

MEETING IN A BOX

Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month



Suffering in Silence:

Mental Health and the AAPI Community

The AAPI community is in the midst of a mental health crisis.

Research from the American Psychiatric Association shows that 2.7 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) suffer from mental illness and or have a substance use disorder.

Additional studies show Asian Americans experience more psychological distress than the general population, yet are three times less likely than white people to get professional help for their mental health issues.

Asian Americans are also more likely to have their mental health symptoms manifest physically, leading to an incorrect diagnosis, lower rates of detection and lack of appropriate treatment. A separate study showed that while Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders report suffering from depression, alcohol use and anxiety, very few seek the help they need.



The Taboo of Mental Illness

The stigma of mental illness is a harsh reality in the AAPI community.

Suppose an AAPI individual discloses that they are mentally ill. In that case, the burden is on the individual, their family and community, says Gordon C. Nagayama Hall, Ph.D. emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Oregon. He says the stigma usually prevents people from getting the help they need.

“They’re not going to want to lose face by seeking mental health services,” he says. “That would be an admission of failure, especially for themselves and their family. Losing face involves the loss of reputation, not only for oneself but one’s whole family. It could also be a loss of face for their whole community.”

William Ming Liu, Ph.D. professor and chair in the Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special Education at the University of Maryland agrees.

“The way that we treat mental health is to go out and talk to a psychologist, psychiatrist or counselor,” he says. “There’s some resistance to that because it tends to bring the mental illness or the conflict into the public. Many Asian Americans feel like it should be handled within the home or the collective larger organized family unit.”



The “Model Minority” Myth

The model minority stereotype praises AAPI individuals as the ideal immigrant population because of their economic and educational achievements.

“People believe that Asian Americans don’t necessarily need mental health services because they believe they are the model minority and don’t represent or look like somebody in distress,” says Lui. “There’s the perception that Asian Americans are educationally doing well, they are economically doing well and they don’t complain about things like racism.”

Meanwhile, 42% of Asian Americans say their mental health has been impacted by racial discrimination, according to a [poll](#) conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of the educational campaign Girl Up.

At the height of anti-Asian violence and hate crimes, Marisa Hamamoto says she was triggered so badly that she couldn’t leave her home. Hamamoto, a stroke and multiple assault survivor, saw a therapist who diagnosed her with PTSD. This was the same time that People Magazine named her one of the Women Changing the World in 2021.

“I’m more forgiving of myself,” says Hamamoto, the owner of [Infinite Flow](#), a non-profit dance company that employs disabled and non-disabled artists with intersectional identities. “This is just a part of my disability and there’s nothing wrong with me. I was initially scared to get the diagnosis because I didn’t want to confront it. You would think as a disability advocate for years that I would be able to do that.”

Lack of Culturally Focused Treatment

Research has [pointed](#) to the need for culturally relevant mental health services and providers specifically for the AAPI population. AAPI communities are very diverse. The [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) says approximately 50 ethnic groups that speak over 100 languages make up the AAPI community, with ancestries connected to countries including China, Japan, Thailand, Samoa, Tahiti and Guam.

There are indications Asian Americans may be more likely to stay in treatment if it's tailored to them. But that's easier said than done.

"The challenge is to find people who are linguistically, culturally and ethnically similar," says Lui. "To be able to go out into those communities to help destigmatize mental health, but also present these community members with mental health options and services. Talk to them about what mental health and mental illness is and how we can treat it."

Hall says many AAPI individuals believe that available mental health services were designed for and by someone other than them.



"For many Asian Americans, they are concerned about school if they are a student, or their work, or their family," he says. "For immigrants, it's a matter of learning English and trying to acculturate. Those are practical concerns that are often not addressed in traditional types of mental health services."

Hall's research inspired him to create an online mental health app for the AAPI community. Users will have access to an Asian American therapist who will provide customized and relevant responses to their questions.

"The advantage of an app is that it is private and a person doesn't have to publicly admit to their problem, they can do it on their phone," he says.

Incorrect Diagnoses

Eva Yi Zheng felt that she never belonged.

Her parents were not affectionate. When Zheng wanted to play volleyball and piano, her father said she was too short and her fingers weren't long enough. As a Chinese American, there was also the pressure of succeeding in high school and college. During one of her many crying episodes, Zheng reached out to her father in distress. He made an appointment for her to see a pediatrician.

"The doctor took just five seconds to diagnose me," she says. "He just said I need to sleep more. He didn't ask about any other occurrences or any other times I felt depressed. He just sent me home after a five-minute visit."

Zheng says the cost of therapy is prohibitive and currently manages her anxiety with free mental health sessions offered by her employer.

Studies show that mental illness in Asian Americans is often misdiagnosed because of symptoms that present differently compared to other groups, language barriers and the medical community's lack of knowledge about Asian cultures. The AAPI community consists of approximately 50 ethnic groups that speak over 100 languages.

David, a Chinese American who asked that only his first name be used for this story, was diagnosed with asthma when he was young. The doctor prescribed him a nebulizer, an assistive breathing device. After 11 years, David found out he was suffering from depression and anxiety.

"It was a waste of money and time for my parents to go through something that was very much a solvable issue," he says. "I wasn't that I wasn't getting a diagnosis. It just wasn't getting the right diagnosis. You can't get help if you don't know what the help is actually for."

Fear of Treatment

Most young AAPI young adults do not seek professional help for their mental health problems and instead reach out to friends or lean on their religion. They fear disappointing their parents and are burdened with the pressure of family obligations.

“My young adult clients that come in and their parents don’t know – what will happen if they know?” says Jyothsna Bhat, Psy.D., clinical psychologist and South Asian mental health advocate at Bhat Psychological Services. “They may be disappointed in them, they may see them as a failure. They may see them as weak, this feeling of being defective.”

Bhat is South Asian and she admits that even she was reluctant to attend therapy — a requirement of her master’s degree in clinical and counseling psychology.

“Stepping in to talk to a therapist, even in the very beginning, was scary,” she says. “What would other people think if they knew I was doing this or how would this be perceived?”

Bhat’s advice for people seeking therapy is to take their time finding a mental health professional they trust. Ask people who have attended therapy about their experiences. If you don’t want to talk to a therapist alone, you can always bring someone with you.

