

Asian Americans: Portraits and Poetry

In our society, Asian Americans have often been considered the “model minority,” and many Americans have not perceived any racism aimed at them. However, we learned in our studies that many Asian Americans feel that no matter what achievements they have made, they are never “good enough” to be truly equal to whites in American society. Many Asian Americans deal with a dual identity, and young people struggle to reconcile their Asian heritage with their present American circumstances.

During the pandemic, hateful rhetoric by some politicians and the resulting anti-Asian violence has revealed a deeper strain of racism than many whites had realized. In the last year, crimes against Asian Americans have increased 150%, and the March 16 shooting of six Asian women has brought such violence to our televisions in recent days.

So, during class as we look at the self-portraits, art, poetry, and a poignant video by Asian Americans, we see their lives with a different lens than we might have a month ago.

Goal

To learn more about Asian Americans through their portraits, paintings, and poetry.

Class Resources

As time permits, read/watch one or more of the following:

- **Anti-Asian hate is no longer invisible.** By Petula Dvorak, *The Washington Post*, published in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Mar 21, 2021. Crimes against Asians come from an invisible hatred, largely ignored. https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/commentary/anti-asian-hate-is-no-longer-invisible/article_0cf4f80c-88cf-11eb-a5ad-bbe0ed6261ee.html
- **What This Wave of Anti-Asian Violence Reveals About America.** Too often, attention to nonwhite groups is only as pressing as the injuries that they have suffered. By Anne Anlin Cheng, *New York Times*, Feb 21, 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/21/opinion/anti-asian-violence.html>
- **Not Your Model Minority.** (13:55 min). Kelly Choi, TEDxUTAustin, Oct 1, 2020. Grouping the Asian American experience into the model minority label trivializes and undermines the individual struggles and experiences each Asian American has gone through. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjACrM6u_Mw

- **To Make the Invisible Visible: Interrogating Race and Racism.** By Keun-Joo Christine Pae. Spring, 2013, Yale Divinity School. Race matters in every part of human society, and those who strive to practice God's love and justice on earth must join the difficult and complex dialogue of race. <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/future-race/make-invisible-visible-interrogating-race-and-racism>