



# **Anti-Asian racism**

A guided learning journey

**March 2025**



**Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion**  
**Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion**

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## Anti-Asian racism – A guided learning journey

Anti-Asian racism is deeply rooted in history and continues to impact communities today. From exclusionary laws like [the Chinese Head Tax](#) and the [internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II](#) to the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, these systemic and interpersonal forms of discrimination highlight the need for awareness and action. The harmful stereotypes and biases that have [historically marginalized Asian communities](#) persist in contemporary society, affecting everything from workplace dynamics to [media representation](#) and public policies. The “perpetual foreigner” stereotype, the “model minority” myth, [the bamboo ceiling](#), and other forms of racial profiling continue to contribute to the erasure of Asian voices and the justification of discriminatory practices. These stereotypes not only divide communities but also obscure the diverse and nuanced experiences of Asian individuals across different ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, and migration histories.

### Understanding anti-Asian racism and Asian identities

Anti-Asian racism refers to the discrimination, violence, and systemic exclusion experienced by individuals of Asian descent. However, understanding anti-Asian racism requires recognizing the vast diversity within Asian identities, which include East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, each with its own histories, cultures, and diasporic experiences. These experiences of anti-Asian racism are not monolithic – discrimination can take many forms depending on factors such as ethnicity, skin, color, immigration status, and religion. One of the key components of this guide is the use of interactive virtual exhibits, these digital experiences offer an engaging way to explore Asian history, cultural contributions, and the impact of racism over time. Whether through online museum collections, storytelling projects, or immersive multimedia narratives, these exhibits provide an opportunity for individuals and workplaces to deepen learning and commitment to anti-racism.

As a comprehensive learning tool, this guide approaches anti-Asian racism through an intersectional and DEIA lens, highlighting how race, ethnicity, gender, and other social factors shape these experiences. By blending historical context with contemporary realities, we aim to foster a more inclusive and equitable understanding of the systemic barriers Asian communities face.

The following list is not exhaustive, as Asia is the largest and most diverse continent, spanning from the Middle East to the Pacific Islands. This guide aims to recognize the vast and interlocking experiences where communities have faced unique and intersecting forms of racial discrimination.

## Landscape of injustice

This digital project explores the forced displacement and dispossession of Japanese Canadians during World War II. It provides historical documents, survivor testimonies, and interactive storytelling that illustrates how government policies disrupted families and communities.

The exhibit aligns with this guide by highlighting the long-lasting impact of systemic racism and exclusionary laws on Asian Canadians. This digital project is dedicated to recovering and grappling with the forced sale of Japanese-owned Canadian property. The impact of the forced dispossession meant that when restrictions were lifted in the late 1940s, Japanese Canadians had no homes to return to.

This project asks why and how the dispossession occurred, who benefitted from it, and how it has been remembered and forgotten, in subsequent decades.

[Learn more of Landscape of Injustice's project.](#)

Here are some additional sources that discuss the displacement and dispossession of Japanese Canadians for further exploration:

- [Japanese Canadians](#), The Canadian Encyclopedia
- [Japanese Canadian Internment: Prisoners in their own Country](#), The Canadian Encyclopedia
- ["From Racism to Redress: The Japanese Canadian Experience"](#), The Canadian Race Relations Foundation

## Komagata Maru Journey

This exhibit tells the story of the 1914 Komagata Maru incident, where a ship carrying South Asian immigrants was denied entry into Canada due to racist immigration policies. Through historical records, newspaper articles, and personal accounts, this resource connects past exclusionary policies to contemporary issues of racial discrimination and xenophobia, reinforcing the guide's themes of systemic oppression.

The story of the Komagata Maru resonates beyond 1914, linking to freedom movements in India and the right to vote for South Asians in Canada. It addresses how we build communities, understand official multiculturalism, how we remember our past and develop multiple connections.

The exhibit is an active attempt to reframe traditional perspectives of this story to include a variety of Canadian Indian voices, as a way for a multilayered look at history, and communicating the lived realities of Canadians – and those striving to be Canadians, over a 100 years ago.

Learn more about the Komagata Maru incident [here](#) on their website as you can navigate various collections, interactive timelines, biographies, and the Komagata Maru martyr's memorials. Additionally, you can learn more about the Komagata Maru incident as well as in the resources listed below:

- [The Story of Komagata Maru](#), Canadian Museum for Human Rights
- [Komagata Maru](#), The Canadian Encyclopedia
- [Komagata Maru: Continuing the Journey](#), South Asian Canadian Digital Archive

## South Asian Canadian Digital Archive (SACDA)

This digital archive documents the histories, contributions, and challenges of South Asian Canadians. Through exhibits on migration, labor struggles, and racial discrimination, the archive highlights how South Asian communities have long been subjected to exclusionary policies, xenophobia, and racial violence. An initiative of the South Asian institute at the University of Fraser Valley, the archive collects, digitizes, digitally preserves, and makes accessible materials with significant ties to the South Asian diaspora across Canada.

