

Over the years I've been seeing a lot of disconnect between the Asian American community about the "model minority" theory and the lack of solidarity shown in support of Black people in the U.S.

I've always questioned the reason for this disconnect and I think it's because people don't understand the history of how this stereotype came to be. So, here's my crack at it.

The 'model minority' stereotype is one that brewed from a historical melting pot consisting of the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and geopolitics.

Following WWII, the Red Scare prompted widespread fear of a potential rise of communism which translated to extreme nationalism and an irrational fear of anti-American traitors. So to combat racism, minorities often attempted to assimilate into American culture by portraying themselves as upright, patriotic citizens (Ex: Japanese Americans pointing to their service in WWII as proof of their patriotism). Although many minorities, including Black people, tried to make similar appeals, it was convenient for the white politicians to only give Asians the biggest platform.

So why Asians? In the Cold War era, the U.S. was obsessed with creating an image as the leader of the free world. But discrimination against minorities is not a good look, especially when those minorities are originally from countries you're trying to form alliances with. By embracing Asian Americans as a model minority (it's important to distinguish them as a model minority because they could not have the same standing as whites), it allowed the U.S. to essentially showcase their qualifications for becoming the leader of the free world. Stories of Asians assimilating into American culture were glorified and used as propaganda.

What effect did this have on minorities (specifically Black people)? In the 1960s, white Americans were becoming increasingly paranoid over the Civil Rights Movement. In the face of conflict, white politicians turned to Asian Americans as a form of scapegoating to shift the blame for Black poverty away from themselves. White Americans argued that working hard and having faith in the government were the keys to overcoming racial barriers and discrimination, as shown by the glorified Asian Americans success stories. The argument was basically, "If Asian Americans could succeed within our system, why couldn't African Americans?" However, it is apparent that Asian Americans were more widely accepted into American culture largely in part due to the support of government propaganda.

Understanding the historical context of the "model minority" stereotype helped me paint the bigger picture. Asian Americans were only given higher standing because we were involuntarily used as a worldwide propaganda tool and as a scapegoat for discrimination against minorities - specifically Black people. It being that the our privileges came at the cost of the livelihood of Black people, we have a moral obligation to stand in solidarity with them and all minorities. It's a fight for **equality**.

TL;DR

If an Asian American enjoys the exclusive rights and privileges granted to them by white politicians but picks and chooses which social justices to fight for while staying blind to the struggles of Black people in America, they are playing into the hands of white America to assist in oppression and discrimination.

P.S.

I'd also like to add that this is not meant to take away from any immigrant's personal success story. I'm not taking away from the hard work that our immigrant ancestors endured to provide this life for us. But we must also recognize the means in which we received this privilege.

If you would like to learn more about the origins of Asian Americans and the model minority stereotype, I'd recommend reading "The Color of Success" by Ellen Wu.

If you got this far, thank you for reading and I hope I helped in opening the door for conversation.