



Coming Out

LIVING AUTHENTICALLY

as **LGBTQ Asian** and
Pacific Islander Americans

NGAPIA



A FEDERATION
OF LGBTQ
ASIAN AMERICAN
SOUTH ASIAN
SOUTHEAST ASIAN
& PACIFIC ISLANDER
ORGANIZATIONS



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN
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To access this resource
online and in additional
languages, please visit:

hrc.im/APIComingOut

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Introduction



No matter who we are or whom we love, all of us deserve the right to live out our lives genuinely, completely and honestly.

**COMING
OUT IS A
PERSONAL
CHOICE**

A teal-colored circular graphic is positioned in the top-left corner of the page, partially cut off by the edge.

Our race, ethnicity, language, religion, cultural dress, sexual orientation or gender identity should never be barriers to us living our full lives. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people, coming out is often a significant part of reclaiming this right and living authentically.

Coming out is a personal choice, and the lifelong coming out experience is different for everybody. For those of us who identify as LGBTQ and as people of color, it can often feel like we are living at the cusp of an intersection that is challenging to manage. For many Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, coming out is a lifelong process that can require a different approach because of cultural norms or traditions that emphasize duty to family and community. This can make the coming out process more complex to navigate.

When embarking on your own coming out journey, it is important to create a safe space for yourself and evaluate your own unique circumstances. Look for supportive people to whom you can turn during times of need, especially if you might face disapproval or rejection from your family, friends or community. Depending on your individual situation, pick a place and time where you feel the most comfortable and safe to come out.

In too many places, LGBTQ people who live openly can face discrimination and even violence. If you fear this mistreatment, it is important to remember that there is nothing wrong with you.

The problem is not you.

The problem is the prejudice and discrimination that many of us learn from our society and our cultures.

Stay patient, persistent and positive, and remember to seek out resources and support from those who affirm your identity.


You are not alone:

Know that there is a history of resilience in our community of LGBTQ API Americans, family members and allies who support and love you exactly as you are.

Coming Out for API Americans



Although API Americans come from various cultural backgrounds, those who come out as LGBTQ often share similar experiences and challenges.



Some who were raised in religious communities must reconcile themselves with traditions and teachings that may condemn or otherwise reject LGBTQ identities. Others, especially those who are immigrants or were raised in immigrant families, must grapple with multicultural identities and familial expectations. Language differences can make it difficult to find relevant or relatable resources and support, and a lack of LGBTQ API representation in media, entertainment and politics perpetuates invisibility.

Many LGBTQ people report that after coming out, they are able to communicate better with their family and friends.


While the LGBTQ API experience is as varied and diverse as the many cultures within our community, in the following sections we will discuss common issues during the coming out process.



Family Acceptance



Although coming out to family is difficult for many LGBTQ people, it can pose additional challenges for those who grow up in traditional API cultures that emphasize parental sacrifice and familial duty.



Given that more than 6 in 10 API Americans are immigrants, many API youth are raised by parents who left their home countries, family and friends in search of a better life. These parents work hard to ensure that their children have greater educational and occupational opportunities.

Growing up amid these significant sacrifices, API American youth often feel indebted to their parents. They fear disappointing their parents, and will avoid doing anything that might humiliate them or bring shame upon the family among the wider community. Especially in cultures that stress familial duty or conformity, LGBTQ API youth can carry a weight of expectations rooted in traditions that define success through rigid gendered norms. This sense of duty may be passed along to future generations and be reinforced across communities.

Coming out is a deeply personal decision, but many LGBTQ API people must also contend with the impact this may have on others in their families and wider community, including:

**THE
ANCESTORS
WHO BRING US
GOOD FORTUNE**

**OUR
FAMILY LINE
AND GOOD
NAME**

**EXTENDED
FAMILY
MEMBERS**

**RELATIVES
“BACK HOME”
IN OUR
COUNTRIES
OF ORIGIN**

Though LGBTQ acceptance has seen encouraging developments throughout Asia and the Pacific Islands, LGBTQ people still face stigma in many countries and cultures. Some people believe that being LGBTQ brings shame upon their family. **It's important to know that your LGBTQ identity should not be the cause of shame or pain. Pain comes from the prejudices around you, not from who you are or who you love.**

As LGBTQ people, we strive to live our lives authentically, completely and honestly. We want our parents and other loved ones to share in our joys. To meet, accept and love our same-sex partners. To recognize us fully for our gender identities. To understand that our children are our parents' grandchildren. We want their support and love.

