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Asian American POLICY REVIEW

Graduate School
of Public Policy
University of California
at Berkeley

John F. Kennedy
School of Government
Harvard University

Defining An Asian American Political Agenda: Critical Issues and Perspectives

Amado Cabezas and Gary Kawaguchi

Henry Der

Peter Nien-chu Kiang

Lee C. Lee

Representative Robert T. Matsui

Don T. Nakanishi

Ronald Takaki

Elizabeth Ahn Toupin

VOLUME 1

SPRING 1990

TEN DOLLARS

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John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

Graduate School of Public Policy
University of California at Berkeley

INDIVIDUAL & INSTITUTIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE)
San Francisco

Dean Joseph Cerny
Graduate Division
University of California at Berkeley

The Graduate Assembly
University of California at Berkeley

Victor Hao Li
Honolulu, Hawaii

Policy Students of Color
Graduate School of Public Policy
University of California at Berkeley

Dean Eugene Smolensky
Graduate School of Public Policy
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Edward Lee
Lawland Long
Michael Lu
Karen Park
Chantale Wong

Our special thanks to:

Joe McCarthy
Gail Nomura
William Parent

CONTRIBUTORS

Ronald Takaki is Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He also serves as Graduate Advisor to the Ethnic Studies Ph.D. Program, and has received Berkeley's Distinguished Teaching Award and the Goldwin Smith University Lectureship at Cornell University. He is the author of several books, including *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*.

Don T. Nakanishi is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education, the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the Administrative Head of the Interdepartmental Program in Asian American Studies. Professor Nakanishi has written extensively on Asian American issues, consulted on numerous political projects, and is the co-founder of *Amerasia Journal*.

Peter N. Kiang is a Lecturer in the Sociology Department and American Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He is also a research coordinator with the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences. Formerly, he served as Program Director of the Asian American Resource Workshop in Boston's Chinatown.

Amado Cabezas is Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies, in the Asian American Studies Program at the University of California, Berkeley. **Gary Kawaguchi** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California Berkeley. They have written extensively on the issues of higher education and labor market segmentation relating to Asian Americans.

Elizabeth Ahn Toupin is Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies at Tufts University. Appointed in 1968, she was the first Asian American dean on the East Coast. Dean Toupin has lectured at Harvard, Brown and Wellesley. Her article, "Is the Model Minority Image Damaging to Asian American Students?" will be published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Winter 1990).

Lee C. Lee is Professor of Asian American Studies, and Director of the Asian American Studies Program at Cornell University. Author of numerous research articles, books and reports, her article "Influence of Political Socialization on Parental Values in the People's Republic of China" will appear in an anthology edited by Michael Lamb, *et. al.*

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The journal is devoted to the study of Asian American issues and the role of the federal government in the development of the Asian American community. The journal is published quarterly and is available to libraries and individuals.

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Defining an Asian American Political Agenda: Critical Issues and Perspectives

Coming from lands across the Pacific, referred to as “strangers from a different shore,” Asian Pacific Americans are now the nation’s fastest growing group. Yet despite their growing numbers, Asian Pacific Americans are still working to define a voice in American society. Viewed and treated in many ways as strangers in the land they now call home, Asian Pacific Americans need to gain the acceptance and understanding of American society, while shaping a unique Asian American role within that society.

Sensing the growing need to provide a forum for these issues, we were moved to establish the *Asian American Policy Review*. It is our hope that the *Review* will stimulate discussion and analysis of the political, cultural and economic issues affecting the Asian American community. By addressing the breadth and complexity of these issues, the *Review* can play an important role in helping to create a greater understanding within the diverse Asian American community and lead us to shape a more unified voice.

We emphasize that the *Review* is intended as an open and public forum. The *Review* is produced by graduate students of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and at the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. To date, we have relied upon the support provided by individuals and institutions receptive to the mission of the *Review*. But we hope that you will be stimulated by the issues addressed within these pages, and we urge you to help us sustain and enrich the vital and continuous debate of these policy issues. We encourage you to respond to the *Review*, and to support this endeavor.

The *Review*’s primary mission is to address policy issues affecting the Asian American community in a non-partisan, informative fashion. In our first issue, “**Defining an Asian American Political Agenda**”, we have attempted to highlight a variety of policy issues of concern to the Asian American community; these include a discussion of voting trends among Asian Americans, Asian Americans in higher education, and a case study of political empowerment among Asian American parents in Lowell, Massachusetts.

We have chosen to preface these works with an excerpt from Ronald Takaki’s *Strangers from a Different Shore*. As part of our premiere issue, we felt the need to provide an overview of the issues and perspectives which currently dominate discussions in the Asian American policy arena. In his final chapter, Takaki eloquently discusses the myth of the model minority and the problem of anti-Asian violence. Public awareness and media

coverage of Asian Americans has tended to focus on distorted perceptions of Asian Pacific Americans as the "model minority", as well as on incidents of anti-Asian violence and discrimination in higher education. These, however, represent only a small sample of the myriad issues which the Asian American community must address.

Asian Americans have often been driven towards consensus and coordinated action out of the necessity of reacting to the attitudes and actions of others. So long as Asian Americans are treated as strangers, this will undoubtedly remain the case. It is our hope, however, that by fostering the discussion of Asian American policy issues, we can also move towards creating grounds for progress on other fronts; addressing problems and opportunities which spring from the communal values and political needs of Asian Americans themselves. As a result, a crucial issue will be the need to balance our political agenda as Asian Americans with the distinct and often divergent interests of our diverse ethnicities and backgrounds. By improving understanding and fostering debate, we hope that the *Review* will help Asian Americans to continue to "break silences" and find a voice in American society and politics.

Breaking Silences

Community of Memory

by

Professor Ronald Takaki

University of California at Berkeley

Like Georg Simmel's "stranger," the early Asian immigrants found themselves viewed and treated as outsiders. As newcomers, they lacked organic and traditional ties to American society. But so did Irish, Jewish, Italian, and other European immigrants. All of them were members of a transnational "industrial reserve army." Coming from lands across the Pacific, however, Asians were "strangers from a different shore." They were "pushed," for "poverty hurt." They were also "pulled" here to meet the labor needs of America's railroads, plantations, mines, farms, and factories. Powered by "necessities" of the "modern world-system" the international labor migrations from Asia to the United States took place, to use Cheng and Bonacich's apt phrase, "under capitalism." But there was in addition "extravagance"—the desire for freedom, and the realization of potentials, for what Carlos Bulosan described as the "building of a new life with untried materials."¹

America seemed to offer a unique place for such a pursuit, for society in this "fresh green breast of the new world" was still an unfinished one. The land was liminal. The "riverbanks" of centuries of customs and strictures had not yet been formed, inviting initiative and the exercise of imagination. "The country is open, go forward," they exclaimed. Their dreams inspired many to break from old patterns and to cross a wide ocean. But here the Asian newcomers encountered a prevailing vision of America as essentially a place where European immigrants would establish a homogeneous white society and where nonwhites would have to remain "strangers." Their distinguishing physical features became what Robert E. Park termed "racial uniforms," and they were placed in a racially stratified labor structure. In order to discipline labor and keep wages low, planters in Hawaii pitted workers of different Asian nationalities against each other, and employers on the mainland promoted "ethnic antagonism"

Reprinted from *Strangers From A Different Shore* (Little, Brown and Co., 1989).

between Asian and white workers.²

But the Asian immigrants chose not to let the course of their lives be determined completely by the "necessity" of race and class in America. While tensions did develop among the Asian groups in the islands, a remarkable degree of interethnic community emerged among them as they lived together in the camps, spoke the common language of pidgin English, and went out on strike together in 1920 and 1946. On the mainland, the various Asian groups were comparatively isolated from each other and struggled separately against racism and competition from a hostile white working class. Isolated as "strangers," first-wave Chinese and Japanese immigrants developed their own economic enclaves, which in turn provided an economic basis for ethnic solidarity. The early Korean, Asian Indian, and Filipino immigrants did not develop their own colonies. The post-1965 groups have also charted different directions for themselves: the Koreans, Chinese, and Vietnamese have concentrated their economic resources in their own ethnic communities, while the Asian Indians and Filipinos have tended to integrate themselves into American society.

Throughout their history in this country Asians have been struggling in different ways to help America accept and appreciate its diversity. Gradually, through events like World War II as well as through struggles such as the labor strikes and the Civil Rights Movement, American society had been moving toward a racially inclusive countervision of democracy—the possible pluralistic America depicted by Walt Whitman and Carlos Bulosan. Today Asian Americans live in a very different America from the one the earlier immigrants entered. They are no longer the targets of anti-miscegenation laws: in California in 1980, the rate of marriages to whites for Japanese was 32 percent, Filipinos 24 per-

cent, Asian Indians 23 percent, Koreans 19 percent, Vietnamese 15 percent, and Chinese 14 percent. Asian Americans are no longer victimized by legislation denying them naturalized citizenship and landownership. They have begun to exercise their political voices and have representatives in both houses of Congress as well as in state legislatures and on city councils. They enjoy much of the protection of civil rights laws that outlaw racial discrimination in employment as well as housing and that provide for affirmative action for racial minorities. They have greater freedom than did the earlier immigrants to embrace their own "diversity"—their own cultures as well as their own distinctive physical characteristics, such as their complexion and the shape of their eyes. Many Asian-American children have access to bilingual education and ESL programs, and in universities across the country, from Berkeley to Brown, students find curricula offering courses on Asian-American history. Previously the targets of exclusionist laws, Asian Americans are currently able to maintain the vitality of their communities by the continuing influx of new Asian immigrants. But in many painful ways, they still find themselves unjustly viewed and treated as "strangers from a different shore."

The Myth of the "Model Minority"

Today Asian Americans are celebrated as America's "model minority." In 1986, *NBC Nightly News* and the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* aired special news segments on Asian Americans and their success, and a year later, CBS's *60 Minutes* presented a glowing report on their stunning achievements in the academy. "Why are Asian Americans doing so exceptionally well in school?" Mike Wallace asked, and quickly added, "They must be doing something right. Let's bottle it." Meanwhile, *U. S.*

News & World Report featured Asian-American advances in a cover story, and *Time* devoted an entire section on this meteoric minority in its special immigrants issue, "The Changing Face of America." Not to be outdone by its competitors, *Newsweek* titled the cover story of its college-campus magazine "Asian-Americans: The Drive to Excel" and a lead article of its weekly edition "Asian Americans: A 'Model Minority.'" *Fortune* went even further, applauding them as "America's Super Minority," and the *New Republic* extolled "The Triumph of Asian-Americans" as "America's greatest success story."³

The celebration of Asian-American achievements in the press has been echoed in the political realm. Congratulations have come even from the White House. In a speech presented to Asian and Pacific Americans in the chief executive's mansion in 1984, President Ronald Reagan explained the significance of their success. America has a rich and diverse heritage, Reagan declared, and Americans are all descendants of immigrants in search of the "American dream." He praised Asian and Pacific Americans for helping to "preserve that dream by living up to the bedrock values" of America—the principles of "the sacred worth of human life, religious faith, community spirit and the responsibility of parents and schools to be teachers of tolerance, hard work, fiscal responsibility, cooperation, and love." "It's no wonder," Reagan emphatically noted, "that the median incomes of Asian and Pacific-American families are much higher than the total American average." Hailing Asian and Pacific Americans as an example for all Americans, Reagan conveyed his gratitude to them: we need "your values, your hard work" expressed within "our political system."⁴

But in their celebration of this "model minority," the pundits and the politicians have exaggerated Asian-Ameri-

can "success" and have created a new myth. Their comparisons of incomes between Asians and whites fail to recognize the regional location of the Asian-American population. Concentrated in California, Hawaii, and New York, Asian Americans reside largely in states with higher incomes but also higher costs of living than the national average: 59 percent of all Asian Americans lived in these states in 1980,

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compared to only 19 percent of the general population. The use of "family incomes" by Reagan and others has been very misleading, for Asian-American families have more persons working per family than white families. In 1980, white nuclear families in California had only 1.6 workers per family, compared to 2.1 for Japanese, 2.0 for immigrant Chinese, 2.2 for immigrant Filipino, and 1.8 for immigrant Korean (this last figure is actually higher, for many Korean women are unpaid family workers). Thus the family incomes of Asian Americans indicate the presence of more workers in each family, rather than higher incomes.⁵

Actually, in terms of personal incomes, Asian Americans have not reached equality. In 1980 the mean personal income for white men in California was \$23,400. While Japanese men earned a comparable income, they did so only by acquiring more education (17.7 years compared to 16.8 years for white men twenty-five to forty-four years old) and by working more hours (2,160 hours compared to 2,120 hours for white men in the

same age category). In reality, then, Japanese men were still behind Caucasian men. Income inequalities for other men were more evident: Korean men earned only \$19,200, or 82 percent of the income of white men, Chinese men only \$15,900 or 68 percent, and Filipino men only \$14,500 or 62 percent. In New York the mean personal income for white men was \$21,600,

Asian Americans complain that they are often stereotyped as passive and told they lack the aggressiveness required in administration. The problem is not whether their culture encourages a reserved manner, they argue, but whether they have opportunities for social activities that have traditionally been the exclusive preserve of elite white men.

compared to only \$18,900 or 88 percent for Korean men, \$16,500 or 76 percent for Filipino men, and only \$11,200 or 52 percent for Chinese men. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Chinese-immigrant men earned only 72 percent of what their white counterparts earned, Filipino-immigrant men 68 percent, Korean-immigrant men 69 percent, and Vietnamese-immigrant men 52 percent. The incomes of Asian-American men were close to and sometimes even below those of black men (68 percent) and Mexican-American men (71 percent).⁶

The patterns of income inequality for Asian men reflect a structural problem: Asians tend to be located in the labor market's secondary sector, where wages are low and promotional prospects minimal. Asian men are clustered as janitors, machinists, postal clerks, technicians, waiters, cooks, gardeners, and computer programmers; they can also be found in the primary sector, but

here they are found mostly in the lower-tier levels as architects, engineers, computer-systems analysts, pharmacists, and school-teachers, rather than in the upper-tier levels of management and decision making. "Labor market segmentation and restricted mobility between sectors," observed social scientists Amado Cabezas and Gary Kawaguchi, "help promote the economic interest and privilege of those with capital or those in the primary sector, who mostly are white men."⁷

This pattern of Asian absence from the higher levels of administration is characterized as "a glass ceiling"—a barrier through which top management positions can only be seen, but not reached, by Asian Americans. While they are increasing in numbers on university campuses as students, they are virtually nonexistent as administrators: at Berkeley's University of California campus where 25 percent of the students were Asians in 1987, only one out of 102 top level administrators was an Asian. In the United States as a whole, only 8 percent of Asian Americans in 1988 were "officials" and "managers," as compared to 12 percent for all groups. Asian Americans are even more scarce in the upper strata of the corporate hierarchy: they constituted less than half of one percent of the 29,000 officers and directors of the nation's thousand largest companies. Though they are highly educated, Asian Americans are generally not present in positions of executive leadership and decision making. "Many Asian Americans hoping to climb the corporate ladder face an arduous ascent," the *Wall Street Journal* observed. "Ironically, the same companies that pursue them for technical jobs often shun them when filling managerial and executive positions."⁸

Asian Americans complain that they are often stereotyped as passive and told they lack the aggressiveness required in administration. The problem is not whether

their culture encourages a reserved manner, they argue, but whether they have opportunities for social activities that have traditionally been the exclusive preserve of elite white men. "How do you get invited to the cocktail party and talk to the chairman?" asked Landy Eng, a former assistant vice president of Citibank. "It's a lot easier if your father or your uncle or his friend puts his arm around you at the party and says, 'Landy, let me introduce you to Walt.'" Excluded from the "old boy" network, Asian Americans are also told they are inarticulate and have an accent. Edwin Wong, a junior manager at Acurex, said: "I was given the equivalent of an ultimatum: 'Either you improve your accent or your future in getting promoted to senior management is in jeopardy.'" The accent was a perceived problem at work. "I felt that just because I had an accent a lot of Caucasians thought I was stupid." But whites with German, French, or English accents do not seem to be similarly handicapped. Asian Americans are frequently viewed as technicians rather than administrators. Thomas Campbell, a general manager at Westinghouse Electric Corp., said that Asian Americans would be happier staying in technical fields and that few of them are adept at sorting through the complexities of large-scale business. This very image can produce a reinforcing pattern: Asian-American professionals often find they "top out," reaching a promotional ceiling early in their careers. "The only jobs we could get were based on merit," explained Kumar Patel, head of the material science division at AT&T. "That is why you find most [Asian-Indian] professionals in technical rather than administrative or managerial positions." Similarly an Asian-Indian engineer who had worked for Kaiser for some twenty years told a friend: "They [management] never ever give you [Asian Indians] an executive position in the company. You can only go up so high and no

more."

