

# ENDLINGS

## TOOLKIT

EXPER  
IENCE  
THE  
art.



# Welcome!

***Endlings*** takes us to the Korean island of Man-Jae, where three elderly *haenyeos*—sea women—spend their dying days diving into the ocean to harvest seafood. They have no heirs to their millenia-old way of life. Across the globe on the island of Manhattan, a Korean-Canadian playwright, twice an immigrant, spends her days wrestling with the expectation that she write “authentic” stories about her identity. But what, exactly, is her identity? And how can she write about it without selling her own skin?

This Toolkit is intended for teachers and learners of all ages wishing to engage more deeply with the inspiration and themes behind ***Endlings***. In the following pages you will hear from the playwright, director, set designer, costume designer, members of the cast, and more about the development of this new play, what it means to its creators, the contemporary and historical contexts of the play, and the important ways in which the representation of Asian identity through art is displayed, explored, and questioned in the play.

See you at the theater!

**BRENNA NICELY** Education & Engagement Director

**JAMES MONTAÑO** Education & Engagement Fellow

**JULIA SCHACHNIK** Community Engagement Fellow

# Table of Contents

## **ENDLINGS: IN PRODUCTION**

Synopsis & Characters.....	5-7
From Man-Jae to Manhattan.....	8-11
Location, Location, Location.....	12-14
Spotlight: Costume Designer Linda Cho.....	15-16
Spotlight: Set Designer Jason Sherwood.....	17-18

## **HAENYEOS AND SOUTH KOREA**

The Last Mermaids of South Korea .....	20
South Korea: Man-Jae and Jeju Islands.....	21-23

## **CONCEPTS IN CONTEXT**

Points of View: API Artists on Working on the American Stage.....	25-27
Behind the Curtains: The Evolution and Impact of Asian Americans in Theatre.....	28-33
A Brief Timeline of Asian and Pacific Islander Theater in America.....	34-37

## **EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

Lesson Plan Index.....	38
Lesson Plan: Traditions Lost and Held.....	39-40
Lesson Plan: Performing Inner Conflict.....	41-43
Lesson Plan: Exploring Identity in the Media.....	44-45

<b>RESOURCES</b> .....	46-47
------------------------	-------

## **ENDLINGS TOOLKIT**

### **EDITORS**

Brenny Nicely, James Montaña

### **DESIGNER**

Robert Duffley, James Montaña

### **CONTRIBUTORS**

Lexi Auth, Robert Duffley, Celine Song, Catherine Wang,  
Sammi Cannold, Linda Cho, Emily Kuroda, Jihae Park,  
Diana Oh

### **PRODUCTION SPONSORS**

Allison Johnson, The Bob and Alison Murchinson  
New Work Development Fund, The Robert Brustein  
Endowment for New Work

### **EDUCATION SPONSOR**

**Bank of America** 

**Thank you for participating in the  
A.R.T. Education Experience!**

If you have questions about using this  
Toolkit in your class, or to schedule  
an A.R.T. teaching artist to visit your  
classroom, contact A.R.T. Education  
and Community Programs at:

**education@amrep.org**  
617.496.2000 x8891

# Endlings In Production

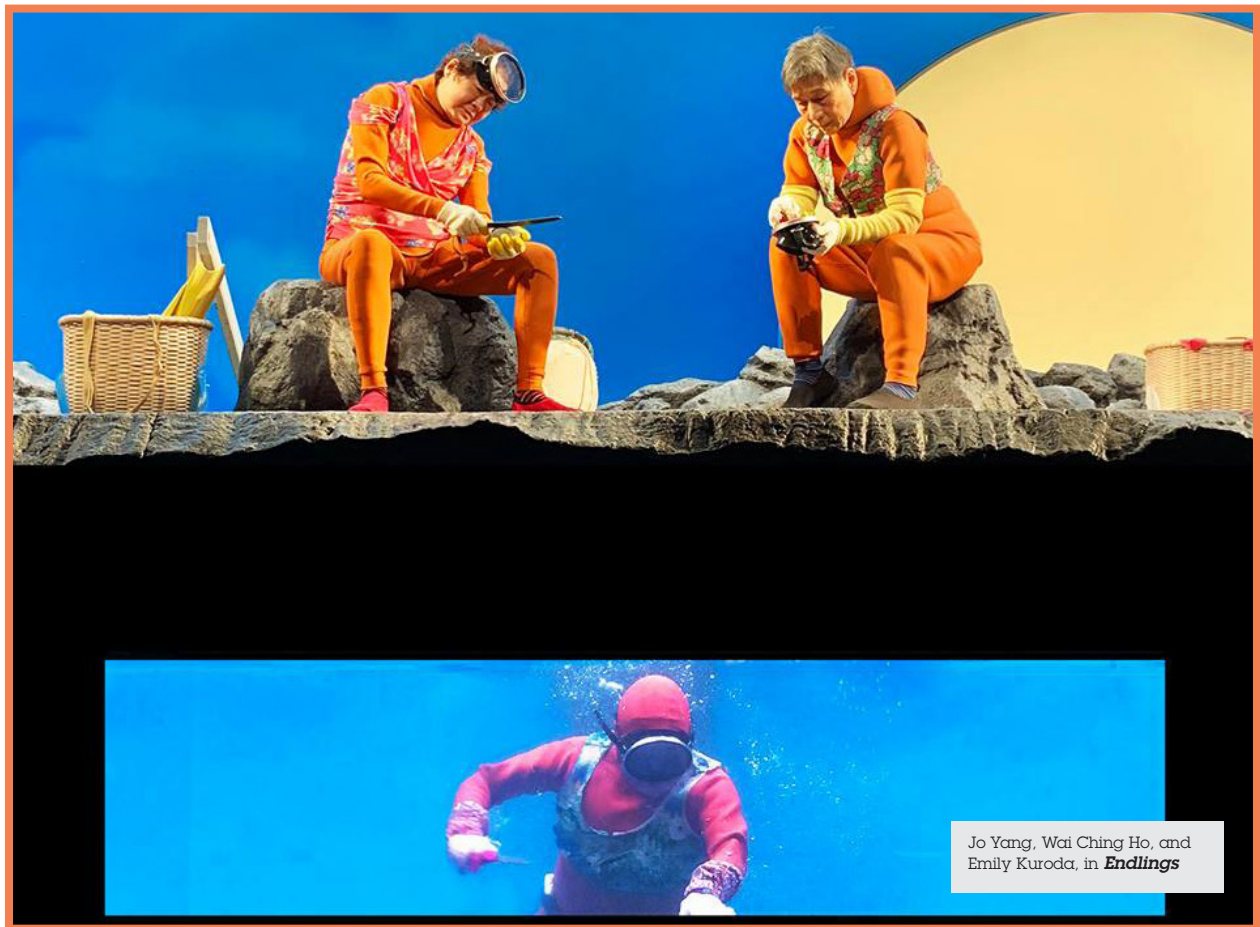


Photo: Jason Sherwood

***Endlings*** at A.R.T. marks the second world premiere production on our stage for the 2018/19 Season. Developing new productions takes immense amounts of imagination and hours hard of work. This section looks at the process of making the production and covers some of the ideas embedded in the play.

First, peruse the “Synopsis & Characters” of the play (pages 5-7). Then, read an interview with director Sammi Cannold and playwright Celine Song (pages 8-11). Next, Celine Song explores the “real estate” of the play in “Location, Location, Location” (pages 12-14). Finally, meet members of the design team, with Spotlights on costume designer Linda Cho (pages 15-16) and set designer Jason Sherwood (pages 17-18).





Image: Julia Kirwin

## Synopsis & Characters

### CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Han Sol (played by Wai Ching Ho) is a 96-year-old haenyeo (Korean female diver). She is the oldest of the haenyeos and their leader. She loves television.

Go Min (played by Emily Kuroda) is an 83-year-old haenyeo. She is the “feisty one”: she likes to complain about how difficult the haenyeos’ lives and work are. She would like, some day, to live in a place where life is easiest.

Sook Ja (played by Jo Yang) is the youngest of the three haenyeos at 78 years old. She is fun-loving and enjoys primping and dressing up.

Ha Young (played by Jiehae Park) is a Korean-Canadian Manhattanite in her late 20s. She is a playwright (and the author of the story about the haenyeos whom we follow through *Endlings*).

White Husband (played by Miles G. Jackson) is Ha Young’s white husband. He is also a playwright.

# Synopsis & Characters

White Male Stage Managers (played by Matt DaSilva, Mark Mauriello, Andy Paterson, Keith Michael Pinault) manipulate the on-stage world of the haenyeos. They populate the stage with various settings and props. They perform the play *Ha Young and White Husband* attend in Act II.

## SYNOPSIS

### ACT I

When the show opens, Go Min, Han Sol, and Sook Ja, the last three remaining haenyeos on South Korea's Man-Jae Island, are working on a beach. They are cleaning the shellfish that they have harvested from the ocean floor earlier that day. While they work, they squabble until, suddenly, an unseen voice (like we might find on a nature documentary) tells us all about the haenyeos' lives. After their workday is done, the haenyeos go home to watch television. Go Min offers the audience real estate advice: she urges the audience not to live on an island, unless that island is Manhattan, because the normal rules about islands (including years of hard work outdoors) do not apply there.