Many LGBTQ APIs are fearful that if they come out to their parents, they will be disowned, shunned or thrown out of the home. That their parents will no longer financially support them.

While these are possibilities,

countless LGBTQ APIs have come out to their parents and were not abandoned.

It is typical for an API parent to initially say, "I am not happy about it but you are still my child." At the same time, only you can determine when or how is the best time or way to come out to your parents. Only you can fully evaluate your own physical safety, emotional support system and financial circumstances. Although some LGBTQ APIs are immediately accepted by their families, it is also not uncommon for coming out to family members — especially parents — to take several years. You may even need to come out multiple times.

“I was terrified of coming out to my family. The potential for rejection or being thrown out of the house all seemed like very real possibilities. When I finally told my mom, she was silent for a few very awkward moments. But then she told me that although it would be difficult for her to handle and understand, she would support me because, she said, ‘You’re my son, and I love you. Nothing can change that.’”

– Prateek Choudhary

Reactions Family Members May Have



The initial coming out announcement can be uncomfortable or scary for all parties involved.

It's important to know that the reaction family members have at first may change over time.

Family members usually require time to work through the concerns and fears they have regarding the unfamiliar or unknown.

“When my son first came out to me, I retreated into shame, sadness and fear as a mother who failed in her most important responsibility. But I love my child and have never stopped loving him. And it is this love that has helped me process through my negative feelings to stand by Aiden and watch him successfully live his life as his true self. He makes me so proud.”

– Japanese American mother Marsha Aizumi

Guilt and shame are common initial feelings among parents. Amid the confusion, and confronted with what they see as a new reality, some family members can erroneously believe that children are or “became” LGBTQ because they:

**MOVED TO
AND/OR
WERE RAISED
IN THE U.S.**

**ATTENDED
U.S.
SCHOOLS**

**LIVE IN BIG
CITIES WHERE
THERE A LOT OF
LGBTQ PEOPLE**

**HAVE
LGBTQ
FRIENDS**

In the absence of comprehensive education and/or exposure to LGBTQ people, parents sometimes mistakenly think being LGBTQ is a choice, a preference or a phase.

This process can be especially challenging for immigrant parents who were raised in places where information about LGBTQ identities was less widely available. It can be further exacerbated by language barriers that make it challenging to directly translate LGBTQ terminology and/or make it impossible to find equivalent words to describe LGBTQ identities and experiences.

Some facts:

Parents cannot, and did not, “turn” their children LGBTQ because of some parenting mistake. Parents and their LGBTQ child have done nothing wrong; in fact, there is nothing wrong.

There are no known environmental factors that “cause” a person to be LGBTQ.

LGBTQ people generally do not choose their sexual orientations or gender identity. Many LGBTQ people become aware that they are different at an early age.

The vast majority of LGBTQ people go on to live successful, happy and healthy lives – especially when they are embraced for who they are and who they love.

Another common reaction that family members have is fear. They may be afraid that their child will suffer and be mistreated as a result of their LGBTQ identity.

It is important for families to know that supporting their child and providing a safe haven for them is the greatest gift they can give to their child to build strength in the face of prejudices or challenges that their child may face in their lives.



“When I came out, I was 21 and my parents spent three months at first shocked and then they joined PFLAG... they became so political and they realized that being gay wasn’t a huge crisis that couldn’t be overcome. They needed to be educated so they took steps to do that; it’s nice to have that support.”

– Openly lesbian actor and model Jenny Shimizu on her parents’ initial reactions and journey through acceptance

Supporting Family Members in Their Process



There are several resources to educate parents and other family members about LGBTQ identities, including overcoming myths or misconceptions.

During this sensitive time, stay strong and acknowledge their feelings. But also remember to honor and assert your own feelings. Your parents may hope that one day you will change. Over time, it is quite common for parents to move from feelings of disappointment and shame, to simple tolerance, to understanding and finally acceptance.