Asian-American "success" has emerged as the new stereotype for this ethnic minority. While this image has led many teachers and employers to view Asians as intelligent and hardworking and has opened some opportunities, it has also been harmful. Asian Americans find their diversity as individuals denied: many feel forced to conform to the "model minority" mold and want more freedom to be their individual selves, to be "extravagant." Asian university students are concentrated in the sciences and technical fields, but many of them wish they had greater opportunities to major in the social sciences and humanities. "We are educating a generation of Asian technicians," observed an Asian-American professor at Berkeley, "but the communities also need their historians and poets." Asian Americans find themselves all lumped together and their diversity as groups overlooked. Groups that are not doing well, such as unemployed Hmong, the Downtown Chinese, the elderly Japanese, the old Filipino farm laborers, and others, have been rendered invisible. To be out of sight is also to be without social services. Thinking Asian Americans have succeeded, government officials have sometimes denied funding for social service programs designed to help Asian Americans learn English and find employment. Failing to realize that there are poor Asian families, college administrators have sometimes excluded Asian-American students from Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), which are intended for *all* students from low-income families. Asian Americans also find themselves pitted against and resented by other racial minorities and even whites. If Asian Americans can make it on their own, pundits are asking, why can't poor blacks and whites on welfare? Even middle-class whites, who are experiencing economic difficulties because of plant closures in a deindustrial-

izing America and the expansion of low-wage service employment, have been urged to emulate the Asian-American "model minority" and to work harder.¹⁰

Indeed, the story of the Asian-American triumph offers ideological affirmation of the American Dream in an era anxiously witnessing the decline of the United States in the international economy (due to its trade imbalance and its transformation

Significantly, Asian-American "success" has been accompanied by the rise of a new wave of anti-Asian sentiment.

from a creditor to a debtor nation), the emergence of a new black underclass (the percentage of black female-headed families having almost doubled from 22 percent in 1960 to 40 percent in 1980), and a collapsing white middle class (the percentage of households earning a "middle-class" income falling from 28.7 percent in 1967 to 23.3 percent in 1983). Intellectually, it has been used to explain "losing ground"—why the situation of the poor has deteriorated during the last two decades of expanded government social services. According to this view, advanced by pundits like Charles Murray, the interventionist federal state, operating on the "misguided wisdom" of the 1960s, made matters worse: it created a web of welfare dependency. But this analysis has overlooked the structural problems in society and our economy, and it has led to easy cultural explanations and quick-fix prescriptions. Our difficulties, we are sternly told, stem from our waywardness: Americans have strayed from the Puritan "errand into the wilderness." They have abandoned the old American "habits of the heart." Praise for Asian-American

success is America's most recent jeremiad—a renewed commitment to make America number one again and a call for a rededication to the bedrock values of hard work, thrift, and industry. Like many congratulations, this one may veil a spirit of competition, even jealousy.¹¹

Significantly, Asian-American "success" has been accompanied by the rise of a new wave of anti-Asian sentiment. On college campuses, racial slurs have surfaced in conversations on the quad: "Look out for the Asian Invasion." "M.I.T. means Made in Taiwan." "U.C.L.A. stands for University of Caucasians Living among Asians." Nasty anti-Asian graffiti have suddenly appeared on the walls of college dormitories and in the elevators of classroom buildings: "Chink, chink, cheating chink!" "Stop the Yellow Hordes." "Stop the Chinese before they flunk you out." Ugly racial incidents have broken out on college campuses. At the University of Connecticut, for example, eight Asian-American students experienced a nightmare of abuse in 1987. Four couples had boarded a college bus to attend a dance. "The dance was a formal and so we were wearing gowns," said Marta Ho, recalling the horrible evening with tears. "The bus was packed, and there was a rowdy bunch of white guys in the back of the bus. Suddenly I felt this warm sticky stuff on my hair. They were spitting on us! My friend was sitting sideways and got hit on her face and she started screaming. Our boy friends turned around, and one of the white guys, a football player, shouted: 'You want to make something out of this, you Oriental faggots!'"¹²

Asian-American students at the University of Connecticut and other colleges are angry, arguing that there should be no place for racism on campus and that they have as much right as anyone else to be in the university. Many of them are children of recent immigrants who had been college-

educated professionals in Asia. They see how their parents had to become greengrocers, restaurant operators, and storekeepers in America, and they want to have greater career choices for themselves. Hopeful a college education can help them overcome racial obstacles, they realize the need to be serious about their studies. But white college students complain: "Asian students are nerds." This very stereotype betrays nervousness—fears that Asian-American students are raising class grade curves. White parents, especially alumni, express concern about how Asian-American students are taking away "their" slots—admission places that should have gone to their children. "Legacy" admission slots reserved for children of alumni have come to function as a kind of invisible affirmative-action program for whites. A college education has always represented a valuable economic resource, credentialing individuals for high income and status employment, and the university has recently become a contested terrain of competition between whites and Asians. In paneled offices, university administrators meet to discuss the "problem" of Asian-American "over-representation" in enrollments.

Paralleling the complaint about the rising numbers of Asian-American students in the university is a growing worry that there are also "too many" immigrants coming from Asia. Recent efforts to "reform" the 1965 Immigration Act seem reminiscent of the nativism prevalent in the 1880s and the 1920s. Senator Alan K. Simpson of Wyoming, for example, noted how the great majority of the new immigrants were from Latin America and Asia, and how "a substantial portion" of them did not "integrate fully" into American society. "If language and cultural separatism rise above a certain level," he warned, "the unity and political stability of the Nation will—in time—be seriously eroded. Plural-

ism within a united American nation has been our greatest strength. The unity comes from a common language and a core public culture of certain shared values, beliefs, and customs, which make us distinctly 'Americans.'" In the view of many supporters of immigration reform, the post-1965 immigration from Asia and Latin America threatens the traditional unity and identity of the American people. "The immigration from the turn of the century was largely a continuation of the immigration from previous years in that the European stock of Americans was being maintained," explained Steve Rosen, a member of an organization lobbying for changes in the current law. "Now, we are having a large influx of third-world people, which could be potentially disruptive of our whole Judeo-Christian heritage." Significantly, in March 1988, the Senate passed a bill that would limit the entry of family members and that would provide 55,000 new visas to be awarded to "independent immigrants" on the basis of education, work experience, occupations, and "English language skills."¹³

Political concerns usually have cultural representations. The entertainment media have begun marketing Asian stereotypes again: where Hollywood had earlier portrayed Asians as Charlie Chan displaying his wit and wisdom in his fortune cookie Confucian quotes and as the evil Fu Manchu threatening white women, the film industry has recently been presenting images of comic Asians (in *Sixteen Candles*) and criminal Asian aliens (in *Year of the Dragon*). Hollywood has entered the realm of foreign affairs. *The Deer Hunter* explained why the United States lost the war in Vietnam. In this story, young American men are sent to fight in Vietnam, but they are not psychologically prepared for the utter cruelty of physically disfigured Viet Cong clad in black pajamas. Shocked and disoriented, they collapse morally into a

world of corruption, drugs, gambling, and Russian Roulette. There seems to be something sinister in Asia and the people there that is beyond the capability of civilized Americans to comprehend. Upset after seeing this movie, refugee Thu-Thuy Truong exclaimed: "We didn't play Russian roulette games in Saigon! The whole thing was made up." Similarly *Apocalypse Now* portrayed lost innocence: Americans enter the heart of darkness in Vietnam and become possessed by madness (in the persona played by Marlon Brando) but are saved in the end by their own technology and violence (represented by Martin Sheen). Finally, in movies celebrating the exploits of Rambo, Hollywood has allowed Americans to win in fantasy the Vietnam War they lost in reality. "Do we get to win this time?" snarls Rambo, our modern Natty Bumppo, a hero of limited conversation and immense patriotic rage.¹⁴

Meanwhile, anti-Asian feelings and misunderstandings have been exploding violently in communities across the country, from Philadelphia, Boston, and New York to Denver and Galveston, Seattle, Portland, Monterey, and San Francisco. In Jersey City, the home of 15,000 Asian Indians, a hate letter published in a local newspaper warned: "We will go to any extreme to get Indians to move out of Jersey City. If I'm walking down the street and I see a Hindu and the setting is right, I will just hit him or her. We plan some of our more extreme attacks such as breaking windows, breaking car windows and crashing family parties. We use the phone book and look up the name Patel. Have you seen how many there are?" The letter was reportedly written by the "Dotbusters," a cruel reference to the *bindi* some Indian women wear as a sign of sanctity. Actual attacks have taken place, ranging from verbal harassments and egg throwing to serious beatings. Outside a Hoboken restau-

rant on September 27, 1987, a gang of youths chanting "Hindu Hindu" beat Navroz Mody to death. A grand jury has indicted four teenagers for the murder.¹⁵

Five years earlier a similarly brutal incidents occurred in Detroit. There, in July, Vincent Chin, a young Chinese American, and two friends went to a bar in the late afternoon to celebrate his upcoming wedding. Two white autoworkers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, called Chin a "Jap" and cursed: "It's because of you motherfuckers that we're out of work." A fistfight broke out, and Chin then quickly left the bar. But Ebens and Nitz took out a baseball bat from the trunk of their car and chased Chin through the streets. They finally cornered him in front of a McDonald's restaurant. Nitz held Chin while Ebens swung the bat across the victim's shins and then bludgeoned Chin to death by shattering his skull. Allowed to plead guilty to manslaughter, Ebens and Nitz were sentenced to three year's probation and fined \$3,780 each. But they have not spent a single night in jail for their bloody deed. "Three thousand dollars can't even buy a good used car these days," snapped a Chinese American, "and this was the price of a life." "What kind of law is this? What kind of justice?" cried Mrs. Lily Chin, the slain man's mother. "This happened because my son is Chinese. If two Chinese killed a white person, they must go to jail, maybe for their whole lives....Something is wrong with this country."¹⁶

Vincent Chin was the only son of Lily and Hing Chin. Lily's great-grandfather had been an immigrant railroad laborer in the nineteenth century, and she remembers his tales about racial persecution. Hing Chin had arrived in the United States in 1922 at the age of seventeen and had served in the U.S. Army during World War II. After the war, both Lily and Hing Chin worked in a laundry, and Mrs. Chin

became an assembly-plant worker after her husband died of a kidney disease in 1980. Their son had high hopes for a career. "When he was a child," Lily Chin recalled, "he wanted to be a writer. I said, 'Vincent, you can't make money at that.' Then he wanted to be a lawyer because he liked to talk. 'Ma, I want to be a lawyer,' 'Oh, you're Chinese, nobody'd believe you,' I said. Then he wanted to be a veterinarian. 'Oh, Vincent, you can't do that. You can't open up the animals, you're scared of blood.'" Vincent graduated from Oak Park High School and studied architecture at the Lawrence Institute of Technology. In the summer of 1982, he was working as a draftsman for Efficient Engineering when he was brutally murdered. "I don't understand how this could happen in America," Mrs. Chin cried out bitterly. "My husband fought for this country. We always paid our taxes and worked hard. Before I really loved America, but now this has made me very angry."¹⁷

The murder of Vincent Chin has aroused the anger and concern of Asian Americans across the country. They know he was killed because of his racial membership: Ebens and Nitz perceived Chin as a "stranger," a foreigner, for he did not look like an American. But why was Chin viewed as an alien? Asian Americans blame the educational system for not including their history in the curricula and for not teaching about U.S. society in all of its racial and cultural diversity. Why are the courses and books on American history so Eurocentric? they have asked teacher and scholars accusingly.

Asian Americans and supporters of justice for Vincent Chin have charged that the corporate executives of the auto industry must also be held accountable for Chin's death: the auto manufacturers should have been designing and building fuel-efficient cars twenty years ago, and now they are

blaming Japan for Detroit's massive unemployment. "Unemployment is not caused by foreign competition," argued Newton Kamakane of UAW Local 1364 in Fremont, California. "It's the result of mistakes and poor planning of the multinational corporations — and General Motors is one of the biggest of them." Unfortunately, unemployment might not have been entirely the consequence of "mistakes and poor plan-

"This is an historical moment for Asian Americans because for the first time we are all united."

ning." American auto companies have been deliberately locating much of their production outside of the United States. They have assembly plants in places like Ciudad Juarez Mexico, which has come to be called "Little Detroit." They have even invested in the Japanese auto companies themselves: General Motors owns 34 percent of Isuzu (which builds the Buick Opel), Ford 25 percent of Mazda (which makes transmissions for the Escort), and Chrysler 15 percent of Mitsubishi (which produces the Colt and Charger). In their television commercials and their promotional campaigns to "buy American," the automakers have contributed to the anti-Japan hysteria pervasive among American workers and to the proliferation of bumper stickers that scream "Unemployment—Made in Japan" and "Toyota-Datsun-Honda-and-Pearl Harbor."¹⁸

In their protests, Asian Americans recount a long, unhappy history: "The killing of Vincent Chin happened in 1982, not 1882 — the year of the Chinese Exclusion Act!" They see a parallel between then and now. "What disturbs me," explained George Wong of the Asian American Fed-

eration of Union Membership, "is that the two men who brutally clubbed Vincent Chin to death in Detroit in 1982 were thinking the same thoughts as the lynch mob in San Francisco Chinatown one hundred years ago: 'Kill the foreigners to save our jobs! The Chinese must go!' When corporate heads tell frustrated workers that foreign imports are taking their jobs, then they are acting like an agitator of a lynch mob."¹⁹

The murder of Vincent Chin has underscored the need for Asian Americans to break silences. "For a long time we have not fought back," declared George Suey of San Francisco. "But this time we will stand up and fight for our rights." Indeed all Asian Americans — Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Asian Indians, and Southeast Asians — are standing up this time. They realize what happened to Vincent Chin could happen to them — to anyone with Asian features. "My blood boiled when I first learned that Vincent Chin was deliberately attacked and murdered as an act of racial hatred," growled Harold Fong of the Chinese-American Citizens Alliance. "When the word 'Jap' gets painted on a door or a man is murdered," declared Congressman Norman Mineta of San Jose, "we ought to let the whole world know." Though they represent diverse communities, Asian Americans have come together and joined their voices in protest. Dr. Marisa Chuang of the newly formed American Citizens for Justice stated: "This is an historical moment for Asian Americans because for the first time we are all united."²⁰

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An Emerging Electorate: The Political Education of Asian Pacific Americans

by

Professor Don T. Nakanishi
University of California at Los Angeles

Asian Pacific Americans, the nation's fastest growing group, are becoming increasingly visible and influential actors in the grand theatre of American politics. At no other period in the over 150-year historical experience of Asian Pacifics in this society have so many individuals and organizations participated in such a wide array of political and civil rights activities, not only in relation to the American political system, but also in relation to the recent tumultuous events in China, the Philippines, Korea, Pakistan and other ancestral homelands in Asia. In traditional electoral politics, the election of Asian Pacific Americans to public office, already a common occurrence in Hawaii, has become a less than surprising novelty in the so-called mainland states with the election and appointment of Asian Pacific Americans to federal, state, and local positions in California, Washington, New York, and elsewhere. Perhaps most significantly, Asian Pacific Americans have demonstrated that they, too, have the commitment, organizational

skills, and fiscal resources to advance their concerns and to confront societal issues that are damaging to their group interests. Two widely-reported grass-roots campaigns of recent years are illustrative of this new collective determination: the successful drive by Japanese Americans to gain redress and reparations for their World War II incarceration; and the national movement to appeal and overturn the light sentences that were given to two unemployed Detroit auto workers who, in 1982, used a baseball bat to kill a Chinese American named Vincent Chin. (The two men mistook Chin for a Japanese, and therefore, someone who was viewed as having taken away their jobs).¹

The emergence of Asian Pacific Americans in American politics probably could not have been foreseen. Early Chinese and Japanese immigrants, for example, were politically disenfranchised and excluded from fully participating in American life because of a plethora of discriminatory laws and policies, perhaps the most crucial being *Ozawa v. United States* (1922), which for-

bade Asian immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens.² This legal barrier prevented early Asian immigrants from being involved in electoral politics of any form, be it the type of ward politics practiced by European immigrants in the East Coast and Midwest to the casting of a vote in a presidential election. These discriminatory policies substantially delayed the development of electoral participation and representation by Asian Americans until the second and subsequent generations during the

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post-World War II period, over a hundred years after their initial period of immigration. Although Asian Americans have often been touted by the national news media as America's "model minority" — a label which Asian Pacific leaders and scholars have vigorously criticized because of its simplistic implication that other minority groups can overcome racial and other discriminatory barriers by following the example of Asian Pacifics³ — this reputed success has disguised their historical lack of access and influence in the nation's most significant political and social decision-making arenas and institutions.

In recent years, however, many outside political observers and media commentators have optimistically predicted that Asian Pacifics will soon become a major force in American politics, perhaps akin to American Jews, especially because of their

extraordinary demographic growth and concentration during the past two decades in certain key electoral states like California, Texas, and New York.⁴ Many believe that if Asian Pacifics come to represent a proportion of the electorate that is comparable to their numbers in the total population, they could become a highly influential "swing vote" in critical local, state, and presidential elections. In California, for example, Asian Pacifics are projected to comprise ten percent of the state's population by the year 2000. In turn, if Asian Pacifics come to represent one of ten California voters — a state that will continue to control the nation's largest number of Congressional seats and presidential electoral college votes — then they would be a strategically important constituency for national, as well as state, political elections. Indeed, both political parties, but most notably the Republicans, have become keenly interested in this new and growing pool of potential voters, and have launched major voter registration campaigns among recent Asian Pacific immigrants and refugees in California and elsewhere. During the past decade, Asian Pacific Americans also have become increasingly recognized as a major new source of campaign funds. Indeed, during election periods, the number of fund-raising activities in Asian Pacific communities has become staggering. In the past presidential election, it is estimated that Asian Pacifics contributed over \$10 million, divided almost equally between George Bush and Michael Dukakis, which was second only to the American Jewish population in the amount of campaign money raised by an ethnic or minority group.

