

# Beyond

MODEL

MODEL

**MODEL**

**MINORITY**

MINORITY

MINORITY

# Faith

A Study Guide on Race and Faith

# SESSION 1: WHAT IS ASIAN AMERICA AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Welcome to our gathering! We're so excited you're joining us as we dialogue and journey together to learn more about Asian American issues and how it all intersects with our faith in Jesus.

As we begin, let's make sure we're all on the same page of respect, space, and listening well. Because of this, we want to make sure we're all in agreement for the following:

- We understand that this is a journey for all of us, so let's respect one another's stories.
- Let's give each other space to think and reflect. Maybe we take a moment before we jump into the conversation, or if we feel we're dominating the conversation. All thoughts and questions are welcome, and we want this to be a safe space for everyone.
- Let's really get intentional with listening well. Some of the subject matter we'll be covering could be sensitive and triggering for some of us. Let's not get defensive or argumentative, but rather treat this as a journey of discovery we'll be going on together.

We're starting on a series that'll help us unpack what it means to be Asian American and then connecting with how that intersects with a faith in Jesus.

The whole study is a 6-part series, and each part is divided into 3 sessions. Here is what you can look forward to:

Part 1. Introduction: What Is Asian America, and Where Does It Come From?

Part 2. Microaggressions

Part 3. The Black/White Binary

Part 4. Media and Representation

Part 5. Gender and Race

Part 6. Living It Out

This first part we're starting with is "What is Asian America and Where Does It Come From?" In the first session we're going to look into Asian American history and why it's important we learn this.

But let's start off with an opening activity.

# Who Here Has?

Raise your hand if you can answer the following questions:

- Experienced that you didn't belong because of your Asian-ness
- Experienced that you didn't belong because you weren't Asian enough or "not really Asian"
- Was told you were desirable or exotic because of your Asian-ness
- Was told you weren't desirable or attractive because of your Asian-ness
- Was told your food smelled weird
- Was told your food was so unique and cool cause it was trendy and new
- Was told to speak English when speaking in your parent's native language
- Are 3<sup>rd</sup> or more generations in the US
- Was told to "go back to your country"

# What Is Asian America?

*"Do not diminish who you are. Your gender, your heritage, your identity. That's what makes you unique."*

–Kailin Gow

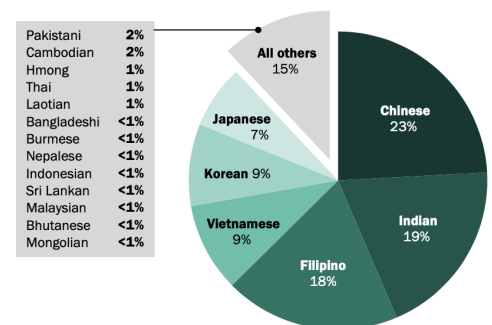
Turn to a partner and share in 1-2 sentences what you think characterizes "Asian American" identity.

In what way do you believe it's important to understand what "Asian American" is and the history for how this identity came about?

When you see the graph (right) showing the breakdown of Asian Americans in the US, what are your thoughts and reflections?

## Six origin groups make up 85% of all Asian Americans

% of origin group among all Asian Americans, 2015



Note: Chinese includes those identifying as Taiwanese. Category "Other Asian, not specified" not shown. Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. See methodology for more. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2015 American Community Survey 1-year estimates (American FactFinder).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# Terminology: Ethno-Racial Pentagram

Ethno-Racial Pentagon was a phrase coined by historian David Hollinger to describe an issuing that

happened in 1977 whereby the federal government began classifying people racially as white, black, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic.

How might understanding these categories help us better understand how our society has been working?

*“When it is said that race affects one’s destiny more than ethnicity does, the reference usually turns out to be to different degrees of mistreatment within a social system, not to different degrees of cultural particularity and group enforcement of norms. Some of the various ethnic groups within the Euro-American bloc have had their share of suffering, but it is dwarfed, according to our common if not always stated understanding, by the suffering inflicted on races. Moreover, the Chinese American suffers less as a Chinese than as an Asian, just as a Crow suffers not as a Crow but as an Indian. Although Japanese Americans were entered during World War II as Japanese rather than as Asians, that Asianness made the difference is proven by the less harsh treatment afforded Americans of highly visible German or Italian affiliations. This distinction between degrees of victimization is the key to the place of Latinos in the ethno-racial pentagon and to the assertion of racial status on their behalf.”*

In what way do you agree with what is said in the above quote about suffering more as an Asian American rather than simply as someone with your ethnic background? In what way might there more power, influence, impact when ethnic groups are brought together in a racial bloc?

