

THE

REBEL YELLOW

MONTHLY

*Asians are done
optimizing for love
and that's OK*

*Let's ride the Fire
Horse!*

*Everybody is
Chinamaxxing*

*Is it time to "drop the
K" from K-pop?*

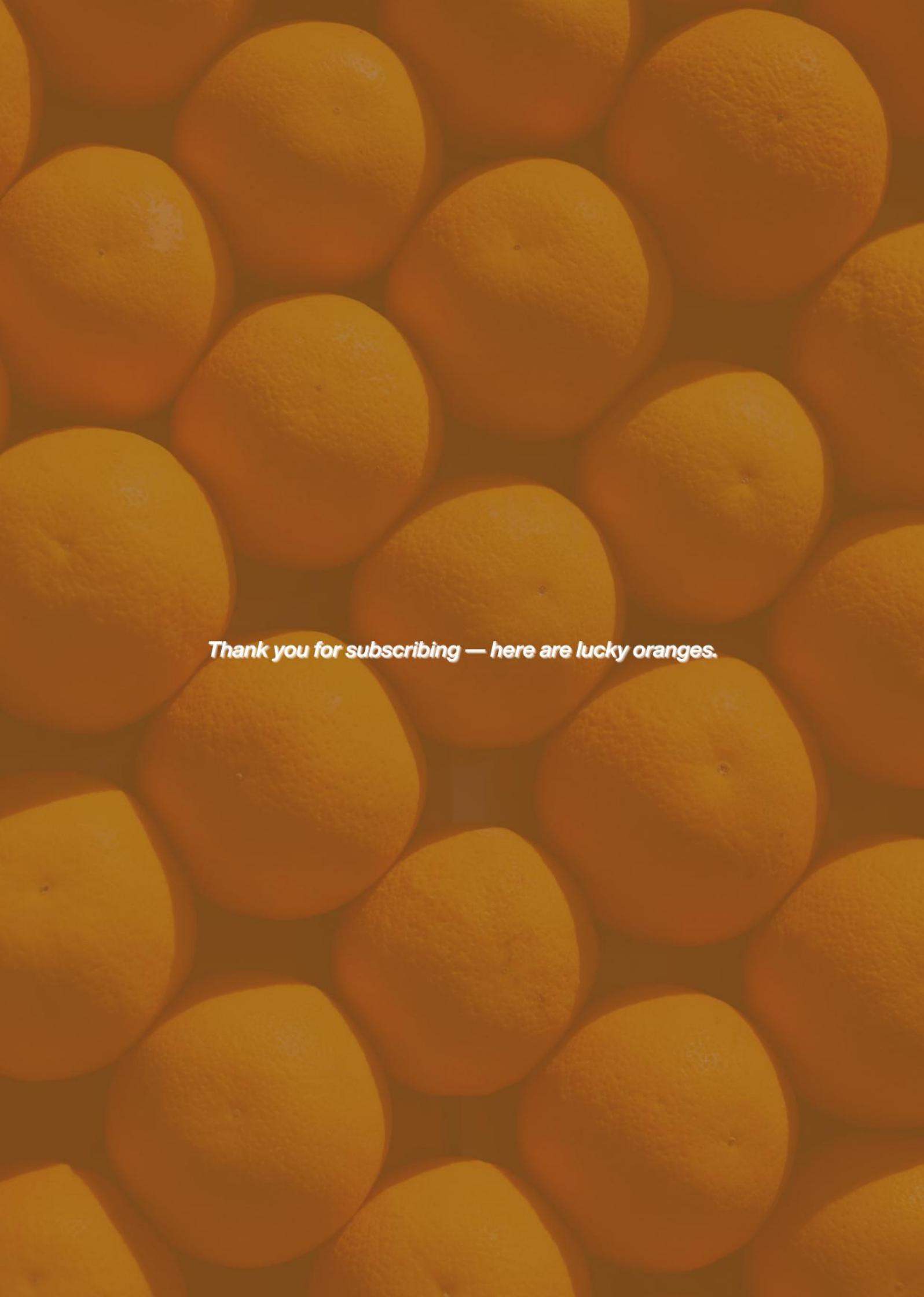
*The AAPI reality
after the 2026 State
of the Union*

and more...



ISSUE #2

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2026

The image features a dense, repeating pattern of bright orange citrus fruits, likely oranges or tangerines, filling the entire frame. The fruits are arranged in a somewhat regular grid but with slight offsets, creating a textured, vibrant background. The lighting is even, highlighting the natural texture of the fruit peels.

Thank you for subscribing — here are lucky oranges.



THE REBEL YELLOW

MONTHLY

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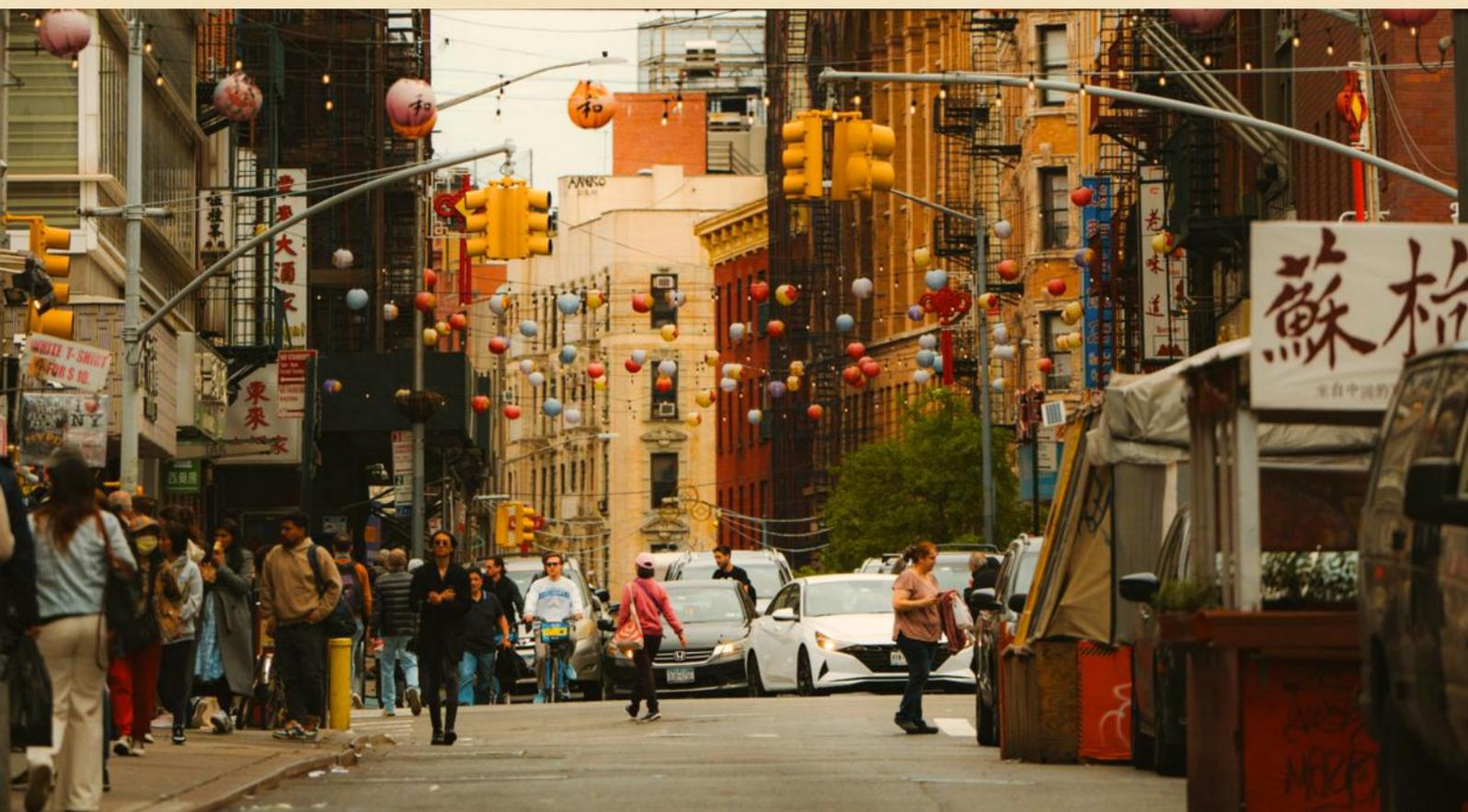
MICOL GUANZON



- 6** Editor's Note
- 7** Let's ride the Fire Horse
- 10** Everybody is Chinamaxxing
- 15** U.S. cities pressed forward with Lunar New Year celebrations amid immigration crackdown
- 17** Trump's immigration crackdown ends in Minnesota
- 19** The AAPI reality after the 2026 State of the Union
- 24** How a former Trump adviser is manufacturing a crisis to ban Chinese students
- 30** Chinese students remain under fire as universities yield to political pressure
- 32** The California tax fight spotlights how billionaires escape taxes
- 34** Former South Korean president sentenced to life in prison for insurrection

CONTENTS

- 36** Asians are done optimizing for love and that's OK
- 43** Is it time to “drop the K” from K-pop?
- 47** Nigel Ng defends Uncle Roger accent after J. Kenji López-Alt’s “yellowface” criticism
- 49** Can a landmark bury a controversy? Alexander Wang’s \$9.5 million bid for cultural absolution
- 53** Kim, Gu and Liu: The Asian American women who defined Milano Cortina 2026
- 58** Asian American Olympians’ nationality choices cast as “loyalty tests” by media: study
- 61** Minority births become the majority in the U.S. for the 1st time
- 63** Remembering Rev. Jesse Jackson
- 65** The Violence of Exclusion
- 72** Picks



Editor's Note

Happy Lunar New Year!

Welcome to the second issue of The Rebel Yellow Monthly, made possible by readers like you.

We want to express our gratitude and appreciation to The Asian American Foundation (TAAF) for their support in helping to keep our mission alive for the year by matching subscriber commitments. It's a tough time right now to be independent journalists that do not bend the knee to those in power, both political and corporate, and so we're thankful to all who read and support us.

In this issue, we explore the push to ban Chinese students from universities, growing Chinese soft power through the lens of "Chinamaxxing" and the symbolism behind the Year of the Fire Horse, among other stories. Also, congrats to Alysa Liu, Chloe Kim and Eileen Gu — we highlight the Asian American athletes who made Winter Olympic history here as well.

Lastly, if you're a writer or artist, consider submitting your work (it can be about anything) to be featured in The Rebel Yellow Monthly through crew@therebelyellow.com.

Sincerely,

Alan Van



Let's ride the Fire Horse

The Year of the Fire Horse is here, and if you choose to give in to what it demands, this rare cycle could be one of the most transformative of your lifetime.

We'll skip the zodiac predictions — there are tons of resources you can check out for these, each likely featuring an astrologist or feng shui expert with their own take. Instead, consider this a quick guide to making the most out of the year.

What's the "Fire Horse"?

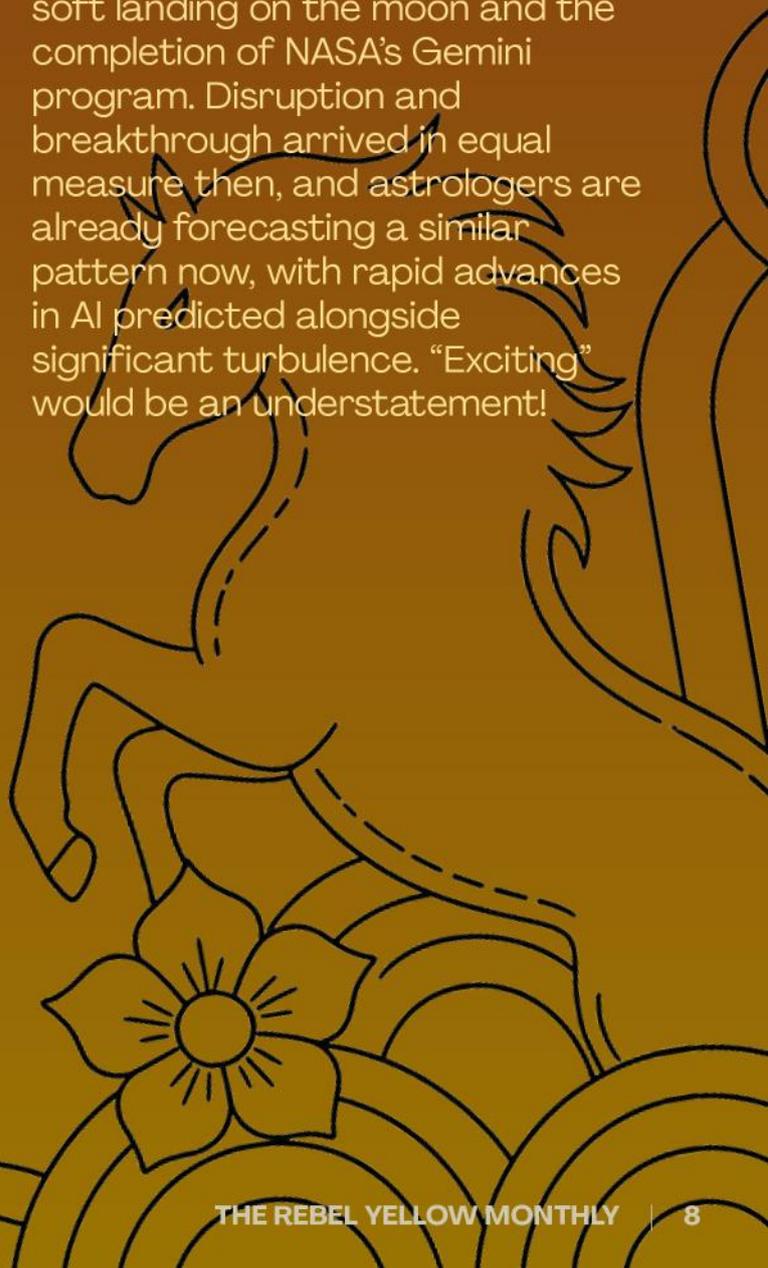
The Lunar New Year began on Feb. 17, opening an astrological pairing that comes around only once every six decades. For the uninitiated, Chinese astrology runs on a *ganzhi* cycle, a 60-year sequence built from 12 zodiac animals and five rotating elements. Within this system, the horse is a *yang* sign. Its energy is considered forceful, expansive and generative, and it represents grace, endurance and success. An old idiom puts it plainly: When the horse arrives, success follows.

This 2026, that horse arrives with fire layered on top of fire. The year's heavenly stem, *bing*, is a fire stem, and the horse's earthly branch, *wu*, is a fire element as well, producing what astrologers call a "double fire" year. Feng shui's ongoing "Period 9," a fire-dominant era running through 2043, adds yet another layer to an exceptionally fiery year.

General rules

Every Horse year carries a core tension between decisive action and reckless impulsiveness, and fire, you guessed it, intensifies it. Interestingly, the contrast with last year could not be sharper. Where 2025's Wood Snake called for caution and subtle, indirect progress, the Fire Horse demands bold, direct action.

