

# ***Hear Us Out! Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders and their Music:***

*A Smithsonian Folkways Learning  
Pathway for students in Grades 9-12*



## ***Teacher's Guide***

### ***Lesson 7: Mobilizing Asian America***

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#### **Lesson Overview**

Because of the long history of violence and legal discrimination against Asian Americans, there is also a long history of political and labor activism in Asian American communities. Inspired by civil rights and anti-war movements in the 1960s, Asian Americans of different ethnicities formed coalitions to improve their living conditions (e.g., affordable housing, social services, labor practices, etc.). Perhaps the most long-lasting effect of the Asian American movement was the development of an Asian American identity defined primarily by community members. Musicians and arts organizations have been instrumental in developing this new racial identity.

**Taiko** is the musical tradition that is most closely associated with the Asian American movement. During this period (1970s), most taiko players were Japanese Americans who wanted to challenge the stereotype of the weak Asian who is unable to speak up for themselves. Taiko means "big drum" or "fat drum" in Japanese. It is characterized by the use of big and smaller drums, other percussion instruments, voice, and choreography.

In this lesson, students will explore the role of music in social justice movements (specifically the Asian American movement). **Component 1** focuses on the history of Asian American activism. In **Component 2**, students will learn about the emergence of taiko music during the Asian American movement—listening for musical characteristics, expressive qualities, and social context. **Component 3** is project-based. In small groups, students will research the ways in which several Asian American arts organizations fulfill their social justice missions.

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## In this Guide

<b>Lesson Overview</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Lesson Components and Student Objectives</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Teaching Plan</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Additional Reading and Resources</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>2014 National Music Standards Connections</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Worksheets</b> .....	<b>29</b>

## Lesson Components and Student Objectives



### 1. Legacy of the Asian American Movement (30+ mins)

- Students will identify historical examples of Asian American activism.
- Students will explain what the Asian American movement was and how it is still relevant today.
- Students will explain how musicians have helped to develop an Asian American identity.



### 2. Taiko and the Asian American Movement (30+ mins)







- Through attentive listening, students will identify similarities and differences between performances of taiko music (related to musical characteristics, expressive qualities, and social/performance contexts).
- Students will explain how the emergence of taiko in the United States relates to the Asian American movement.



### 3. Researching Asian American Arts (15+ mins)

- Students will describe the role of the arts in sustaining social justice movements.
- Students will describe the achievements and challenges of several community-based Asian American arts organizations.

\*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Component. Keep in mind that these Components are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Components they'd like to use from each Lesson. The time estimate given for each component indicates "in class" time. The + indicates there are optional extension activities and/or a suggested homework assignment.

While all learning types ( History and Culture,  Music Listening,  Music Making and Creation, and  Creative Connections) fulfill 2014 National Music Standards, non-music teachers will be able to use  History and Culture and  Creative Connections Components without specific musical knowledge.

## Teaching Plan

### 1. Component One: Legacy of the Asian American Movement

#### **To prepare:**



- Read through the component.
- Preview Component 1 of the **Lesson 7 Slideshow** (slides 4–36).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes.)
- Print (or prepare to display) the lyrics for “Yellow Pearl” (find below).
- Optional: Print (or prepare to display) the lyrics for “Tanforan (Is Anybody There?)” (find below).

**Slides One - Three:** Information for teachers

**Slide Four:** Component 1 Title Slide

Important notes for teachers: After the opening listening activity on **slide 5**, please tailor the content of this component to meet the needs of your students. **Slides 6–25** are intended to provide a comprehensive overview the history of Asian American activism in the United States, with a specific focus on the goals of the Asian American Movement during the 1970s. It will be up to you to decide how much of this contextual information you want to explore with your students. Alternatively, students could explore this section of the slideshow on their own—at their own pace and on their own devices. On **slide 26**, students are prompted to connect the lesson material to their own lives by considering what social services are provided in their own communities, and by whom. Beginning on **slide 27**, students are prompted to consider how artists have helped to develop an “Asian American” identity—defined primarily by community members. This point is illustrated through four musical examples (**slides 29–33**).

**Slide Five:** “Yellow Pearl”

#### A. Attentive Listening

- Listen to the opening song from the 1973 album *A Grain of Sand*, while following along with the lyrics.
  - Find the lyrics below (or display on screen).

#### B. Discussion

- *What is “yellow peril”?*

- *How do the lyrics express Asian American pride?*
  - **Hints to guide discussion:**
    - The term "Yellow Peril" refers to the fear that peoples of East and southeast Asia represent a threat to the Western world. This fear has contributed to a long history of discrimination and violence against Asian Americans, which led to the need for Asian American activism.
    - On her 2021 album *120,000 Stories*, Noboku Miyamoto added: This song turned the derogatory term “yellow peril”—which described Asians as a menace to European and American societies—into a pearl, a jewel, a thing of beauty and resilience. We saw the Vietnamese resisting the US invasion as an example of the power of the small. We claimed our identities as Asian Americans and challenged the notion of being a “minority” by connecting to Asians around the world”.
    - The liner notes from *A Grain of Sand* state: “A tiny grain of sand gets inside an oyster, and the oyster tries to cover it and cover it, until finally it becomes a pearl. Our people were called “the yellow peril” when they first came to this country. We were ridiculed and feared and looked on as something less than human. We were like a tiny grain of sand, isolated and separated from our homeland. They tried to make us feel inferior and look powerless, but we see that if we look across the ocean, if all people look to their homelands, we are not a minority, but an overwhelming majority in this world. We are not powerless. We are going to make the “yellow peril” into something beautiful.”

### **Slide Six:** History of Asian American Activism

#### Share Information and Optional Video

- Because of the long history of violence and legal discrimination against Asian Americans, there is also a long history of political and labor activism in Asian American communities. Much Asian American activism across the political spectrum relies on cross-racial coalitions.
  - If time allows, watch the embedded video about Filipino-Chicano coalitions in the late 1960s (approx. 6 minutes).
    - For more about the Delano Grape Strike and Filipino contributions to the Chicano Movement, visit Lesson 6 of the "Music of the Chicano Movement Pathway."

