

BRILLIANT . . . TO READ THIS BOOK IS TO BECOME MORE HUMAN. —CLAUDIA RANKINE, author of *CITIZEN*

MINOR FEELINGS

AN ASIAN AMERICAN RECKONING

CATHY PARK
HONG



WELCOME

ASIAN AMERICAN BOOK CLUB

Poet and essayist Cathy Park Hong fearlessly and provocatively blends memoir, cultural criticism, and history to expose fresh truths about racialized consciousness in America. Part memoir and part cultural criticism, this collection is vulnerable, humorous, and provocative—and its relentless and riveting pursuit of vital questions around family and friendship, art and politics, identity and individuality, will change the way you think about our world.

Binding these essays together is Hong's theory of "minor feelings." As the daughter of Korean immigrants, Cathy Park Hong grew up steeped in shame, suspicion, and melancholy. She would later understand that these "minor feelings" occur when American optimism contradicts your own reality—when you believe the lies you're told about your own racial identity. Minor feelings are not small, they're dissonant—and in their tension Hong finds the key to the questions that haunt her.

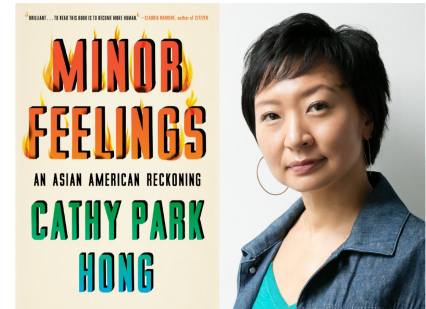
With sly humor and a poet's searching mind, Hong uses her own story as a portal into a deeper examination of racial consciousness in America today. This intimate and devastating book traces her relationship to the English language, to shame and depression, to poetry and female friendship. A radically honest work of art, Minor Feelings forms a portrait of one Asian American psyche—and of a writer's search to both uncover and speak the truth.

[-PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE](#)

ABOUT

[MINOR FEELINGS &](#)

[CATHY PARK HONG](#)



- Asian American history and lived experiences are not mainstream
- It provides a safe space for Asian American book club members to explore their shared identity
- It builds a community to affirm and support one another's experiences, emotions, and intellectual responses.
- It connects Asian American educators and empowers them through community learning and connection.

WHY

HAVE AN ASIAN
AMERICAN BOOK CLUB

As you organize your book club consider the following questions

- What are my/our goals for the book club?
- What type of community do I need to create a safe space for Asian American members to feel safe, supported, and empowered?
- Will the meetings be live or online?
- What is the ideal number of book club members and why?
- How long will your meetings be? How many meetings will there be?
- Who is invited to the book club?
- What are the guidelines/agreements of the book club? How do they help foster the Asian American book club community you're striving to create?
- What do you need to prepare before each of your book club meetings?

HOW TO ORGANIZE THE BOOK CLUB

Our Asian American Book Club was limited to 25 members, occurred over zoom for two 2-hour meetings. Asian American educators nationwide were invited. Invitations to join our book club were through word of mouth.



ocapica

Thank you to the generous funding from
[Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance](#)

The Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance was founded in 1997 and focused on research, advocacy, and education around issues of health within Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. By 1999, OCAPICA expanded to include legislative education and advocacy as well as youth, cultural arts, and curriculum development. Since then, OCAPICA has grown even more to respond to the needs of AAPI and other underserved communities, expanding its programming in: mental health and wellness for youth and families; civic engagement and voter empowerment; youth employment; and academic mentoring and college readiness. OCAPICA also partners with local area universities on research, evaluation, and service learning.

**MADE
POSSIBLE
BY**

OUR GOALS

- learn about Asian American history
- discuss and reflect on Asian American experience
- enhance the well-being of our Asian American community
- reflect on our teaching

- We strive for a thoughtful and respectful discussion of the featured book and its related themes.
- You do not have to have finished the book to participate, but we ask that you contribute to the discussion in whatever way you feel comfortable.
- Please keep your video screen on, so that we can best mimic a "real-life" conversation. If you need to momentarily go off-camera, we understand.
- We do not tolerate demeaning, discriminatory, or harassing behavior and speech.