Sixty years ago offers a useful preview. In 1966, the last *bing-wu* year, China's Cultural Revolution began and the Vietnam War escalated. Yet the same year brought the Soviet Union's first soft landing on the moon and the completion of NASA's Gemini program. Disruption and breakthrough arrived in equal measure then, and astrologers are already forecasting a similar pattern now, with rapid advances in AI predicted alongside significant turbulence. "Exciting" would be an understatement!



The background is a solid dark brown color. It features several decorative elements: two hanging lanterns with vertical lines and tassels, and several fans with radiating lines. The lanterns are positioned in the upper left and middle right. The fans are located in the lower right and bottom center.

Make the most out of it

A few weeks into the Fire Horse year, we already see a risk of letting the horse set the pace for us. This energy is relentless as it pulls people into overdrive and leaves them depleted well before the year is out. And so moving with intention instead of impulse is what makes the difference. Try to pick one meaningful goal and commit fully, or set a sustainable rhythm and let the year carry your best work forward. Focus is key.

Knowing where you stand zodiac-wise can also shape how you navigate the months ahead. Some say the Ox, Rat and Horse signs are likely to feel the year's friction most, while those born in Goat years are entering their luckiest stretch. But you see, whatever your sign, one truth holds: No year is inherently lucky or cursed, and leaning on yourself, your loved ones and your community is always the smartest move.

The Fire Horse runs through Feb. 6, 2027, when the Year of the Fire Goat takes the reins.

Everybody is Chinamaxxing

**(or why
your white
neighbor
is
suddenly
boiling
apples)**



On TikTok and Instagram, "being Chinese" has become something one can simply try on. Under hashtags like #newlychinese and "Chinamaxxing," users film themselves buying expensive fruits, doing the Asian squat and wearing slippers indoors. A familiar caption from one of the trend's proponents floats through comment sections: "You met me at a very Chinese time in my life," a riff on a line from the 1999 film "Fight Club."

The joke is that identity can be adopted through habit. The subtext is that China, long framed in the U.S. primarily as rival or threat, now circulates online as aesthetic or aspiration. What appears at first glance to be absurdist meme culture is unfolding at a moment of generational realignment, algorithmic exposure and geopolitical tension. The "becoming Chinese" trend is less about hot water than about who gets to define cultural cool, and what it means when the internet decides that "Chinese" is suddenly in.



From punchline to cultural signal

Sherry Zhu, a 23-year-old Chinese American creator, became a face of the trend by sharing childhood habits like wearing indoor slippers and drinking warm water. In one video, Zhu tells followers: "Tomorrow you're turning Chinese," adding, "And I know that sounds intimidating, but there is no point in fighting it now."

Zhu told The Wall Street Journal she initially viewed the concept as humor. "I thought that it would just be funny," she said. "Now people are more exposed to Chinese culture, and they want to learn more."

The meme reduces culture to ritual. Boiling apples, practicing qigong and using chopsticks stand in for transformation. Crystal Abidin, a professor at Curtin University, told The New York Times that this streamlined presentation makes the culture "palatable" and "accessible" to a broad audience.

Shaoyu Yuan, a professor at New York University, views the trend as a sign of "growing cultural cachet." He noted that the familiarity of these gestures is now "widespread enough to become widely 'meme-able.'" This shift suggests that China occupies a more intimate place in the Western digital imagination than it did a decade ago.

Why now?

The rise of "Chinamaxxing" coincided with political debates over TikTok in the U.S. as the threat of a U.S. ban in early 2025 prompted some American users to migrate to RedNote, a popular Chinese social media platform. There, so-called TikTok refugees encountered Chinese creators directly, exchanging recipes, language tips and glimpses of daily life.

This platform shift aligns with changing generational data. A 2023 study by researchers at Rutgers University and the Network Contagion Research Institute found that TikTok users, particularly heavy users, expressed more positive attitudes toward China's human rights record and were more likely to view China as a desirable travel destination.

Yuan cautioned that even if trends are not orchestrated by official channels, amplification matters. "Even if the trend is not coming from official Chinese channels, the distribution environment can still tilt what gets amplified," he said.

According to a 2025 Pew Research Center survey of 25 countries, favorable views of China have seen a modest increase to 36% as global confidence in President Xi Jinping rose to 25%. This shift occurs as confidence in the U.S. presidency declined sharply, leaving the gap in global trust between the two leaders at its narrowest point since 2020.

State approval, selective vision

Chinese officials have publicly welcomed the trend, with state media presenting it as evidence of rising global interest in Chinese culture and a "deepening" of Chinese cultural influence.

At a press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said he was "very glad to see that more and more foreign friends show interest in experiencing today's China." He cited official statistics showing that in 2025, inbound and outbound travel by foreign nationals surpassed 82 million, up 26.4% year on year.

But while Beijing has framed this trend, as evidence of rising soft power, the version of China circulating in meme form is highly curated. China's youth unemployment rate exceeds 15% and many young people face economic pressure and demanding work culture.

Professor Sun Fei of Michigan State University told the South China Morning Post that those embracing the trend "might overlook some of the internal challenges within Chinese society, yet these are the realities recognised and experienced by the Chinese public."

Diaspora whiplash

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a wave of Sinophobia was widely documented, with members of the Chinese diaspora reporting racism and avoidance of their communities and businesses. With "Chinamaxxing," customs that once marked Chinese Americans as foreign are now circulating online as wellness trends.

For Chinese Americans, the shift in tone can feel disorienting. Karen Lin, 32, who was born and raised in New York's Chinatown, told The Wall Street Journal that she initially felt encouraged. "All of a sudden, being Chinese is cool," she said. But she questioned the logic of self-declaration. "If I eat Mexican food, I'm not going to say I'm Mexican now," she added.

The internet may be at a "very Chinese time" right now, but for those who have long navigated pride and prejudice in equal measure, the time feels less like novelty and more like a reminder: culture can trend, but identity endures.

Writing for PureWow, editor Marissa Wu noted that when she participates in rituals that "should belong" to her, she gains no social capital. She expressed frustration that a qipao or a Tang jacket can make an Asian person appear "ethnic" in a negative sense while making a non-Asian creator appear "cool." As she noted, "A Westerner's enthusiasm should never be required to legitimize another culture."

The trap of digital visibility

Whether "Chinamaxxing" is a lasting cultural shift or simply the latest iteration of a digital "core" destined to be replaced by the next viral aesthetic remains to be seen. Still, this phenomenon serves as a warning for Asian Americans regarding the nature of digital belonging.

The sudden "cool" factor of traditional rituals provides a fleeting form of visibility that often disappears when the next trend arrives. Relying on an algorithm to validate heritage can create a false sense of acceptance that is as temporary as the platform itself.

Instead of being baited by pseudo acceptance driven by viral cycles, the real opportunity lies in converting this moment into something more durable. Lasting influence comes from community building and authentic representation rather than the short term fluctuations of internet trends.



U.S. cities pressed forward with Lunar New Year celebrations amid the immigration crackdown



Mayor Zohran Mamdani attends New York City's 28th Annual Lunar New Year Parade and Festival on March 1, 2026.

Major cities across the country welcomed the Year of the Horse with vibrant Lunar New Year festivities this month, even as the Trump administration's immigration crackdown cast a shadow over celebrations in many communities.

Culture goes on: The Lunar New Year began Feb. 17, launching a 15-day observance on the lunar calendar. Earlier in the month, Chicago held its Light Up Chinatown event, where Mayor Brandon Johnson declared, "Let this be a year of unity and strength as the year of the horse charges us to do." On the weekend of Feb. 15–16, Seattle hosted the 30th anniversary of Tet, the Vietnamese celebration of the Lunar New Year — one of the largest Tet events in the Pacific Northwest, headlined by Vietnamese performers Hồ Lệ Thu and the duo Trúc Linh & Trúc Lam. In Texas, Houston Botanic Garden's "Radiant Nature" showcased Chinese lantern installations through Feb. 22.

Major parades and cultural events continue through early March. New York City's parade through Chinatown is scheduled for March 1, with Lion Dance troupes moving from Mott Street and Canal Street toward Sara D. Roosevelt Park. On the West Coast, Los Angeles expanded its programming to 12 free events, which began Jan. 18 and continue through March 1. It features the 127th Golden Dragon Parade and East West Players' "Tam Tran Goes to Washington," a play centered on a UCLA student whose immigration status leads her to testify before Congress. In Minnesota, the Twin Cities Dumpling Feast, now in its fifth year, took place at Peking Garden Chinese Restaurant.

Why this matters: Asian American communities should not live in fear during this celebratory season. In January, federal immigration officers shot and killed two U.S. citizens, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, in Minneapolis. Another fatal shooting by federal agents occurred in Franklin Park, a Chicago suburb. These incidents came as the Trump administration deployed roughly 3,000 federal immigration agents into Minnesota by late January, though border czar Tom Homan indicated that approximately 700 would leave. The crackdown created an atmosphere of fear in Asian American communities, especially as agents went "door-to-door asking people where the Asian people live."

Despite these turbulent times, the celebrations continued. The Year of the Horse, specifically the Fire Horse this 2026, is believed to bring intense, transformative change — a symbolism that resonated amid the month's tensions. Chicago resident Edward Huang, for one, told WLS the celebration is "a reminder for us as immigrants to all stick together and to charge forward, as well, no matter what happens."



The Trump administration ended its controversial immigration operation in Minnesota, a weeks-long crackdown that claimed the lives of two U.S. citizens and interrupted those of thousands more.

What happened: White House border czar Tim Homan announced the decision at a news conference, saying, “I have proposed and President Trump has concurred that this surge operation conclude.” Under the so-called Operation Metro Surge, the administration deployed about 3,000 immigration officers into the state to target alleged fraud in government programs involving Somali residents. The crackdown resulted in more than 4,000 arrests, according to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Originally published in Issue 180 of The Rebel Yellow



Trump's immigration crackdown ends in Minnesota



About 2,000 agents remained as the drawdown continued in the days following the announcement. The announcement came as the Senate blocked a funding measure for the DHS, setting up a likely agency shutdown amid partisan disputes over enforcement reforms.

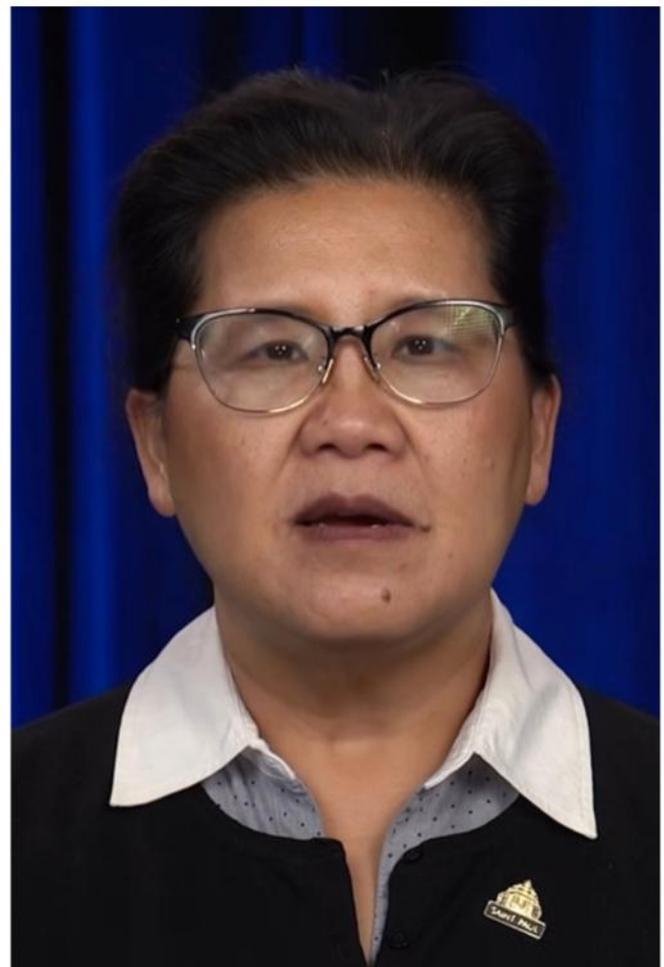
Mistakes made, lasting horrors: The 10-week crackdown escalated after federal agents fatally shot two U.S. citizens, Renee Good on Jan. 7 and Alex Pretti on Jan. 24. Their deaths prompted Trump to replace Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino with Homan on Jan. 26. More than a dozen federal prosecutors in Minnesota also resigned, citing widespread accusations of racial profiling, warrantless searches and civil rights abuses.

The legal and political fallout has been severe. U.S. District Judge Nancy E. Brasel issued a 41-page order condemning Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for isolating “thousands of people” from their attorneys and violating detainees’ constitutional right to access counsel. Meanwhile, Gov. Tim Walz described the operation as “an unprecedented federal invasion” that inflicted “deep damage, generational trauma, economic ruin and many unanswered questions” on Minnesota. Amid the crisis, Trump’s approval significantly dropped, with many saying ICE went too far.

What this means for Asian

Americans: The Minnesota crackdown heightened longstanding anxieties about immigration enforcement. Polling showed opposition to Trump’s immigration policies among Asian Americans jumped from 58% to around 70% between March and fall of last year. Those concerns extend beyond immigration status itself. AAPI communities worry that aggressive federal tactics and broadened authority threaten constitutional safeguards for legal residents and citizens, particularly given the documented history of racial profiling and documentation challenges they face.

Following Pretti’s death, Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) attended his vigil and denounced ICE as “a rogue, militarized police,” while Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) proposed legislation mandating independent probes of federal use of force. These strong reactions from Asian American lawmakers illustrated how heavy-handed tactics, no matter their official justification, erode trust between AAPI families and the federal immigration system they often must engage with.



We’ve received reports of federal law enforcement officers going door-to-door asking people where the Asian people live right in our very own city.