### **Slide Seven:** Early Asian American Activism

#### Share Information and Optional Video

- In 1867, Chinese railroad workers went on strike after a tunnel explosion killed six (five of whom were Chinese). The workers demanded ten-hour workdays and

wages equivalent to those of White workers. Leland Stanford (the owner of the railroad) ended the strike after eight days by cutting off all provisions to Chinese workers. However, the strike showed railroad tycoons that they could not take Chinese workers for granted.

- If time allows, watch the embedded trailer for a new musical inspired by this event (approx. 3 minutes).

### **Slide Eight:** Silent Protests: Angel Island Poems

#### Share Information

- Under some circumstances, the protests of Asian Americans could not be public. Angel Island, located near San Francisco, was the main immigration station charged with enforcing racist Asian exclusion laws. There, many Chinese and some other arrivals carved poems onto the walls of the barracks protesting their extended detentions and often deportations.

### **Slide Nine:** Setting Angel Island Poems to Music

#### A. Share Information

- The carved poems on Angel Island have inspired many musicians. In the late 1990s, Jon Jang wrote *Island: Immigrant Suite #1* and *#2*. Jang's grandparents were detained and interrogated on Angel Island. The first suite is for an ensemble of Chinese and Western instruments that performs in a style inspired by free jazz (an improvised style of jazz characterized by the absence of set chord patterns or time patterns).

#### B. Attentive Listening

- Listen to an excerpt from the embedded recording (fourth movement).
  - Especially if teaching in the context of a music classroom, have students reflect on how music elements and expressive qualities are applied (instrumentation, time, rhythms, melody, dynamics, texture, tempo, etc.).

### **Slide Ten:** Protesting through Lawsuits

#### Share Information

- Asian Americans also used courts to fight for rights. Some challenges were successful, but others were not. In the 1920s, several Asian Americans unsuccessfully tried to fight for citizenship ([Ozawa v. U.S.](#); [Thind v. U.S.](#)) and the right to attend White schools in the South ([Lum v. Rice](#)) by claiming Whiteness. These cases demonstrate the limits of assimilation in the U.S.
  - Click on the links if you would like to learn more about each lawsuit.

**Slide Eleven:** Korematsu v. U.S.Share Information

- When FDR issued Executive Order 9066 incarcerating Japanese Americans on the west coast, Fred Korematsu remained at his residence in San Leandro, CA. He was arrested and convicted. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, where he and his lawyers argued that E.O. 9066 was unconstitutional. In a 6-3 decision, the Court ruled against Korematsu, arguing that the government can take individuals' or groups' civil rights in situations of "military necessity."
  - George Hirabayashi and Minoru Yasui were also arrested for violating military orders associated with E.O. 9066. Their cases also went to the Supreme Court. I focus on Korematsu here because his case resulted in a more wide-ranging Supreme Court decision.

**Slide Twelve:** The Legacy of KorematsuShare Information and Reflect

- Although Korematsu's conviction was voided in 1983, the Supreme Court's decision that "military necessity" can lead to the curtailing of civil rights remained.
- In Trump v. Hawaii (2018), the court disagreed about the meaning of Korematsu, but both sides repudiated it. In her dissent, Justice Sotomayor wrote, "This formal repudiation of a shameful precedent is laudable and long overdue." *However, did the Court create a new precedent that resembles Korematsu in many ways? (Eric, can you provide a couple of talking points to help guide this discussion?)*

**Slide Thirteen:** Involvement in Homeland PoliticsShare Information

- Many Asian Americans in the early 20th century were also involved in the politics of their homeland. Examples include:
  - The Ghadar Party founded by members of the South Asian diaspora who want to overthrow British colonialism.
  - Chinese Americans fundraising for the 1911 Revolution in China and for war efforts in the 1930s.

**Slide Fourteen:** From Ethnicities to RaceShare Information

- Before the mid-1960s, Asian Americans did not think of themselves as a single racial group. Two key reasons were:
  1. Different Asian ethnicities often lived very different lives; and

2. Homeland politics often made coalitions between different ethnicities difficult.

### **Slide Fifteen:** From Ethnicities to Race

#### Share Information and Watch Video

- In the 1960s, more radical Asian American activists participated in the Civil Rights and Anti-war movements and saw the political potential of large coalitions. This inspired them to form organizations that cut across Asian ethnicities and alliances with other racial groups. These activists were often opposed by more traditional or pro-business organizations in Asian American communities. These divisions were often most visible when labor issues were involved.
- Watch the short video clip, which illustrates this point (approx. 1 minute).

### **Slide Sixteen:** Black Power and the Asian American Movement

#### Share Information

- The pioneers of the Asian American movement in the late 1960s were heavily influenced by the Black Power movement, which holds political stances that emphasize:
  - Racial pride
  - Self-determination, particularly community control over institutions (education/police)
  - Fair housing and employment

### **Slide Seventeen:** Three Early Organizations

#### Share Information

- *Asian American Political Alliance* (San Francisco and Berkeley, 1968-69): Helped lead student strikes (**see next slide**).
- *The Red Guard Party* (San Francisco, 1969-73): Directly modeled on the Black Panther party. They focused their efforts on SF Chinatown.
- *Asian Americans for Action* (NYC, 1969-80): Dedicated to opposing the Vietnam War and nurturing grassroots Asian American solidarity.

