

## Media Resources Focusing on Asian Americans

For information on media resources focusing on Asian Americans, please choose from the following categories:

[Documentaries](#)

[Curriculum Units](#)

## Asian Americans: Documentaries

### **American Cultures for Children (1997)**

Grades: K-4

The American Cultures for Children series includes videos about Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Americans. Broken into short segments, they focus on the cultural aspects of each group, such as food, festivals, language, and literature.

### **Becoming American (1983)**

Grades: 9-12+

This documentary documents a young Laotian family's journey from a Thai refugee camp, which they had been forced into following the Vietnam War, to Seattle, where they were allowed to immigrate. Becoming American powerfully details the difficulties refugees faced and reveals how little support the United States government actually gave to the people it displaced. Still valid after almost 20 years.

### **Doubles: Japan and America's Intercultural Children (1995)**

Grades: 9-12+

This 60-minute video deals with the complex issues of cultural identity encountered by children of both American and Japanese heritage. The video traces the lives of several now-adult children and their experiences as part of two (and sometimes more) cultures. The term "doubles" is used by parents of mixed-race children, instead of "half," to reflect the importance both cultures play in shaping individual identity. The program was produced by independent filmmaker, Regge Life.

### **Filipino Americans: Discovering Their Past for the Future (1994)**

Grades: 9-12+

Award-winning producer John Wehman captures an in-depth history of Filipino Americans in this documentary. Through interviews with historians, archival photos, and documents, the 400-year chronicle of one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States is explored.

### **Kelly Loves Tony (1998)**

Grades: 10-12+

Directed by Emmy award-winning filmmaker Spencer Nakasako, this tale of two teenage Southeast Asian-American parents struggling to raise a child is representative of many of the difficulties faced by new immigrants to this country.

### **Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision (1994)**

Grades: 10-12+

The winner of the 1995 Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary, this documentary profiles brilliant architect and artist Maya Lin. Lin, a second generation Chinese American, is most famous for designing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial while still a 21-year-old undergraduate at Yale. Since then she has designed the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama; the Yale's Women's Table; and the Juniata Peace Chapel in central Pennsylvania. Ideal for older high school and college students,

the film begins by looking at the controversy surrounding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's design and goes on to discuss other projects she has worked on. Throughout the documentary, insights about Lin's past and personality are slowly revealed. While race is never the central theme of Maya's story, it is indicative of how far minorities (and women) have come and how much our country has to gain by giving everyone a voice.

### **Moving Memories (1992 )**

Grades: 7-12+

Moving Memories, a documentary produced by the Japanese American National Museum and hosted by Star Trek star George Takei, features home videos taken by several early Asian pioneers. Since the lives of Japanese immigrants during the 1920s and '30s were not recorded in early newsreels and motion pictures, this amateur footage taken by businessmen, priests, teachers, etc. is an invaluable addition to the historical record. The clips in Moving Memories, divided into sections by filmmaker, depict family life, community events, and economic development during that period.

### **Multicultural Peoples of North America Series (1993)**

Grades: 4-10

The Multicultural Peoples of North America series chronicles the history of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans in three separate videos. In addition to discussing each group's history, each video profiles a family, emphasizing the differences and desires of each generation, and features a short biography of an influential member of that ethnic group. Aimed at grades 4-10, this series explores important issues including identity formation and the effects of racial discrimination. I would recommend choosing only one of these videos to purchase, however, because they are too similar to one another to warrant screening all three.

### **My Brown Eyes (1994)**

Grades: 4-10

My Brown Eyes is a beautiful and poignant story of immigrant life as told from the point of view of a child. We are introduced to a ten-year-old boy who rises early and prepares for his first day of school in America. Clever & resourceful, he makes breakfast for his exhausted working immigrant parents who work long hours until the wee hours of morning and packs his own lunch. The resourceful boy, however, is unprepared for the challenge that awaits him at school. The boy becomes withdrawn and silent at school: children laugh at the boy's name and they make fun of the lunch he has prepared. Downloadable Facilitator's Guide available.

### **Once Upon a Camp Series**

Grades: *The Bracelet* K-5, *Dear Miss Breed* 6-8, *Interactions* 9-12

The Japanese American National Museum has developed an excellent documentary series for teaching about the Japanese Internment called Once Upon a Camp. Each video is targeted toward a particular grade level and is accompanied by an extensive teacher's guide featuring historical background and suggested activities. Programs include:

1. *The Bracelet* features a Japanese-American teacher reading a children's book to her second grade class about a young girl named Emi who is forced to leave her home for the camps. Right before she leaves, her best friend, a little white girl, gives Emi a bracelet so that she will always remember their friendship. At the camp, Emi accidentally loses the bracelet, but learns that some memories are carried in our hearts.
2. *Dear Miss Breed* features letters written by young people in the camps to children's librarian Clara Breed. This short film combines old footage of camp life with the voices of children reading excerpts of the letters.
3. *Interactions* follows four high school students as they learn about the Internment.

Initially they knew almost nothing about the event, but after surfing the web for information, visiting the Japanese American National Museum, talking with several former internees, and visiting Manzanar, a desolate former camp in eastern California, they come to better understand the injustice perpetrated by the United States government.

**Sa-I-Gu: From Korean Women's Perspectives (1993)**

Grades: 9-12+

Korean-American women who lost their businesses during the L.A. riots speak out in this 36-minute documentary. They voice their frustrations about racial tension, lack of governmental concern for their plight, and future economic uncertainty.

**Slaying the Dragon (1988)**

Grades: 9-12+

Portrayals of Asian women in the media are often typecast and one-dimensional, ranging from the scheming dragon lady to the obedient servant-wife to the Connie Chung newsreader. This hour-long documentary challenges these images and introduces filmmakers willing to cast more complex characters.

**Who Killed Vincent Chin? (1988)**

Grades: 10-12+

This 82-minute Academy Award nominated film relates the stark facts of Vincent Chin's brutal murder by disgruntled auto workers in Detroit who assume he is Japanese and the cause for their employment frustrations. Chin's murderers receive only a small fine for their actions, which propels the Asian American community in an unprecedented civil rights protest.

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Asian Educational Media Service

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue MC-025  
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Phone: (217) 333-9597  
aems@illinois.edu



## Asian Americans: Curriculum Units

### **Introduction to Diasporas in the United States** (2002)

Grades: 10-12+

This unit introduces students to the topics of diasporas, migration, and the role and experience of diasporic communities in the United States. Students learn about five diasporas in the United States-the Armenian, Chinese, Cuban, Irish, and Yoruban- from their development as diasporas to their contemporary identities, roles, and remaining homeland ties.

### **Rediscovering Our Histories: The Japanese American Internment Experience**

Grades: 7-12

This curriculum package includes three award-winning videos, Days of Waiting by Steven Okazaki, A Family Gathering by Lise Yasui, and A Personal Matter: Gordon Hirabayashi vs. the United States by John de Graaf, all of which focus on the Japanese American experience during the civilian internment of the 1940s. The accompanying teacher and study guides examine issues such as the discrimination and its consequences, the role of history in people's lives, and the meaning of Constitutional rights.

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