



## Note to Instructors

### Welcome and thank you for teaching this course.

The object of the course is simple: to educate young people about the rich history of Chinese people in America, which is often left out of textbooks. We originally designed this course to teach young Chinese Americans in Chinese Schools; however, the curriculum can be easily adapted to other educational environments. We were inspired to start teaching this course because of anti-immigrant beliefs and policies that have resurfaced in force over the past several years. Many of the same things that have happened to Chinese immigrants in the past are happening again today to other immigrants, including newly arrived Asian immigrants. Rhetoric used to justify Chinese Exclusion included arguments that Chinese immigrants could never become American because they're dirty, dangerous, and unassimilable. Contemporary parallels to this kind of language are everywhere, with the current U.S. president as the most vocal mouthpiece. These racist ideas are effectively deployed to garner widespread support for discrimination and exclusion.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing demographic among undocumented immigrants in the United States today, and we believe that the knowledge imparted by this course will resonate with our students, even as certain parts of the Chinese community grow more conservative. As such, we hope that three overarching themes of the course will help develop young people into leaders for a more just, inclusive, and colorful America.

- 1) **Social Justice.** Many of the problems that we face today as a community stem from the same fundamental problems of racism and xenophobia that plagued Chinese communities a hundred years ago. The course's topics aim to gradually introduce students to complex theories behind a progressive vision for social justice, including ideas like systemic white supremacy. We hope you will leave your students with a critical framework they can use not only to understand our current reality, but also to imagine a better future.
- 2) **Community.** In many ways, things seem to have come a long way from the time of Chinese Exclusion. Some of that is because of historical coincidence, but most of it is because of the courage of communities to take action against injustice and inequality. There is power and hope in building community, and the foundation of building pan-ethnic coalitions rests on empathy and understanding. We hope that this course will show your students

the importance of taking action, as well as the value in working with other communities.

- 3) **Voice.** The value of this course is premised on the idea that knowledge is power, and that education can unify and galvanize communities. Common experiences tie the Asian American community together, but these perspectives and voices have been silenced in mainstream history classes. We must regain the power of these common narratives by remembering them and passing them on. Ultimately, we want students to leave the course with the understanding that the history of the Chinese in America is part of their heritage, and to never doubt that their voice and their story have power. And we hope they will one day use that power to improve the world that we live in.

We wish you luck, and we hope you will find teaching this course as rewarding as we did!

Happy teaching,

Julia Wang & Kathy Lu



## How to Use this Guide

Based on the needs of the pilot program in New Haven, this curriculum was built as a **semester-long class** comprising eleven class sessions, including one introductory session attended by interested parents and one end-of-semester “celebration” session, where families are invited to come see the students give final presentations. Our pilot program model used two co-teachers who jointly taught the class in a local Chinese School every week. Each class session is designed to take **45 minutes** to teach, but can be easily adapted to be shorter or longer depending on your individual educational needs.

We have found that **high school students** are the most suited to learning the class material. They have often already learned important foundational information from other parts of U.S. history, such as the Civil Rights Movement and World War II, and they tend to be mature enough to handle the more difficult topics, such as anti-Asian violence.

The start of each lesson plan begins with a **Key Ideas** section meant to summarize the most important takeaways each student should learn by the end of the lesson. The Key Ideas section is then followed by a list of **Required Materials**. Throughout each lesson plan, we include tips for instructors, such as optional details to add or questions to ask students, as **Suggestions** that are marked by the lightbulb icon.

As you will see, class sessions typically take the following format:

- 1) **Journal Reflections:** At the start of the class, students spend about five minutes sharing what they wrote in response to the previous week’s journal prompt.
- 2) **Class Presentation & Discussions:** The class then transitions into teacher-led lectures. These presentations **should not take longer than 25 minutes**, and they should be guided with visuals from a Class PowerPoint (see attached PowerPoint folder). Discussions are typically interspersed throughout the presentation.
- 3) **Journaling:** Classes will usually end with students spending 5-8 minutes writing in their journals in response to the given prompt.

