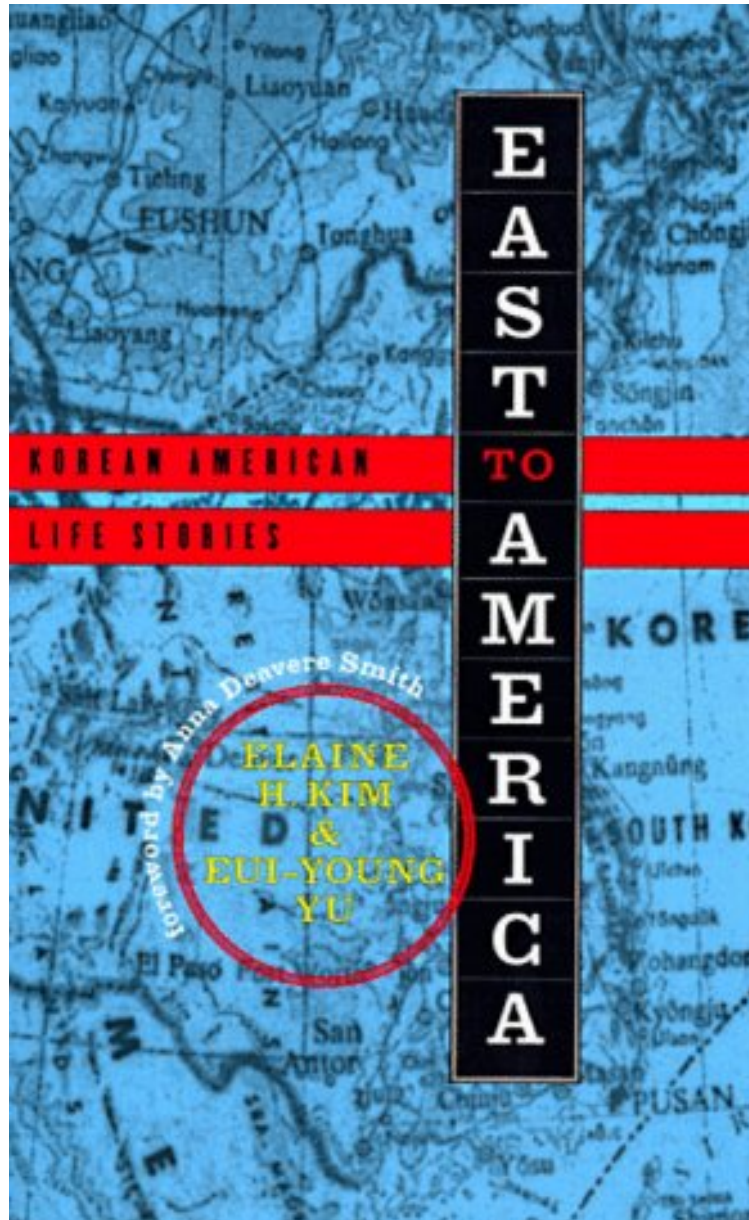


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East to America: Korean American Life Stories

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PERSPECTIVE. I AM AN AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE WHOM FOUND THIS BOOK EXTREMELY INTERESTING! THE BOOK KEPT MY ATTENTION AND MADE ME WANT TO KEEP READING MORE. ONE OF THE MANY BOOKS THAT I REFER TO FRIENDS WHEN THE ASIAN AMERICAN CONVO COMES UP. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Yori J. By Yori J. I love reading about people in other countries, about human stories. Many times after reading this type of book, you realize that you are so lucky to be an USA citizen. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Oral History is good. By Customer. This book emphasizes the importance of oral history. Although you might not find polished masterpieces here, "East to America" accomplishes the much-needed task of placing Korean-American voices within a more prominent context--or at least publishes their voices. Praise for Elaine Kim Co. for compiling the book; in my own research there has been slim pickings as far as the K.A. literature goes). But, as a "second generation" (American-born) Korean-American, I was disappointed to find that few members of my own generation (X?) were included in the collection (But it makes sense; after all, the book is called "East to America" ...bah). I found the stories gritty and real, and it was hard to put the book down. I would recommend this book to not only any Korean-American, but to anyone who is interested in viewing the Korean-American population as something more than gun-toting greengrocers or model minority geeks.

