

HOME COURT



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Letter from the Filmmaker



Throughout my 20-year career as a filmmaker, I've made short films and commercials for corporations and nonprofits, refining the craft of telling impactful and underrepresented stories with concision. I'm thrilled to be directing *Home Court*, my first feature-length film.

Four years ago, fellow filmmaker Jenn Lee Smith asked if I knew anything about the Asian American basketball leagues. When her daughter was invited to join, Jenn discovered that the league's history began in the 1920s with Japanese Americans who formed their own recreational basketball teams due to discrimination. In the 1930s, the teams formed leagues, and my husband and his family played in those leagues.¹ My father-in-law played in the Nisei Athletic Union, the first major Japanese American league formed post-World War II. The leagues were formative to him and his siblings, and their participation started a tradition that endured for generations to come. One of my cousins, Jamie Hagiya, grew up in the leagues and was a star player at the University of Southern California. Jamie introduced us to one of her former Japanese American league coaches, Jayme Kiyomura Chan, who told us about Ashley Chea. As we listened to the story of the daughter of Cambodian American refugees who was also a basketball prodigy, Jenn and I quickly realized that we wanted to tell this story—one of holding space for joy as well as heartache that explores the high stakes of following the American dream. *Home Court* is a universal American story that is at once tender, inspiring, and nuanced, all wrapped up in a teenage underdog basketball story.

I see pieces of Ashley's story echoed in my own Japanese-Jewish American children, whose grandparents were born into incarceration as Japanese Americans during the war and grew up rejecting the Japanese culture in favor of assimilating in order to survive, which increasingly disconnected future generations from their true selves. Due to anti-Semitism when my grandparents immigrated, I didn't even know I was Jewish until I was an adult, and the pain of the generational shame remained until I reclaimed my Jewish identity as my own. May this film inspire people not only to chase their dreams, but also to look deeper into their history, connecting with their parents and grandparents to learn more about who they are and what their families endured to arrive where they are today.

Best,
Erica Tanamachi

¹ [Nichi Bei News](#). Retrieved December 18, 2024.



About the Film

FILM SYNOPSIS

Home Court is the coming-of-age story of Ashley Chea, a Cambodian American basketball prodigy in Southern California whose life intensifies as recruitment heats up. As she overcomes injury as well as racial and class differences between her home and private-school worlds, in peer groups, and against rival schools, Ashley strives to become her own person and define her legacy.

SCREENING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of this film are to:

- Encourage discussion of the experiences of growing up Asian American and reflection on the ways in which those experiences are rich and varied
- Foster cross-cultural relationships and intergenerational conversations among immigrant and refugee families and the community to promote collective healing
- Highlight and celebrate women in sports, with a spotlight on Asian American athletes
- Explore how sports can provide opportunities for developing leadership skills and fostering connections
- Support students in defining their paths, values, and personal understanding of success after high school



Discussing the Film

FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

Home Court touches upon several topics that youth, children of immigrants or refugees, and student athletes face. Participants are encouraged to have courageous conversations, make connections through storytelling, and learn more about one another intergenerationally.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

This film includes language and topics that may be offensive or triggering or may cause distress. This includes profanity as well as sounds, images, and photos of gunshots, war and genocide, and incarceration camps.

Audience members are arriving with various life experiences and viewpoints. Set the tone and create a safe space to share by establishing some community agreements with the group. Be gentle with yourselves and also provide space for audiences to step away if and when they need to.



Topics and Themes

Home Court touches upon several topics and themes. To help you facilitate the conversation with others, this discussion guide offers detailed guidance on the following themes:

- Growing Up Asian American
- Intergenerational Understanding, Support, and Healing
- Asian Americans and Women in Sports
- Fostering Women’s and Girls’ Leadership Skills Through Sports
- Supporting Students in Defining Their Paths

Each topic includes the following:

- **Overview and Background Information** – Framing language and helpful insights to introduce the topic
- **Discussion Questions** – Questions specific to the film and/or the topics that will help you get the conversation going and will support in-depth conversations as well as personal reflections
- **Engagement Activities beyond a Panel** – Ideas for promoting active participation in the film’s topics
- **Potential Partners and/or Speakers** – Suggestions for community building and outreach and for building additional knowledge to moderate conversations
- **Additional Resources** – Organizations to reach out to and/or links for research in preparation for your event

