



QUEER & API: ENGAGING WITH API COMMUNITIES

ACCEPTANCE IN THE KOREAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

KOREAN AMERICANS AND LGBT ISSUES

Past efforts in the Korean American community have focused on confronting active and organized opposition to LGBT equality. In particular, a few Korean American Christian churches mobilized members in 2008 to support California's Proposition 8 to pass a constitutional amendment to deny marriage rights for same-sex couples. As recently as summer 2013, some isolated churches have reportedly mobilized to oppose LGBT inclusion in school academic standards, as well as to oppose transgender inclusive policies. LGBT advocates and allies have generally sought to counter this opposition by confronting opposition at local community events with messages supporting LGBT rights. Groups also have conducted voter education through phonebanks and other outreach methods.

Recent research suggests that one-time, isolated attempts to provide information or change people's minds are ineffective. While there seems to be general support among Korean Americans for the principles of equality and non-discrimination, there is very little knowledge about the LGBT community. The lack of awareness raises confusion and ambivalence, leading to reactive resistance to support. Moreover, many do not know or encounter openly LGBT people in their lives, increasing the discomfort and confusion about these issues.

Among many, however, there is an openness to discussion and sharing opinions in a respectful and nonjudgmental setting. This can, in fact, change people's minds. Many in the Korean American community would benefit from opportunities to engage in dialogue about their views and to ask questions about basic facts, laws, and issues related to the LGBT community.

A well-paced, longer-term campaign of building community understanding through dialogue will be more effective than one-time policy efforts to garner support.

THE POWER OF HUMAN CONNECTION

Within the Korean American community, there is a lack of personal experience meeting or talking with people of the LGBT community. Below are quotes by some of the straight male and female focus group participants stating their lack of communication with the LGBT community.

"I wish I could meet them."

"I don't know anyone like that and . . . I just see it on the television or in the news or news paper, and just the celebrities"

"I think that . . . people should have some courage and talk about these things. They don't talk about [LGBT issues] at all."

OUR PURPOSE

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

API Equality-LA and API Equality-Northern California partnered with Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy to collect research on **Asian Pacific Islander (API) views on same-sex marriage and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.**

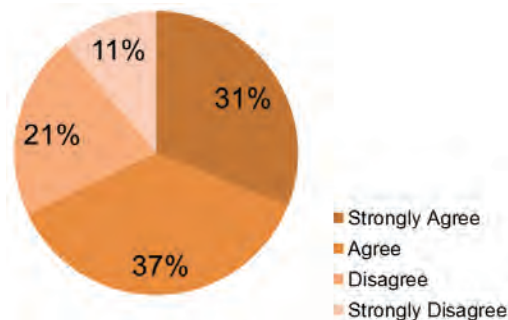
These fact sheets highlight key findings from a combination of one-on-one in-depth interviews and focus groups among voters and individuals in California's Chinese, Filipino, and Korean communities. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in each ethnic community in English and participants' primary languages: Mandarin, Korean, or Tagalog. Participants were of varying genders, age, and education levels. This research was designed to explore views on same-sex marriage as well as values, attitudes, and feelings related to LGBT people.

Factsheets are for community members and LGBT advocates looking to gain a better understanding of these communities, so they can reach out and build better understanding across difference between and among our communities.

JUST GETTING STARTED

Few studies focus specifically on the views of the Korean American community with regard to LGBT issues. Public education efforts to focus specifically on the Korean American community have also been limited. Lack of information and awareness results in confusion and uncertainty about LGBT equality. Based on their direct experience, community advocates in Los Angeles, the largest concentration of Korean and Korean Americans in the U.S., suggest that slow-paced and gradual work is needed to build understanding of LGBT issues in the community. Korean American corporate media and older members of the community are well-respected opinion leaders who tend to exert negative influence on people's views on LGBT acceptance. API Equality-LA's research suggests, however, that for many across age groups the values of equality and non-discrimination resonate, and conversation to explore these values in connection with their family and faith values can be helpful to neutralize fear and hostility toward LGBT issues—and can even build support among some.

“I SUPPORT GAY AND LESBIAN RIGHTS.”



Source: Koreatown Youth Attitudes Towards Gay and Lesbian Issues, API Equality-LA

WHAT INFLUENCES KOREAN YOUTH TO BE MORE ACCEPTING?



Source: Koreatown Youth Attitudes Towards Gay and Lesbian Issues, API Equality-LA

POLLING RESULTS

API Equality-LA's research, based on focus groups and in-person interviews, shows that many Korean Americans do not have opportunities to talk to others in a safe and non-judgmental environment, which leads to a lack of understanding of LGBT issues. Many people stated they do not know someone personally who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Issues of inequality, discrimination or hardship that LGBT people experience seem very abstract.

Similar to other communities, among Korean-Americans, not knowing a LGBT person may be correlated with opposition to equal rights for LGBT people. While there are Korean Americans who are extremely opposed to LGBT equality, personal experience suggests that many have simply not had enough opportunities to meet and talk with LGBT people to develop an awareness of commonalities or values they may share across this line of difference, and that resistance to the idea of LGBT equality is not hardened opposition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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API EQUALITY-LA
Asians and Pacific Islanders for LGBT Equality

API Equality-LA advocates in the Greater Los Angeles Asian and Pacific Islander communities for the fair treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and marriage equality for same-sex couples. API Equality-LA's vision is to create a society that celebrates the loves and lives of all people - free from discrimination and injustice.



API EQUALITY
Northern California

API Equality-Northern California works at the intersections of the Asian and Pacific Islander and LGBTQ communities to transform people, practices, and policies to make the world an equitable and safe place for everyone. API Equality-Northern California envisions a world where LGBTQ Asians and Pacific Islanders are empowered to practice self-determination, cultivate intergenerational connections, and live truthfully.