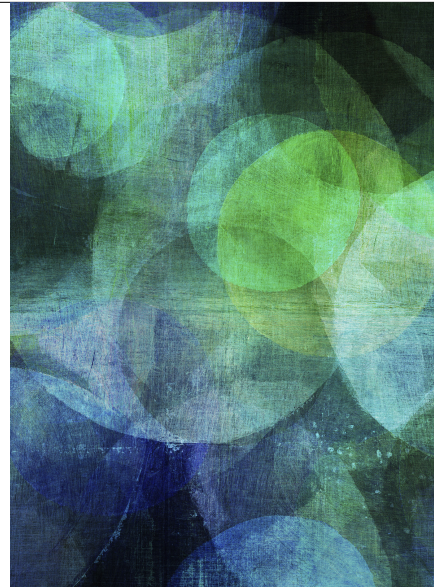




My experience and lens are shaped by my experience as a third generation Japanese American woman from Los Angeles, California.

1992

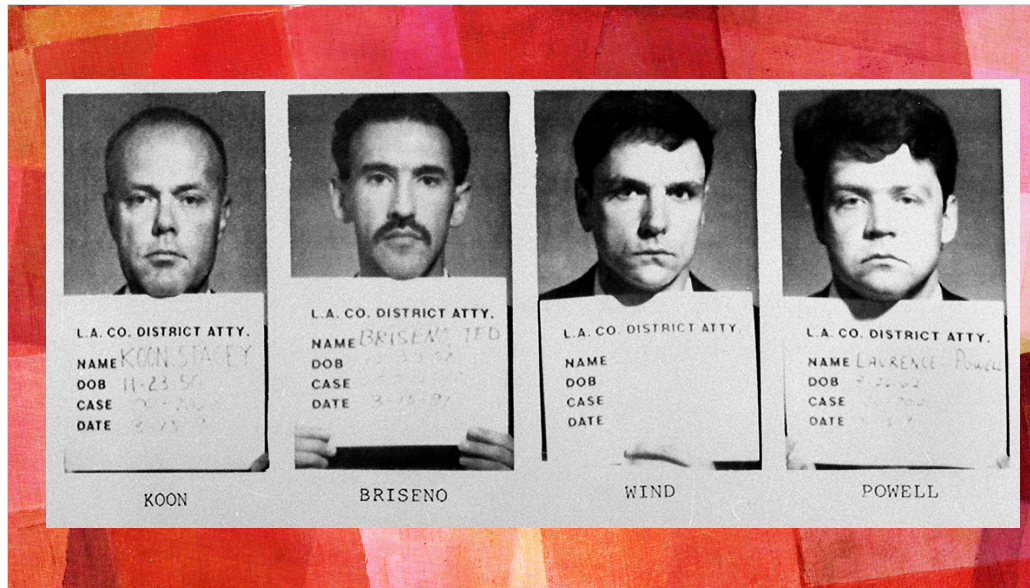
The Los Angeles Rebellion



I experience the current double pandemic as a radicalized person whose family has a history intricately woven into the story of the United States.



— March 3, 1991 — Rodney King is pulled over by California Highway Patrol officers for speeding on a Los Angeles freeway. King, who later admitted he tried to elude authorities because he had been drinking and was on probation for a robbery conviction, pulled off the freeway and eventually stopped his car in front of a San Fernando Valley apartment building. At that point, Los Angeles police officers took charge of the traffic stop. George Holliday, who lived in the apartment building and was awakened by the noise, came out to videotape the scene, filming four white officers beating and kicking the black motorist dozens of times, including after he was on the ground. After Holliday turns over the video to a local TV station, it quickly spreads and creates international outrage.



The four police officers indicted for brutalizing black motorist Rodney King in a videotaped attack are shown in these police mug shots taken March 14, 1991. From left, Sgt. Stacey C. Koon, Officer Theodore J. Briseno, Officer Timothy E. Wind and Officer Laurence Powell. Two served time in prison and all four lost their careers.

AP



April 29, 1992 - all four officers were acquitted of all charges. The city erupted in response. 63 people were killed and 2,383 injured. Until today it was the largest civil disturbance in American history.