## General Teaching Tips

- This class is designed for **co-teachers**, which also builds in leeway for occasional absences due to illness. We have found it most effective to have co-teachers alternate between leading discussions versus giving presentations. Ex: Teacher A will give the lecture while Teacher B will lead the interspersed discussions in one week, and the positions will be flipped the next week. This kind of set arrangement keeps classes as organized as possible even with multiple teachers.

- Because discussions are a big emphasis in the class, we recommend arranging the seats into a **large circle** so that students can see each other's faces.
- Chinese Schools and other heritage language schools typically take place over the weekend or during weekday evenings, and students may find it difficult to focus. To help combat this, make the class presentations as **interactive** as possible, and ask questions of the students even when not specifically built into the curriculum.
- We find that using Powerpoint presentations with mostly **visual sources** have been effective in keeping the students' attention and inspiring questions and discussion. To that end, we have attached a visual companion of helpful images with their sources in the Appendix—but these images should only be a starting point! Take the time to search for other pictures that will make your lecture more engaging. Please cite their sources in your Powerpoint to indicate that the images' usage fall under Fair Use in the Copyright Act.
- High school students may be a little rowdy, so reference the **ground rules** (outlined in the **Introductory Session**) whenever necessary to reinforce them. Otherwise, letting things slide may make the class unmanageable later on.
- Some high school students will already be conditioned to **take notes** throughout the session. If they are, encourage them to do so, as it will help with information retention. If they do not take notes automatically, however, we recommend letting them simply listen. We have found that the class material is engaging enough to hold students' attention without forcing them to take notes, and we are hoping to make the class somewhat of a safe haven from the drudgery of high school.
- You should use your budget to obtain nice mini-size journals for the students—it's always more fun to write in something prettier. *We highly recommend **collecting the journals*** at the end of each class and storing them for students during the week. Otherwise, students will inevitably forget the journals at home, causing unneeded hassle.

## Reading List

Instructors are encouraged to read through the following book list before teaching the course, especially if you do not have a strong background in Chinese American history already. Articles and specific chapters in each book are highlighted below as **must-reads** if time is limited and indicate for which class they would be most helpful.

- *The Making of Asian America*, Erika Lee (2015)
  - Introduction & Chapter 1 (Lesson 1)
  - Chapters 3-4 (Lessons 2-3)
  - Chapter 9 (Lessons 4-6)
  - Chapters 12-13 (Lessons 4-6)

- *A New History of Asian America*, Shelley Sang-Hee Lee (2014)
  - Chapter 2 (Lesson 1)
  - Chapter 6 (Lesson 4)
  - Chapter 8 (Lesson 5)
  - Chapters 11-12 (Lessons 6-7)
- *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority*, Madeline Hsu (2015)
- Uyematsu, Amy. “The Emergence of Yellow Power in America (an excerpt).” *Gidra*. October Issue. 1969. <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~hist32/Hist33/Uyematsu.PDF>
- Ishizuka, Karen. *Serve the People: Making Asian America in the Long Sixties*. Verso, 2016.



## LESSON SEVEN | Yellow Power & the Formation of Asian American Identity

### **Key Ideas:**

- *In the Civil Rights Movement, the collective identity of Asian America was born. Asian American activists modeled their strategies after black activists, and students all over the country began educating themselves about common experiences through Asian American history.*
- *The rise of the Asian American identity led to more unified activism and greater political power.*
- *The Yellow Power Movement, concentrated in California, used this power to form coalitions with other non-Asian American groups and successfully agitate for common goals, such as ethnic studies programs.*

- Materials:**
- 1) Class PowerPoint
  - 2) Whiteboard markers or chalk
  - 3) Student journals
  - 4) A Song for Ourselves documentary (available online)



### Discussion Module (5 min.)

In the Civil Rights Movement, black activists and leaders are highlighted for their impact. Where do you think Chinese Americans were doing this movement? Thinking about yourself as a Chinese American, what role would you have wanted to play?

- I. **How did the Civil Rights Movement affect Asian Americans?**
  - They were hugely influenced by black civil rights leaders to engage in greater self-reflection and community education.
    - If “black is beautiful,” where are Asian Americans located in the U.S. racial landscape?

