



Joy, Self-determination, and Modern Representation in AANHPI Communities

Competency

Educators will create learning experiences that affirm Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) joy and self-determination by integrating pop culture, media, and/or entrepreneurship to counter deficit narratives.

Key Method

The educator promotes inclusive and affirming learning experiences by integrating AANHPI joy, counternarratives, modern representation, and student-centered reflection into instruction to support identity, resilience, and self-determination. These learning experiences help students recognize how communities counter harmful stories with pride, creativity, and collective strength.

Method Components

Overview

While history books have often highlighted the traumatic histories of Asian-American communities, this microcredential invites you to explore a different entry point. You'll engage with counternarratives, healing resistance, and the Eight Pillars of Joy to build a richer understanding of what AANHPI joy is grounded in and why it matters for your students. Once you understand these theories, you can explore modern AANHPI figures who have helped these communities shine and thrive. In many ways, joy and representation are how these communities have reclaimed their stories and imagined new futures.

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Who is AANHPI?

AANHPI is an umbrella term covering a wide and diverse range of ethnic and cultural communities. These identities are fluid and self-identified. Here's a general breakdown of those different communities:

East Asian: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Taiwanese, Tibetan
Southeast Asian: Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian (Khmer), Thai, Laotian, Burmese (Myanmar), Indonesian, Malaysian, Singaporean, Hmong, Mien/Iu Mien

South Asian: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Nepali, Bhutanese, Maldivian, Afghan

Central Asian: Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen

Native Hawaiians: the Indigenous Polynesian people of the Hawaiian Islands (also called Kānaka Maoli)

Polynesian: Samoan, Tongan, Tahitian, Māori (New Zealand origin), Tokelauan, Niuean, Cook Islander

Micronesian: Chamorro (Guam/CNMI), Marshallese, Palauan, Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Kosraean, I-Kiribati

Melanesian: Fijian, Papua New Guinean, Solomon Islander, Ni-Vanuatu

Counternarratives

Counternarratives challenge and reshape dominant narratives that have historically marginalized certain groups. In AANHPI communities, counternarratives amplify voices and experiences that have been silenced or overlooked—through stories of labor and resistance, cultural pride, or everyday joy. By presenting alternative stories that reflect the full humanity of AANHPI people, counternarratives expose the biases and assumptions that underlie systemic racism and invite students to see themselves and their communities as agents of change.

Scholar Rudine Sims Bishop reminds us that books and stories can serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors—mirrors that reflect students' own identities and experiences back to them, windows that offer views into the lives and experiences of others, and sliding glass doors that invite students to step into those worlds entirely. For AANHPI students, counternarratives are often the first mirrors they encounter in a classroom, and help students see how race, class, and power shape whose stories are centered and whose are ignored.

Healing Resistance

Healing Resistance - A Radically Different Response to Harm by Kazu Haga
reclaims and modernizes the principles of Kingian Nonviolence, offering a practical

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guide for activists and individuals to address conflict and systemic harm through personal and social transformation. For educators, this framework offers a way to help students understand how AANHPI communities have responded to harm not just through protest, but through joy, healing, and the building of beloved community.

Some key concepts:

- Principled Nonviolence: Moves beyond simply "not using violence" to a proactive practice of building beloved community
- Personal and Social Transformation: Individual healing and societal change are interconnected; nonviolence is a tool for both
- Beyond Protest: Addresses the need for a deeper, more resilient approach to social change grounded in daily practice
- Restorative Justice: Integrates principles of restorative justice to repair harm and restore relationships, even in the face of deep conflict

Eight Pillars of Joy

The Dalai Lama once explained, "Joy is resilient, enduring happiness. It is finding the silver lining in the darkest of times." The Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu have both been leaders and advocates for social justice in their own communities and around the world. While these two men serve as models of strong spiritual leaders of color, their practices can support the analysis of AANHPI joy and resilience. The Eight Pillars of Joy by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu help identify specific qualities evident in the actions and decisions one makes daily, even during tumultuous times.

There are four qualities of the mind and four qualities of the heart:

- Perspective, Humility, Humor, Acceptance
- Forgiveness, Gratitude, Compassion, Generosity

Introduction to Asian American Pop Culture

AANHPI representation in popular culture has grown remarkably over the last decade. Where mainstream media once offered few authentic portrayals of AANHPI lives, we're now seeing stories that honor the full diversity, complexity, and joy of these communities. This representation matters deeply—for AANHPI students, it offers mirrors that reflect their own identities and experiences, and for all students, it opens windows into lives and worlds they may not otherwise encounter in a classroom.