— St. Paul Mayor Kaohly Her in a Congressional testimony, Jan. 16, 2026

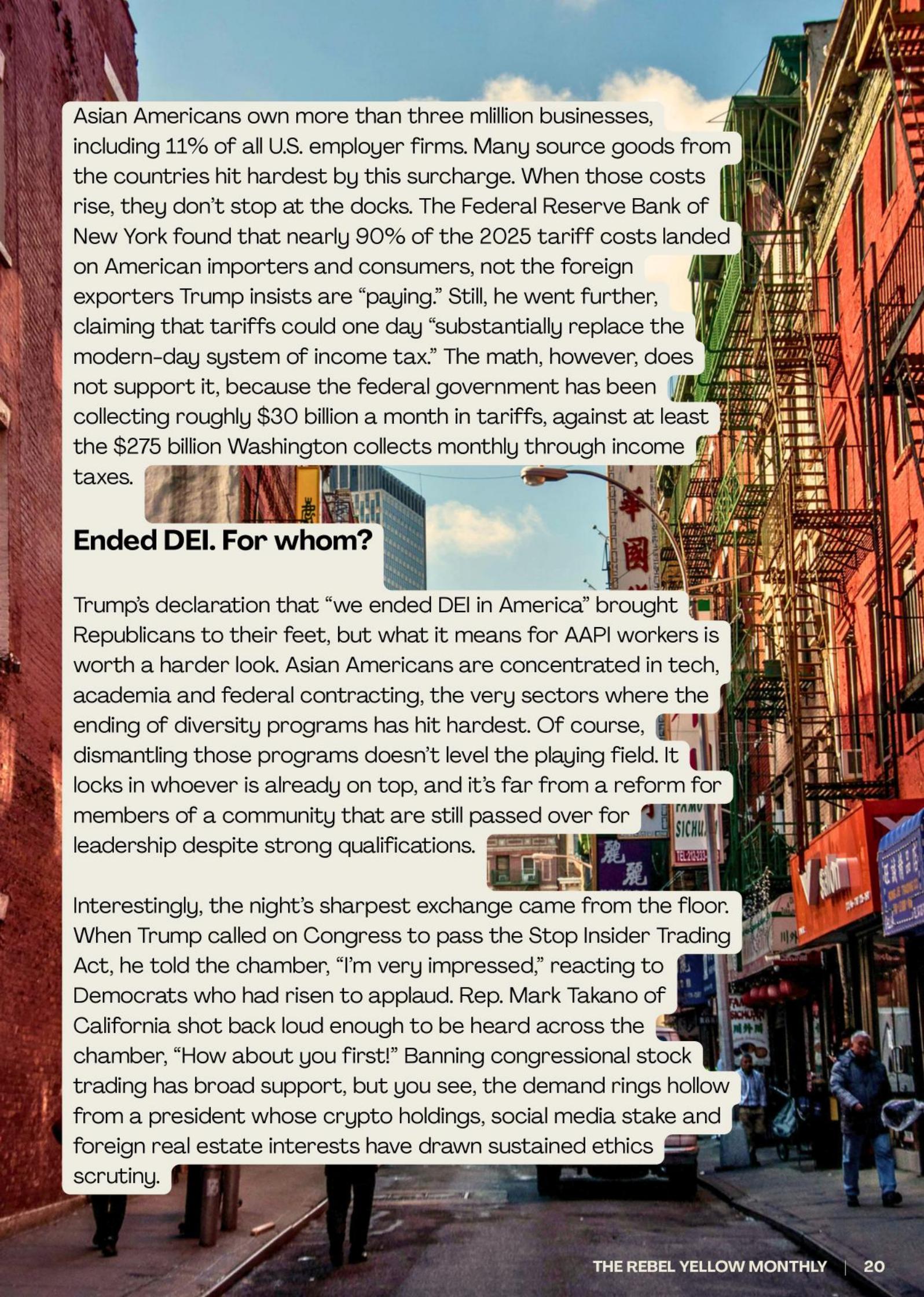
The AAPI reality after the 2026 State of the Union



President Donald Trump’s 108-minute State of the Union near the end of February was built on a single premise: America is winning, and the winning is his. For more than 24 million Asian Americans in the audience, however, its most important moments were recognizing who he chose to honor, who he chose to scapegoat and who he quietly handed the bill.

Who’s actually paying

The night’s biggest economic story actually broke days before Trump reached the podium. On Feb. 20, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) does not give him authority to impose tariffs, invalidating the legal basis for his tariffs. Just hours later, the administration invoked Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, a provision that lets the president impose temporary import surcharges with a ceiling of 15% for up to 150 days. Customs officials confirmed the surcharge took effect on Feb. 24 at 10%, with the higher rate still formally unresolved. At the address, Trump declared the Court’s ruling “unfortunate” while insisting “congressional action will not be necessary.” The justices, seated in the front rows, were left expressionless.



Asian Americans own more than three million businesses, including 11% of all U.S. employer firms. Many source goods from the countries hit hardest by this surcharge. When those costs rise, they don't stop at the docks. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that nearly 90% of the 2025 tariff costs landed on American importers and consumers, not the foreign exporters Trump insists are "paying." Still, he went further, claiming that tariffs could one day "substantially replace the modern-day system of income tax." The math, however, does not support it, because the federal government has been collecting roughly \$30 billion a month in tariffs, against at least the \$275 billion Washington collects monthly through income taxes.

Ended DEI. For whom?

Trump's declaration that "we ended DEI in America" brought Republicans to their feet, but what it means for AAPI workers is worth a harder look. Asian Americans are concentrated in tech, academia and federal contracting, the very sectors where the ending of diversity programs has hit hardest. Of course, dismantling those programs doesn't level the playing field. It locks in whoever is already on top, and it's far from a reform for members of a community that are still passed over for leadership despite strong qualifications.

Interestingly, the night's sharpest exchange came from the floor. When Trump called on Congress to pass the Stop Insider Trading Act, he told the chamber, "I'm very impressed," reacting to Democrats who had risen to applaud. Rep. Mark Takano of California shot back loud enough to be heard across the chamber, "How about you first!" Banning congressional stock trading has broad support, but you see, the demand rings hollow from a president whose crypto holdings, social media stake and foreign real estate interests have drawn sustained ethics scrutiny.

A scapegoat found

As usual, Trump's speech had villains. Midway through, he turned to Minnesota saying, "Members of the Somali community have pillaged an estimated \$19 billion from the American taxpayer." But let's be clear: that figure is highly disputed. Documented fraud in the relevant cases is far lower — closer to \$200 million, according to reports — and even the highest prosecutorial estimates top out around \$9 billion across multiple programs, with no claim that Somali residents were responsible for all of it. The figure traces to a web of related federal cases involving nearly 100 individual defendants, many of Somali descent, charged with defrauding federal nutrition, Medicaid and child care assistance programs.

Those are individual people accused of individual crimes, but Trump took those cases and made an entire community answer for them. Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Somali American from Minnesota, was heard shouting from the floor that his claims were lies.



A garbled claim, a real dispute

Trump spent several minutes on foreign policy victories, telling the chamber he had “ended eight wars” in his first 10 months. Among those eight was the violent confrontation between India and Pakistan. That standoff, he said, began with the April 2025 Pahalgam attack and India’s subsequent Operation Sindoor. One of his most-discussed lines of the night came next: “Pakistan and India would have been a nuclear war. Thirty-five million people said the Prime Minister of Pakistan would have died if it were not for my involvement.” Context from his earlier Board of Peace event filled in what the syntax could not. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had told him “tens of millions of people” would have died without American intervention.

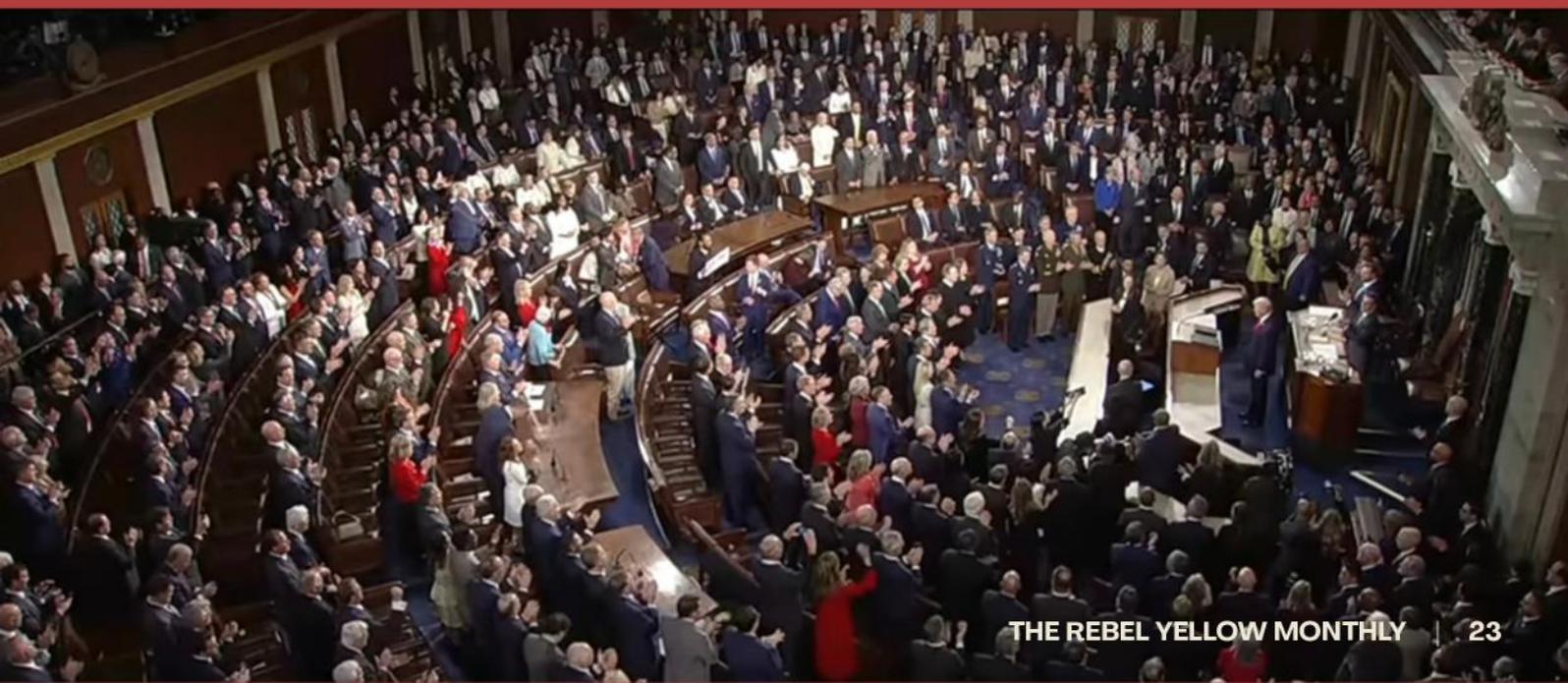
But India wants no part of that story. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said the ceasefire came through direct contact between the two countries’ military operations chiefs, with Pakistan reaching out first and no American in the room. When asked about the U.S. role in the ceasefire, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar replied, “The U.S. was in the United States.” Every time Trump repeats this claim, he erodes India’s firm position that Kashmir must be resolved bilaterally. For South Asian Americans, watching a war that claimed real lives recast as a presidential trophy is its own kind of injury.

The medal and the ballot

First Lady Melania Trump placed the Medal of Honor around the neck of 100-year-old Navy Capt. Royce Williams, the last living Korean War recipient and the oldest person ever to wear the decoration. On Nov. 18, 1952, over the Sea of Japan, his squadron was ambushed by seven Soviet fighter planes. Cut off from his wingmen in blizzard conditions, Williams shot down four of them, then flew his plane back to the USS Oriskany with 263 bullet holes in the aircraft, out of ammunition, with no hydraulics. The Soviet Union's role was classified for more than 50 years. Under orders not to speak of it, Williams told no one, not even his wife, until the records were declassified decades later.

Williams deserved this honor, and Korean American families know exactly what his long wait meant. For them, that war never became history. However, honor in the gallery cannot substitute for standing on the floor. The House passed the SAVE America Act 218-213 on Feb. 11, requiring documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections. For millions of naturalized Asian Americans whose documents carry a previous legal name or who simply don't hold a current passport, this is a tactile barrier.

As the U.S. approaches its 250th year in July, Asian Americans must ask whether the "Golden Age" is being built on the community's labor and stripped of its vote.



CHINA'S COLLEGE TAKEOVER
 Reclaiming U.S. Schools for American Students
 0:31

CHINA'S SECRET WEAPON? AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES
 0:41

SHOULD WE CAP INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT 1%?
 0:42

ARE AMERICAN STUDENTS BEING REPLACED?
 5:00

UNIVERSITIES CHOSE CHINESE MONEY OVER AMERICAN TALENT

FILTRATION OF CHINESE STUDENTS

REJECTED
 The Impact of Chinese Money on U.S. College Admissions

CAUGHT SPYING
CHINESE STUDENTS AT U.S. COLLEGES



How a former Trump adviser is manufacturing a crisis to ban Chinese students

“China’s College Takeover,” a documentary by former Trump adviser Steve Cortes, opens with the sound of play-by-play commentary from a University of Illinois football game in Mandarin.

Cortes, 54, describes the broadcast as evidence of an “organized infiltration,” arguing that Chinese-language coverage in the American heartland signals a broader strategic threat. He characterizes roughly 300,000 Chinese students in the U.S. as a “strategic export” of a hostile regime and calls for their complete removal from American campuses.

The film, produced by Cortes Investigates, does not tell viewers that the broadcast is a student-run journalism lab housed within the University of Illinois College of Media. The program functions as a training platform for aspiring sports broadcasters entering international media markets and runs alongside traditional English-language coverage. The documentary goes on to assert that Chinese students are displacing Americans, consuming taxpayer subsidies, exploiting visa loopholes and operating as potential saboteurs. It concludes with a demand to cap foreign enrollment at 1% or 2% and reduce the number of Chinese nationals to zero.

Admissions data, federal immigration law and university financial records contradict nearly every one of those claims.

The admissions math

A central claim in the documentary is that Chinese students are crowding out high-achieving Americans and that public universities have effectively sold seats to foreign nationals. To illustrate this, the film highlights Stanley Zhong, a Palo Alto student with a 1590 SAT score rejected by UIUC and 15 other schools. The film frames his rejection as a nationality-based substitution, but institutional data reveals that international students face a lower acceptance rate than residents.

In 2025, UIUC's acceptance rate for Illinois residents was 50%, while the international rate was below 33%. Of the most recent freshman class, 71% were Illinois residents (6,587 students) compared with 724 students from China.

In elite programs like Computer Science, the major Zhong sought, the constraint is fixed infrastructure and faculty-to-student ratios. With a 7.2% acceptance rate in 2025, the program denies thousands of domestic applicants annually because the number of available seats is limited by lab space and the volume of instructional staff. The data shows that students like Zhong are rejected due to extreme competition for a finite number of spots, not because those spots were reassigned to foreign nationals.

The subsidy claim

Cortes asserts that international students are “significantly subsidized” by U.S. taxpayers. Federal policy states that international students are not eligible for Pell Grants or federal student loans. At public universities, they typically pay full out-of-state tuition.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, international students contributed nearly \$55 billion to the U.S. economy in 2024. NAFSA reports that their presence supported more than 355,000 jobs nationwide. In Illinois alone, their economic contribution totaled approximately \$2.4 billion.

Research from the National Foundation for American Policy found that for every additional 10 international graduate students enrolled at a university, there is an associated increase of 15 domestic graduate students. The findings suggest that revenue linked to international enrollment can correlate with expanded faculty hiring and program growth.

In states where public funding for higher education has declined over decades, full-pay international tuition has become a significant revenue stream rather than a taxpayer burden.

Wage suppression and labor law

The film argues that international graduates undercut American workers by accepting lower wages through employment-based visas. This claim, however, overlooks the strict regulatory framework governing foreign labor.

Under federal law, employers sponsoring H-1B visa holders are legally mandated to pay at least the prevailing wage for the specific occupation and geographic area. This requirement, enforced by the Department of Labor, is a structural safeguard specifically designed to prevent the wage suppression of domestic workers.