Many parents move beyond acceptance to fully embracing and celebrating their LGBTQ children, both in public and private.

The Coming Out Continuum



“We are concerned about our family and the huge fear of rejection we may face. It’s true that many Asian parents tend to be very conservative and protective of their children. But once you can get them behind their kids, they will take on the world!”

– Trinity Ordona, longtime activist for LGBTQ rights



Religion & Faith



Around the world, more and more faith traditions are now openly embracing LGBTQ people both in places of worship and in the larger community.

Many LGBTQ APIs are raised in Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, Islamic, Sikh or other faith traditions, each with varying levels of LGBTQ acceptance and affirmation both in the U.S. and abroad. Moreover, **millions of LGBTQ people are themselves people of faith or learning to reconcile their own identities with beliefs and traditions of their families and communities.**

Some South Asian and Pacific traditions have long histories of scriptural inclusion of LGBTQ identities and multiple perspectives of God(s), Goddess(es) and Divine Spirits. Many other faiths that were once non-affirming now recognize that to embrace LGBTQ people is to emphasize strong religious and spiritual values such as compassion, love and a belief to treat others how one would like to be treated.

Countless congregations openly welcome and affirm their LGBTQ members, including blessing their weddings and welcoming full participation in worship and religious activities.

Ultimately, only you can decide how you practice your faith – and the role that faith plays in your life with regard to your sexual orientation or gender identity. We also recognize that LGBTQ family acceptance is often influenced by religious beliefs or traditions and cultural contexts.

As you approach this topic individually, or with your family and friends, you might wish to pursue some of the following suggestions and resources:

Identify supportive and allied members in your existing religious community who may be able to provide assistance should you decide to come out.

Read the stories or writings of other LGBTQ people and allies from your same denomination, ethnic or racial backgrounds to learn from their faith journeys.

Explore LGBTQ-affirming places of worship and congregations.

Seek support from LGBTQ API religious organizations that may be able to direct you to others who have had similar experiences.



Just like any group of people, religious communities vary greatly in their attitudes and level of inclusion of LGBTQ people, even within the same denomination or sect.

Moreover, the number of LGBTQ-affirming religious communities across the country is steadily increasing, and that is true among API religious communities as well. Remember, only you can decide the degree to which faith plays a role in your life and how you choose to integrate it with living an authentic life as an LGBTQ person.

To learn more, visit [*HRC's Religion & Faith resources*](#).

LGBTQ API Immigrants



The immigrant experience is intricately tied with the lived experiences of many LGBTQ API Americans.

API Americans are the nation's fastest growing ethnic or racial group, largely as a result of immigration.

The Williams Institute at UCLA
School of Law found that there are

more than
1 million
LGBTQ
immigrants

in the U.S., including 267,000
undocumented immigrants.
Approximately 40,000 are LGBTQ API
undocumented immigrants.

An estimated

22.5 million

**Asians and
Pacific Islanders**

live in the U.S.,
including

roughly

6 in 10
**who are
foreign-born**

approximately

1.45 million
**who are
undocumented,
comprising 1 in 10
API immigrants**

LGBTQ API immigrants in the U.S. include those who are:

Citizens and lawful permanent residents.

**On a visa for professional workers (H-1B)
or students (F1).**

Undocumented or overstayed a visa.

**Young people who entered the U.S. as
children, including DREAMers.**

All seek the opportunity to better their lives in the U.S., to be safe from discrimination and to be free to live their full lives as LGBTQ people.


Many LGBTQ API immigrants come from countries that may be less accepting or even intolerant of LGBTQ people. In some countries, LGBTQ identities are still criminalized. In too many places, LGBTQ people are censored, jailed, tortured or even put to death. Others might come from conformist societies in which the LGBTQ community may be shunned or ostracized.