### **Slide Eighteen:** Campus Strikes

#### Share Information

- The biggest success of the early Asian American movement came about through the student strikes at San Francisco State College (1968-69) and UC Berkeley (1969). Asian American activist students joined other students of color as members of the Third World Liberation Front to demand:

- Changing how the university produces and disseminates knowledge about BIPOCs
- Giving BIPOCs greater access to admission and financial aid

### **Slide Nineteen:** The Birth of Ethnic Studies

#### Share Information

- The five-month strike at SF State and the three-month strike at Berkeley ended when both universities agreed to create ethnic studies departments. The flourishing of these programs at hundreds of universities today demonstrates the far-reaching influences of these strikes.

### **Slide Twenty:** Helping Communities throughout the 1970s

#### Share Information

- The efforts of the Asian American Movement were most visible in large Asian enclaves. In San Francisco, Los Angeles, Honolulu, Seattle, New York, Philadelphia and several other cities, activists in the Asian American Movement in the 1970s worked to:
  - Preserve and sustain traditional Asian neighborhoods
  - Fight for affordable housing
  - Provide social services
  - Organize labor and fight discriminatory employment practices

### **Slide Twenty-One:** Preserving Neighborhoods

#### Share Information

- Activists fought against redevelopment in many Asian enclaves, including Seattle's International District, Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, and Philadelphia's Chinatown. In the late 1960s, Philadelphia unveiled plans to build a highway that cut across Chinatown. Chinatown residents rose up and reached a compromise: a sunken expressway that allowed for pedestrians and local car traffic at street level.

### **Slide Twenty-Two:** Fighting for Affordable Housing

#### Share Information

- In numerous cities, Asian American movement activists fought for affordable housing. Many were particularly concerned about housing for elderly members of their community.
- The most famous of these battles took place at the International Hotel in San Francisco, where many older Filipino Americans lived. Although ultimately



unsuccessful, activists managed to delay the eviction of the tenants by almost a decade.

### **Slide Twenty-Three: Providing Social Services**

#### Share Information and Optional Video

- Given the influence of the Black Panthers on the Asian American Movement, it is no surprise that activists focused much of their energy on social services, including:
  - Providing meals
  - Repairing and renovating affordable housing in poor condition
  - Starting free health clinics
  - Offering legal services
- In 1971, activists in New York City's Chinatown organized a week-long health fair to provide health education and screenings to the medically underserved Chinese community. These efforts expanded in subsequent decades, and led to the building of the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, which serves 60,000 people annually.
  - If time allows, watch the related video (approx. 4 minutes).

### **Slide Twenty-Four: Fighting for Workers**

#### Share Information

- The Asian American Movement was also very involved in labor organizing and in fighting against discriminatory hiring practices.
- A particularly important event was the Jung Sai Strike of 1974-75 by 135 mostly middle-aged Chinese American women who wanted to unionize. They had worked for low wages in poor conditions and was regularly facing harassment and intimidation.
  - Advance to the next slide to learn more about the Jung Sai Strike.

### **Slide Twenty-Five: Jung Sai Strikers**

#### Share Information

- Striking Jung Sai garment workers often faced arrest, police harassment, and unsympathetic judges. A truck driver who worked for the factory owner even ran over several workers.
- Ultimately, the workers prevailed. The court ruled that the factory had to hire back all workers employed at the start of the strike, give them back pay, and negotiate with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

## Slide Twenty-Six: Reflection

### Discussion and/or Writing Activity

- Activists from the Asian American Movement worked to help their communities get services and fight for survival. In your own community (ethnic, racial, geographic, or professional):
  - *Who is providing necessary social services?*
  - *Who should be providing these social services?*
  - *Are these social services accessible?*
  - *Is your community threatened in some way? If so, who is fighting to preserve and sustain the community?*
    - Note: students could respond to these questions through discussion or a written reflection.

## Slide Twenty-Seven: Asian American Consciousness

### Share Information and Optional Video

- Perhaps the most long-lasting aspect of the Asian American Movement's work is the development of an Asian American identity that is defined primarily by community members. Artists--including many who participated in organizations you will have an opportunity to research in Component 3--were instrumental in developing this new racial identity.
  - If time allows, watch the related video (approx. 4 minutes).
    - About the video: *Manzanar*, a 1972 experimental film by Robert Nakamura, taught many Asian Americans about the Japanese American incarceration during WWII. In the 1950s and 1960s, most Japanese Americans were still too traumatized to discuss it openly. The film also helped to center the incarceration experience in Asian American identity.

## Slide Twenty-Eight: Developing an Asian American Identity

### Share Information

- Developing an Asian American identity means:
  - Recognizing that your community has stories that are worth telling
  - Recognizing that your community's experiences are different from those of non-Asian American communities
  - Recognizing commonalities between the diverse experiences of your community, particularly similar forms of exclusion and similar strategies for resistance and healing
  - Recognizing the limits of assimilation

## Slide Twenty-Nine: Music of the Asian American Movement

### Share Information and Optional Attentive Listening

- Musicians involved in the Asian American Movement created music in a wide variety of genres. Many were influenced by the folk music revival of the 1960s. The most famous example is the trio of Chris Iijima, Nobuko Miyamoto, and Charlie Chin, who sang the song you listened to at the beginning of this component, "Yellow Pearl."
- Optional: Listen to this track again, while thinking about this question: *Why does this sound like folk music of the 1960s?* (**Hints: guitar, playing and vocal style, vocal harmonies, additional instrumentation/percussion instruments**).

## Slide Thirty: Asian American Music and the Folk Revival

### A. Share Information

- Another group that performed folk music is the San Jose-based Yokohoma, California.
  - The group was named after a short story collection by Toshio Mori. Published in 1949, it tells stories of Japanese American life in the 1930s and 1940s. The band's song, "Tanforan (Is Anybody There?)," memorializes Tanforan, an assembly center south of San Francisco where Japanese Americans gathered before they departed for incarceration camps.
    - Note: To learn more about Japanese American Incarceration camps, visit Lesson 3.