GROWING UP ASIAN AMERICAN

Overview and Background Information

Ashley Chea’s experiences in *Home Court* are just one example of what it can be like growing up Asian American. The term Asian American was coined in the late 1960s, during the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War, as a unifying label for people of Asian descent in the United States.² In 1968, Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee, graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley, formed the Asian American Political Alliance, and that is believed to be the first use of the term.³ It was meant to empower diverse Asian communities to advocate collectively for civil rights. However, this broad term often obscures the vast diversity within the Asian American experience, a complex identity shaped by distinct histories of migration, political orientations, and generational viewpoints.

Asian Americans represent a hugely varied group, including East Asians, South Asians, Southeast Asians, and Pacific Islanders, each with unique cultures, languages, religions, and migration stories. This diversity can be both a strength and a challenge. Although sharing the label “Asian American” fosters solidarity, it also belies distinctions, such as those between refugees fleeing war and professionals arriving for specialized careers. These differences deeply influence family dynamics, opportunities, and cultural experiences.

Generational differences may be another defining aspect of growing up Asian American. First-generation (the first group of people to migrate, regardless of citizenship) parents often prioritize preserving cultural traditions and achieving economic stability in a new country, whereas second-generation (the generation first to be born in the resettled country) children navigate the complexities of understanding their identity in American society. Clashes can arise over values, language, and expectations.⁴ Growing up Asian American involves navigating these layered identities while shaping a path that reflects the richness of cultural heritage and the evolving realities of life in America.

² [Asian American Movement 1968](#). Retrieved November 1, 2024.

³ [CNN](#). Retrieved December 20, 2024.

⁴ [Complicating the image of model minority success: A review of Southeast Asian American education](#). Retrieved December 20, 2024.

Discussion Questions

1. Which moments in the film resonated with your own experiences with family?
2. Have you experienced a generational or cultural gap in your family relationships? How does it show up? How do you bridge the gap?
3. How do generational differences influence the way family members support or view Ashley's involvement in sports?

Engagement Activities beyond a Panel

- **Map your family's migration journey**
On a blank piece of paper, using pictures and words, share what you know about your family's migration story. Do you know how your family ended up where you are? What factors contributed to their migration? When did they leave? Who else came?
- **Tour an ethnic enclave**
An ethnic enclave is a geographic area where a particular ethnic group is highly concentrated. Is there a Cambodia Town near you? A Chinatown? Japantown? Connect with someone from the community to take a tour and learn more about how these enclaves came to be and how they have served the community over time.

Potential Partners and/or Speakers

- **[Association for Asian American Studies](#)** – A research and teaching hub for Asian American Studies, an interdisciplinary field born out of the 1960s social justice movements
- **[National Council of Asian Pacific Americans](#)** – A coalition of 40 national Asian Pacific American organizations around the country, based in Washington, D.C., that serves to represent the interests of the greater Asian American and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander communities and to provide a national voice for their issues
- Ethnic studies and Asian American studies professors and educators
- Asian American cultural arts centers and museums



“I want people to know that if I’m not playing well, it’s not because I’m Asian, it’s because I’m just having a bad day.”

– ASHLEY CHEA, *HOME COURT*

Additional Resources

- [AYPAL: Building API Community Power](#)
- [Eastwind Books](#)
- [Khmer Girls in Action](#)
- [United Cambodian Community](#)
- [Cambodian American Studies Model Curriculum](#)
- [Hmong History and Cultural Studies Model Curriculum](#)
- [Vietnamese American Experiences Model Curriculum](#)
- [A Nail the Evening Hangs On](#), by Monica Sok
- [Afterparties](#), by Anthony Veasna So
- [Kween](#), by Vichet Chum



INTERGENERATIONAL UNDERSTANDING, SUPPORT, AND HEALING

Overview and Background Information

Home Court sheds light on the Southeast Asian roots of Ashley Chea’s parents, which reflects the experiences of many Cambodian immigrants. Research shows the U.S. dropped an estimated 500,000—2.7 million tons of bombs on Cambodia, making it one of the most heavily bombed nations in history and destabilizing the region.⁵ And from 1975 to 1979, Cambodia endured the Khmer Rouge regime, led by Pol Pot, which sought to create an agrarian communist society. This period, marked by genocide, forced labor, and starvation, led to the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people—about a quarter of Cambodia’s population.⁶

⁵ [Bombs Over Cambodia](#). Retrieved December 20, 2024.