For LGBTQ API immigrants in the U.S.:

**Coming out does not lead to deportation or
visa revocation.**

**It may be possible to obtain a Green Card
through political asylum if LGBTQ people
are persecuted in a person's country of
origin. (Consult with an attorney.)**

**LGBTQ immigrants, whether undocumented
or documented, who fall in love with
American citizens can legally marry, and the
U.S. citizen can petition for their spouse to
remain in the U.S. and become a citizen.
(Consult with an attorney.)**



Unfortunately, some LGBTQ API people still encounter racial profiling when entering government buildings or boarding planes. Sometimes their gender presentation and/or perceived differences from their gender-marker on their IDs, in combination with their ethnic, racial or religious presentation, may trigger heightened scrutiny.

It is important to be vigilant, careful and aware of potential discrimination.

It is equally important to identify supportive friends, family and community that affirm who you are, regardless of where you were born or how you choose to live out your identities.



Living in a Bicultural World



For many API Americans, especially those who are immigrants or the children of immigrants, it can feel like living in a bicultural world, where you must grapple with norms and expectations of both American and API American cultures.

Determining when, if and how to work through these overlapping realities – especially if they conflict – may first require identifying what is important to you personally. Indeed, the role your LGBTQ identity plays in relation with your API identity may vary depending on the context and your current situation.

Part of this often means engaging with bilinguality and cross-cultural communication. This may include speaking two or more languages with varying levels of regularity, whether at home, in places of worship, when among family or at community events. **It can already be difficult for many people to express their sexual orientation or gender identity, especially when they are first coming out.**

For those of us who must express it across multiple languages or cultures, it can be even more challenging.

For API youth who speak a primary language different than their parents, this linguistic barrier can make it even harder to express feelings or emotions. Moreover, in some languages, there may not be equivalent translations of LGBTQ terminology or concepts.

When confronted with these challenges, you might consider:

Seeking out LGBTQ-affirming resources specific to your native language and/or the language of your parents.

Getting assistance from supportive loved ones who can help translate or facilitate difficult conversations across languages.

Looking for LGBTQ-affirming stories and media specific to your native language and/or country of heritage or origin; international and culturally specific movies, TV shows, online videos and other media featuring LGBTQ people are increasingly accessible in the digital era.

Reading the stories of LGBTQ API people and other LGBTQ people of color who learned how to navigate their own bicultural identities.

Finding community with others of a similar background who are also LGBTQ and/or allies, which you may find through in-person support groups, organizations like the ones listed at the end of this guide and online communities.

Just as there is no singular American or API American experience,

there is no single way to live out your own ethnic or racial identity.

Especially in the absence of prominent LGBTQ figures in Asia and the Pacific Islands, it can sometimes feel like LGBTQ identities are not compatible with your API identity. Above all, know that there is no specific API “mold” you have to fit, even as you may feel pressure from your family or community. Being LGBTQ does not make you any “less” Asian, Pacific Islander or any other national heritage or ethnic or racial identity you may hold.

“I didn’t want to come out to my mom in English. I came out to her in Urdu because I wanted her to know that coming to terms with my orientation was solely about me and not about my attending Berkeley or becoming Americanized.”

– Aleem Raja, former board member of Trikone, a San Francisco non-profit organization for LGBTQ people of South Asian descent

Other Coming Out Considerations



Coming Out at School

Coming Out at Work

Being an Ally

Coming Out at School

Coming out at school can be a significant decision for many young people, especially in communities or at campuses where LGBTQ people may not yet be fully embraced. At the same time, many school districts, colleges and universities actively and openly support their LGBTQ students, faculty and staff.

Before deciding to come out at school, you may first consider:

- Does your city, state, school district or university have non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies to protect LGBTQ students, faculty and staff?
- If you are not fully out in your community or to your family, can your physical safety and privacy be guaranteed if you are out at school? For some college students who rely on their parents for financial support, you may need to carefully weigh your specific circumstances when coming out.
- Can you seek out classmates, teachers, counselors and other adults at school whom you can trust and go to for support during your coming out process?
- Does your school have a dedicated safe space or LGBTQ-affirming organizations, including a Queer Straight Alliance, LGBTQ resource center or LGBTQ & API organizations?

For more information about this topic, please refer to Lamda Legal's [Know Your Rights](#) for LGBTQ teens and young adults in school.