AAPI Mental Health Resources

Over the past 50 years, the number of mental health resources and services supporting the AAPI population has grown.

The [Asian American Health Initiative](#), the [New York Coalition for Asian American Mental Health](#) and the Asian American Federation are among the organizations responding to the mental health needs of Asian Americans on a state level.

The [Asian Mental Health Collective](#), the [Asian Mental Health Project](#) and the [National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association](#) serve the AAPI community by providing mental health resources like seminars, support groups and the ability to search for therapists by ethnicity and language.

Riciel-Grace Crudo, a Filipino American, went to therapy in 2018 to work through feelings of being stuck in her career. Crudo says she was lucky to find an “amazing” Asian American female therapist.

“It’s so important to show that you are not alone in this journey and that other folks are looking for the same kind of resources and help,” she says.

Together with her friend Sabrina Wang, they founded the Power of Asian Feminine. The pair hosts webinars every quarter to support Asian American women, including one in 2021 on mental health.

“It’s not only empowering for me to continue doing this work for myself but it’s empowering for me to share this information and reach out to other folks in my community about how we can do this together,” she says.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES:

Why are AAPI individuals less likely to seek mental health help than other Americans?

How does the model minority myth affect the mental and emotional health of the AAPI population?

The rise in anti-Asian violence has contributed to Asian Americans’ poor mental status. What can be done to address the problems they face?

Why is it important to have culturally relevant mental health treatment options for AAPI individuals?

What mental health support does our company provide for AAPI people and other marginalized groups?

Timeline

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have played an integral role in shaping American history, business, art and other advancements, and yet much of it is not taught in schools. AAPI history is unfortunately rife with racism and violence — a cyclical hostility that has resurged today. The rise of anti-Asian hate crimes throughout 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic represents another dark chapter in American history but rising out of all the senseless attacks and racist rhetoric is a more visible, engaged and vocal generation galvanized to combat the erasure and advocate for the AAPI community. This timeline outlines some important moments in the AAPI diaspora, from the time Asian immigrants first arrived in the U.S. to today's barrier-breaking accomplishments in politics, activism and media. Share this timeline with your team to help contextualize and celebrate various aspects of Asian American and Pacific Islander heritage.



1848 - Chinese immigrants working during the gold rush

1587

“Luzon Indios” Filipinos are considered the first Asians in what would be known as America when they arrived in Morro Bay, California.

1790

The first recorded immigrants from India arrive in Massachusetts.

1815

The first recorded immigrants from China arrive in San Francisco.

1848

The California Gold Rush leads to the first large-scale immigration of Chinese to the U.S. due to the aftermath of the Opium Wars, when the British levied high taxes against Chinese peasants and farmers and drove them from their land. In addition to military intervention and rampant opium addiction, alternating periods of floods and droughts in China exacerbated the already destabilized region, leading many desperate Chinese people to sail for California in the hopes of survival.

1854

Yung Wing graduates from Yale College, becoming the first Chinese person to graduate from a U.S. college. He goes on to champion higher education for other Chinese by establishing the Chinese Educational Mission, which helps send other Chinese students to U.S. schools. He also writes a memoir, *My Life in China and America*, where he outlines how the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 impacted his life.

In *People v. Hall*, the California Supreme Court rules that Chinese people (and anyone who “looked Chinese”) cannot testify against whites accused of murder, just as Native American and Black people could not.

1862

The U.S. imposes a monthly tax on Chinese immigrants doing business in California with the Anti-Coolie Act.

1869

The first transcontinental railroad is completed. The Central Pacific crew is made up of primarily Chinese immigrants, while the Union Pacific crew is made up of primarily Irish immigrants. These sides often clash. The laborers work as long as 15 hours a day in treacherous conditions to complete the project. The first Japanese settlers arrive on the U.S. mainland in California.

1870

The Naturalization Act of 1870 restricts citizenship to whites and Blacks, making Chinese people ineligible. Naturalized American citizens of Chinese descent also had their status revoked.

1871

The Chinese Massacre of 1871: 500 white and Hispanic people ran through Old Chinatown in L.A., killing 500 Chinese people — the largest mass lynching in U.S. History.

1875

The Page Act of 1875 (a preamble to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) prohibited Chinese women from entering the U.S. under the pretense of “population control.”

1878

A California circuit court rules that In re Ah Yup and other residents of Asian descent were not eligible for naturalization, emphasizing that “Orientals” were unfit to participate in government. 1879 California adopts a constitution prohibiting the employment of Chinese immigrants by corporates, states, county or municipal governments.



1885 - Artist's depiction of the 1885 Rock Springs Massacre

1882

The Chinese Exclusion Act, the first and only law banning the immigration of a specific ethnic/national demographic, prohibited Chinese immigrants from entering the United States for “10 years.”

1885

Soh Jaipil (anglicized as “Philip Jaisohn”) arrives in the U.S. as a political exile. He becomes the first Korean to be naturalized as a U.S. citizen and the first Korean American medical doctor. He returns home in 1896 and becomes a well-known political activist.

The Rock Springs Massacre: On Sept. 2, white immigrant miners killed 28 Chinese immigrant miners, injured 15, and burned down 78 Chinese homes because they felt Chinese miners were taking all the mining jobs.

The Tacoma Riot: A mob of nearly 500 prominent businessmen, police and political leaders drove 200 Chinese residents out of Tacoma, Washington. The anti-Chinese sentiment was so strong at the time that none of the mob members faced any repercussions.

In *Tape v. Hurley*, the California Supreme Court ruled that exclusion of Chinese American students from public school based on their ancestry was unlawful, becoming a precursor to *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 and *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954.

1886

In *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, the Supreme Court rules that any law with unequal impact on different groups is discriminatory.

Seattle Riot of 1886: local chapters of the American labor federation, Knights of Labor methodically expelled 200 Chinese civilians due to labor competition.

1887

The Hells Canyon Massacre (also known as the Snake River Massacre): 34 Chinese gold miners were ambushed, robbed, murdered and mutilated in May 1887.

1892

The Geary Act of 1892 extended the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and included provisions such as carrying a “Certificate of Residence” or face detention or deportation. 1898 The U.S. assumes control of the Philippines upon winning the Spanish-American War. The U.S. also illegally annexes Hawaii. In *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, the Supreme Court upholds the 14th Amendment: that all people born in the U.S., even if they are of Chinese descent, are citizens.