In this collection of powerful, candid oral histories, a wide cross section of Korean Americans render a portrait of a community grappling with racial tensions, class and gender differences, and differing notions of family and honor.

From Publishers Weekly. During the 1992 Los Angeles riots, Koreatown was the target of burning and looting by many blacks whose resentment exploded against Korean shopkeepers; blacks charged that the Koreans exploited them, treated them badly and flaunted their superiority. Kim and Yu, both Korean Americans who teach at California colleges, set out to reform these images of their people in some 50 engrossing interviews with a cross section of the Korean American community. These movingly reveal a culture and history of people victimized both in their native land and in the U.S. Most were brought here as children in the 1970s after the Korean War by parents fiercely determined to make a better life; others are American-born. All display a strong sense of filial duty and respect for education, hard work and success; most feel a sense of commonality with blacks but confess that their culturally imprinted emotional reserve invites misinterpretation. While race relations are not the only focus of these interviews, they are a prominent concern. A Korean American police officer present during the riots observes that Korean Americans did not realize the magnitude of black hostility toward them. But he also says that a sense of victimization does no one any good: "So what if you're a victim," he says coolly. "Get in line, there are 10,000 victims ahead of you." Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal. YA--One of the many consequences of the Rodney King verdict was TV images of desperate Korean shop owners during the LA riots defending their property with guns. This book is a direct result of the author's desire to replace those images with a more complete picture of Korean-Americans, showing, through the words of the Korean-Americans themselves, that they have as many different life stories to tell as any other ethnic group. These 38 interviews include a Korean adopted as a baby by white Americans, a rap artist, a journalist, a gay activist, several inner-city shop owners, a widow, an abused wife, and a charity volunteer. The book's usefulness lies in exposing students, especially those of Korean descent, to Korean-Americans' recent history, culture, and heritage. It can also serve as background reading for multicultural issues. Judy McAloon, Potomac Library, Prince William County, VA. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus. This diverse series of interviews with Korean-Americans grew out of the editors' reaction to the media portrayal of "inarticulate aliens" during the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Kim (Asian-American Studies/Univ. of California, Berkeley) and Yu (Sociology/Calif. State Univ., Los Angeles) successfully offer a "glimpse of some Korean American perspectives on history, identity, and community." As with all immigrant groups, the editors note, some Koreans see America as "a promised land"; to others "it is purgatory." James Park found a sanctuary here. He describes a miserable childhood in the 1940s and '50s, spanning the Japanese occupation of Korea and the North-South conflict, during which his mother died "because of my father's neglect." In 1969 he left for the US as a foreign-exchange student; today he is a prominent Los Angeles importer-exporter. Dong Hwan Ku (a pseudonym) has a different perspective. He came to this country in 1984 and owns a small sundries store near an unnamed college campus. "I am scared everyday," he says, recalling how he fired warning shots during the 1992 looting. He sees no solution to the violence and animosity between local black residents and the Korean business community. He wants to go home. Others, such as Kyong-A Price, have found answers and peace. A "troubled woman" who attempted suicide several times, Buddhist Price felt spiritually at odds with her Anglo-Christian husband. Then, like many Korean-Americans, Price became born-again and "accepted Jesus Christ." As Kim and Yu note, there are 3,000 Korean Christian churches in the US but only 650 Buddhist temples. The church has become the single most important community organization. A window into a little-known community and a wide variety of people--a gay activist, a rapper, a monk--along with an excellent overview of Korean and Korean-American history. -- Copyright 1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.