Coming Out at Work

Just as in other facets of life, being open at work can be a daunting challenge. But it can also relieve the daily stress of hiding who you are. At the same time, however, no one wants to put their job security or opportunity for advancement in jeopardy.

Before choosing to come out at work, you may first consider:

- Does your employer have a formal non-discrimination policy that specifically covers sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression? Check the official Equal Employment Opportunity statement (usually found on the company website and in the employee handbook).
- Does your state or locality have a non-discrimination law including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?
- Is your company ranked on the Human Rights Campaign [Corporate Equality Index](#)? If so, what rating has it earned?
- Are your employer's health benefits fully LGBTQ-inclusive, including covering transition-related health care and domestic partner benefits?
- What is the overall climate in your workplace, including whether other LGBTQ people are out in the office and whether co-workers make derogatory or supportive comments about LGBTQ people?

For more information about this topic, please refer to HRC's [Coming Out at Work](#) and Workplace Equality resources.



Being an Ally

If you have a friend, family member or co-worker who is coming out, you can help them by being a supportive ally. **However, be aware that they are the only person who can make the decision about how and when to come out with their LGBTQ identity.**

You can help by researching and sharing culturally competent, linguistically appropriate resources, making introductions to others who are LGBTQ and allies and speaking up when others make anti-LGBTQ jokes and gender assumptions. You can be an advocate for LGBTQ equality and fairness. You can speak out. Educate others, especially those for whom LGBTQ identities may be unfamiliar. Share information. We must all work together to build a better world that embraces diversity and personal freedom. To learn more about how you can get involved, visit HRC's [ally](#) resources.

“As both an individual, and as an educator, I have experienced and witnessed bullying in its many forms. And as the proud *jichan*, or grandpa, of a transgender grandchild, I hope that my granddaughter can feel safe going to school without fear of being bullied. I refuse to be a bystander while millions of people are dealing with the effects of bullying on a daily basis.”

– Japanese American Representative Mike Honda (D-CA), founding member and Vice Chair of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus



At the Intersections of Race and the LGBTQ Community



Racial discrimination continues to be a pervasive issue in our society, and LGBTQ people of color often must face heightened challenges in many facets of daily life.

“Being gay and Asian in America is like fighting a two-front battle. One not only has to fight racism and homophobia in society in general, but also stereotypes and lack of representation in the gay community. With more awareness of gay Asian issues, and as more Asians become involved, I have confidence that there will be victory.”

– Edward Kai Chiu

Unfortunately, just as it is in any community, the LGBTQ community is not untouched by these issues — and as you seek love and acceptance there may be times where you may have to confront that reality.

As you choose to come out and live authentically in your own way, you may find it helpful to surround yourself with others who recognize and affirm your identities — including both API and LGBTQ. Many LGBTQ people, including those who may not find full support among our families or communities of heritage, find love and support from “chosen family,” who fully embrace us for who we are.

Most importantly, know that you are not alone.

Far beyond the proud community of LGBTQ API Americans, there are many who stand with you and who will accept you for who you are.

LGBTQ API

History and Culture



A Historical Appreciation of Sexual and Gender Diversity in Asia and the Pacific Islands

Although many LGBTQ API people still face discrimination and persecution in many countries, LGBTQ people have existed and been well-documented throughout history in Asia and the Pacific Islands.

In **China**, as far back as the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), the Golden Orchid Society (*Jinglanhui*) was a women's organization that celebrated "passionate friendships" and embraced same-sex relationships between women. Meanwhile, many regard Guanyin, the "Goddess of Mercy" to be a transgender deity.

Japan has a well-documented history of same-sex relations, including among the samurai and Buddhist monks.

Korea had *Hwarang* warriors, "flower boys of Silla," the dynasty that united the Korean Peninsula in 7th century. These elite archers who dressed in long flowing gowns have been interpreted by many historians to hold LGBTQ identities.

In **South Asia**, the term *Hijra* includes transgender people, intersex people and non-binary people. These individuals, who have been well documented since antiquity, are officially recognized today by governments in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

Many Asian cultures have long had terms for LGBTQ individuals who may not fit within Western or other traditionally binary gender structures. These terms, sometimes treated as a third gender, include *phet thi sam* in **Thailand**, *meti* in **Nepal**, the *khanith* in the **Arabian Peninsula**, *bakla* in the **Philippines** and *mak nyah* in **Malaysia**.

