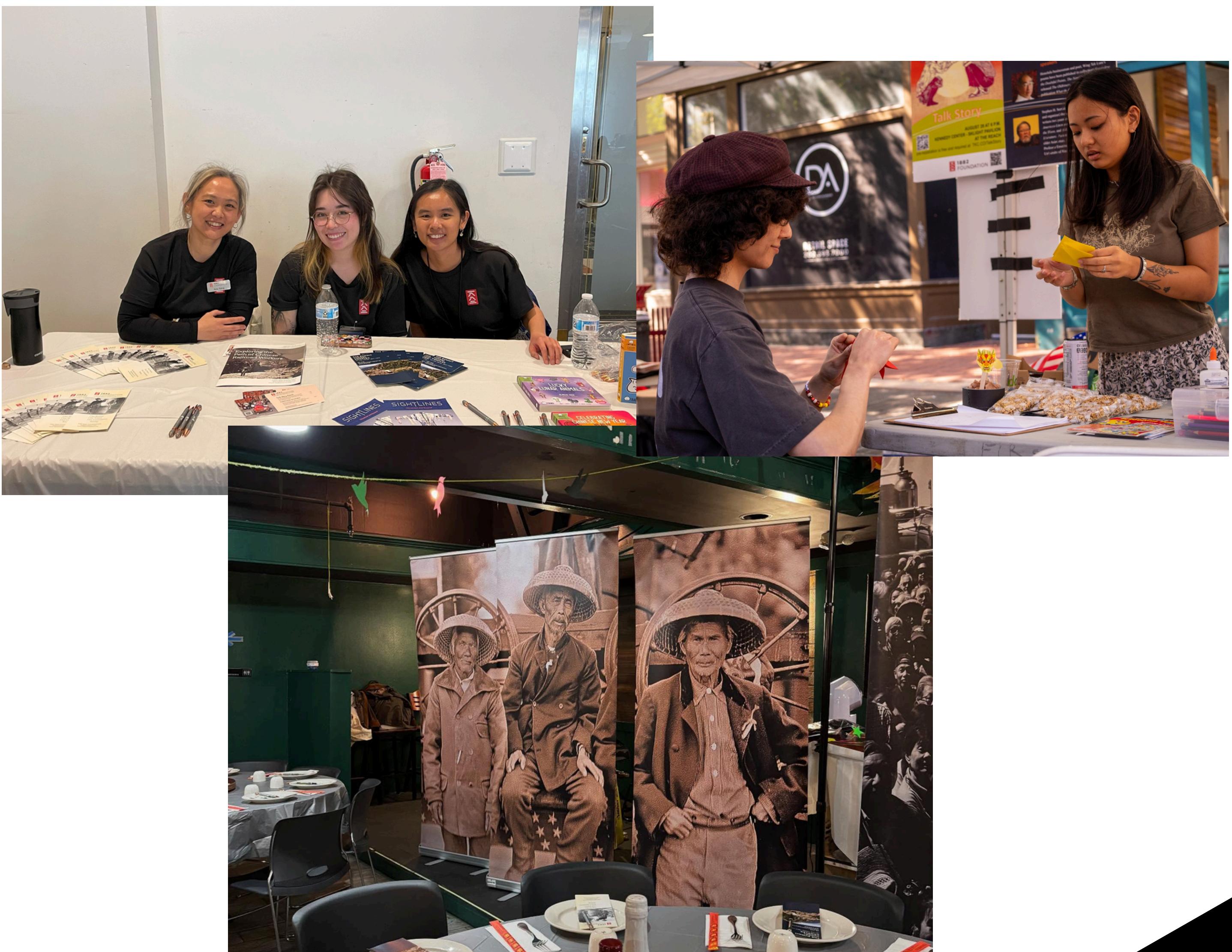
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www.1882foundation.org

Abstract

There has been an unfortunate neglect of Asian American history, leaving many Asian American adults feeling incomplete. They may lack knowledge of their culture, language, and traditions, and they may feel a disconnect from their family, especially their parents or grandparents. The 1882 Foundation's Talk Story events remedy this by encouraging the discussion and contemplation of local Asian American history. Speakers present on various topics, with their common goal being to drive attendees to think about their own identity and history and eventually share their story.