### B. Attentive Listening

- Listen to an excerpt from this track (link embedded). Find a transcription of the lyrics below.
  - *What is the story behind these lyrics?* (**Tanforan Park was a horse racing facility in California from 1899–1964. It was used between April and October 1942 as an internment camp in which 8000 Japanese Americans were detained and processed for forced relocation and prolonged internment. It was destroyed in a fire in 1964**).
  - Especially if you are teaching this lesson in a music classroom, consider asking students to compare/contrast the musical characteristics of "Yellow Pearl" and "Tanforan (Is Anybody There?)"

## Slide Thirty-One: Asian Sounds in Asian American Music

### A. Share Information

- Unlike the folk-influenced artists, some musicians involved in the Asian American Movement wanted to center Asian instruments in their music making. One example is the band Hiroshima. Formed by Dan and June Kuramoto in 1974 (and still active in 2022), the band expressed ethnic/racial pride by foregrounding the sounds of koto (Japanese zither), and often Japanese dance.

#### B. Attentive Listening

- Listen to the embedded example.
  - Especially if teaching in the context of a music classroom, have students reflect on how music elements and expressive qualities are applied (instrumentation, time, rhythms, melody, dynamics, texture, tempo, etc.).

### Slide Thirty-Two: Jazz in Asian American Music

#### A. Share Information

- Still other musicians, such as Mark Izu, Anthony Brown, Jon Jang, Francis Wong, Glenn Horiuchi and Fred Ho, found inspiration in free and avant-garde jazz (pushing the boundaries of traditional jazz forms and/or the absence of set chord or time patterns).
- They saw this music's liberatory potential and began collaborating with musicians from these traditions.
  - United Front is one of the most prominent mixed Asian American and African American combos in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

#### B. Attentive Listening

- Listen to the embedded example.
  - Especially if teaching in the context of a music classroom, have students reflect on how music elements and expressive qualities are applied (instrumentation, time, rhythms, melody, dynamics, texture, tempo, etc.).
- Optional: Revisit slide 9 for another example related to jazz (Jon Jang's Island: Immigrant Suite #1 and #2—about Angel Island).

### Slide Thirty-Three: Discussion

#### Reflection/Discussion

- In the last four slides, you heard four groups that include musicians involved in the Asian American Movement. Based on listening to these tracks, discuss these questions in small groups or as a class:
  - *Which track was most meaningful to you? Why?*

- *Which track was least meaningful to you? Why?*
- *What does each track reveal about Asian American experiences?*
- *Are these tracks relevant to Asian American experiences today?*
- *Do these tracks remind you of any music you listen to? Why (not)?*

### **Slide Thirty-Four:** The Decline of the Asian American Movement

#### Share Information

- Most scholars believe that the Asian American Movement began to peter out in the late 1970s. This does not mean that Asian American activism stopped.
- Over the past decade, and particularly since the rise of anti-Asian violence in 2020, many Asian Americans have called to a new Asian American Movement-- one that fits the very different and vastly expanded landscape of Asian America in the 21st century.
  - In fact, the murder of Vincent Chin in 1981 and the subsequent trials brought many Asian Americans into the political arena. What declined in the late 1970s was the movement's radicalness.
    - To learn more about this event, visit:
      - <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/19/1106118117/vincent-chin-aapi-hate-incidents>

### **Slide Thirty-Five:** Learning Checkpoint

- *What are some examples of Asian American activism before the late 1960s?*
  - **1867 Chinese railroad strike, court cases, involvement in homeland politics**
- *What was the Asian American Movement? How is the movement still relevant in the 2020s?*
  - **In the 1960s, more radical Asian American activists participated in the Civil Rights and Anti-war movements and saw the political potential of large coalitions. This inspired them to form organizations that cut across Asian ethnicities and alliances with other racial groups in order to fight for their rights related to labor reform, access to social services, affordable housing, etc. Perhaps the most long-lasting aspect of the Asian American Movement's work is the development of an Asian American identity that is defined primarily by community members. As evidenced by the rise of anti-Asian violence in 2020, activism is still needed today.**

- *How did musicians involved in the Asian American Movement express their Asian American identity?*
  - **Musicians were instrumental in helping to establish an Asian American identity. During the Asian American Movement, they created music in a wide variety of genres. Some were influenced by the folk music revival of the 1960s. Some centered Asian instruments in their music-making. Others found inspiration in free and avant-garde jazz**

## **2. Component Two: Taiko and the Asian American Movement**



### **To prepare:**

- Read through the component.
- Preview Component **2** of the **Lesson 7 Slideshow** (slides 37–59).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes.)
- Optional: Print the listening worksheet (find below).

### **Slide Thirty-Seven:** Component 2 Title Slide

Component 2 focuses on the emergence of Taiko music in the United States and its relationship to the Asian American Movement.

### **Slide Thirty-Eight:** What is Taiko?

#### Share Information

- **Taiko** is the musical tradition that is most closely associated with the Asian American movement. Taiko means "big drum" or "fat drum" in Japanese. Taiko drums are played using **bachi**, or cylindrical wooden sticks about 16 inches long and three-quarters of an inch in diameter.

### **Slides Thirty-Nine:** What is Taiko?

#### A. Share Information

- In North America, the term taiko generally refers to **kumi-taiko**: ensembles that use big and smaller drums, other percussion instruments, voice and choreography.
  - In general, taiko performances emphasize power, precision, and rhythmic/choreographic complexity.

#### B. Attentive Listening

- Watch the embedded example (“Hachidan Uchi,” performed by Soh Daiko).
  - Important note: Consider using the provided listening worksheet, which will prompt students to record their thoughts about the musical characteristics/elements, expressive/aesthetic qualities, and the social/performance context of several performances included in this component (find at the end of this guide). At the end of the component, students can use this information to compare/contrast and discuss (slide 52).

### Slide Forty: The Development of Taiko

#### A. Share Information

- Many drums used in contemporary taiko came from Buddhist and Shinto rituals, gagaku (court music), noh, and kabuki theater. Although these instruments have existed for centuries, the tradition of performances that focus on an ensemble of drums did not emerge until the 1950s. Daihachi Oguchi (1924-2008), founder of Osuwa Daiko, was an early proponent of *kumi-taiko* in Japan.