The Institute fosters interdisciplinary scholarly research, studies, community and public engagement on issues related to South Asia and the Canadian South Asian Diaspora (SACSAD). By shedding light on South Asian immigrants' experiences – including activism against racist policies and the fight for civil rights – SACSAD highlights how South Asian communities have resisted and navigated systemic oppression in Canada.

Beyond historical documentation, SACSAD highlights community activism against racist policies and the fight for civil rights, demonstrating how South Asian Canadians have resisted and navigated systemic oppression. The archive connects past struggles to contemporary issues, showing how racial discrimination continues to impact South Asian communities today – whether through racial profiling, workplace discrimination, or Islamophobia.

Learn more about SACDA's legacy project and their virtual interactive exhibits [here](#). Additionally, some of SACDA's projects can be found listed below as well:

- [Union Zindabad! South Asian Canadian Labour History in British Columbia](#), South Asian Canadian Digital Archive
- [\(Dis\)enfranchisement: 1907 – 1947: The Forty Year Struggle for the Vote: A Digital Exhibit based on the 2017 exhibit at the Sikh Heritage Museum, National Historic Site and Gur-Sikh Temple](#), South Asian Canadian Digital Archive
- [Timeline of Discriminatory Laws: A South Asian History](#), South Asian Canadian Digital Archive

## The Virtual Museum of Asian Canadian Cultural Heritage (VMACCH)

In showcasing Asian Canadian heritage, VMACCH plays a crucial role in combating anti-Asian racism by addressing the historical and ongoing exclusion of Asian voices in Canadian narratives. By providing a platform for Asian Canadians to share their heritage, the museum challenges the erasure of their contributions, fostering a deeper understanding of the diverse cultural histories that shape Canada.

Featuring works by Asian Canadian artists, VMACCH highlights how artistic expression can serve as a form of resistance against racial stereotyping and marginalization. It facilitates cultural exchange, demonstrating that Asian cultures are not separate from but integral to Canada's broader cultural fabric. By bridging connections between Asian and non-Asian communities, VMACCH actively works against the "perpetual foreigner" stereotype, which has long been used to justify exclusionary policies and social discrimination. This featured website is meant to connect Asian cultures to other cultures and show that it is part of the overarching community found in Canadian culture.

The exhibits found through the VMACCH are a valuable teaching resource on Asian heritage and culture, and showcases interactive events hosted by the Social Service Network, the Chinese Canadian Photographic Society of Toronto, and mainstream museums such as the Gardiner Museum and the Bata Shoe Museum.

By engaging with VMACCH, participants can reflect on how cultural visibility is a key factor in dismantling anti-Asian racism. Representation in art, history, and public spaces is not just about celebration – it is about reclaiming narratives that have been historically silenced. This aligns with the broader themes of this guide, which seek to deepen awareness, challenge stereotypes, and advocate for systemic change in how Asian communities are perceived and treated in Canada.

Learn more about the VMACCH's objectives of providing better opportunities for Asian Canadians in sharing their heritage and promoting a better understanding of Asian heritage here. Additionally, here are some resources found on the VMACCH's website that you can explore:

- [Finding Connections Through Asian Canadian Visual Art: Not Just Visual Images](#), The Virtual Museum of Asian Canadian Cultural Heritage
- [Holding a Mirror to Nature: Asian Canadian Film](#), The Virtual Museum of Asian Canadian Cultural Heritage
- [Significant Events in the history of Asian Communities in Canada](#), Government of Canada

If you want to learn more about Anti-Asian Racism, please check out the Resource Guide found [here](#).

Learn more about Anti-Asian Racism:

- [Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's \(APF Canada\)](#) resources for combatting anti-Asian Racism and learning about Canadians of Asian descent.
- The [RepresentASIAN Project](#) is a Canadian platform dedicated to celebrating, advocating and elevating Asian representation and voices in media and beyond.

Understanding anti-Asian racism is not just looking at the past – it's about recognizing how historical injustices continue to shape the present and influence the future. As this guide has shown, discrimination against Asian communities is deeply woven into systemic policies, social narratives, and lived experiences. Just as exclusion and oppression have persisted, so too has resilience, activism, and cultural expression.

By engaging with these resources, reflecting on the complexities of Asian identities, and challenging harmful stereotypes, we take an active step toward dismantling racism in all its forms. True solidarity requires us to acknowledge the diversity within Asian communities, recognize the intersections of oppression, and commit to meaningful allyship.

The journey does not end here – this is just the beginning. Continue learning, questioning, and advocating for change in your workplaces, communities, and beyond.