The Problem

We need to tell Asian American history. Asian American students are growing up feeling unrepresented in their history curriculum, with Asians only being mentioned in a few milestones. Those include Chinese immigration in the mid-19th century, the role of those immigrants in building the transcontinental railroad, the subsequent Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the incarceration of almost 120,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans during World War II (Waxman, 2021). These few historical events reinforce the idea of Asian Americans being “perpetually other”. Historical Asians are not thought of as Americans, but instead as labor sources killed when they outcompete white labor or as untrustworthy spies when their families might have lived in America for generations.

In addition, Asian Americans constantly worry about their place in America, especially since the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the wake of the 2021 Atlanta spa shootings, which primarily targeted older Asian women, Katie Li, the Boston Public Schools Ethnic Studies coordinator, opined “[The shooting] amplifies hundreds of years of history of exclusion, of erasure, of invisibility” (Waxman, 2021). Recent action has been taken to officially recognize prominent Asian American figures and expand curricula, but it is not nearly enough to erase the collective void of Asian American history held by American society. Where can Asian American adults learn more about their culture and find peace of mind?

49%

of Asian Americans were insulted or called a bad name in the last 12 months because of their race
(TAAF, 2025)

42%

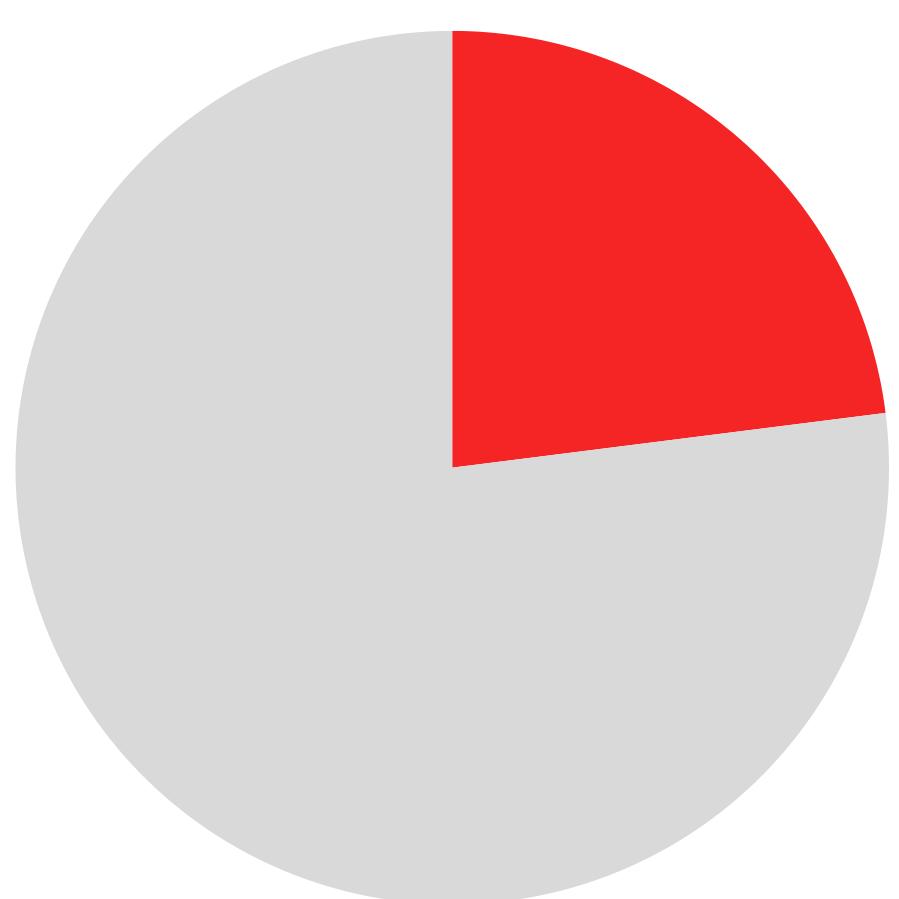
of Americans could not name a famous Asian American
(TAAF, 2025)