1893

Hawaii’s monarchy was overthrown by a group of American-backed businessmen, forcing Queen Liliuokalani out of power. Five years later, the United States annexed Hawaii and in 1959 Hawaii became the 50th state.

1898

Guam becomes a U.S. territory after the United States wins the Spanish-American war and The Treaty of Paris is signed.

1900

American Samoa officially became a U.S. territory. The Department of Interior was given authority over American Samoa in 1956.

1900-1904

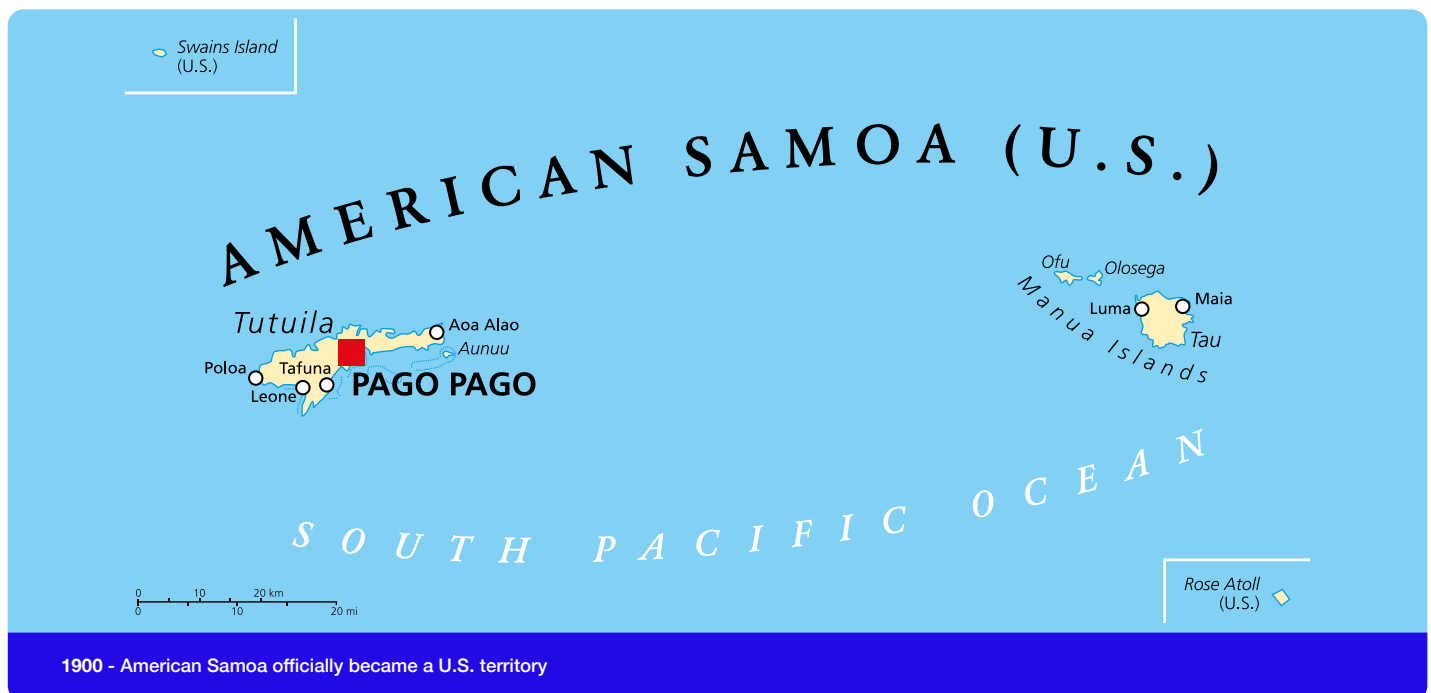
The San Francisco Plague: an epidemic of the bubonic plague occurs in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Medical authorities were aware of the disease, but then-California Gov. Henry Gage denied its existence for more than two years. His reluctance to act on it led to widespread outbreaks throughout the city, including cases identified in Oakland. Originally, 121 cases were identified and 119 people died, but four years later, 160 more cases and 78 more deaths linked to the initial outbreak were documented.

1906

The San Francisco Board of Education segregates Chinese, Japanese and Korean schoolchildren in newly formed “Oriental Schools.”

1907

Theodore Roosevelt issues Executive Order 589, preventing Japanese and Korean people from entering the U.S. mainland. Fueled by anti-Asian sentiment from the Asiatic Exclusion League, the Pacific Coast Race Riots of 1907 occurred in San Francisco, Bellingham, Washington, and Vancouver, Canada.



1900 - American Samoa officially became a U.S. territory

1917

The Immigration Act of 1917 was passed to restrict immigration by imposing a literacy test and thus creating new categories of inadmissible persons. One section of the law specified an “Asiatic barred zone,” which included immigrants from China, Myanmar (then Burma), Thailand (then Siam) and most Polynesian islands. Occupational exceptions included those who were lawyers, physicians, chemists, civil engineers and merchants.

1922

In *Takao Ozawa v. United States*, the Supreme Court rules that Japanese migrants cannot be naturalized.

1923

In *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the Supreme Court rules that Indian migrants cannot be naturalized.

1924

The Immigration Act of 1924 effectively prohibits the immigration of all Asians to the U.S.

1927

In *Lum v. Rice*, the Supreme Court ruled that exclusion by race, of Chinese American students from school, did not violate the 14th Amendment — creating a precedence that would exclude minority children from schools reserved for whites.

1934

The Tydings-McDuffie Act limited immigrants coming to the U.S. from the Philippines to 50 people per year.



1955 - The Vietnam War begins

1942

After the Attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 results in 120,000 Japanese Americans being sent to internment camps.

1943

Congress repeals the Chinese Exclusion Act and grants naturalization rights to some Chinese immigrants already residing in the United States with the Magnuson Act.

1946

The Luce-Celler Act permits 100 Filipinos and 100 Indians to immigrate and become naturalized per year. Wing Ong becomes the first Chinese American not born in the U.S. to be elected to state office. He serves in the Arizona State House of Representatives.

