Teaching Asian American History to Expand the Narrative and Build Connections

NAIS People of Color Conference 2019
Presenters:

- Freda Lin, YURI: An Asian American Education Project
- Rahul Gupta, Wing Luke Museum
What is Asian America?
“...shared historical limitations on citizenship, social mobility, and economic opportunities, which served as the basis for the development of a shared Asian American identity.” - Asian American Studies scholar, Taro Iwata

An umbrella term that masks the diversity in ethnic origins, indigeneity, language, & religion of the peoples meant to be included.

“This panethnicity can be a means to express agency and “to contest systems of racism and inequality in American society - systems that seek to exclude, marginalize, and homogenize Asian Americans”

- Asian American Studies scholar, Yen Le Espiritu
Asian Americans in the Curriculum
Roots of Teaching Asian American History
What did you learn about Asian American history when you were a student?
What K-12 Textbooks Say...

- Asian Americans are “successful” model minorities, or faceless anonymities that pose economic threats.
- Rare mention of Asian Americans in textbooks tend to focus on the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and the Japanese American incarceration during World War II.

State of Asian American Studies in Schools

- Ethnic Studies in schools
- Initiatives to include more Asian American history within curriculum
- Other Ways?
State of Asian American Studies in Schools

- Initiatives to include more Asian American history within curriculum
  - Cultural Institutions: Wing Luke, Densho, 1882 Coalition
  - Utilizing Community Organizing tactics to move teachers, administrators and districts to adopt content
- Other Ways: Place-Based instruction, expanding beyond Social Studies into ELA, Civics, Civil Rights
More than 700 sign high school student petition to add Asian American studies classes

In January, the Korean American Young Leaders (KAYL), a youth empowerment program run by the Korean American Center in Irvine, launched an online petition calling for Asian American studies courses at Irvine Unified School District. (Photo
Why educate about Asian Americans?
Challenge the dominant story
For Example:

Who initiated & led the Grape Boycott in the 1960s?
Not Cesar Chavez

Larry Itliong
Expand the Narrative
For Example:

What court case segregated People of Color?
Asian Americans were also segregated in schools.

California Supreme Court Case *Tape v. Hurley* (1885)
U.S. Supreme Court decision *Lum v. Rice* (1927)

Chinese Americans are a “colored race” & attended segregated schools in the South

*Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) applied to Asian Americans
Build Coalitions
For Example:

What coalitions have Asian Americans fostered in history?
Build Coalitions

- Expand networks of teachers and advocates
- Influence state-level curriculum adoption
- Move cultural and historical institutions on a local level
Bringing it to the Classroom
What guidelines can we consider when integrating Asian Americans into school curriculum?
Guidelines to consider when integrating Asian Americans into the curriculum

- How does the curriculum define or limit “Asian American”? 
- Does the curriculum move beyond stereotypes of Asians or Asian Americans? 
- Does it represent the diversity of this population? 
- Does it attempt to re-think the representations of Asian Americans in the dominant historical record?
Classroom Strategies
Keywords of Asian American Studies

ASSIMILATION

IDENTITY

DISCRIMINATION

EXCLUSION

RESISTANCE

KEYWORDS Chalk Talk Activity

1. Gather around your assigned Keyword with your group

2. Discussion Questions:
   a. What do you associate this word with in history? In Asian American history specifically?
   b. What are ways that you can connect this word to students?
   c. What questions does this word raise for?
Resources
Professional Development and Youth Workshops

YURI: An Asian American Education Project
Curriculum Resource Books
Wing Luke Museum: Online Classroom

Bridging Story, Place and History

- Home
- Bridging Museum and Classroom Experiences
- Educational Standards by Grade Level
- Free Curriculum
- Curriculum By Subscription
- Subscription Rates/ Get a Password
- A Museum Like No Other

Curriculum.wingluke.org

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/

Online Resource
Welcome to the Smithsonian Learning Lab!
Understand history, art, culture, and the sciences through inquiry and analysis.

https://learninglab.si.edu/

Letters From Home: Chinese Exclusion and Family

The WING
Books

Him Mark Lai, founding community scholar, Chinese American Studies

- 1925-2009, born in SF Chinatown
- Fully biliterate, Chinese School
- Major contribution in framing the study of Chinese American history, beginning in the small villages of the Pearl River Delta in southern China
- Archived the paper copies of SF Chinese language community newspapers and used them for research and writing, giving voice back to Chinese workers
- See the Him Mark Lai digital archive

ISLAND

MICHAEL LIU, KIM GERON, AND TRACY LAI

THE SNAKE DANCE OF ASIAN AMERICAN ACTIVISM

Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940

Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung

COMMUNITY, VISION, AND POWER
Lesson Plans

Critical Thinking & Literacy Skills

Interdisciplinary

Standards aligned

Inquiry-driven questioning

Student Centered

Written or Hosted by YURI: An Asian American Education Project
Lesson Plan Samples

DURING VIEWING LESSON 7 Exploring the Dual Going Home through Haiku Poetry

SUMMARY OF THE LESSON OR SEGMENT OF THE FILM


This final segment of the film addresses Tule Lake’s closure and the reverberations and of the incarceration period for prisoners and their descendants. Former prisoners discuss legacy: the stigma of having been a prisoner at Tule Lake, especially for those who renounced citizenship, and how their incarceration shaped the remainder of their lives. The segment also reviews the movement by students and activists to rehabilitate this history through pilgrimages to the former concentration camps. Many of these same activists organized for redress from the U.S. government, which was eventually issued in 1988 under the Reagan Administration.

In this lesson, students will consider the difficulty of returning home or resettling in the aftermath of wartime incarceration. Students will engage in a gallery walk activity as a means of addressing the following questions:

1. Hang up six posters with the following questions listed on each:
   a. What rights should you have as a citizen of any nation?
   b. What rights do you have as a U.S. citizen according to the Constitution?
   c. How might citizens’ rights change during times of war?
   d. Why is citizenship important or not important?
   e. What does citizenship mean?
   f. What situations or circumstances would make you NOT want to be a citizen of a nation?

2. Divide students up into six groups and have each group stand by a poster

3. Give groups 5-10 minutes to discuss the question and possible answers, then write each different response on a sticky note and attach it to the poster.

4. After time is called instruct each group to rotate clockwise to the next poster and do step 3 for their new poster. Rotate each group four more times.

5. Have each group return to the poster they started with and review all new responses.

6. Ask each group to present to the whole class their poster question and collected responses.

7. Remind students how the U.S. Constitution defines citizenship by projecting the 14th Amendment from the U.S. Constitution on screen:

   All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.
How do you teach Asian American Studies at your school?

Keep in touch with YURI to help create a hub for online AAPI curriculum.
THANK YOU for your participation!!