GUIDELINES

ASIAN AMERICAN BOOK CLUB



Special thank you to [Bel Canto Books](#) for these guidelines

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WELCOME

ASIAN AMERICAN BOOK CLUB

First meeting and discussing
first half of the book

OUR PROTOCOLS

Our Asian American Book Club was comprised of Asian American educators nationwide. Some of us knew someone in the group, some of us did not. We established this protocol of introductions to help us get to know one another and provide everyone an opportunity to share.

- Name
- Location
- Asian American identity
- Role in education

“When I hear the phrase “Asians are next in line to be white,” I replace the word “white” with “disappear.” Asians are next in line to disappear. We are reputed to be so accomplished, and so law-abiding, we will disappear into this country’s amnesiac fog.”

— **Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning***

Topics & Discussion Questions

First half of the book

Identity | Otherness | Model Minority | Invisibility | Racism | Language | Trauma | Gender | Friendship

- What is your first memory of seeing yourself as Asian American?
- How have the first 90 pages made you feel?
- What quotes, experiences, thoughts, etc would you like to discuss and why?
- What is your definition of Asian American and has that definition evolved/changed due to the book?
- In Hong's chapter titled, Bad English, Poet Natalie Diaz's tweet asked "*Why must writers of color always have to talk about whiteness? Why center it in our work when it's centered everywhere else?*" (p. 86) **In what ways do/don't you center whiteness?**
- On pages 55-57, Hong defines minor feelings. In summary "*minor feelings*" occur when American optimism contradicts your own reality—when you believe the lies you're told about your own racial identity. Minor feelings are not small, they're dissonant (Random House Books). **Does this apply to you?**

QUOTES

To inspire discussion

“[Stockton writes] children of color as growing sideways, since their youth is likewise outside the model of the enshrined white child. But for myself, it is more accurate to say that I looked sideways at childhood.”

— Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, P. 68

“Innocence is [Bernstein] writes, not just as an ‘absence of knowledge’ but ‘an active state of repelling knowledge,’ embroiled in the statement, “well, I don’t see race” where I eclipses the seeing. Innocence is both a privilege and a cognitive handicap, a sheltered unknowingness that, once protracted into adulthood hardens into entitlement.”

— Cathy Park Hong, **Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning**, P. 74-75

“Shame is associated with the Asianness and Confucian system of honor alongside its incomprehensible rites of shame, but that is not shame I’m talking about. My shame is not cultural but political. It is being painfully aware of the power dynamic that pulls at the levers at the social interactions and the cringy indignity of where I am in that order either as the afflicted--or as the afflicter. I am a dog cone of shame. I am a urinal cake of shame. This feeling eats away at my identity until my body is hollowed out and I am nothing but pure incinerating shame.”

— **Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, P. 75-76**

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WELCOME
ASIAN AMERICAN BOOK CLUB

Second meeting and
second/end half of the book

SAY
“HI”

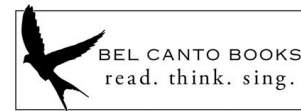
Please re-introduce
yourself in the zoom chat

- Name
- Location
- Asian American identity
- Role in education
- Highlight of the summer

- We strive for a thoughtful and respectful discussion of the featured book and its related themes.
- You do not have to have finished the book to participate, but we ask that you contribute to the discussion in whatever way you feel comfortable.
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ASIAN AMERICAN BOOK CLUB



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OUR GOALS

- learn about Asian American history
- discuss and reflect on Asian American experience
- enhance the well-being of our Asian American community
- reflect on our teaching

Topics & Discussion Questions

Second half of the book

Identity | Otherness | Model Minority | Invisibility | Racism | Language | Trauma | Gender | Friendship

- How has the book impacted you?
- What quotes, experiences, thoughts, etc would you like to discuss and why?
- What is your definition of Asian American and has that definition evolved/changed due to the book?
- Take a look at some of the themes we saw in the book. Which of these themes resonate with you and why?
- Have you found community among other Asian American? What has that experience been like for you?
- Would you recommend this book to other Asian American Pacific Islanders? Why or why not?
- Would you recommend this book to non-Asian American? Why or why not?
- How has this book impacted you as an educator?
- What's next?

