



Pre-departure Seminar June 25, 2016

## Being a Minority in Japan: Asian American

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1. What you might reasonably encounter
  - a. The Good
    - i. You'll integrate more easily and have more privacy.
    - ii. Compared to other JETs, you might have a better perspective on the culture.
    - iii. You might be instantly more approachable and relatable to your students, teachers, and other Japanese people you meet.
    - iv. You can help break stereotypes of what a "typical" American looks like, and provide an interesting story of what it's like being Asian in America.
  - b. The Bad
    - i. You won't have the same superstar status and attention as non-Asian JETs.
    - ii. You might be held to higher expectations with regards to the Japanese language, culture, and personal behavior.
    - iii. It may be difficult for many Japanese people to grasp your identity.
    - iv. You might feel lonely because your experiences differ from many other JETs.
2. Some factors that will affect your individual experience as an Asian American JET (ESID!)
  - a. Japanese language skills: The better your Japanese, the more people will think of you as Japanese, no matter your ethnic background.
  - b. Gender: Gender roles tend to be more rigid in Japan.
  - c. Job placement: CIRs are often expected to be a functioning member of the office, elementary ALTs are sometimes told to never speak Japanese at school, etc.

- d. Ethnic background: You will have different experiences as a Chinese American, Japanese American, Indian American, mixed race, etc.
- e. Other: Your name, marital status, situational factors (who you're hanging out with), first-generation immigrant or not, country of birth, personal style, etc.

### 3. Navigating the waters

- a. Know your identity: Be prepared to answer many questions about your identity. This is much easier if you are comfortable with who you are!
- b. Be patient, and keep an open mind: Remember, Japanese people are not all the same. People's reactions to you will vary. But once they get to know you, your racial identity won't be the defining aspect about you.
- c. However, it's okay to pick your battles: Don't let yourself get stuck in a rut. It's okay to not be the super-JET all the time.
- d. Seek support: Don't be afraid to reach out to other JETs, particularly Asian-American JETs, to share your experiences or seek their advice. They'll likely be going through the same challenges and situations as you.
- e. Put yourself out there: Make new friends, go to local events in town as well as JET-sponsored events, and truly embrace all the JET Program and Japan have to offer.

### 4. Take-aways

- a. You will have unique experiences as an Asian-American in your city, town, or village. Embrace it as much as you can.
- b. Focus on the good memories more than the bad ones. No one will be happy 100 percent of the time, no matter who you are. Some days will be tough. But it will be okay!
- c. Your individual situations will make for interesting stories to tell for the rest of your life.

### 5. Support

Join the "Asian Pacific Islander AJET (API AJET)" group! You can join the Facebook group NOW!

Have a great time on JET! Ganbatte!