Model Minorities at the Margins of Asian America

The 2024 presidential campaigns of Nikki Haley and Vivek Ramaswamy suggest that South Asian American visibility in the US political right is on the rise. South Asian Americans currently occupy prominent positions in the Trump administration—director of national intelligence (Tulsi Gabbard), FBI director (Kash Patel), and second lady (Usha Vance). Any celebration of increased government representation of South Asian Americans must, however, also reckon with the reported upsurge in anti-South Asian hate and added immigration restrictions targeting the H-1B visa program. Conservative South Asian American politicians may be differentiated from those on the left, most notably former Vice President Kamala Harris and NYC mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani. The latter's progressive and anti-assimilationist position as a democratic socialist is especially remarkable because it resists the ever-persistent model minority myth, which as Susan Koshy argues, "was and continues to be one of the primary discursive mechanisms for articulating the relationship between whiteness, blackness, and Asianness." The emergence of South Asian Americans in US polity indicates that the relationship between the model minority myth and Asian American racialization requires further attention within the context of an emergent authoritarian and fascist national climate.

This CAALS-sponsored panel invites papers that reexamine, critique, and question the relevance of the model minority myth and model minority stereotypes in the study of Asian American literature and popular culture. Chinese American and Japanese American histories of racialization have been the focus of scholarship on this topic, including Madeline Y. Hsu's *The Good Immigrants* and Ellen D. Wu's *The Color of Success*. However, given the expansive demographics of Asian American identity within an increasingly polarized political landscape and changing immigration patterns, model minority discourse may challenge or reinforce the racialized status of South Asian American, Southeast Asian American, and West Asian American groups. This panel asks how an expansive Asian American literature continues to contend with the model minority myth's affiliations with whiteness, neoliberal progress, capital accumulation, and anti-Blackness.

We welcome papers that engage with existing literature and scholarship related to model minority discourse, and especially those which address the myth's limits—or even its eventual obsolescence—in intersectional Asian American identity formation going forward.

-How do Asian American writers engage with model minority discourse in unexpected and/or contradictory ways? How might the myth even be pleasurable or desired? How are critiques of the model minority myth used to return attention to groups that are historically overlooked within Asian America? Do writers from the margins signal a different kind of model minority formation than described by previous scholars?

-How can existing scholarly concepts—Takeo Rivera's model minority "masochism," erin Khuê Ninh's model minority "impostors," Eleanor Ty's model minority "disenchantment," and Stephen Sohn's model minority "terrorist," among others—help to produce new interpretations of Asian American literature at the margins? How might intraracial and interracial affinities and shared movements between the US and the Global South disrupt existing model minority narratives and gesture towards different liberal and radical futures?

-How can new intersections of Asian American literature and culture (including South Asian American, West Asian American, and mixed and multiracial Asian identities, among others) continue

to stretch and challenge how we conceive of Asian America as a site for potential creative collaboration and political resistance? How might considerations of gender, sexuality, religion, caste, colorism, disability, and other axes of difference nuance and/or combat model minority stereotypes?

Please submit a 250-word abstract, short bio, and a condensed two-page CV (500 words max) to Jennifer Cho (jencho@umd.edu) by January 22, 2026. Please be sure to mention any technological needs for your presentation.

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Down to a Science
Experiments and Materiality in Asian American Literary Form

In celebration of Michelle Nancy Huang's forthcoming book *Racial Beings: Experiments in Asian American New Materialism*, we invite papers that explore experiments and materiality in Asian American literary form. Following Huang's work, topics could include literary interventions about science-related topics such as genetic engineering, material sciences, oceanic thought, climate change, geological sites and physical objects. Decentering the human can reconfigure how Asian American race-making is conventionally understood, while considering how "race is fabricated, synthesized, and produced through scientific development and technological discourse." Calling for "synthetic readings" that recognize that race is both material and metaphor, papers can include ecocritical approaches, techno-orientalist examples, and post-humanist critique.

We are open to provocations, reimaginings, and parallel arguments, or papers on works by or in conversation with Asian American writers discussed in *Racial Beings*: Ruth Ozeki, Ken Liu, Larissa Lai, Jeffrey Yang, Aimee Nezhukhumatathil, Brenda Shuaghnessy, and Julie Otsuka.

Please submit a 250-word abstract, short bio, and a condensed two-page CV (500 words max) to Rei Magosaki (magosaki@chapman.edu) by January 22nd, 2026. Please be sure to mention any technological needs for your presentation.

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Open Call:
New Directions in Asian American Literary Studies

We welcome proposals on current debates regarding Asian American literature. Our aim is to provide a forum for new and innovative work in Asian American literary studies.

Please email your abstract (max. 250 words), short bio, and a condensed two-page CV (500 words max) to Timothy K. August at timothy.august@stonybrook.edu by January 22nd, 2026. Please be sure to mention any technological needs for your presentation.