The Problem

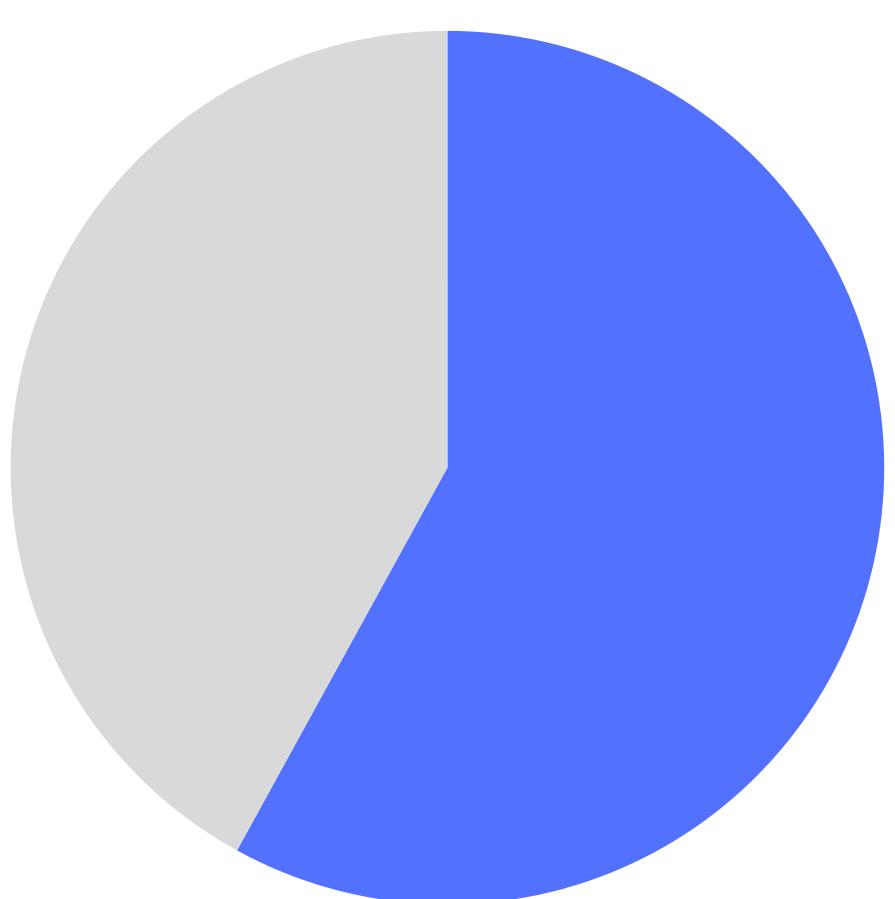


27%
of Americans are concerned that
Chinese Americans are a threat
to US society (TAAF, 2025)

