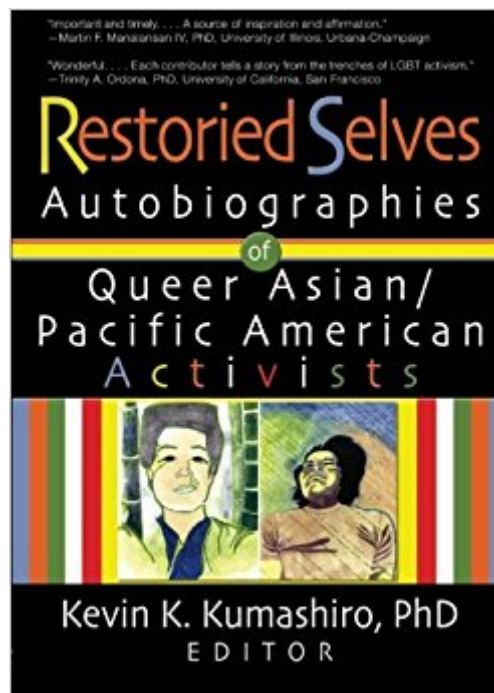




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# Restoried Selves: Autobiographies Of Queer Asian / Pacific American Activists (Haworth Gay & Lesbian Studies)



## Synopsis

*Restored Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian / Pacific American Activists* presents the first-person accounts of 20 activists' life stories that work against common stereotypes, shattering misconceptions and dispelling misinformation. These autobiographies challenge familial and cultural expectations and values that have traditionally forced queer Asian / Pacific Americans into silent shame because of their sexual orientation and/or ethnicity. Authors share not only their experiences growing up but also how those experiences led them to become social activists, speaking out against oppression. Many harmful untruths or stories about queer Asian-Pacific Americans have been repeated so often, they are accepted as fact. *Restored Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian / Pacific American Activists* provides a forum for voices often ignored in academic literature to re-story themselves, addressing a range of experiences that includes cultural differences and values, conflicts between different generations in a family or between different groups in a community, and difficulties and rewards of coming out. Those giving voice to their stories through narrative and other writing genres include the transgendered and intersexed, community activists, youths, and parents. The stories told in *Restored Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian / Pacific American Activists* reflect on: personal experiences based on country of origin, educational background, religion, gender, and age populations served by activism, including the working poor, immigrants, adoptees, youth, women, and families different arenas of activism, including schools, governments, social services, and the Internet issues targeted by activism, including affirmative action, HIV/AIDS education, mental health, interracial relationships, and sexual violence institutions in need of change, including legal, religious, and educational entities and much more! *Restored Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian / Pacific American Activists* is an essential read for academics and researchers working in Asian American studies, ethnic studies, gender studies, and queer studies, and for LGBTQ youth and their parents, teachers, and social service providers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book will be A Source of Inspiration and Affirmation for activists, scholars, and most of all, to young queer Asian-Pacific Americans searching for their own place in society."

While reading this anthology, I kept being reminded of Cheryl Dunye's film "Watermelon Woman." At the end, she proclaims, "I am a black lesbian filmmaker." I can understand struggling to make peace with one's racial and sexual identities. But is identifying as a filmmaker an equally difficult struggle!? Well, in this book, non-straight Asian-Americans do not just speak about themselves, but they purposely dissect their political activism. In this book, activism is given as much weight as race or sexual orientation. Activism here takes several forms. Be it promoting gay marriage in Hawaii, fighting xenophobia in a church setting, or coming out to one's Asian American studies students; the range is broad. Activists of all kinds of identities will relate to this. Further, straight Asian-Americans will see how they face some of the same struggles and this book may go far in promoting pan-sexual unity in Asian America. The best article was by Pauline Park. She relates how as a transgender Korean adoptee, almost no organization accepts her in her wholeness. Still, this hasn't stopped her from accomplishing a lot in New York. Every reader will be blown away by all that she has done. The worst article came from David Lee. His piece says almost nothing about being activist. Though he critiques privileging white men over Asian man, you can tell he isn't taking his message seriously. I don't even know why Kumashiro put his piece in the book. I am quite sure other submissions had to have been better than this terrible contribution. I doubt most Americans ever think about non-straight Asian Americans at all. However, if they do, they probably think first about monoracial, monosexual, gay-identified, male-born men. Kumashiro obviously wanted to have new centers. Most of the contributions are by women and their pieces are far stronger than those of the men. There are many works by biracial people and bisexuals, including Kumashiro coming out as bisexual. Not only is this a trans-inclusive work, but many contributors trouble gender binaries by