Although it is evident that a larger, more diverse, and increasingly assertive Asian Pacific population has emerged in recent years, there is much to suggest that Asian Pacifics will not come to close to reaching their full political potential during the 1990s.

Drawing on data from the U.S. census and the University of California, Los Angeles Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Project,⁵ this article assesses the possible future impact of Asian Pacific voters in American electoral politics. It begins with a succinct overview of the recent growth and diversification of the Asian Pacific population, and then examines several key trends among Asian Pacific voters which suggest that an overly optimistic forecast of Asian American political strength and participation may not be warranted. It concludes by offering several recommendations on what might be done to enhance the political potential of the emerging Asian Pacific population.

The Demographic Surge: Growth and Diversity of Asian Pacifics

Asian Pacific Americans, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, are the nation's fastest growing group, having increased by 128 percent from 1.5 million in 1970 to 3.5 million in 1980. This substantial increase can be attributed in large measure to the Immigration Act of 1965, which eliminated the discriminatory quota provisions of the Immigration Act of 1924, and the Indochinese Refugee Resettlement Program Act of 1975 and the Refugee Act of 1980, which permitted the migration and entry of close to 1 million refugees from Southeast Asia.⁶

Reversing a four-decade longitudinal trend, Asian Pacifics now represent the largest group of legal immigrants to the United States. Between 1931 and 1960, when the provisions of the 1924 National Origins Act were in effect, 58 percent of the immigrants were from Europe, 21 percent from North America, 15 percent from Latin America, and the smallest portion, 5 percent, were from Asia. However, by the

reporting period 1980-1984, legal immigration from Europe had decreased to 12 percent of the overall total, North America to 2 percent, while Latin America had increased to 35 percent and Asian immigration had substantially increased to 48 percent of the country's total.⁷

From 1970-80, the Asian Pacific population also dramatically shifted from being largely American-born to being predominantly foreign-born as a result of this upsurge in international migration. For example, according to the 1980 census, 63.1 percent of all Asian Pacifics in Los Angeles County were foreign-born; 92.9 percent of the Vietnamese, 85.9 percent of the Koreans, 72.8 percent of the Filipinos, and 70.3 percent of the Chinese were born abroad. Japanese Americans had the highest proportion of American-born individuals, but 28.5 percent were still foreign-born. In marked contrast, 10.4 percent of the County's white residents, 2.4 percent of the Blacks, and 45.5 percent of the "Spanish-Origin" population were foreign-born.⁸

By the beginning of the 1990s, it is estimated that, nation-wide, the Asian Pacific population will have doubled again and will number close to 7 million.⁹ California, with a projected 2.5 million Asian Pacifics in 1990, continues to be the largest population center with over 35 percent of the nation's Asian Pacifics, but there continues to be large concentrations in Hawaii, New York, Washington, Illinois, and Texas. (Indeed, the Greater New York City area, which is estimated to have nearly one million Asian Pacifics in 1990, comes close to rivaling both the Greater San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California as the largest Asian Pacific community). In 1990, the Asian Pacific population in California is also projected to eclipse the state's Black population, and become second to the rapidly growing Latino populace, which will continue to be California's single largest minor-

ity group.¹⁰

The Asian Pacific population, as many previous scholarly and public policy studies have demonstrated, should not be conceptualized as a single, monolithic entity.¹¹ It is a highly heterogeneous population, with respect to ethnic or national origins, cultural values, generation, social class, religion, political ideologies, and other

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socially differentiating characteristics. Fawcett and Arnold describe recent Asian and Pacific immigrants as follows:¹²

The most evident fact about Asian and Pacific immigration is its diversity. Whether one looks at the political and economic status of the countries of origin, the characteristics of the immigrants themselves, or their modes of adaptation in the host society, differences are more striking than similarities. Sending countries include socialist Vietnam, capitalist South Korea, and colonial American Samoa — each having quite different economic resources and strategies for development. Significant groups of immigrants include Hmong hill

farmers, Indian scientists and engineers, Chinese businessmen, and Filipino service workers — as well as Thai, Filipino, and Korean women immigrating as marriage partners.

Even within any particular Asian Pacific American subgroup, differences can be quite pronounced, reflecting different waves of immigration and different segments of a class hierarchical structure. Brett and Victor Nee, in their rich ethnographic study of San Francisco Chinatown, *Longtime Californ'*, provide a revealing socio-historical analysis of such within-group diversity.¹³ On the other hand, Hirschman and Wong use census data to illustrate significant within-group differences in socioeconomic achievement among Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos between those who are immigrants versus those who are American-born.¹⁴

The combination of unprecedented demographic growth, along with extraordinary internal diversification, offer an array of provocative scenarios for future Asian Pacific American electoral participation. On the one hand, there is no question that as Asian Pacifics come to represent an increasingly sizeable proportion of the population in certain states like California and specific urban areas like the West San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles County,¹⁵ issues like reapportionment and fair political representation, heretofore rarely considered, should become prominent and critical for Asian Pacific Americans. In contrast to previous years when their population size and concentration might not have been substantial enough for Asian Pacifics to place special emphasis on these issues or to seek participation in the rough-and-tumble political decision-making process which is associated with creating political districts, the demographic conditions in the decade of

the 1990s will justify and necessitate enhanced involvement and monitoring of these processes. Indeed, a number of Asian Pacific communities across the nation from the Silicon Valley in Northern California to the Queens and Chinatown areas of New York should be concerned about gerrymandering practices, and the potential dilution of Asian Pacific electoral strength.

On the other hand, the unusual internal heterogeneity of Asian Pacifics will challenge leaders and organizers of different Asian Pacific sectors and communities, who are often separated by both real and symbolic boundaries of language, culture, class, or religion, to find common ground on key policy issues, and to seek effective mechanisms for pursuing these shared interests in a unified manner. Although this may appear to be visionary, there are enough examples from the past decade — be it in terms of their concerted lobbying activities against university admissions quotas, anti-Asian violence, or unfair immigration policy legislation — to illustrate the enormous promise and potential of such collective endeavors in the future.

The Emerging Asian Pacific Electorate

"The future size, characteristics, and impact of the Asian Pacific American electorate in Los Angeles County remains to be shaped. Hopefully, this study has served to move us a step beyond our previous uncertainty and speculation about Asian Pacific American voters, and has provided some insights into a variety of factors which appear to influence their present reality, along with their future potential. The study clearly underscores the need for further voter

registration efforts by Asian Pacific American organizations, the two major political parties, and others who believe that the right of political franchise must not be taken for granted . . . And although Asian Pacific Americans as a whole currently reflect a majority preference for the Democratic party, it should be obvious that the large and growing pool of non-registered voters could have a profound impact on the overall partisan identification of Asian Pacific Americans, and especially among groups like Koreans and Vietnamese, which are overwhelmingly composed of recent immigrants. Therefore, the extent to which the two major parties further cultivate their relations with, and address the specific concerns of, the Asian Pacific American community will greatly determine the future partisan direction of the Asian Pacific American electorate."

Nakanishi, The UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Study,¹⁶

In recent years, a body of scholarly knowledge has gradually emerged on Asian Pacific electoral political involvement. Two consistent findings from all empirical studies suggest that the glowing forecasts of enhanced future electoral clout by Asian Pacifics might not be realized unless there are profound reversals of present voting trends among Asian Pacifics. One common finding is that Asian Pacific Americans, even after statistical manipulations to control for the high proportion of age-eligible individuals who cannot vote because they are

not United States citizens, still have lower voter registration rates than whites, blacks, and Latinos.¹⁷ The "UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Study" estimated that Japanese Americans, who have the largest number and the highest proportion of citizens of all the Asian Pacific groups in Los Angeles County, had a voter registration rate in 1984 of 43.0% for those who were eighteen years and older. At the same time, 35.5% Chinese Americans, 27.0% Pilipino Americans, 16.7% Asian Indians, 13.0% Korean Americans, 28.5% Samoan Americans, and an extremely low 4.1% Vietnamese were estimated to be registered voters in the region. These registration rates were well below the average for Los Angeles County of 60% for all individuals eighteen years and older. As a result of these low rates of voter registration, Asian Pacific voters represented less than 3 percent of all voters in the County in 1984, despite the fact that they were over 6 percent of the County's population. Similiar findings of low registration rates have been found for Asian Pacifics in other areas of California and New York.¹⁸

The other consistent and yet puzzling finding about Asian Pacific American voters deals with the pattern of their partisan affiliations, and specifically the extremely high proportion who designate themselves as independents or "no party" registrants. When the UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Study conducted its initial empirical analysis of registered voters in 1984,¹⁹ it identified large numbers of "independent" Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Asian Indians, in which one in five declined to state a party preference at the time of registering to vote. Although recent polls and studies of the American electorate report that a growing number of voters now consider themselves to be independents,²⁰ the official registration indexes for Los Angeles County indicated that only ten

percent of all voters — like the Japanese, Filipinos, and Samoans who were also identified in the study — decline to specify a party affiliation. In our subsequent annual follow-up studies for the UCLA project, we have continued to find that certain Asian Pacific groups, like the Chinese Americans, register in large numbers as independents.

The Asian Pacific voters in the City of Monterey Park are illustrative.²¹ Table 1 compares and contrasts different groups of ethnically identified registered voters in Monterey Park — Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Asian Pacifics as a whole, and the overall citywide electorate — between 1984 and 1989. In 1984, for example, there was a plurality of Democrats (43.1%) over Republicans (30.8%) among Chinese American voters, but also a relatively high proportion of individuals (25.3%) who specified no party affiliations. By 1989, Chinese American voters, who accounted for the vast majority of new registered voters in the City since 1984, were nearly evenly divided among Democrats (34.9%), Republicans (37.1%), and independents (26.1%). The "practical" or "political" implication of this observation is that a Chinese American candidate who seeks the nomination of a specific political party in a primary election will be faced with a situation in which practically two-thirds of all Chinese American registered voters, who would likely represent a sympathetic bloc of voters, will be unable to cast ballots during the initial "Party members only" primary election. This is exactly what happened in the November 1987 primary election when Lily Chen, a Chinese American and a former Mayor of the City of Monterey Park, sought the Democratic party nomination for the United States Congress. Although her campaign staff tried to persuade Chinese Americans who were registered as independents or Republicans to switch their party affiliations for the Democratic pri-

mary election, very few actually did. Although she raised substantial campaign contributions from Chinese and other Asian Americans, she was soundly defeated by her incumbent opponent. On the other hand, Japanese Americans in Monterey Park, who have experienced far less population growth especially as a result of little immigration, continue to reflect a different electoral profile from Chinese American voters.

...the connotation of belonging to a "political party" such as the Communist or Kuomintang is far different from what is normally associated with the Democratic and Republican parties.

Similar to Japanese Americans in other cities and neighborhoods of Los Angeles County, those in Monterey Park show a majority preference for the Democratic party (55.3% in 1984 and 51.9% in 1989). They are also far more likely than Chinese American voters to register for one of the two major parties rather than declaring themselves to be independents.

When political organizers and community leaders confront these two puzzling aspects of the electoral participation of Asian Pacific Americans, their remedies tend to be short-term, action-oriented outreach efforts like initiating a major voter registration campaign, or organizing forums for partisan officials to speak to ethnic organizations.²² This is generally what has occurred in the Southern California area in response to the findings and analyses of the UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Project. These and other voter outreach activities are extremely important, and should be fully supported by Asian Pacifics. However, such immediate and

action-oriented solutions may be masking far more fundamental and unique issues of political participation which must be addressed, especially for the large numbers of Asian Pacifics who are recent immigrants and refugees. For example, it has been hypothesized that the low rates of voter registration and the unexpectedly high proportion of independent voters among certain Asian Pacific groups has far more to do with their political experiences in nation-states like Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, which have different voting procedures, and where the connotation of belonging to a "political party" such as the Communist or Kuomintang is far different from what is normally associated with the Democratic and Republican parties. Traditional adult education classes in American civics and government which are required for naturalization applications may expose newcomers to the most rudimentary facts of American government, but have little or no impact on their preexisting political belief systems, their general sense of political efficacy towards government and other public institutions like schools, or their knowledge of the inner workings of American politics.

Although low rates of electoral participation appear to be evident for both American-born and foreign-born Asian Pacifics, there may be unique political, psychological, and cultural barriers which immigrants and refugees must overcome in order to participate fully in the American political system. Zvi Gittleman's pioneering study, *Becoming Israelis*,²³ which examines the process of "political resocialization" which American and Soviet adult immigrants to Israel undergo in adapting to the Israeli political system, offers highly suggestive insights into the potential underlying causes of this situation. According to Gittleman, "political resocialization" can be seen as a process by which adult immigrants and refugees, who have largely acquired

their fundamental political values, attitudes, and behavioral orientations in one sociopolitical system, undergo "adult political socialization, or resocialization" in making the transition to a newly adopted society

the wooing of Asian Pacifics by the two major political parties is viewed glowingly, especially in light of the decades of political disenfranchisement and powerlessness in this country. Other observers, however, argue that Asian Pacifics may be the victims of political consumer fraud.

that has its own, and usually different, political traditions, procedures, and philosophical or legal principles. He writes:²⁴

Are immigrants, in fact, resocialized politically, or do they remain outside the political arena? If they are resocialized, is it only on the level of outward behavior, while the fundamental political *weltanschauung* remains unchanged, a product of the political culture of the "old country?" What remains, if anything, of their former political cultures if they are resocialized into a new one? If there is, indeed, a process of resocialization going on, who are its "agents"?

The concept of political resocialization might well serve to direct our policy and scholarly attention to the largely neglected process by which Asian Pacific and other immigrants and refugees to the United States come to participate in the nation's political system. Most policy reports and

needs assessments of these recent international migrants focus on a wide range of issues dealing with their transition and adaptation to American life and society — be it cultural, linguistic, or occupational — but avoid the so-called "political" aspects, and largely treat them as socially taboo. Indeed, Tomas Hammar, after reviewing works on international migration and political socialization, wrote that, "in the latter we find very little about migration, in the former not much about politics."²⁵ However, by failing to seriously and rigorously considering these potentially significant political learning and adaptation issues, we may be overlooking one of the most critical and fundamental aspects of their immediate and long-range adjustment to and full participation in this society. As Philip Coombs writes:²⁶

In the United States it is difficult enough for a small-town New England family, for example, to adapt to its new home in Houston, Texas. But it is obviously far more difficult for a Latin American or Vietnamese or Korean family of rural origin to adjust to whatever U.S. city or town it happens to end up. Other matters may further complicate the situation. Those who began their lives under dictatorial regimes may, within a democratic haven, have learning needs that are as much political as cultural and occupational. Moreover, as a result of the chaotic national situations that uprooted them and subsequent years spent in refugee camps, some may have psychological problems in dealing with their new environments that are incorrectly diagnosed as

learning disabilities. At stake here is the education of parents as well as children, as in the case of parents who fear that if they sign documents to allow their children to go on a school-sponsored trip they may never see them again.

Conclusion

The Asian Pacific American electorate is in the process of realizing its full potential. In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the participation of Asian Pacifics in all aspects of traditional electoral politics, be it running for public office or working on campaign staffs. It is likely that such involvement will continue, and hopefully become even more attractive to Asian Pacifics. However, in conclusion, it may be good to briefly comment on the most visible, and some might argue the most rewarding, manner in which Asian Pacifics have participated in recent American electoral politics, namely by giving money.

The emerging perception of Asian Pacific Americans as the new political moneybags of American politics has its pluses and minuses. For some, the wooing of Asian Pacifics by the two major political parties is viewed glowingly, especially in light of the decades of political disenfranchisement and powerlessness in this country. Other observers, however, argue that Asian Pacifics may be the victims of political consumer fraud. They have not always received the types of political goods — be it greater access or more appointments — that they sought or were promised when they contributed to party coffers. Some point an accusing finger at politicians for such “deceptive” practices, although it is hardly newsworthy to find elected officials promising one thing and doing something

else. Others blame Asian Pacific political fund-raisers, who oftentimes behave more like philanthropists than shrewd entrepreneurs. Instead of cutting deals and seeking maximum returns for their investments, it is alleged that Asian Pacific political money usually takes the form of charity, since few strings are ever attached to it.

Political contributions will undoubtedly continue to play an inordinate role in American politics. Indeed, one is reminded of the famous truism of the late California political boss Jesse Unruh that, “Money is the mother’s milk of politics.” However, it would be unfortunate and misguided if Asian Pacific Americans, by their own volition or by the encouragement of politicians, solely restricted their participation in American electoral politics to giving money. There are many other ways in which Asian Pacifics can and should realize their full potential as a highly visible and contributing interest group in American politics.

