

CA ETHNIC STUDIES MODEL CURRICULUM

Asian Americans - Our History, Our Future

Themes:

1. History and Movement
2. Social Movements and Equity

Asian American Ethnic Studies Course Content:

- Unit 1: An Introduction to Asian American History
- Unit 2: Asian American Immigration and Diaspora
- Unit 3: Asian American Settlement and Exclusion
- Unit 5: On Becoming an Asian American Community Prior to 1965
- Unit 6: New Asian American Communities after 1965
- Unit 7: Asian American Social Movements

Disciplinary Area: Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 1, 4, 5, 6, 7

Standards Alignment:

CA HSS Analysis Skills (9–12): Historical Research Evidence and Point of View 1–3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1, 2, 3, 7, 8; W.1, 4, 8; SL.1, 2. L.1.

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RI.9-10.1, 2, 3, 7, 8; W.9-10.1, 1.b, 4, 8; SL.9-10.1, 1.d, 2; L.9-10.1; RI.11-12.1, 2, 3, 7, 8; W.11-12.1, 1.b, 4, 8; SL.11-12.1, 1.d, 2; L.11-12.1.

9-12.IV.C.4.1; 9-12 V.C.2; 9-12 V.E.2.2, 3, 3.4, 5.

U.S. History Grades 5-12 4.2C.3; 9.4A.6; 10.2B.1; 10.2E, 4.

Lesson Overview:

The history of Asian Americans in the United States is an integral part of American history. Since the day Asian immigrants arrived in America, they have contributed and shaped the way the country is today. From labor activism to fighting for school integration and citizenship rights in the courts, Asian Americans have faced adversity and opportunities to create roots in the U.S. Building coalitions together with other minority groups, Asian Americans have been a part of historical achievements including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, and Title IX. Today, as one of the fastest-growing minority populations, Asian Americans have a choice to make on how they will make positive and effective changes towards the future of the United States.

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Learn about how Asian Americans are an integral part of America's history since their arrival to the United States as immigrant laborers in the 1800s.
- Learn about how Asian Americans leveraged the legal system to fight against school segregation, citizenship rights, and forced incarceration during wartime.
- Learn about how American policies and legislation has affected the lives of Asian Americans negatively and positively.
- Learn about how voting and building coalitions is important for Asian Americans in gaining future political strength to yield positive changes and benefits.
- Research and discuss about the challenges and opportunities of other communities.

Essential Questions:

- How have Asian Americans played an increasing role in American society? What are some historical and modern examples?
- How have various American policies and legislation affected the lives of Asian Americans in the United States?
- How have various policies and legislation influenced by Asian Americans affected the lives of Americans and other minorities?
- How is voting and coalition building beneficial for Asian Americans and their future?

Asian Americans - Our History, Our Future Essay:

The history of Asian Americans in the United States is an integral part of American history. Since the day Asian immigrants arrived in America, they have contributed and shaped the way the country is today. During the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad (1863-1869), Chinese laborers—paid less than Europeans—were labor rights pioneers in collective bargaining actions with the Central Pacific Railroad.

Utilizing the legal system, Asian Americans fought for equality in the courts. In the matter of *Tape v. Hurley* (1885), the first case to deal with school segregation, the California State Supreme Court deemed the exclusion of Chinese students from public schools unlawful. *Wong Kim Ark v. United States* (1898) guaranteed citizenship to those born in America, regardless of race or their parents' national origin. And in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), Japanese Americans fought against their forced incarceration during World War II in order to uphold their Constitutional rights.

Some policies worsened the lives of Asian Americans, while some advanced their progress. The Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 specifically prohibited the immigration of Chinese, and then later all Asians, for sixty years. In 1942, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, forcefully removing almost the entire population of Japanese Americans in the continental United States—120,000 men, women and children, almost the entire population of Japanese Americans in the continental U.S.—on the West Coast to be rounded up and sent to incarceration camps.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended segregation and banned employment discrimination based on race and color. It led to the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which replaced the quota immigration system with a preference system and those who had pre-existing family ties in the U.S., leading to an increase in Asian immigration. Title IX, co-authored by Patsy Mink the first woman of color elected to Congress, provided equal opportunities for girls and women in federally funded educational programs or activities.

While laying roots in this country, Asian Americans have also built coalitions with other minority groups. In the 1960s, Filipino and Mexican American grape farmworkers united in California to hold a five-year-long strike against labor exploitation. Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs fought alongside Black activists for civil rights. In 1969, Asian, Black, Latinx and Native American students fought to establish Ethnic Studies in universities. Post-1992 civil unrest, Koreans and Blacks worked together to rebuild Los Angeles. In 2001, Tereza Lee inspired the DREAM Act, legislation that affects millions of undocumented immigrants today, a majority Latinx.

In order for Asian Americans to create future positive legislative changes and to have elected officials who represent them, they need to exercise their civic duty of voting—a right denied to them until 1952. As scholar/author Viet Thanh Nguyen states, “Asian Americans have choices to make. They can dwell on their own victimization.... Or they seek to transform the system into something more just, more equitable for everyone. That’s the hope of activism, that’s the hope of solidarity. That’s the hope of alliance, that’s the hope and the conviction from which something like the Asian American movement was born.”

