

# The discrimination of asian-american



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**Introduction**

Asian Americans are Americans who are of Asian descent. They are composed of Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Cambodian and Pakistan and other Americans from with Asian origin. In poverty rate, Asian Americans are second lowest and are 3rd largest minority group in U. S. with a total population of 5% as per the 2007 population census (Minckler, 2008). Their reference as Asian American from the former Oriental American started in 1960, when activists argued that Oriental American's reference was derogative.

The migration of Chinese (Asians) to America dates back to 1865; they moved to seek contract labor and to work in sugarcane plantations and transcontinental railroad project. Nevertheless anti-migrants movements in late 1800s led to Chinese exclusion act (1882) forcing them to retreat into some isolated areas doing some casual jobs to fellow Chinese and some merchandize retailers. Trends changed with 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act that led to millions of Asians to flow into the United States.

Asian Americans have been subject to discrimination racism, racial profiling and stereotype or group definition for many years. Hatred against the Asian Americans and prevention from upward mobility in work places is on record. It has been observed that they have the worst chances of advancing to managerial positions. Their families have over the years tried to socialize their children to cope up with these challenges at the same time retaining the sense of cultural integrity as well as their ethnic identity. Activists have over the years advised the Asian Americans not to consent to the allegation that they are lesser beings or have lesser rights because of their race,

ethnicity or their descent simply because the United States is their home. Some parents have opted not to discuss the issue of prejudice with their children though it has been evident and as part of life. Asian American prejudices propelled the expectations of parents to their children such that they started working harder to lift their standard, hence Asian Americans have the highest standards of education among the United States citizens (Terrance, & Claudette, 2004). This has enabled many of them to emerge as model minorities with some of them succeeding in education, better jobs and incomes consequently better living standards. Nevertheless discrimination has not ceased, most of them continue to suffer from racism and ethnicity in their respective places of work and their day to day activities.

The highly profiled Asian Americans have not been spared of racism. This was evident in the case of Wen Ho Lee; Taiwanese-American scientist who was accused of being a Chinese spy. When the truth of the case was identified, it was realized that Lee had been used as a scapegoat because of his ethnicity. The discrimination is pronounced in the education system; the prestige of the school that one attends is determined by the economic status of an individual, this implies the economical inequality narrows down to education system, hence majority of the Asian Americans attending low standard schools (Hurst, 2006).

Many Asians Americans have opted to be in self employment because of: labor market discrimination, ethnic resources, structural opportunities, and class resources. Self employment enables Asian American to gain a sense of personal autonomy. The discriminations are so pronounced such that despite the fact that Asian Americans are the most educated of the American

citizens, (Asians have the highest collage rate of 43% of all American adults aged between 25 and 64) they are very scanty in top management positions (WordPress, 2009).

Nevertheless it's worth noting that not all Asian Americans are affected by the discrimination; there are some who feels that they partake the 'national cake' more than their fare share, since there are some white Americans who do not get what they get (Goldsea, Perspective, n. d.). This is evident since there are Asian Americans who are seen to be doing better than the whites Americans. Most Asian Americans are also respected because of their value for education, business, family as well as career.

### **Discrimination Theories**

There are several theories that have been advanced in an attempt to explain the various discriminations that are evident in work places; such a theory is 'Unconscious Bias Theory'. When many people are accused of having practiced biasness at workplaces, many defend their actions asserting that they were not a deliberate; such is what Unconscious Bias theory attempts to explain. In nations like the United States where the ethnic discrimination is evident, the victims argues that they were maltreated based on their race. In most nations where such biases are evident, the plaintiff is required by the law to prove that the actions against him/her were motivated by the racism. The theory is misused as a defense mechanism for ills perpetrated to others. Such biases include: extreme scrutiny for some workers of a given race, questioning of some workers ability because of their skin color, and overworking workers of a specific race among other ills. This theory also explains that there are many people who perpetrate bias acts, unconsciously

because of their socialization, hence subject to unconscious bias theory (Lee, 2005).

Desperate impact theory: this theory is used in the United States in an attempt to curb gross inequalities against state protected minority group. The theory deals with actions that can be referred to as indirect discriminations. The theory is required by the judiciary to demand for equal treatment of all people and if an employer denies the minority group a job or promotional opportunity he has to prove that it's an issue of job necessity, but has nothing to do with discrimination. Its also requires the plaintiff to prove that an action that seems neutral at its face-value is disproportionately negative towards him/her (Blanpain, Nakakubo, & Araki, 2008).