In recent years, many Asian Pacific American organizations have undertaken innovative projects and activities like leadership training symposia and voter education drives that go beyond the limited and narrow development of Asian Pacific Americans as political donors. Many of these efforts fall under the general rubric of political education, and are directed at increasing the political awareness and efficacy of the diverse sectors which comprise the contemporary Asian Pacific population. These activities are far removed from the glamorous aspects of politics. They are geared towards long-range rather than immediate payoffs. However, as Asian Pacifics attempt to enhance their representation and influence in American politics through the 1990s and beyond, it would be wise and prudent for them to invest a share of their political bankroll in these vital political education endeavors.

Indeed, when Asian Pacifics develop multiple identities as major political donors, active voters, and informed issue-oriented citizens, they will have realized their full electoral potential and they will be a significant force in the grand theatre of American politics.

Table 1: Asian Pacific American Registered Voters,
Monterey Park, 1984 and 1989

	# REGISTERED	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS	OTHER PARTIES	NO PARTY
'84 CITYWIDE	22,02 (100.0%)	13,657 (62.0%)	5,564 (25.0%)	368 (1.7%)	2,290 (10.4%)
'89 CITYWIDE	23,184 (100.0%)	13,243 (57.1%)	6,684 (28.8%)	369 (1.6%)	2,888 (12.5%)
'84-'89 NET GAIN/LOSS	+1,163	-414	+1,120	+1	+598
'84 CHINESE AMERICANS	3,152 (100.0%)	1,360 (43.1%)	972 (30.8%)	23 (0.7%)	797 (25.3%)
'89 CHINESE AMERICANS	5,356 (100.0%)	1,868 (34.9%)	1,989 (37.1%)	100 (1.9%)	1,399 (26.1%)
'84-'89 NET GAIN/LOSS	+2,204	+508	+1,017	+77	+602
'84 JAPANESE AMERICANS	2,586 (100.0%)	1,429 (55.3%)	838 (32.4%)	21 (0.8%)	298 (11.5%)
'89 JAPANESE AMERICANS	2,919 (100.0%)	1,516 (51.9%)	991 (33.9%)	42 (1.4%)	370 (12.7%)
'84-'89 NET GAIN/LOSS	+343	+87	+153	+21	+72
'84 ASIAN PACIFIC TOTAL	6,441 (100.0%)	3,265 (50.7%)	1,944 (30.2%)	54 (0.8%)	1,178 (18.3%)
'89 ASIAN PACIFIC TOTAL	8,988 (100.0%)	3,754 (41.8%)	3,198 (35.6%)	168 (1.9%)	1,868 (20.8%)
'84-'89 NET LOSS/GAIN	+2547	+489	+1254	+114	+690

Source: UCLA Asian Pacific American
Voter Registration Project

Notes

1. For a more detailed discussion of the domestic and international aspects of recent Asian Pacific American political involvement, see Don T. Nakanishi, "Asian American Politics: An Agenda for Research," *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 12, 1985-86, pp. 1-28.
2. For a general overview of Asian American history, please see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From A Different Shore*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1989.
3. For critical assessments of the model minority thesis, see Bob Suzuki, "Education and Socialization of Asian Americans," *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 4, 1977, pp. 23-51; and Ki-Taek Chun, "The Myth of Asian American Success and Its Educational Ramifications," *IRCD Bulletin*, Vol. 15, 1980, pp. 1-12.
4. See, for example, Judy Tachibana, "California's Asians: Power From A Growing Population," *California Journal*, November, 1986, pp. 534-543; and Bruce Stokes, "Learning the Game," *National Journal*, No. 43, October 22, 1988, pp. 2649-2654.
5. The first empirical study of patterns of voter registration and political party affiliations among Asian Pacifics.
6. The Immigration Act of 1965 repealed the national origins provisions, which were legislated through the Immigration Act of 1924. The 1965 law created an annual Eastern Hemisphere ceiling of 170,000 with annual per-country limit of 20,000, and an annual Western Hemisphere ceiling of 120,000 with no country limitations. See, for example, James T. Fawcett and Benjamin V. Carino (eds.) *Pacific Bridges*, Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies, 1987.
7. United Way, Asian Pacific Research and Development Council. *Pacific Rim Profiles: A Demographic Study of the Asian Pacific Population in Los Angeles County*, Los Angeles: United Way, 1985, pp. 11-15.
8. UCLA Ethnic Studies Centers. *Ethnic Groups in Los Angeles: Quality of Life Indicators*, Los Angeles; UCLA Ethnic Studies Center, 1987.
9. See Thomas Muller, *The Fourth Wave: California's Newest Immigrants*, Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1984; and Leon Bouvier and Philip Martin, *Population Change and California's Future*, Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau, 1985.
10. Robert Gardner, Bryant Robey and Peter Smith, "Asian Americans: Growth, Change, Diversity," *Population Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 4; and California Department of Finance, *Projected Total Population of California Counties*, Sacramento: Department of Finance, 1985.
11. See, for example, Russell Endo, Stanley Sue, and Nathaniel Wagner (eds.), *Asian Americans: Social and Psychological Perspectives*, Vol. 2, Palo Alto: Science and Behavior, 1980; James T. Fawcett and Benjamin V. Carino, *Pacific Bridges*, op. cit.; Charles Hirschman and Morrison G. Wong, "Trends in Socioeconomic Achievement Among Immigrant and Native-Born Asian Americans, 1960-1976," *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 22, 1981, pp. 495-514; Bok-Lim Kim, "Problems and Service Needs of Asian Americans in Chicago: An Empirical Study," *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 5, 1978, pp. 23-44; Don T. Nakanishi and Marsha Hiran-Nakanishi (eds.), *The Education of Asian and Pacific Americans*, Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1983; United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues of Asian and Pacific Americans: Myths and Realities*, Washington, D.C.: United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1979.
12. James T. Fawcett and Fred Arnold. "Explaining Diversity: Asian and Pacific Immigration Systems," in James T. Fawcett and Benjamin Carino, *Pacific Bridges*, op. cit., p. 453.
13. Brett Nee and Victor Nee. *Longtime Californ?: A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.
14. Hirschman and Wong, op. cit.
15. Los Angeles County includes the City of Monterey Park, which had a population that was 51% Asian Pacific in 1986.

16. Nakanishi, Don T. The UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Study. Los Angeles: Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California, 1986, p. 16.

17. See Grant Din, "An Analysis of Asian/Pacific American Registration and Voting Patterns in San Francisco," M.A. Thesis, Claremont Graduate School, 1984; Nakanishi, "Asian American Politics," *op. cit.*; Nakanishi, Don T. The UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Study, *op. cit.*; and Uhlaner, Carole, Bruce E. Cain, and D. Roderick Kiewiet, "Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the 1980s," Social Sciences Working Paper, No. 647, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, California Institute of Technology, 1987.

18. See Marion Chen, Woei-Ming New, and John Tsutakawa, "Empowerment in New York Chinatown: Our Work as Student Interns," Amerasia Journal, Vol. 15, 1989, pp. 299-306; Din, *op. cit.*; and Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet, *op. cit.*

19. See Ibid., for details on methodology of the project.

20. See, among others, Steve E. Finkel and Howard Sarrow, "Party Identification and Party Enrollment: The Differences and the Consequences," Journal of Politics, Vol. 47, 1985, pp. 620-642.

21. Monterey Park has attracted substantial media and scholarly attention because of its growing Asian Pacific population, as well as its extreme racial tensions. According to the U.S. census, 33.7% of the City of Monterey Park's population in 1980 consisted of Asian Pacifics (18,312 of 54,338). By 1986, when the Bureau of the Census conducted its "test census" of cities in central and eastern Los Angeles County, Asian Pacifics accounted for 51.4% of the City's total population (31,467 of 61,246). Between 1980 and 1986, the City's Asian Pacific population increased by 71.8%, whereas the City's white and Latino populations declined by 16.7% and 11.2%, respectively.

22. See Mark Arax, "Group Seeks to Reverse Voter Apathy by Asians," Los Angeles Times, March 3, 1986, p. 1, 3.

23. Zvi Gittleman. Becoming Israelis: Political Resocialization of Soviet and American Immigrants. New York: Praeger, 1982.

24. Ibid., p. 343.

25. Tomas Hammer, "Migration and Politics: Delimitation and Organization of a Research Field," paper presented to the Workshop on International Migration and Politics, European Consortium on Political Research, Grenoble, France, 1978, p. 16.

26. Philip H. Coombs. The World Crisis in Education: The View From The Eighties. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 48.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work done during the year. It is divided into two main sections: (a) the general situation and (b) the progress of the work done during the year.

2. The second part of the report deals with the financial statement of the organization for the year. It is divided into two main sections: (a) the income statement and (b) the balance sheet.

3. The third part of the report deals with the activities of the organization during the year. It is divided into two main sections: (a) the general activities and (b) the special activities.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations of the organization for the year. It is divided into two main sections: (a) the conclusions and (b) the recommendations.

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Southeast Asian Parent Empowerment: The Challenge of Changing Demographics in Lowell, Massachusetts

by

Peter Nien-chu Kiang
University of Massachusetts at Boston

Lowell, Massachusetts, a city famous in U.S. immigrant and labor history, is in the midst of a dynamic and inevitable, yet violent and bitter process of transformation as it confronts the challenge of changing demographics. Like other cities such as Monterey Park, California¹ which have undergone dramatic demographic change during the 1970s and 1980s, the rapid growth of Asian and Latino communities in Lowell has tested each of the city's institutions including the hospitals, police departments, courts, and especially the public school system. Rapid demographic change is also redefining the popular conception of who is an "American". At the same time, a climate of anti-immigrant resentment has developed in Lowell as reflected in incidents of racial violence and the advocacy of "English-Only" policies by individuals and groups within the city.

This preliminary report analyzes the process of change taking place in Lowell through the issue of public school education and the emerging role of Southeast Asian parents who, in coalition with Latino

parents, are demanding educational access and equity for their children. The Lowell case-study illustrates how community organizing and coalition-building around a specific issue have led to the demand for political representation and empowerment as the means to resolve the challenge of changing demographics.

A Brief History of Lowell

The town of Lowell was established in 1826 in the context of America's industrial revolution. Seeking to expand their economic base, Boston-based gentry purchased land alongside the Merrimack River and built a chain of textile mills with an elaborate canal-lock system that powered looms with energy generated by the river's current. As Lowell emerged as the country's textile center, teenage girls were recruited from the area's surrounding farms to work in the mills. Paid at half the male wage, yet earning more than they would from farm-work, the mill girls lived in dormitory-style

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housing constructed next to the factories. Harsh working and living conditions, however, led to some of the country's first examples of labor organizing — including mill girl strikes in 1834 and 1836, the formation of the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association in 1844, and a petition to the Massachusetts Legislature for a 10-

By the mid-1980s, Lowell was cited as the "model city" of the "Massachusetts Miracle", having overcome industrial decline to reemerge as a leading center of the country's technological revolution.

hour workday in 1845.²

As successive waves of European immigrants entered the country throughout the 1800s and early 1900s, cheap immigrant labor entered the booming textile industry and replaced the mill girls in Lowell. The mill girls' dormitories evolved into overcrowded tenement housing for successive waves of Irish, French Canadian, Greek, Polish, and Portuguese immigrants. As the textile industry reached its height in the 1890s, Lowell became widely recognized as a city built by immigrants. Labor organizing continued in the city: the Yiddish-speaking Lowell Workingmen's Circle formed in 1900, and Greek immigrants led a city-wide strike in 1903 which set the stage for the well-known Bread and Roses strike of 1912 in the neighboring mill town of Lawrence.

But by the 1920s, the textile industry in Lowell entered a long period of depression and economic decline. By 1945, eight of the city's eleven big mills had closed and unemployment soared. Foreshadowing the decline of many midwestern industrial cities during the 1970s, Lowell and other textile mill towns in the area all but

died during this period.

In the 1970s, however, there was a turn-around in the state's economic condition. This was due to a combination of factors, including the emergence of new industries fueled by high technology research at Massachusetts-based universities, and the political muscle of the Massachusetts congressional delegation—which included Speaker of the House "Tip" O'Neil, Sen. Edward Kennedy, as well as Sen. Paul Tsongas who was born and raised in Lowell. A combination of federal dollars and corporate investment revitalized Lowell's economy, enabling the city to move from 13.8% unemployment in 1978 to 7% in 1982 to less than 3% in 1987. The run-down mill factories were rehabilitated. The city's vacant industrial land area dropped from 100 acres in 1978 to zero in 1987.³

Central to the economic revitalization of Lowell was the decision of An Wang, a Chinese immigrant and Chairman of Wang Laboratories, Inc., to relocate the company to Lowell in 1976. Wang purchased cheap industrial land, and with the added incentive of \$5 million in federal grants, built new electronics assembly plants and corporate office towers. The timing of the move coincided with Wang's take-off as a company. Corporate sales rose from \$97 million in 1977 to \$2.88 billion in 1986. As the largest employer in Lowell, Wang's payroll in 1986 accounted for \$114 million. Furthermore, the company purchased \$25 million worth of goods from local vendors and paid more than \$3 million in local taxes⁴—infusing the city with a strong economic base.⁵ By the mid-1980s, Lowell was cited as the "model city" of the "Massachusetts Miracle", having overcome industrial decline to reemerge as a leading center of the country's technological revolution.

Demographic Change and New Waves of Immigrants

As part of the large-scale Puerto Rican migrations that occurred throughout the Northeast industrial states beginning in the late 1950s, a small number of Puerto Ricans settled in Lowell. In the late 1960s, a large group of Puerto Rican workers based at garment factories in New Jersey were transferred to Lowell. Through the 1970s, Puerto Ricans and growing numbers of Dominicans developed a stable Latino community. By 1987, the Latino community had reached 15,000 or 15% of the city. In neighboring Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Latino community swelled to 30% of the city's population — reflecting significant demographic changes throughout the Merrimack Valley area.

The most dramatic growth in Lowell, however, has resulted from Southeast Asian refugee resettlement and secondary migration. In 1980, less than 100 Southeast Asians lived in Lowell. Today, only a decade later, there are approximately 3,000 Lao, 1,000 Vietnamese, and close to 25,000 Cambodians. Lowell has become home to the largest Cambodian community on the East Coast and boasts the second largest per capita concentration of Southeast Asians in the United States after Long Beach, California.

The majority of Southeast Asians in Lowell are secondary migrants, having moved there from other states in the U.S. rather than from refugee camps in Southeast Asia. Many settled in Lowell because of the city's well-publicized economic health and availability of jobs. Others came because family members or friends were already established there. Still others came, simply because they heard that Lowell was where Cambodians live.

As the numbers of Latinos and

Southeast Asians expanded rapidly during the 1980s, the city found itself unprepared to address the multiple issues of housing, bilingual services, and civil rights confronting new immigrants. Furthermore, Lowell's economic rejuvenation had failed to refurbish the city's nineteenth century housing stock and public school facilities, particularly in neighborhoods such as the Acre where large numbers of Latinos and Southeast Asians had settled. School and educational issues thus emerged as a primary concern for Lowell's new immigrant communities.

Access and Equity in the Schools

Lowell has the sixth largest Hispanic student population and second largest number of Asian students in Massachusetts. In 1975, only 4% of Lowell's school children were minorities. By 1987, however, minorities made up 40% of the school-

...as many as 35-50 new Southeast Asian students arrived and enrolled in school each week. Strains on the public school system quickly reached crisis proportions.

age population —half of them being of limited English proficiency. As Southeast Asians continued to migrate to Lowell throughout 1987, as many as 35-50 new Southeast Asian students arrived and enrolled in school each week. Strains on the public school system quickly reached crisis proportions.

In response to the influx, the Lowell School Committee established makeshift classrooms in nonschool facilities such as the Lowell Boys Club and Lowell YMCA. This process *de facto* segregated 170 Latino

and Southeast Asian elementary age school children in buildings which lacked library and cafeteria facilities as well as principals and supervisory staff on site. Overcrowded makeshift classrooms accommodated students from grades one to six. Partitions separated bilingual classes in Spanish, Lao, and Khmer. Special compensatory education classes were held in hallways where it was quieter. Spaces within existing school buildings such as the basement boiler room, an auditorium storage area of the Robinson School and a bathroom in the Daley School were also converted into classrooms.

After three months of segregation, minority school children and their parents began to take action. The Latino parents had already seen the educational system take its toll on their children. While the Latino high school population had doubled from 200 to 400 between 1982 and 1987, the number of those who successfully graduated had dropped from 76 to 55. Southeast Asian students had fared no better. Over half of the Lao students who entered Lowell High School in 1986-87 had dropped out by the end of the year. For the Southeast Asian parents, the conditions facing their children in school had become intolerable.

Parents Organizing

When they say 'Americans', they don't mean us—look at our eyes and our skin. We are minorities, but we have rights too. We need to support each other.