⁶ *Ibid.*

In the mid-1970s, Cambodians began fleeing their country to seek refuge abroad, and the number increased in the early 1980s.⁷ Families like Ashley Chea’s resettled in the United States, where they faced such challenges as cultural displacement, economic hardship, and the burden of rebuilding their lives while carrying the trauma of war.

As mentioned, the migration experience impacts each generation differently. Coach Jayme, a daughter of immigrants and also a mother, acts as the intermediary and provides support to both Ashley and the Chea family as a whole. Jayme’s understanding of both Ashley and Ashley’s parents contributes to how she is able to better support Ashley.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the film address the cultural or generational gaps between parents and children in immigrant or Asian American families?
2. How might trauma affect the ways someone can show or receive support?
3. What role does storytelling—both in sports and in the film—play in fostering healing and bridging divides between generations?

Engagement Activities beyond a Panel

- **Write a gratitude letter for someone you care about**
Think of someone you want to say “thank you” to. Write a letter to them. What are you grateful for? What was happening for you when they helped you? You may choose to send it or not.
- **Map your support**
It takes many people to create a safe, healthy environment for children to grow and thrive. On a blank sheet of paper, create a neighborhood and map your community of supporters. Create landmarks for the types of support that you need and who helps you.

Potential Partners and/or Speakers

- [Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants](#)
- [Refugee & Immigrant Transitions](#)
- Restorative justice practitioner and circlekeeper who facilitates harm and conflict circles for healing.

⁷ [Timeline: Cambodian Refugee in the U.S.](#) Retrieved December 20, 2024.

“I want her to get more education so she can work. Not with the power, not with the body—with the brain.”

—LIDA CHEA, ASHLEY'S MOTHER, *HOME COURT*

Additional Resources

- [*From the Land of Shadows*](#), by Khatharya Um
- [*Landbridge*](#), by Y-Dang Troeung
- [*Refugee Lifeworlds*](#), by Y-Dang Troeung
- [*War, Genocide, and Justice*](#), by Cathy J. Schlund-Vials
- Hok, S. (2023, September 15). [How Cambodian Americans heal the cycle of intergenerational trauma](#). The California Report Magazine.
- Osaka, N. (2021, July 8). Naomi Osaka: [“It’s O.K. Not to Be O.K.”](#) TIME.
- [Parents Are Human](#) – A card game designed to inspire meaningful conversations
- [Yellow Chair Collective](#) – A collective of mental health professionals who specialize in multicultural and Asian American experiences



ASIAN AMERICANS AND WOMEN IN SPORTS

Overview and Background Information

It wasn't always possible for Cambodian American women like Ashley Chea to compete and play sports. Anti-Asian racism and xenophobia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries deeply impacted the lives of Asian Americans, leading to exclusion from mainstream social and cultural institutions, including sports.⁸ Discriminatory policies like the Page Act of 1875,⁹ the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882,¹⁰ and the Immigration Act of 1924¹¹ marginalized Asian American communities, fostering segregation and systemic inequities. Amid this hostile environment, Asian Americans built their own community networks, including sports leagues, as spaces for recreation, connection, and cultural solidarity.

⁸ [PBS Newshour](#). Retrieved December 20, 2024.

⁹ [Immigration History](#). Retrieved December 4, 2024.

¹⁰ [Zinn Education Project](#). Retrieved December 11, 2024.

¹¹ [US Office of the Historian](#). Retrieved December 11, 2024.