The economic impact of these graduates often trends toward growth rather than stagnation. Research published in the *Journal of Labor Economics* found that H-1B visa holders are associated with increased innovation and, in some cases, higher wages for domestic college graduates. These findings suggest that the presence of high-skilled international workers can create a "rising tide" effect in the labor market, directly contradicting the claim that they broadly depress earnings.

Who controls visas

The documentary asserts that universities issue an "almost unlimited" number of visas, suggesting that institutions can unilaterally bypass federal immigration caps. This claim misrepresents the legal boundary between academic admission and national border control.

Under U.S. law, universities do not possess the authority to issue visas. They issue a Form I-20, which is merely a certificate confirming a student has been admitted and possesses the financial means to study. The I-20 does not grant legal entry into the U.S.; it is essentially a prerequisite for the federal application process.

The actual F-1 student visa is issued solely by the U.S. Department of State following a mandatory in-person interview and comprehensive background screening. The Department of Homeland Security further oversees compliance through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

Since 2025, federal authorities have screened more than 1.3 million students through criminal and security databases. Additionally, Presidential Proclamation 10043 restricts entry for certain Chinese nationals associated with institutions linked to China's military-civil fusion strategy. Universities have no power to override visa denials issued by these federal agencies.

Security cases and generalization

The documentary relies on documented criminal cases to frame the presence of international students as a systemic threat. It highlights the conviction of Ji Chaoqun, an Illinois Institute of Technology alumnus who acted as an agent for Chinese intelligence, and a 2025 indictment involving Chinese nationals at the University of Michigan accused of attempting to smuggle agricultural biological materials.

While these federal prosecutions under espionage and export control statutes are factual, the film uses them as a springboard for sweeping generalizations. In an interview with "On Balance," Cortes claimed, "We know that some of these students, perhaps a large cohort of these students, are spying on us. They are saboteurs."

This rhetoric, however, is not supported by the enrollment data. The vast majority of the Chinese students in the U.S. are undergraduates pursuing degrees in non-sensitive fields such as business, accounting and the arts. Federal security protocols, including "deemed export" controls and targeted Department of Justice investigations, are specifically designed to monitor individuals in high-level, dual-use research areas.

The film extends these isolated prosecutions into a categorical indictment of an entire student population, regardless of their field of study or level of access to sensitive information.

STEM designation and the "backdoor" claim

The documentary characterizes the concentration of international students in STEM fields as evidence of a visa workaround. Cortes describes interest in "STEM-designated" programs as a mechanism that allows foreign nationals to remain in the U.S. longer and gain labor advantages.

STEM designation, however, is a formal federal classification rather than a university invention. Under the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, F-1 students may work in the U.S. for up to one year after graduation. Those in federally designated STEM fields are eligible to apply for a 24-month extension, allowing for a total of three years of temporary employment. This structure is a deliberate federal policy intended to retain global talent in sectors with documented labor shortages.

The extension does not grant permanent residency or a "backdoor" to citizenship. Continued employment beyond the OPT period requires employer sponsorship under existing immigration statutes. This includes H-1B regulations that mandate payment of the prevailing wage. The framework is designed to keep graduates in high-demand sectors identified by federal agencies, not to bypass immigration controls.

These students remain under federal oversight throughout their stay. Since 2025, federal authorities have screened more than 1.3 million students through criminal and security databases. Presidential Proclamation 10043 also restricts entry for certain Chinese nationals affiliated with institutions linked to China's military-civil fusion strategy. Universities have no power to override these federal determinations.

What this means for Asian students

Faculty members at the University of Illinois say the rhetoric surrounding the film carries heavy historical weight. Shao Dan, a professor of East Asian studies, warned that describing students from a specific country as excessive or dangerous “could lead to unintended harmful and disastrous social consequences.”

Yoon Pak, a professor in the College of Education and Asian American studies, referenced earlier exclusionary periods. “The sense of the ‘yellow hordes,’ the ‘yellow peril,’ the fear, the invasion. It’s really preying upon these immediate feelings of ‘attack.’ And it is the kind of rhetoric that still unfortunately continues today,” Pak said.

The documentary states that it seeks to protect “U.S. citizens.” However, critics argue that language such as “saboteurs” and “infiltrators” risks collapsing the distinction between foreign nationals and Asian American citizens in the public imagination. By framing a specific nationality as an inherent threat, the film’s narrative mirrors the logic of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the first federal law to bar a specific ethnic group from immigrating to the U.S.

The film ends with a call to eliminate Chinese enrollment from American campuses. Yet the admission rates, visa authority and revenue data that govern higher education describe a system regulated by capacity limits and federal oversight rather than infiltration. Whether policymakers respond to the visceral fear portrayed in the documentary or to institutional fact will determine how American universities define both security and belonging in the years ahead.





Chinese students remain under fire as universities yield to political pressure

Chinese international students continue to face hostile academic experiences in the U.S. as they are caught between escalating federal pressure on universities and an anti-immigration policy that has effectively shut some of them out before they even arrive.

State of play

Indiana's Purdue University has emerged as one flashpoint. There, faculty and students allege that an unwritten directive has been screening out applicants from China and other countries the U.S. classifies as adversaries. They cite a 2025 letter in which the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party asserted that Chinese STEM enrollment comes "potentially at the expense of qualified Americans." Multiple students reportedly saw offers vanish weeks after receiving them, with one later learning through a faculty contact that the restriction was conveyed only verbally, according to *The Guardian*. Purdue, for its part, denies the allegations. Alarming, the pressure has also been palpable in other institutions including Harvard, the University of Virginia, UCLA and the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign.

What this means

The stakes are especially personal for the broader Asian American community. Critics caution that portraying Chinese students as a threatening presence invokes the same “yellow peril” logic that fueled the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and contributed to the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin. That history resonates today as former Trump campaign adviser Steve Cortes openly calls for Chinese student enrollment to be cut to zero. This argument, historically, has never been contained to one targeted group. Interestingly, AAPI adults appear to be paying close attention, with a January 2026 AP-NORC poll finding that nearly 70% disapprove of Trump’s overall job performance, a figure roughly 20 points higher than among AAPI adults without college degrees.

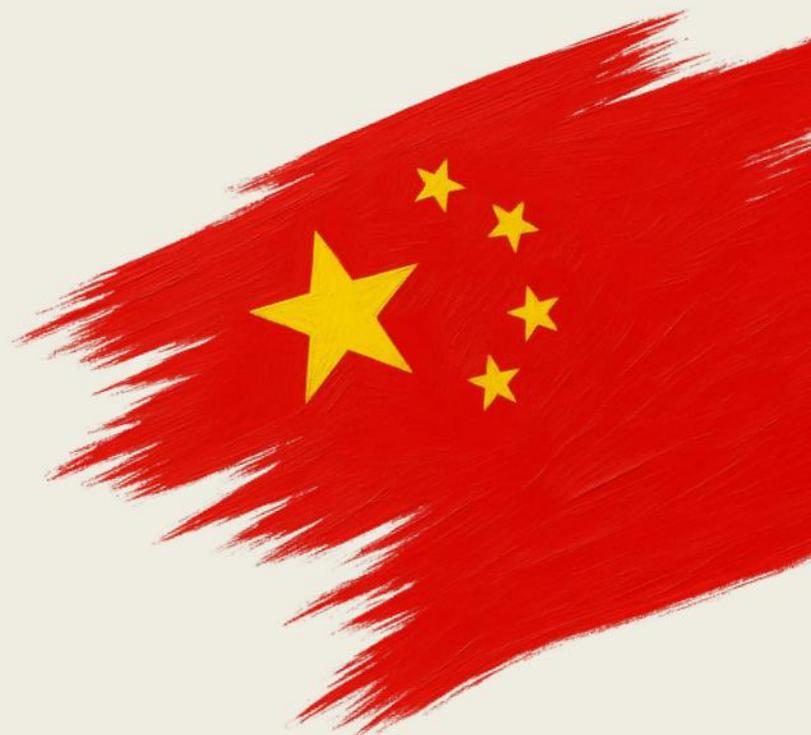
Pushback

Opposition is growing. In a letter to university leadership, a group of Purdue faculty, students and alumni condemned what they described as “soft banning students based on their nationality,” a practice that betrays “higher education’s core values of meritocracy, equality and academic freedom.” The Federation of Asian Professor Associations separately called the alleged policy “unethical” and questioned whether it might violate Title VI of the 1964 Civil

Rights Act, which prohibits publicly funded institutions from discriminating on the basis of race, color or national origin. “They deserve to come here if that’s what they feel is best for them,” Sharon Nguyen, a Vietnamese American sophomore at UIUC whose own research depends on international peers, told IPM News.

Broader implications

Unfortunately, the damage is already measurable. In 2023–24, international students contributed nearly \$44 billion to the U.S. economy, but a 17% decline in new international enrollments for 2025–26 has stripped away more than \$1.1 billion of that and eliminated close to 23,000 jobs. Meanwhile, universities in China and other countries have stepped in, positioning themselves as destinations for students displaced from American campuses.

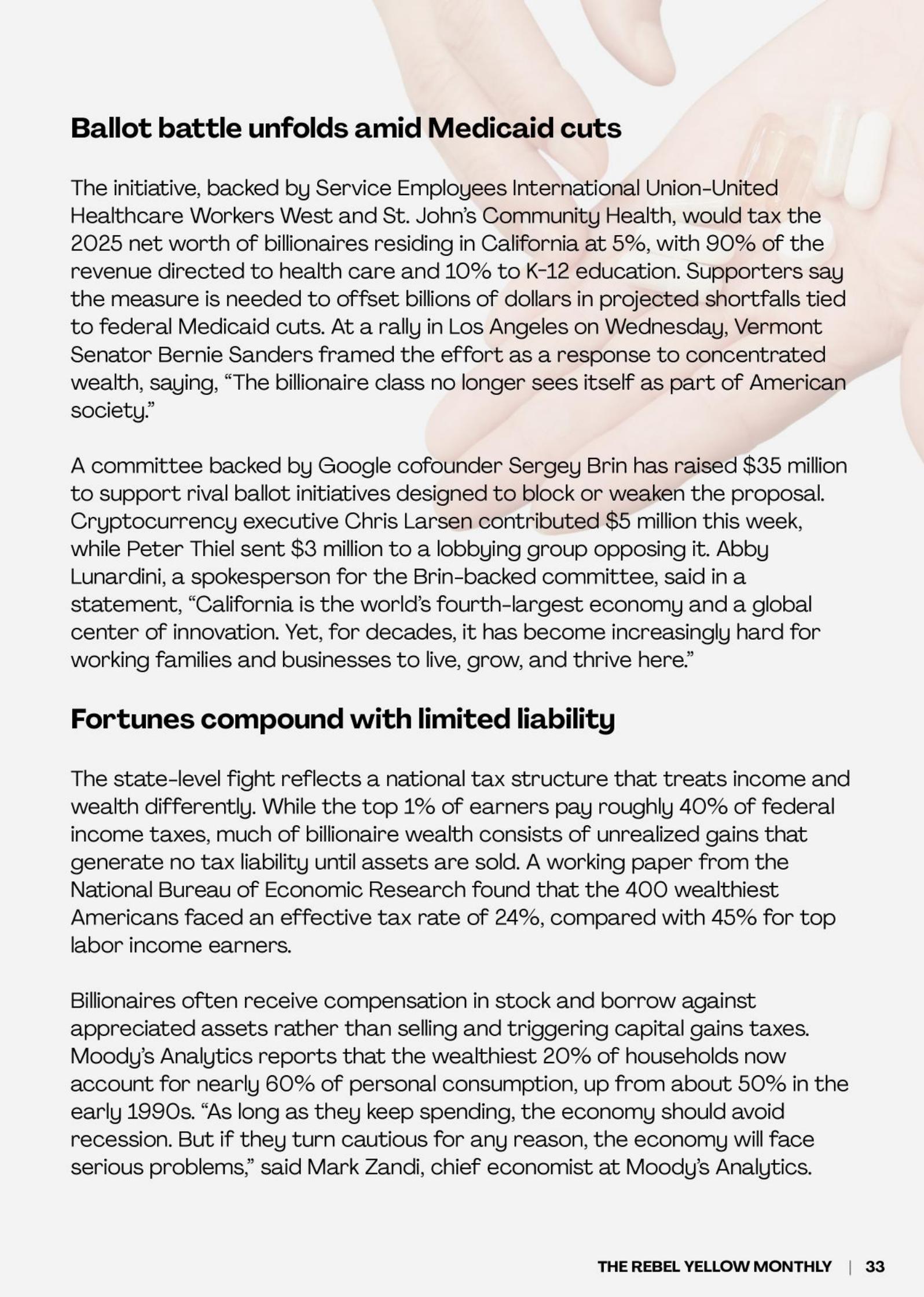


The California tax fight spotlights how billionaires escape taxes



As wealthy donors commit at least \$35 million to defeating California's proposed 5% tax on billionaires, the escalating campaign is focusing attention on how much of the nation's largest fortunes go untaxed each year.

The measure would apply to residents whose wealth is largely held in appreciated stock and other assets that are not subject to annual income tax unless sold. The clash comes as Federal Reserve data show the top 1% now control a record 32% of U.S. wealth.



Ballot battle unfolds amid Medicaid cuts

The initiative, backed by Service Employees International Union–United Healthcare Workers West and St. John’s Community Health, would tax the 2025 net worth of billionaires residing in California at 5%, with 90% of the revenue directed to health care and 10% to K-12 education. Supporters say the measure is needed to offset billions of dollars in projected shortfalls tied to federal Medicaid cuts. At a rally in Los Angeles on Wednesday, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders framed the effort as a response to concentrated wealth, saying, “The billionaire class no longer sees itself as part of American society.”

A committee backed by Google cofounder Sergey Brin has raised \$35 million to support rival ballot initiatives designed to block or weaken the proposal. Cryptocurrency executive Chris Larsen contributed \$5 million this week, while Peter Thiel sent \$3 million to a lobbying group opposing it. Abby Lunardini, a spokesperson for the Brin-backed committee, said in a statement, “California is the world’s fourth-largest economy and a global center of innovation. Yet, for decades, it has become increasingly hard for working families and businesses to live, grow, and thrive here.”

Fortunes compound with limited liability

The state-level fight reflects a national tax structure that treats income and wealth differently. While the top 1% of earners pay roughly 40% of federal income taxes, much of billionaire wealth consists of unrealized gains that generate no tax liability until assets are sold. A working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that the 400 wealthiest Americans faced an effective tax rate of 24%, compared with 45% for top labor income earners.

Billionaires often receive compensation in stock and borrow against appreciated assets rather than selling and triggering capital gains taxes. Moody’s Analytics reports that the wealthiest 20% of households now account for nearly 60% of personal consumption, up from about 50% in the early 1990s. “As long as they keep spending, the economy should avoid recession. But if they turn cautious for any reason, the economy will face serious problems,” said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody’s Analytics.