As the haenyeos fall asleep for the evening, playwright Ha Young tells us her own real estate story: her grandmother fled south across the 38th parallel as the Korean War began. Her mother emigrated to Toronto with Ha Young and her sister. Ha Young herself has immigrated to New York, where she lives in a tiny apartment in order to write this play—we understand that she is the author of the haenyeos' story. She tells the audience that watching a play, entering into the new world that it creates, is a lot like being an immigrant.

The haenyeos' alarm clocks ring. They begin their workday: Sook Ja recounts a dream in which she saw her husband, a fisherman who died long ago. Han Sol's granddaughter calls her from a faraway country. On the beach, Go Min and Han Sol tell stories about the haenyeos who have been killed by their dangerous work. They notice that Sook Ja has been underwater for a long time—they find her, badly hurt, and drag her to the shore. Sook Ja tells them that, while she was diving, she had a vision of her husband and of a turtle, who wanted Sook Ja to pay in order to visit her husband. In her vision, she gave the turtle her leg; now she cannot dive anymore. While the other two women dive back into the sea to finish their work, Sook Ja dies on the beach. Go Min and Han Sol are upset that Sook Ja has died, but they express their emotions curtly and bitterly as they get rid of her things and go back to work. As they dive, the stage transforms suddenly into Manhattan.

# Synopsis & Characters

## ACT II

Act II opens in Ha Young’s apartment in Manhattan. Her husband, known in the play only as ‘White Husband,’ is reading her play—Act 1 of ***Endlings***. After he finishes, he tells Ha Young that he loves the play, but she is suspicious because he is not jealous, as he has been of her earlier scripts. This disagreement leads to a conversation about why Ha Young is writing about haenyeos in the first place. She reveals that she wrote the play in order to “dominate through submission”—giving in to white theater administrators’ desire for her to tell an “authentic” story about her Korean identity. Suddenly, Ha Young and White Husband realize that they are late to a play.

On the train to the theater, Ha Young and White Husband encounter the haenyeos, who are busking for money by performing their aquatic skills; none of the subway passengers pay them any attention. At the theater, Ha Young and White Husband see a “white play.” Performed by nondescript white male stage managers, the play is a combination of tropes from vague “political” or “romantic” domestic dramas. During the play, Ha Young’s phone rings—she answers it and speaks to her grandmother in Korean. This conversation transports Ha Young into a new world: she envisions an underwater ballet with talking clams, Sook Ja, and the turtle. In a poetic reimagining of the beach scene from Act I, she encounters Han Sol, and the two women speak about their similar relationships to the ocean and to the theater, envisioning their pasts and futures—two timelines which twine together poetically in the play’s final conversation between a playwright and her character.



## From Man-Jae to Manhattan

**Endlings** Playwright Celine Song and Director Sammi Cannold share their journeys to this underwater world premiere.

**This play begins on the shore of a tiny island, six hours by boat from the South Korean mainland, with three haenyeos harvesting seafood. Celine, what are haenyeos, and how did you become interested in writing a play about them?**

**Celine Song:** Haenyeos are women who dive into the ocean for seafood off the coast of South Korea. There, haenyeos are part of the national conversation about rural life and the preservation of traditional culture. I lived in Seoul until I was twelve years old, so I've known about these women since I was a child, but I had completely forgotten about them when I immigrated with my family to Canada.

Then, a few years ago, I was hanging out with my mom in Toronto, and we watched a Korean documentary about the island of Man-Jae, where a group of very old haenyeos were living. I knew that Man-Jae is an island far from the South Korean mainland, and while I watched the documentary, I was thinking about how these haenyeos' whole lives were unfolding on this little piece of rock. Meanwhile, I was living in Manhattan, paying outrageous rent and writing



## From Man-Jae to Manhattan

plays. I was struck by the fact that both the haenyeos and I are Korean, both living on islands, yet we are so different—we are almost different species.

***Endlings* also follows Ha Young, a Korean-Canadian playwright grappling with her own (and others') fascination with the haenyeos. How did a play about haenyeos begin to merge with your own story as an author and as an immigrant?**

**CS:** I always think about theater as a kind of conquest: a theater is an empty space for which someone pays rent; someone pays to keep the lights on. As a writer, you're trying to conquer that space and make it yours. Before I wrote ***Endlings***, I was trying to conquer the theater by speaking the language of the people who own the stages: I was writing what I call "white plays"—plays in which the characters and the cast were not specifically of any race, which usually meant that they were cast with white actors by default—or plays that were implicitly aligned with white patriarchy.

But as I wrote ***Endlings***, I realized that even if I did manage to conquer a stage with a "white play," it wouldn't truly be me doing the conquering—I wouldn't be embracing where I came from, who I am. Writing this play revealed to me, very deeply, just how much of an immigrant I am. Ha Young is actually my Korean name—when my family immigrated, we tried to make the transition as smooth as possible. One way to do that was to erase our names, find new ones that our white teachers could pronounce. But the truth is, I love my name Celine. It is now more my name than my Korean name, because it's what I've been called for my eighteen years of life as an immigrant. So if you ask me where I am from, my answer is not Korea or Canada or America—it is "I am an immigrant." I don't have a hometown or a home country. Where my family is is my home.

By writing a play about this version of myself and the haenyeos, I realized that even though we are not similar at all, we share something important—and I am not truly conquering unless I bring them with me.

**Sammi, what is the world of this play, and how are you bringing it to life onstage?**

**Sammi Cannold:** The play is set on two islands. The first act is set on Man-Jae Island, and the action there takes place both on land and underwater. The design team and I have embraced many of the real elements that you would see if you actually traveled to Man-Jae: we have a beach and the haenyeos' houses, and we also have a body of water onstage where we can see the haenyeos swim, dive, and harvest seafood. Then, Act II takes us to the home of Ha Young in Manhattan, where she is figuring out how to tell this story, even as it's being told.



## From Man-Jae to Manhattan

**Actually having the haenyeos swim onstage poses great challenges for design, production, and performance. Why was it important for you as a director to make sure the play included underwater elements?**

**SC:** It was important for me to bring Man-Jae Island to life in the most naturalistic way possible because what these women do underwater is so athletic and virtuosic. As Celine shows us in the play, some of the women have trouble walking on the rocky beach, but the second they enter the water, they essentially become mermaids. If we only show them on land, we're not presenting a full picture of their lives, and it felt critical to honor their expertise.

As a director, I've always connected to complexity, and to things that should be impossible in theater—because personally, that is the theater I have enjoyed the most. I have never really known how to stage plays that rely primarily on simplicity, but I feel really at home in the world of logistical problem-solving. It's why I think I've frequently tackled site-specific projects, such as ***Violet*** on a bus at the A.R.T. I'm so excited about how telling stories in non-traditional locations and/or with non-traditional approaches can create another level of connection and engagement for audiences. And for ***Endlings***, we're so lucky to be working with a team and a theater that both delight in those sorts of challenges. I hear the A.R.T.'s mission to expand the boundaries of theater as a call for us to go further and try harder to do things that seem to be impossible.

**Another unconventional element of this play is its cast: *Endlings* centers on four Asian women, depicted with complete storylines at a time when fully realized Asian characters are rare in Western theater and film. What has it been like to challenge that status quo?**

**CS:** Often, Asian women in Western media aren't given the full dignity of human beings. They are onscreen or onstage only to serve white stories. In this play, that is obviously not the case. We're lucky to have a spectacular cast for this production. They've all done incredible work in their careers. This is hardly the first time any of them have been given a substantial or meaty role. But in a way, they still remind me of the haenyeos: they have been devoted to a craft for decades, even though the real estate available to them is often inhospitable. That they've been able to succeed consistently is not proof against the uphill battle they face—it's just proof of their own strength and ability.

**SC:** I think we're also challenging an ageism too often present in theater: there's an idea that once you're a certain age, you can no longer play certain parts or do certain things. But the haenyeos—and the women playing them

## From Man-Jae to Manhattan

here— are setting an example for us in demonstrating that you're never too old to do incredible work. To our knowledge, the oldest haenyeo in South Korea right now is 98 years old, and she dives every day.

**As part of your research for the production, Sammi, you traveled to South Korea to meet haenyeos in person and learn about their work. What can you tell us about that trip?**

**SC:** I traveled with Diane Borger, A.R.T.'s Executive Producer, to Jeju Island, in addition to a number of other cities in South Korea. There are four thousand haenyeos currently living on Jeju—we stayed in a fishing town where many of them live, so we got to wake up in the morning and watch them dive into the sea. We also visited a haenyeo museum and watched a haenyeo diving show. We got to know several groups of haenyeos and discuss the play with them. That experience was very helpful from a research perspective, and it was also important for me to understand their culture firsthand, rather than just through the videos that you can find online.

Diane and I also planned to visit Man-Jae Island, but we ultimately weren't able to make the final leg of the trip due to rough seas. We started on Jeju, took a five-hour ferry to a city called Mokpo, and there, we were told that the six-hour fishing boat journey to Man-Jae was too dangerous in current conditions and it was unclear when it might be safe again. More than disappointment, that experience made the play feel real to me. I felt how cut off these women actually are from the outside world.

**Celine, *Endlings* makes a comparison between going to a play and making an immigrant's journey: by visiting this remote island and its stories, the audience is transported to a new place. How does that experience work?**

**CS:** Immigration means that you will never be the same again. When I left Korea, that move meant that, on some level, I was abandoning what it is like to be Korean. And I can also never “fully” be Canadian or a New Yorker. When you immigrate, you enter into a space where you are no longer what you were. So my dream is for people to come see this play and really feel like an immigrant. I don't want the way you look at the ocean, the way you think about real estate, the way you think about your grandmothers, to ever be the same again.