Police flooded the streets on April 30 as riots continued. An LAPD officer (left) takes aim at a looter in a market at Alvarado and Beverly Boulevard. A National Guardsman (right) at a gas station near Vermont Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard. Armed National Guard soldiers (bottom) hold a line at a post office in South Central after the post office suspended mail delivery due to rioting. John Gaps III, David Longstreath/AP; Ted Soqui/Corbis via Getty Images



My brother cut his teeth as a new firefighter on these streets. We hadn't heard from him in more than 30 hours. Calling us from a payphone he told us what was happening. He described the dozens and dozens of fires they extinguished, the crowds on the streets, the anguish and the fear and the anger.

The staging area for the fire fighters was the parking lot of the elementary school where I started my formal education.



That neighborhood of South Central LA had long been working class. In 1992 Asian immigrants, mainly Korean, had established convenience stores. The Korean community could establish stores in Black neighborhoods because of the investments they managed to gather, from community or wealth inaccessible to the Black community.

This resulted in resentment and inevitable misunderstandings, incidents, and conflict that were not reported in the general press but which were circulated in the local community and in the Korean language press.



<https://aapr.hkspublications.org/2018/11/15/race-riot-roots/>

March 16, 1991 - Shopkeeper Soon Ja Du shot and killed 15-year old Latasha Harlins. Du was convicted of voluntary manslaughter, but her suspended sentence — five years of probation, 400 hours of community service, and a fine — enraged much of L.A.'s black community.



Looters load up a car at the Viva shopping center near a billowing fire during the rioting that erupted in Los Angeles on April 29, 1992, after a jury found four Los Angeles Police Department officers not guilty in the beating of Rodney King.

Ron Eisenbeg/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

My brother described a particularly striking looter he encountered. An elderly woman, emerging from a local store, pushing her shopping cart full of items. Their eyes met and she responded to his incredulous look, “Do you know how long it has been since I have been able to actually buy something from this store?”

The story of this being a race motivated situation obscured the real economic pressures that had plagued these poor sections of Los Angeles and painted too simple an explanation.



Police stand over a group of handcuffed looting suspects in Los Angeles on April 30, 1992, as rioting continued throughout the area.

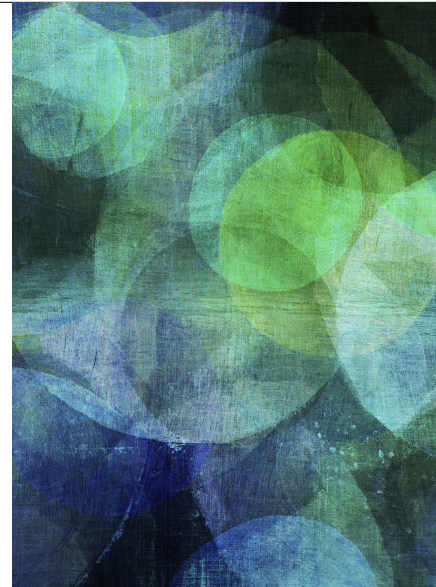
Nick Ut/AP



People gather in the Pico-Union neighborhood of Los Angeles during rioting following the acquittal of four police officers in the beating of Rodney King in 1992. The neighborhood looks similar today as it did 25 years ago. It's still more than 80 percent Latino, with lots of immigrant families from Mexico and Central America. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/27/525619864/as-los-angeles-burned-the-border-patrol-swooped-in>
Gary Leonard/Corbis via Getty Images

ASIAN AMERICAN

*It is a political identity, arguably
not based on any shared or
common characteristics or natural
affinity but used on how resources
are allocated and a term for a
solidarity group*



In this context, together with my family's experience of incarceration with our due process during World War II, my Asian American identity was shaped.



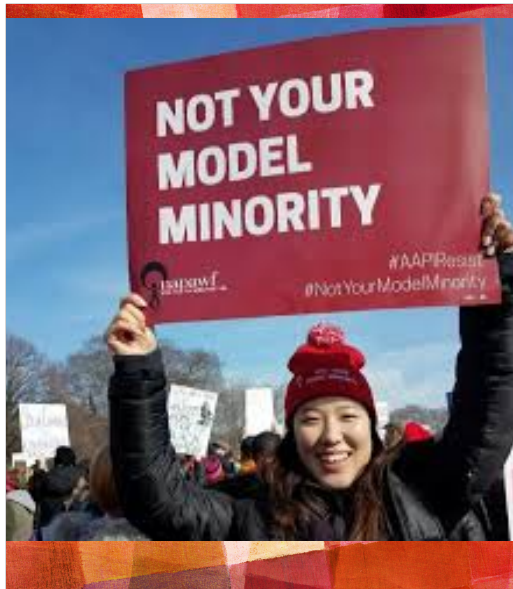
DR. ERIKA LEE, THE MAKING OF ASIAN AMERICA

- To be Asian American in the 21st Century is an exercise in coming to terms with a contradiction: benefiting from new positions of power and privilege while still being victims of hate crimes and microaggressions that dismiss Asian Americans as outsiders in their own country

See her also as a participant in the recent PBS series Asian America.