- Note that Asian Americans have been struggling with their “in-between” status for decades.
- They borrowed from Freedom Summer and black studies to engage in political education of their own.
  - The community educated themselves with material very similar to what we have learned in this class. Many of them were recent immigrants totally disconnected from Chinese American history. They learned about the plight of the railroad workers, Chinese exclusion, and Japanese internment for the first time.
- This led to the birth of the collective identity of “Asian American.”



### Discussion Module (8 min.)

What does being Asian American mean? What are the benefits of a collective identity like Asian American? Are there drawbacks?

*Suggestion: Possible topics of discussion might include the power of community unity, the common stereotypes that all Asian Americans face, or the diversity in cultures and national origins among the Asian American community.*

## II. What role did Asian Americans play in the Civil Rights Movement?

- Asian American groups had long participated in local activism.
  - The Red Guard Party was a “street gang” in San Francisco modeled after the Black Panthers. They advocated for causes such as healthcare, education, and housing access in Chinatown.
  - The Yellow Brotherhood in L.A. was made up of Japanese American former gangsters who wanted to address community issues, like a drug epidemic.
- The Yellow Power Movement emerged, located mostly on the West Coast.
  - Activists participated in the Third World Liberation strikes at San Francisco State University for ethnically diverse faculty and an ethnic studies program for about five months—the longest campus strike in U.S. history! Ended in the creation of the U.S.’s first ethnic studies program.
    - Education is a key to unlocking power because it can uncover common histories and unite communities.



*Suggestion: Link back to why this Chinese American History unit is so important.*

- Asian Americans were also active in opposing the Vietnam War.
  - There was collective identification with the Vietnamese, as Asian Americans in the U.S. military and at home experienced racism. They were also troubled by graphic images of killed Vietnamese (with faces that looked just like theirs) on U.S. media.
- Watch an excerpt (05:30-07:00 and 08:15-15:00) from the “**A Song For Ourselves**” documentary, available at this link:  
[http://www.tadashinakamura.com/Tadashi\\_Nakamura/A\\_Song\\_For\\_Ourselves.html](http://www.tadashinakamura.com/Tadashi_Nakamura/A_Song_For_Ourselves.html)
  - This documentary spotlights Chris Iijima, a very influential singer-songwriter during the Yellow Power Movement. He used song as a tool to unify the Asian American community and raise political awareness of civil rights. Think about how this video is also using oral history as a tool! These interviews are all preserving people’s memories that are kept nowhere else but their minds; without these oral histories, they would be lost forever.



### Journaling Module (8 min.)

How did the documentary excerpt make you feel?

Were you surprised by the power of song in the Asian American movement? Why do you think people found the Yellow Pearl’s songs so compelling?



## LESSON EIGHT | Vincent Chin & Asian American Activism

### **Key Ideas:**

- *The death of Vincent Chin led to nationwide, pan-Asian organizing for justice.*
- *Chin's death showed that ethnic differences among Asian groups didn't matter when it came to racially motivated violence against one particular ethnic group.*
- *The organizing around Chin's death provides one example of how Asian Americans made a tragedy a powerful mobilizing force.*
- *Thanks to the political activism of Asian Americans after Chin's death, there is greater nationwide recognition of the Asian American political entity and their history.*

- Materials:** 1) Class PowerPoint  
2) Whiteboard markers or chalk  
3) Student journals  
4) Excerpt of *Vincent Who?* documentary (available online)

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### I. Journal Reflections (5 min.)

- Ask students to share what they wrote during last class's journaling session.

### II. Who was Vincent Chin?

- Vincent Chin was born in Detroit in the 1960s and grew up in Chinatown.
- On June 19, 1982, on the night of his bachelor party shortly before he was to be married, Vincent Chin was beaten to death by two white men who yelled racial slurs like "Chink" and "Jap" at him. One of them yelled, "It's because of you that we're out of work," assuming that Chin was Japanese. (At the time, the economy was unstable and many white auto workers blamed the Japanese car industry for "stealing their jobs.")
- Chin's murderers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, were eventually put on probation and never went to prison. Instead, they paid a \$3,000 fine.