Works Cited:

- “Chinese laundries.” Immigration to the United States. <https://immigrationtounitedstates.org/426-chinese-laundries.html>.
- Davies, Dave. “How The 1965 Immigration Act Made America A Nation Of Immigrants.” NPR, NPR, 16 Jan. 2019, www.npr.org/2019/01/16/685819397/how-the-1965-immigration-act-made-america-a-nation-of-immigrants.
- Depenbrock, Julie. “Ethnic Studies: A Movement Born Of A Ban.” NPR. 13 Aug. 2017. <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/08/13/541814668/ethnic-studies-a-movement-born-of-a-ban>
- History.com Editors. “Civil Rights Act of 1964.” A&E Television Networks, LLC. <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-act>

Vocabulary:

- **Collective Bargaining:** a negotiation between an employer and employees to come to an agreement over items including wages, benefits and working conditions
- **Segregation:** the separation of people or things from each other within a specific space or group
- **Exploitation:** taking advantage of someone or something in order to gain profits
- **Undocumented:** not having the required legal documents to reside in a country
- **Civic Duty:** responsibility and obligation to society

Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection:

Lesson Steps/Activities:

Activity 1: Challenges and Opportunities Asian Americans Have

A. Ask students to either conduct research based on the following lesson topics, **or** view the following video clips (under 7 minutes each). Students should view at least one video from each group:

- Group 1 videos (Challenges):
 - 1920s to 1940s - Protecting Our Democracy
 - 1950s to 1960s - The Model Minority Myth
 - 1950s to 1960s - Perpetual Foreigners
 - 1980s to Present - Vincent Chin, Outrage to Organizing
 - 1980s to Present - Victimized Twice: 9/11
- Group 2 videos (Opportunities, Influences):
 - 1960s to 1970s - Filipino American Farmworkers
 - 1960s to 1970s - The Fight for Ethnic Studies
 - 1960s to 1970s - Generation Rising
 - 1980s to Present - Silicon Valley
 - 1980s to Present - Tereza Lee and Undocumented Students

B. Socratic Seminar discussion points:

1. Challenges that Asian Americans face.
 - What unique challenges will Asian Americans face in advancing forward in the United States?
 - For Asian Americans the unique challenges include being treated as perpetual foreigners, the ability to immigrate, and being viewed as model minority.
2. Opportunities and influences that Asian Americans have.
 - Building stronger coalitions.

- Gaining more political power by getting out the vote.

Activity 2: Challenges and Opportunities Your Community Have

- A. Ask students to conduct research on the challenges and opportunities the community of their choice face.
- A community can be an ethnic community, racial community, gender community, LGBTQ community, disabled community, religious community, undocumented community, low-income community, homeless community, etc.
- B. Socratic Seminar discussion points:
1. Challenges your community is facing.
 - What unique challenges does your community face in advancing forward in the United States?
 2. Opportunities and influences your community have.
 - What opportunities and influences does your community have in order to advance forward?

Activity 3: Asian American Electorate

Asian Americans didn't gain the right to vote until 1952. Sixty-nine years later in 2021, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris of California became the first Black and Asian American vice president of the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the U.S. electorate, with more than 11 million eligible to vote in the 2020 elections.

- a. Have students read the Pew Research Center's article (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/05/07/asian-americans-are-the-fastest-growing-racial-or-ethnic-group-in-the-u-s-electorate/>) and write a summary discussing why Asian Americans are an important voter bloc.
- b. Have students do research on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, and Voting Rights Act of 1965. How did these two pieces of legislation affect the right to vote for Asian Americans and protect the rights of those with limited English proficiency?
- c. Have students research on the effect Asian American votes have in national and local elections.

Resources:

- Wang, Amy B. "Record Asian American turnout helped Biden win Georgia. Can it help flip the Senate?" *The Washington Post*. 28 Nov. 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/asian-americans-georgia-senate/2020/11/28/28521068-2ad2-11eb-9b14-ad872157ebc9_story.html. Accessed 20 Jan., 2020.
 - Zhou, Marrian, Alex Fang. "Asian Americans hold outsized role in Georgia's Senate runoffs - Second-generation voters mobilize families with control of Senate at stake." *Nikkei Inc.* 5 Jan. 2021. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Asian-Americans-hold-outsized-role-in-Georgia-s-Senate-runoffs>. Accessed 20 Jan., 2020.
 - "Indian-Americans helped Democrats win Georgia Senate race, says Impact - Asian Americans second highest turnout in early votes among all non-white groups." *Gulf News*. 12 Jan. 2021. [Indian-Americans helped Democrats win Georgia Senate race, says Impact \(indiatimes.com\)](https://www.indiatimes.com/News/Indian-Americans-helped-Democrats-win-Georgia-Senate-race-says-Impact-1077777). Accessed 20 Jan., 2020.
- d. After students have completed their research, have a class discussion and what they learned.

Discussion questions:

- How Asian Americans can make a difference?

- How marginalized people can join together and make a difference?
- How would you build coalitions to advance social changes?

Materials and Resources:

- Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles – Lesson Resources: <https://advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/curriculum-lesson-plans/asian-americans-k-12-education-curriculum/episode-5-lesson-7-our>
- “Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: May 2019.” The United States Census Bureau, May 8, 2019. Web, Accessed August 28, 2020. <www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2019/asian-american-pacific-islander.html>.
- Budiman, Abby. “Asian Americans are the Fastest Growing Racial or Ethnic Group in the US Electorate.” Fact Tank: News in the Numbers, Pew Research Center, May 7, 2020. Web, Accessed August 28, 2020. <<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/05/07/asian-americans-are-the-fastest-growing-racial-or-ethnic-group-in-the-u-s-electorate/>>.
- “Voting.” AAPI DATA, Demographic Data & Policy Research on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders. Web, Accessed August 28, 2020. <<https://aapidata.com/civic/voting/>>.