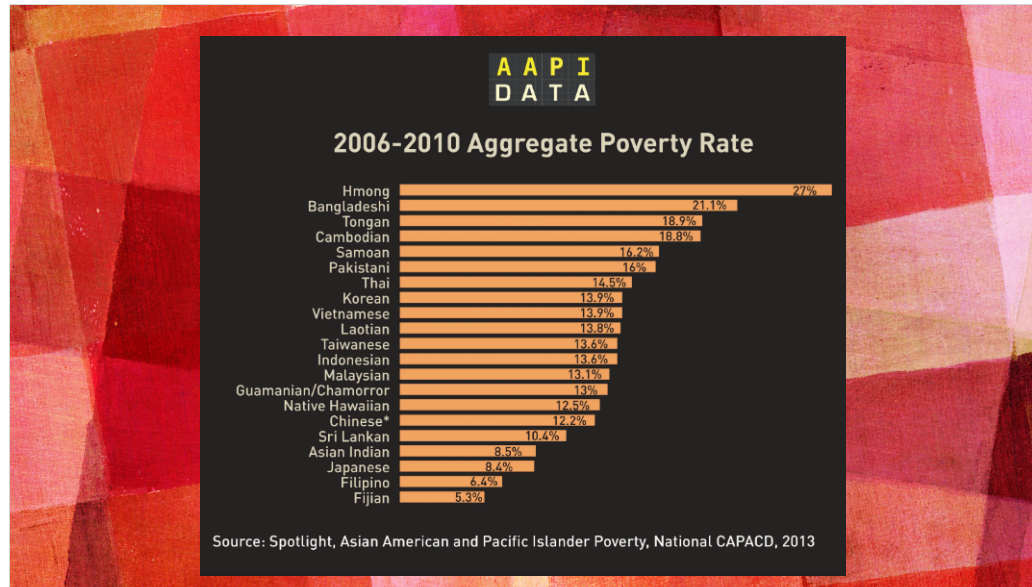
We are vast and diverse - the dominant narrative obscures this reality and has done so intentionally throughout the history of the United States.



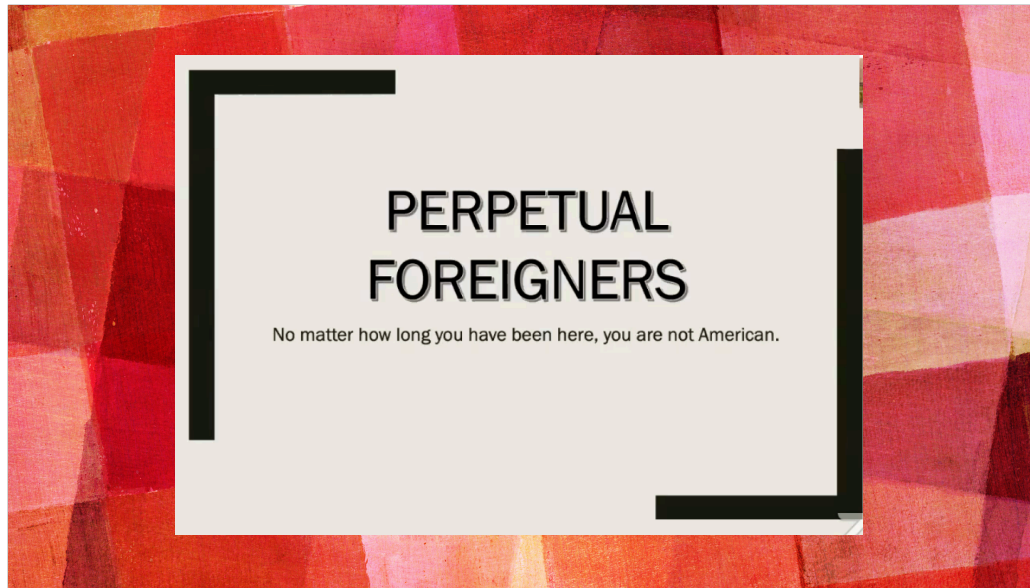
MYTH OF THE MODEL MINORITY

- During the civil rights era the experience of Asian Americans was used against other radicalized groups, especially Black people
- The goal was to further oppress other groups to and fractionalize collective action by inferring potential privileged status
- Some bought into this story. Many came to see the underlying falsehood and strategy to undermine solidarity

The “model minority” trope was developed in the 1960’s - as a weapon against African Americans and as a way to assuage the guilt and obvious injustice of the Japanese American internment only 15 years earlier.