- Sommanee Bounphasaysonh
*Laotian Association of Greater Lowell*⁶

For the next eighteen months from May 1987 through November 1988, Latino and Southeast Asian parents led efforts to demand equal access and equity for their children in the Lowell public schools. With

organizational and technical assistance from the Multicultural Education Training and Advocacy (META) and a statewide bilingual parents network, Parents United in Education and the Development of Others (PUEDO), the parents convened joint meetings in four languages between the Hispanic Parents Advisory Committee (HPAC), the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell and the Laotian Association of Greater Lowell to develop tactics and strategy. Eventually, a coalition of those organizations established the Minority Association for Mutual Assistance, affectionately known as MAMA.

The parents employed a range of tactics which included grass-roots canvassing and petition drives combined with outreach to churches and other groups such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Lowell. When the Lowell School Committee failed to act, the parents organized press conferences and mass community meetings with state education officials to press their case forward. Eventually, the parents and students filed a lawsuit in federal district court against the Lowell School Committee and the City of Lowell on the basis of unconstitutional segregation of the Lowell Public Schools and denial of equal educational opportunities to students of limited English proficiency in violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974.⁷

In the process, the parents developed a comprehensive 33-point program of educational reform directed not only at desegregation and upgrading of facilities, but issues of personnel hiring and training, curriculum reform, drop-out prevention, special education program development, and parent involvement.⁸ On November 9, 1988, after eighteen months of organizing and negotiations, the parents won their demands in an historic out-of-court settlement approved in a 6-1 vote by the Lowell

School Committee. The settlement represented an unqualified victory for the Latino and Southeast Asian parents and children in Lowell, and set a precedent for educational reform in the interests of linguistic minority students everywhere.

English-Only Exclusion and Violence

English is our mother tongue and it's the language that's going to be used at our meetings. This is an English-Only School Committee in an English-Only America.

- George D. Kouloheras
*Lowell School Committee*⁹

The success of the parents did not come without a price. In advocating for their children's educational rights, the Latino and Southeast Asian communities confronted disenfranchisement within the city's political institutions as well as anti-immigrant resentment and racial intolerance.

At a School Committee meeting on May 6, 1987 when 100 Latino, Lao, and Cambodian parents first came to voice their concerns about their children's education, they requested that the meeting be translated to allow them to participate. School Committee member George Kouloheras responded that this is an English-Only meeting, and went on to castigate the Latino parents as "those bastards who speak Spanish."¹⁰

While anti-minority and anti-immigrant incidents, including racial harassment, tire slashings, broken windows, job and housing discrimination were not uncommon in the city, little attention had been paid to minority concerns amidst the Dukakis campaign's national promotion of Lowell as the model city of the "Massachusetts Miracle."¹¹ In June 1987, under pressure from the parents and threatened with

funding cuts by the state, the Lowell School Committee adopted a desegregation plan which Kouloheras and other white residents vehemently opposed because it required a mandatory busing plan to integrate several predominantly-white schools. The desegregation plan became the focal point for candidates' campaigns during the fall 1987 School Committee and City Council elections. Fueled by Kouloheras' English-Only rhetoric, anti-immigrant sentiment escalated throughout the summer.

On September 15th, one week after school reopened amidst widespread controversy over the busing plan, an 11-year old white student accosted Vandy Phornng, a 13-year old Cambodian bilingual student while Vandy and his brothers were walking along the canal near their home. After making racial comments about Vandy's background, the white youth punched Vandy in the face, dragged him down a flight of stairs to the canal and pushed Vandy into the water. Vandy was carried away by the strong current, and later drowned. The white boy's father, like Kouloheras, was an outspoken advocate for the English-Only movement in Lowell.¹²

Political Representation and Political Power

The death of Vandy Phornng gave little pause to the anti-immigrant campaign of Kouloheras and others who rode its bandwagon to victory in the October 1987 primaries and November city elections. In the School Committee election, Kouloheras was the top vote-getter while his ally, Kathryn Stoklosa, was second from the top. Sean Sullivan, a first-time candidate whose campaign focused exclusively in opposition to "forced busing" was also elected, while George O'Hare, a longtime incumbent who

supported the desegregation plan was defeated. The struggle surrounding the schools also affected the City Council race as Tarsy Poulos, a vehement opponent of the desegregation plan, received the third highest vote total because, according to a former Lowell City Manager, "he got every hate vote out there."¹³

For the Southeast Asian and Latino parents, the election reinforced what they

...both the Southeast Asian and Latino communities are moving ahead to strengthen their organizations, develop leadership, promote consciousness, and build coalitions...

had begun to recognize—in spite of their significant and growing numbers, they had no political representation or even influence within the city's institutions. The only Hispanic in City Hall, for example, as many community leaders were quick to point out, was a gardener.¹⁴

In the months following the city elections, the parents continued to press their case forward — united around their common interests and their vision of educational reform. The working relationships they had developed within MAMA continued off and on for the next year as their lawsuit against the city slowly made progress. Finally, in a tremendous victory in November 1988, the Lowell School Committee accepted most of the parents' demands for reform and agreed to an out-of-court settlement of the lawsuit. During that period, Alex Huertas, the most visible leader of the parents, decided the time had come for a minority to run for office in Lowell.

Education and Empowerment

The lack of Latino and Asian representation has made our struggle harder. In next year's elections, we need to promote our own candidates..

- Alex Huertas
PUEDO⁵

Lowell is a city of 100,000 residents, but only 40,000 voters. The overwhelming majority of Southeast Asians and Latinos are not registered, and many are not citizens. Numerically, however, they account for roughly 45% of the city's population, and are continuing to grow. Successful candidates in Lowell elections typically receive less than 10,000 votes. George Kouloheras, the top votegetter in the 1987 School Committee race, for example, received only 8,400 votes. Although not a factor in the most recent election, the political potential of both the Latino and the Cambodian vote seems exceptional in this context.

It is useful to remember that in 1854, when the city's population was nearly one-third foreign-born, the mayor was elected based on a "Know-Nothing" anti-Irish, anti-immigrant platform. Later waves of European newcomers continued to face resentment, exclusion, and exploitation characteristic of the immigrant experience in New England.

Yet, eventually each group achieved some measure of representation and political power. As early as 1874, with nearly 40% of the population being immigrants, Samuel P. Marin became the first French-Canadian to win elected office in Lowell. Under his leadership, the ethnic "Little Canada" community grew and thrived. By the 1950's, most of Lowell's ethnic groups, including the English, Irish, Greeks, and Poles had

succeeded in electing their "favorite sons" to the Mayor's Office and had won basic political representation within the city.

Will the newest immigrant groups of Latinos and Southeast Asians follow this same historical pattern of European ethnics' structural assimilation into the social, economic, and political mainstream of Lowell? Or does the current state of disenfranchisement confronting Latinos and Asians reflect their status as urban racial minorities in the tradition of the African American experience as much as it does their being new immigrants? Time will tell. To ensure their own and succeeding generations' full participation in society, both the Southeast Asian and Latino communities are moving ahead to strengthen their organizations, develop leadership, promote consciousness, and build coalitions which can lead toward empowerment.

Schools, Southeast Asians, and the Future of Lowell

The Puerto Ricans ... it's so easy for them to get up and yell, "WE WANT THIS!" For us, we hide our faces and whisper to ourselves, "we want this" ... But give us a couple more years, we're still learning.

- Sommanee Bounphasaysonh
*Laotian Association of Greater Lowell*⁶

Schools have historically served as sites of struggle by minorities and immigrants for access, equity, and democratic reforms. Such landmarks in U.S. legal history as *Lau vs. Nichols* and *Brown vs. Board of Education* testify to the significance of the fight for educational rights. Furthermore, for immigrant and refugee parents who have sacrificed their own lives

and dreams in order to give their children opportunities for security and social mobility, the schools often represent their single most important investment in this country.

As cities undergo shifts in their ethnic and racial make-up, the schools quickly emerge as one major arena, and often as the initial battleground, where contradictory agendas unfold based on conflicting relations and responses to the demographic changes.¹⁷ Anti-immigrant

...when a city's population changes, the city's institutions must also change in order to reflect the needs and interests of its people.

sentiment, racial harassment, and English-Only advocacy characterize one set of responses to the challenge of changing demographics currently facing many American cities. These reactions, framed by struggles over turf and the interests of a shifting electorate, often lead to divisiveness and segregation as in the case of the Lowell Public Schools, and even violence and tragedy as in the killing of eleven-year old Vandy Phorng.

An alternative set of responses, however, recognizes that when a city's population changes, the city's institutions must also change in order to reflect the needs and interests of its people. An example of this basic demand for access and equity has been crafted by Latino and Southeast Asian parents seeking educational reform in Lowell. Typically, however, this approach meets resistance, if not overt hostility, and leads directly to the demand for political representation and political power as exemplified in the initiation of Alex Huertas' campaign for City Council.

Alex Huertas withdrew from the City Council race in Spring 1989 due to family responsibilities. However, by taking that initial step in declaring that minorities should run for political office, Huertas and Lowell's Latino parents made their intentions and aspirations clear. While the Latino parents have clearly set the tone for the movement thus far, the Southeast Asian parents are learning quickly through the process. A Cambodian community activist, Sambath Chey Fennell, considered running for Lowell school committee in 1989, and will likely run in 1991—perhaps becoming the first Cambodian American elected official in the country.

The city's political dynamics, however, are fluid and volatile. With the Massachusetts economy facing recession and companies like Wang Laboratories, the foundation of Lowell's economic infrastructure, having laid off more than 6,000 employees in 1989, the social conditions are becoming more polarized. In November 1989, Lowell's electorate voted on a non-binding referendum introduced by George Kouloheras to declare English the official language of the city. The English-Only referendum passed by a wide 72% to 28% margin with 14,575 votes for and 5,679 votes against.¹⁸

As a case study illustrating the challenge of changing demographics, the story of Lowell is unresolved. The 3-1 English-Only referendum vote may symbolize popular opposition to those demographic changes, but the city's transformation is already in progress. In time, Cambodians, who represent the largest minority group in the city with a population approaching 25% of the total, will have an especially critical role to play in determining the future of Lowell. The Latino and Southeast Asian parents' successful eighteen-month struggle for access and equity in the Lowell Public Schools represents the first step in an ongoing

process of organizing and coalition-building that, in time, may lead not only to the defeat of the city's anti-immigrant, English Only forces but to the election of Cambodian and Latino candidates to city office and to the eventual empowerment of the Southeast and Latino communities. Contention over school policy and issues of educational reform in Lowell will continue to prove critical to that historic process.

Notes

¹ See Charles Choy Wang, "Monterey Park: A Community in Transition" in Gail M. Nomura, et al, (eds) *Frontiers of Asian American Studies*, Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1989, 113-126.

² Kevin Cullen, "Lowell: the dark side of the boom", *The Boston Globe*, October 25, 1987.

³ Cullen, 1987.

⁴ John Wilke, "Wang had key role in Lowell's economic revival", *The Boston Globe*, November 9, 1987.

⁵ Throughout 1988-89, however, Wang Laboratories has faced severe economic difficulties, leading to lay-offs of thousands of employees, drops in quarterly earnings and stock prices, and resignations of many managers, including An Wang's son, Frederick. The socio-economic impact of Wang's difficulties on the city of Lowell needs further study.

⁶ Sommanee Bounphasaysonh, personal interview, June 11, 1987.

⁷ Hispanic Parents Advisory Council, et al, *Complaint*, U.S. District Court, District of Massachusetts, Civil Action No. 87-1968 K.

⁸ META Inc., letter to Lowell School Committee, May 21, 1987.

9. George Kouloheras, quoted from Lowell School Committee meeting, June 3, 1987.

10. Diego Ribadencira, "School Panelist in Lowell is Accused of Racism", The Boston Globe, May 8, 1987.

11. Doris Sue Wong, "Lowell is Seen Not Fulfilling Promise for many Asians, Hispanics", The Boston Globe, November 3, 1987.

12. See Doris Sue Wong, "Day of fishing ends in violent death for Lowell Boy", The Boston Globe, September 23, 1987 and L. Kim Tan, "Family Demands Justice in Teen's Slaying", The Boston Herald, September 23, 1987 and L. Kim Tan, "Police defend arrest of boy", The Boston Herald, September 24, 1987.

13. See Andrew J. Dabilis, "Lowell Desegregation Opponents Fare Well in School Council Races", The Boston Globe, October 7, 1987 and election coverage in The Lowell Sun, November 4, 1987.

14. Doris Sue Wong, "Lowell is seen not fulfilling its promise for many Asians, Hispanics", The Boston Globe, November 3, 1987.

15. Alex Huertas, personal interview, June 11, 1987.

16. Sommanee Bounphasaysonh, personal interview, June 11, 1987.

17. See, for example, New Voices: Immigrant Students in U.S. Public Schools, Boston: National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1988 or Camilo Perez-Bustillo and Javier Colon-Morera, "What Happens When English Only Comes to Town?: A Comparative Study of Four Cities in California and Massachusetts, 1984-1989", forthcoming.

18. Jules Crittendon, "English referendum passes nearly 3 to 1," Lowell Sun, November 8, 1989.

The first of these is the fact that the
City Council has been very active in
recent years in supporting the
development of the city. This is
evident from the fact that the
Council has passed many resolutions
and ordinances which have
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city's appearance and to
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An Analysis of Asian Americans in Higher Education in California

By Amado Cabezas and Gary Kawaguchi

Ethnic Studies Department, Univ. of California at Berkeley

In marked contrast to high levels of undergraduate enrollment, Asian-Americans are underrepresented in college and university faculties nationwide.

Percent of Asian American Undergraduate Enrollment (1988)

UC Berkeley	26
Other UC campuses	10-40
Other research universities	10 +

In this paper we present our findings on the underrepresentation of Asian American faculty in postsecondary institutions, (1) based on 1980 census data on the employment of Asian Americans in colleges and universities in California, and (2) based on our analysis of the latest affirmative action plans and reports for University California at Berkeley and several other research universities.¹ Their slow progress in diversifying faculty and administration lies in their interpretation of federal affirmative action regulations. Our analysis uncov-

ers serious problems in their method of choosing of faculty availability pools only on the basis of the existing national pool of Ph.D.s. This method of assessing the underrepresentation of minority and women faculty merely perpetuates underrepresentation.

The concern over Asian Americans in higher education today is evident in many ways. For example, at UC Berkeley, the issues and concerns over Asian American admissions policy and the extensive dialogue between the University and the larger Asian American community led to the formation of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Asian American Affairs. To underscore the importance of the Committee, two Asian American campus leaders were chosen as its co-chairs: Janice Koyama, head of Moffitt Undergraduate Library, and Professor Yuan T. Lee, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1986. The Committee had a broad four-fold charge of looking into (1) the educational experiences of Asian American students; (2) the recruitment, selection, and advancement of

faculty of Asian descent; (3) the University employment practices on Asian American staff; and (4) ways to improve relations between the University and the Asian American community at large. The Committee's work is reported in "Asian Americans at Berkeley: A Report to the Chancellor," May 1989.

Low Levels of Employment of Asian Americans in Higher Education in California in 1980

Among college graduates employed in colleges and universities in California, based on 1980 census data, we found the following: (1) In the managerial ranks, Asian Americans comprised only 3.1 percent of educational management and administrative jobs, compared with 19.0 percent of comparable management-related occupa-

Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese American men had incomes from 60-79% of the mean annual income of U.S.-born white men in 1979. Incomes of Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese American women ranged from 39-50% of that of white men.

tions.² (2) Among postsecondary teachers, they comprised only 3.4 percent of about sixty thousand college faculty.³ (3) As Table 1 reveals, income differentials among faculty and staff were severe: Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese American men had incomes from 60-79% of the mean annual income of U.S.-born white men in 1979. Incomes of Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese American women ranged from 39-50% of that of white men.

Asian American Faculty in the Nine-Campus University of California System

In the fall of 1987, a report entitled *The University of California in the Twenty-First Century: Successful Approaches to Faculty Diversity* was released.⁴ Known as *The Justus Report* after director, Joyce Justus, the report recommends strategies for improving the University's recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty. In the executive summary, it states that:

Statistically, despite problems in comparing institutions, the University of California is doing well or better than its comparison institutions in terms of the representation of minority faculty at all faculty ranks, as UC has the highest overall proportion of underrepresented minority faculty of any of these institutions.