*Interview by A.R.T. Editor and Assistant Dramaturg Robert Duffley.*

*This article originally appeared in the A.R.T. Spring 2018/19 Guide.*

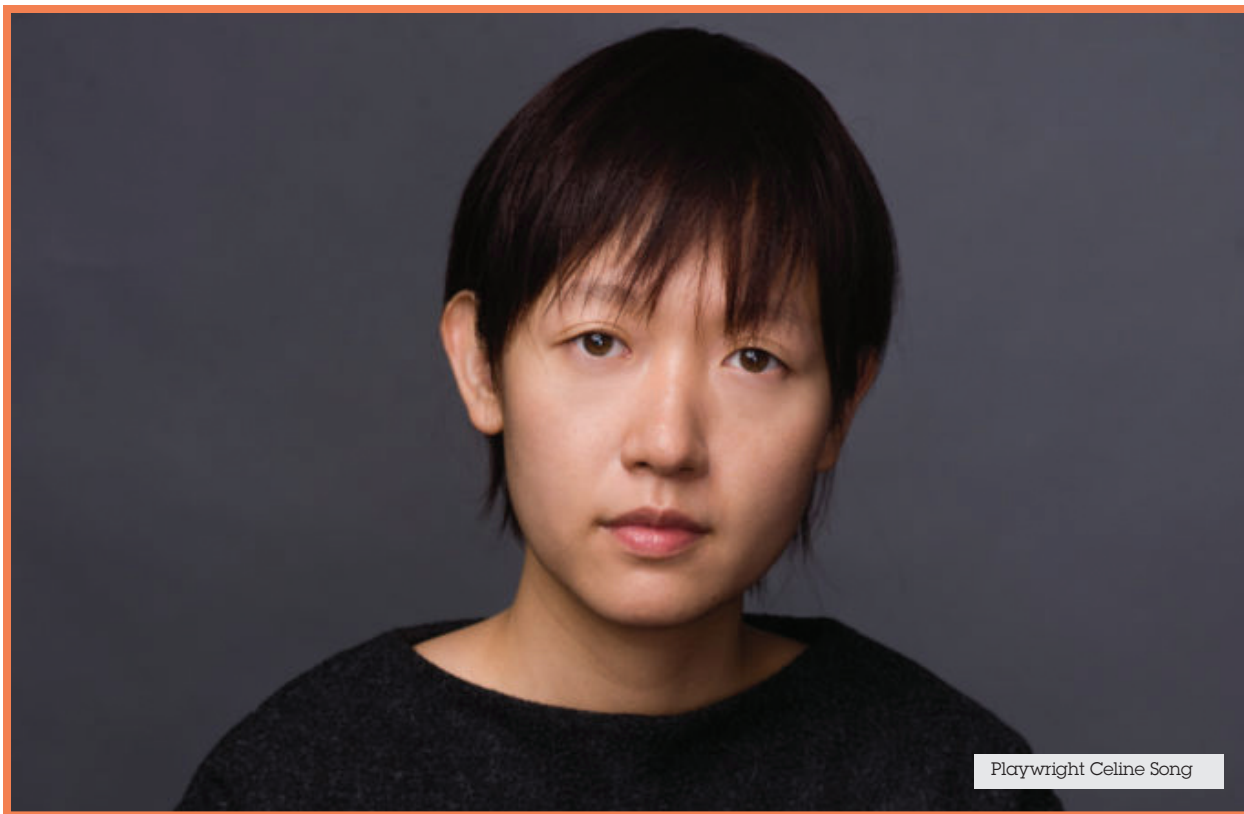


Photo courtesy of Celine Song

# Location, Location, Location

By Celine Song

In the audience of playwright Edward Albee's memorial service in 2016, listening to his venerable friends talk about him lovingly on a Broadway stage, I wept. My career as a playwright had begun in the summer of 2012 at a barn in Montauk owned by Edward, where I was invited to stay as a writing fellow. I met Edward there. I met my white husband there too.

Now that Edward had died, it felt like a world was dying with him: not just the Great White Playwright, but also the Great White Play. The whole room could feel it. My white husband could feel it. I could feel it. The loss was devastating.

At the time that Edward died, I was writing a new play, **Endlings**. This play was about these women called *haenyeos* (해녀, "sea-women"), elderly female free-divers in South Korea. Haenyeos have been included on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, but they will soon go extinct because there are no heiresses to their way of life. Just like Edward, when today's haenyeos die, a world will die with them: a tradition that is over a thousand years old will abruptly come to a halt.

IN PRODUCTION

## Location, Location, Location

But this loss won't be mourned in a big Broadway theater. Looking around at this memorial service in this incredible Broadway house in the middle of Times Square, surrounded by all the most important white theater people in the country, I wept and thought about how much real estate determines our possibilities, not just in life but in death. Even as we are being eulogized, we are victims of location, location, location. Edward got to be who he was because he dropped out of school and made it to New York just in time for the avant-garde. My grandmother got to be who she is because she made it across the line to South Korea just as her country was being ripped apart by a war it didn't start. Real estate.

As I wept for Edward, I started wondering if there was anybody else in that room who knew somebody like my grandmother, a woman who is not a haenyeo but who has survived 90 years of Korean history against all odds. I started thinking about how funny it was that even though my grandmother and Edward Albee were almost the same age—they were born at almost exactly the same moment in history at opposite ends of the globe—I never once thought of them as peers. They were separated by a world of language, a world of history, a world of real estate. They belonged in different universes entirely. Picturing the two of them in the same room together—eating dinner, talking, sharing stories about being old—seemed absurd.

And yet, just by existing, I had made it happen. Here I was, mourning Edward, thinking about my grandmother, and in a way, I had snuck her into a space that history had seemingly closed off to her forever. Just by living my life, just by being me, I had performed a bit of magic. Whereas before, being the only Asian person in rooms like this might have made me feel isolated or inferior, now it made me feel immensely powerful: I was collapsing two universes onto each other, ripping open the fabric of spacetime.

I've immigrated twice in my life: from Seoul to Toronto at the age of twelve and from Toronto to New York City at the age of twenty-three. I write in English. I changed my name from Ha Young to Celine. Growing up, I felt insecure about my accent and my loose grasp on English grammar. For a long time, I felt insulted when someone described me as Asian, even though I am, obviously—I didn't want anybody to notice. The non-Asian gaze on an Asian body is full of hateful, poorly informed stereotypes thanks to a severe lack of authentic Asian representation in Western media. I wanted the world around me to forget that I was an Asian, because it hurt too much to be seen. It made me feel ugly, unloved, and powerless. So I aligned myself with whiteness and patriarchy, both as a person and as an artist. I wrote "white plays," the kinds that I thought might impress someone like Edward Albee.

***Endlings*** is a play with a large cast, three older Asian women in leading roles,

## Location, Location, Location

sweeping monologues, and multiple sets (including a literal ocean). I've even written myself into the play as a character, taking up space, taking on power, speaking my own language, pretending to be no one other than my grandmother's granddaughter.

**Endlings** is the first play that I wrote without any thought toward how it would be produced or what it would do for my career. It is the play that taught me not to care about what the artistic directors and literary managers would say. It taught me to care only about the words that made me feel good when I put them on the page: 언니 (*un-nee*, literally “older sister,” affectionately used by women to describe any woman older than the person who is speaking). 할머니 (*hal-muh-nee*, grandma). 우리 이쁜이 (*ooh-ree ee-ppun-ee*, my cute little sweetheart).

This play is as idiosyncratic and multitudinous as my identity. I do not feel as Korean as the haenyeos in my play, even though I am indeed Korean. I do not feel entirely Canadian or American either, even though I am indeed both of those things. My favorite foods are things most people don't know how to read or pronounce: 간장게장 and 갈비찜. I play 화투 (*hwa-too*, a Korean card game) with my family in Toronto, and I translate everybody's bickering for my white husband. I grew up drinking both Iced Cappuccinos from Tim Horton's and bubble teas from the Chinese-run mall where my parents operate a store. I watch Korean television, and I write for American television. Who I am cannot become a Halloween costume, a painting on a wall, a vacation photograph, an item on the menu, a body to treat as an object. Who I am is a story that only I can tell, in my own voice, as my own author.

America is afraid that immigrants are going to change what it means to be American, and the truth is that we *will*. We always have. We immigrants throw into question the acceptable power structures in a society, because we are transformers. We are metamorphosis. We are gods and animals and forces of nature. We put Edward Albee and my grandmother in the same room together at the same little table—and there's nothing you can do about it. It already happened. All I had to do was exist.

This play is most dear to me, because it taught me how to just exist as I am. It gave me the wisdom to be myself.

*Celine Song is the playwright of **Endlings**. Her other plays include The Feast, Family, and Tom & Eliza. She is currently a staff writer on Amazon's "The Wheel of Time" and developing a project for television with Diablo Cody and Beth Behrs.*

*This article originally appeared in the A.R.T. Spring 2018/19 Guide.*





Photo: American Repertory Theater

## Spotlight: Linda Cho

Between costume fittings for *Endlings*, the Tony Award-winning costume designer whose recent work includes *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Anastasia*, and *Lifespan of a Fact* shared her designs for this production.

### How did your design process for this show begin?

The starting point for designing this show was to look at images of actual haenyeos. In real life, these women wear full pants and shirts underneath their diving clothes, which are neoprene and water-resistant. It was also a joy to discover that there's a real liveliness to the clothing that they choose to wear on the outside of their diving uniforms—bright colors, bold patterns, purely for the joy of it.