#### B. Attentive Listening

- Listen to an excerpt from an example of early taiko music (recorded in 1978-not on listening worksheet).
  - *Can you hear the solos played by each drummer?*

### Slide Forty-One: The Flourishing of Taiko in the U.S.

#### Share Information

- Over the past half century, the art of taiko has spread throughout the world. In the U.S., there were two taiko groups in the late 1960s. The number grew to 200 in 2000 and 464 in 2016.
  - With two exceptions, the North American Taiko Conference has met every two years since 1997. The conference is now sponsored by the Taiko Community Alliance, which was founded in 2015 with the mission to "empower the people and advance the art of taiko."

### Slide Forty-Two: Early History of Taiko in the U.S.

#### Share Information

- The three earliest taikos in the U.S. were:
  - San Francisco Taiko Dojo (founded 1968)
  - Kinnara Taiko (Los Angeles, founded 1969)
  - San Jose Taiko (founded 1973)

### Slide Forty-Three: Early History of Taiko in the U.S.

#### Share Information and Optional Video

- The founding of these ensembles coincided with the emergence of the Asian American movement, and many early players were movement activists. In this period, most taiko players were Japanese Americans who wanted to challenge the stereotype of the weak Asian who is unable to speak up for themselves.
  - If time allows, watch an excerpt from the embedded video, which illustrates this point (the whole video is 25 minutes long).



### Slide Forty-Four: San Jose Taiko's "Ei Ja Nai Ka?"

#### A. Share Information

- The piece that best shows the connection between U.S. taiko and the Asian American movement is "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" by San Jose Taiko co-founder P.J. Hirabayashi.
- As other works in this component show, taiko pieces often emphasize power, precision and rhythmic/choreographic complexity. "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" is different. The focus is not virtuosity, but participation.

#### B. Attentive Listening

- Watch the embedded video and discuss the use of musical characteristics, expressive elements, and social/performance context (or students can fill out the associated section on their listening worksheet).
  - **Advance to the next slide for more information about this composition.**

### Slide Forty-Five: San Jose Taiko's "Ei Ja Nai Ka?"

#### Share Information and Optional Video

- A key goal of the Asian American movement was the development of an Asian American consciousness/identity. This requires a good understanding of Asian American history.
- "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" pays tribute to the Issei, the early Japanese American immigrants who worked in plantations, mines, and on railroad construction.
  - Additional context about "Ei Ja Nai Ka": Taiko player/ethnomusicologist Angie Ahlgren wrote: "'Ei Ja Nai Ka?' articulates issei history in ways beyond those available in narrative histories. Within the layers of music and dance, and within the various contexts in which the piece is offered, the dance evokes pre-internment labor and immigration...It is important to acknowledge that internment is one traumatic event in the longer narrative of Japanese American history, which encompasses exploitative labor conditions, racist property laws, and other injustices, many of which reflect ongoing issues related to U.S. immigration policy." (Drumming Asian America, pp. 28-29).
- If time allows, watch another version of this song (recorded during the Covid-19 pandemic). As students watch/listen, they can keep this additional context in mind.

**Slide Forty-Six: The Growth of Taiko in the U.S.**Share Information and Optional Video

- In the last quarter of the 20th century, community and Buddhist-church-sponsored taiko groups were formed across the country. The 1990s also saw the start of the collegiate taiko tradition. This growth brought many non-Japanese Americans into taiko, which led to many changes in the taiko community.
  - If time allows, watch an excerpt from the embedded video (not on listening worksheet).

**Slide Forty-Seven: Taiko and Japanese American Reparations**Share Information

- Taiko player and ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong wrote: "Playing taiko has been one of the most joyful and fulfilling experiences I've ever had, but it is also interlaced with anger--and more than one kind of anger at that."
  - Optional discussion question: *Where do you think the anger comes from?* (**Advance to the next slide to learn more**).

**Slide Forty-Eight: Taiko and Japanese American Reparations**Share Information

- One source of anger was Japanese American incarceration during WWII.
- In the 1970s/80s, Japanese Americans and their allies campaigned for and ultimately received reparations from the U.S. government. Taiko was one of the key sounds of this campaign.
- Since the 1970s, February 19 has been the Day of Remembrance for Japanese Americans. That is the day FDR signed E.O. 9066.
  - San Jose Taiko has played at almost all Days of Remembrance ceremonies in San Jose.
- Note: To learn more about the Japanese incarceration, visit Lesson 3.

**Slide Forty-Nine: Taiko and Asian American Jazz**A. Share Information

- In the 1980s, taiko players in the U.S. increasingly began experimenting with putting their drums in a variety of musical contexts.
- In 1987, Asian American jazz composer/pianist Jon Jang wrote *Reparations Now!*. This recording features taiko player Susan Hayase.
  - Other Asian American jazz/experimental musicians who have incorporated taiko include Anthony Brown, Miya Masaoka and Tatsu Aoki.

### B. Attentive Listening

- Listen to the embedded recording from this composition and discuss the use of musical characteristics, expressive elements, and social/performance context (or students can fill out the associated section on their listening worksheet).

### **Slide Fifty:** Taiko in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the U.S.

#### Share Information

- In the 21st century, taiko has continued to grow around the country.
  - One of the most important developments is the huge increase in non-Asian American participation. Today, about 40% of U.S. taiko players do not identify as Asian American.
  - Another is the growth of infrastructure (e.g., conferences, online spaces) that allows taiko groups to network with one another.

### **Slide Fifty-One:** Kenny Endo

#### A. Share Information

- One of the most important innovators in U.S. taiko is Kenny Endo.
- After playing in San Francisco Taiko Dojo and Kinnara Taiko, Endo trained in Japan and became the first non-Japanese national to receive "master's rank" in classical Japanese drumming.
- He and his wife, taiko player Chizuko Endo, moved to Hawai'i in 1990, and built a strong taiko training program in the state.