By the 1930s and 1940s, Asian American women began breaking barriers in sports, often playing on women’s and co-ed teams.¹² This was significant because, at the time, women—especially women of color—faced compounded discrimination based on race and gender. Co-ed teams offered a rare opportunity for Asian American women to compete and demonstrate athletic skill in spaces that were otherwise inaccessible. As these community-organized leagues grew, sports became both recreation and a form of quiet resistance against systemic exclusion. And 1972 saw the passage of Title IX—a law that protects people from sex discrimination in any education programs or activities that are federally funded, including sports.¹³

These leagues also nurtured leadership skills and relationship building within Asian American communities. Women playing on co-ed teams and leading their own teams challenged societal norms and fostered empowerment. This legacy of community sports continues to be a pathway for young athletes and inspires further conversations about equity and representation in athletics.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the film challenge or reinforce stereotypes about Asian Americans in sports and other areas of life?
2. How have Asian American basketball leagues made basketball accessible for Asian American women and girls?
3. How does the film contribute to conversations about the diversity and inclusion of Asian Americans and women, including Asian American women, in mainstream sports?
4. In what ways do the athletes in *Home Court* defy societal expectations and norms about Asian American women?

Engagement Activities beyond a Panel

- **Research an Asian American league near you**
Does one exist near you? What sport do they play? What is the history of how it came into existence?
- **Visit your local library**
Research an Asian American athlete you are curious about. If you can’t think of one, start with finding an Asian American athlete who plays a sport you enjoy. What have been their contributions to the sport? To the community?
- **Put together a panel featuring women and girl athletes and coaches**
- **Invite a women’s or girls’ basketball team to your campus or community for a basketball demo**

¹² [PBS SoCal](#). Retrieved November 11, 2024.

¹³ [US Department of Education](#). Retrieved November 22, 2024.

Potential Partners and/or Speakers

- College and high school women athletes
- Women who coach women's and girls' sports

Additional Resources

- [The AMAZN Foundation](#)
- [The Asian American Athlete](#) podcast
- [Northern California Nisei Athletic Union](#)
- Reft, R. (2024). [Diamonds Separated by Oceans: Baseball, Japanese Americans, and Southern California's Pacific Rim](#). PBS SoCal.
- [Asian American Athletes in Sport and Society](#), edited by C. Richard King
- [Asian American Basketball: A Century of Sport, Community, and Culture](#), by Joel S. Franks
- [Asian American Sporting Cultures](#), edited by Stanley I. Thangaraj, Constancio Arnaldo, Jr., and Christina B. Chin
- [Gridiron Capital](#), by Lisa Uperesa
- Hanson, Sandra L. (2005, August). [Hidden Dragons: Asian American Women and Sport](#). *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 29(3).
- [Sport in Asian America](#). (2015). *Amerasia Journal*, 41(2) (special issue).

“Look, it’s the ching-chong team. They should go back to wherever they came from.’ And surprisingly, all of us were born in California. We ended up playing them. And in the first five minutes, we were up by 15. After that, every other team we played in that tournament respected us.”

– ASHLEY CHEA, *HOME COURT*



FOSTERING WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' LEADERSHIP SKILLS THROUGH SPORTS

Overview and Background Information

Coach Jayme Kiyomura Chan and Ashley Chea are leaders in their sport and in their communities. Sports can provide opportunities for developing leadership skills in women and girls. Many former high school and college students who participated in sports say that athletics had a positive impact on them, particularly on their self-esteem, confidence, and health¹⁴ and that they carry out in other parts of their lives what they learned through their participation in sports. Sports provide additional opportunities for young leaders to develop their leadership skills outside school and home.

¹⁴ [Pew Research Center](#). Retrieved November 22, 2024.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways did Ashley demonstrate leadership with her team after coming back to play in her senior year? Have you demonstrated leadership in a similar situation? If so, what did that look like?
2. What role do setbacks and failures play in shaping the journey and leadership skills of athletes? How can students be supported in learning from such experiences?
3. How do mentors and role models influence the leadership journeys of the women and girls in *Home Court*?

Engagement Activity

- **Share a story about winning/losing**
With a partner, think of a story about winning and/or losing that resonated with you. It could be your own win/loss or someone else's (such as a favorite team/athlete).
- **Watch a game**
 - Tune in to the next college women's basketball game or WNBA game.
 - Support your local school's girls' teams.
- **Plan a "game day"**
Organize a game, match, or activity in which the school, neighborhood, or community can participate. Who else can organize it with you? What would make the event successful? What tasks need to be completed and who is taking ownership of the tasks?

"I just wanted to say that I'm sorry for not being the captain that you guys wanted me to be since the, since the beginning, and, um, I'm working really hard to try and get to that point, but I just want to say that you guys all... did rea — did r-really good, um, like, collectively, and you guys all helped the team in one way or another, so good job."

