Untold: Exploring Asian American Experiences

Asian American Health Initiative
Montgomery County, Maryland
Department of Health and Human Services
"Untold: Exploring Asian American Experiences" is a thoughtfully curated collection of resources designed to enhance understanding of the diverse Asian American experiences. While it may not cover every single aspect, it offers a range of pathways to delve deeper into the experiences, struggles, and triumphs that encompass the Asian American identity.

The term “Untold” emphasizes the need to shed light on stories that long remained underrepresented. The “Untold” stories within this resource collection refer to those narratives that have been overshadowed by stereotypes, misconceptions, and historical gaps, leaving a significant portion of the Asian American experience untold or unnoticed.

Within these pages, you'll encounter various avenues for exploration, including museums, scholarly articles, impactful movies, and insights into how Asian Americans are portrayed in contemporary media.

AAHI acknowledges that this collection isn't meant to fully capture the essence of what it means to be Asian American – a multifaceted, fluid, and ever-evolving experience shaped by factors like cultural heritage, history, and individual narratives. Instead, its purpose is to provide you with valuable resources, inviting you to begin a journey of discovery and understanding within the richness and diversity of Asian American culture.

This collection is for the youth struggling with their Asian American identity, for older adults wanting to learn more about mental health, for mental health professionals wanting to provide culturally responsive care, and for the Asian American community looking to explore, celebrate, and share their multifaceted experiences.
If you would like to access the digital version of these resources, please scan the QR Code.
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Articles

These articles were chosen to shed light on the various challenges and issues faced by the Asian American community. These articles discuss discrimination, mental health, the model minority myth, and trauma.

Addressing Asian and Pacific Islander Mental Health in the U.S.

This article includes a panel of Asian American mental health experts who discuss culturally specific barriers to seeking care, along with ways to improve outreach. Conversations revolve around the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and hesitation about seeking care.

Asian Americans Are Still Caught in the Trap of the 'Model Minority' Myth Stereotype. And It Creates Inequality for All

An analysis of Asian American identity, and relations with other minorities. It calls into question what the term means and its implications of solidarity. It is an important read since many Asian Americans experience psychological distress due to cultural detachment.
Creating Inclusive Depression Care for Older Asian Americans: What Community Organizations Can Do

Older Asian Americans are difficult to reach and is a group that underutilizes mental health services. This article shares lessons learned from community-based organizations into how they integrated mental health services into the lives of older Asian Americans.

A Crisis of Cultural Competency in the Context of Asian-American Depression

This resource offers insight into understanding symptoms across cultures and the considerations of culture in mental health diagnoses. It mentions the effects of culturally-based traumatic events on mental health.

'I-AM SHAKTI' Wants to Get South Asian Americans Talking About Mental Health

'I-AM SHAKTI' is a movement aimed to helping South Asian Americans navigate mental health challenges and share their stories. With Archit Baskaran as the founder of the movement, it is also comprised of undergraduates and medical school students. The article mentions the effects of the Model Minority Myth and stigma around mental health on seeking treatment.
Intergenerational Trauma in AAPI Communities

This article talks about intergenerational trauma and adverse childhood experiences, as it shows up in AAPI communities. It touches upon historic events that have caused trauma and how it is passed on through generations. Without understanding these cultural and racial issues, it may be difficult for mental health clinicians to understand trauma in AAPI communities.

Mental Health Facts (South Asian)

The South Asian Public Health Association has created a mental health factsheet that lists and explains statistics regarding South Asian mental health. It also addresses some of the limitations and barriers to accessing treatment and services.
This report, conducted by the Trevor Project, explores the mental health and well-being of AAPI LGBTQ Youth. It includes statistics on the AAPI LGBTQ population as well as the mental health challenges they face. The main mental health concerns experienced were anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide risk. It mentions risk factors for suicide among AAPI LGBTQ along with discrimination based on identity.

Recommendations for the Treatment of Asian-American Pacific Islander Populations

This resource provides insight into the various Asian ethnic groups that comprised the U.S. population as well as the prevalence rates of mental illness within each ethnic group. It provides information on the common myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes faced by Asian American individuals. This source highlights cultural aspects and views towards mental health that may also be recognized as barriers to mental health care utilization. Additionally, it lists multiple implications for mental health professionals to provide culturally competent care.
What Stops Many South Asian Am from Seeking Mental Health Treatment

This article aims to have readers better understand the stigma and intersectionality surrounding South Asian American mental health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It mentions that the South Asian American community does not normalize conversations about mental health. The article also included themes such as immigration, displacement, racism, poverty, and the language barrier.
Here is a list of various books by Asian American authors that discuss topics including immigration, identity, stereotypes, and discrimination, and navigating mental health and the stigma surrounding it. Many of these books are available within Montgomery County Public Libraries.