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Former South Korean president sentenced to life in prison for insurrection

Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol received a life sentence on Feb. 20 following his conviction on insurrection charges stemming from a failed martial law decree he imposed in December 2024.

State of play: Yoon, 65, was found guilty of rebellion by Judge Jee Kui-youn of the Seoul Central District Court for directing troops and police to surround parliament, detain political opponents and consolidate power outside constitutional limits. The judge ruled that his actions were designed to "block the Assembly building and arrest key figures ... in order to prevent lawmakers from gathering to deliberate or vote."

A special prosecutor pushed for the death penalty, though most legal observers had anticipated a life sentence given that the episode ended without bloodshed. The following day, Yoon released a statement apologizing for the "frustration and hardship" his decree brought upon the public, yet he stood behind the "sincerity and purpose" of his actions, dismissed the verdict as political retaliation and urged supporters to "unite and rise."

Accountability in practice: Yoon's life sentence affirms that South Korea's judicial institutions can hold even a former head of state accountable, a capacity built through four decades of democratic institution-building since Chun Doo-hwan's military rule.

Still, the verdict also depended on factors beyond the courtroom, including citizens who converged on parliament in freezing rain so that lawmakers could achieve a quorum and vote to lift the decree, as well as soldiers who defied their orders. That fragility has drawn attention beyond South Korea's borders, and for Korean Americans tracking a markedly different institutional response to executive overreach in the U.S., the divergence has prompted sharp comparisons about how democracies respond under pressure.



Asians are done optimizing for love and that's OK



Depending on what you feel about and how you actually treat the 14th day of each February, the quiet of its aftermath unfolds differently for different people. This year, most of my friends happened to be all single, and the stories I've heard paint a kind of quiet resulting from dating fatigue.



Only this time, the exhaustion feels distinctively influenced by technology. The “safe” bios, AI-drafted openers and profile photos so crisp and clean they might as well be a work of modern sorcery. All these typically lead to days (or weeks) of curated conversations that signal “cultured, but not too much,” reinforcing “authenticity” in quotation marks until one goes home from the date uncertain who actually showed up to it.

Not everybody does these things, of course. But if you're single, Asian and at the tail end of your 20s, signs of pressure begin to emerge.



We've spent the last several years leaning on dating apps to bridge the gap between our private lives and our families' expectations. The pitch was seductive. Let tech smooth the edges, optimize the presentation and close the distance between who you are and who you're supposed to be. However, the data tells a different story. The latest Singles in America report, produced by Match and the Kinsey Institute from a survey of more than 5,000 U.S. adults, found that the share of singles using AI to enhance their dating lives surged 333% in a single year, now reaching roughly one in four.

Among Gen Z, the numbers are starker. Close to half have already brought AI into their dating lives, using it to build profiles, craft opening lines and screen for compatibility. And yet across generations, we report being ground down by the process. More help than we've ever had, and less and less appetite for it.

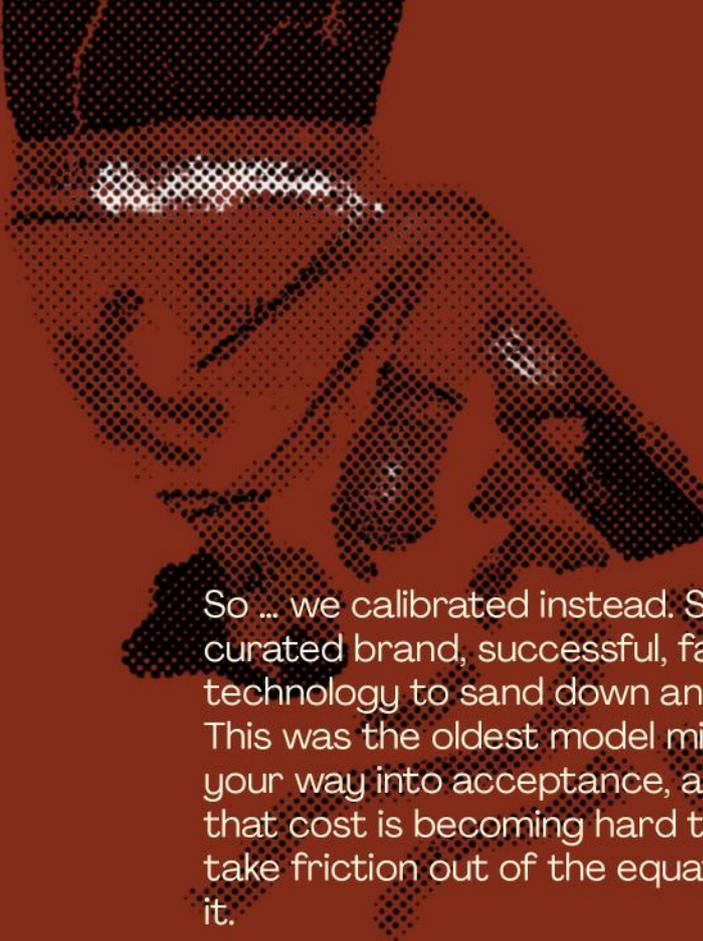
Performance costs

We leaned into these tools partly because the dating market has always felt tilted. For years, the data seemed to confirm it. We know Asian men face real structural disadvantages on mainstream apps. Dating platforms compress complex people into rapid visual appraisals, and they've historically amplified racial bias in the process. Researchers call it sexual racism. It's documented, and it's been baked into how these platforms function from the start.

Some specific numbers have shifted. A May 2024 internal data analysis by Coffee Meets Bagel found that AAPI men now receive the largest share of likes on the platform from women of all ethnicities, a finding that held even after CMB normalized for the relative size of each ethnic group in its user base. CMB acknowledged its platform skews toward Asian users and that a larger like-share doesn't necessarily mean any individual AAPI man is more likely to be liked. Still, the company cited the trend as a meaningful shift from what the data showed a decade earlier.

A change in like-share, though, doesn't touch the deeper pressure that drove us toward optimization. The anxiety was never really about match rates. It was about what we believed we had to become to be desirable at all, and that belief doesn't dissolve because an app's internal numbers improved.



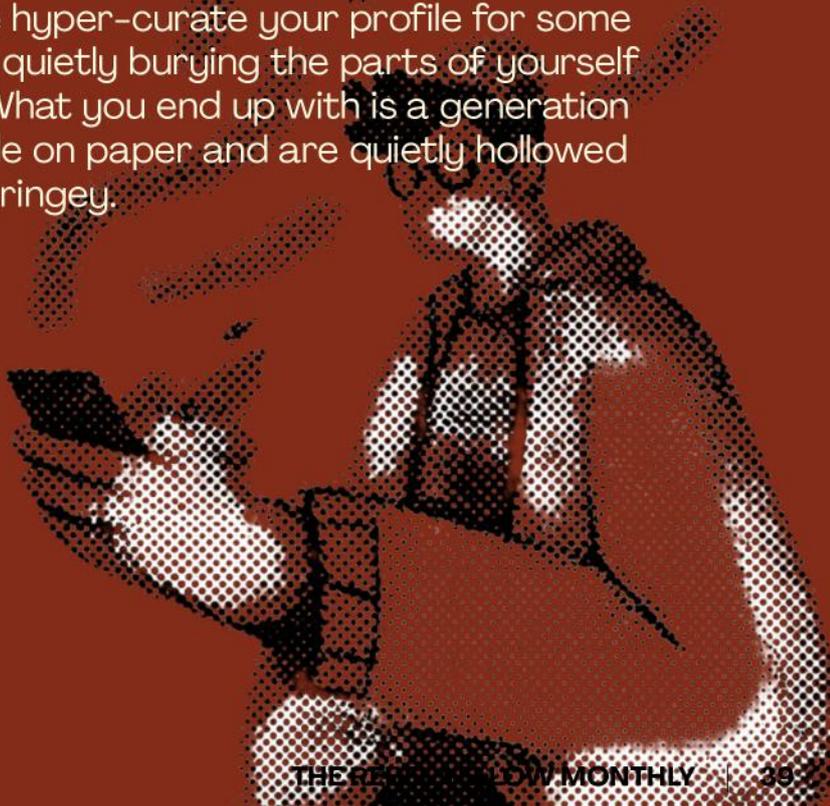


So ... we calibrated instead. Some turned our heritage into a curated brand, successful, family-oriented, relatable and used technology to sand down anything that might read as “too much.” This was the oldest model minority pressure repackaged. Perform your way into acceptance, and make the effort invisible. Today, that cost is becoming hard to absorb. Dating apps promised to take friction out of the equation, but instead, they’ve automated it.

The weight of the group chat

There appears to be a layer underneath all this that no algorithm has figured out. The tension between what the family wants vs. who you actually are. It’s the oldest conflict in the immigrant household, and what’s changed is that we tried to outsource it.

The trend became some kind of digital bargaining. You can filter for partners who check the family’s boxes while privately hoping they check yours, too. Maybe hyper-curate your profile for some imagined parental gaze while quietly burying the parts of yourself that don’t translate cleanly. What you end up with is a generation of daters who look impeccable on paper and are quietly hollowed out by the gap. It’s honestly cringey.



CMB's Dating Realness Report, which was conducted in partnership with YouGov last November and surveying more than 1,000 U.S. working professionals between 21 and 35, put numbers to what many people feel but rarely say aloud. Ninety-three percent said dating is difficult. Meanwhile, 45% said committing to a relationship feels tougher than working up the nerve to ask for a raise. In the report, CEO Quincy Yang said the company's focus for 2026 is on "tools that help daters date with purpose" rather than chasing new features or encouraging endless swiping. This is a fairly direct acknowledgment of what the optimization era got wrong.

Speaking to DatingNews in December, Yang said the company's ultimate goal is fostering an environment where "people show up with clarity and intention." Given what the data shows, it reads as a quiet acknowledgment that something in the current model isn't working.

Loneliness vs. solitude

What Yang is describing, most dating apps were never built to deliver. Honesty at the level of the self doesn't optimize well. See, for a community that has long navigated ways of saving face, performing a frictionless version of yourself predates any app! AI gave that pressure more surface area, and now the performance follows you into the room. Now, we realize the more telling shift may not be about who we're dating at all, but about what we're doing in the stretches between.





Singlehood in many Asian households has historically been treated as a waiting room, sort of like a temporary state before real life begins. The group chat has opinions, with each auntie having someone in mind.

The APA's 2025 Stress in America report makes clear why that pressure is landing differently now. Conducted by the Harris Poll among more than 3,000 adults last August, the report found that 69% of Americans said they needed more emotional support over the past year than they received, up from 65% the year before. More than half reported persistent feelings of disconnection, with 54% feeling isolated from others, 50% feeling left out and 50% lacking companionship.

When connection feels this scarce, the urge to optimize for it starts to look like a symptom rather than a strategy. A 2025 study published in *OBM Neurobiology* by clinical psychologist Ami Rokach of York University draws a distinction worth sitting with. Loneliness, Rokach argues, is “painful, agonizing and troubling.” It’s not simply being alone, but the felt sense of being disconnected from others in ways that matter. Solitude, on the other hand, is different. Chosen and deliberate, it allows us to care for ourselves on our own terms, and that self-knowledge, Rokach argues, contributes to a more focused and fulfilling engagement with life and with others.

Reclaiming the “solo-moon”

A February 2025 study in *Nature Communications* by University of Michigan researchers Micaela Rodriguez, Kathryn Schertz and Ethan Kross tracked that difference across nine countries and six continents. They found that people’s beliefs about solitude shaped their experience of it far more than how much time alone they actually logged. Among participants with average loneliness levels, those who viewed solitude negatively reported a 53% spike in loneliness after spending a great deal of time alone over two weeks. Those who viewed it positively reported a 13% decrease over the same stretch, even when they spent just as much time by themselves. This is fascinating as it held across cultures, suggesting it’s less about personality than about what you bring into the quiet with you.



ICYMI, “solo-moon” is still an emerging term. It’s a shorthand for a period of intentional solitary retreat. However, it’s pointing at something the optimization era largely ignored. Being alone can be something you move toward rather than away from, and that’s a genuinely different way of being in the world after all the stresses of communal obligation.

Unsurprisingly the family group chat reads an empty Saturday night as evidence of failure. That framing has weight when you’ve spent your whole life inside it; when the people who love you genuinely believe that being partnered is the same thing as being OK. It’s annoying, really.

But a generation that has been optimizing nonstop for family, for apps or for some imagined future version of themselves is starting to run out of gas for the performance. Now, we see that the quiet of a weekend alone isn’t really the problem. What’s underneath it is, and in our opinion, that’s not something a better algorithm was ever going to reach.

Is it time to "drop the K" from K-pop?



When the cast of "KPop Demon Hunters" told Variety in a recent interview that it may be time to "drop the K," they reopened a long-simmering debate about how Korean culture is framed abroad. The prefix once signaled a rising export category. Now, with Korean artists topping global charts and dominating streaming platforms, some argue the label may be outgrowing its purpose.

The comment surfaced as the cast reflected on a breakthrough. The film had just won best animated feature and best original song for "Golden" at the Critics Choice Awards. Rei Ami described the recognition as "validation. It's long overdue." She spoke about years of rejection and being told she and others were "too little, too much."

In the same conversation about the global reach of Korean culture, Arden Cho added, "This movie is now, and I feel this is the beginning of showing the world that K-pop, K-fashion, K-beauty ... The K is ..."

Rei Ami then interjected, "... It's no more. Drop the K."

Mythology, idols and hierarchy

"KPop Demon Hunters" centers on a Korean girl group that battles demons through music shaped by idol training culture and Korean shamanism. Director Maggie Kang said she fought to make the film more Korean because this side of the culture "didn't exist" in animation. The narrative integrates spiritual ritual, generational hierarchy and the pressures of obedience and honor rather than relying on generic fantasy structures.

EJAE said she joined because it was "the first Korean-based animated film" from U.S. producers. "I wanted to see Korea," she said. Cho, who has worked in the industry for 23 years, said being Korean and Asian American often felt like "such an obstacle in this business." She noted that non-Asian viewers often found the character Rumi's obedience to authority "weird," a reaction she connected to a lack of understanding regarding Korean cultural norms and the "repressed weight" of generational trauma.

Despite these hurdles, "KPop Demon Hunters" was the most-streamed movie of 2025 after logging 20.5 billion minutes watched in the U.S., according to Nielsen data released in January. "Golden" topped Billboard's Global Excl. U.S. chart for 20 weeks.



Beyond the export label

The debate over the “K” has been publicly raised by some of the most influential figures in South Korea’s modern music industry.

Bang Si-hyuk, founder of HYBE, the entertainment company behind BTS and multiple global acts, addressed the issue at the Kwanhun Forum in Seoul in March 2023. “These days, I often say that we need to remove the ‘K’ from K-pop,” he said. He added that if K-pop continues “in its current structure,” “there will be a limit to its growth.”

Bang’s warning of a “crisis” was driven by specific data showing a clear downward trend in consumption growth across Southeast Asia and China. To Bang, the “K” has become a market ceiling that prevents the genre from competing on equal footing with Western pop giants.