This representation is also an act of self-determination. When AANHPI artists, athletes, chefs, writers, and entrepreneurs claim space in popular culture, they're reshaping the stories told about their communities on their own terms. As you explore the figures below, consider how each one embodies joy, resilience, and

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self-determination in their own field. The individuals highlighted here represent just a starting point—a few notable voices among many. We encourage you to seek out additional AANHPI figures in fields that matter to you and your students, and to bring those discoveries into your classroom.

Entertainment – Movies

- *KPop Demon Hunters* (2025) – A Netflix animated musical urban fantasy film from Sony Pictures Animation about a world-renowned K-pop girl group, Huntrix, who lead double lives as supernatural demon hunters.
- *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) – An acclaimed absurdist sci-fi comedy-drama starring Michelle Yeoh as Evelyn Wang, an exhausted immigrant laundromat owner who must navigate parallel-universe versions of herself and harness their abilities to save the multiverse from a powerful, destructive being.

Music and Comedy

- Ruby Ibarra – Filipina-American rapper and activist blending hip-hop with Filipino identity and social justice themes.
- Ali Wong – Chinese-Vietnamese-American stand-up comedian and actress, known for her Netflix specials and the hit series *Beef*.

Writers

- Alice Wong – Asian-American disability rights activist and writer dedicated to amplifying the voices and experiences of the disabled community. Her career focuses on challenging systemic ableism through storytelling, advocacy, and community organizing.
- Amy Tan – Chinese-American novelist celebrated for *The Joy Luck Club*, exploring mother-daughter bonds across cultures.
- Ocean Vuong – Vietnamese-American poet and author whose lyrical work explores war, queerness, and immigrant identity.
- Carlos Bulosan – Filipino-American author of *America Is in the Heart*, a landmark account of immigrant labor and racial injustice.
- Jhumpa Lahiri – Indian-American author whose debut short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000, making her the first South Asian recipient of the award.
- Kao Kalia Yang – One of the most celebrated Hmong-American authors, known for her memoirs *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* and *The Song Poet*, and whose work inspired the first-ever Hmong opera.

Sports

- Jeremy Lin – First American of Chinese/Taiwanese descent to play in the NBA; sparked the viral "Linsanity" phenomenon in 2012.
- Apolo Anton Ohno – Most decorated American Winter Olympian of his time, winning eight medals in short-track speed skating.
- Chloe Kim – Korean-American snowboarder and two-time Olympic gold medalist in the halfpipe.

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- Manny Pacquiao – Filipino boxing legend and eight-division world champion, one of the greatest fighters in the sport's history.
- Alyssa Liu – Chinese-American figure skater and three-time U.S. National Champion who competed at the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Business and Entrepreneurship

- Roy Choi – Korean-American chef who revolutionized street food by founding Kogi BBQ, the pioneering Los Angeles Korean taco truck.
- Adrienne Borlongan – Filipino-American founder of the Los Angeles ice cream shop Wanderlust Creamery, known for globally inspired, Asian-flavored scoops.
- Padma Lakshmi – Indian-American actress, model, TV host, and cookbook author, widely known as the host of *Top Chef* and an advocate for endometriosis awareness.
- Lisa Su – Taiwanese-American CEO of AMD, who is widely credited with turning the company around and making it a major competitor in the semiconductor industry. Frequently cited as one of the most influential women in tech.
- Indra Nooyi – Indian-American former CEO of PepsiCo, who led the company for 12 years and is known for her "Performance with Purpose" philosophy, which links business success to social responsibility.

Visual Arts

- Yayoi Kusama – Japanese artist and one of the world's most recognized living artists, famed for her immersive polka-dot infinity rooms.
- Pacita Abad – Filipino-American artist known for her bold, colorful "trapunto" paintings—vibrant, quilted canvases stuffed and embellished with mirrors, beads, shells, and buttons. Over a 30-year career, she created more than 4,500 works exhibited across 70 countries.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Bishop, Rudine Sims. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1990. Available via NCTE: <https://ncte.org/blog/2016/02/windows-mirrors-sliding-doors/>

DuCros, Faustina M., et al. "Asian Americans and Pacific islanders on TV." *Contexts* 17.4 (2018): 12-17.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1536504218812863>

Rodríguez, Noreen Naseem, and Sohyun An. "Perspectives on Practice: Celebrating AAPI Heritage Month Is Not Enough: A Guide to Centering Asian American Histories and Narratives." *Language Arts*, vol. 101, no. 5, 1 May 2024, pp. 350–357,

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<https://publicationsncte.org/content/journals/10.58680/la20241015350?crawler=true.10.58680/la20241015350>.