Meanwhile, the **Pacific Islands** have a multitude of broadly LGBTQ traditions and identities, including *mahu* in **Hawai'i**, *fa'afafine* in **Samoa**, *fakaleiti* in **Tonga**, *vaka sa lewa lewa* in **Fiji**, *rae rae* in **Tahiti**, *fafafine* in **Niue**, *akava'ine* in the **Cook Islands** and *whakawahine* among the Maori of **New Zealand**.



LGBTQ Progress in the 21st Century



LGBTQ equality has seen encouraging forward momentum in recent years in Asia and the Pacific Islands, led by the courage and persistence of local activists and allies even in many countries where LGBTQ identities are still ostracized or persecuted.

Taiwan, well-known for hosting the largest annual LGBTQ pride event in Asia, is set to become the first in the region to have marriage equality by 2019, after a constitutional court ruling ordered the government to recognize same-sex marriage. In Japan, several localities have begun registering same-sex partnerships, a clear sign of growing acceptance. Meanwhile, Nepal's Supreme Court ordered the government to "study" the possibility of legalizing marriage equality in a 2007 ruling.

In Southeast Asia, Thailand passed a Gender Equality Act in 2015 prohibiting anti-LGBTQ discrimination and is likely to recognize same-sex relationships in the near future. Although same-sex couples still do not have legal recognition in Vietnam, the country recently repealed a ban on same-sex marriage.



Out elected officials and other leaders provide hope and strength for local LGBTQ communities, including:

Sunil Babu Pant, longtime Nepali LGBTI rights and HIV activist and Asia's first openly LGBTQ national-level legislator.

Geraldine Roman, the first openly transgender woman elected to the Congress of the Philippines.

Manvendra Singh Gohil, an openly gay prince who has been a strong advocate for LGBTQ rights in India and around the world.

Japan's **Tomoya Hosoda**, the world's first openly transgender man elected to public office.

Groundbreaking Japanese politicians **Aya Kamikawa**, a transgender woman, and **Taiga Ishikawa**, a gay man, who both have continuously advocated for LGBTQ rights.

Kanako Otsuji, the first openly LGBTQ member of the Japanese House of Representatives.

Audrey Tang, the first openly transgender cabinet official to serve in Taiwan's Executive Yuan, after she was appointed to lead the government's digital innovation efforts.

Even in countries with limited legal or political progress, emboldened activists and a growing acceptance of LGBTQ identities provide an optimistic outlook for future. For instance, after Chinese social media giant Weibo announced that it would begin censoring LGBTQ-related content, a massive user-led protest by LGBTQ Chinese and allies led to the company reversing its decision.

At the same time, many LGBTQ people in Asia and the Pacific Islands continue to face discrimination and even violence, including recent waves of state-sponsored persecution in Central Asia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iraq and Malaysia. As LGBTQ API Americans and believers of equality, we must continue to stand with communities abroad and advocate for global LGBTQ equality.

Contemporary LGBTQ API American Leaders



Today, we celebrate the myriad stories and contributions of LGBTQ API Americans, who continue to provide leadership, visibility and pride to our diverse community.

In 2012, Representative **Mark Takano** (D-CA), a career educator, became the first openly LGBTQ person of color elected to Congress. Georgia's **Sam Park** similarly became the first openly gay man elected to the state's general assembly in 2016. **Benjamin Cruz**, who made headlines for being openly gay when he was first nominated for judgeship in the 1980s, became the Speaker of the Guam Legislature in 2017. And **Kim Coco Iwamoto**, a descendent of World War II internees, became the nation's highest-ranking openly transgender elected official in 2006 when she was elected to the Hawai'i Board of Education.

In local communities and across the nation, we celebrate the work of advocates like **Geena Rocero, Glenn Magpantay, Mia Frances Yamamoto, Sasanka Jinadasa, Jim Toy, Pauline Park, Ben de Guzman, Urooj Arshad, Cecilia Chung, Dan Choi, Mohan Sundararaj, Pabitra Benjamin, Kham Moua** and **Faisal Alam**, who challenge us to question the bias, discrimination and prejudice that disproportionately affect LGBTQ people of color in America.