This statement is less laudable when we realize that these comparison institutions are themselves struggling to increase their minority and female faculty representation. These schools are Columbia, Duke, Harvard, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, MIT, North Carolina, North Carolina State, Stanford, SUNY Buffalo, Texas, Wisconsin, and Yale. Table 2 shows the underrepresentation of minority and women faculty in these universities. In the ranks of tenured professors — who now comprise about two-thirds or more of the ladder-rank faculty in the universities — minority men range from 3.5% for institution E to 8.9% for UC. (The Justus report uses letter

Table 1
Mean Annual Income of Those Employed by Race, Nativity, and Gender in Colleges and Universities in California, 1980

Population	Income	Ratio	Sample
US White Male	\$17,806	1.00	4,022
US White Female	\$9,608	0.53	3,907
FB White Male	\$21,134	1.18	426
FB White Female	\$11,493	0.64	264
US Japanese Male	\$14,103	0.79	67
US Japanese Female	\$8,913	0.50	125
US Chinese Male	\$9,663	0.54	43
US Chinese Female	\$7,155	0.40	57
FB Chinese Male	\$13,819	0.77	91
FB Chinese Female	\$8,707	0.48	80
FB Filipino Male	\$10,706	0.60	47
FB Filipino Female	\$7,006	0.39	54
US Black Male	\$13,235	0.74	300
US Black Female	\$9,944	0.55	396
US Mexican Male	\$12,804	0.71	226
US Mexican Female	\$7,488	0.42	232
FB Mexican Male	\$10,577	0.59	72
FB Mexican Female	\$6,119	0.34	86

US - U.S.-born; FB - Foreign-born

Special tabulation from the 1980 Census five-percent Public Use Microdata Sample.

codes to protect the identity of the institutions in presentations and discussions of the data.) As Professor Sally Fairfax, the UC Berkeley Faculty Assistant for the Status of Women, has reminded department chairs at Berkeley, not all minorities are men, and not all women are white. Minority women range from a low of 0.3% to a high of 1.4% in these schools; at UC they comprise only 1.1% of the tenured appointments.

Asian Americans comprise only 5.5% of the tenured faculty in the UC system, fourth behind Institution A (6.1%), D (5.8%), and H (5.6%); the rest had fewer Asian faculty. Thus the tenured ranks in the UC system consist of 81.1 percent white men, 9.0 percent white women, 8.8 percent minority men, and 1.1 percent minority women, a composition that renders overly optimistic the Justus report's conclusion that UC is "doing well or better."

Among non-tenured assistant professors at UC, 11.7 percent are minority men, compared with 6.2% to 18.1% among the comparison institutions. Minority women make up 4.5% of UC faculty in this group, compared with 1.5 to 4.8% in other schools. Asian Americans comprise 8.3% at UC, also in the middle range between 4.9 to 16.7% among the other institutions. Across this category, 16% of non-tenured faculty at UC are minority men and women; 60% are white men and 24% white women, with the most progress seen among the latter group.

The Justus report calls UC and the other institutions to task when it states:

Perhaps the most important aspect of such (institutional) comparisons, however, is to demonstrate the scale of the problem nation-wide, to indicate how much work remains to be done by the academy at large. ...The comparisons suggest, as well, that if the Univer-

sity of California is to meet the challenge of diversifying its faculty in the twenty-first century, it must make extraordinary efforts in the next two decades, due to both the slow rate of progress being made by all institutions, and to UC's need to maintain a competitive edge.

While the Justus report contains data on Asian American faculty, it fails to address the substantive issue of underrepresentation. Its recommendations specifically discuss black and Hispanic faculty, not Asian American faculty. Speaking to the important issue of increasing the pool of potential candidates:

Minorities tend to be concentrated at certain kinds of institutions — generally in two- and four-year colleges, with more blacks at historically black institutions (HBCUs) in the South, and more Hispanics at Catholic and small state universities in the Southwest.

A similar case can be made for the large pool of Asian Americans from other colleges and universities in the West Coast and throughout the country. Asian permanent residents who completed college educations in their native countries in Southeast Asia represent yet another concentrated pool of students. Under preference quotas (3) and (6) of the 1965 Amendments to the Immigration Act, many college-educated, experienced, and skilled Asian American professionals were encouraged to immigrate to the U.S. to help meet the nation's need for such workers.

Table 3
University of California and Comparable Institutions
Tenured and Non-tenured On-Track Faculty
Ranked by Underrepresented Minority Representation

A. NON-TENURED ON TRACK FACULTY (ASSISTANTS ONLY)

<u>Code</u>	<u>Total%</u> <u>Underrep</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>%Min</u>	<u>%Min</u> <u>Men</u>	<u>%Min</u> <u>Women</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Black</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Hisp.</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Asian</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Am. Ind.</u>
UC	7.9	16.2	11.7	4.5	2.6	5.0	8.3	0.3
B	7.0	14.0	9.4	4.5	5.9	0.7	7.0	0.3
L	6.5	14.0	9.2	4.8	4.8	1.5	7.5	0.2
C	6.3	12.6	8.4	4.2	5.1	1.3	6.3	0.0
G	5.9	10.8	8.1	2.7	3.2	2.7	4.9	0.0
J	5.8	12.3	10.1	2.2	2.9	2.2	6.5	0.7
H	5.6	22.2	18.1	4.2	4.2	1.4	16.7	0.0
E	5.5	10.7	7.0	3.7	4.9	0.6	5.2	0.0
K	5.0	11.1	8.6	2.5	1.9	3.0	6.1	0.0
A	4.0	14.1	NA	NA	3.0	1.0	10.1	0.0
I	2.9	9.8	6.8	2.9	2.0	0.9	6.8	0.0
D	2.6	11.4	9.8	1.5	1.3	1.3	8.7	0.0
F	2.2	7.1	6.2	0.9	1.1	0.9	4.9	0.2

B. TENURED FACULTY (FULL & ASSOCIATES)

<u>Code</u>	<u>Total%</u> <u>Underrep</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>%Min</u>	<u>%Min</u> <u>Men</u>	<u>%Min.</u> <u>Women</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Black</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Hisp.</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Asian</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Am. Ind.</u>
UC	4.4	9.9	8.9	1.1	1.7	2.5	5.5	0.3
B	4.1	8.4	7.0	1.4	2.5	1.3	4.3	0.3
K	3.8	5.8	5.0	0.8	1.0	2.4	2.0	0.4
L	3.3	8.5	7.1	1.4	1.8	1.4	5.2	0.2
C	3.1	7.4	6.4	1.0	2.3	0.6	4.3	0.3
I	3.0	6.3	5.7	0.6	2.0	1.0	3.3	0.0
J	2.5	5.9	5.6	0.3	1.7	0.8	3.4	0.0
H	2.5	8.1	7.8	0.3	1.7	0.7	5.6	0.1
D	2.4	8.2	7.3	0.9	1.2	0.9	5.8	0.2
F	2.3	5.5	4.8	0.8	1.2	1.0	3.2	0.1
G	2.2	5.0	5.0	0.0	1.8	0.5	2.7	0.0
E	2.1	3.7	3.5	0.3	1.2	0.9	1.7	0.0
A	2.0	8.1	NA	NA	1.1	0.9	6.1	0.0

Source: 1986 EEO-6 Reports

* For institution M, data were unavailable for the full range of ethnicities.

Table reproduced from: Joyce Justus et. al; *The University of California in the Twenty-First Century: Successful Approaches to Faculty Diversity*, 1987.

Affirmative Action at UC Berkeley

Affirmative action encompasses any measure beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, including action adopted to correct or compensate past and present discrimination. An affirmative action program is conducted until goals addressing the underutilization of minorities and women are met; after that, the program is stopped. Affirmative action, however, remains among the most contentious issues in American society. Thus an analysis of affirmative action examines how its goals are determined.

In UC Berkeley's latest academic affirmative action plan (for 1986-1989), Asian Americans comprised only 81 (5.1%) of the school's 1,587 ladder-rank faculty.⁵ The plan divides the faculty into ten organizational units made up of divisions of the College of Letters and Science and other colleges. Distribution of Asian American faculty and total faculty by organizational unit is shown in Table 3.

Nearly one-half (47%) of Asian American faculty at UC Berkeley are concentrated in two of the university's ten organizational units: engineering and physical sciences. Asian Americans are underrepresented in the remaining seven units: College of Chemistry, College of Environmental Design, College of Natural Resources, Professional Schools, Biological Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Excluding the physical sciences and engineering, there are only 43 Asian Americans (3.6%) among the remaining 1,195 ladder-rank faculty at Berkeley. This underrepresentation is not addressed by Berkeley's affirmative action plan: nine out of the ten organizational units set hiring targets for Asian American faculty at zero. The lone exception is in engineering — presently

with the highest representation of Asian faculty on the campus at 11.6% — with a goal of four additional Asian faculty.

How does the affirmative action plan arrive at these goals or lack of them? The answer is in the plan itself. The University compares the current employment or "utilization" of minorities and women to their "availability." When the analysis reveals utilization to be less than availability, the plan establishes goals and timetables for eliminating underutilization. This method of analysis is a key factor in the continuing underrepresentation of Asian American and other minority faculty in universities such as Berkeley.

The federal government requires its contractors — the University, in this instance — to use eight factors to determine underutilization. These underutilization criteria are set by Revised Order No. 4, which together with Executive Order 11246 and 11375, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and several other public laws comprise the statutory requirements for affirmative action by the University as a federal contractor. Specifically, Revised Order No. 4 sets the following eight factors:

- 1) The minority population in the immediate labor area;
- 2) The minority unemployment force in the immediate labor area;
- 3) The minority workforce in the immediate labor area;
- 4) The minority workforce with requisite skills in the immediate labor area;
- 5) The availability of minorities having requisite skills in an area in which the contractor can reasonably recruit;
- 6) The availability of promotable and transferable minorities within the contractor's organization;
- 7) The existence of training institutions capable of training minorities in the requisite skills;

Table 3
Asian American Faculty at U.C. Berkeley, 1986-89

<u>Organizational Unit</u>	<u>Total Faculty</u>	<u>Asian Am Faculty</u>	<u>% Asian Am. Faculty</u>
Department of Ethnic Studies	12	3	25.0
College of Engineering	215	25	11.6
Physical Sciences Division, (College of Letters and Science)	177	13	7.3
College of Natural Resources	132	6	4.5
Biological Sciences	125	5	4.0
College of Chemistry	77	3	3.9
Professional Schools	259	9	3.5
Humanities	273	9	3.3
College of Environmental Design	69	2	2.9
Social Sciences	248	5	2.0
Total	1587	80	5.0

Source: "University of California, Berkeley 1986-1989 Academic Affirmative Action Plan"; "University of California, Berkeley Annual Academic Affirmative Action Plan Update, 1986-87."

8) The degree of training which the contractor is reasonably able to undertake as a means of making all job classes available to minorities.

The "immediate labor area" for UC Berkeley, as stated in the first four factors, would be the larger Bay Area, where Asian Americans comprise about ten percent of the population, a proportion twice that of Asian faculty on campus. To these four factors, the University responds:

These factors pertain to the immediate labor area. They are not relevant to the evaluation of patterns of academic employment because Berkeley's academic employees are usually recruited nationally, and from a subset of persons having specified academic training, usually exemplified by graduate degrees.⁵

However, as Figure 1 shows, about three-fourths of the ladder-rank faculty at UC Berkeley in fact come from only a select set of "public and private ivies," not through national recruitment. Nearly half came from only five universities: Berkeley, Harvard, Stanford, MIT, and Columbia. About another quarter came from Yale, Chicago, Princeton, Michigan, Wisconsin, UCLA, CIT, Cornell, Illinois, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins, Cambridge, London, and Oxford. Only the remaining one-quarter came from other institutions.

In the fall of 1986, Asian American graduate students accounted for 9.2 percent of all domestic graduate students. In 1985-86, of 656 doctoral degrees granted at Berkeley, 63 (9.6%) were earned by Asian Americans mostly in optometry, engineer-

ing, and chemistry, but with nine in the social sciences and two in the humanities.⁶ However, because of the University's response to Factors 1 to 4 of the Revised Order, the large pool of Asian American Ph.D.s from Berkeley and other California institutions are neglected. Indeed, we find that forty-three Asian American faculty members at Berkeley (exactly 50%) received their Ph.D. from California universities, contradicting the University's claim that it hires mostly on a nation-wide basis.⁷

It is not surprising that Asians would do their graduate work in areas where they are highly concentrated: the San Francisco Bay Area, and metropolitan Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. The Justus report strongly recommends that the UC system can raise its availability pool by recognizing the fact that many black Ph.D.s receive their degrees from historically black colleges and universities in the South, and similarly, that many Chicanos and Latinos receive graduate degrees from colleges in the Southwest. Similarly, the report should recognize that Asian American Ph.D. recipients come mostly from West Coast colleges and selected schools in the Midwest and East Coast.

The recommendations of Berkeley's Campus Coalition for Affirmative Action for increasing minority and women graduate student enrollment include recruitment in institutions with high undergraduate enrollments of minorities and women, undergraduate outreach, and financial and faculty mentor support. Recommendations also include goals and timetables for, and accountability and compliance by, individual departments and schools, as well as objectives for student participation in admissions and affirmative action committees.⁸

Factor 5 of the Revised Order refers to "the availability of minorities having requisite skills in an area in which the con-

tractor can reasonably recruit." Again, the University responds by basing faculty availability on "nation-wide data respecting Ph.D. recipients." Significantly, the availability pool for administrators such as Vice Chancellors and Provosts are based on "data respecting incumbent tenure faculty at Berkeley, which comprise the source of nearly all appointments to the job group." This helps explain the absence of Asian Americans in the administrative positions at Berkeley: faculty underrepresentation directly leads to underrepresentation in the administration.⁹

...underrepresentation is not addressed by Berkeley's affirmative action plan: nine out of the ten organizational units set hiring targets for Asian American faculty at zero. The lone exception is in engineering — presently with the highest representation of Asian faculty on the campus at 11.6%...

Factor 6 is "the availability of promotable and transferable minorities within the contractor's organization." To this requirement for increasing the pool, the University refers to a "Faculty Renewal Model" which, however, is absent from the UC Berkeley Affirmative Action Plan.

Finally, Factors 7 and 8 respectively require the consideration of "the existence of training institutions capable of training minorities in the requisite skills" and "the degree of training which the contractor is reasonably able to undertake as a means of making all job classes available to minorities." The University seems to set aside its extensive involvement in research and graduate instruction in response to these factors, noting that:

Consideration of training institutions and the possibility of undertaking training to make all job classifications available to minorities is not appropriate for analysis of Berkeley's academic appointments, given the specific academic degrees required for academic positions.

Similarly, the University does not acknowledge the presence of other graduate training institutions in the area, such as Stanford University and the UC campuses at San Francisco, Davis, and Santa Cruz. The same factors in Revised Order No. 4 apply to the analysis of underutilization for women. To these, the University responds the same way it does with minorities. Thus, the University's message on minority and women faculty seems to be: we recruit mostly nation-wide; we only look to those who already have Ph.D.s; and we select administrators only exclusively from the existing tenured ranks of faculty. This sentiment helps to explain the continuing slow rate of progress in meeting "the challenge of diversifying its faculty in the twenty-first century" (as quoted earlier from the Justus report).

The federal government is no help. In 1986, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs of the U.S. Department of Labor reviewed and commended UC Berkeley's affirmative action goals for both minority and women faculty, thereby concluding reporting requirements set under a Conciliation Agreement signed in 1984. The root of the problem starts with the University's affirmative action policy. On page 1, paragraph 1, the affirmative action plan states that:¹⁰

Berkeley is the oldest and most mature campus in the Univer-

sity of California system, and holds the leading position among the top academic research institutions in the United States. ... For large numbers of California citizens, Berkeley represents a summit of educational aspirations. Particular emphasis is being placed on increasing the numbers of underrepresented minorities and women at Berkeley so they may have equal access to positions of prestige and leadership.

But the Plan quickly backs away from this objective when it continues:

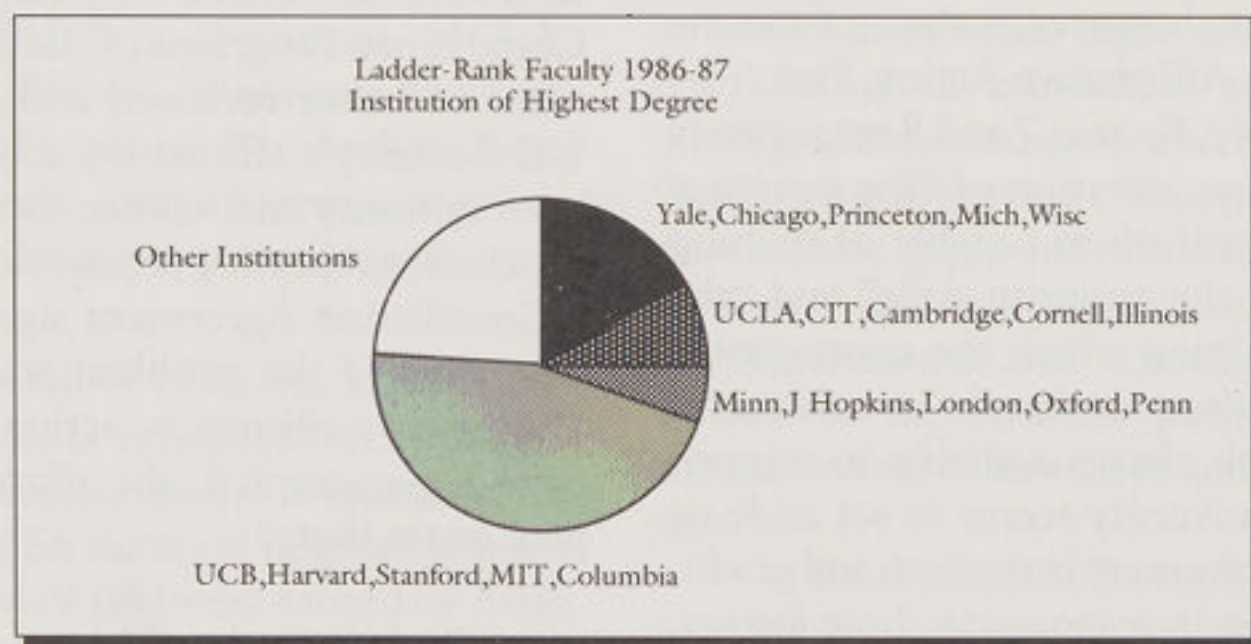
(But) while Berkeley's attractiveness for students, staff and faculty has many sources, it is ultimately related to the intellectual standards that Berkeley sets and the educational opportunities it offers. As the preeminent public research univer-

sity, Berkeley has a primary responsibility to extend its resources to the most talented students and faculty wherever they may be without regard to race or gender.

