

Bringing Asian American Studies to the Community

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The paradox of Asian American Studies creates a difficult task in the future of expanding its study to the general population of America. During its inception in the 1960s and 1970s, Asian American Studies was taught and learned by a greater variety of people in the community and in the home. But Asian American Studies was limited by the few number of people involved. The paradox lies in its growth and development to become a larger area of study in terms of the number of people, but the scope has narrowed to a public university setting. Currently, most Asian American Studies is taught through traditional teaching and learning methods of lectures, tests, and research papers in the context of higher education. Therefore, in the future, it would be beneficial to combine the strengths throughout the Asian American Studies movement. With a hands-on community focus and a larger vision taught to the growing number of active participants interested in the field, ideally everyone will be able to learn about Asian American Studies and ethnic studies in the future. Asian American and ethnic studies will be able to be expanded through many new methods and techniques of learning and teaching.

Hopefully in the future, people will learn about Asian American Studies the same way and places people did in the early 1970's and today through political advocacy, strikes, media/periodicals, community-based organizations, at home and in community as well as higher education. Within higher education, AAS will expand not only at the UC's, but also the CSU's, community colleges, and private universities with a diversity requirement in place. In addition to that, Asian American Studies will also be taught in K-12 education. If the government sees the important of ethnic studies, then it would be reflective in primary and secondary education, and then AAS and ethnic studies will be recognized and institutionalized studies. People will also learn about AAS in the home from parents. With general increase of awareness, parents can educate their children against ignorance and racism no matter what race they may be. Parents can also encourage their children to participate in cultural events and cultural arts. AAS will be incorporated into society and everyday culture with the representation of ethnic communities and figures in mainstream media, political offices, scientific breakthroughs, music/movies, economy, CEO's, etc.

Everyone will be able to learn about AAS, or at least the general population of the United States. People in K-12 education and higher education will learn it. People in the movement, ethnic enclaves, and community organizations will learn it. API immigrants and API workers can learn about AAS. Adults of all ages and backgrounds can learn about AAS through media, TV, radio, and through each other. Of course, we cannot force people to learn AAS if they do not want to. People who will not learn AAS are people who do not value it and are against anti-Asian American Studies. Also, people who are racist and/or ignorant will not learn AAS. Also, people with low socio-economic status who cannot afford an education and who work all day have a less likely chance of learning AAS unless it is through media or through interaction with others.

With any luck, in the future Asian American Studies will be taught through mainstream media, such as the television or radio. There should be more of an API voice in mainstream media with more accurate portrayals of Asian Americans instead of the stereotypes of the kung-fu masters or the dragon ladies. We will have three dimensional characters, instead of just being tokenized.

Also, we will be recognized for our full range of skills, whether they are in music, arts, or athletics. In the future, Asian American studies won't be taught just in the upper echelons of education, but beginning in grades K-12. We'd bring the children to things like Asian American museums (hopefully there will also be more of those in the future as well) and community-based organizations. In this way, we can connect their life to Asian American history early on in their lives. It'd also be nice to give more required readings by Asian American writers. Asian American studies would be taught much in the way the best courses are taught today, through guest speakers, videos/documentaries, students' experiences, discussions, etc. Higher education would be much more hands on. Students would get first-hand experience organizing and learn through peer interaction and teaching. There would ideally be many self-initiated projects and work more with organizations on campus and in the community. Also, those in ethnic enclaves would be teaching themselves about Asian American Studies because they will actually be a part of it just by living their day to day lives. For those who don't understand English, Asian American Studies would be taught in many of the main Asian languages spoken in the US in order to accommodate for those people.

However, with the advent of a more mainstream Asian American studies, there is the potential for it to be watered down. When an issue becomes mainstream and socially accepted, there is a great risk that people will romanticize or filter what is learned in the interest of appealing to the American populous. The appeal of only a small portion of the populous knowing the history is that the history can be as radical as it wants and people will be generally accepting of it because they seek the topic out and are, themselves, very radical. It is easy for us to remember the details of Asian American history right now because we are still in the midst of its development. However, in the future, when they take a holistic view of our times now, many details that would seem important to us would be looked past in the future. Kinda sad when you think about it that way, huh? However, it's the hard fact that all generations must come to accept eventually because history is being written every day. The future Asian American Studies will be taught by the mainstream and will be learned by the mainstream in the same way everyone learns anything about history, through K-12 and television, movies and media. The Asian American Studies movement takes baby steps, but eventually, everyone should be able to appreciate the contributions and sacrifices made by those before them. The future Asian American Studies will hopefully be as socially aware in the general populous as we are now as a small class or a small organization. One voice is weak, but many put together make for an easier push towards social change.

With a more conscious and aware society, we will be able to stress the importance of ethnic studies in order to reduce the amount of racism, ignorance, and hatred in America. Although there is no effective way to completely eradicate bigotry and intolerance, through Asian American and ethnic studies education throughout people's lives, there will hopefully be the implementation of more cognizant communities in America that can work together to combat any misconceptions that may occur. With the currently narrowed focus of Asian American studies only in higher education, it is the responsibility of those who are aware of this problem to bring the community back into education to all people, not just students. This may be difficult for those who are of low socioeconomic status, but if the future sees the increase of Asian American studies and community organizations, there will also be enhancement in the outreach of education.

Having many facets and new techniques to teach Asian American studies will also be essential in order to relate to a variety of people who will be learning. In the future, this ethnic studies education will expand and extend into our daily lives. This new type of education will still involve a structured education at the college level, but also throughout K-12 and within society and the home. However this education will be much more interactive and relevant through more group projects and action in order to increase learning through social interactions. We will be able to learn from other people about the different communities and change the mainstream society we live in to recognize the significance of ethnic studies and the vitality of our communities. However, the danger of mainstream society picking and choosing what to be taught about Asian American studies is evident. Therefore, it will be increasingly crucial to teach in this holistic manner that does not ignore certain Asian American issues or histories.