### At some points in the play, the performers will actually be swimming on stage. Have you ever designed underwater costumes before?

This is my first underwater experience! It's been really exciting to think about the materials, and what's going to read underwater, and the practicalities of construction. Sammi Cannold, our director, went to Jeju Island in South Korea and was given some real used diving suits, so we had a great reference. The

## Spotlight: Linda Cho

wetsuits in the play are being made in California by 7TILL8, an Asian-American company, which was extremely enthusiastic about looking at the research supporting the production.

### What can you tell us about some of the other costumes in the play?

In one scene, the characters are wearing hanboks—traditional Korean outfits. Han Sol, who is an older woman, wears a traditional silhouette, while Ha Young appears in a modernized version of the traditional garment. There's also a turtle. I wanted to mix the realistic with some humanoid elements: this turtle has a long white beard, so we read that he is ancient.

*Interview by A.R.T. Editor and Assistant Dramaturg Robert Duffley.*

*This article originally appeared in the A.R.T Spring 2018/19 Guide.*







Photo: Jason Sherwood/Instagram @jasonsherwooddesign

## Spotlight: Jason Sherwood

By James Montañó

**Endlings** set designer Jason Sherwood started 2019 with a huge project: Fox's *RENT: Live*, which aired on January 27. The multi-level set was both immersive and expansive, portraying gritty 1990's New York, and was a perfect platform for reimagining this popular musical. **Endlings** presented a whole new challenge: portraying the island of Man-Jae, the water beneath, and the bustling city of New York.



Photo: Jason Sherwood/Instagram @jasonsherwooddesign

Jason came to stage design in his teens. In a recent interview following *RENT: Live*, he said, "I think that set design is primarily what I've been interested in since I was fifteen because it combined storytelling, writing, the world of design, and the world of theater. It put all of those things in conversation with each other" (Piazza 2019). After graduating from NYU, he went on to design for plays: *Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *The Mountaintop* (Trinity Repertory Company), and *The Room Upstairs* (Off-

## Spotlight: Jason Sherwood



Photo: Jason Sherwood/Instagram @jasonsherwooddesign

Broadway); musicals: *Company* (Bucks County Playhouse); *The Wiz* (TUTS) and *This Ain't No Disco* (Atlantic Theater Company); and concerts: People's Choice Awards (2018), and Sam Smith's 2018 World Tour. Jason has numerous exciting projects coming soon, such as the Spice Girls World Tour and *The Secret Garden* on Broadway.

***Endlings*** is the second show Jason has designed at A.R.T. this season; he also designed the set for ***ExtraOrdinary*** this past November.

To see more of Jason's amazing designs, check out his website:  
[jasonsherwooddesign.com](http://jasonsherwooddesign.com)

Reference: Piazza, Bianca. 2019. "Dissecting the Scenic Design of Fox's RENT Live: an Interview with Jason Sherwood." Beyond Fashion Magazine, February 19, 2019.  
<https://www.beyondfashionmagazine.com/lifestyle/interior-design/dissecting-the-scenic-design-of-foxs-rent-live-an-interview-with-jason-sherwood/>



# Haenyeos and South Korea



A haenyeo at work  
on Jeju Island,  
South Korea

Photo: Idobi [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Haenyo\_8094.jpg]

In South Korea, a rare and dwindling population of sea women glide into the waters to harvest seafood. They are called *haenyeos* and they have been working together to sustain their lives for generations. ***Endlings*** follows three such women as they dive, live, and die together.

This section provides an overview of this culture. Read background on haenyeos in “The Last Mermaids of South Korea” and also watch videos that peek into the daily lives of the women (page 20). Also, discover the landscape of Man-Jae and Jeju, South Korea—the homeland for the haenyeos (pages 21-23).





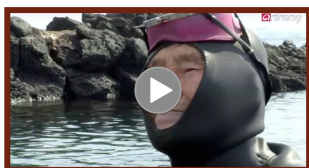
Photo: 'Idobi' [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Haenyo\_8101.jpg]

# The Last Mermaids of South Korea

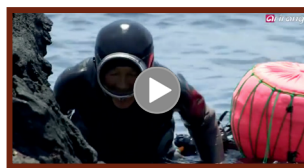
**Endlings** takes us to the small, secluded island of Man-Jae in South Korea, where three elderly haenyeos live and work together. They dive off of the rocky coasts of the island, harvesting sea life for sustenance and their livelihood. This culture of “sea women” in South Korea has been maintained for many years, but the population of haenyeos is on a steady decline.

In 2014, the *New York Times* took a look at the rich culture of haenyeos, their history, and the unsteady future ahead in the article “Hardy Divers in the Korean Strait, ‘Sea Women’ are Dwindling.” It is a helpful introduction to the society, with gorgeous photos to peruse. [Read the full article.](#)

Playwright Celine Song also recommends the following videos by Arirang TV, the Korean public service news and culture agency. Click on the images to view:



*“A Day of Haenyeo in Jeju”*



*“Last Mermaids”*



*“A Haenyeo is Missing into the Sea”*



Photo: Teddy0408/Public Domain

# South Korea: Man-Jae and Jeju Islands

By James Montaña

**Endlings** takes place on two islands. While many are familiar with the island of Manhattan in New York City, the play also contains scenes set on the island of Man-Jae. Man-Jae, or Manjaedo, is a small island off the southwest coast of South Korea, in the South Jeolla Province. It is part of an archipelago, or small cluster of islands, called Sinan County and is considered one of the most remote islands in this archipelago. Without a large dock on Man-Jae island, it can only be accessed with small boats launched from neighboring islands.

In 2018, Director Sammi Cannold and A.R.T. Executive Producer Diane Berger visited South Korea. They spent time in Jeju Province, which boasts one of the largest populations of haenyeos in the area. The team had hoped to visit Man-Jae for research, but the weather was not cooperating and the boat captains did not feel comfortable traversing the sea in the small boat.

As the locals say, “if the gods do not permit it...Manjaedo cannot be reached” (Kyong-o 2016).

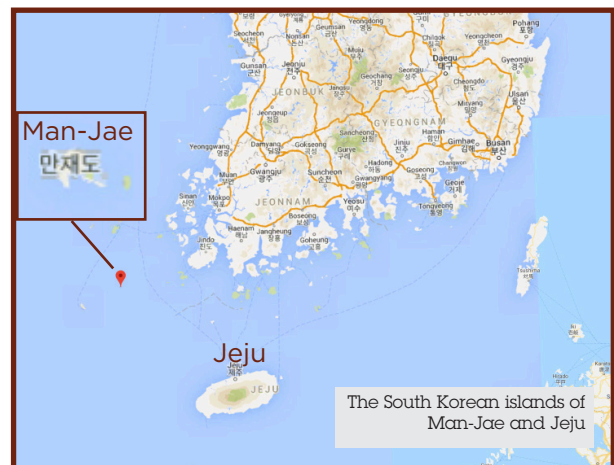


Image: Google Maps



## South Korea: Man-Jae and Jeju Islands

The below photos are from Sammi and Diane's journey.



Photos: Sammi Cannold

A haenyeos' storage room in Jeju



The rocky coast of Jeju Island



## South Korea: Man-Jae and Jeju Islands



Haenyeos  
prepare their  
day's catch



A cove on Jeju



Buoys, nets, and  
flippers—a haenyeo's  
tools for survival



A sculpture from  
the Haenyeo  
Museum

Reference: Kyong-O, Moon. (2016) "Islands of Sinan: Dialogue with Pristine Nature." *Koreana*, Summer 2016. Vol. 30, No. 2.

<https://koreana.or.kr/user/0002/nd71200.do?View&boardNo=00000227&zineInfoNo=0002&pubYear=2016&pubMonth=SUMMER&pubLang=English>