Music critic Kim Zakka has noted that the debate over definition stretches back more than a decade. “There has been so much discussion surrounding the question ‘What exactly is K-pop?’ ever since 2011, when K-pop songs started going outside of Asia,” he told Korea JoongAng Daily in 2024. The term, he added, has generally referred to “the whole industry, not just a style of music or looks.”

Lee Soo-man, founder of SM Entertainment and widely regarded as one of the pioneers of the modern K-pop industry, offered a similar perspective in a September 2025 keynote in Seoul. He described K-pop as “a new language of communication that transcends barriers,” emphasizing its expansion beyond national borders.





Pride, pressure and branding

Artists have described a more complicated relationship with the label. RM, leader of BTS, told the Spanish newspaper *El País* in March 2023, “Spotify categorizing all of us as K-pop can be annoying, but it is a premium label.” He added that it is “also a tag that can be tiring.” RM views the “K” as a mark of quality that previous generations fought to achieve, making its removal a complex question of cultural heritage.

The term has come to signify collective ascent from a national industry into a global one. It has also grouped artists of varied genres and identities under a single category. Within the *Variety* interview, the cast of “KPop Demon Hunters” spoke about audience responses to themes of repression, identity and belonging embedded in a story grounded in Korean tradition.

The suggestion from “KPop Demon Hunters” cast to drop the “K” from K-pop comes alongside documented viewership, chart performance and awards recognition for a film built on Korean spiritual practice and generational hierarchy. The prefix remains attached to the genre. Whether it continues to define Korean pop or gradually recedes as the industry expands further into global markets remains under discussion.

As May Hong, who voices Mira, noted, the film's success is “vindicating,” suggesting that the “ultimate Korean revenge” occurs when the culture becomes so mainstream that the label is no longer required.

Nigel Ng defends his Uncle Roger accent after J. Kenji López-Alt's "yellowface" criticism



Malaysian comedian Nigel Ng addressed criticism in February after recently discovering a 2021 video from Japanese American chef J. Kenji López-Alt, in which he described Ng's Uncle Roger accent as "yellowface."

López-Alt originally wrote in a video description that Ng's performance "promotes anti-Asian racism" and objected to the exaggerated speech pattern. Ng responded in a video statement, saying he is Malaysian and that the accent reflects his own cultural upbringing rather than a mockery of Asians.

The Uncle Roger character, introduced in 2020 through viral YouTube videos critiquing Western interpretations of Asian cooking, features an exaggerated Cantonese-influenced speech pattern and mannerisms. Ng has previously said the persona is inspired by middle-aged men or "uncles" and elders he encountered growing up in Malaysia.

Ng rejects stereotype label

“Accent is not a stereotype,” the 34-year-old comedian said in a video published Feb. 8. “Accent is just how we talk and how we live. There’s nothing wrong with having an accent.”

Ng also addressed criticism that viewers imitate his delivery and catchphrases. “Sure, many people watch Uncle Roger’s videos, and then they imitate Uncle Roger’s way of speaking, and now they use ‘haiyaa’ and ‘fuiyoh’ in their daily life. That’s amazing! Uncle Roger popularised Malaysian slang to the whole world. Fuiyoh! And when people imitate Uncle Roger like that, they are not making fun of me. It’s all out of love.”

He later responded directly to López-Alt, saying, “Sorry, I don’t sound white like you, Nephew Kenji, haiyaa,” and joked that accents are common throughout Asia. Ng ended by complimenting López-Alt’s fried rice and expressing hope the chef’s opinion of him had changed.

Chef cites lived experience

After Ng’s response, López-Alt updated that description to clarify his position, writing that he believed Ng had “good intentions” and that he had never said he hated him.

Explaining his perspective, the 46-year-old chef wrote about growing up Asian in the United States and referenced anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said his mother in New York was “afraid to walk outside” amid reported attacks on elderly Asian women.

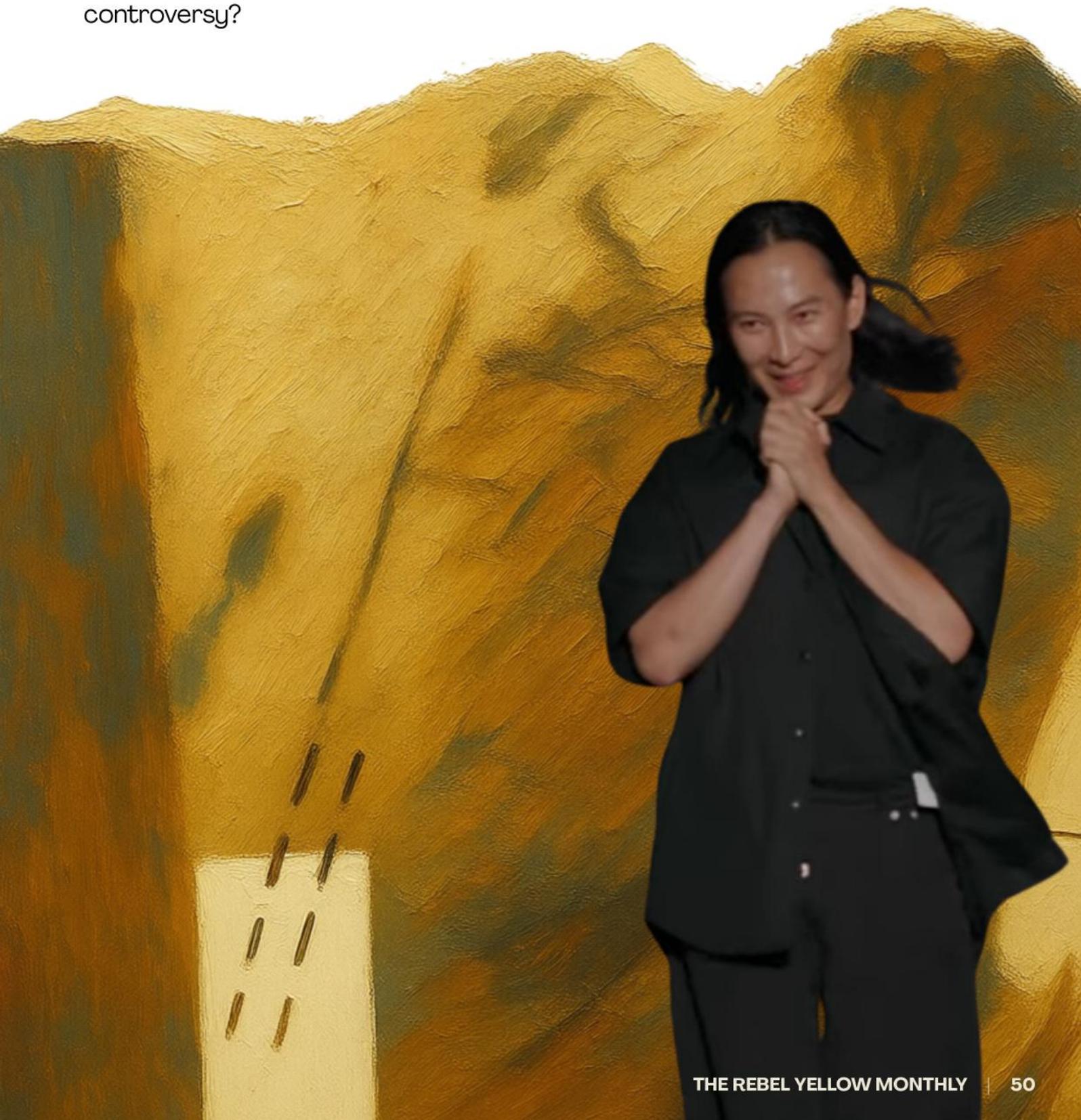
“So, in that context, when I open up the comments to a video and see comments imitating your catchphrases or speech patterns, then see that the people doing it are virtually all non-Asian American men, it rubs me the wrong way. I hope you can understand that,” he wrote.

**Can a landmark bury a
controversy?**

**Alexander
Wang's \$9.5
million bid for
cultural
absolution**

Six years after facing public allegations of sexual misconduct that reshaped his reputation, fashion designer Alexander Wang opened The Wang Contemporary last month inside a restored Chinatown landmark.

The \$9.5 million acquisition, developed with his mother, Ying Wang, establishes a permanent arts institution rooted in Asian and Asian American culture. Can a fixed cultural institution anchored in heritage and community recalibrate a legacy shaped by controversy?



Reclaiming 58 Bowery

The Wang Contemporary occupies 58 Bowery, a 1924 Beaux-Arts building that once housed the Citizens Savings Bank at the edge of Chinatown. The acquisition, finalized in July 2025, represents the first time in over a century that the landmark has been under Chinese American ownership. The purchase embeds the Wang name into Chinatown's physical landscape, shifting his presence in New York from seasonal runway stages to permanent real estate.

The opening featured a large-scale installation by Brooklyn-based collective MSCHF titled "20,000 Variations on a Paper Plane in Flight," which filled the building's bronze dome with cascading paper planes. The work underscored the venue's ambition to operate at the intersection of spectacle, contemporary art and community programming.

The reckoning that lingered

In late 2020, multiple individuals accused Wang of sexual misconduct in allegations that spread widely on social media and prompted industry scrutiny. Wang denied the accusations at the time. In March 2021, he said in a statement that he regretted behavior that "caused pain" and expressed a commitment to personal accountability.

He later said he had reached out privately to some of the individuals who accused him in an effort to take responsibility and learn from the experience. There were no publicly reported court rulings tied to the allegations, and the episode gradually shifted from breaking news to a lasting reputational context rather than a formal legal resolution. Despite initial distancing by some Western retailers, Wang maintained the support of influential industry figures, which facilitated his eventual return to the center of the New York fashion scene.

Pivot east, stabilize west

The post-controversy strategy relied heavily on Asia. Backed by minority investments from Chinese firms Challenjers Capital and Youngor Group in 2022, the brand expanded to over 20 retail locations in mainland China. This geographic pivot insulated the business from the full force of U.S. reputational fallout, with revenue reportedly exceeding \$200 million by 2024.

By diversifying revenue streams, the company secured the capital necessary to fund the cash purchase of 58 Bowery. This financial independence allowed the brand to re-enter the New York market on its own terms, using the Chinatown building as both a corporate asset and a symbolic cultural bridge.

The matriarchal return to NYFW

The opening of The Wang Contemporary is the culmination of a dual strategy that began with Wang's official return to the New York Fashion Week calendar in September 2025. After seven years away from the official schedule, his 20th-anniversary show, titled "The Matriarch," was staged inside the then-unrestored 58 Bowery space. This return signaled a renewed alignment with the industry structures that confer legitimacy while publicly cementing his partnership with his mother.

This repositioning replaces the "party-boy" image of his early career with a narrative centered on family stewardship and intergenerational continuity. By foregrounding maternal collaboration within the context of a permanent arts venue, Wang reframes his public identity within Asian American cultural frameworks where legacy and lineage carry significant weight. While his fashion collections operate within a cyclical system of seasonal trends, the Chinatown venue provides a year-round physical presence that exists independent of the runway.

Redemption's hard limits

Chinatown continues to navigate economic pressures including rising rents and pandemic-era business losses. A privately funded arts institution backed by a globally recognized designer brings investment and visibility, but also raises questions about long-term integration within the community.

The Wang Contemporary has committed to public programming, including a martial arts festival scheduled for May 2026 during Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Its sustained impact will depend on accessibility, partnerships and whether it becomes embedded in neighborhood life.

Institutional permanence does not automatically translate into public absolution. Audiences, investors and fashion institutions may recalibrate their relationships over time, but forgiveness from those who accused Wang is personal and cannot be conferred by architecture, philanthropy or commercial success.

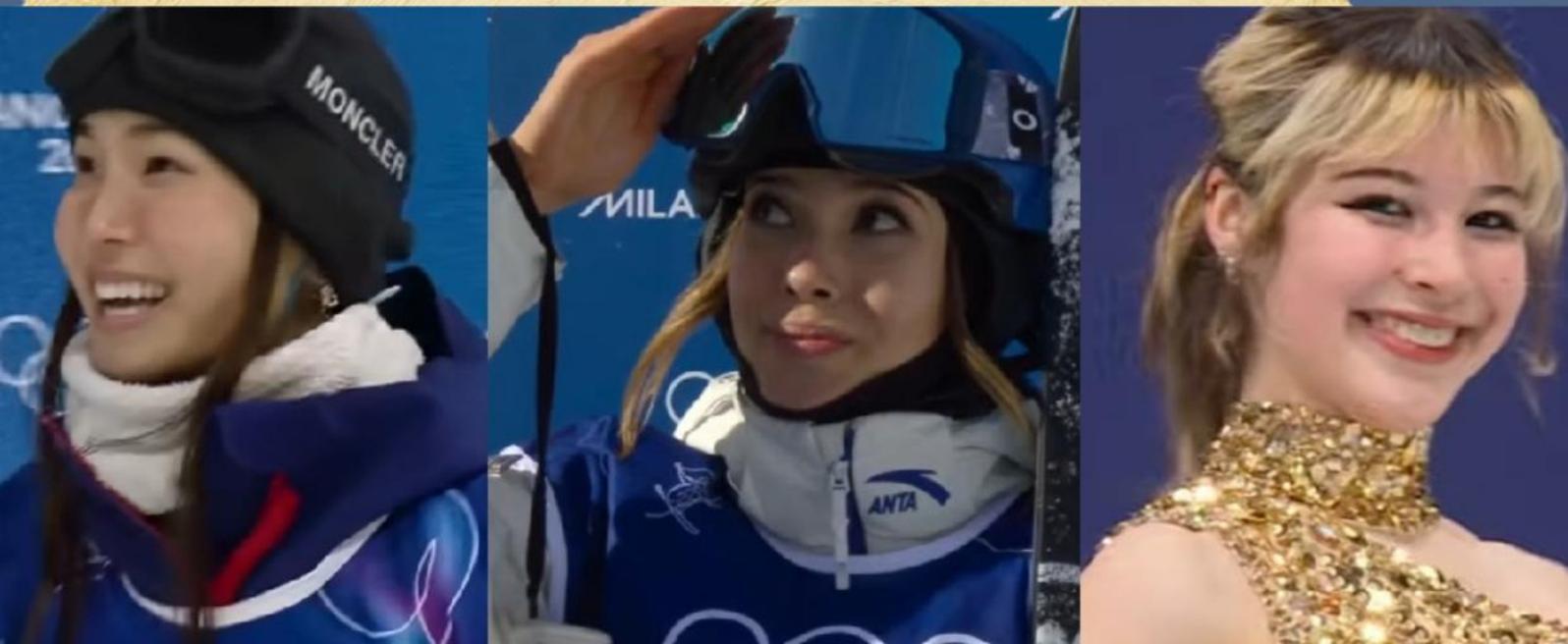
The Wang Contemporary represents a significant structural investment in cultural infrastructure, but whether that investment ultimately reshapes Alexander Wang's legacy will be determined over years, not by the opening of a single landmark.