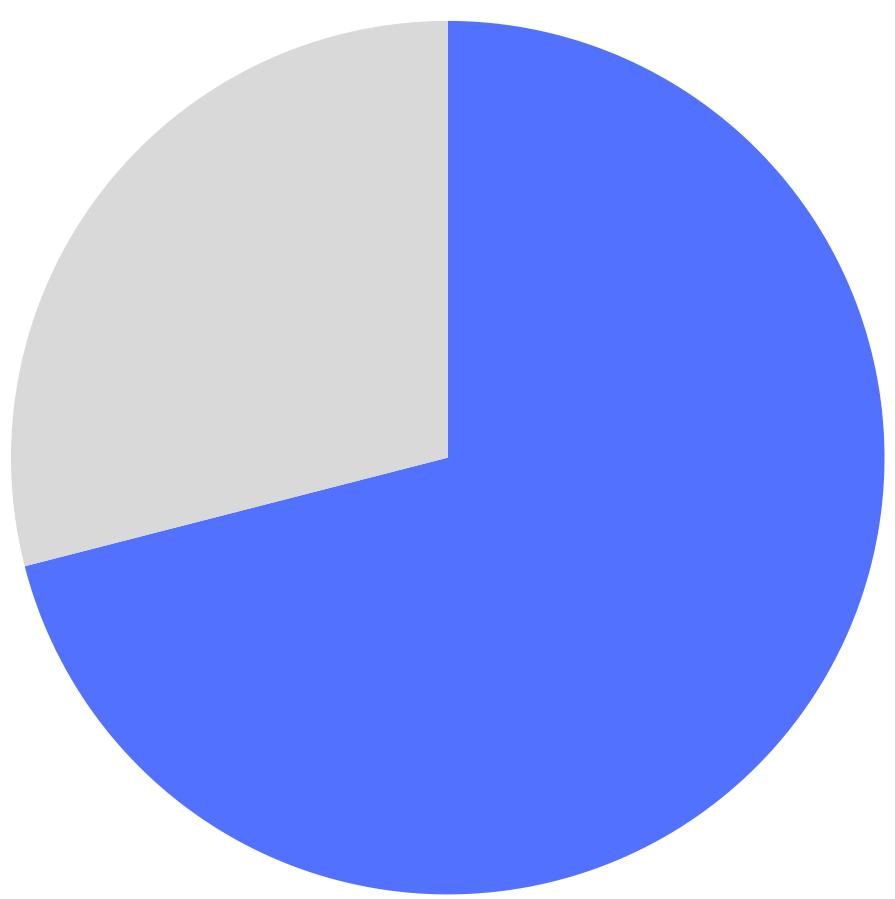
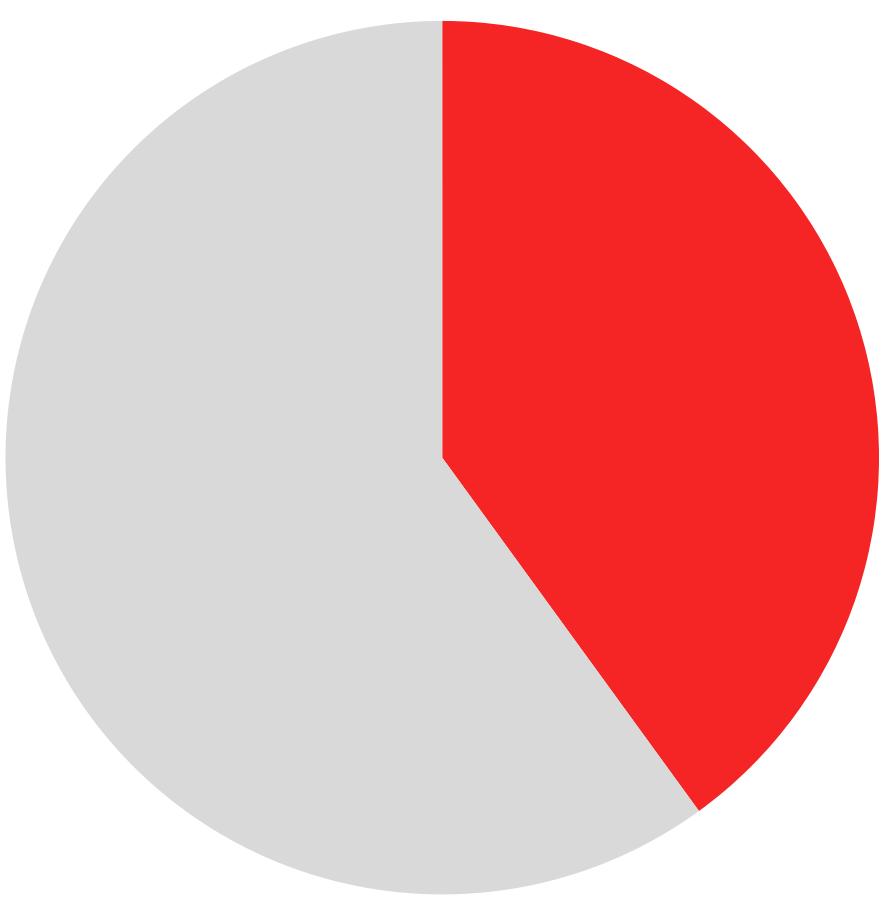
Asian Americans