1. The Abundance
2. Good Talk
3. The Making of Asian America
4. Minor Feelings
5. Permission to Come Home
6. Rise: A Pop History of Asian American from the Nineties to Now
The Abundance - Amit Majmudar

The Abundance is a collection of poems written by Amit Majmudar that explores themes of cultural identity, belonging, and cultural heritage from the perspective of a second-generation Indian American. The Abundance is a powerful exploration of cultural identity, history, and mental health from the perspective of an Asian American poet.

Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversation - Mira Jacobs

A graphic novel by Mira Jacobs tells her own story of raising a son as an Indian woman married to her Jewish husband. It details many historic events in American culture and how they impact Indian identity and family dynamics. It delves into topics such as colorism, gender norms, and their effects on personal and professional life.

The Making of Asian America: A History - Erika Lee

This book explains the history of Asian Americans, their role in American life, and the generations of immigrants venturing out for new beginnings. It includes talk of both the Asian exclusion laws and the waves of community activism.
**Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning - Cathy Park Hong**

A collection of autobiographical essays by the Korean American author Cathy Park Hong. Through the events in her life, she describes the many facets of Asian American identity and the psychological distress that comes from merging different cultures.

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**Permission To Come Home - Jenny T. Wang**

Dr. Jenny T. Wang provides mental health support and guidance for the Asian American community. It confronts and destabilizes the stigma around mental health among Asian Americans. The themes that Dr. Wang addresses include recognizing emotions, establishing boundaries, and managing anger.

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**RISE: A Pop History of Asian America from the Nineties to Now**

RISE is a love letter to and for Asian Americans—a vivid scrapbook of voices, emotions, and memories from an era in which the Asian American culture was forged and transformed, and a way to preserve both the headlines and the intimate conversations that have shaped the Asian American community into what it is today.
Films/TV

Here are some films that focus on the Asian American experience. These films offer a unique perspective on the cultural and societal factors that can impact mental health in this community. Some of the challenges explored include navigating cultural identity and generational differences.
**Definition Please (2020)**

1 hr 31 mins

*Definition Please* is a family drama that follows the story of Monica Chowdry, a former national spelling bee champion who returns home to care for her sick mother. This film showcases the cultural nuances of being Indian American through traditions and explores the complexities of family relationships, the pressures of cultural expectations, and the challenges of finding one’s place in the world. It also explores themes of mental health concerns, specifically bipolar disorder.

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**The Namesake (2007)**

2 hr 22 mins

This film is adapted from the novel *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. While the film does not explicitly center around mental health, *The Namesake* is a great movie that explores immigration, acculturation strategies, and identity crises. These are all common experiences that many Asian Americans can relate to. Self-conscious differentiation may lead to mental health struggles. This film has the potential to immerse professionals in such an experience, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of their clients.
**Everything Everywhere All At Once (2022)**

2 hr 19 mins

The movie is a great resource for understanding immigrant experiences and the parent-child relationship. It shows the immigrant experience of living a new life and tackles mental health concepts such as acculturation stress, intergenerational stress, and language barriers. *Everything Everywhere All At Once* is an emotional roller coaster that poetically and artistically displays the strained relationships in Asian families due to the feelings of being stuck between different cultures.

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**The Farewell (2019)**

1 hr 40 mins

*The Farewell* is a 2019 film directed by Lulu Wang that tells the story of a Chinese American woman named Billi (played by Awkwafina) who travels to China with her family to visit her grandmother, who has received a diagnosis of terminal cancer. The film is a powerful and poignant exploration of cultural differences, family relationships, and the complexities of the immigrant experience. From an Asian American mental health perspective, it offers important insights into the ways that culture, history, and trauma impact mental health and well-being, and highlights the importance of support systems and connections in maintaining resilience and coping with life’s challenges.
**Minari (2020)**

- **1 hr 55 mins**

Although the movie does not tackle mental health directly, it provides insight into the immigrant experience of chasing the American dream and becoming successful. It touches on some aspects and psychological theories that may have an impact on Asian American mental health such as masculine norms and depressive symptoms in Asian men, the family strength theory, and acculturation.