Kim, Gu and Liu



The Asian
American women

who **defined**
Milano Cortina
2026



The recently concluded Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics ended with an image that will endure beyond the medal table.

In Milan, Alysa Liu stood between Japan's Kaori Sakamoto and Ami Nakai on the Olympic podium in women's singles. Days earlier in Livigno, South Korea's Gaon Choi stood atop the halfpipe podium alongside Chloe Kim and Japan's Mitsuki Ono.

It was the first time in Winter Olympic history that both women's singles and women's halfpipe concluded with all-Asian podiums at the same Games. Behind the symmetry were three careers moving in different directions.

Kim's poetic final run

Kim entered the 2026 Games as a veteran in a discipline increasingly shaped by the technical amplitude and execution she helped standardize in 2018 and 2022. While her first gold at the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics established her as a generational talent, her second at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics confirmed durability in a sport that rarely allows it.

One month before the Opening Ceremony, Kim dislocated her left shoulder and tore her labrum in a training crash in Switzerland. The injury left her with minimal snow time heading into Italy. She still secured silver with a first-run score of 88.0, extending her Olympic podium streak to three consecutive Games and tying the record for the most total Olympic medals in women's halfpipe.

The gold went to Choi, who rebounded from a heavy opening-run crash to land a 90.25 on her final attempt. Choi has long cited Kim as her primary role model, and the two embraced at the bottom of the pipe after Kim's final-run fall sealed the result. The image captured more than sportsmanship. It marked a visible transition inside the event.

Even before the competition, Kim confirmed her retirement from competitive snowboarding, signaling a shift toward family life and entrepreneurship. "I am 25 right now," she said. "I'd love to start a family. My mom had me when she was young. I'd love to be a young mom. My dad's 70 right now. There's so much time, but also not enough time."



Medals amid the noise

Eileen Gu arrived in Italy as the most decorated female freestyle skier in Olympic history, having never finished off the podium. At the Beijing 2022 Games, she won two gold medals and one silver. In Milano Cortina, she added a gold in halfpipe and silver medals in slopestyle and big air, preserving a perfect Olympic podium record across two Games.

Her athletic consistency unfolded alongside renewed scrutiny over her national affiliation. Born in San Francisco and representing China, Gu again became a focal point of political commentary in the U.S. She revealed during the Games that she had faced death threats and physical harassment while attending Stanford University.

Despite the pressure, Gu delivered a 94.75 in the halfpipe final after recovering from a fall in her opening run. In prior interviews addressing criticism, she stated, “I’m not trying to please anyone. I’m an 18-year-old girl out here living my best life.” Her Olympic record remains intact regardless of the political climate surrounding it.

China’s 15 medals marked its strongest Winter Olympic performance outside a home Games. Gu’s three-medal campaign sits at the center of that outcome, reinforcing her status as one of the most consistent performers in the sport.





Ending a generation-long drought

Liu's gold ended a 24-year U.S. drought in women's singles, the country's first Olympic title in the discipline since Sarah Hughes won Olympic gold in 2002. Her path to Milan included early national dominance, retirement at 16 citing mental fatigue and the "joyless" structure of elite training and a return on her own terms.

The 20-year-old Oakland, California, native limited her practice schedule, selected her own music and designed her own costumes. Skating to Donna Summer's "MacArthur Park Suite," she landed seven clean triple jumps and posted a career-best score of 226.79, vaulting from third after the short program to gold.

She finished ahead of Sakamoto and Nakai, completing the first all-Asian Olympic podium in women's singles. "I think that everything, even [the first part of] my skating career and the time I spent away from the sport and coming back, everything has led to this; has led to that performance," said the rising skating star.

A permanent shift in the winter landscape

By the time the Winter Games arrive in 2030, the field in halfpipe and women's singles will include athletes who grew up watching Kim's dominance, Gu's consistency and Liu's historic return to Olympic gold. Their influence now sits inside the sport's development pipeline, shaping expectations, technique and ambition. The standard has already shifted; the next cycle will reveal who meets it.

Asian American Olympians' nationality choices cast as "loyalty tests" by media



U.S. media coverage of Winter Olympians Chloe Kim and Eileen Gu treated their nationality decisions as measures of allegiance rather than parallel career choices, according to a University of Michigan study published in January.

The analysis found that while Kim's representation of the U.S. was framed as a natural extension of the American dream, Gu's decision to compete for China during the 2022 Beijing Olympics was repeatedly situated within debates over patriotism and U.S.-China tensions. References to loyalty and national alignment appeared far more frequently in coverage of Gu than in reporting on Kim's Olympic appearances in 2018 and 2022.

Celebrated insider, scrutinized outsider

Kim, the daughter of Korean immigrants, was born and raised in California and declined an invitation to join South Korea's national team before winning gold in snowboarding at the 2018 PyeongChang Games and again in Beijing in 2022. Media coverage frequently described her as an "All-American teenager," emphasizing her immigrant family background as part of a broader narrative of American opportunity and inclusion.

Gu, also born and raised in California to a Chinese immigrant mother and white American father, trained within the U.S. ski system before announcing in 2019 that she would represent China. At the Beijing Games, she won two gold medals and one silver. The study found that U.S. reporting consistently foregrounded her nationality decision, often introducing it early in articles and returning to it throughout coverage. Commentary regularly invoked phrases such as calls to "pick a side," framing her athletic career within a binary of insider versus outsider.

Both athletes are currently competing at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan, where 25-year-old Kim has won silver in women's snowboard halfpipe and 22-year-old Gu has earned silver in freestyle skiing slopestyle, with additional events including women's big air and halfpipe still ahead for Gu later in the Games.

Loyalty, race and academic framing

Researchers concluded that both athletes experienced what they describe as “conditional belonging,” meaning their acceptance as American was tied to perceived national loyalty. Kim’s alignment with Team USA reinforced her portrayal as an emblem of national success. Gu’s choice to represent China, however, was frequently cast as suspect or strategic, with some commentary suggesting profit or political symbolism.

The study also identified recurring references to academic credentials and family sacrifice in coverage of both athletes. Reports highlighted Kim’s connection to Princeton University and Gu’s admission to Stanford University, along with mentions of high SAT scores and strong parental support. These elements reflected what the authors describe as the persistence of the “model minority” stereotype, where athletic excellence was intertwined with expectations of academic achievement and filial devotion.

“Despite the fact that Chloe Kim is an American citizen, she had to worry about hate crimes because of her appearance and her Asian identity,” said Doo Jae Park, the study’s corresponding author. The findings document how sports coverage during two Olympic cycles became a site where national belonging for Asian American athletes was publicly negotiated through the lens of loyalty.



Minority births become the majority in the U.S. for the 1st time



For the first time in U.S. history, more babies were born to racial and ethnic minority mothers than to non-Hispanic white mothers, according to a new national study released in February.

The analysis, published in JAMA Network Open, examined more than 33 million births recorded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from 2016 through 2024. Researchers found that non-Hispanic white births declined to 49.6% of all U.S. births in 2024, while minority births rose to 50.4%. [ALLYGREATSITE.COM](https://allygreatsite.com)

White birth share falls

The study shows that the crossover was the result of sustained declines in the share of births to non-Hispanic white mothers rather than an increase in overall U.S. births. In 2016, white births accounted for 52.6% of all births, but that share fell steadily over the following eight years. During the same period, total births nationwide declined from about 3.9 million to roughly 3.6 million annually, indicating that the shift reflects changes in who is giving birth rather than growth in birthrates.

Researchers noted that white women experienced larger and more consistent declines in fertility compared with other groups. As white births fell more sharply, the combined share of births to Hispanic, Black, Asian and other racial or ethnic groups increased, pushing minority births above the 50% mark for the first time in the available national data.

Hispanic, Asian births lead shift

Hispanic women accounted for the largest and fastest-growing share of births among all racial and ethnic groups analyzed. The study found that births to Hispanic mothers increased from 23.5% of all U.S. births in 2016 to 27.4% in 2024, making them the largest single contributor to the overall shift. Hispanic women were also the only major group to see growth in both the number of births and their share of total births during the study period.

Asian Americans, while representing a smaller share of total U.S. births, are also contributing to the nation's shifting birth patterns. The Asian American population has more than doubled since 2000, making it one of the fastest-growing racial groups in the country, according to the Pew Research Center. Provisional federal data show births to Asian mothers increased in 2024, even as overall U.S. fertility remained near record lows.

Remembering Rev. Jesse Jackson

As the nation marks the centennial of Black History Month, we are also mourning one of its most consequential voices for justice. Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. died on Feb. 17 at the age of 84, marking the end of an era not only for Black America, but for a broader, hard-won democratic tradition he worked for more than six decades to advance.

Born in Greenville, South Carolina, Jackson later moved to Chicago where he would found Operation PUSH, the organization that became the base of his public life. His politics found their fullest national expression at the 1988 Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, where his “Keep Hope Alive” address cemented his belief that moral conviction must be converted into organized political power. Though widely recalled as a protégé of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., his most durable contribution may be the Rainbow Coalition, which he built to draw in communities that had long been kept outside the mainstream of American political life.

Asian American solidarity

That coalition’s reach was perhaps most tangible in Jackson’s early alliance with Asian Americans. In 1984, while much of the country had moved on from the killing of Vincent Chin two years prior, Jackson traveled to San Francisco’s Chinatown and stood at a public rally beside Lily Chin, the victim’s mother. His remarks that day did not treat the murder as an isolated crime. Instead, he connected the killing to the broader trend of racial violence in America, citing the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till as evidence that the hatred threatening Black lives and Asian American lives emanated from the same source.

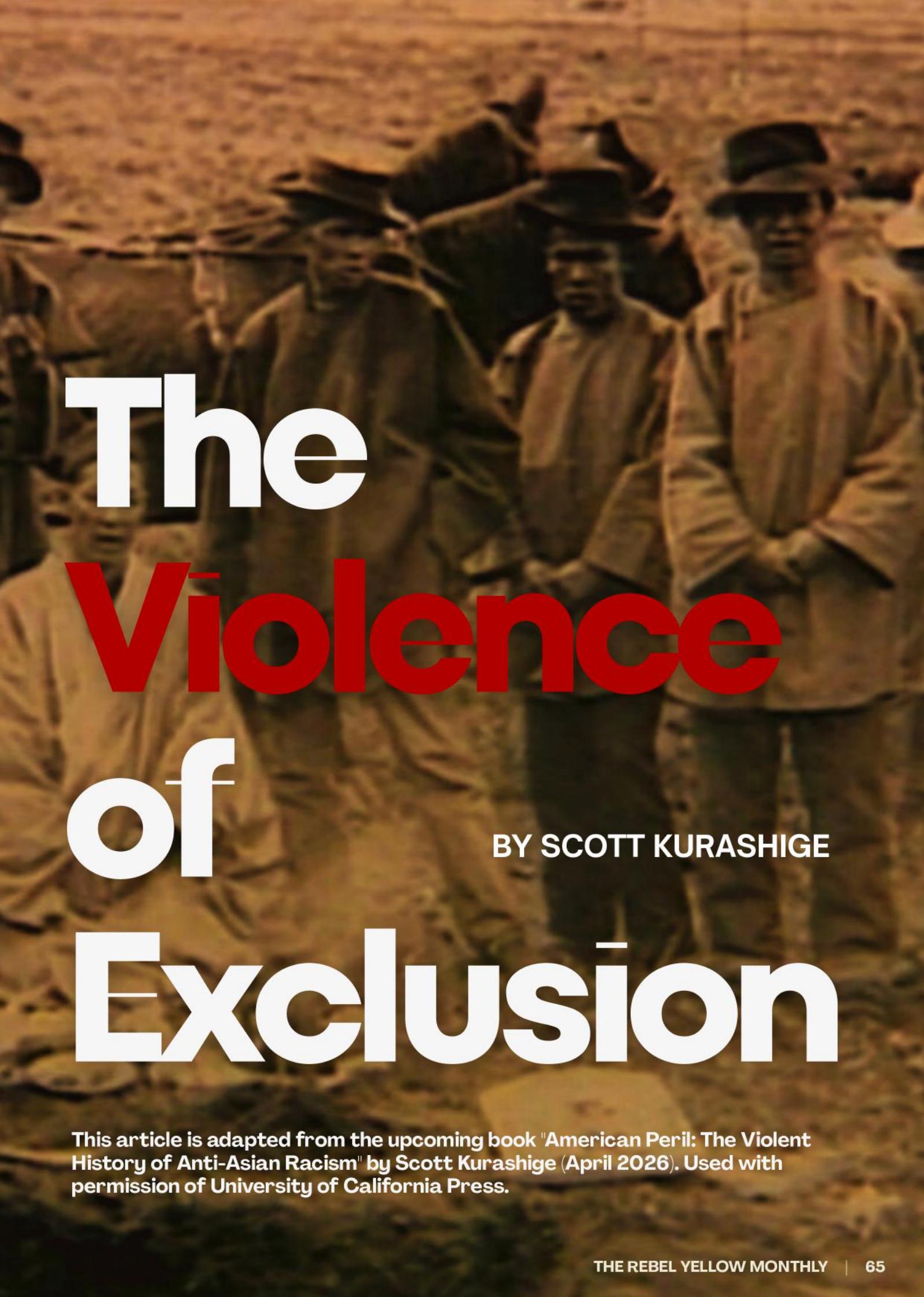
That conviction carried directly into how he ran for president. Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign gave AAPI organizers real operational authority, with Eddie Wong serving as National Field Director. It was a concrete demonstration that the Rainbow Coalition's inclusivity was not symbolic, but substantive for communities that had rarely seen themselves reflected in a national campaign.

Legacy remembered

Thousands filed past his casket during two days of public visitation at Rainbow PUSH Coalition headquarters in Chicago. His remains then made their way back to South Carolina, where he will lie in state at the Columbia Statehouse. We see a homecoming both solemn and fitting for a man who spent a lifetime insisting that the margins of American life deserved a place at its center.



The Statehouse stop brings the arc of his life full circle. In July 1960, an 18-year-old Jackson was among the “Greenville Eight” who staged a sit-in at the whites-only Greenville County Public Library. Sixty-six years later, the state that shaped him will honor him in its most solemn chamber, with Gov. Henry McMaster ordering flags to fly at half-staff. Today, his journey stands as a testament to what sustained, cross-community organizing can accomplish.



The Violence of Exclusion

BY SCOTT KURASHIGE

This article is adapted from the upcoming book "American Peril: The Violent History of Anti-Asian Racism" by Scott Kurashige (April 2026). Used with permission of University of California Press.