1949

The U.S grants 5,000 educated Chinese people refugee status after the Communist takeover of China.

1955

The Vietnam War begins, ultimately sparking resistance from many Asian Americans. The Asian American Movement, made up of a number of grassroots organizations, goes on to reach its peak in the 1960s and ‘70s.

1956

Dalip Singh Saund of California becomes the first Indian American in Congress.

1958

Japanese American Miyoshi Umeki wins Best Supporting Actress at the 30th Academy Awards for her role in *Sayonara* — the first actor of Asian descent to win an Oscar for acting.

1959

Hiram Fong of Hawaii becomes the first Chinese American in the Senate. Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii, a World War II veteran, becomes the first Japanese American in Congress. In 1962, Inouye became the first Japanese American elected to the Senate.

1964

Patsy Takemoto Mink of Hawaii becomes the first woman of color in Congress. She is a third-generation Japanese American who grew up in Maui.

1965

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminates the national-origins quota system, which had previously provided immigration visas to 2% of the total number of people of each nationality — a quota that largely affected Asians and non-Northwestern Europeans.



1982 - The Vietnam War Memorial is dedicated in Washington, D.C.

1973

The Organization of Chinese Americans (now known as the Asian Pacific American Advocates) is founded to advance the social, political and economic well-being of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S.

The film Enter the Dragon is released, making Bruce Lee the first Asian American Hollywood action superstar.

1975

The war in Vietnam ends, leading to a large migration of Southeast Asian refugees to the U.S.

1979

The first Asian Pacific American Heritage Week is celebrated on May 4. Capitol Hill staffer and member of the Organization of Chinese Americans, Jeanie Jew is credited for spearheading the initiative along with Ruby Moy.

1982

The Vietnam War Memorial is dedicated in Washington, D.C., honoring the 57,939 Americans killed in the war.

1985

Ellison Onizuka becomes the first Asian American — and first American of Japanese descent — in space.

1988

The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 pays surviving Japanese American internees \$20,000 each in reparations.

1990

President George H.W. Bush issued a Presidential Proclamation designating May 1990 as the first Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. Two years later, Congress passes legislature making the designation permanent.

1992

Jay Kim of California becomes the first Korean American elected to Congress.

1993

“Joy Luck Club,” the first major modern Hollywood movie featuring an all Asian American cast premieres.

1994

“All American Girl,” starring comedienne Margaret Cho, was the first network sitcom to feature a predominantly Asian American cast.

1997

Gary Locke of Washington becomes the first Asian American governor of a mainland state. He goes on to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to China and the Secretary of Commerce under the Obama administration.

Astronaut and engineer Kalpana Chawla becomes the first woman of Indian descent to go into space during NASA’s Columbia mission. In 2003, during the second mission, she was one of the seven crew members who died during the Columbia disaster.

1999

Chinese Canadian Andrea Jung becomes the first woman of color CEO of a Fortune 500 company, Avon.

2000

Norman Mineta becomes the first Asian American Cabinet member when he briefly served as President Clinton's Secretary of Commerce. Mineta goes on to become the Secretary of Transportation for the Bush administration in 2001 — the only Democrat Cabinet member.

2001

September 11th attacks lead to a wave of anti-Asian sentiment and the Patriot Act, which is linked to the unfair detainment of South Asian people in the U.S.

Elaine Chao, who was born in Taiwan, becomes the first woman Asian American Cabinet member. She served as the Secretary of Labor under the Bush administration and goes on to serve as the Secretary of Transportation under President Trump.

2004

The Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami was one of the deadliest disasters in modern history, killing nearly 230,000 people in countries including Sri Lanka, Thailand and India. Losses were estimated at \$10 million.



2004 - The Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami

2006

At the 78th Academy Awards, Ang Lee becomes the first person of color and first Asian to win Best Director for *Brokeback Mountain*.

2007

Bobby Jindal of Louisiana becomes the first Indian American governor. The National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance is founded to connect Asian American, South Asian, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander LGBTQ organizations and support LGBTQ AAPI rights and visibility.

2009

President Obama appoints three Asian Americans to the Cabinet: Gary Locke, Secretary of Commerce; Steven Chu, Energy Secretary; and Eric Shinseki, Veterans Affairs Secretary.

Far East Movement is the first Asian American group to earn a number one hit on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for the song, "Like a G6."

Speed Skater Apolo Anton Ohno, who is half Japanese, earns eight Olympic medals, becoming the most decorated winter Olympian.

Nikki Haley of South Carolina becomes the first female Indian American governor.

Jeremy Lin becomes the first Taiwanese American player in the NBA, who signed him out of Harvard University into a two-year deal with the Golden State Warriors. He goes on to sign with the Toronto Raptors in 2019, becoming the first Asian American to win an NBA championship.

2013

Kevin Tsujihara, of Japanese American heritage, becomes the first non-white CEO of a major Hollywood studio, Warner Bros. At the 85th Academy Awards, Ang Lee wins his second Oscar for Best Director for *Life of Pi*.

2014

Filipina supermodel Geena Rocero comes out as transgender while delivering a TED Talk in honor of the International

Transgender Day of Visibility. She founds the organization, Gender Proud to raise awareness and advance the rights of trans people.

Pakistani Activist Malala Yousafzai becomes the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She became an advocate for girls' education after 2012 when a Taliban gunman shot her in the head for attending school.

2015

House of Representatives unanimously passes legislation to remove all references to "Orientals" in federal law and replace the term with the more accurate and inclusive "Asian American/Pacific Islanders."



2022 - Frederic Aspiras, nominated for a hair and makeup Oscar

2016

California Attorney General Kamala Harris, who is half Indian, is elected as a Senator. She is the first Indian American to serve in the Senate.

Iraq War veteran Tammy Duckworth becomes the first Thai American woman and the first woman with a disability elected to Congress. In addition to being the first female double amputee in the Senate, Duckworth is also the first Senator to give birth while in office.

The U.S. government formally banned the use of the derogatory term "Oriental" from federal law, replacing it with the term Asian American.

The Disney film Moana premieres and grosses \$247 million in the U.S. To ensure a culturally accurate representation of the film's main character, a Polynesian princess, Disney enlists the help of anthropologists, linguists, historians, choreographers and cultural practitioners from islands including Samoa, Tahiti, Mo'orea and Fiji.