Glass ceiling theory: The concept of glass ceiling was initially used to explain some of gender discrimination in work place. The theory explained why women, despite having abilities to get top management in organizations, they are not able to. The theory explains that women have what it takes to be in top management but there is an artificial barrier that has been placed such that they can not get to those dream positions. It explains why most management positions are male dominated (Hildbrand, 2007). The glass ceiling is also applicable to Asian Americans discrimination, no matter how much knowledge and experience they have it's made very slippery for them to climb up the management ladder. Most Asian Americans continue to serve in junior positions; very few Asian Americans are directors of white owned companies. The glass ceiling explains why there is an immense under representation in higher levels of executive, administrative and managerial positions (Min, 2006).

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From the concept of Media and portrayal of Asian Americans, we can draw the expectancy theory that suggests that “ To the extent that advertising portrayals build or reinforce expectancies; they may contribute to undue pressure being placed on minority groups” (Taylor & Lee, 1994). The expectation theory explains that the media portrayal of a people places on board some expectations towards the people in question, if those expectations are not met, its becomes a source of biases. For example it’s expected that Asian Americans should excel in sciences and mathematics; the negative implication is perceived when pressure is mounted on individuals to meet the stereotypical demand. A theory like cultivation theory explains how assimilation of the minority group is made more difficult because of the media portrayal of the minority group the media stereotypes leads to people accepting those stereotypical portrayals as being manifest in reality (Bryant, & Oliver, 2008).

Racial assimilation theory: This theory is used to address current trends on discrimination. The government as well as human rights activists have over the last few years made every attempt to fight racial discrimination in workplaces and other spheres of life. This has been amidst the current trends whereby there has been a divide between the blacks and non-blacks; referred as whitening. The Asian Americans fall under the category of non blacks. The racial assimilation has played a positive role in relation to curbing the Asian American discrimination, which is evident through American Asian Intermarriages and improved treatment of Asian Americans in workplaces and other circles of life (Kim, 2009).

**The Impact Of Asian Americans Discrimination:**

The most immediate and visible impact emanating from Asian American discrimination is injustices. The injustices are manifest at many spheres of life such that most of the Asian American people live in united states as if they are strangers; without enjoying the full rights of citizenship. For example Asian Americans do not enjoy equal rights to employment as the white Americans. This has led to a divide between the white Americans and the Asian Americans; most white Americans are richer than Asian Americans (Tsung Chi, 2005).

The discriminations have resulted to stereotypes; both positive and negative. The stereotypes range from hard work to anti social treatments. Some of the stereotypes have become frameworks of barriers such as the establishment of bamboo and glass ceilings hence less Asian Americans are managing to move up the management ladder; most remain in junior clerical and administrative positions. For example by 2006, 6.06% of federal workforces were Asian Americans and pacific islanders, but its only 3.73% of employees were in senior pay grades (Rosenberg, 2009).

It has been identified that some Asian Americans earns lesser than their colleagues of equal levels with the same job descriptions and equivalent human capital conditions; the discriminations is even more pronounced for the immigrants Asians as compared to native Asian Americans born in America. This has promoted enmity in the society such that white Americans and Asian Americans interact at formal or business levels, if not in physical confrontations, but not as allies. Under employment is also so pronounced

among the Asian Americans. The immigrants suffer the more because of the language and cultural barriers (Rosenberg, 2009).

High academic achievement: In order to overcome the stereotypes and discriminations, many Asian Americans have placed more emphasis on empowering their children through education. The end result has been having the Asian Americans as the most educated people in the America: their Asian American percentage in colleges is greater than any other race in the country. Therefore Asian Americans academic excellence can be accredited to the discrimination issue. Nevertheless the discrimination is detrimental (Min, 2006).

Michelle Nealy (2008) has noted that other than the physical effects of the discrimination, there is vast psychological distress that results from racial discrimination. These findings were as a result of a research that was conducted to evaluate the feelings of diverse age groups of Asian Americans who have ever been victims to racial discrimination.

Solution to the Discrimination Challenges:

### **Cultural Diversity Knowledge**

The world has become a global village through the establishment of efficient and effective means of transport and communication. This has contributed to immense migration, such that any given society is a blend of people from diverse cultures. We can therefore not overlook the importance of understanding cultural differences. Many conflicts that are witnessed between people from different races, regions and ethnic groups are majorly not as a result of the skin color, or area of origin, rather they emanate from



cultural diversities. Therefore if the white Americans and the Asian Americans would take their time to keenly study and understand their cultural diversities, the misperceptions which lead to strained relationships would be overcome contributing to harmonious living (Bodenhausen, 2009).