### III. How did the Asian American community respond to Chin's death?

- *Vincent Who* documentary excerpt (watch 01:22-02:45):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_rwnyM1vtE&t=13s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_rwnyM1vtE&t=13s)

- Vincent Chin’s death was a galvanizing force for both Chinese and Asian American groups.
  - Asian Americans in Detroit organized marches and protests around the city with the slogan “Remember Vincent Chin.” Soon, Asian American groups in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and other major cities also organized around Chin’s death to advocate for civil rights for Asian Americans, including launching a Department of Justice investigation into the murder. (Lily Chin, Vincent’s mother, was a tireless fighter for justice and became a movement leader.)
  - This was the first instance of a national, widespread “pan-ethnic” Asian American organizing.
    - *Pan-ethnic* means instead of focusing on individual ethnic groups, people of Asian descent rallied around their shared experiences and struggles.
    - Asian Americans realized that assimilation and ethnic differences were not enough to prevent racism or even racial violence against them. Vincent Chin became a rallying point for an Asian American identity. Anyone who “looked” Asian was perceived to be the same as other Asians and thus were subject to common discrimination.
  - Recall our previous classes on other Asian immigrants and their experiences with discrimination.



### Discussion Module (10 min.)

Divide into groups of 2-3 students and discuss:

What experiences do Asian Americans have in common with each other? Have you ever experienced discrimination or racism on the basis of your race?

Do you think it’s important for Chinese Americans to work with other Asian Americans in combating racism, even if it’s not directed toward Chinese people specifically? Why?

*Reconvene and discuss with the whole class.*

#### IV. What was the legacy of the Vincent Chin?

- Asian American activists turned the tragic murder of Vincent Chin on its head: Instead of emphasizing ethnic differences, activists forged a pan-Asian identity.
  - “Asian American” is a pan-ethnic, political identity.

- May Asian American organizations sprang up, and alliances were created between different organizations in different parts of the United States.
- Congress-members from Michigan sponsored and eventually passed the Hate Crime Statistics Act in 1990, which requires information to be collected on anti-Asian violence and other hate crimes.
- Asian American History month was signed into law in 1992 and designated to be May. May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the U.S. on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869.
- Many Asian American groups have opposed recent discriminatory policies against other groups, particularly the Muslim Ban.
  - They cited historical examples of similar injustice: Chinese Exclusion (<https://www.facebook.com/WingOnWoAndCo/photos/a.206389929723033.1073741828.158197537875606/377878142574210/?type=3&theater>), Japanese Internment ([http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/umages/q\\_1.jpg](http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/umages/q_1.jpg)).



### Journaling Module (8 min.)

This journal entry will follow the format of “head, heart, and hands.”  
Head: Name one thing you learned today. Heart: Describe how it made you feel. Hands: What do you want to do in response?

*Suggestion: Before journaling, emphasize to students that it’s okay to feel hurt, angry, or even uncertain. Highlight that this course has hopefully shown the students that there are many ways to respond to this history and to confront the continuing inequality and oppression that exist today.*

## LESSON SEVEN: Yellow Power & the Formation of Asian American Identity

*Yellow Power Movement demonstration, from Reappropriate.co:*



*Yellow Brotherhood of Los Angeles, from Densho.org:*



**YELLOW BROTHERHOOD** taking to the soap and chamois at the car wash held recently at Centenary Methodist Church in Los Angeles. The proceeds from the car wash are going toward the establishment of a youth study and recreation center in the Crenshaw area.

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*Anti-War protest (1968), from Asian Community Center archives:*



*1968 campus strike for ethnic studies, from San Francisco State University:*



*Leaders of the 1968 campus strike (Richard Aoki, Charlie Brown, and Manuel Delgado), from Brown University:*



*Joanne Nobuko Miyamoto and Chris Iijima (Yellow Pearl) in A Song for Ourselves, from Center for Asian American Media:*



## LESSON EIGHT: Vincent Chin and Asian American Activism

*Vincent Chin, from NBC News:*



*Justice for Vincent Chin button, from Museum of Chinese in America (New York):*



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*Justice for Vincent Chin rally, from NBC News:*