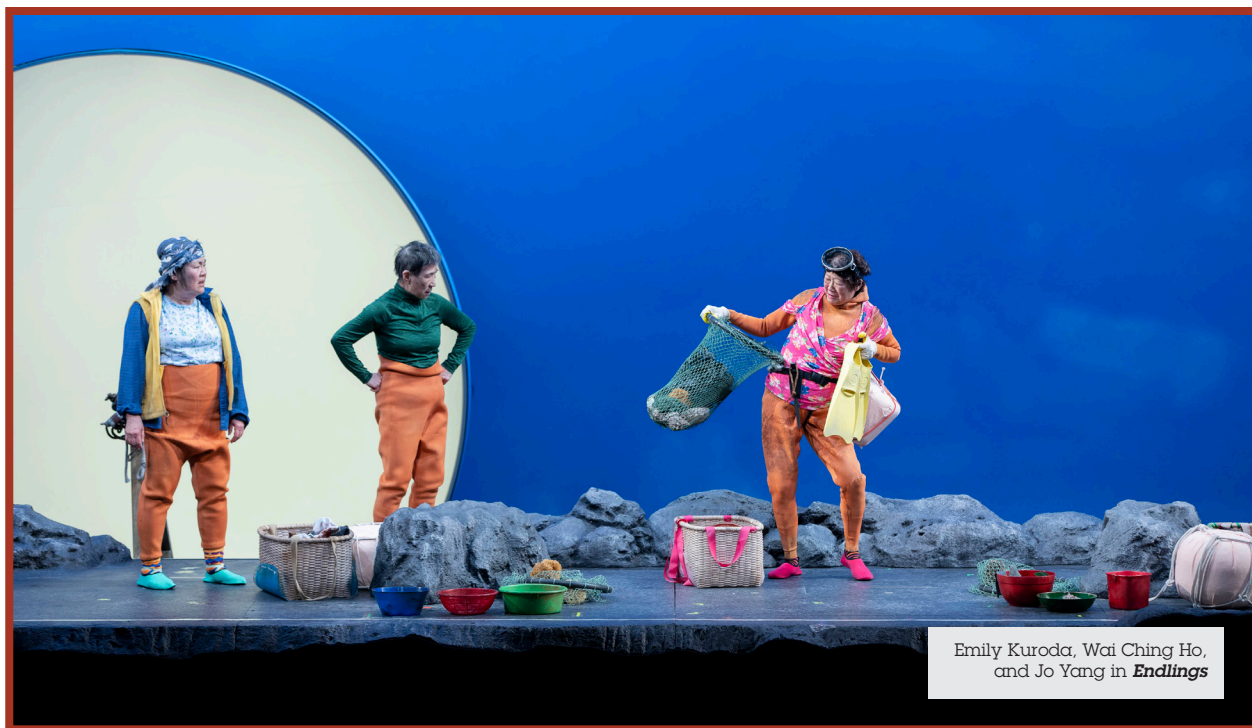
# Concepts in Context



***Endlings*** wrestles with complex ideas about identity, representation, and making art while being Asian, female, and an immigrant. Those various identities are explored further in this section of the Toolkit.

In “Points of View: API Artists on Working on the American Stage,” designer Linda Cho, performers Jiehae Park, Emily Kuroda, and playwright/performer Diana Oh discuss what brought them to theater and what keeps them excited about the art form (pages 25-27). Next, look at the history of Asian American and Pacific Islander theater artists in America and the ongoing work for fair representation (pages 28-33). Finally, peruse a “Brief Timeline of Asian and Pacific Islanders Theater in America” (pages 34-37).





Emily Kuroda, Wai Ching Ho,  
and Jo Yang in *Endlings*

Photo: GretjenHelene.com

## Points of View: API Artists on the American Stage

*In **Endlings**, the character of playwright Ha Young wrestles with her place on the white American stage. How much “real estate” is she able to take up with her voice and culture, especially in the face of an art form where white stories are default? We asked a variety of Asian/Pacific Islander (API) theatermakers working on the A.R.T. stages about what helped shape them as artists, what it is like working in the theater, and how they make space for their voice on the American stage.*

### What inspired you to pursue theater?



**JIEHAE PARK** (Actor): We moved around a lot when I was a kid. I think that, plus the code-switching between insider-outsider you have to do growing up as an immigrant in America, made me crave a place—a physical place—where I felt at home. Theater is my weird, wandering home away from home, where things are just a little bit more magic, funny, expressive... full of people making something out of nothing to try to understand our bewildering world just a little bit more.

CONCEPTS IN CONTEXT

## Points of View: *Endlings* Artists on Working on the American Stage

**EMILY KURODA** (*Actor*): I was terribly shy as a child. I was the kid in the corner who never spoke. When I was in high school I discovered theater, and directed my first show, and went on to be a theater major at Cal State Fresno. I switched from directing to acting—thriving in the luxury of embodying a character. Acting allows me to travel to different lands, different time periods, different cultures. When all the elements of a show harmoniously meet (which happens once in a blue moon for a few seconds) it is a thrill, an out-of-body experience that keeps me in this crazy business.



**LINDA CHO** (*Costume Designer*): Well, let me go back... when I was in high school and considering what field of study to pursue, my mother, who was a painter and designer, told me, “You are a woman and a minority, you will never succeed in anything artistic...” So I went to McGill University in Montreal and studied psychology with the hope of pursuing medicine. Sadly, I hated all my pre-med prerequisites and loved all the theater, fine art, and design classes. Seeing my struggle and joy, my mom said, “Why don’t you do this theater thing, you seem to like it...” Needless to say, I was surprised to hear her change of heart, and she said she wanted to push me to be the hardest thing she could think of so I would be ready to do anything.

### What are the joys and/or challenges of working in American theater?

**EMILY KURODA:** In theater, not only do we learn about other people and cultures, but it is a collaborative art. We rely so much on our writer, director, fellow actors, designers, the team of stage managers, dramaturgs, and running crew to create the final product. The rehearsal process is a challenge and a joy, as we collectively chase a good play with the director guiding it to its final shape. Once a show opens, it changes every night as the audience becomes a very integral part of the equation. I am so lucky to be a part of this very exciting, ever-changing process—working with brilliant, inspiring people. There is no better job in the world!

**LINDA CHO:** I love being part of the conversation; by the nature of what we do we are constantly asking questions: What have we done? Where could we go? How can things be different? The material we cover in American theater can educate, open eyes, challenge long held beliefs, create empathy and perspective. I also love being part of the community of theater. This is a field people go into because they love the theater, and so you are surrounded by

## Points of View: *Endlings* Artists on Working on the American Stage

people who care about their contribution in creating something relevant and entertaining.

**Celine has said, “A theater is an empty space for which someone pays rent; someone pays to keep the lights on. As a writer, you’re trying to conquer that space and make it yours.” As a theater maker, how do you work to “conquer that space?”**



**DIANA OH** (Playwright/Performer): I’ve been developing *MY HATE LETTER TO THE GREAT AMERICAN THEATRE* with The Public’s Emerging Writers Group and I asked “What is it about this play that scares me so much?” And one of the writers laughed and responded with: “I mean, you’re putting the entire eco-system that has made your body of work possible on trial.” And she was right. I think about leaving Theatre all the time and yet, here I am centering queer magic with ***Clairvoyance*** at A.R.T.

and Oberon, throwing the ***Infinite Love Party***, creating street installations with *{my lingerie play}*: I am the Anti-Theatre Accidental Theatre Maker. And I’m also many other unboxable things. I believe in there needing to be space, support, and hunger for art that expresses and dissects these truths. Some of the best art has been born out of putting the eco-system on trial: the Riot Grrl Movement, the art made during the Civil Rights movement, art born in the midst of chaos. I don’t want space to define me, rather, I want to use my liberated voice to teach space its potential.

**EMILY KURODA**: As my character would say, “Celine is f-cking brilliant.” As an actor, my job is to tell the story. With truth.

### DISCUSSION

- What do Jiehae, Emily, Linda, and Diana’s experiences have in common? How do they differ?
- Linda Cho mentions that she loves theater because she loves to be “part of the conversation.” What conversation does she mean?
- What do you think Diana Oh means when she says she want to “teach space its potential”? Do you know other artists who are working to “teach space its potential”?
- How do you think that someone can “conquer a space,” as Celine describes?



Photo: GretjenHelene.com

# Behind the Curtains: The Evolution And Impact Of Asian Americans In Theatre

By Catherine Wang

*In an environment with traditionally limited opportunities, Asian American actors, writers, and directors find support and common ground in the theatre scene.*

Years before Lauren Tom landed her lead role in the 1993 film *The Joy Luck Club*, she was developing her acting skills in Chicago and New York theatre. In an era when Hollywood was churning out [slapstick caricatures of Asians](#), Tom recalled a much more accepting environment in the theatre scene. She describes one of the many times when she was cast as a white character:



Gage Skidmore from Peoria, AZ, United States of America [CC BY-SA 2.0]

“It was funny because there was a line in that play where one character asks my character, ‘What kind of accent have you got?’ I have a Chicago accent with flat a’s, and the audience laughed along because they could hear my real Chicago accent.” But when Tom began working in Hollywood a few years later, she felt out of place as a Chinese American. “In film or TV, what you look like sometimes seems like 90% of whether you get the job. When I moved from New York to Los Angeles, it was kind of a shock to me to realize this, and to find out that the roles I was cast in were not the roles I was used to playing. I had to change my expectations.”

CONCEPTS IN CONTEXT



## Behind the Curtains

In recent years, Asian Americans have become increasingly vocal about the lack of racial progress in Hollywood. In the past year, Internet users have criticized films such as [Dr. Strange](#) and [Ghost in the Shell](#) for “whitewashing” roles by casting well-known white actors to play Asian characters. For Asian actors, exclusion—and even blatant discrimination—remain barriers. Hayden Szeto, a 31-year-old Chinese-Canadian actor starring in the coming-of-age film *The Edge of Seventeen*, recalls, “I think every Asian actor has gotten the question ‘Can you do an accent?’ at some point. Besides that, there was one time when I was auditioning for the role of a Chinese boy and afterwards, I remember the casting director muttering, ‘This boy is way too pretty to be Asian.’ He said it right in front of me.”

Despite increasing discussion about Asian American issues in entertainment, the spotlight is usually directed on film and TV. But as Tom experienced, theatre is often a distinctly progressive medium that provides a platform of expression for many Asian American actors who struggle to fit in, or even enter into, mainstream media. Historically, Asian American theatre groups have facilitated diversity in other forms of media, serving as launch pads to increase representation beyond the stage.

### Finding an “Artistic Home”: The Roots of Asian American Theatre

Snehal Desai is the Artistic Director of East West Players (EWP), the country’s largest and oldest Asian American theatre company. He began his acting career at Emory University in the late 90s, before the practice of “colorblind casting” became popular; experiences like Tom’s were still relatively rare. Since then, Desai has seen a shift in theatre discourse that reflects progress for minorities: “It used to be called ‘colorblind,’ which is not a reality in our world. That’s causing someone to deny a significant part of who you are and what your experiences are, so now it’s more about color-conscious casting. Whereas it used to be like, ‘I’m just going to look at you and not take your race into account,’ now it’s about taking all aspects of us and embracing them.”