2018

Crazy Rich Asians premieres and goes on to win awards and recognition for its story, costume design, acting and representation. In addition to critical acclaim, the film grossed over \$174 million in the U.S.

Korean pop group BTS reaches No. 1 on the Billboard 200. The band grows a dedicated fanbase and an interest in K-pop music stateside.

2019

Sandra Oh wins the Golden Globe for Best Performance in a Television Series – Drama for her role in Killing Eve.

2020

Nora "Awkwafina" Lum becomes the first Asian American to win Best Actress at the Golden Globes for her role in The Farewell.

At the 92nd Academy Awards, Korean filmmaker, Bong Joon-ho's Parasite wins four Oscars, including Best Picture — the first non-English language film to win the category.

Stop AAPI Hate is founded to track the surge in anti-Asian hate crimes in America stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021

Kamala Harris is sworn in as the first woman Vice President of the United States, becoming the highest-ranking female official in history. Half Filipina singer H.E.R. wins the Grammy for Song of the Year for "I Can't Breathe" — inspired by the nationwide protests over the death of George Floyd.



2022 - Nathan Chen, first American to win figure skating gold since Evan Lysacek in 2010

At the 93rd Academy Awards, in addition to one of the most diverse slate of nominees, it's a banner year for Asian representation:

Beijing-born Chloé Zhao becomes the first woman of color, first Asian woman and only second women ever to be nominated and win Best Director for her film, *Nomadland*. Along with nominations for Best Picture, adapted screenplay and editing, Zhao is also the first woman ever to receive four nominations in a single year. Zhao is joined by Korean American director of *Minari*, Lee Isaac Chung — the first time two directors of Asian descent were nominated for Best Director.

Korean American Steven Yeun became the first Asian American nominated for Best Actor for his role in *Minari*. He is joined by British-Pakistani Riz Ahmed for his role *Sound of Metal*. For the first time, two actors of Asian heritage were nominated for Best Actor in the same year.

Youn Yuh-jung becomes the first Korean actress to win Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Minari*.

Raya and the Last Dragon is Disney's first animated movie featuring a Southeast Asian princess. The film is voiced by Kelly

Marie Tran, the first Southeast Asian actor to lead an animated feature from the studio.

Marvel's *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, starring Simu Liu, is the first big-budget American blockbuster to feature an Asian superhero.

2022

Beijing, China is the first city ever to host both the Summer Olympics and Winter Olympics.

Chloe Kim made Olympic history as the first woman to win two gold medals in the snowboard halfpipe event.

Nathan Chen was the first American to win figure skating gold since Evan Lysacek in 2010.

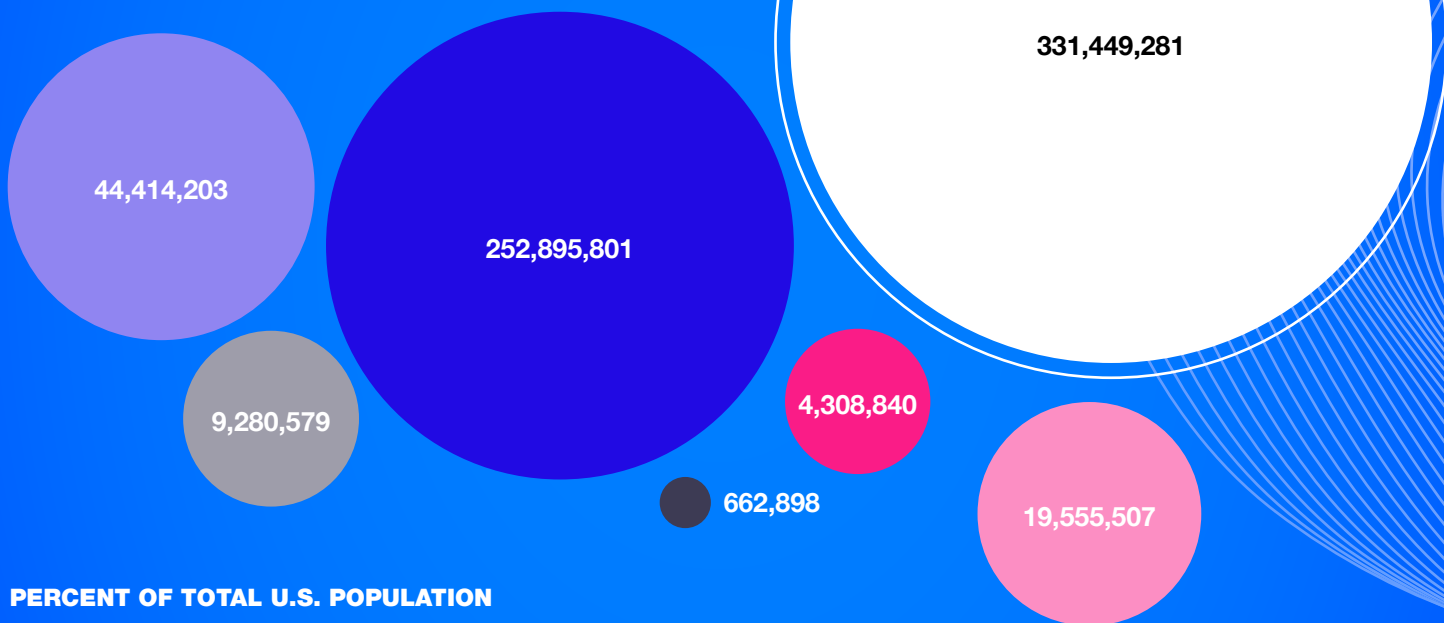
Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's film *Drive My Car* was the first Japanese film to be nominated for a Best Picture Oscar. Hamaguchi is only the third Japanese filmmaker to be nominated in the Best Director category.

Frederic Aspiras, who styled Lady Gaga in the film *House of Gucci*, is the second Asian American to be nominated for a hair and makeup Oscar.

