

## Introduction

Rose Ann Torres, Alison Lam

Across the shifting political, cultural, and ecological terrains of the twenty-first century, Asian diasporic communities in Canada and the broader Americas inhabit worlds defined by movement and constraint, aspiration and exclusion, recognition and erasure. Migration today unfolds within a global landscape marked by pandemics, intensifying geopolitical rivalries, climate displacement, digital hyper-connectivity, and resurgent racial nationalisms. Within this context, Asian diasporas are neither marginal nor monolithic; they are central actors in shaping the social, political, and ethical contours of contemporary life in the Americas.

This volume begins from a critical premise: that Asian diasporic experiences cannot be reduced to singular narratives of success, suffering, or assimilation. Instead, they must be understood as layered, relational, and historically situated formations shaped by colonialism, racial capitalism, migration regimes, gendered labour systems, and digital publics. Migration is not merely the crossing of national borders; it is the crossing of epistemic worlds, cultural imaginaries, racialized scripts, and intimate geographies of belonging. It is as much about emotional landscapes and intergenerational memory as it is about policy frameworks and labour markets.

The chapters gathered here illuminate Asian diasporic life as an unfolding process of negotiation between what is inherited and what is reimagined, between state recognition and community affirmation, between vulnerability and resistance. They speak across differences, Chinese Jamaicans, Muslim immigrants, Tamil Canadians, South Asians, Filipinas, Asian 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, im/migrant, and Asian immigrant adolescents yet converge around a shared commitment: to interrogate how power shapes diasporic existence and how diasporic communities reshape power in return.

At stake is not only how we understand migration, but how we envision justice. What does belonging mean in settler colonial states? How do racialized migrants navigate inclusion within nations built upon Indigenous dispossession? How does digital life reshape diasporic intimacy and identity? And how might intersectional, transnational, and decolonial frameworks offer more expansive possibilities for solidarity?

This volume invites readers to move beyond static models of integration or multicultural celebration and toward a deeper reckoning with structural inequity, relational accountability, and collective futurity.

### **I. Diasporic Identity as Fluid, Layered, and Interdependent**

Identity in diasporic contexts is never singular. It is forged in tension and translation, in dialogue between ancestral memory and contemporary belonging. Several chapters in this collection demonstrate how Asian diasporic subjects inhabit identities that are hybrid, situational, and relational rather than fixed or essential.

Lisa Roach's examination of Chinese Jamaican immigrants reveals identity as a dynamic interplay of heritage, racialization, and local belonging. Chinese Jamaicans in Canada navigate a

triadic cultural matrix, Chinese ancestry, Jamaican cultural formation, and Canadian multicultural discourse, each of which confers recognition while also imposing expectations. Their identities are neither additive nor hierarchical; rather, they are negotiated through everyday practices, language, foodways, family histories, and racial encounters.

Similarly, the chapters on South Asian migrants, Filipinas, and Asian immigrant youth foreground identity as a living process. These communities move between inherited cultural scripts and new social norms, often navigating generational tensions around gender roles, sexuality, and professional aspiration. Identity here is not about preserving authenticity but about cultivating coherence amid multiplicity.

Collectively, these contributions challenge assimilationist paradigms and instead position diasporic identity as creative, adaptive, and interdependent formed through relationships with communities, institutions, and broader political structures.

## **II. Migration as a Site of Both Vulnerability and Power**

Migration carries profound ambivalence. It offers safety, opportunity, and mobility, yet also exposes migrants to precarity, surveillance, and racialized exclusion. This volume resists portraying migrants as either heroic strivers or passive victims; instead, it situates migration as a complex field of power.

Dr. Anila Zainub's work on Muslim immigrant integration reveals how Islamophobia, geopolitical anxieties, and economic restructuring shape settlement trajectories. Highly skilled Muslim immigrants encounter systemic barriers that render their credentials suspect and their belonging conditional. Yet they also build networks, institutions, and solidarities that reconfigure the very spaces that marginalize them.

