

# DRAGON LADIES AND DESI DORKS

COMBATting AAPI  
STEREOTYPES IN  
POP CULTURE






HELLO!




Do you write stories? Do you watch movies, TV, or theatre? Do you care about the **AAPI** community?

*If you answered yes to any of those questions,  
this zine is for you!*

**Dragon Ladies and Desi Dorks is a guide to recognizing AAPI stereotypes, so you aren't doomed to replicate them.**



*Some definitions before we begin:*



**stereotype:** a widely held but oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person

**exoticization:** the practice of portraying or regarding someone or something as different, unusual, or "other"

**model minority:** the cultural expectation for Asian Americans to be smart, wealthy, hard-working, and docile

**critical race media literacy:** amplifying and analyzing the racialized nature of media ... and fostering increased audience engagement surrounding it\*

*\*adapted from  
Jayne Cabbage*

# IS THAT A STEREOTYPE?

## LET'S DO SOME DIGGING



### Dimension

Does this character have characteristics other than their race or ethnicity? Do they have desires, strengths, and weaknesses?



### Isolation

Is there only one character of this ethnicity? Does this character seem like they speak for their entire ethnicity?



### Reaction

Are you laughing at them? Are you disgusted with them? Do you hate them? Does the emotional context reinforce power structures?



### Target audience

Who is this media for? Does it cater to whiteness as the default? Does it over-explain or dismiss aspects of AAPI culture?

## TIGER MOM

An Asian parent (not necessarily a mom) who pushes their child to achieve academic or extracurricular success

*Mo's Father - Lemonade Mouth*  
*Mike Chang Sr. - Glee*  
*Nalini - Never Have I Ever*



## THE GURU

A wise, elderly mentor, usually mysterious, sometimes magical

*Mr. Wing - Gremlins*  
*Master Wong - Doctor Strange*  
*Mr. Miyagi - The Karate Kid*



## WILTING LOTUS

A quiet, submissive East Asian woman, often intimately involved with a white man

*Lilly - Pitch Perfect*

*Cio-Cio-San - Madame Butterfly*

*Kim - Miss Saigon*

## DRAGON LADY

An East Asian femme fatale, hot, scheming, and untrustworthy

*O-Ren Ishii - Kill Bill*

*Alex - Charlie's Angels*

*Jocelyn Packard - Twin Peaks*



## KAWAII CUTIE

An adorable, infantilized East Asian girl, often including schoolgirl or "gamer girl" aesthetics



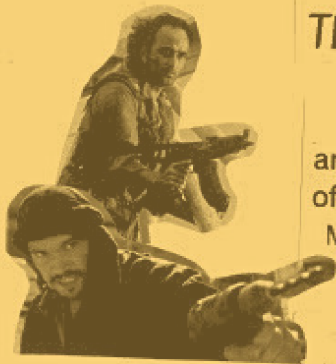
*Peni Parker - Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

*Knives Chau - Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*

*Gogo Yubari - Kill Bill*

## TERRORIST #4

An aggressive,  
armed Brown man,  
often implied to be  
Muslim post 9-11



*Raza - Iron Man*

*Aziz - True Lies*

*The Butcher - American Sniper*

## INDIAN INCEL

An awkward man  
who fails to talk to  
women, often South  
Asian, but can be  
other AAPI  
ethnicities



*Raj - The Big Bang Theory*

*Danny - Escape Room*

*Abed - Community*

# S.T.E.M. WHIZ (THE M STANDS FOR MODEL MINORITY)

## DESI DORK + EASTERN GEEK

An extremely studious Asian, especially associated math or science, can overlap with the "Indian Incel" stereotype

*Baljeet - Phineas and Ferb*  
*"Asian nerds" - Mean Girls*  
*Cho Chang - Harry Potter*



## ASSIMILATION M.D.

An Asian doctor of any gender or ethnicity, praised for their hard work, dedication, and success



*Lahela - Doogie Kamealoha, M.D.*  
*Dr. Yang - Grey's Anatomy*  
*Dr. Park - House M.D.*



This zine was created by **Aysha Zackria** as her final project for **"Where are you really from?: Asian American Racism, Activism, & Identity.**

The glossary was developed with **input from AAPI members of the CMU community** including **Katy Zapanta, Vik, Anura Ghodke, and Jacob Kadir.**

Feel free to reach out with any comments or questions by emailing **[azackria@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:azackria@andrew.cmu.edu)**