Resources

Overview for AANHPI Month (May)

[AAPI Heritage Month: Rise, a Pop History of Asian America](#)

Eight Pillars of Joy

[The 8 Pillars of Joy According to the Dalai Lama | by Nina Vinot | Medium](#)

Futures and Foundations Digital Textbook

[Asian American Popular Culture](#)

[An Introduction to Asian American Popular Culture](#)

[Asian Americans and the Moving Image, Part 1: Film and Television](#)

[Asian Americans and the Moving Image, Part 2: Media Activism, Community Advocacy, and New Hollywood](#)

[Asian Americans in Music, Part 1: Folk, Traditional, Jazz, and Classical](#)

[Asian Americans in Music, Part 2: Pop, Rock, and Hip Hop](#)

Additional Modules

Pacific Islanders

[PIs in Popular Culture](#)

Filipinx Americans

[Ruby Ibarra's Jacket](#)

Indian Americans

[Indian Culture](#)

Korean Americans

[Korean Americans and Hallyu since 2000](#)

Laotian Americans

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Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this microcredential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

Suggested word count: 250-350 words

Please don't include any information that could identify you to reviewers.

Please answer all of the following questions:

1. Describe your school community. What grade level and subject do you teach? Include any relevant demographics or learning considerations, such as multilingual learners, IEP/504 supports, age range, or general classroom context, that help reviewers understand your teaching environment.
2. Why did you choose this microcredential on AAPNHI Joy? Share a specific reason or instructional challenge that motivated you.
3. What professional growth goals or student outcomes do you hope to achieve by completing this microcredential? Provide at least one concrete example of how you hope this will impact your teaching or students.

Passing: Completely answers each of these questions using personal examples. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this microcredential, please submit the following four artifacts as evidence of your learning. See the Rubric for the passing requirements.

Please don't include any information that will identify you or your students to reviewers.

Artifact 1: Personal Reflection on Joy and Sustainability

Before you can help students connect with the joy and self-determination expressed by AANHPI artists, athletes, writers, and entrepreneurs, it helps to examine your own relationship with those same qualities. The AANHPI figures you'll explore in this module communicate joy not as a performance, but as a practice—something cultivated deliberately in the face of challenge. As an educator, your ability to recognize and honor that in their work is deepened when you've reflected on how you sustain joy in your own life.

Using this [template](#) based on the Dalai Lama's Eight Pillars of Joy, reflect honestly on how you, as an educator, create joy and sustainability in your own life. This worksheet is for personal use—your responses are private and will not be submitted or evaluated.

Once you've completed the worksheet, create a document and respond to the following reflection prompts:

- Which pillar surprised you most, and why?
- Which pillar feels most relevant to your work with students right now?
- What's one intention you're carrying into your classroom as a result of this reflection? Include a specific example of how you might put this into practice.

The preferred format for submission is a PDF. If you choose to submit a link to an online document, please ensure that the sharing settings allow anyone with the link to view.

Artifact 2: AANHPI Curriculum Audit

Representation in curriculum isn't just about adding diverse names to a reading list; it's about examining whose stories are centered, whose are absent, and what messages those choices send to students. This audit invites you to take an honest look at one unit, course, or subject area you currently teach through the lens of AANHPI representation.

Using the prompts below, examine your existing curriculum materials—texts, media, examples, figures referenced, cultural touchstones—and respond to each:

- What AANHPI voices, figures, or perspectives are currently present in this unit or course?
- Where are the gaps? What's absent or underrepresented?
- Are the AANHPI representations that do exist authentic and complex, or do they rely on stereotypes or a single narrative?
- What's one concrete change you could make to better reflect the joy, self-determination, and diversity of AANHPI communities?

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Upload your completed audit as a document. The preferred format for submission is a PDF. If you choose to submit a link to an online document, please ensure that the sharing settings allow anyone with the link to view.

Artifact 3: Resource List of Key AANHPI Modern Figures

Using the attached [template](#), compile a resource list of influential modern AANHPI figures for your students to use as a starting point for their own research. The method components include a list of figures to get you started; we encourage you to go beyond this list and explore figures relevant to your own students and community. As you build your list, consider your content area—a music teacher might explore AANHPI figures across genres and eras, an art teacher might focus on different forms and movements, and an ELA teacher might prioritize authors, poets, or spoken-word artists. The goal is a resource that feels genuinely useful in your specific classroom context.