Sarah Alam's ethnographic exploration of South Asians in the post-pandemic era demonstrates how global crises, COVID-19, inflation, labour instability have intensified existing vulnerabilities. The pandemic functioned as a magnifying lens, exposing structural inequities embedded within immigration status, racial hierarchy, and labour segmentation. At the same time, communities mobilized mutual aid, transnational care networks, and digital platforms to navigate uncertainty.

Migration, in these accounts, emerges not as a one-time event but as an ongoing negotiation. It is a process of adapting to structural constraints while simultaneously generating new forms of agency and belonging.

## **III. The Intersections of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and State Power**

Intersectionality operates as the connective tissue of this volume. Asian diasporic lives unfold at the crossroads of race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and immigration status. These intersecting axes of identity shape both exposure to marginalization and possibilities for resistance.

Avi Kuttner's chapter on Asian 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences illuminates the "double exclusion" faced within both queer spaces and racialized communities. Yet from this marginality emerges a radical longing for wholeness, a refusal to fragment the self to fit into siloed movements. The yearning for integrated belonging becomes a site of political imagination.

The narrative confronting the "Asian docility myth" similarly exposes how racial stereotypes function as technologies of discipline within academia and beyond. By recounting experiences of pandemic-era xenophobia and institutional silencing, the author reframes voice as

resistance. Speaking, in this context, becomes an act of defiance against racialized expectations of compliance.

#### **IV. Colonialism, Environmental Racism, and Diasporic Complicity**

A particularly vital intervention of this volume lies in its engagement with settler colonialism and environmental injustice. Asian diasporas in Canada and the Americas are positioned within lands structured by Indigenous dispossession. This raises urgent ethical and political questions about complicity, solidarity, and accountability.

Vanessa Vigneswaramoorthy's theorization of Tamil-Canadian settler colonialism challenges celebratory narratives of multicultural inclusion. It asks what it means for communities fleeing state violence to align knowingly or unknowingly with another settler state. The chapter urges diasporic communities to consider how struggles for safety and recognition might reproduce colonial logics unless grounded in Indigenous solidarity.

The discussion of environmental racism and colonial enclosure, including reflections on spaces such as Kowloon Walled City, demonstrates how colonial governance has historically contained and pathologized Asian communities. These analyses underscore that colonialism is not an historical artifact but an ongoing structure shaping land, policy, and belonging.

#### **V. Rewriting Narratives: From Victimhood to Agency**

While this volume does not shy away from documenting racism and exclusion, it firmly resists narratives that reduce Asian migrants to objects of suffering. Instead, it foregrounds agency, creativity, and futurity.

The chapter on Filipina transnational narratives reframes dominant depictions of Filipinas as docile caregivers. Through interviews and storytelling, Filipina women articulate strategies of subtle resistance, redefining power in domestic spaces, building informal networks of care, and asserting dignity within constrained labour markets. Agency here is not always loud or visible; it is woven into everyday acts of survival and assertion.

Youth-centered research on social media further illustrates how Asian adolescents negotiate beauty standards and digital pressures. While algorithms amplify anxiety, young people also reinterpret, remix, and critique these digital norms. Resistance takes shape in humor, community formation, and digital storytelling.

Across chapters, agency is neither romanticized nor detached from structural realities. It is understood as relational, strategic, and embedded within broader systems of power.

#### **VI. Toward New Frameworks of Belonging and Justice**

Taken together, these contributions offer more than empirical accounts; they propose new conceptual frameworks for understanding Asian diasporic life. They challenge the limits of multiculturalism, question integration as assimilation, and insist on intersectional and decolonial approaches to justice.

The volume asks:

- How is belonging negotiated within settler colonial states and transnational digital publics?
- What solidarities become possible when racial justice, queer liberation, migrant rights, and Indigenous sovereignty are considered together rather than separately?

- How might policy move beyond symbolic inclusion toward structural transformation?

Justice, in this volume, is not limited to representation. It entails rethinking immigration systems, labour protections, higher education practices, mental health frameworks, and digital governance. It requires listening to those positioned at the margins and recognizing their knowledge as foundational rather than supplemental.

### **Conclusion: A Collective Narrative of Becoming**

Asian diasporic communities are not peripheral to the story of the Americas, they are constitutive of it. Their histories illuminate the entanglements of colonialism, capitalism, migration, and resistance that define the hemisphere. Their present struggles and aspirations reveal emerging global realities where mobility is both hope and necessity, where identity is hybrid and evolving, and where racism adapts across contexts.