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**Never Have I Ever (Netflix)**

- **30 min episodes**

*Never Have I Ever* is a coming-of-age series on Netflix that involves a South Asian high school sophomore navigating her way through friendships, love, and self-identity. It includes aspects of her struggles to meet her parents’ academic expectations as it places a great emphasis on an immigrant family from South Asia. It highlights the voices of South Asian women and rejects the common, harmful stereotypes.
We’ve compiled a few local museums and attractions that showcase a range of exhibits, including ancient and contemporary art, ceramics, calligraphy, and cultural artifacts. These museums focus on preserving, promoting, and showcasing the art, history, and culture of Asia and Asian diaspora communities around the world.

**Chinese American Museum DC**

The Chinese American Museum in Washington, DC (CAMDC) is the first and only museum in the nation's capital dedicated to the Chinese American story. A few of the permanent exhibits include *Thoughts from the "Wishing Wall,*" an interactive timeline featuring milestones related to Chinese American history, and a digital photo wall that tells personal stories.

**National Museum of Asian Art**

The National Museum of Asian Art carries many exhibits of Asian art that aims to enhance comprehension of Asia, the United States, and the world. The museum addresses questions about culture and identity. Some of the artwork originates from the ancient Near East to China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia, and the Islamic world.
Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center

The Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center (APAC) aims to promote understanding and appreciation of Asian American history, culture, and experiences and digital initiatives. These include performances, workshops, lectures, and film screenings that explore a wide range of topics.

U.S. National Arboretum - Asian Collection

The U.S. National Arboretum is a botanical garden in Washington D.C. that features a diverse collection of plants and trees from around the world, including several species that have cultural significance to Asian Americans. The Asian Collection includes a variety of plants that are native to Asia, such as Japanese cherry blossom trees, Chinese magnolias, and Korean dogwoods. The collection also includes several varieties of bamboo, which is a symbol of strength and resilience in many Asian cultures. The U.S. National Arboretum offers insight into various Asian cultures through the differing lens of botanical diversity.
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts - East and South Asian Collection

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has a collection of art and artifacts that reflect and celebrate the diversity of Asian American cultures. The museum's Asian Art collection includes works from countries such as China, Japan, Korea, India, and Southeast Asia. It features ancient and contemporary art, including sculptures, paintings, ceramics, and textiles that showcase the artistic traditions of different regions and time periods.
Podcasts

Here are a few podcasts that focus on Asian American mental health and diverse experiences to provide a platform for individuals to share their personal stories and challenges. These podcasts often discuss issues such as cultural barriers, stigma, and discrimination.

4 Elements to Create "Home:" Discussing Mental Health in Asian American Community

21-Minute Listen

Dr. Jenny T. Wang provides advice on some mental health struggles Asian Americans face. This can act as a new perspective for mental health professionals on the concerns and experiences of Asian American clients.

Asians Do Therapy - Religious Trauma and Asian American Experience

44-Minute Listen

Asians Do Therapy works to highlight Asian American experiences in therapy and therapists sharing culturally relevant information to adapt therapy, which is centered on the white middle class experience. Dr. Yeo, a psychologist specializing in religious and racial trauma, comes as a guest to discuss the intersections of Christianity and the Asian American experience.
An Asian Mental Health Story with Carrie Zhang

31-Minute Listen

Carrie Zhang is the founder of The Asian Mental Health Project. Within her upbringing, she felt as though she was alone in her mental health struggles, with no one to confide in. As a result, she did not find help processing trauma, depression, and anxiety until college. In this podcast, she talks about the cultural stigmas as well as institutional biases that prevent the APIDA community from seeking treatment and receiving the help they need.

Asian Enough

Listening Times Vary By Episode

The podcast explores both the joys and complications of being Asian American. The hosts invite special guests to share their personal stories and unpack their identities on their own terms. This podcast explores the vast diaspora across cultures, backgrounds, and generations in an attempt to expand the ways in which America defines the term Asian American.
Self-Evident is a podcast dedicated to exploring the vital question of race, power, culture, and identity through the lens of Asian Americans. With a mission to empower local communities to share stories and build relationships around the value of self-representation, the podcasts presents in-depth audio documentaries and open conversations that challenge listeners of all backgrounds to confront tough questions about who we are. Listeners appreciate Self-Evident for helping them understand America from diverse perspectives, effecting personal change, and taking action with those closest to them to help move our country toward healing and justice. The podcast's nuanced and challenging stories about Asian Americans underscore the power of storytelling to grow the capacity for underrepresented people to create structures of mutual support with each other.

Therapy Reimagined - Asian American Mental Health: Interview with Linda Yoon

Linda Yoon talks about the heterogeneity of Asian Americans but the homogeneity of the term, and the clinical consequences of misunderstanding this idea. She provides insight on the barriers Asian Americans face in seeking mental health services and how Asian Americans perceive mental health treatment. In order to navigate this, Yoon lists the important questions to ask and how, for an accurate assessment.
What Pressures Do Asian Americans Face Addressing Mental Health Needs?