The above is a declaration that the underrepresentation of minorities and women in the faculty ranks, and an affirmative action program to correct such underrepresentation will not be allowed to get in the way of the maintenance of "intellectual standards" which Berkeley sees as its "primary responsibility." The underlying assumption seems to be excellence above all else, with diversity seen as a threat to excellence. This also runs counter to the ideal of diversity and excellence which the Chancellor and others have recently espoused. There is no evidence that faculty diversification impedes academic excellence.

Figure 1

Distribution of institutions from which highest degree was received by 1,593 ladder-rank faculty of the University of California at Berkeley, 1985-87 academic year. (from Office of Budget and Planning, Chancellor's Office, UC Berkeley, 3/87.)



Additional Affirmative Action Issues from the Ethnic and Gender Distribution of the Asian American Faculty at Berkeley

Of the 86 Asian American ladder-rank faculty members at Berkeley in fall of 1987, we find the following:

- 44 (51%) are Chinese Americans;
- 18 (21%) are East Indians;
- 18 (21%) are Japanese Americans.
- 2 (2%) are Filipinos;
- 2 (2%) are Koreans; and
- 2 (2%) are other Asians.

This shows a clear need for affirmative action for Filipino, Korean, and other Asian American faculty. (There is only one Filipino in the social and behavioral sciences in the other eight campuses.) There are only nine Asian American women in the faculty, yet the Berkeley Plan sets no affirmative action goals for them despite the following statement in the Justus report:

With many other postsecondary institutions across the U.S., the University of California faces a high rate of turnover in its faculty between now—and especially after 1989—and the early 2000s. In this period, it is projected that approximately 40 percent of the current ladder rank faculty members will retire; simultaneously, enrollments are expected to increase. Thus about 6,000 new ladder rank faculty will be needed by the year 2000, or somewhat over 400 per year, compared to a present rate of approximately 300 per year (Faculty Turnover Projections, 1986). The next two decades present an unusual opportunity for the University to improve dramatically the

representation of women and minorities on its faculty—but only if it takes certain extraordinary measures.¹¹ (Page 1.)

Asian American Faculty in Other Universities

To assess Asian American faculty representation in other universities, we requested the affirmative action plan and data for Asian faculty from the twelve “comparable institutions” discussed in the Justus report. Only Yale, Michigan, and Columbia sent reports with data for Asian faculty. Duke, Wisconsin, and Stanford had no data breaking down their minority faculty by race. We also requested data from universities nearby: UC San Francisco, UC Santa Cruz, San Francisco State University, California State University at Hayward, and San Jose State University. Only SFSU responded with data that included a breakdown of the faculty composition by race; CSU Hayward had no such breakdown. For the California State University system as a whole, Asians make up 6.8 percent of the total of 11,721 faculty members.¹¹

Our results to date for Asian American faculty representation is shown in Table 4. With the exception of the University of Michigan at Dearborn, Asians comprise about the same percentage at Yale, Columbia, the Flint and Ann Arbor campus of Michigan: about five to seven percent in the tenured ranks. At SFSU, they make up about five percent of the tenured ranks. The percentage reaches 8.5 percent in the non-tenured ranks.

The pattern of underrepresentation of Asian faculty results from the same problem: assessing underutilization from an availability pool based only on the nation-

wide pool of Ph.D. recipients. This is the same policy adopted by UC Berkeley and suggests a common approach followed by comparable institutions. With such an approach, attempts at increasing the representation of minority and women faculty will be difficult to pursue. One solution is for the universities to change their response to the eight factors in assessing the available pool: referring to Ph.D. pools in the immediate areas, assisting in the training of minority and women candidates, and promoting from within the ranks of the universities (such as from its own lecturer ranks).

Similar to UC, Stanford also rejects consideration required by Factors 1 to 4 for utilization from the immediate labor market area, citing the nation as the area pool. However, the Stanford Medical School acknowledges Factor 8 for the training it undertakes to make faculty ranks available to minorities and women. Excluding the faculty ranks, at Stanford, minorities make up 25.3 percent of the total work force of 5,611 persons; Asians are 9.3 percent of this workforce. But the non-tenured faculty ranks at Stanford are only 7.9 percent minority and 10.5 percent women; the tenured ranks are 6.4 percent minority and 7.6 percent women — a utilization much lower than at UC Berkeley or the UC system of nine campuses as a whole.¹² With no data for Asian faculty at Stanford, but based on the minority total, there is a smaller percentage of Asians there than at Berkeley. In the administrative ranks, there are no Asians among twelve in senior management nor among 40 in middle management, where they have set a goal of one. By contrast, Asians comprise 5 percent of 173 in lower management—mostly women as administrative services managers, where they have set a goal of two more.

Implications of Underrepresentation

Asian Americans cannot continue to be only students in educational institutions. The absence of Asian American faculty and administrators means an absence of role models, a lack of community, and a lack of important representation within the community for students. With representa-

The underlying assumption seems to be excellence above all else, with diversity seen as a threat to excellence.

tion, unnecessary confrontations and problems can be more easily foreseen and avoided. We have already begun to see some of the consequences of a lack of representation and participation of Asian American leadership at the University: misunderstanding and lack of sensitivity escalating to acrimony, distrust, and hostility. Equitable representation can be part of having reached full membership and integration within the larger society. Asian American leadership on important matters of scholarship, research, curriculum, and instruction is needed by the communities which the University serves, both Asian and non-Asian alike. Leadership can be shared with all constituencies, women, and minority communities. The lack of such leadership can be costly in dealing with varied and complex social, economic, and political challenges faced by the University. As a society, we do best when we solicit and consider all points of view forthrightly and with respect, obtain all information available, have a choice of resources, and thus arrive at more alternatives and possible solutions.

Recommendations

We recommend the following steps for alleviating the underrepresentation of Asian American faculty in colleges and universities:

(1) That university administrations reassess and recognize the status of Asian American faculty, their underrepresentation especially in disciplines such as the social sciences and humanities, and pursue affirmative action goals and timetables for hiring and promoting Asian faculty. That particular attention be given to the severe underrepresentation of Filipino American, Korean American, Southeast Asian, and Asian American women faculty within the ranks of Asian American faculty.

(2) That university academic affirmative action plans be reformulated so that their policies more seriously address the underrepresentation of women, Asian American, and other minority faculty.

(3) That the university response to the eight factors in Revised Order No. 4 for the availability pool requirements extend beyond looking only to the percentage of the existing pool of Asian American Ph.D.s nationwide, and that this pool not be further limited to comparable public and private elite universities such as Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and UC Berkeley. That other factors for increasing the availability pool be considered, such as accounting for the immediate labor market area when such an area contains a high minority population, promoting from within the institution (such as from the lecturer pool), and acknowledging the supply of minority and women Ph.D.s from the university's own graduate programs.

(4) That the university seriously hold the departmental and other administrative units initiating recruitment and hiring to the

attainment of affirmative action goals and timetables, using both incentives such as TOE (target of excellence appointments) and disincentives such as freezing all new hires unless goals and timetables are being addressed.

(5) That attention be paid also to affirmative action for Asian American administrators, both in the academic and other ranks of educational administrators.

(6) That affirmative action for Asian Americans, other minorities, and women in graduate programs be undertaken to increase the availability pool for the faculty ranks. That recognition be given to graduate and faculty affirmative action as being interconnected. That outreach to the Asian American undergraduate ranks be considered for long range plans to increase the availability pool.

(7) Recruiting of graduate candidates should be led by Asian American and other faculty and administrators on a personal level, and also at the organizational and institutional levels.

(8) That the Asian American community be informed of employment opportunities for Asian American faculty that will arise because of the large numbers of faculty retiring in the 1990s. That academic careers in fields other than disciplines such as engineering, business, and the physical sciences be considered by Asian Americans. These fields would include, for example, sociology, economics, political science, public policy, ethnic studies, literature, history, and other social sciences and humanities. And that the academic community help provide Asian American role models for the next generation of academic personnel.

(9) That Asian American community organizations and alumni groups provide scholarships, fellowships, endowed chairs, and other programs to help promote the entry of Asian Americans in the faculty ranks.

Table 4
Asian American Faculty Representation in Selected Universities.

<u>University</u>	<u>Asian Tenured Faculty</u>			<u>Asian Non-Tenured</u>		
	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>
UC Berkeley, 86-87	N/A	N/A	69 (5.0%)	N/A	N/A	15 (8.2%)
Yale, 87-88	N/A	N/A	33 (3.4%)	N/A	N/A	32 (4.5%)
Michigan, 87-88 a	N/A	N/A	5 (5.7%)	N/A	N/A	1 (2.3%)
Michigan, 87-88 b	N/A	N/A	16 (12.7%)	N/A	N/A	3 (9.0%)
Michigan, 87-88 c	N/A	N/A	70 (4.5%)	N/A	N/A	38 (5.2%)
Columbia, 87-88	35 (5.8%)	6 (1.0%)	41 (6.8%)	19 (7.0%)	4 (1.5%)	23 (8.5%)
San Francisco State University, 85-86	28 (3.8%)	8 (1.1%)	36 (4.9%)	15 (4.8%)	7 (2.3%)	22 (7.1%)

N/A - no data available.

a - Flint campus; b - Dearborn campus; c - Ann Arbor campus.

Sources:

"University of California, Berkeley 1985-1989 Academic Affirmative Action Plan";

"University of California, Berkeley Annual Academic Affirmative Action Plan Update, 1986-1987".

"Summary of Yale University Affirmative Action Program for the Employment of Women and Members of Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups, 1987-88," Yale University.

The Affirmative Action Office, "Affirmative Action Report of the University of Michigan," March 1988, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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(10) That Asian American political and other community leaders, alumni, parents, and other members of the community exert their leadership and influence in helping to pursue the above recommendations.

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Notes

1. UC Berkeley, Stanford, Yale, University of Michigan, Columbia University, and San Francisco State University.

2. accountants, auditors, personnel, training, and labor relations specialists.

3. Mostly in biological science, chemistry, physics, psychology, economics, history, political science, sociology, social science, engineering, mathemat-

ics, medical science, health specialties, business, agriculture and forestry, the arts, physical education, English, foreign languages, and law.

4. Joyce Bennett Justus (Project Director), Sandria B. Freitag, and L. Leann Parker, "The University of California in the Twenty-First Century: Successful Approaches to Faculty Diversity," Spring 1987.

5. "University of California, Berkeley 1986-1989 Academic Affirmative Action Plan"; "University of California, Berkeley Annual Academic Affirmative Action Plan Update," 1986-87.

⁵ UC Affirmative Action Plan, 1988.

6. Office of Institutional Research and Office of Student Research, "Berkeley Campus Statistics, Fall 1977."

7. Twenty-seven from UC Berkeley, 3 from three other UC campuses, 10 from Stanford, and 3 from the California Institute of Technology (data from the UC Office of the Chancellor).

8. Lee Badgett, et al., op. cit.

9. In the spring of 1990, Professor Chang-Lin Tien was appointed Chancellor of UC Berkeley.

10. University of California, op. cit.

11. Faculty and Staff Relations, "profile of California State University Employees," Fall 1985. The California State University, Office of the Chancellor, 400 Golden Shore, Long Beach, California.

12. Santiago Rodriguez, "Affirmative Action Plan for Stanford University, 1987-1988," Campus Report Supplement, February 3, 1988; Stanford University, "Affirmative Action Goals." Computer printout, February 8, 1988.

10) The American political system is characterized by a high degree of decentralization and a strong tradition of individualism. This is reflected in the structure of the government, the role of the states, and the nature of the political process. The federal government is a system of checks and balances, designed to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful. The states have a significant role to play in the political process, and the political process itself is highly decentralized, with a strong emphasis on local government and public participation.

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Cultural Transformation in Higher Education: The Case of Asian America

by

Professor Lee C. Lee
Cornell University

Cultural literacy is a recurring theme of discourse among educators in the United States' institutions of higher education. Best-selling books of the 1980s, such as Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, have questioned the basic foundations of what constitutes education and whether university students have achieved cultural literacy upon graduation. Much debate has been generated concerning what constitutes cultural literacy and whether the attainment of cultural literacy should include non-western classics and American minority cultures. Clearly these debates are not all based on scholarly concerns nor are they void of the politics of higher education. Much of this discourse has centered on issues of the *whats*, the *hows* and the *shoulds* of educating culturally literate individuals. However, little attention has been placed on the *whys* of this educational imperative.

America has often been referred to as a "melting pot" nation. According to the melting pot theory, people who came to the United States from all over the world would shed the ways of their old countries and

blend happily as one people. For many years, however, white Protestants — the undisputed keepers of the dominant culture — assumed their own exemption from the process of cultural "melting" while the rest of the people became acculturated, learning the dominant culture's behaviors and thought patterns.¹

This implicit monolithic cultural policy sowed the seeds of prejudice and discrimination against those who were not of white Protestant descent. This can be documented throughout the history of the United States of America where non-Protestant immigrants — such as Irish, Italians, and Jews — were discriminated against. For members of different racial groups, *national racism* was an additional stress they encountered in their daily lives.

National racism occurs when the laws which were established governing morality and social conduct deprive members of particular racial groups of personal freedom, equal opportunity and justice in the courts. Such sanctioned societal discriminations are devastating to the discrimi-

nated groups, and their effects are felt for generations. The attitudes and moral values reflected in these laws, by which members of society are socialized, have a residual effect on all members of society, be they mi-

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nority or otherwise. Hence, the consequences of such laws leave attitudinal legacies for all.

After the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the nation acted to affirm its constitutional mandate of equality and justice for all. Affirmative action programs were instituted to functionally adjust the injustices inflicted on minority members. Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans have held undisputed claims to the status of minority membership and are thus members of a "protected" group which qualify for these restitutive programs. However, Asian Americans' claim to minority membership has been fraught with ambiguity in spite of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights assertion that "... Asians are entitled to the full panoply of civil rights protections afforded to all Americans; they also are a 'protected minority' and participate in affirmative action programs."² Asian Americans are not included in many affirmative action programs. The fundamental assumption underlying this exclusion is the belief among many people that Asian Americans, as a racial minority group, have never been nor are currently discriminated against in this society.

Such beliefs are rooted in igno-

rance. This ignorance is the consequence of this nation's educational system where school curricula promote ignorance of this nation's minority history and culture. Although Asian Americans have been in this country in significant numbers for over a hundred years, their presence has been largely ignored in educational settings. While course offerings in Asian history, literature, art, etc. have existed for many years in major university settings, they address the issues of foreign cultures, whereas Asian American studies address issues of American studies and American culture. Asian American studies also speak to the manner in which American and Asian experiences are linked in cultural, social and political ways.

Although Asian American content has been historically invisible in this nation's educational enterprise, the United States of America's treatment of Asians is well-documented in the popular press of the 1890s by writers such as Mark Twain and Samuel Becker and in the annals of the congressional and legislative records.³ These historical records are testimonies to the existence of national racism and prejudice against Asians from their arrival in large numbers in the mid-1800s.

Some examples from these historical records will illuminate the issue under discussion. The examples selected are drawn from Chinese and Japanese experiences because these two ethnic groups have the longest histories in America.

In the classic *Chink!*, Wu catalogues the many Laws and Acts which were passed in the United States specifically against the Chinese.⁴ The Foreign Miner's License Tax Act, the first law passed in California against the Chinese, required a payment of \$4 per month for each license. By 1869, the Chinese payment of this tax amounted to more than half of all the taxes paid in California. When the Chinese diversified their occupations, a special "Police Tax"

was imposed on all Chinese over the age of 18 years. A tax of \$50 per head was also levied against ship owners who brought Chinese to America.