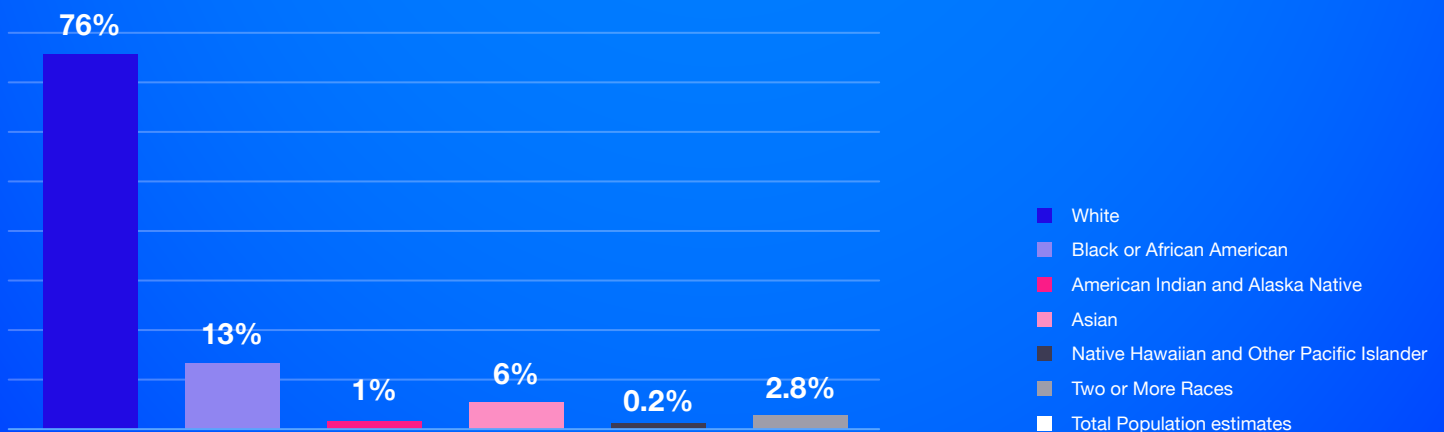
FACTS AND FIGURES

DEMOGRAPHICS POPULATION

2020 POPULATION IN THE U.S.



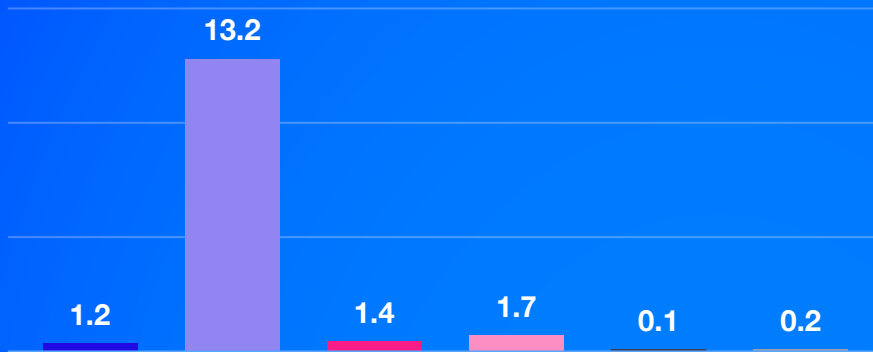
PERCENT OF TOTAL U.S. POPULATION



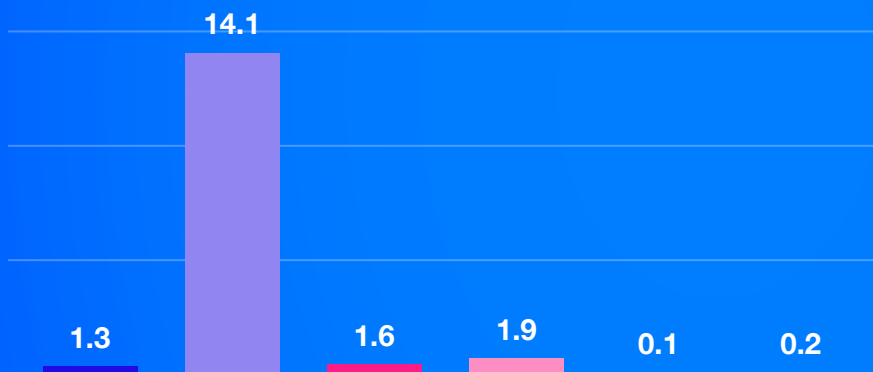
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/POP010220>

FINANCES BUYING POWER

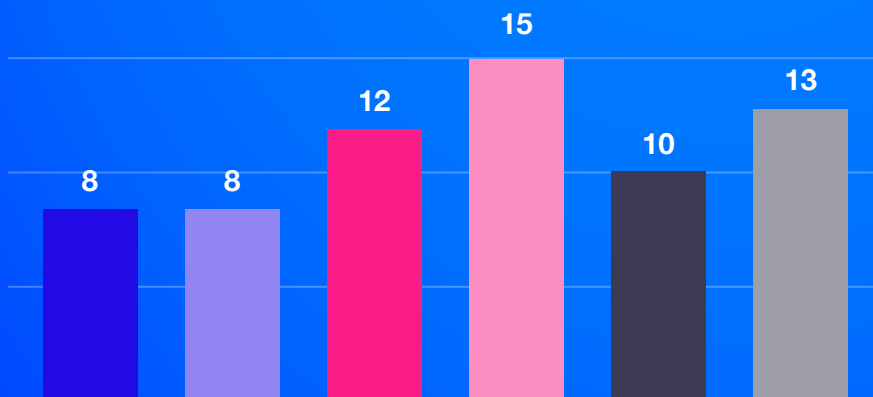
2019 BUYING POWER (TRILLIONS \$)