Listening Times Vary By Episode

Dr. Jenny Wang is a Taiwanese American clinical psychologist and national speaker on mental health and racial trauma in Asian American, BIPOC, and immigrant communities. In this podcast, she talks about the common Asian American stereotypes and how they seem positive but have rather negative effects. She explains how these stereotypes limit individuals in addition to any traumas that may result from immigration.
Listed below are scholarly literature that discuss Asian American mental health, implications for treatment, mental health counseling and therapy, and cultural competence. This literature examines the cultural values and beliefs that influence help-seeking behaviors, stigma surrounding mental health issues, and the ways in which cultural identity and acculturation effect mental health outcomes.

**The Asian American Family and Mental Health: Implications for Child Health Professionals**

The culture of Asian Americans' countries of origin as well as the society in which they currently live plays a pivotal role in their reaction to mental health and illness. Mental health issues are increasingly evident in Asian American communities. As a result, the need for the delivery of culturally competent health care and mental health services is paramount. A culturally competent framework that includes the use of a cultural competence model for practice can guide the health care provider in the recognition of problems, particularly in the children of Asian American families.

**Asian American Mental Health: Assessment Theories and Methods**

Professionals who work with Asian American clients confront fundamental questions, such as the cultural validity of the diagnostic tools and systems that are available to them, how to measure dynamic constructs like acculturation and identity in ways that meaningfully inform their work, and how to assess the cultural competence of care systems and training programs. This book provides information on the conceptual issues and practice guidelines for conducting culturally informed assessments of Asian Americans.
Counseling Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders with Race-Based Trauma Related to COVID-19

Review of the effects of racial discrimination on increasing the risk factors for developing mental health problems. It discusses strategies for counseling Asian Americans: making the "invisible" visible, disarming the microaggression, and external reinforcement.

Counseling and Psychotherapy for South Asian Americans: Identity, Psychology, and Clinical Implications

Counseling and Psychotherapy for South Asian Americans: Identity, Psychology, and Clinical Implications is an essential guide for mental health professionals working with South Asian Americans clients. The book covers a wide range of topics, including cultural identity, racism, colorism, immigration, gender, sexuality, parenting, and caring for older adults. The book also addresses the challenges faced by South Asian American clients in accessing mental health services, including a scarcity of therapists from similar backgrounds and the stigma surrounding mental health in the community. The authors highlight the need for more culturally responsive therapists and provide insights into the future of South Asian American mental health, social justice, advocacy, and public policy.
Cultural Considerations in Asian and Pacific Islander Mental Health

This book offers a broad array of perspectives from clinicians and researchers actively working with racially/ethnically diverse populations. It also addresses psychosocial cultural issues that impact the mental health of the growing Asian American population. It provides information to professionals so they can develop their cultural competence and equip them to meet the needs of their clients.

Filipino American Psychology: A Handbook of Theory, Research, and Clinical Practice

This book compiles the latest information about the psychology of Filipino Americans into a single, indispensable volume. Distinguished and celebrated professor and author, Dr. Kevin Nadal, explains in thorough detail the mental health issues facing many Filipino Americans today. It also covers effective techniques and strategies for working with the Filipino American population today.
Promoting Cultural Competence in Counseling with Asian American Children and Adolescents

*Promoting Cultural Competence in Counseling with Asian American Children and Adolescents* is a valuable resource for mental health professionals seeking to provide effective care for Asian American youth. The authors address the challenges faced by Asian American youth, including major adjustment problems in school and cultural barriers that impact their cognitive appraisal and coping choices. The positive "model minority" stereotype can also trivialize the social and mental health problems faced by the younger generation of Asian Americans. The scholarly article provides in-depth insights into Asian cultural conceptions of mental health and offers recommendations for promoting cultural understanding and competence among clinicians.

The Mediating Effect of Avoidant Coping on the Relationship between Asian Values and Psychological Distress among East Asians

This article focuses on East Asian American college students and how their cultural values (collectivism, emotional self-control, etc.) lead to avoidant coping mechanisms. It evaluates the relationship of Asian values with avoidant coping and anxiety, through a regression path analysis. It discusses the idea of broadening outreach, utilizing Asian American student associations, Asian American churches, etc.
The TED Talks listed provide a unique perspective on mental health through the lens of Asian American youth. They offer insights into the experiences of Asian Americans and the challenges they face.