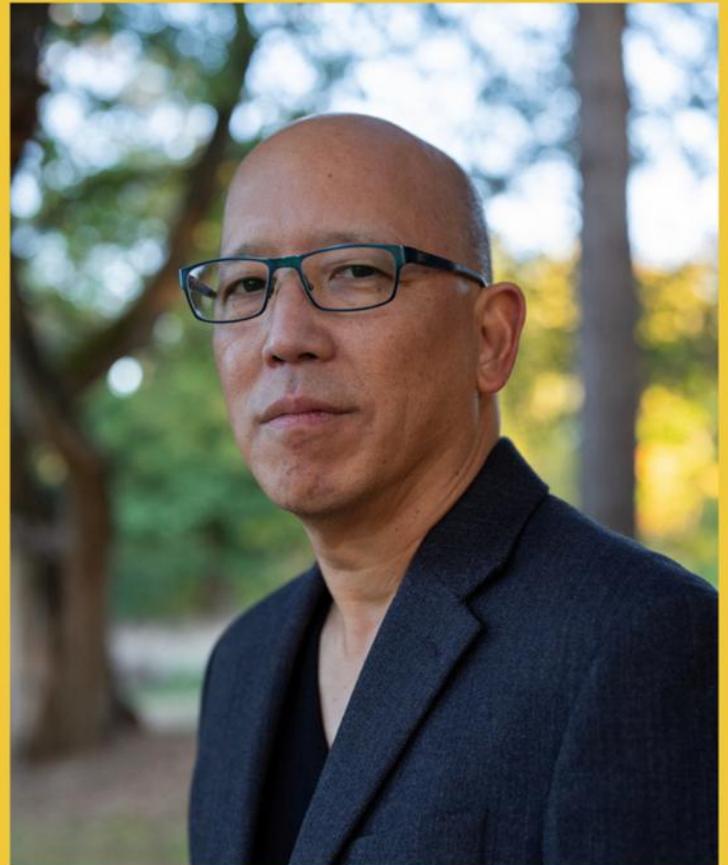
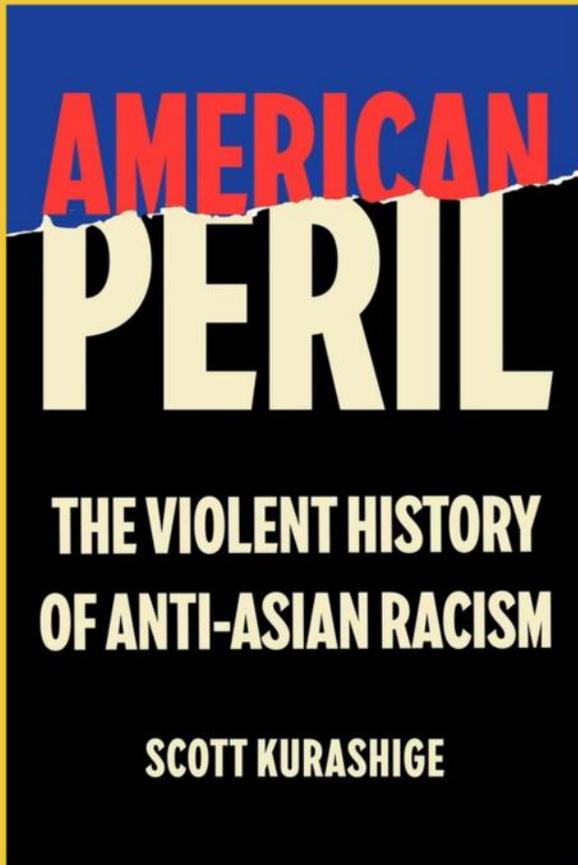
In August 1885, a group of white workers demanded the removal of all Chinese immigrants who were mining with them in Rock Springs, a town of one thousand residents in Wyoming Territory. Around six hundred Chinese worked the mines—a large concentration for a site roughly a thousand-mile trek from San Francisco.

More than three decades earlier, the discovery of gold in California had drawn the first major wave of migrants to the United States from China. While many hoped to discover riches in the land they called “Gold Mountain,” the majority were relegated to arduous jobs at low wages and without the rights or protections of citizenship. The Chinese in Rock Springs were neither gold miners nor independent prospectors. They were hired by the Union Pacific railroad company to mine coal to fuel steam-powered locomotives.



If an American student learns only a handful of things about Asian American history, one of the most common tidbits is that “the Chinese built the railroads.” We need to look beyond the technological milestone, however, to consider the perspective of labor history.

More than ten thousand Chinese worked for the Central Pacific Railroad, which the government had commissioned to build the transcontinental railroad starting in Sacramento and going east. In 1869, they famously met up with the mostly Irish workers hired by the Union Pacific, in Promontory Point, Utah, where the two lines were joined. But there was little to celebrate for the Chinese workers, many of whom had perished from the harsh weather and hazards of construction. Nearly all who survived became abruptly unemployed. They were not even afforded a free ride back to California on the tracks they had laid. But this corresponded with the promoters’ xenophobic rationale for the transcontinental railroad’s construction: It was urgently needed to boost settlement of whites in the U.S. West and restore order in the face of an overseas invasion of Celestials.



As with their hiring of railroad construction crews, the Union Pacific had initially employed white workers, primarily immigrants, to mine bituminous coal at Rock Springs starting in 1868, on land expropriated from the Shoshone. This was an era of intense class conflict that was intertwined with unbridled anti-Asian racism.

As decreasing yields cut into corporate profits, the company hired the first group of Chinese in 1875, when they were brought in to break a strike by white workers. Still, a relatively peaceful coexistence emerged over the next eight years, largely because the Chinese workers agreed to stay out of the higher-yield coal pits reserved for whites.

Tension resurfaced in 1883. As greater and greater amounts of labor were needed to extract diminishing yields of coal, continued white migration to the West put further downward pressure on wages. In response, the Knights of Labor moved to organize the coal miners—but accepted only white workers as members. Nonetheless, the union demanded that the Chinese support their actions.

Lines of segregation hardened in Rock Springs—a company town split into two distinct residential quarters: “Whitemen’s Town” and “Chinatown.” By the summer of 1885, there were nearly twice as many Chinese workers as whites, who complained that the company’s practices were creating an entire workforce of so-called coolies. A management representative insisted that Chinese would need to be hired until the strikes ceased and the white workers respected the company’s authority.

Variations of this scenario occurred throughout the American West in towns where Asian immigrants were employed between the 1850s and the 1930s. Asians simultaneously became a useful tool for capitalism, a cheap source of ultimately disposable labor, and “the indispensable enemy” (to quote historian Alexander Saxton) of white agitators and demagogic politicians.

Hostilities erupted in 1885, exploding the trope of the West as a “safety valve” for the social conflicts of the nation’s densely settled areas east of the Mississippi. In Wyoming, white labor organizers developed a plan to drive out the Chinese miners, starting with the town of Carbon. But the Rock Springs workers jumped the gun.

On the morning of September 2, 1885, Leo Qarqwang was working Coal Pit Number Six with a small group of Chinese miners. Claiming he had violated a whites-only space, a dozen or more whites moved to halt operations, forcing him and others out. They beat Leo over the head with a shovel and wounded another Chinese miner so badly that he later died.

That pit was relatively far from town, but the fury reached Chinatown by afternoon. Armed to the teeth with guns and knives, a much larger group of seventy-five to one hundred whites gathered. They issued a stern warning: You have one hour to get out. But some began assaulting the Chinese residents within thirty minutes of the order to vacate.



The primary account of the massacre that transpired comes from a statement signed by 559 Chinese workers at Rock Springs. Lor Sun Kit survived two shots in the arm and back. The first reported dead was Leo Dye Bah, a fifty-six-year-old immigrant with a wife and two children in China. He was shot through the chest, breaking his sternum. The mob killed Yip Ah Marn, who was thirty-eight and also had a wife and two children in China. Unarmed and defenseless, the Chinese community was caught “like a herd of frightened deer that let the huntsmen surround and kill them.”

Many tried to flee. Some were beaten. Others were robbed. At least fifteen were shot. White women joined the mob and engaged in shooting alongside the men. Amid vows from whites to kill all the Chinese, Chinatown was burned nearly to the ground. Some who hid inside for safety or were too infirm to flee were burned alive. The mob may also have thrown dead or wounded victims into the fire. Some who escaped to the hills died for lack of food or water. One man reportedly committed suicide after losing his wife and baby.

By September 8, when President Grover Cleveland ordered troops into Rock Springs, many of the survivors had fled a hundred miles away to another company town, Evanston, with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The racist lynch mob killed twenty-eight Chinese and wounded fifteen—some of whom later died.

Although sixteen whites were arrested, none were indicted by the grand jury. One influential white witness scurrilously blamed the Chinese for starting the deadly fires. Indeed, with the massacre covered by newspapers nationwide, many white Americans sided with the lynch mob.

Incredibly, the head of the Knights of Labor determined that his union was totally blameless. “The recent assault upon the Chinese at Rock Springs,” he declared, “is but the outcome of the feeling caused by the indifference of our lawmakers to the just demands of the people for relief.”

The company, nevertheless, remained determined to break the white workers’ union. With federal troops becoming a long-standing presence, the Union Pacific fired the mob and strike leaders and insisted on bringing back the Chinese workers. In a sign of both resilience and desperation, 250 Chinese returned to the mines at Rock Springs within three weeks of the massacre. When whites refused to work with them, the bosses recruited more Chinese laborers. By the end of 1885, mining operations were back to full capacity, but Chinese now outnumbered whites by more than five to one.

The Rock Springs massacre remains one of the worst mass murders of Asians in the continental United States by a racist mob. In terms of the number killed, it is rivaled only by the Hells Canyon massacre on May 25, 1887.

A group of white men, led by a West Virginian transplant named Bruce “Blue” Evans, plotted a robbery of Chinese prospectors as they were mining for gold along the Snake River. It was a treacherous stretch, in Oregon near the Idaho border, where others dared not go. But the hoodlums chose not to rob and dash, even though they were in a remote area and would have been difficult to trace. The gang of eight whites, including a boy of only fifteen, slaughtered as many as thirty-four Chinese. Consequently, author R. Gregory Nokes concluded that racism must have influenced their actions.

The public knew nothing of the massacre until a body mysteriously appeared downstream several weeks later. More surfaced in the days that followed. All the suspects either were found innocent or fled to Canada.



This outcome was not surprising, Nokes concluded, given that nothing more than a “half-hearted” investigation took place. For over a hundred years, the authorities buried the evidence until a county clerk found a handful of the surviving documents. We still do not even know most of the victims’ names.

Given how much has been lost to history, the statement by the survivors at Rock Springs serves as a broader comment on the horrors of the exclusion era:

We never thought that the subjects of a nation entitled by treaty to the rights and privileges of the most favored nation could, in a country so highly civilized like this, so unexpectedly suffer the cruelty and wrong of being unjustly put to death, or of being wounded and left without the means of cure, or being abandoned to poverty, hunger, and cold, and without the means to betake themselves elsewhere.

Too often, episodes like this are presented as isolated incidents of anti-Asian violence strung along a historical timeline. This narrow view prevents us from seeing Chinese exclusion not simply as an event or a law but as a transnational process that played out over decades and shaped the life chances and experiences of Asian Americans broadly speaking.

From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, anti-Asian racism intensified in concert with the rise of American capitalism and imperialism. Most immediately, exclusion entailed banning Asian migrants from entering the United States and barred those here from becoming naturalized citizens. But the effects of exclusion were sweeping in scope, limiting the prospects of Asian immigrants and their American-born descendants from full access to jobs, housing, political representation, and other civil rights.

Violence and exclusion went hand in hand. Denying fundamental rights to Asian Americans, such as the right to testify in court or equal protection from the police, rendered them vulnerable to racist assaults while granting white perpetrators effective immunity. At the same time, anti-Asian agitators deployed violence to drum up support for their causes. White labor organizers and mob leaders used peer pressure to gain adherents, while making an example of those who did not come along. Anti-Asian riots and massacres further served to define Asians as a social problem for white employers and policymakers to address. And through 1942, these violent, racist tactics repeatedly proved effective. Both major political parties closed ranks to support Chinese and Asian exclusion, Japanese American incarceration, and other measures intended to win over white voters and buy social peace.

Exclusion would define the struggles of Chinese and all Asian immigrants and their descendants deep into the twentieth century, and the Progressive Era brought a new phase of anti-Asian violence. The lynchings and pogroms that marked the drive for Chinese exclusion would not end anytime soon, though they would occur with less frequency within the United States as the anti-Asian racism of the Wild West adapted to the regulatory state. The violence did not disappear; it was bureaucratized—turned into inspections, interrogations, detentions, and deportations, a Kafkaesque machinery that could function as nothing more than a slower form of killing.

Tragically, the frontier justice of the nineteenth century was anything but extinct. And the same thirst for conquest at the heart of Manifest Destiny ultimately led America overseas, where the pursuit of a global empire would bring violence and mass murder to a whole new level.

BLACKPINK - "GO"

BLACKPINK blasts off into their "Deadline" era with "GO," an intergalactic anthem that fuses heavy EDM bass with pure main character energy. This sci-fi-infused track is a high-stakes reminder that the queens still own the throne, delivering a blockbuster sound that's truly out of this world. It's the ultimate soundtrack for anyone ready to conquer the galaxy!

IVE - "REVIVE+"

We mentioned this last time, but now IVE is actually back with "REVIVE+," a 12-track masterpiece that elevates their signature self-love to a much bolder, grander sound. We're sucked in the cinematic gravity of "Blackhole" (Do NOT miss out the MV!) and the high-voltage energy of "Bang Bang," both of which anchor the album's infectious vibe. And featuring six stunning solos that let every member shine, it's a total musical takeover that proves why they're K-pop's IT girls.

PICKS

“Blood Over Bright Haven”

M.L. Wang

Better late than never! We recently stepped into the industrial utopia of Tiran, where magic is basically high-stakes computer coding and glass ceilings are meant to be shattered by the brilliant, ambitious Sciona. This dark academia standalone pairs a first-of-her-kind highmage with a mysterious janitor to uncover a magical secret so dark it puts every utopia trope to shame. It’s an unflinching exploration of the literal cost of progress that left our hearts racing and our (well, some of our) moral compass spinning!

“From Florida’s Finest Delu/xxx”

Sailorr

Sailorr — Vietnamese American artist Kayla Le from Jacksonville, Florida — is a singer-songwriter to add to your playlist.

Give a listen to catchy, melodic R&B bangers like “Rent Free,” “Sincerity” and “Pookie’s Requiem” from her debut album to understand why. She also proudly flaunts her Vietnamese heritage, sometimes sporting black grills and ao dais during her performances.

“The Bluff”

Priyanka Chopra Jonas steps into full action-hero mode in “The Bluff,” a seafaring adventure set in the 19th-century Caribbean that leans into sword fights, survival, and a mother-daughter core rather than pure spectacle. It’s a fun shift from her recent spy roles, giving her a physically demanding lead in a genre that rarely centers South Asian women. If you’re in the mood for something big, glossy, and star-driven, it’s on Amazon Prime.

“American Peril: The Violent History of Anti-Asian Racism”

“American Peril” (out April 7 from University of California Press) is the kind of history book that feels immediately present-tense, tracing how anti-Asian violence is not episodic but systemic and repeatedly erased from the national story. Author Scott Kurashige moves from the 19th century to the pandemic era with clarity and momentum, making it hard to look at current events the same way once you see the through line. It reads less like an academic text and more like a recovery of memory that was never supposed to surface.

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