This volume offers a collective narrative of becoming: of communities crafting coherence amid displacement, forging solidarity amid fragmentation, and imagining futures rooted in justice and care. It calls upon scholars, activists, policymakers, and readers to move beyond passive observation and toward ethical engagement.

To cross worlds is not only to migrate; it is to transform. And to claim belonging is not only to seek recognition; it is to participate in reshaping the conditions under which belonging becomes possible.

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Navigating Dual Heritage: Identity Formation and Cultural Adaptation of Chinese Jamaicans in the Caribbean and North America**

By Lisa Roach

This chapter offers a nuanced exploration of the Chinese Jamaican diaspora, foregrounding identity formation as an ongoing, relational, and historically layered process. The migration of Chinese communities to Jamaica dates back to the nineteenth century, shaped by colonial labour demands and transoceanic trade networks. Over generations, Chinese Jamaicans cultivated distinctive hybrid identities rooted in Chinese ancestry and Jamaican cultural life. Contemporary migration to Canada and other parts of North America adds yet another layer of negotiation, as individuals navigate multicultural policy frameworks, racial categorization, and diasporic belonging.

Drawing on Social Identity Theory, Acculturation Theory, and Hybrid Identity Theory, Roach conceptualizes identity not as a static inheritance but as an adaptive process mediated by context. Through qualitative interviews and community-based narratives, the chapter traces how participants articulate belonging across three interlocking cultural spheres: Chinese heritage, Jamaican national identity, and Canadian multicultural citizenship. Rather than experiencing these as mutually exclusive, many participants describe a fluid, situational identification that shifts depending on social environment, generational location, and racial encounter.

The chapter also examines the role of racialization in shaping identity negotiation. In Canada, Chinese Jamaicans may be read primarily as “Asian,” erasing Caribbean cultural belonging; in other contexts, they may be perceived as culturally Jamaican yet racially ambiguous.

These layered readings produce both friction and creativity. Participants recount experiences of cultural misrecognition alongside moments of cultural pride and community affirmation.

By foregrounding intersectionality, the chapter illuminates how gender, class mobility, generational status, and migration history shape identity differently within the same community. Younger generations often articulate more fluid transnational affiliations, while older migrants emphasize cultural preservation and intergenerational continuity. Ultimately, this chapter challenges binary understandings of diaspora and contributes to broader debates on hybridity, multiculturalism, and belonging in settler societies.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Muslim Immigrant Integration in Canada: Challenges and Possibilities**

By Dr. Anila Zainub

In an era marked by intensifying Islamophobia, securitized migration regimes, and geopolitical polarization, this chapter critically examines the integration experiences of highly skilled Muslim immigrants in Canada. While Canada is frequently positioned as a model multicultural nation, Muslim immigrants continue to encounter structural barriers that complicate settlement trajectories and social inclusion.

Building on longitudinal qualitative research and policy analysis, Zainub interrogates dominant integration paradigms that equate success with assimilation. The chapter situates Muslim immigrant experiences within broader contexts of racial capitalism, labour market credentialism, and post-9/11 security discourses. Highly educated immigrants often arrive with substantial professional expertise, yet encounter systemic deskilling, employment discrimination, and implicit bias shaped by racialized perceptions of Islam.

The analysis foregrounds the interplay between structural constraints and immigrant agency. Participants describe navigating workplace exclusion, public scrutiny of visible religious practices, and the burden of representing Islam in everyday interactions. At the same time, they actively cultivate professional networks, faith-based community organizations, and interfaith collaborations that foster belonging and collective resilience.

Particular attention is given to generational dynamics and gendered experiences. Muslim women who wear hijab report heightened visibility and surveillance, yet also articulate faith as a source of strength and public presence. The chapter argues that integration must be reconceptualized as a reciprocal process requiring institutional transformation rather than unilateral adaptation.

