

Conversation Guide: Being Asian American in the Time of COVID

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. *Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate.*

Introductions: Why We're Here (~10 minutes)

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage (~5 minutes)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, community and/or the country?
- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?

Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Being Asian American in the Time of COVID (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

Being Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) is an experience that can be hard to define given the more than 19 origin groups that make up people of Asian descent. Dimensions like gender, class, sexuality, generation, and immigration status also play roles in shaping our experience and how we are perceived and treated.

The U.S. has a long history of anti-Asian rhetoric and racism that includes major exclusionary policies and wars and occupations in and conflicts with Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, China, and Japan. During the pandemic, there has been an increase in reports of anti-Asian violence and discrimination with a majority of incidents being reported by women. Many attribute the rise in violence and discrimination to linking the Coronavirus with China and people of Chinese descent. As we work through what can be a painful, paralyzing, and uncertain time, it can be helpful to hold space to reflect on what we have experienced, to verbalize the questions we think are important to be asking, and to share our concerns and hopes for the AAPI community.

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- What does being Asian mean to you? What about being American? How do those two identities relate to each other? What is the impact of having your ethnicity lumped into a monolith like Asian American?
- How has Anti-Asian sentiment surfaced in your personal experience over the years? How has it changed over the years?
- When thinking about the rise in reports of Anti-Asian violence and discrimination, what feelings or thoughts come up for you? Is there anything that has surprised you about your reaction or the reactions of those around you?
- What would help you to feel more empowered? What would you like to see non-Asian allies do to help you feel more empowered and supported right now?
- What are your hopes and concerns for the AAPI community moving forward? What do you wish people outside that community understood?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min)

- *Give us feedback!* Use livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/ or QR code
- *Donate!* Make more of these possible; give at livingroomconversations.org/donate/
- *Join or host more conversations!* With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/



Thank you!