hardly mentioning their gender at all. There is a great piece by a man who has Klinefelter's syndrome; this is fascinating as many activists want to use the phrase "LGBTI" to include intersexuals. Southeast Asians are often called "the forgotten Asians" and this book has a respectable amount of contributions from them. Still, this book is lacking in strong works by non-straight Polynesians. One Chicana-Samoan lesbian talks more about Chicanos and hardly about Samoans in her work. Another man talks about Native Hawaiian issues; however, he is not Native and the lack of mentioning what his race is makes me think he might be completely white, thus defeating the purpose of the book. When gay Pacific Islanders like Greg Louganis, Benjamin Cruz, or Esera Tuaolo are making press, this paucity is quite surprising and disappointing. This book is for everyday readers. There are no footnotes or postmodern jargon. Readers will have a much easier time with this book than they may have with "Q&A" or "Racial Castration," previously released gay Asian-American books. The selections are arranged in alphabetical order. Because I think the purpose of the book is to get more straight Asian-Americans to embrace sexual minorities, I'm completely shocked that the word "queer" is thrown around so often and without question here. Many readers will be turned off and I don't know why the editor didn't think more about this.

*Restored Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian/Pacific American Activists* edited by Kevin R. Kumashiro is an anthology consisting of seventeen autobiographical essays by queer APA activists, this collection offers just a small sample of the experiences faced by individuals, as well as by queer APA communities. At just over 130 pages, the slimness of this text masks the richness of its content. One of the most reoccurring and elusive themes in much of the queer APA literature I've read has to do with "home," specifically the search for home. By no means has there been any consensus about what "home" is, or that it even exists, or that it would be a good thing to find or be "at home." Still, the pull of "home" has been one I have strongly felt over the years. At various times in my life thus far, I thought that I had found home in lovers, in family, in friends, in learning, in teaching...What was most powerful, perhaps, was when I found home in myself. By no means an easy task, or one that once accomplished doesn't continue to be an ongoing struggle, but certainly one that I've gotten the sweetest rewards from, even if only for short moments at a time. This book offers many such tales of just such a home coming. The essays echoed my own experiences and feelings, and did a fabulous job of bringing much needed queer APA activist voices to the foreground. Not only did I feel in community with the authors, but it turns out that my life's path actually crossed, and continues to cross, with a good number of the authors' lives. It's a small world, indeed. It's specifically in this context of community that I think revolutionary social change will

happen. One of the things that the stories in Restoried Selves strongly instill is that we must recognize the ways in which we get in our own ways, succumbing to various internalized oppressions, so that we may be able to come to loving terms with ourselves, and then with one another. While there are some stories in this anthology that are far from painting rosy pictures of queer APA life experiences, there isn't one single essay that doesn't leave readers with hopefulness. In fact, I think the ultimate strength of Restoried Selves lies not in its embodiment of a vibrant queer APA activist community (as HUGE an asset that this is), but rather in the way it presents the challenges facing queer APA individuals and communities in order to offer insights and practical advice to ALL readers to work towards combating these challenges. In this way, this book isn't merely by queer APA activists, about queer APA activism, for queer APA activists, but for every person who wants to better understand what it means to work in coalition for broad social change. I have nothing but the highest praises for Restoried Selves, and if you haven't already read it, go out, buy it, and read it, NOW!!!

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