By centering Muslim immigrant voices, this chapter reframes integration as an ongoing negotiation shaped by power, policy, and community solidarity. It calls for reimagining pluralism beyond symbolic tolerance toward substantive equity and structural justice.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Fighting the Asian Docility Myth: Finding My Own Voice in the Academy**

By Jasmine Pham

This deeply reflective chapter interrogates the racialized construction of Asian “docility” as both stereotype and disciplinary mechanism. The myth of Asian compliance quiet, hardworking,

apolitical functions as a racial script that simultaneously erases difference and enforces containment. Through personal narrative and critical analysis, the author situates this myth within longer histories of Orientalism, model minority discourse, and pandemic-era xenophobia.

The chapter begins with a racist encounter in a Toronto grocery store during the COVID-19 pandemic, tracing how such moments reverberate into academic spaces. Universities, often imagined as sites of intellectual freedom, reproduce hierarchies of race and voice. Asian scholars frequently confront expectations of silence, emotional restraint, and gratitude for inclusion. Speaking critically can be interpreted as aggression; remaining silent reinforces invisibility.

Drawing on critical race theory and autoethnography, the author reflects on moments of professional marginalization, microaggression, and self-censorship. Yet the narrative is not solely diagnostic. It documents the deliberate cultivation of voice as resistance through teaching, mentorship, scholarship, and public engagement.

This chapter contributes to scholarship on racialized labour within higher education and offers a powerful meditation on epistemic justice. It challenges institutions to confront how diversity rhetoric can coexist with subtle forms of silencing. Ultimately, reclaiming voice becomes both personal survival strategy and collective intervention.

#### **Chapter 4**

#### **Yearning for Wholeness: Asian 2SLGBTQIA+ Experiences of Intersectional Marginalization as a Gateway for Systemic Change**

By Avi Kuttner

This chapter positions Asian 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences as critical sites for rethinking intersectional justice. Asian queer individuals often confront racism within mainstream queer spaces and homophobia or transphobia within racialized communities. This “double exclusion” generates isolation but also fosters innovative forms of solidarity and critique.

Drawing on feminist intersectionality theory, queer of color critique, and Asian diasporic scholarship, Kuttner conceptualizes “yearning for wholeness” as both affective experience and political strategy. Through qualitative interviews and community engagement, participants describe navigating fragmented belonging modulating identity across contexts to ensure safety and recognition.

The chapter argues that Asian 2SLGBTQIA+ activism disrupts siloed justice movements by insisting that race, sexuality, gender identity, and migration status cannot be disentangled. Community-led initiatives mutual aid networks, digital storytelling platforms, and intergenerational dialogues offer alternative models of liberation grounded in relational care.

Rather than framing marginalization solely as deficit, the chapter highlights how intersectional positioning generates epistemic insight. Asian queer communities expose structural blind spots in both anti-racist and LGBTQ+ advocacy. Their yearning for integrated belonging becomes a blueprint for coalition-based systemic change.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Displaced/Displacing: Theorizing Tamil-Canadian Settler Colonialism**

By Vanessa Vigneswaramoorthy

This chapter engages a provocative and necessary inquiry: how might diasporic communities fleeing violence become implicated in settler colonial structures? Focusing on Tamil Canadians, the chapter examines how multicultural inclusion and political participation intersect with Indigenous dispossession.

Drawing on settler colonial theory and diaspora studies, Vigneswaramoorthy interrogates the celebratory narrative of Canada as humanitarian refuge. Tamil migration, shaped by Sri Lanka's civil war, reflects legitimate claims to safety and justice. Yet settlement within Canada unfolds on Indigenous lands governed by colonial legal frameworks.

Through analysis of political rhetoric, diasporic activism, and policy discourse, the chapter introduces the concept of Tamil-Canadian settler colonialism not as accusation, but as analytical lens. It asks how diasporic claims to belonging might unintentionally reinforce settler sovereignty.

The chapter calls for relational accountability and Indigenous solidarity, arguing that diasporic justice movements must situate themselves within broader decolonial struggles. It contributes a crucial intervention into conversations about multiculturalism, complicity, and ethical belonging.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Equality or Equity? Understanding Immigrant Student Needs in Canadian Higher Education**

By Alison D'Cruz

As immigrant enrollment in Canadian universities rises, higher education institutions increasingly function as sites of settlement and social mobility. Yet policy frameworks often conflate equality with equity, overlooking the distinct needs of immigrant learners.