The diversity of Asian America is starkly evidenced in the extremes of economic life. Asian Americans are among the poorest Americans.



Given that a high percentage of Asian Americans are immigrants it and because the whole community is characterized as monolithic, Asian Americans are described as exotic, foreign, inscrutable, mysterious, eating odd things, being a source of disease and unChristian ideas and practices.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS STATEMENT
Wednesday, May 13, 2020



CONTACT
Cynthia Choi
(213) 268-0910
cchoi@caasf.org

Manjusha P. Kulkarni
(310) 922-8052
mkulkarni@a3pcon.org

**In Six Weeks, STOP AAPI HATE Receives Over 1700 Incident Reports
of Verbal Harassment, Shunning and Physical Assaults**

LOS ANGELES—Since its official launch on March 19, 2020, the [STOP AAPI HATE](#) reporting center has received over 1700 reports of coronavirus discrimination from Asian Americans across the country. The reporting center was founded by the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) and San Francisco State University's Asian American Studies Department.

A recent manifestation is the increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans as people blame us for the corona virus epidemic



especially since 1992 Asian Americans have grappled with their identity and place in U.S. multiracial society and participation in democracy



this work has led to increased intersectional solidarity and collaboration to address the impacts of systemic racism on all of us



In Minneapolis this diverse experience is embodied in one of the officers involved in the death of George Floyd

FORMER OFFICER TOU THAU

Hmong American



It is not a coincidence that this man, a child of refugees or a refugee himself, chose this public service avenue. It is no coincidence that he is a police officer and my brother is a firefighter.



https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jAW1PThiyP6KZiUUro4cD-xl6eOMWByig6DYF7X_bHs/preview

The challenge of finding our voice, stating our claim and stance in this work, while also addressing the immigrant generations is happening in many ways. Letters for Black Lives is one public way.



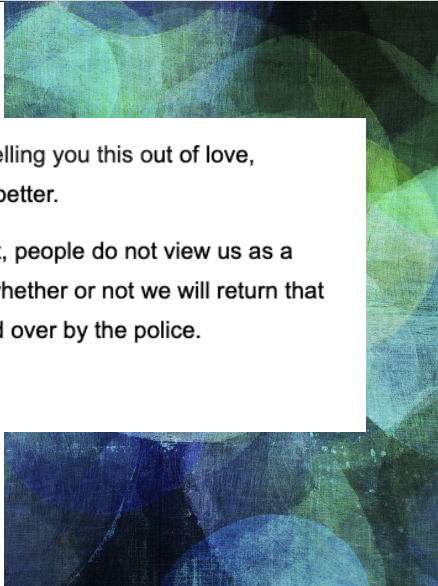
June 2020

Mom, Dad, Uncle, Auntie, Grandfather, Grandmother, Family:

We need to talk.

You may not have many Black friends, colleagues, or acquaintances, but I do. Black people are a fundamental part of my life: they are my friends, my neighbors, my family. I am scared for them.

Recently, in Minnesota, a white police officer killed a Black man named [George Floyd](#) by kneeling on his neck for almost 9 minutes—ignoring his repeated cries that he was unable to breathe. Two more police officers helped pin Floyd down, while a fourth, Asian officer stood guard and didn't intervene. Floyd is not alone: Already this year, police officers killed [Dreajon Reed](#) in Indiana and [Tony McDade](#) in Florida in May, and [Breonna Taylor](#) in Kentucky in March. An ex-detective killed [Ahmaud Arbery](#) in Georgia in February.