We also look to artists and writers like **June Millington, Parvez Sharma, Jose Antonio Vargas, Ghalib Shiraz Dhalla, Helen Zia** and **Kit Yan**, who share our stories and intersectional perspectives through their work. Meanwhile, athletes like **Esera Tuaolo, Amazin LeThi** and **Julie Chu** fight for equality both inside and outside the sports arena.

LGBTQ Stories in Film and Television



Although LGBTQ API Americans are often underrepresented in mass media and entertainment, trailblazing artists continue to pave the way to share our stories.

Celebrities from **Margaret Cho**, **Bryan Chan** and **Alec Mapa**, to **Rex Lee**, **Jenny Shimizu**, **Maulik Pancholy**, **BD Wong** and **Gia Gunn** live proudly, openly and authentically, inspiring others to live their truth and serving as role models for API youth.

Meanwhile, LGBTQ cinema and television are on the rise in Asia and the Pacific Islands, bolstered by the wider accessibility provided by digital platforms. Although LGBTQ films have flourished in the region for decades, mainstream media platforms and networks increasingly feature LGBTQ actors, storylines and themes in Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong, but also in countries where LGBTQ people face greater societal barriers, including China, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Before winning accolades for *Brokeback Mountain*, filmmaker **Ang Lee** created *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), an Oscar-nominated story of a Taiwanese American gay man and cross-cultural family acceptance.

Yuri on Ice, named 2016 Anime of the Year, prominently depicts a same-sex relationship that has drawn praise from fans and international figure skaters alike in one of Japan's most popular sports.

More and more primetime television shows are featuring LGBTQ API characters, including *Code Black*'s Malaya Pineda, *How to Get Away with Murder*'s Oliver Hampton (a HIV-positive character portrayed by openly gay **Conrad Ricamora**), and *Superstore*'s Mateo Liwanag (an undocumented immigrant portrayed by openly gay **Nicos Santos**).

Additional Resources

Educate yourself and others.
Support and resources are readily available.

Family is Still Family – The National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance and Asian Pride Project have many multilingual resources to help API parents who have LGBTQ children. Videos are available in seven Asian languages, translated informational leaflets in 25 Asian and Pacific Islander languages, live local workshops and parent support groups in many cities.
www.familyisstillfamily.org

Out & Equal
www.outandequal.org

PFLAG supports parents, families and friends who support their LGBTQ loved ones. Please visit www.pflag.org/blog/resourcesapifamilies for additional resources specific to Asian Pacific Islander families. Local chapters of PFLAG also offer API-specific resources and support, including chapters in New York City, the California [San Gabriel Valley](#) and [Washington State](#).

The National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance is a federation of local LGBTQ Asian American, South Asian, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander (APIs) organizations that support LGBTQ APIs. www.nqapia.org
Please see below to find resources in your area.

The South

[Asian Queers and Allies \(AQUA\)](#), Durham, NC

[Collective of Houston Asian Americans \(CHAA\)](#)

[Trikone](#) – Atlanta, GA

[Khush Texas](#), Austin, TX

[VAYLA](#) – New Orleans

Midwest

[Invisible-to-Invincible \(i2i\): Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago](#)

[Trikone](#) – Chicago

[Freedom Inc.](#) – Madison, WI

Mid-Atlantic/Metro DC Area

[Asian Pacific Islander Queers United for Action \(AQUA\)](#), Washington, DC

[Asian Pacific Islander Queer Society \(APIQS\)](#), Washington, DC

[hotpot!](#), Philadelphia, PA

[Khush](#) – DC, Washington, DC

Greater New York City Area

Dari Project

Gay Asian & Pacific Islander Men of New York (GAPIMNY)

Q-WAVE

SALGA

PFLAG NYC Chapter – API Project

Desi Rainbow Parents

New England

Massachusetts Area South Asian Lambda Association (MASALA), Boston, MA

Queer Asian Pacific-Islander Alliance (QAPA), Boston, MA

Southeast Asian Queers United for Empowerment & Leadership (seaQuel), Providence, RI