Photo: East West Players/Instagram @eastwestplayers



EWP was founded in 1965 by a group of Asian American artists who were frustrated by the lack of roles (and the stereotypical roles that did exist) for Asians in Hollywood. The roots of Asian American theatre are entwined with the development of a collective cultural identity in the 60s, as the idea of “Asian America” emerged as a form of protest against racism. Since EWP’s founding, Asian American theatre has



## Behind the Curtains

evolved into a tight-knit community, creating opportunities for Asians on stage and on screen. “Probably 70% of anyone that you see on TV or film who’s an Asian American actor has probably come through or worked with East West Players in some capacity,” says Desai.

Asian American theatre reached another milestone in 1988, when the Broadway production of David Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly* won the Tony Award for best play. *M. Butterfly* was Hwang’s critical response to Giacomo Puccini’s opera *Madama Butterfly*, and the play was groundbreaking for its subversion of both racial and gender stereotypes. Hwang, who interned at East West Players in college, was the first Asian American to win a Tony, and he continues to produce works that promote Asian American visibility on national stages.



Photo: Lia Chang [CC BY-SA 3.0]

### One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Although the number of roles for Asian Americans has increased since the 60’s, actors and directors still face many of the same barriers that they have grappled with for decades. In 2012, the Asian American Performers Action Coalition released a study in which they argued that Asian Americans are not part of “the trend toward more inclusive casting” in New York theatre. Their [statistics](#) indicated that “Asian American performers are the least likely among the major minority groups to play roles that are not defined by their race.” Esther Kim Lee, a professor at the University of Maryland and author of *A History of Asian American Theatre*, says, “We’ve made progress, and we see more Asian American characters on TV and film, but those are baby steps. Every time we go one step forward, there’s something more, like yet another yellowface controversy.”

Both on the stage and on screens, the power structures in the entertainment industry pose a challenging barrier for emerging Asian American actors. Although there are more acting opportunities opening up, there are still very few Asian producers and directors. Desai says, “One of the biggest things we fight for is being able to get in the room, to be seen. Those in power are still often white and male, and tend to mentor those who are like them... I think for all artists right now, particularly theatre artists, it’s a question of artistic home: a place where you can find residency and support to do your work, not just on a transitional basis.” Fundamentally, Asian Americans still lack representation behind the scenes, at the higher levels that produce narratives and make decisions about how to represent characters’ racial identities. Suzy Nakamura, an actress who plays a lead role in the TV comedy *Dr. Ken* and appeared in

## Behind the Curtains

Photo: Suzy Nakamura/Instagram @notreallysuzy



Suzy Nakamura (right),  
Ken Jeong (center), and  
the cast of *Dr. Ken*

shows like *How I Met Your Mother* and *The West Wing*, says that until recently, “I’ve been cast with my face, but with someone else’s story. So what I think we still need to do is to get the underrepresented stories out there.”

Small, minority-focused theatre groups face another more material concern: how can they grow their audiences? Few of the theatre-goers who flock to big-budget Broadway productions hear about or take interest in alternative theatre scenes. Even beyond theatre, there is a popular perception that

pieces by or about Asian Americans cater specifically to Asian viewers, and not to Americans as a whole. Desai wants EWP to fight this assumption and earn the empathy of more diverse audiences: “Through specificity, you find universality. For all of us who are minorities in this nation, we’ve been able to find something in stories where we have not seen ourselves reflected, so others need to learn to do the same... I read a newspaper review once that said something like, ‘Even though the characters are Asian American, I identify with them.’ I don’t sit there and think, ‘Even though the characters are white, I identify with them.’ It’s universal. That family in *Fresh Off the Boat* is just as universal as the family in *Black-ish* or *Modern Family*.”

Even within the Asian community, many younger Asian Americans are unfamiliar with the theatre scene. Phil Yu, the founder of [Angry Asian Man](#), a popular blog that provides commentary on Asian American issues, doesn’t go to the theater often, but when he does, he often notices a lack of young Asians in the audience. He says, “The thing is that you need new people to find theatre. You can’t just have old white people watching stories about Asians: there needs to be a level of attractiveness that brings in new audiences, particularly younger Asian Americans... I went to an off-Broadway show about Bruce Lee a couple years ago, and I noticed from where I was sitting in the audience that there should be way more Asians here.”

### Today’s Stage

According to Lee, some smaller theatre groups are taking the practical approach of collaborating with larger companies to increase their visibility. For example, [Silk Road Rising](#), a small theatre company in Chicago, has partnered with the more well-known [Goodman Theatre](#) on productions about Asian/Middle Eastern American narratives. As a genre, theatre is also beginning to produce and promote work beyond the physical stage, in an effort to reach larger audiences on the Internet. In 2013, the YOMYOMF Network produced an

## Behind the Curtains



David Henry Hwang's *Yellow Face*. Click to view.

exclusive [YouTube adaptation of David Henry Hwang's play \*Yellow Face\*](#).

Lee writes in *A History of Asian American Theatre* that from the 1990s and onwards, Asian American theatre has evolved under the influence of a new wave of younger artists who distinguish themselves from their predecessors.

Unlike the generation of EWP founders who sought to increase Asian American visibility in a time when there was none, today's emerging artists face a less straightforward racial and political climate: they are often less concerned with the number of Asian roles offered, and more concerned by the quality and depth of those roles.

Another shift has been the rising popularity of comedy, which has become an empowering mode of expression for many younger artists. This trend is evident not just in theatre, but also on TV, with shows like *Master of None* and *Dr. Ken*, and on YouTube, with comedy channels like [nigahiga](#). Lee explains, "By using humor and irreverence, Asian Americans are able to claim their identity as Americans and as three-dimensional human beings. I think now Asian Americans are not the butt of the joke – they're the joke makers."

### Looking Forward

Despite frustrating setbacks, Asian Americans in entertainment remain hopeful. Last October, the Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment (CAPE) celebrated its 25th anniversary, bringing together many prominent Asian Americans in TV, film, and other media. Attendees raised over \$25,000 for programs that support young Asian and Pacific Islander artists and writers.

Lee recently saw [Aubergine](#), a play in New York directed by Julia Cho, a Korean American playwright, and she felt for the first time that she had seen a "real representation" of the Korean American experience. "I felt completely convinced that they were telling my story. The realness of the body – only theatre can show that, and when it's done right, it's the most effective way of promoting empathy and storytelling and transformation."

In light of the recent surge in anti-immigrant rhetoric, the power of storytelling is more relevant than ever, as both a protest against racism and a celebration of cultural identity. Yu observes, "Art flourishes in times of distress and upheaval. There has to be something to react to. Rather than someone just shouting at someone else, art is something that changes minds, whether it's a play or a movie or a YouTube sketch. Those have the power to spark

## Behind the Curtains

conversations and change minds. When things stink politically and are even frightening like they are now, that's when the best art comes out."

*Catherine Wang is the Managing Editor of US-China Today and a research assistant at USC's Language Processing Lab..*

*This article originally appeared in US-China Today on January 17, 2017*

*Article reprinted with permission from the author.*

### DISCUSSION

- Actress Suzy Nakumara says, "I've been cast with my face, but with someone else's story." According to Suzy, is gaining racial representation onstage and on screen enough? If not, what else must be done?
- Snehal Desai says, "Through specificity, you find universality." What does he mean by this? Do you agree? Why, or why not?
- The author discusses how comedy has increasingly become an empowering mode of expression for young Asian American artists. Do you think comedy is a means of empowerment? Why or why not?





From Right to Left: High School Boys at Japanese American Citizens League (1942); playwright Frank Chin (1978); a performance at the Aratani Theatre in L.A. (2008); playwright Young Jean Lee (2019)

Photos: (Left) Dorothea Lange [Public domain]; (Center Left) Nancy Wong [CC BY-SA 4.0]; (Center Right) Marshall Astor [CC BY-SA 2.0]; (Right) Loudfan [CC BY-SA 4.0]

## A Brief Timeline of Asian and Pacific Islander Theater in America

Compiled by James Montañó

*It has taken a long time for Asian/Pacific Islanders (API) artists, along with other artists of color, to gain a foothold on the American stage. This abbreviated timeline looks at the growth of API artists on the stage, as well as some of the key historic political and social contexts that affected this growth. Click on the highlighted links to explore each event further.*

**1903:** The Broadway production of *A Japanese Nightingale* at Daly's Theater is produced. Written by William Young, adapted from [Onoto Watanna's \(Winnifred Eaton\) novel](#), it is the first Broadway play produced with the original text from an API author.

**1920's-1930's:** Works by API playwrights are written and published in the US, but few are staged. Ling-Ai Li's *The Submission of Rose Moy* (1924), a play exploring the themes of intergenerational conflict in a Chinese family, is published in the *Hawaii Quill Magazine* in 1928. Wai Chee Chun Yee writes *For You a Lei* in 1936 about class struggles for Chinese people living in Hawaii.

## A Brief Timeline of Asian and Pacific Islander Theater in America

**1942-1946:** [Japanese Americans are placed in internment camps](#) following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Over 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry are put in camps across the midwestern, southern, and western U.S.