QUOTES

To inspire discussion

Otherness

“We must make right this unequal distribution but we must do so without forgetting the immeasurable value of cultural exchange in what Hyde calls the gift economy. In reacting against the market economy, we have internalized market logic where culture is hoarded as if it’s a product that will depreciate in value if shared with others; where instead of decolonizing English, we are carving up English into hostile nation-states. The soul of innovation thrives on cross-cultural inspiration. If we are restricted to our lanes, culture will die.”

— Cathy Park Hong, **Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning**, P. 102

“I willed myself invisible on the school bus that has hotboxed with cruelty of a bully who daily reminded my friends and me that we were ugly as dogs. No matter our income, my family could not cough up the thorn embedded in our chests. That stain of violence followed us everywhere.”

— Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, P. 119

“But where does silence that neglects her [Theresa Hak Kyung Cha] end, and where does the silence that respects her begin? The problem with silence is that it can’t speak up and say why it’s silent. And so silence collects, becomes amplified, takes on a life outside our intentions, in that silence can get misread as indifference, or avoidance, or even shame, and eventually this silence passes over into forgetting.”

— Cathy Park Hong, **Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning**
Portrait of An Artist, P. 165

*“Being **indebted** is to be cautious, inhibited, and to never speak out of turn. It is to lead a life constrained by choices that are never your own”*

*“**Indebtedness** is not the same thing as gratitude.”*

*“**Indebtedness** is to fixate on the future.”*

— Cathy Park Hong, **Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning**
The Indebted

"I treat good fortune not as a gift but a loan that I will have to pay back in weekly installments of bad luck. I bet I'm like this because I was raised wrong-browbeaten to perform compulsory gratitude. Thank you for sacrificing your life my me! In return, I will sacrifice my life for you!"

— Cathy Park Hong, **Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning**
The Indebted, P. 186

Racism

“Our respective racial containment isolates us from each other, enforcing our thoughts that our struggles are too specialized, unrelatable to anyone expect others in our group, which is why making myself, and by proxy other Asian Americans, more human is not enough for me. I want to destroy the universal. I want to rip it down. It is not whiteness but our contained condition that is universal, because we are the global majority.”

— Cathy Park Hong, **Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning**
The Indebted, P. 197

Otherness

“Unless we read as Muslim or trans, Asian Americans are fortunate not to live under hard surveillance, but we live under a softer panopticon, so subtle that it’s internalized, in that we monitor ourselves, which characterizes our conditional existence. Even if we’ve been here for four generations, our status here remains unconditional; belonging here is always promised and just out of reach so that we behave, whether it’s the insatiable acquisition of material belongings or belonging as a peace of mind where we are absorbed into mainstream society. If the Asian American consciousness must be emancipated, we must free ourselves of our conditional existence.”

— **Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*
The Indebted, P. 202**

FURTHER LEARNING

- learn about Asian American history
- discuss and reflect on Asian American experience
- enhance the well-being of our Asian American community
- reflect on our teaching



Educate to Empower

Stacy Yung and Virginia Nguyen are history teachers with over 30 years of combined teaching experience. They are leaders in diversity, equity, inclusion, and allyship in Southern California and have trained thousands of educators. In response to the March 2021 murder of six Asian women, and the increased awareness of anti-Asian hate, they created [Educate to Empower](#). Together they are creating and curating ABAR resources and hosting workshops for educators on topics of DEI and Asian American. They believe that educators committed to antiracism can change the world.

For additional resources created by Educate to Empower, visit their [Linktree](#).

CREATED BY