Pacific Northwest

Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Portland, OR

Trikone – Northwest, Seattle, WA

UTOPIA – Seattle

Project Q of APIFWSC – Chhaya, Seattle, WA

Pride Asia, Seattle, WA

Northern California

API Queer Sacramento Coalition (APIQSC)

Asian Pacific Islander Equality – Northern California

Asian Pacific Islander Queer Women and Transgender Community (APIQWTC)

Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA), San Francisco, CA

GAPA Foundation, San Francisco, CA

South Bay Queer and Asian, San Jose

Trikone – San Francisco, CA

UTOPIA – San Francisco

Southern California

Asian Pacific Islander Equality – Los Angeles

Barangay – LA

Satrang

UTOPIA – San Diego

Viet Rainbow Orange County (VietROC)

API PFLAG San Gabriel Valley, CA

Pacific Islands

Pride Marianas, Saipan

Guam Alternative Lifestyle Association (GALA)

National

Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity (MASGD)

Desi LGBTQ Helpline (DeQH)

Network on Religion and Justice (NRJ)

Korean American Rainbow Parents (NY, DC, LA)

Acknowledgments



This project reflects the collaborative efforts of the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation as we seek to provide greater resources and support for LGBTQ API Americans and other LGBTQ people of color.

Glenn D. Magpantay, Esq.,

Executive Director of NQAPIA, Co-Author

Glenn D. Magpantay, Esq., has worked in the movement for LGBTQ rights and equality for over 25 years. Before, Glenn had a long and distinguished career as a civil rights attorney as the Democracy Program Director at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), where he worked to protect and promote the voting rights and political participation of Asian Americans. He continues to inspire new legal minds and future advocates by teaching Race & the Law at Brooklyn Law School and Asian American Civil Rights at Hunter College/CUNY.

Glenn is a former co-chair of the Gay Asian & Pacific Islander Men of New York and organized the first-ever LGBTQ testimony before the

White House Initiative on Asian Americans & Pacific Islander in 2000. He was named as one of *Instinct* magazine's "25 Leading Men of 2004." In 1994, he spoke at the National March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. Glenn attended the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook on Long Island, and as a beneficiary of affirmative action, graduated cum laude from the New England School of Law in Boston.

Mark Lee, HRC Foundation Senior Writer, Public Education & Research, Co-Author

Mark Lee serves as project manager, content strategist and editor for a wide range of LGBTQ-focused public education campaigns and research studies within the HRC Foundation, including surveys, polls, op-eds, blogs, reports, guides and other resources. Prior to joining HRC, Mark was the Manager of Research & Strategic Insights at Government Executive Media Group, leading a team that studied policy implementation and federal agency management. He has authored governmentwide workforce studies on diversity

& inclusion and telework initiatives, presenting at major conferences and for agency leaders within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Department of Labor and General Services Administration. Mark holds a degree in business administration from the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business.

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About the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance

The National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA) is a federation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Asian American, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations. We seek to build the organizational capacity of local LGBT AAPI groups, develop leadership, promote visibility, educate our community, enhance grassroots organizing, expand collaborations, and challenge homophobia and racism.

About the HRC Foundation's Public Education & Research Program

The HRC Foundation's Public Education & Research Program spearheads a wide variety of LGBTQ advocacy and outreach campaigns, working to ensure that the HRC Foundation's resources and programs are timely, impactful and inclusive. In addition to publishing resource guides, informational materials and reports, the team conducts original quantitative and qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of LGBTQ people. The program also collaborates with academic researchers and provides guidance to other HRC initiatives in support of efforts to advance LGBTQ equality and well-being.

About the Human Rights Campaign Foundation

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation improves the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people by working to increase understanding and encourage the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive policies and practices. We build support for LGBTQ people among families and friends, co-workers and employers, pastors and parishioners, doctors and teachers, neighbors, and the general public. Through our programs and projects, we are enhancing the lived experiences of LGBTQ people and their families, as we change hearts and minds across America and around the globe. The HRC Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

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NQAPIA



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& PACIFIC ISLANDER
ORGANIZATIONS