#### B. Attentive Listening

- Watch the embedded video and discuss the use of musical characteristics, expressive elements, and social/performance context (or students can fill out the associated section on their listening worksheet).

### **Slide Fifty-Two:** Listening Reflection

#### Reflection/Discussion

- In this component, you have heard four works involving taiko by Asian Americans:
  - Peter Wong and Jennifer Wada: "Hachidan Uchi" (slide 39)
  - P.J. Harabayashi: "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" (slide 44)
  - Jon Jang: Excerpts from *Reparations Now!* (slide 49)
  - Kenny Endo: "Spirit of Rice" (slide 51)
- *How are these works similar and different: musically, expressively, and socially?* (**Hints: think about instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, stage (entertainment) vs. audience participation, structure of the piece, use**

**of choreography, costumes/attire, number of performers, vocal timbre, etc.)**

- *Which performance speaks to you most/least? Why?*
- *What other musical practices does taiko remind you of? Why?*

### **Slide Fifty-Three:** Taiko and Gender

#### Share Information

- Around two-thirds of taiko players in the United States are women. In exploring the prevalence of Asian American women in this musical practice, Deborah Wong wrote: "Taiko is not a matter of Asian American women 'rediscovering' a certain kind of Asian body but is rather an intricate process of exploring a Japanese bodily aesthetic and refashioning/re-embodying its potential for Asian American women."

### **Slide Fifty-Four:** Taiko Leadership and Gender

#### Share Information and Optional Video

- With its emphasis on power, large gestures and stances that command large personal spaces, taiko empowers Asian American women and allows them to "disown" both the Western stereotype of the passive sexualized Asian woman and the gender expectations of many Asian cultures.
- Despite their prevalence, women are still often overlooked for leadership positions, and left out of taiko histories.
  - If time allows, watch the short, embedded video, which illustrates this point (approx. 3 minutes).
    - About the video: This is the trailer for a documentary on Genki Spark, a Boston-based "multi-generational, pan-Asian women's arts and advocacy organization that uses Japanese taiko drumming, personal stories, and creativity to build community, develop leadership, and advocate respect for all." Genki Spark was founded by Karen Young in 2010.

### **Slide Fifty-Five:** Taiko Reception in the U.S.

#### Share Information

- As we have seen in this component, taiko performers in the U.S. often work hard to dispel stereotypes of Asians.
  - For example, the song "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" unpacks the long history of Japanese America and highlights the community's many contributions to the U.S.

### Slide Fifty-Six: Taiko Reception in the U.S.

#### Share Information

- Despite these efforts, many audience members fail to understand what taiko players are trying to communicate because they listen and watch with an Orientalist frame. Very often, taiko reinforces their notion that Asian Americans are exotic and inscrutable.
  - **Orientalism** is when aspects of the Eastern world are imitated or depicted in highly stereotyped and "exotic" ways.
    - Learn more about Orientalism in Lesson 2.
  - **Inscrutable** means impossible to understand or interpret.

### Slide Fifty-Seven: How Do We Move Forward?

#### Discussion

- Deborah Wong wrote: "Taiko effectively addresses Asian American needs for empowerment precisely because it is commodified, mediated, and easily appropriated...Taiko teeters permanently on the edge of orientalist reabsorption...Its slipperiness as a sign of authenticity is both its power and a vulnerability."
  - *What are your ideas for better communication between taiko players and audience members?*

### Slide Fifty-Eight: Learning Checkpoint

- *What is taiko and kumi-taiko? What are some musical characteristics?*
  - **Taiko is the musical tradition that is most closely associated with the Asian American movement. Taiko means "big drum" or "fat drum" in Japanese. In North America, the term taiko generally refers to *kumi-taiko*: ensembles that use big and smaller drums, other percussion instruments, voice, and choreography. Taiko performances often emphasize power, precision and rhythmic/choreographic complexity.**
- *When and why did taiko become established in the U.S.? How is the early history of taiko connected to the Asian American Movement?*
  - **The emergence of taiko ensembles in the United States coincided with the emergence of the Asian American Movement (late 1960s/1970s), and many early players were movement activists. In this period, most taiko players were Japanese Americans who wanted to challenge the stereotype of the weak Asian who is unable to speak up for themselves.**

- *How has taiko changed in the U.S. since the 1970s?*
  - **Taiko has continued to grow. One of the most important developments is the huge increase in non-Asian American participation. There are now many more opportunities for taiko groups to network (e.g., conferences, online spaces).**
  
- *What are some challenges that the taiko community is facing?*
  - **Despite the fact that 2/3 of taiko players in the United States are women, women are often overlooked for leadership positions, and left out of taiko histories. Additionally, many audience members fail to understand what taiko players are trying to communicate. Very often, taiko reinforces their notion that Asian Americans are exotic and inscrutable.**

### **3. Component Three: Researching Asian American Arts**

#### ***To prepare:***



- Read through the component.
- Preview Component **3** of the ***Lesson 7 Slideshow*** (slides 60–68).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes.)
- Print the project instructions (find below).

#### **Slide Sixty:** Component 3 Title Slide

Component 3 is project-based. It will take about 15 minutes of class time to review the instructions provided on the next several slides. A printable copy of the instructions is linked on slide 63 and can also be found in the teacher's guide. Students can conduct their research during class time or outside of class time as homework. Please feel free to amend this project to meet the needs of your students!

