

**Book Club Discussion Guide for**  
**Asian American Histories of the United States**  
**by Catherine Ceniza Choy (2022)**

Discussion questions written by Ellie Yang Camp, 2022.

*Note:* These questions were originally made for a book club of 10 adults, ages ranging in their 20s to 40s, who all identified as female or non-binary East Asian Americans.

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**Preface & Introduction**

1. In the preface, Choy describes that the main motivator for writing this book was to give context to the surge in anti-Asian violence after the outbreak of Covid-19. How has the increase in anti-Asian violence affected your experience of being Asian American?
2. What was it like for you to read so many instances of anti-Asian violence paraphrased quickly in the preface?
3. Were there any specific parts of the preface or introduction that illuminated an experience or understanding of being Asian American that you related to?
4. Any parts that felt very different from your own experiences and made you wonder?
5. How does learning more about these historical events influence how you think about your own Asian American identity?

**Chapter #1: 2020: The Health of the Nation**

1. What are some specific points in Chapter 1 that you especially liked and/or have stayed with you?
2. Any parts that have caused you to wonder and ask more questions?
3. In what ways does knowing that there is a long history of scapegoating Asians for diseases affect how you live as an Asian American today?

**Chapter #2: 1975: Trauma and Transformation**

1. What is something new you learned about Southeast Asian/Southeast Asian American history from this chapter?
2. The second half of the chapter gives many examples of how Southeast Asians have shaped American life. What is one you liked learning about or have a particular connection to?

**Chapter #3: 1968: What's In The Name "Asian American"?**

1. When did you first begin to think of yourself as Asian American? Was there anything that helped catalyze it?

2. How does the identity of Asian American directly challenge the idea of the Model Minority?
3. Choy writes that the Asian American Movement of the 1960s-80s included the goals of “community-centered service programs, the humane representation of Asian Americans in arts and culture, and justice for victims of anti-Asian violence and Japanese American internment.” (p.57) What would you like our current actions in the 2020s to include?
4. How does learning about the history of Black and Asian American solidarity affect how you think about being Asian American? What questions do you have?

#### **Chapter #4: The Many Faces of Post-1965 Asian America**

1. How does the data presented in this chapter about post-1965 Asian Americans compare or contrast with your own perception of who makes up Asian America? Were there any stats that surprised you or are hard for you to grasp?
2. On page 81, Choy describes how during the Dotbusters scare in New Jersey, Lalitha Masson stopped wearing a bindi and Indian saris, hoping it would make her less of a target. Are there things you have done to help you feel like less of a target in regards to anti-Asian violence?
3. Do you or your family have a connection to the Hart-Celler Act? What faces of post-1965 Asian Americans do you know? What about your own face?

#### **Chapter #5: Mixed Race Lives**

1. In the section about Mexipinos on page 109, it says, “Rituals surrounding the preparation and consumption of food were among the strongest factors in a holistic formation of Mexipinos’ mixed identity.” Considering this and the Interlude section about food, what is it about food that helps provide such a deep connection to our identities?
2. How would you like to see the Asian American community progress in being more inclusive of adoptees and multi-racial members and their stories?

#### **Chapter #6: 1941 and 1942: The Days That You Remember**

1. What are some details that stood out to you about the experiences of Japanese Americans being incarcerated during WWII?
2. How would you describe the greater Asian American community and intra-community relations during WWII? What factors influenced the loyalties of different groups and how they behaved towards one another?
3. Reading about the anti-Japan sentiment during the war, in what ways does it compare to anti-China sentiments that are rising today? What are the challenges that continue to face Asian American communities navigating how to respond in the midst of geopolitical tensions?
4. World War II opened up many job opportunities to women and people of color. To what extent do you think more job opportunities for marginalized communities can be thought of as “progress” when they are tied to a demand for labor and a war effort?
5. What can Asian Americans today learn from what happened to our communities during World War II about what it means to be us?

### **Chapter #7: 1919: Declaration of Independence**

1. Do you/your family have any ties to movements for freedom and/or democracy in other countries? If so, what is the general feeling towards the U.S. in regards to this struggle?
2. This chapter presents us with the tension of the U.S. being an imperialist nation AND ALSO being an incubator for colonized Asian people fighting for democracy/independence in their Asian countries of origin against other imperialist nations. What is it like to experience the dichotomy of the U.S. in this way as an Asian American? What questions and feelings does it bring up?
3. Are there lessons from experiencing your ethnic identity in a political way that can be carried over into what it means to be Asian American as political identity?
4. This chapter includes many examples of groups recovering their forgotten/erased histories. Is there a history you would like to be recovered?

### **Chapter #8: 1875: Homage Conclusion (1869: These Words)**

1. On page 162-163, Choy describes a study by Mukkamala and Suyemoto that identified six types of discrimination that Asian American women face when race and gender intersect. What are those six types and how does seeing them laid out make you feel?
2. What is something that frustrates you about how Asian American women are represented? What would you like to see more of?

### **Conclusion: 1869: These Words**

1. How has reading the history in this book affected you? What is your internal response to being exposed to all this history? What is stirring in you?