## The God of History

*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham...*

*—Matthew 1:1*

Insight: For Jewish people, as well as for other Eastern peoples of nomadic origin, one’s family tree was hugely important because a person’s identity was linked to family and tribe, more so than to place of birth. A genealogy is a list of names, tracing the family lineage between one individual and their ancestors.

The New Testament, the section of the Bible describing the life and work of Jesus and his followers, begins with this genealogy. This section shows us that the God of the Bible is

not a philosophical idea or impersonal principle but a personal God that enters history and interacts with the day-to-day lives of real people who live in particular times and places.

Whether in Biblical times or the years since, God has met people in their own contexts and worked through them to impact their families, communities, and societies. Whether migrants living in exile or slavery, part of a social minority, or as members of the ruling class, God values people and sees who they are where they are.

## Discussion Questions

How might your view of history and learning the history of Asian Americans change knowing that God is a God of history and values who we are, and the journey of those who've come before us, as well as our own journey into the future?

Take a moment to reflect and think about the various history classes you've taken up to now in your life, especially from elementary through high school.

Which ethnic or racial group's history did you predominantly learn about? What was the second racial or ethnic group's history you learned the most about?

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being very little and 10 being so much that I could win Jeopardy, how much Asian American history did you learn about in school?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

How might it affect your awareness and perception of the social impact Asian Americans have had when our history hasn't been fully integrated into all "American" history?

If God is a God of history and one who remembers and values our own Asian American history and genealogy, then in what way would learning about Asian American history be a spiritual exercise?

## Our Asian American History

Asian American Experience in the US pre-1970:

1587 – 1907: Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese migrate to America

1890: Chinese Exclusion Act is passed, the first ever immigration law created in the United States excluding one specific ethnic group from entering the country.

1910: Angel Island opens as a major immigration station, detaining and interrogating predominantly Chinese and Japanese immigrants arriving to the US from 1910-1940.

1913: California bans Japanese immigrants (“Issei”) from purchasing land. Land begins to get purchased in the names of U.S. born children (“Nissei”).

1924: Immigration Act of 1924 (Oriental Exclusion Act) passes and bans most immigration from Asia. The quota for most Asian countries is zero.

1933: Filipinos are ruled ineligible for citizenship barring immigration and could no longer marry White people.

1942: President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, uprooting 100,000 Japanese people to be sent to Incarceration “internment” camps.

1968: Historian Yuji Ichioka coins the term Asian American to replace “Orientals” and frame a new “inter-ethnic-pan-Asian American self-defining political group,” and co-founds the Asian American Political Alliance with Emma Gee at UC Berkley.

1968: Third World Liberation Front, a coalition of student groups, forms to go on strike in demand of a more diverse and less Eurocentric curricula. Asian American studies is created and taught for the first time at San Francisco State University, UC Berkeley, and UCLA.

What are some takeaways you have when getting a glimpse of Asian American history in the United States?

For those who have learned very little about Asian American history, do you know how you can begin learning more about it? What resources would you have access to?

Knowing that history is important and remembered by God, in what way can a faith in Jesus help in bringing about a more just future for Asian Americans?

## **For This Week**

- Take some time this week to reflect and journal on the fact that God is a God of history and values your past, family history, where and who you’ve come from. Think about how this affects your own view of your past and your family history.
- Do a little bit of research by asking and having a conversation with your parents about your family history. Ask and find out how your grandparents and parents came to be together. What is their faith history? How has God been interactive in their own journey thus far?
- Read up on the history of how Asian American came into existence in the United States from the additional resources provided. Reflect and journal how knowing the history and journey of Asian Americans in the U.S. impacts your own journey, history, and future.

# Additional Resources

## Books:

Beyond Colorblind by Sarah Shin

How Asian American Came to Be: The Making of Asian America by Erika Lee

## Podcasts:

<https://soundcloud.com/centeringpodcast>

<http://asianamericapodcast.com/>

<http://www.vivianmabuni.com/someday-is-here>

<http://theycallusbruce.libsyn.com/website>

## Other resources:

<https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/ethnicity-and-the-incarnation-kevin-doi/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004706646/thisis2016-asian-americans-respond.html?src=vidm>