

ASIAN AMERICAN YOUTH OVERVIEW

An Asian American woman writes to Ann Landers (from a column entitled "I Happen to be Asian-American"), "We Asian-American women are sick and tired of the 'subservient' label that has been hung on us for so many years...I was born in the U.S.A. and am an American as much as anyone...Don't stick me with your labels." This quotation illustrates some of the issues raised by the interaction between Asian and American cultures. Some of these were explored in an interview with Dave Mack, a Young Life leader in urban Chicago, former high school teacher, and Doctor of Ministry candidate at the Lutheran School of Theology.

Mack observes a hierarchy of ethnicity among Asians in America. The Chinese are proud of the length of their history and the fact that they spawned other cultures. The Koreans also have an old, but separate tradition of which they are proud. Filipinos, Burmese, and Vietnamese—some of whom were educated in Chinese schools—emphasize their association with some Asians and their separateness from other Asians. Among Southeast Asians, for example, the Cambodians and Thais despise the Hmong.

These racial attitudes surface among Asian immigrants in America. Mack tells a story of Vietnamese and Chinese kids waiting for buses after a basketball game. The Vietnamese students and a Vietnamese teacher had gotten on a bus when some Chinese students and a leader appeared at the door of the school. When an additional bus did not arrive, the Vietnamese teacher ordered his students (and the Young Life leader) to exit the bus, in the rain, so the Chinese could enter the bus first—and no one demurred.

A handful of the many issues affecting Asian-American youth include:

- * Stigma associated with being refugees.
- * Education and financial security—great dreams constituting the most important agenda for all.
- * Assimilation—how far to go in becoming American and Western.
- * Dating and marriage patterns. Studies note that some Asian young women view dating American males as more romantic, and marrying American males as more beneficial for quicker assimilation and upward mobility. Similarly, some Vietnamese males desire American wives; however, Chinese males are more likely to desire Chinese wives.

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