White Americans



23%
of Asian Americans completely
feel they are accepted in the
U.S. compared to 58% of white
Americans (TAAF, 2025)



40%
of Asian Americans completely
feel they belong in the U.S.
compared to 71% of white
Americans (TAAF, 2025)

Talk Story

The 1882 Foundation introduced its Talk Story program in 2012 to give platforms to Asian American speakers on a variety of topics. Subjects of past events have included memoir writing and healing generational trauma, but talk stories often center on Asian Americans sharing their life stories. Owners of Chinatown Tropicals, a now-closed aquarium store, described growing up in the 1960s and 70s and riding motorcycles around the city. New interns at the foundation denounced the tokenism of Asian characters in recent popular media. By creating a safe space for Asian Americans to speak about these pressing topics, the 1882 Foundation hopes to foster cultural growth and awareness in the D.C. area.

Find text recaps of past Talk Story events here:
<https://1882foundation.org/programs/events/talkstory/>

Find video recaps of past Talk story events here:
<https://www.facebook.com/1882ProjectFoundation/videos>



Origin

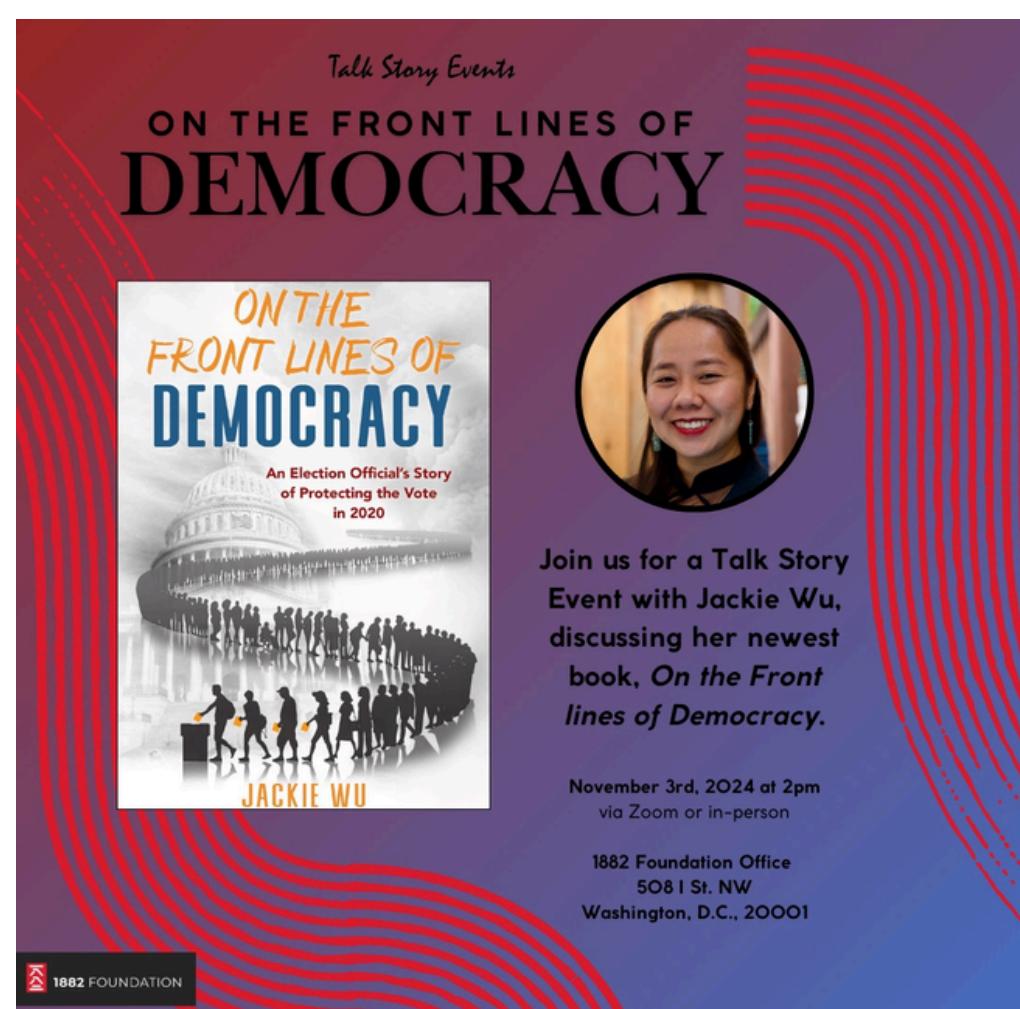
The Kūkākūkā, or the talk story in English, is the Hawaiian tradition of passing down history orally rather than through writing. According to Fiske (2019), “[u]nfortunately, our Hawaiian ancestors did not pen a written history of our islands. Information was passed generation to generation verbally, with the ‘Ōlelo (the language and spoken word) and in storytelling. Today there is much effort in our Hawaiian renaissance to record what we know about our past history before the kūpuna (our elders) forget and can no longer tell it to us”. Dan Akaka adds “Parents took the opportunity to learn from the Kapuna, the native speakers who were still alive and could translate the stories. These elders are the basis of our culture” (Abbott, 2019). The talk story, telling ancestral stories with an emphasis on narrative, is how Hawaiians preserve their history for future generations.