#### **Slide Sixty-One:** Arts and Social Justice Movements

##### Share Information and Discussion

- As we saw in component 2, the arts can play a major role in sustaining social justice movements. This is because the arts are very good at storytelling and reaching an audience beyond the activist community. Through theater, film, music, dance and the visual arts, audiences can build communities, learn, and forge possible paths toward a better future in an entertaining way.
  - Optional student connection: *Have you ever attended an arts event (film, play, concert, performance, etc.) that was intended to advance a social justice cause? Tell us about it.*

#### **Slide Sixty-Two:** Project: Researching Asian American Arts Groups

##### Share Information

- In this project, you will do some research on a major Asian American arts group, such as: Kearny Street Workshop, East West Players, Asian Improv aRts (AIR), Pan-Asian Repertory Theater, Chen Dance Company, Visual Communications, Center for Asian American Media. Alternatively, you could research an Asian American arts group in your area.

### **Slide Sixty-Three: The Project**

#### Project Instructions

- In small groups, you will do research on your chosen organization. Try to find answers to the following questions (find a printable copy of these instructions below):
  - *When, why, and by whom was this organization founded?*
  - *What type of social justice mission does the organization have?*
  - *How has the organization changed over the years?*
  - *What does this organization do in the past and currently?*
  - *Find a few seminal achievements for this organization. Why are they considered important? See if you can find relevant videos, audio recordings, newspaper reviews and reliable blogs about these seminal moments.*
  - *How well do you think the organization fulfills its social justice mission?*

### **Slide Sixty-Four: Resources for the Project**

#### Project Instructions

- To complete your research, you should:
  - Explore the organization's website carefully.
  - Go to <https://archive.org>, to see if there are archived version of the organization's website.
  - Look for websites of local newspapers.
    - Newspaper databases--many schools have subscriptions to newspapers.com or ProQuest. There is also a free trial available on newspapers.com.
  - Search the Internet for relevant and reliable articles, videos, and podcasts. Interviews are often particularly helpful.

### **Slide Sixty-Five: Present Your Findings to the Class**

#### Project Instructions

- After the completing your research, each group will give a 7-10-minute presentation in class. At the end of the presentation, your classmates should understand:
  - Why the organization was founded, and how it has changed since its founding;
  - The key socio-political issues that the organization is most concerned about;
  - How the organization has fought for social justice;
  - What the greatest achievements and challenges are.



**Slide Sixty-Six:** ReflectionReflection/Discussion

- After all the presentations, the class should discuss:
  - How the organizations they studied are similar and different
  - How their achievements and challenges are similar and different
  - The potential and limitations of the arts in the fight for social justice

**Slide Sixty-Seven:** Learning Checkpoint

- *How and why do the arts play an important role in sustaining social justice movements?*
  - **The arts can play a major role in sustaining social justice movements (and historically have) because the arts are very good at storytelling and reaching an audience beyond the activist community. Through theater, film, music, dance and the visual arts, audiences can build communities, learn, and forge possible paths toward a better future in an entertaining way.**
- *What are some of the achievements and challenges of the community-based arts organization you researched?*
- *What resources are most useful when you research community arts institutions?*
- *What were the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of this research project?*

## **Additional Reading and Resources**

Ahlgren, Angela K. 2018. *Drumming Asian America: Taiko, Performance, and Cultural Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Diao, Ying. April 20, 2021. "The Chinese Poetry Left at Angel Island, the 'Ellis Island of the West'." *Smithsonian Voices from the Smithsonian Museums* (blog). *Smithsonian Magazine*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/smithsonian-center-folklife-cultural-heritage/2021/04/20/chinese-poetry-angel-island-immigration-station/>.

Duke University School of Law. "Trump v. Hawaii & The Shadow of Korematsu." *YouTube* video, 52:14. September 4, 2018. <https://youtu.be/QfTet5zQBZg>.

Iijima, Chris Kando, Joanne Nobuko Miyamoto, and William "Charlie" Chin. 1973 Liner Notes for *A Grain of Sand*. Paredon Records PARO1020. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/PARO1020.pdf>.

Kim, Sojin. February, 23, 2017. "Remembering E.O. 9066: San Jose Taiko on Musical and Historical Resonances." *2017 Smithsonian Folklife Festival* (blog). <https://festival.si.edu/blog/2017/remembering-e-o-9066-san-jose-taiko-on-musical-and-historical-resonances>.

Miyamoto, Nobuko. 2021. Liner Notes for *120,000 Stories*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings SFW40570. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/SFW40570.pdf>.

Wong, Deborah. 2004. *Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*. Routledge. New York: Routledge.

Wong, Deborah. 2019. *Louder and Faster: Pain, Joy, and the Body Politic in Asian American Taiko*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

## **2014 National Music Standards Connections**

### **MU:Re7.2.8a Compare how the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to the structure within programs of music.**

- I can explain similarities and differences between several performances of taiko music (providing details related to musical characteristics and expressive qualities). (Component 2)

### **MU:Re7.2.8b Identify and compare the context of programs of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.**

- I can explain similarities and differences between several performances of taiko music (related to social/performance context). (Component 2)

### **MU:Re8.1.7a Describe a personal interpretation of contrasting works and explain how creators' and performers' application of the elements of music and expressive qualities, within genres, cultures, and historical periods, convey expressive intent.**

- I can explain how and why several Asian American musicians have incorporated taiko music into their compositions. (Component 2)
- I can interpret the lyrical meaning of the song “Yellow Pearl,” and explain how the musicians used musical elements and expressive qualities to convey intent. (Component 1)

### **MU:Cn10.0.8 Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.**

- I can explain why taiko music grew in popularity during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the United States. (Component 2)
- I can explain why Chris Iijima, Nobuko Miyamoto, and Charlie Chin wanted to write and perform the song “Yellow Pearl.” (Component 1)
- I can describe the mission/purpose of several Asian American arts organizations. (Component 3)

### **MU:Cn11.0.8 Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.**

- I can explain how the emergence of taiko in the United States relates to the Asian American movement. (Component 2)
- I can discuss the relationship between taiko and gender. (Component 2)
- I can discuss how musicians involved in the Asian American movement helped to develop an Asian American identity. (Component 1)
- I can explain the role of the arts in social justice movements. (Component 3)
- I can describe the achievements and challenges of several Asian American arts organizations. (Component 3)