**1955:** [Vietnam War begins.](#)

**1961:** The hugely popular film *Breakfast At Tiffany's* is released, [which features the actor Mickey Rooney in yellowface.](#)

**1965:** The Immigration Act of 1965 changes the quota system, which unfairly limits immigration from Asian countries. [The change leads to higher immigration from China, Korea, and the Philippines.](#)

**1965:** [The East West Players](#) in Los Angeles is founded. It becomes one of the largest continually-running theater organizations founded by API artists. Their stated goal is to “blend Eastern and Western movement, costumes, language, and music.”

**1970-1980:** Various API protest organizations are founded, such as the Oriental Actors of America, Brotherhood of Artists, and Asian/Pacific American Artists to fight for representation and work of API artists on stage and screen.

**1972:** [Ping Chong begins his work on \*Lazarus\*](#) with a group of artists, who later become his company. Considered a pioneering API director, Ping Chong continues to create work that blends Eastern and Western traditions in theater.

**1972:** The Theatrical Ensemble of Asians begins in Seattle. The theater continued until 2004, when it finally closed its doors under the new name of the Northwest Asian American Theatre.

**1972:** *Chickencoop Chinaman* by [Frank Chin](#) at the American Place Theatre marks one of the first major Asian-American centered plays produced in New York. The play looks at urban life for a Chinese documentary filmmaker and his relationship to black culture. That same year, Chin creates the Asian American Theatre Workshop in San Francisco, which still exists to this day.

**1976:** [Pacific Overtures](#) by Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman premieres on Broadway. The show is about the westernization of Japan by the British.

**1980:** *Song for a Nisei Fisherman* plays at the Mitzie Abe Fort Mason Center in San Francisco, produced by the Asian American Theatre Company.

## A Brief Timeline of Asian and Pacific Islander Theater in America

**1981:** [Cold Tofu](#), the long-running improv and comedy troupe in Los Angeles is founded by API women: Marilyn Tokuda, Denice Kumagai, Irma Escamilla, and Judy Momii.

**1981:** Willa Kim wins a Tony Award for Best Costume Design for *Sophisticated Ladies*, being the first API artist to win a Tony.

**1982:** Rick Shiomi's groundbreaking play *Yellow Fever* premieres at New York's Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. The play is a noir-style detective comedy that takes place in Vancouver, Canada's Powell Street—an area some call Japantown.

**1983:** [The Aratani Theatre](#) opens in the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district. It remains, as they say on their website, “at the epicenter of Japanese and Japanese American performing arts.”

**1988:** The premiere of [David Henry Hwang's \*M. Butterfly\* on Broadway](#) marks the first time an API playwright's work is produced on Broadway. Hwang, one of the playwrights mentioned in ***Endlings***, wins a Tony Award for Best Play, while lead performer B.D. Wong also wins for Best Featured Actor in a play. Both Hwang and Wong are the first API artists to win the awards in these categories.

**1990:** API theater makers petition Actors Equity Association in protest of non-API performers playing API characters in the upcoming Broadway production of *Miss Saigon*. Nonetheless, [Miss Saigon](#) premieres on Broadway, starring Jonathan Pryce in yellowface as the Engineer.

**1990:** Paul Chihara and John Driar's [Shogun, The Musical](#) opens on Broadway. It is the first musical with an API composer.

**1991:** Lea Salonga wins a [Best Actress in a Musical](#) Tony for *Miss Saigon*, the first API female performer to do so.

**1992:** [Theater Mu](#) is founded in Minneapolis, Minnesota by Rick Shiomi, Dong-il Lee, Diane Espaldon, and Martha Johnson. It is still one of the largest API theater company in the US.

**1993:** [Unbroken Thread](#) is published. Edited by Roberta Uno, it is the first anthology of work by API female playwrights. The book, published by University of Massachusetts Press, is a precursor to UMass Amherst's [Asian American Women Playwrights archive](#) later founded in 1997, under the stewardship of Roberta Uno.

## A Brief Timeline of Asian and Pacific Islander Theater in America

**2000:** Three South Asian theater companies are founded: Disha Theatre and SALAAM! (South Asian League of Artists in America) in New York and Arthe in Washington DC.

**2003:** *Bombay Dreams* premieres on Broadway with music by A.R. Rahman, book by Meera Syal, Thomas Meehan, lyrics by Don Black and produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber. This Bollywood-style musical boasted a mostly South Asian cast.

**2015:** *Mimi Lien* (*Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812*) wins a MacArthur Genius Fellowship for her work in set design. She is the first API stage designer to win the award.

**2018:** *Straight White Men* opens on Broadway, making the playwright, Young Jean Lee, the first female API playwright to have a play staged on Broadway. Young Jean Lee is also referenced in *Endlings* as a contemporary of the character Ha Young.

### References:

AMERICAN THEATRE. Accessed February 10, 2019. <https://www.americantheatre.org/>.

"An Informal Historical Timeline of Asian American Theatre." Asian American Theatre Revue Blog. Accessed February 28, 2019. <https://aatrevue.com/Newsblog/informational-resources-on-the-revue/an-informal-historical-timeline-of-asian-american-theatre/>.

Lee, Esther Kim. *A History of Asian American Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 20



# Educational Activities

## Lesson Plan Index

### TRADITIONS LOST AND HELD

Pages 39-40

*In this activity, students will learn the value of traditions and how they are maintained or lost. They will do this by interviewing someone in their community or family. Students will then explore the cultural and historical context of their interviewee's traditions while examining customs and values that they may personally carry.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **Endlings**.*

### PERFORMING INNER CONFLICT

Pages 41-43

*In this activity, students will explore two of the ways that conflict is expressed theatrically: in dialogue or monologue. Students will examine a personal conflict and construct a monologue that communicates the inner turmoil of a character. Students will direct each other in performance and present the monologue for their peers.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **Endlings**.*

### EXPLORING IDENTITY IN MEDIA

Page 44-45

*In this activity, students will critically examine representations of Asian/Pacific Islanders (API) in popular culture. In examining such representation, students will discuss the use of cultural identifiers through appropriation and the presence or absence of API performers onstage or on-screen. Students will choose a piece of pop culture to critically examine and discuss how whiteness is represented and how API culture and/or people are represented.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **Endlings**.*

# Lesson Plan: Traditions Lost and Held

## OBJECTIVES

*Students will learn the value of traditions and how they are maintained or lost. They will do this by interviewing someone in their community or family. Students will then explore the cultural and historical context of their interviewee's traditions while examining customs and values that they may personally carry.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **Endlings***

## SUGGESTED STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

### Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework

**Writing Standards 9-12 3.** Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. 5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

**Speaking and Listening Standards 9-12 1.** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively 2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally), evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

### English Language Arts and Literacy | 11-12

**Writing in the Content Areas WCA.11-12.3** In history/social studies, students must be able to incorporate narrative accounts into their analyses of individuals or events of historic import.

## TIME

2 Class periods  
Class one: 30 minutes  
Class two: 45 minutes

## MATERIALS

- Article "The Last Mermaids of South Korea" (page 20)
- Recording device/cell phone for interviews (optional)
- Paper and writing utensils for note taking

## PROCEDURE

### Class 1:

1. Have students read the article together or in advance of the class.
2. Ask: What are the traditions that are disappearing in this region?
3. For follow-up, ask: Why do we think those traditions are disappearing?
  - As an extension, ask: How do you think technology has affect the tradition, for good or ill?
4. Have students pair off and discuss a tradition that their family/friends/community keeps. This could be food, holidays, music, an heirloom, and the like.

5. Students should report out about their partner's traditions.
6. Present the assignment for the next class:
  - a. Students are to interview someone in their family/community about a tradition they have kept and/or traditions that they have lost. Remind students that this could be a recipe, an heirloom, a holiday tradition, a religious tradition, and so on.
  - b. Possible interview questions:
    - Why did you keep/lose this tradition?
    - Where do you think the tradition began?
    - Are there any traditions that you wish to create for yourself/family/friends?
  - c. Students will then write down the important points from the interviewee.
  - d. As a final step, students will briefly give the tradition a cultural context. What could have occurred socially, culturally, and historically to create and maintain this tradition? How does technology affect the continuation or degradation of this tradition? Naturally, this may require a little research.
  - e. Students should be prepared to present their interview and background in the next class. If possible, students will provide visuals or props to enhance their presentation.

### **Class 2:**

1. Students will present their findings to the class in a 3-5 minute presentation. Encourage the use of visuals and props for this presentation.

### **REFLECTION**

- Of the various traditions presented in class, what were similar?
- What were the most common reasons some chose to maintain a tradition?
- What were the most common reasons to lose a tradition?
- What role does technology, politics, religion, and social change have in maintaining or losing a tradition?



# Lesson Plan: Performing Inner Conflict

## OBJECTIVES

*Students will explore two of the ways that conflict is expressed theatrically: in dialogue or monologue. Students will examine a personal conflict and construct a monologue that communicates the inner turmoil of a character. Students will direct each other in performance and present the monologue for their peers.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **Endlings***

## SUGGESTED STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

### Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework

**Theatre Learning Standards PreK-12** 1 Acting Students will develop acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes. 2 Reading and Writing Scripts Students will read, analyze, and write dramatic material. 5 Critical Response Students will describe and analyze their own theatrical work and the work of others using appropriate theatre vocabulary. When appropriate, students will connect their analysis to interpretation and evaluation. 18 Apply appropriate acting techniques and styles in performances of plays from a variety of dramatic genres and historical periods 9 Drawing on personal experience or research, write a monologue for an invented, literary, or historical character 19 Identify and describe, orally and in writing, the influence of other artists on the development of their own artistic work.