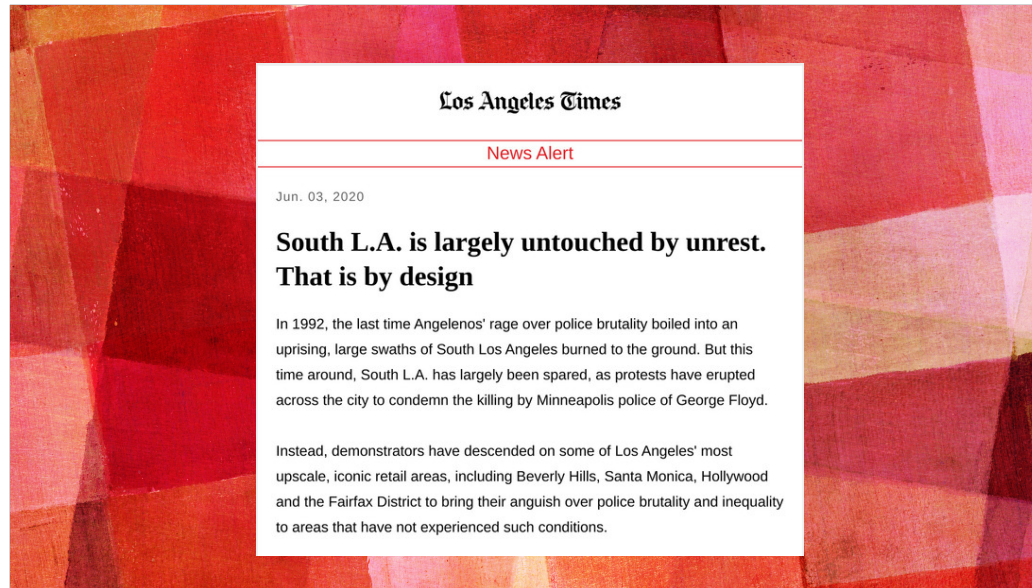


I want to share with you how I see things. I am telling you this out of love,
because I want all of us, including myself, to do better.

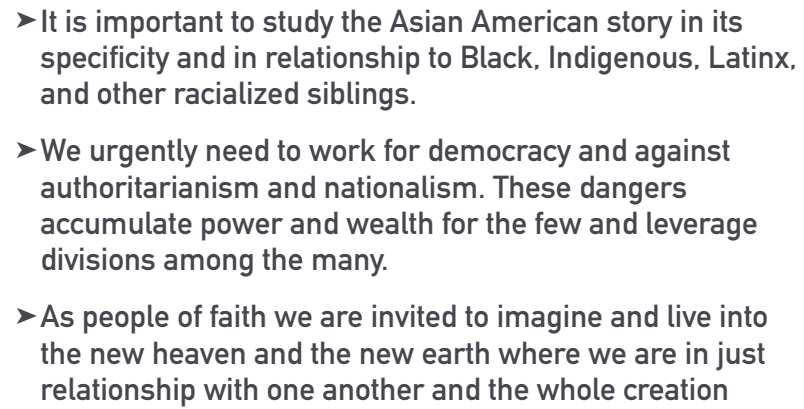
For the most part, when we walk down the street, people do not view us as a
threat. We do not leave our homes, wondering whether or not we will return that
day. We don't fear that we may die if we're pulled over by the police.

This is not the case for our Black friends.

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/VRR-8_ODGH4](https://youtu.be/VRR-8_ODGH4)



In 2020, the community impacted by the 1992 rebellion has been spared. The now predominantly Latino neighborhood has intentionally been spared damage and destruction. Wealthier communities, Hollywood, Melrose and elsewhere as protesters address the economic and privileged root causes of this injustice.

- 
- It is important to study the Asian American story in its specificity and in relationship to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized siblings.
 - We urgently need to work for democracy and against authoritarianism and nationalism. These dangers accumulate power and wealth for the few and leverage divisions among the many.
 - As people of faith we are invited to imagine and live into the new heaven and the new earth where we are in just relationship with one another and the whole creation



RESOURCES TO TAKE ACTION

- Asian American Racial Justice Tool Kit
asianamtoolkit.org
- National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, see Facebook video
- A Different Asian American Timeline
aatimeline.com
- Letters for Black Lives
- Stop AAPI Hate
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice

**DO JUSTICE.
LOVE MERCY.
WALK HUMBLY
WITH GOD.**

*artwork created from items cleaned
from the streets after 1992 rebellion*



Right now, even as we speak, my brother, now a fire captain with the LAFD, is managing the COVID testing process for the City of Los Angeles. He is responsible for ten testing stations, and processing 10,000 tests every week. In the midst of the unrest that roils our hometown. He has been working at this task every day since March 13.