- I can explain how the lyrics to the song “Yellow Pearl” express Asian American pride.  
(Component 1)

## Worksheets

**“Yellow Pearl” Lyrics**

from *A Grain of Sand: Music for the Struggle by Asians in American* liner notes (PAR01020)

SIDE 1, BAND 1: (3:04)**YELLOW PEARL**

Words and Music; Iijima-Miyamoto

A tiny grain of sand gets inside an oyster, and the oyster tries to cover it and cover it, until it finally becomes a pearl. In order to get the pearl out you have to kill the oyster. Our people were called "the yellow peril" when they first came to this country. We were ridiculed and feared and looked on as something less than human. We were like a tiny grain of sand, isolated and separated from our homeland. They tried to make us feel inferior and powerless, but we see that if we look across the ocean, if all people of color look to their homelands, we are not a minority, but an overwhelming majority in this world. We are not powerless. We are going to make the "yellow peril" into something beautiful. We are moving toward the time when we will kill the oyster.

(spoken)

A grain,  
A tiny grain of sand  
Landing in the belly of the monster  
And Time is telling  
Only how long it takes  
Layer after layer  
As its beauty unfolds  
Until its captor  
It holds in peril  
A grain,  
A tiny grain of sand.

(sung)

In the ocean oyster beds  
Repose beneath the sea  
Open one and you might find  
Deep in one of a different mind  
One who looks like me.  
In Rome the senate chamber rang  
Victory was the call  
Defeat invaders from the north,  
But they weren't beat at all.

(chorus)

And I am a yellow pearl  
And you are a yellow pearl  
And we are the yellow pearl  
And we are half the world  
And we are half the world.

Now you might say I'm just a dreamer,  
Pearls like you just don't appear.  
And I refuse to grant you, schemer,  
Recognition that you're here.  
Now you can say just what you want,  
But my hurt has ceased.  
I see signs of myself  
Come drifting in from the East.

(chorus)

(spoken)

And time is telling  
Only how long it takes  
Layer after layer  
As our beauty unfolds  
Until our captor we'll hold  
In peril.  
A grain,  
A tiny grain of sand.

## **“Tanforan (Is Anybody There?)” Lyrics**

by *Yokohoma, California* (on the album by the same name)

Is anybody home? I thought somebody lived here.

Once upon a time, there were people in this place.  
But that was long ago, and now you'll never know  
That they were even here, and memories are unclear.  
Today (today)...

Tanforan, Tanforan, anybody home?  
Well it's been such a long time  
Since I called you home.  
Tanforan, Tanforan, anybody home?  
Well it's been such a long passed  
And now you're calling me home.

I went to Tanforan yesterday, horses on the run.  
See many people that I know, betting all for fun.  
But I know another Tanforan, they will never see.  
Early in 1942, well it was home for me.

[Refrain]  
Is anybody home? Is anybody there?  
Or is it just that nobody cares?  
Is anybody home? Is anybody there?  
Sometimes I wonder where we're going.

### ***[What is the story behind these lyrics?]***

Tanforan, Tanforan, where do you belong?  
Lost somewhere in America, where did she go wrong?  
Tanforan, Tanforan, try to see behind you.  
Deeply buried within our past,  
Will we ever find you?

[Refrain]

Horses stall and that ain't all  
What do you see there?  
Crowded rooms for everyone  
Tell me, is that fair?  
Now the horses return to race.  
Lay that money down.  
Are you scared to lose your place  
Is that something that you can face.

[Refrain]

## Lesson 7 Listening Worksheet

	“Hachidan Uchi (Hitting Eight Sides)” <i>Soh Daiko</i>	“Ei Ja Nai Ka?” <i>San Jose Taiko</i>	“Reparations Now!” <i>Jon Jang</i>	“Spirit of Rice” <i>Kenny Endo</i>
<p><b>Musical Characteristics:</b> what instruments do you hear? Texture (many instruments/a few)? Do you notice anything related to rhythm, melody, or harmony (simple/complex/repetitive)? Structure/form?</p>				
<p><b>Expressive Qualities:</b> what dynamics are used? Do you notice anything about the tempo, timbre, or style? What message/story do the lyrics tell? What language is used?</p>				
<p><b>Social/Performance Context:</b> what is the intent of the performers within this performance context? Where is the performance taking place? Choreography? Lighting? Attire/dress? What is the role of audience members?</p>				

## Researching Asian American Arts Organizations

### 1. Choose an arts organization to research:

- Kearny Street Workshop
- East West Players
- Asian Improv aRts (AIR)
- Pan-Asian Repertory Theater
- Chen Dance Company
- Visual Communications
- Center for Asian American Media
- Any Asian American arts organization in your area

### 2. As you complete your research, try to answer these questions:

- When, why, and by whom was this organization founded?
- What type of social justice mission does the organization have?
- How has the organization changed over the years?
- What does this organization do in the past and currently?
- Find a few seminal achievements for this organization. Why are they considered important? See if you can find relevant videos, audio recordings, newspaper reviews and reliable blogs about these seminal moments.
- How well do you think the organization fulfills its social justice mission?

### 3. To complete your research, you should:

- Explore the organization's website carefully.
- Go to <https://archive.org>, to see if there are archived versions of the organization's website.
- Look for websites of local newspapers:
  - Newspaper databases--many schools have subscriptions to newspapers.com or ProQuest. There is also a free trial available on [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).
- Search the Internet for relevant and reliable articles, videos, and podcasts. Interviews are often particularly helpful.



4. Prepare a short (7–10 minutes) presentation for your class:

At the end of your presentation, your classmates should understand:

- Why the organization was founded, and how it has changed since its founding;
- The key socio-political issues that the organization is most concerned about;
- How the organization has fought for social justice;
- What their greatest achievements and challenges are.