Uncle Pilipo Solotorio (right) exchanging breath with Dan Akaka (left) as a traditional Hawaiian greeting

Logistics

- Held monthly
- Predominantly held at the I Street Conference Center in Washington, D.C.
- Simultaneous livestreams on Zoom and Facebook
- Length: 1-1.5 hours
- Structure:
 - Welcome speech by an 1882 Foundation director
 - Speaker(s) present a slideshow to viewers
 - Q&A follows, though questions are welcome during the presentation
- About 10-20 guests received at each event, either in-person and virtually



Fliers for two recent Talk Story events & a past event's schedule

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Impact



Teaching minority history in schools is already having positive effects on students, so we should ensure this education reaches adults who share the same desire to know more about their personal history. Jay Shah (2019), a college student at the University of Pennsylvania, said about taking South Asia studies classes, “The more South Asia studies classes I have taken, the more I have learned about the history of my ancestors. And it was through this that I started to fully appreciate the other part of my identity beyond boxes on the demographic section on an application”. Acacia Thede, a lecturer in the San Diego State University School of Teacher Education, added “When students can see themselves, when they can participate and when they can feel that all the parts of their identity are valued, that makes a big difference. It leads to school communities that are safe and welcoming, where kids can show up to campus and just breathe” (Klitzing, 2025).

By creating the Talk Story event as a safe space for sharing Asian American history, the 1882 Foundation “encourages individuals to reveal their stories in their own words and to share them with others. There are two parts to this—telling and sharing. ‘Telling’ refers to people saying what is historically important to them. This is empowering. It allows them to define themselves, the elements of their identity, as opposed to having a ‘historian’ define for them what is historically important” (1882 Foundation).

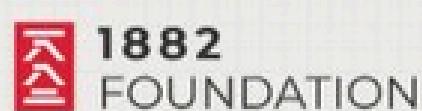
Conclusion

We need to tell Asian American history. With anti-Asian hate persisting to this day, it may seem unorthodox to combat it by sharing Asian American history. However, this is precisely the solution we need. With this designated space for preserving history, we can then learn how to change our future. We can be inspired by those who came before us by listening to how they overcame the challenges of their time. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior (n.d.), “historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations. Our nation’s history has many facets, and historic preservation helps tell these stories”. The United States’ history has been primarily told through the eyes of white men; it is time Asian Americans add their own voice to the story.

Are you part of the Asian American community living or working in the Richmond region with a story to tell?

We want to hear from you!

The Valentine is partnering with the Asian American Society of Central Virginia and the 1882 Foundation to highlight the stories and experiences of Asian American community members for an exhibition to open in Summer 2025.



If you have a story to share, please reach out to Stan Lou, our Talk Story director, at info@1882foundation.org

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