

Asian Is Not Oriental

ASIAN
is not
Oriental
head bowed, submissive, industrious
model minority
hard working, studious
quiet

ASIAN
is not being
Oriental,
Lotus blossom, exotic passion flower
Inscrutable

ASIAN
is not talking
Oriental,
ahh so, ching chong chinaman
no tickee, no washee

ORIENTAL
is a white man's word
Oriental is jap, flip, chink, gook
it's "how 'bout a backrub mama-san"
it's "you could teach them
niggers and mexicans a thing or two
you're good people
none of that hollering' and protesting"

Oriental is slanty eyes, glasses and buck teeth
Charlie Chan, Tokyo Rose,
Madam Butterfly
it's "a half hour after eating Chinese food
you're hungry again"
it's houseboys, gardeners, and laundrymen

Oriental is a fad: yin-yang, kung fu
"say one of them funny words for me"
Oriental is downcast eyes, china doll
"they all look alike."
Oriental is sneaky
Oriental
is a white man's word.

WE
are not Oriental
we have heard the word all our lives
we have learned to be Oriental
we have learned to live it, speak it,
play the role
and to survive in a white world
become the role
the time has come
To look at who gave the name.

Anonymous (1989)

<http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/>