Your resource list must include:

- At least 15 figures, representing a range of AANHPI communities and fields, with an emphasis on those most relevant to your content area and/or students
- At least one linked resource per figure
- A brief rationale for each figure explaining why you chose them and how they embody joy, resilience, and self-determination in their own field

Upload your completed resource list as a document. The preferred format for submission is a PDF. If you choose to submit a link to an online document, please ensure that the sharing settings allow anyone with the link to view.

NOTE: *The template has an example for you to follow.*

Artifact 4: Three Samples of Student One-Pagers on Key AANHPI Modern Figures

Integrate a mini-unit or lesson into your curriculum that celebrates AANHPI joy and resilience. Discuss counternarratives and healing methods for embodying joy, then have students use the Resource List of Key AANHPI Modern Figures you created in Artifact 3 to research one key AANHPI figure.

Before beginning, create a one-pager template for your students that includes the following elements:

- Name of AANHPI figure
- Key dates
- Photo of the figure
- Summary of their work
- Impact on AANHPI communities

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- Key quotes
- Connection to AANHPI joy, resilience, and self-determination with specific examples
- A personal reflection: What does this figure's story inspire in you? How does their example connect to your own experience of joy or resilience?

You may create your template as a Word document or Google Doc, or using a tool such as Canva or Google Slides. Upload three completed student one-pagers as evidence of your lesson.

The preferred format for submission is a PDF. If you choose to submit a link to an online document, please ensure that the sharing settings allow anyone with a link to view. NOTE: Please ensure that no student names or identifying information are visible in your submission.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Personal Reflection on Joy and Sustainability	All three prompts are answered with complete explanations and at least one specific example. Responses clearly connect the educator's reflection to their classroom practice. Writing is organized and easy to understand.	All three prompts are answered, but example(s) are vague or missing. The connection to classroom practice is present but underdeveloped.	Not all prompts are answered. Responses lack detail, specific examples, or alignment with the activity's goals.
Artifact 2: Curriculum Audit	The audit demonstrates a thorough and honest examination of the candidate's curriculum, identifying specific AANHPI voices or perspectives that are present and naming concrete gaps. The candidate critically evaluates the quality of existing representation—not just its presence—and proposes a specific, actionable change grounded in the module's themes of joy,	The audit addresses most prompts but lacks depth or specificity in places. Gaps or existing representation may be identified in general terms rather than with concrete examples. The proposed change is present but may be vague or loosely connected to AANHPI representation as explored in the module.	The audit is incomplete, surface-level, or doesn't meaningfully engage with the curriculum prompts. Gaps or existing representation are not clearly identified, and/or no actionable change is proposed.

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	self-determination, and authentic portrayal.		
Artifact 3: Resource List of Key AANHPI Modern Figures	Includes 15+ figures representing AANHPI communities and fields. Each entry includes at least one linked resource and a rationale that connects the figure to joy, resilience, and self-determination. Resource list is clearly organized, follows the template, and is ready to hand directly to students.	Includes 15 figures representing AANHPI communities and fields. Rationales are present but vague or fail to connect to joy, resilience, and self-determination. List mostly follows the template and is usable, with minor gaps or formatting issues.	Fewer than 15 figures and/or little diversity in community or field representation. Rationales are missing or don't connect to the micro-credential's themes. List doesn't follow the template, is incomplete, or would be difficult for students to use.
Artifact 4: Three Samples of Student One-Pagers on Key AANHPI Modern Figures	All three one-pagers include every required element (name, key dates, photo, summary, AANHPI impact, quotes, and personal reflection) with accuracy and detail. Each one-pager clearly connects the figure to AANHPI joy, resilience, and self-determination through specific examples.	Most required elements are present across all three one-pagers, with minor gaps. Some connection to AANHPI joy, resilience, and self-determination is evident but inconsistent or underdeveloped.	Multiple required elements are missing or inaccurate across one or more one-pagers. Content is surface-level with little to no connection to AANHPI joy, resilience, and self-determination.

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Part 3 Reflection

300-500 words

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this microcredential.

Completely answer the following questions about your experience in completing this microcredential. Your answers must not include identifiable information about your students or yourself.

1. Out of the four artifacts you completed, which was the most meaningful to your professional growth and why?
2. What are your plans to extend your teaching and learning about AANHPI joy and self-determination?
3. How has this microcredential inspired you to counter one of your personal or cultural deficit narratives? How could you use the information in this microcredential to help your students counter their own or their culture's deficit narrative? Name one way you will make classroom materials more affirming so students can see themselves as capable and valued.

Passing: The educator thoroughly reflects on learning and the submitted artifacts, including specific details and organized writing.