**Acknowledging Mental Health in Asian Households - Chanelle Chong**

**16 mins 50 sec**

Chanelle Chong is the co-founder of Moraa, an organization focused on shedding light on social taboo issues and promoting self-love. She talks about the importance of acknowledging mental health, the social stigma surrounding it, and culture and traditional beliefs. Along with speaking about her personal experience, Chong mentions Confucius's teachings and its relation to mental health conversations.
Changing the Perspective of Mental Illness in Asian Culture - Timothy Xu

16 mins 17 sec

Timothy Xu is a fourth-year computer science major who talks about the mental health stigma within Asian culture through the lens of his own experiences. With this TED Talk, he hopes to change people's perceptions of mental illness. This is a great resource for helping professionals to understand mental health struggles from a cultural perspective.

The Difficulties of Communication in an Asian-American Family - Alan Phan

9 mins 55 sec

Alan Phan explains the mental health issues in the Asian-American community through his personal experience. He focuses on the stigma around seeking help and the way families communicate about mental health.
I Am Not Your Asian Stereotype - Canwen Xu

Canwen Xu is an eighteen-year-old Asian American. In this TED Talk, she shares her experiences with stereotypes and growing up differently. She talks about her experiences with the Model Minority stereotype and the common question - "where are you from?"

Mental Health for All by Involving All - Vikram Patel

Vikram Patel is a mental health care advocate whose hope is to help bring mental health care to low-resource communities by teaching others about basic psychiatric services. Patel talks about the impacts of differences in treatment for physical and mental health care.
We've compiled a few videos that explore a variety of Asian American experiences dealing with mental health. These videos feature personal stories as well as expert perspectives and insights into the cultural and social factors that impact mental health in this community.

Asian American Mental Health: Practical Tips for Working with Patients and Their Families

Dr. Rona Hu, medical director of the Acute Psychiatric Inpatient Unit at Stanford Hospital, presents at the 2016 Neuroscience Education Institute Congress. She explains the context of differences in nonverbal communication in Asian Americans. She provides a different way to frame questions regarding mental health, towards patients, so that it allows them to save face.
A Brief but Spectacular Take on Asian American Mental Health

Christine Catipon is a clinical psychologist at the University of California, Irvine Counseling Center. In this video, she explains her brief but spectacular take on Asian American mental health and growing up avoiding discussions of it due to the stigma around it.

Cultural Competence for Asian American & Pacific Islander Mental Health Services, with Dr. DJ Ida

In this webinar at the Telehealth Certification Institute, Dr. DJ Ida, the Executive Director of the National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA), talks about the importance of cultural competence in mental health services.
Full Anna Akana Interview | JED Voices

49 mins 51 sec

Anna Akana is an Asian American comedian, musician, actress, filmmaker, and mental health advocate. She talks about losing her sister to suicide, the shame, silence, and denial of mental health within the Asian American community.

Mental Health Mukbang (Playlist) | Asian Mental Health Collective

33 mins 42 sec

The Mental Health Mukbang is a videocast that provides bite-size information on mental health that is easily digestible by viewers. Their hope with this series is to really talk casually about Asian American mental health issues in order to break the stigma. With the pilot episode being an introduction to mental health, each episode explores other themes such as identity, therapy, the model minority myth, creating and setting boundaries, self-care, and anxiety.
The Southeast and East Asian Mental Health Experience | NAMI

21 mins 8 sec
NAMI ambassadors Diana Chao and Martin Hong talk about the mental health experiences of Southeast and East Asian Americans. They mention the Anti-Asian policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and immigration laws. This history helps to emphasize personal experience and how it shapes identity development.

Why Is It So Hard to be a Good Asian Kid?

22 mins 7 sec
Dr. Kanojia is the founder of Healthy Gamer (HG), a coaching group that tackles subclinical mental health issues through a mixture of evidence-based psychiatry, and complementary/alternative medicine. In this video, he speaks to Asian youth about mental health by addressing common cognitive traps that are stopping them from accessing mental health services. Values like personal responsibility and low self-worth due to comparisons that cause them to feel underserving of therapy.
This is a powerful interview with Johnny Chang, a former gang member from Los Angeles, which highlights his personal redemption story of a child who was raised through a troubled Asian American upbringing and a victim of circumstances out of his control. This provides a different perspective on Asian Americans and their identity and upbringing. Johnny speaks about the trauma he experienced during childhood and how it resulted in gang affiliation. He talks about his journey with prison, alcoholism, and domestic violence. This interview provides a story of hope, forgiveness, and personal redemption through reflection, overcoming faults, and finding purpose.
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