This problem can also be overcome through avoiding parochialism, whereby an individual sees the world from his point of view disregarding other people's perceptions. A parochial person will neither appreciate any other way of looking at things nor doing things; he will not even acknowledge the significance of the diversities, consequently edgy relationships. Easier intercultural communication demands that we understand and appreciate other people's cultures (Bodenhausen, 2009).

### **Exposure**

Unconscious bias theory is a good explanation of lack of exposure among many people who are perpetrators to ethnic discriminations. Most of perpetrators of Asian American discrimination act out of ignorance. Many do not have a clear picture of the repercussions of such actions hence when they are acting as agents to their continuity, they act innocently. Exposure would play a very significant role in bring awareness to perpetrators and the victims. If the effects of racial discrimination would be tabled, the subjects (perpetrators and victims) would be more careful in the activities that they engage in. Racial discrimination sometimes leads to violence; if people were to be exposed to the discrimination's atrocities, they would have a second thought before they decide to take any actions. Exposure would also motivate anti-racial activists to be more radical in combating such discriminations (Leach, 2006).

## **Training**

Racial discrimination as evident in America by the majority White Americans against small ethnic groups such as the Asian Americans can be managed to a great degree through enlightenment. As it has been explained in this paper, very many people act out of ignorance; It's incumbent for people to get training on the various manifestations of racial discriminations as well as strategies to overcoming the challenges. The trainings should revolve around the challenges that are experienced in workplaces and in the society so that potential victims can employ the appropriate overcoming machinery in curbing the discriminations. There are so many workers who will be exploited ignorantly, since they don't even know they are being exploited, therefore awareness is very important to facilitate change towards better social interactions. Training will also play an important role in exposing the atrocities of racial discrimination. Training will involve case studies to make it more clearly to the students on the real meaning of such discriminations. The trainings should be conducted in all levels of education system, right from childhood during the socialization process, to adulthood (Smith, 2006).

Trainings will also help the trainees to have a more understanding of the cultural diversities in existence. Such knowledge will enable the people to appreciate other people's culture the more. On the other hand when people understand and appreciate other's cultures they will identify their common grounds hence cultivating harmonious co-existence (Smith, 2006).

## **Conclusion**

From the time the first Asian came to America, anti-Asian racism was experienced. Such manifestations included acts of discrimination and

prejudices. Asian Americans have been denied equal right to the white Americans for more than 200 years. They have also been subjected to harassments, hostility, imprisonment, physical attacks, and sometimes murdered. The Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 was as a result numerous acts of discrimination. This ethnic group was singled out and forbidden from coming to the United States. This was followed by immense denials against Japanese immigrants who were seeking equal treatments in citizenship, ownership of land, among other human rights. The atrocities were so intense such that Asians would not even be allowed to testify in courts. An example of the discrimination was during the 2nd world war when Asian Americans (including Japanese Americans) were imprisoned based on their ethnic groups.

Over the years this acts of discrimination have reduced but they are still witnessed in many spheres of life; evidence to this is explained by the concept of glass ceiling, where despite the fact that Asian Americans are the most educated citizens of United States, they are very few in top management positions. There are artificial barriers that have been created used to ensure people from some given ethnic origins do not access the top-most management positions. In work place Asian Americans receive thorough scrutiny and are subject to discriminations; they are used as scapegoat.

The implications of these discriminations have been tensed relationships, positive and negative stereotypes, enmity, more devotion to reading among Asian Americans among many other effects. In attempt to overcome these challenges, some of the solutions that have been proposed include: creating

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cultural awareness, exposure of discriminatory activities and training both the victims and the perpetrators.

Since its evident that discrimination towards people of some ethnic groups is still on, there is a need to do more research on other means employable in curbing ethnic and racial discriminations; the present mechanism have not proved functional enough to overcoming this global challenge. Its also needful for more research to be conducted on the reasons behind the discriminations; to get to the root of the problems.

### **Recommendations**

Most of the changes that have been proposed and advanced in attempt to overcome the challenge of Asian American discrimination have been proposed by the research organizations, human rights organizations and the government without involving the victims and the perpetrators, consequently lesser successful; its incumbent to include the community right from the begging where the problem is identified all the stakeholders to solution identification and implementation.

Reconciliation services are also very important curbing this challenge; there are pronounced enmities that have resulted from acts of discrimination, the tense relationships can only be overcome by employing mechanisms of reconciliation, the perpetrators should be brought to a position of accepting their ills be shown the need to change. Reconciliation will be possible if people learn to respect the cultures of others and to see things from diverse points of view.

Community awareness is not an option but a must for the society to overcome this challenge. People need to understand the consequences of acts of discriminations. The stakeholders should ensure awareness at all the circles of life.

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