—ASHLEY CHEA, *HOME COURT*

Potential Partners and/or Speakers

- Student athletes
- Sports coaches
- [Women's Sports Foundation](#) members or leaders

Additional Resources

Yam, K. (2024). [Natalie Nakase Becomes WNBA's First Asian American Head Coach](#). NBC News.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN DEFINING THEIR PATHS

Overview and Background Information

Adolescence is a time filled with challenges, and having trusted individuals to turn to can make a significant difference. Coaches often play a crucial role in guiding and mentoring young athletes, much like Coach Jayme Kiyomura Chan did for Ashley Chea. By understanding the unique struggles Ashley faced as an Asian American student athlete, including cultural pressures and balancing academic and athletic demands, Coach Jayme was able to provide meaningful support.

Anxiety and depression are common concerns among U.S. youth,¹⁵ but engaging in physical activities like sports has been shown to promote mental health and overall well-being. When young people feel supported and cared for, mentors can more effectively help them pursue their goals—not just in sports, but in other areas of life as well. This holistic approach underscores the value of combining mentorship with the benefits of physical activity to foster resilience and personal growth in adolescents.

¹⁵ [Pew Research Center](#). Retrieved November 22, 2024.

“I just know that, like, Asian Americans get, like, looked down upon of any sport, but especially basketball. All the coaches I’ve ever had in my life have told me that. Every college coach, every high school coach will never choose me first. I mean, that broke me down for a while. I had months where I didn’t even want to play basketball anymore. But that was the only thing that would keep me happy.”

–ASHLEY CHEA, *HOME COURT*

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can mentors and educators help students identify and nurture their individual interests, especially when those interests fall outside traditional expectations?
2. How do the supportive environments portrayed in *Home Court*—family, community, teammates—help the athletes grow and thrive?
3. What role do mentors play in fostering a safe space for students to explore their identities and passions?

Engagement Activity

- **Put together a panel of mentors and people who work with young athletes**
- **Facilitate a mentorship event**
Connect with mentors and people who work with youth or young athletes to table at a community outreach event.
- **Map your goals on a sheet of paper**
What is a goal you have for yourself in the next year? What steps are needed to get there? Who can support you? Somewhere on your map, write down three to five affirmations to uplift and motivate you on your journey.

Potential Partners and/or Speakers

- Nonprofit leaders who work with youth
- Guidance counselors
- Mental health professionals
- Educators
- After-school program providers

Additional Resources

- **BAWSI (Bay Area Women’s Sports Initiative)** – Mobilizes the women’s sports community to engage, inspire, and empower girls in under-resourced neighborhoods and children with disabilities
- **Girls Inc.** – The longest-running girls’ leadership program, evolving with girls to meet the challenges and opportunities of the day

Credits

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INDIE LENS POP-UP

Indie Lens Pop-Up is a neighborhood series that brings people together for film screenings and community-driven conversations. Featuring documentaries seen on PBS's *Independent Lens*, Indie Lens Pop-Up draws local residents, leaders, and organizations to discuss what matters most, from newsworthy topics and social issues to family and community relationships. Since its inception in 2005, more than 7,200 Indie Lens Pop-Up events have brought an estimated 430,000 participants together to discuss issues that impact local communities. For more information, visit the [Indie Lens Pop-Up website](#).

INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, *Independent Lens* is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Park Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS app. For more information, visit the [Independent Lens website](#).

Join the conversation with #IndieLens on Facebook and Instagram at @IndependentLens.

ITVS

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years the San Francisco non-profit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy® Award-winning PBS series, *Independent Lens*. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS app. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Park Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit the [ITVS website](#).

CENTER FOR ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA

The Center for Asian American Media (CAAM) presents innovative, engaging Asian American works on public television through our dynamic documentary programs. CAAM's award-winning public TV programs are seen by millions of viewers a year across the United States, including 47 documentary shows in the last four years and more than 200 films since 1982. CAAM is a member of the National Multicultural Alliance (formerly the National Minority Consortia), designated by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to provide diverse programming to PBS. For more information, visit [caamedia.org](#).

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,500 locally owned and operated public television and radio stations nationwide. CPB is also the largest single source of funding for research, technology, and program development for public radio, public television, and related online services. For more information, visit the [CPB website](#).