2020 BUYING POWER (TRILLIONS \$)



% INCREASE FROM 2019-2020

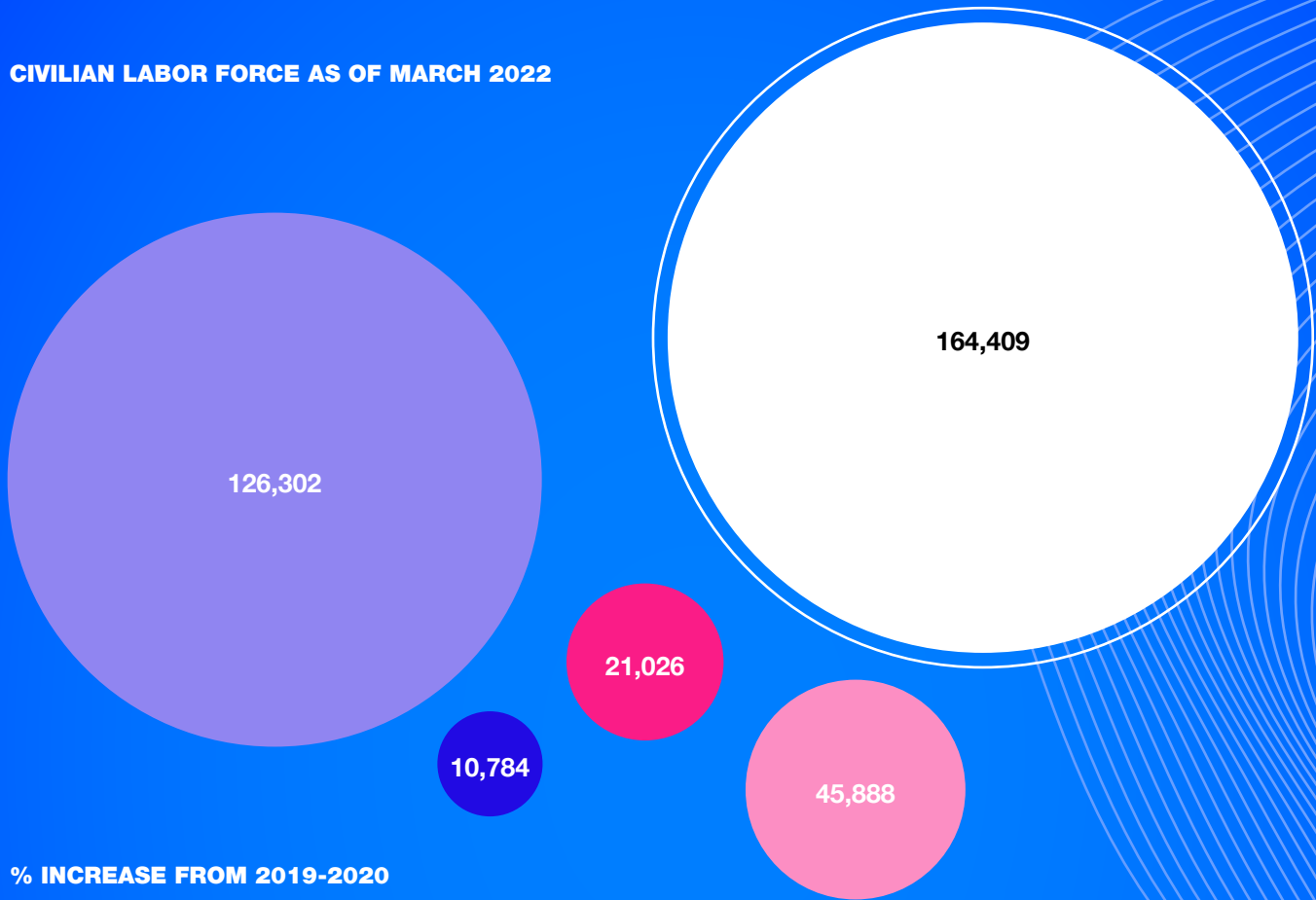


- Asian
- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latinx
- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Multiracial

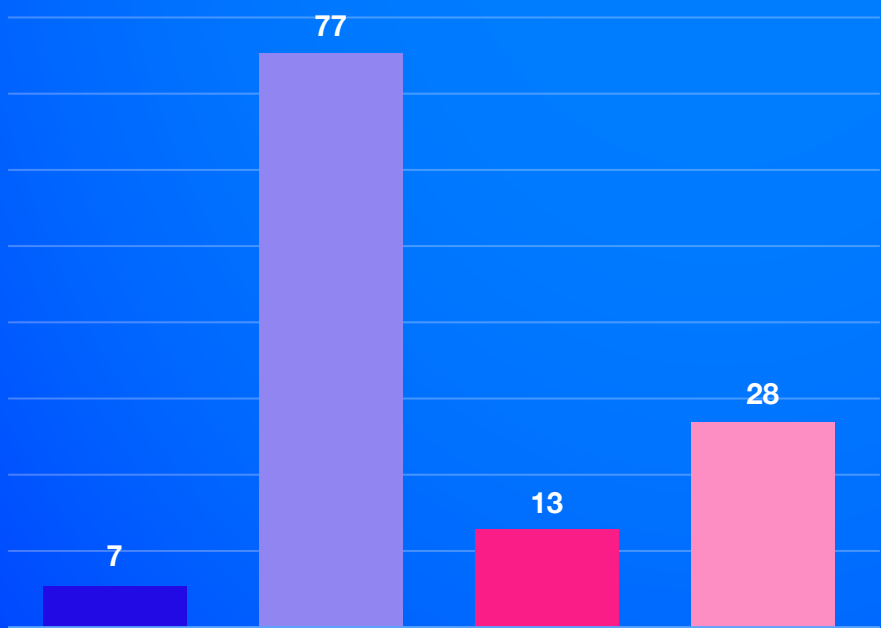
US Buying Power*, by Race/Ethnicity, 2000-2025 (billions) | Insider Intelligence (emarketer.com)

WORKPLACE WORKFORCE POPULATION

CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE AS OF MARCH 2022



% INCREASE FROM 2019-2020



Employment Situation - 2022 Q01 Results (bls.gov)

- Asian
- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Total People

The Rise of the Asian American Immigrant Population

When Huilin Chen immigrated from China to the United States in 2010, she was overwhelmed with feelings of excitement, hope and fear.

“Excited to start a new life in New York City, hoping that everything will go smoothly – yet the fear of all the unknowns and fear of not being able to make it here,” she says.

Chen came to the United States to pursue a master’s degree in computer science at New York University. She admits it was very tough. Chen struggled with communication and the high cost of living in New York City. She worked two minimum wage jobs while attending college.

“I lived in my friend’s balcony-converted guest bedroom in Brooklyn,” she says. “There were times the only groceries I could afford were just eggs and potatoes.”

But Chen persevered. Ten years and 4 months after she arrived in the U.S., Chen got her green card and became a U.S. citizen. She currently works as a Vice President at Morgan Stanley.

