

to 10 THINGS KNOW ABOUT LGBTQ API COMMUNITIES

Asian Americans, South Asians, Southeast Asians, and Pacific Islanders are the nation's fastest growing racial group and the largest segment of new immigrants coming to the United States. More and more are coming out as LGBTQ. Studies have found the LGBTQ immigrant population is disproportionately API. All seek to better their lives, be safe from discrimination, and be free to be out. You can help and NEA and NQAPIA want you to know a few things to support your LGBTQ API youth.

LGBTQ APIs in schools have rights.

Many school districts, cities, and states have laws and regulations that protect LGBTQ people from discrimination and bullying. Transgender students can often use restrooms that corresponds to their gender identity or use separate changing facilities for gym. Even in places without formal rights, LGBTQ APIs all deserve affirmation, respect, privacy to feel safe, and ability to disclose what they want to disclose when to disclose and to who to disclose to.

APIs are culturally & linguistically diverse.

APIs speak many languages and have different cultural values, especially with regards to LGBTQ identities. Some LGBTQ APIs come from countries that may be less accepting or even outright intolerant of LGBTQ people. While LGBTQ people face violence in the U.S. too, in some Asian countries, homosexuality is against the law.

LGBTQ people are jailed, tortured or put to death. Others come from conformist societies in which difference is shunned. There are many multilingual resources to educate API parents of LGBTQ kids, including videos, translated informational leaflets, local workshops, student clubs, and API parent support groups in many cities.

For LGBTQ APIs, coming out is a process, not an event.

3 Some API parents think being LGBTQ is an American disease or something that their children "caught" because they immigrated to the United States or because their children have LGBTQ Friends. Being LGBTQ is innate and new learning can be difficult. While some youth assert "I'm here, I'm queer, Get used to it!" for APIs, coming out usually takes a different approach because of cultural norms and teachings. Coming out to parents can take a very long time. It is not uncommon for the process to take 10, or even 15 years before full acceptance.

Strong API values of the Family and honor.

4 The lengthy coming out process is sometimes because some youth do not want to shame their family or disappoint their parents, who may have sacrificed greatly for them. Family is central in API cultures. Personal decisions

are often inextricably tied into the well-being of the family. So some APIs view being coming out as a self-centered, Western American influence that dishonors the family name and ancestors. Educators can support their young people to work with their parents and family members in their personal journeys towards love and acceptance. But it will take time.

Discrimination as both an LGBTQ people and as people of color.

5 Some LGBTQ APIs, especially South Asians, may encounter racial profiling when entering government buildings or boarding planes. Sometimes their gender-presentation or perceived differences from their gender-marker on their IDs, in combination with their ethnic or religious background, may trigger heightened scrutiny.

Discrimination under the "model minority" myth.

6 Some East and South Asian students are seen as a "model minority." They are stereotyped to be wealthy, high achieving, low risk, mature, conflict adverse, and "easy" students. But this myth privileges Asian students over Black, Latinx and Native students. It erases the realities of poor, learning-challenged, and working-class API students. Some school personnel then assume Asian students do not require the same support as others and LGBTQ API kids may not reach out for the help that they need.

Gender Identity is not the same as Sexual Orientation.

7 Sexual orientation typically refers to sexual or affectional attraction. Gender identity typically refers to a person's own understanding of their gender, regardless of whether it aligns with anatomy or the sex they were assigned at birth. There is a spectrum of sexualities and genders. Some people refer to themselves as strictly gay, lesbian, or straight while other may be bisexual, omniseual, pan-sexual or simply "fluid". Queer is a gender neutral term for those outside of the mainstream and is popular with young people to reclaim a pejorative word. Some people may identity with being a woman or a man, while others may be transgender, a transman or transwoman, gender variant, or gender nonconforming. Some people prefer the gender-neutral or gender-inclusive term of "they/ them/ theirs." Asking for "preferred gender pronouns" allows young people to identity their gender with which they prefer to be referenced as.

API cultures have long histories of queerness and gender nonconformity.

Same-gender loving people, homoerotic traditions, and transgender experiences have existed throughout history - in China since 37 BC and the Qing dynasty, Japan since the samurai, Korea since the 7th century. Thailand had the Kathoey ("ladyboys") and Vietnam had transgender shamans Đạo Mẫu. Female roles in Beijing opera, traditional Japanese kabuki theater and ancient Korean shamanic spiritual traditions have been played by male. The Hijra of India were intersex people or eunuchs who have undergone ritual castration who serve as temple priestesses. Pacific Islands homoerotic and transgender traditions include Mahu in Hawai'i, fa'afafine in Samoa, fakaleiti in Tonga, vaka sa lewa lewa in Fiji, rae rae in Tahiti, fafafine in Niue, and akava'ine in the Cook Islands.

Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and Christian traditions are evolving.

For some Asian Pacific faiths, sexuality and gender doesn't matter at all. But some API religious leaders have damned LGBTQ people. Passages in some

scriptures were written to describe the thinking and culture of a particular time. More and more API faith traditions are becoming more welcoming of LGBTQ people. Many faiths now recognize that to embrace LGBTQ people is to emphasize strong religious and spiritual values such as compassion, love, a merciful God, and a belief to treat others how one would like to be treated. Some South Asian and Pacific traditions have long histories of scriptural inclusion of LGBTQ identities and multiple perspectives of God(s), Goddess(es) and Divine Spirits.

Educate Yourself and Others.

Support and resources are readily available. The National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance and Asian Pride Project have many multilingual of resources to help API parents who have LGBTQ kids. Videos are available in 7 Asian languages/dialects, translated informational leaflets in 25 Asian and Pacific languages, local workshops, and parent support groups in many cities. www.familyisstillfamily.org

For more information contact NQAPIA, APP, HRC, PFLAG, GLSEN, NEA, GSA Network.