### Reading | Craft and Structure

**R.PK-12.4** Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

**R.PK-12.6** Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

### English Language Arts and Literacy | 11-12

*Writing in the Content Areas WCA.11-12.3 In history/social studies, students must be able to incorporate narrative accounts into their analyses of individuals or events of historic import.*

## TIME

45 minutes

## MATERIALS

- Handout: Monologue Examples (page 43)
- Writing utensils
- Paper
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or other surface for writing

## VOCABULARY

- **Dialogue:** a conversation between two or more characters.
- **Monologue:** a speech by one character.
- **Outer Monologue:** a speech spoken by one character directly to another character.
- **Inner Monologue:** a speech that expresses the inner world or feelings of the character to no one in particular (many times directly to the audience).

## PROCEDURE

1. Write the words “Dialogue” and “Monologue” on the board. Ask the class to define the terms.
2. Pass out Monologue Handout to the class.
3. Ask a student to volunteer to read or perform the first monologue aloud.
4. Ask another to read/perform the second aloud.
5. Allow the class to discuss the difference and similarities between the two.
  - a. Differences could be tone, content, pacing.
  - b. If students do not address it, note that one monologue is an “Outer Monologue.” Define this for the group and write on the board. The other is an “Inner Monologue.” Do the same for this phrase.
6. Introduce the assignment:
  - a. Students are to write a monologue that expresses a character’s inner conflict.
  - b. To begin they should decided four factors and write them at the top of their page:
    - Who is the character?
    - What is their conflict?
    - Where are they when they are speaking?
    - Is this an Inner or Outer Monologue?
  - c. Give the students 10-15 minutes to free write.
7. Have students pair off.
  - a. One student will read the monologue aloud while the other will direct and give notes on the monologue.
  - b. If necessary, performers take a moment to edit their script.
  - c. Performer and director switch and repeat the activity.
8. Ask for a few students to perform their monologue for the class.
9. Have a moment of reflection.

## REFLECTION

- Is it easier to write an Inner Monologue or an Outer Monologue?
- Is an Inner or Outer Monologue more or less realistic than the other?
- Can you think of an example of an Inner Monologue in a play, television, or movie?
- Are there moments in real life where one would verbalize an inner monologue?

# Monologue Examples

## MONOLOGUE 1:

Ok, I don't think it can be too hard right? Jordi, tell me I'm being reckless, and I shouldn't go through with it. Tell me to turn around and pretend like she never walked into my chemistry class and begrudgingly became my lab partner. Tell me that this is crazy, Jordi! (*Beat*) Actually, no don't say anything. Never mind. You're always telling me that I am too unsure of myself, that I need more confidence. Know what? Yeah, I'm gonna do it! I got the flowers, the choreography is down. I just need the right moment to jump on the table, give you the signal (*gives a hand gesture*), then you play the song, and I'll do my thing. She'll look at me with my moves (*shakes a hip*), say "yes" and there: I've got my prom date! Right? Easy peasy. I like it, Jordi. It's a solid plan. (*Confident*) I think I'm going to have an actual human prom date this year! (*Pause*) Unless she's allergic to flowers. Or I jump on the table, slip, break my neck, and die. And make a fool of myself! I'll never live that down—breaking my neck and dying. No, never mind. Jordi, I'm calling it off. It's not worth the stress.

## MONOLOGUE 2:

I came to this school only three weeks ago from Mexico City and I promised myself that I wouldn't say anything bad about where I came from. I would be a proud *Mexicana* who just happens to live in Portland now. But...I've started to slip. I've always been able to do an American accent and I've been doing it all day, every day at school. Why? Why am I doing this? It feels like when you twist your face up into a shape. You know, you do it for a bit and your face starts to hurt. Do it too long and it becomes the new normal. Your face is stuck, curled into that snarl, and it actually feels ok. I accidentally forgot to untwist my tongue and used the accent at home. My *padre* asked me, "Why are you sounding like that, *hija*? Are you getting sick?" I didn't have the heart to tell him that, yes, I am getting sick. Sick of lying to people that I come from the "south"—everyone thinks Phoenix or something—and that I'm afraid if I say the truth, the real truth, they'll hate me. For lying, for pretending to be like them, for daring to say that I am the same as them.



# Lesson Plan: Exploring Identity in Media

## OBJECTIVES

*Students will critically examine representations of Asian/Pacific Islanders (API) in popular culture. In examining such representation, students will discuss the use of cultural identifiers through appropriation and the presence or absence of API performers onstage or on-screen. Students will choose a piece of pop culture to critically examine and discuss how whiteness is represented and how API culture and/or people are represented.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **Endlings***

## SUGGESTED STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

### Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy

**Reading Informational Text / Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RI.9-10.7** Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized or deemphasized in each account.

**RI.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**Writing / Text Types and Purposes W.9-10.2** Write informative/explanatory texts (e.g., essays, oral reports, biographical feature articles) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**Connections / Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change ARTS.C.08.07 [HS]** Identify works, genres, or styles that show the influence of two or more cultural traditions, and describe how the traditions, and describe how the traditions are manifested in the work. Suggested period: American and world cultures to c. 1920

## TIME

45 minutes

## MATERIALS

- Writing utensils
- Paper
- Screen to view YouTube videos in class
- Chalkboard, white board, or other surface for writing
- Articles: ["Yellowface, Whitewashing, and the History of White People Playing Asian Characters"](#) and ["The Prevalence of Asian Appropriation by Female Artists"](#) to be read digitally or printed in class.

## VOCABULARY

- **API:** Asian/Pacific Islander
- **Default Whiteness:** The idea that whiteness is the default cultural identity of stories and characters.
- **Appropriation:** the act of taking something from someone without their permission.

## PROCEDURE

1. Open the assignment with a question: What is your favorite television show or movie at the moment?
2. Further ask: Which various cultures are represented in the work?
  - a. Allow students to talk through cultural identities. If it is not raised, ask: Is whiteness a culture?
  - b. Allow for discussion.
3. Write the phrase “Default Whiteness” on the board and define it for the group.
  - a. Ask if there are examples of this in pop culture, books, television, or movies.
4. Show following clips regarding representation of people of color in film. Both clips are the only moments a person of color speaks in a specific film:
  - a. [\*The Fault in Our Stars\*](#)
  - b. [\*Maleficent\*](#)
5. Ask:
  - What kind of world does both of these films portray if there is only one person of color in the film?
  - What does it say about whiteness?
  - What does it say to people of color?
6. Explain that today the focus will be on Asian or Pacific Islander identity and representation.
7. Split the class in two and assign each group a different article:
  - a. [“Yellowface, Whitewashing, and the History of White People Playing Asian Characters”](#) from *Teen Vogue*
  - b. [“The Prevalence of Asian Appropriation by Female Artists”](#) by the blog *Asian American Popular Culture: WQ17*
8. Gather students together. Have the students offer a single word or phrase that had an impact on them from the article. Write those on the board.
9. Allow students to speak out about the articles.
  - Ask: Did you relate to anything in the article?
10. Give the take home assignment: For next class, in any visual pop culture experience of choice, recognize the placement of API voices in the work or the appropriation of cultural hallmarks.
  - a. Also, note the presence or lack of voices of other people of color or other appropriative cultural elements.
  - b. Write one to two paragraphs that discuss the presence of those voices or their lack.

## REFLECTION

- Why is it important to have representation of non-white cultures?
- What can one do to not see whiteness as default?
- What is the line between appropriation and appreciation?

## RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS

For further information about deepening conversations around whiteness in the classroom, head over to *Teaching Tolerance*’s fantastic resource called [“Why Talk About Whiteness?”](#)

# Resources

## READ

[Meet the Last Generation of Haenyeo, Korea's Real-Life Mermaids](#) from *Huffington Post*. This is a photo essay with beautiful images of South Korea's haenyeos.

[Asian Actors Tell Stories of Prejudice in #MyYellowFaceStory Project](#) from *Playbill*. A powerful conversation sparked by the #MyYellowFaceStory on Twitter, which encouraged API theater makers to tell their stories of prejudice and exclusion from the American stage.

[Broadway diversity improves for all but Asian Americans, report finds](#) from *NBC News*. Data from the 2015/2016 Broadway season.

[Why the The Mikado is Still Problematic: Cultural Appropriation 101](#) from *Howlround*. Using Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* as a springboard, stage director Desdemona Chiang examines the uses and abuses of API characters onstage and on-screen.

[Swipe White](#) from *Longreads*. “Jennifer Chong Schneider considers what it is to be Asian, maligned, and fetishized in dating — and questions her own desire when she dates someone of her own ethnicity for the first time.”

## LISTEN

[Not So Ancient Podcast](#). Hosted by theater performers and other theater artists, this podcast focuses on the “history of Asian American Drama.” In each episode the hosts read a play by modern API playwrights and discuss it with a rotating crew of artists.

## WATCH

[Asian Enough?](#) This TEDx talk by actor David Huynh covers the lack of API performers on the American stage and in cinema and the perils on representation through a white gaze.

[Culture of Jeju Haenyeos \(woman divers\)](#) from UNESCO. This video relays the history of haenyeos and their current status as a culture on the brink of



# Resources

extinction. UNESCO has since placed the haenyeo on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity—listing them as a protected culture.

[Documentary on 12 Year Old Korean Haenyeo Diver 1975](#). A vintage short documentary film by *Journal Films, Inc.*, as part of their “Families of the World” series. A fascinating film that follows a young future haenyeo in training on Jeju Island.