“I am grateful to experience the hardships,” Chen says. “They made me stronger and more resilient. These are great qualities to have to build a solid career. And this is what I love about New York, it’s an immigrant city and so many other immigrants could relate to my struggle and I theirs.”

Asian American Immigrant Population

Chen is one of the more than 18 million people that make up the Asian American population. By the middle of the century, Asian Americans could be the largest immigrant group in the country, according to a [Pew Research Center](#) analysis of Census Bureau data.

“Asian Americans are projected to become the largest immigrant group in the U.S., surpassing Hispanics in 2055,” according to a statement from Neil Ruiz, Associate Director of Race and Ethnicity Research at the Pew Research Center. “By then, Asians are expected to make up 36% of all U.S. immigrants, while Hispanics will make up 34%.”

By 2060, the Asian American population is forecast to reach 46 million, nearly four times the current total. Compare that to the 1870 Census, when roughly 63,000 people were classified as Asian by the Census Bureau.

Daishi Miguel Tanaka, Manager of Immigration Advocacy at [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#), says the family immigration system – where a U.S. citizen or green-card holder sponsors a family member from a foreign country – has contributed to the growth of the Asian American population. But he admits that the system is flawed.



“We have four million immigrants in the family immigration backlog, many of them from China, Vietnam, India and the Philippines,” Tanaka says. “You have a system on one end that has beautifully contributed to the tapestry of this country and on the other end, it’s keeping families apart. Families are waiting decades to see their mom, dad or sibling abroad.”

Asian American Population Diversity

A [Pew analysis](#) of Census Bureau data found that Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the United States.

“Between 2000 and 2019, the Asian population in the U.S. grew by 81%,” says Ruiz. “This growth can be attributed to immigration. Around 6-in-10 Asian Americans, including 71% of Asian American adults, were born in another country in 2019.”

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders saw the third fastest population growth in the same period. The Asian countries with the largest number of U.S. immigrants in 2019 were China, India and the Philippines. Experts say the data highlights the importance of acknowledging how diverse the Asian American population is.

“The diversity is significantly greater, in terms of languages, culture and religion,” says Jeanne Batalova, a senior policy analyst at the [Migration Policy Institute](#). “We have Southeast Asian immigrants, which are very different not only within themselves but also those who come from Central Asia or South Asia. That diversity is often missed when we combine populations in these large buckets.”

Tanaka says the variety of ethnicities, languages, education and income that make up the Asian American population often get lost in the Asian model minority myth.

“The Asian American and Pacific Islander community is not a monolith,” he says. “It’s really important for Asian Americans to be recognized for our unique cultures, languages and our history with America, as well as the struggles that individual communities face.”

The Growing Influence of Asian Americans

As the Asian American immigrant population grows, so will their influence in areas like politics, says Mark Mather, a demographer at the [Population Reference Bureau](#), a nonpartisan research organization.

“More Asian Americans are turning out to vote and they are voting about issues they care about,” he says. “It’s going to be a diverse set of topics because it’s such a diverse population. In many cases, in immigrant communities, it’s going to be things like education and barriers to learning in school because of English language issues. Poverty among the refugee populations, for example, is another. And some of the hate crimes they have experienced.”

The buying power of Asian Americans grew 314% from 2000 to 2019, almost triple the total U.S. buying power in the same period, according to [Nielsen](#). In 2022, Asian American buying power is expected to climb to \$1.3 trillion.



“The Asian American population has a tremendous buying power and it’s growing – not because their population is growing but because there is a fairly large group of Asian Americans that have a high income,” Mather says. “We’re going to see more businesses trying to meet the needs of this population. And it’s going to be important for them to do that.” With that income, more Asian Americans are becoming homeowners. Between 1989 and 2019, Asian households had the largest homeownership rate increase of any racial or ethnic group according to the [Urban Institute](#).

“A higher proportion of Asian Americans are living in multigenerational households,” says Jung Hyun Choi, a senior research associate with the Housing Finance Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Choi says that would shift the demand for the type of housing supply that is needed in the U.S., to multifamily and larger homes or duplexes.

U.S. Immigration and Asian Racism

Asian Americans have faced a long legacy of immigration discrimination in the U.S.

“Rewind the clock and see that racism has manifested itself throughout many points in our history,” says Tanaka. “Starting with the yellow peril, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II and scapegoating and violence directed against Arab, Middle East, Asian, Muslim and South Asian communities after 9/11.”

“Yellow Peril” was a term used in the mid 19th century that painted Asian immigrants as undesirable people who were stealing American jobs. This led to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the first major law in the U.S. that barred immigration solely based on race.

In more recent history, the Trump administration enacted restrictive immigration policies, including banning immigration from Muslim-majority Asian countries. The policy was reversed by President Biden in his first 100 days in office.

The rise in anti-Asian sentiment and negative immigration rhetoric has accelerated during the pandemic, as Asians have

been accused of causing and spreading COVID-19. In 2020, anti-Asian hate crimes increased 149% in 16 of the largest cities in the U.S., according to the [Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism](#).

“People who were thinking about the United States may have changed their minds because there’s been a bit of a backlash against immigrants,” says Mather. “During the pandemic, there’s been a lot of backlash against Asian Americans in particular. In the short term, there may have been some kind of a chilling effect. But I would not expect that to continue in the long term.”

Chen recalls the racism she experienced both before and after the pandemic. While Chen wasn’t physically injured in the most recent attack, she says the mental damage was real. She began to have nightmares and insomnia and started to carry pepper sprays. Chen admits that she questioned her decision to immigrate to the U.S. Some of her friends have decided to move back to China permanently. Yet, Chen remains optimistic about the future.

“I’m just one of the 18.64 million Asian Americans with hopes and dreams living here, passing by you on the streets, in the grocery store, at a restaurant, at a coffee shop,” she says. “I hope we can all see each other beyond the colors of our skin and let our humanity shine through.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES:

Asian Americans are forecast to be the largest immigration group by 2055. What do the projections mean for the growing influence of Asian Americans?

How diverse is the AAPI population and why is it important to acknowledge their diversity?

How has the model minority myth contributed to the lack of understanding of how diverse the AAPI community is?

In what ways have the AAPI community experienced immigration discrimination in the United States and how is it still happening in the present day?