Drawing on demographic data, institutional policy analysis, and student narratives, this chapter critiques standardized support models that assume uniform student experiences. Immigrant students may navigate language barriers, credential recognition challenges, financial precarity, and intergenerational responsibilities alongside academic expectations.

The chapter distinguishes equality (identical treatment) from equity (context-responsive support). It argues for holistic frameworks addressing mental health, career integration, mentorship, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Universities must move beyond access metrics to examine retention, belonging, and long-term outcomes.

By centering immigrant student voices, this chapter contributes to migration scholarship and higher education reform, advocating for systemic transformation rather than superficial accommodation.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Influences of Social Media on Adolescents' ideas of Physical Appearance Research with Children and Young People**

By Shaoyuan Zhang

This chapter explores how social media shapes Asian female adolescents' perceptions of beauty, self-worth, and belonging in Toronto. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok circulate algorithm-driven aesthetics that privilege Eurocentric features while commodifying racialized difference.

Using participatory qualitative methods, Zhang foregrounds youth voices in interpreting digital culture. Participants describe navigating comparison pressures, internalized colorism, and body surveillance amplified by filters and influencer culture. Social media operates as both mirror and magnifier of racialized beauty hierarchies.

Yet the chapter also highlights youth agency. Adolescents engage critically with online content, curate counter-narratives, and form supportive peer communities. Digital literacy emerges as a crucial site of intervention.

By situating adolescent well-being within digital capitalism and racial formation, this chapter calls for culturally responsive education and policy that addresses online mental health risks without pathologizing youth engagement.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Peace, Security, and Employment: A South Asian Perspective of Life in Canada in the Post-Pandemic World**

By Sarah Alam

This ethnographic chapter situates South Asian migration within the destabilizing aftermath of COVID-19. Inflation, labour precarity, geopolitical tensions, and housing crises have reshaped settlement trajectories.

Through interviews and community observation, Alam documents how refugees, international students, and skilled migrants navigate intersecting uncertainties. Employment instability and rising living costs complicate aspirations of upward mobility. Participants describe balancing transnational obligations with local survival.

The chapter underscores resilience while refusing romanticization. Mutual aid networks, religious institutions, and digital communication sustain community cohesion. Yet systemic inequities persist.

Positioning South Asian experiences within global crises, the chapter contributes to scholarship on migration, labour, and post-pandemic recovery.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Im/migrants' Well-being in Canada: Navigating Acculturation and Racism in the Post-Pandemic Era**

By Mi Hee Park, Sumi Lee, Kyung Nam Kim, Yob Ha

This chapter examines Asian immigrant mental health through the intersecting lenses of acculturation, racial trauma, and pandemic intensification. Despite Canada's multicultural narrative, anti-Asian racism surged during COVID-19, compounding preexisting stressors.

Drawing on psychological research and survey data, the authors analyze generational differences in coping, identity negotiation, and discrimination exposure. First-generation immigrants often confront language and employment stress, while second-generation youth navigate identity fragmentation and peer racialization.

The pandemic serves as magnifier rather than anomaly, revealing structural inequities embedded within healthcare access and social support systems. The chapter calls for culturally grounded mental health frameworks integrating anti-racist practice.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Reconceptualizing Victimhood and Resiliency: Transnational Narratives of Filipinas in Canada**

By Rose Ann Torres & Dionisio Nyaga

This chapter challenges reductive portrayals of Filipinas as passive caregivers within global labour chains. Drawing on interviews with thirty Filipinas in Toronto, Torres and Nyaga foreground women's narratives of agency, desire, and strategic resistance.

Participants recount experiences of deskilling, racialization, and gendered labour expectations. Yet they articulate nuanced understandings of power mobilizing kinship networks, remittance economies, faith communities, and everyday acts of refusal.

The chapter situates Filipina migration within global political economy while centering lived experience. It reframes resiliency not as individual endurance but as relational practice embedded within transnational care networks.

By reconceptualizing victimhood and agency, the chapter contributes to feminist migration scholarship and expands conversations on justice, dignity, and belonging.