In 1854 the California State Supreme court established a precedent which excluded Chinese from court proceedings. The chief justice asserted that "the Chinese, Negroes, and Indians are respectively, 'a race of people whom nature has marked as inferior, and who are incapable of progress or intellectual development...as their history has shown'...If we would admit them to testify, ...we would admit them into all the equal rights of citizenship, and we might soon see them at the polls, in the jury box, upon the bench, and in our legislative halls."⁵ In 1860, the California Statute excluded "Mongolians, Indians, and Negroes" from public school, effectively barring all Asians from an education. In the reorganization of California school laws in 1870, segregated schools were established, one for whites and another for other races. Thus, Asians, together with other people of color, were not provided with equal educational opportunities.⁶

These attempts to discourage Chinese from immigrating to California proved inadequate. The California Legislature took direct action in 1870 and passed a new act to bar Chinese from immigrating to California. Twelve years later, the U.S. Congress followed California's example by enacting a national exclusion law to bar Chinese from immigrating to the United States. Fourteen discriminatory Chinese exclusion laws were passed by Congress between 1882 and 1924. These exclusion laws were extended to the Philippines in 1904 and to Japan in 1907. Although these discriminatory laws were struck from the books in 1943, it was not until 1965 that immigration procedures did not *functionally* exclude Asians from the United States.

The consequences of such national

racism and institutionalized prejudice is evidenced in the treatment of Chinese after California (1870) and the U.S. Congress (1882) sanctioned racism and prejudice by enacting the exclusion laws. Massacres of Chinese took place in Los Angeles, California (1871), in Rock Springs, Wyoming (1885), in Seattle, Washington (1885), and in Tacoma, Washington (1885). A quote from one of Mark Twain's observations will illustrate the consequences of national racism.

He (the Chinese) is a great convenience to everybody—even to the worst class of white men, for he bears the most of their sins, suffering fines for their petty thefts, imprisonment for their robberies, and death for their murders. Any white man can swear a Chinaman's life away in the courts, but no Chinaman can testify against a white man. Ours is the 'land of the free' — nobody denies that — nobody challenges it. (Maybe it is because we won't let other people testify). As I write, news comes that in broad daylight in San Francisco, some boys have stoned an inoffensive Chinaman to death, and that although a large crowd witnessed the shameful deed, no one interfered ... He (the Chinese) gets a living out of old mining claims that white men have abandoned as exhausted and worthless — and then the officers come down on him once a month with an exorbitant swindle to which the legislature has given the broad, general name of 'foreign' mining tax, but it is usually inflicted

on no foreigners but Chinamen. This swindle has in some cases been repeated once or twice on the same victim in the course of the same month...⁷

It was during this period of Chinese oppression that the phrase "Chinaman's Chance" was coined.

Japanese Americans to some degree were initially protected from discriminatory treatment because of Japan's international stature. However, the signing of the Gentlemen's Agreement between U.S. and Japan in 1906 marked the beginning of the erosion of this tenuous protection, and the exclusion laws were extended to include the Japanese in 1907. During World War II, the entire Japanese American population on the West Coast, regardless of their birthright as citizens, was herded into concentration camps by the U.S. government. Facts uncovered during the national Movement for Redress and Reparation in the 1980's concerning the decision to intern Japanese Americans left little doubt that this national act had its roots in racism. In his coverage of the Redress and Reparation Proceedings, reporter Ken Kashiwahara discovered a memo by President Roosevelt discussing the option of incarcerating Japanese Americans.⁸ This memo was dated 1936, years before Pearl Harbor. It is important to point out here that the U.S. was at war with Germany as well as Italy at the time but only Japanese Americans were incarcerated in concentration camps.

This brief historical sketch clearly demonstrates that Asian Americans have historically been grouped with Blacks and Native Americans and targeted for discrimination by the nation's legislatures and the courts. The consequences of these discriminatory laws have inculcated attitudes and behaviors which serve to denigrate and oppress Americans of Asian descent.

With the onset of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, the power of the old monolithic culture began to erode in the United States; clearly, white Protestants could no longer be viewed as the sole guardians and definers of American culture. Now, increasingly, in both formal and informal contexts, there is a recognition that the learning of behaviors and thought patterns goes both ways: the old monoculture — or

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its remnants — influences immigrant and minority groups while those groups simultaneously change and shape the mainstream.

These changes are evident in popular and mass culture, in the news media, the fine arts, and even in our dietary habits. The emergence of this new pluralistic society has also become increasingly evident in a range of institutions where change and innovation have begun a slow process of national transformation.

Some examples of institutional change which recognize and reinforce pluralism are affirmative action and equal opportunity programs; the creation of bilingual and multicultural programs in primary and secondary schools; the use of public monies to teach English as a second language; the implementation of bilingual and multicultural approaches by health care and social service providers.⁹ Underlying many of these developments, discriminatory laws have been abolished, and important court decisions have been made that

guarantee the rights of ethnic and minority populations, such as *Lau v. Nicholas*.¹⁰ In addition, the United States of America has officially apologized to Japanese Americans and Congress has enacted reparation legislation for those Japanese Americans interned during World War II.

In various contexts, it has become clear that American culture is in fact many cultures, and its history, many histories; failure to incorporate this truth in our social and educational structures has unproductive and negative consequences. Nevertheless, despite changes in society at large, the legacy of *national racism* remains. These are evident in the increased incidence of violence against minority group members including Asian Americans and the often callous decisions of the courts.

A vivid example is the case of Vincent Chin, a Chinese American who was battered to death by two white auto-workers in Detroit, in 1982. For this act of premeditated killing, the two defendants were placed on probation for three years and received a fine of \$3,720 from the judge. The judge held that these defendants were upstanding members of the community and having no prior records, they would pose no danger to society because they would not repeat such an act. The judge also expressed the belief that "one does not fit the punishment to the crime, rather, one fits the punishment to the person." Since this incident, there have been killings of Asian Americans in California, where a Southeast Asian immigrant teenager was stabbed to death by a white student in a public school, and in New Jersey, where an Asian Indian youth was beaten to death by a group of white students. The increase in anti-Asian violence has been well-documented by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.¹¹ Such occurrences are the product of our national racism and the consequences of our attitudi-

nal legacy. Although laws can be stricken from the books with a stroke of a pen, it takes generations to change attitudes and values.

Unfortunately, it appears that the restitutive and healing mood of the nation during the sixties has begun to erode. Many of the programs to enhance equal opportunity, e.g., affirmative action programs, and the laws which bar discrimination are being challenged in the courts by the very governmental agencies which originated them. Just as exclusion laws legitimized violence, these governmentally sanctioned events give legitimacy to the residues of national racism. The consequences are evident in the revitalization of racist organizations in this country, such as the Ku Klux Klan, and the increased incidences of violence against visible minority group members.

The United States of America's slow and tentative progress toward elimination of racism has its roots in its legacy of national racism. Much of this lack of progress can be linked to the nation's educational policies, particularly in higher education settings. It is only in the relatively recent past that universities have acknowledged that not all our immigrants came from Europe. Prior to the 1960s, American colleges and universities existed in an atmosphere of social isolation which was almost exclusively white; the concept of the ivory tower was indeed suitable. The widespread belief in *one* American culture, *one* version of history was in large part responsible for the "ivory tower syndrome."

Formal recognition of ethnic diversity in higher education's policies and curricula began abruptly. In the late sixties, following the initial gains of the civil rights movement and the integration of all-white southern college campuses, racial and political confrontation erupted on northern college campuses. There was a broad spectrum of issues and demands raised during

this period, but for our purposes here, we will concentrate on the issues centered around race and culture which led to the creation of the first ethnic studies programs.

Minority students felt that their influence, history, and culture had been excluded from university curricula and power structures. They maintained that the Euro-centered perspectives in academia were not relevant to their experience and demanded sweeping changes. The impact of student demands was far-reaching. In his report to the Ford Foundation on Afro-American Studies, Nathan Huggins notes that Afro-American Studies courses were added even

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by schools at which there had been little or no protest. This fact suggests that there was wide acceptance of the idea that higher education could no longer be Eurocentric in content. Like all other aspects of the movement for peace and civil rights, the demand for university reform by black students was national in its impact as well as local in particular manifestations. In some sense, the urge for change was everywhere; whether or not a campus had militant black students making demands, the urge for reform was in the air.¹²

While the demands of black students had the most visible effect on curricula around the nation, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans

had demands as well. The effects of pressure from these latter groups were strongest in California, where Asian American and Hispanic American students are most strongly represented.

Many of the changes that emerged from the turmoil of the sixties are valuable and important; however, the confrontational atmosphere may have had some long-lasting negative effects within universities. One such effect has been that in responding to the demands of specific racial or ethnic groups, many universities responded with politically motivated solutions and did not deal with the pedagogical and educational issues, i.e., the importance and place of ethnic studies in higher education. Thus, Afro-American studies were initiated on many campuses across the nation, Native American and Hispanic studies on a few, and Asian American studies on fewer still and mainly on the West Coast.

Most programs initiated at that time were instituted as independent, free-standing units outside the mainstream academic enterprises of the campus. Many of these programs were isolated from mainstream academia. The impact of ethnic studies on the general student population has been meager as the programs appear to serve mainly their own ethnic constituents. Hence one major goal of ethnic studies on university campuses, i.e., educating all students on minority history and cultures regardless of their ethnic origin, has yet to be realized in higher education.

Despite the isolation from mainstream academia, courses, programs, and departments, ethnic studies have served two important functions. The first has been to make university curricula more reflective of social realities, and the second has been to give minority students the sense that they, as a people, have a legitimate place in higher education. However, universities, in their isolation of ethnic studies, have not func-

tionally acknowledged the importance of cultural diversity in the educational enterprise.

As long as higher education curricula perpetuate the isolation and segmentation of ethnic studies, it will not be viewed as a legitimate scholarly pursuit in the perceptions of most majority students, and thus, ethnic studies will not attain a place of importance in their educational goals. Majority students must be educated about minority cultures, and minority students must be educated about minority cultures beyond their own ethnic or racial group. University students, the future leaders of our nation, will not attain a comprehensive understanding of their own society, which is indispensable to citizenship, unless they understand the *diverse roots* from which their society emerged. Without this basic knowledge and understanding, they will not comprehend the relations of their society to the rest of the world. The fundamental value of ethnic studies is in the new perspectives which they afford on traditional education, American culture, and global issues.

Universities across the nation have begun to recognize the importance of educating its students on issues of race and culture. As reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: "A growing number of institutions, prompted by pressures from minority groups, racial tension on campuses, and concerns that students are leaving college unprepared to live in an ethnically diverse nation, are requiring students to take courses that explore issues relating to race."¹³ Solutions to this perceived need could have culminated in an educational revolution in higher education much in the tradition of Kuhn's notions of scientific revolutions, where "shifts of vision" enables new perspectives to be established that have far-reaching consequences.¹⁴

Unfortunately, faculty in institu-

tions of higher education have again ignored the pedagogical and educational imperatives which must precede curricular changes. Instead, these curricular changes in non-West Coast university campuses, for the most part, are appendages which are either poorly funded or not funded at all. This lack of financial support from institutions often leads to self-admitted, unqualified faculty teaching these courses.¹⁵ Thus, faculty qualification are based in the "heart" rather than on one's academic qualifications. Such appendages to the curricula only serve to reinforce students' perception that these courses are not an integral part of their education. These efforts although well intended, reinforce negative perceptions of the importance of understanding the diverse roots of this nation's history and culture within his or her educational experience. If higher education institutions are indeed interested in graduating educated individuals who will understand the nation and the world in its fullest, then an "educational revolution" must take place on campuses across the nation.

Moreover, as long as majority and minority educators are reluctant to integrate ethnic studies into mainstream curricula and continue to provide only isolated and segmented ethnic studies offerings, higher education will not partake in the cultural transformation that is taking place in the society at large. The consequences of such reluctance foster the continued germination of the seeds of prejudice and discrimination. Stanford University's move to revamp its Western Civilization requirement is a step toward recognition of pluralism but falls short as a solution to instill knowledge and understanding of the diverse cultural roots of this nation. The University of California at Berkeley's struggle to include an ethnic studies requirement for graduation comes closer to fulfilling this goal. However, the segmental nature of its

solution — the creation of new courses which compares at least three American ethnic groups in a course — is inadequate in instilling knowledge and “valuing” cultural diversity.

The process of shattering ignorance and stereotypes involves a continuous process of “valuing” ethnic and cultural diversity throughout the educational experience. The first and most important step is to include minority content in the curricula; thus, ethnic studies courses play an important role in building the bridge toward our ideal of including ethnic and minority cultural content into mainstream courses when appropriate. For example, introduction to American history courses should include minority experiences, such as Asian American history. In an introductory course on American families, minority family content should be included as well.

University curricula are, in some ways, definers of what constitutes United States society or American culture. Thus, implicitly, university curriculum becomes the legitimation process in defining what constitutes the United States of America. Without the inclusion of minority content into mainstream curricula, minority cultures and experiences will forever be portrayed as peripheral or foreign in the purview of students. For in the act of inclusion, legitimation of minority cultures takes place and the message is given that minority cultures are an essential part of American culture and thus, an important component of the scholarly pursuit of American studies.

It follows that universities to some degree have the power to either perpetuate or reduce racism in the society at large. Universities can be viewed as microcosms in which people with differing religious beliefs, cultural values, and mores communicate and interact on a daily basis. The success of such interactions depends, in large measure, on the extent to which a

university fosters an atmosphere of mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance. Such an atmosphere is enhanced not only by policies which govern the conduct of its members but also by its policies of academic offerings. Cultural literacy must extend beyond the classics and world culture to include knowledge of minority history and cultures. Although cultural literacy will not eliminate racism or prejudice, it is a means for fostering tolerance and understanding of diversity, and this has significant implications for social change.

Higher education must complete its cultural transformation by taking an active role in providing the impetus for social change: change in our misunderstanding of this nation’s constitution; change in our ignorance of this nation’s discriminatory history; change in our ignorance of the diverse historical roots of this nation; and change in our intolerance for differences of culture, religion and ethnic customs. It is clear that our common enemy is ignorance, and we must work toward its eradication. We, as educators of the future leaders of this nation, can and should take a giant step toward accomplishing this social change.

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Public Policy, Higher Education & The Model Minority

by

Elizabeth Ahn Toupin
Tufts University

Three issues in higher education policy toward Asian Americans threaten the full development of an exceptionally well-qualified group of students. They are discrimination in admissions, rate of retention, and support services for Asian Americans in higher education. A clear understanding of these concerns has been clouded by the myth of the "model minority" which the media continues to perpetuate, despite attempts by Asian American scholars to challenge misleading data on higher incomes, higher employment rates, and higher levels of educational attainment among the Asian American population.

A new approach needs to be developed to direct energies toward public policy in higher education that is beneficial to Asian Americans. First, it is important to distinguish between public/state university systems and private colleges and universities. Second, geographical and historical differences between East and West Coasts also have to be taken into consideration. The history of Asian Americans in Western states differs in terms of population size,

discriminatory laws, areas of settlement, occupation, levels of education, orientation, and the receptivity of the communities in which Asian Americans settled. While racial violence against Asians is a daily factor on both coasts today, the historical experience on the East Coast does not include discriminatory laws regarding property and interracial marriages.

A new approach needs to be developed to direct energies toward public policy in higher education that is beneficial to Asian Americans.

Admissions

In the mid-1980s, Asian American students charged prestigious private colleges and universities with discriminatory admissions policies. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, and Stanford all responded by conducting internal audits. The percentage

of Asian American students accepted in these schools increased in subsequent years. Only Stanford — on the West Coast — offered a public acknowledgment of possible “unconscious biases.”

The history of educational institutions also differs on East and West Coasts. Segregated schools are not part of the Asian American experience on the East Coast, nor are there clear-cut discriminatory practices regarding college admissions or the hiring of Asian Americans at professional levels in the business world. On the West Coast, public colleges and universities play a dominant role; on the East Coast, private

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colleges prevail. More importantly, because of racially discriminatory hiring practices, a college degree on the West Coast was viewed historically as less critical in enabling second generation Asian Americans to gain entry into professional vocations. As Ron Takaki noted in his most recent book *From Different Shores - Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America*, only 25% of 161 Nisei graduates from the University of California over a ten year period (1925-1935) were employed in the professional vocations for which they had been trained.

East Coast private colleges, in contrast, are marked by a lack of racial awareness; in particular, they fail to recognize the salient distinctions between Asian nationals and Asian Americans. This may be more a

factor of provincialism and arrogance than outright racism, as the individual histories of these colleges indicate a continuous but small flow of students from Asia since the 19th century.

The recent charges of discriminations in admissions policy against Asian Americans have been proven in the state of California and — as we have seen before — tacitly acknowledged by some of the major private colleges and universities vis-a-vis their sudden and large increase in admissions rates of Asian American students in recent years. Discrimination in admissions will have to be constantly monitored in both the public and private sectors due to the exceptional number of Asian American applicants who fully meet the eligibility requirements but are admitted at a lower yield rate. Nationwide, SAT scores among Asian American students are competitive with non-Asian students applying to a given institution. According to Jayjia Hsia, for example, an estimated “5,200 of 7,000 UC eligible Asian Americans in 1987 applied to UC Berkeley, which had places for 3,600 first year students. Dean L. Fred Jewett of Harvard estimated that 40 to 50 percent of Asian high school students who scored at the top of the SAT ranking submitted applications to Harvard.” This large pool of Asian American college applicants is the result of two important factors: declines in birth rate among whites and blacks, and changes in immigration policy since 1965 which abolished the national origins quota. The second factor brought on an influx of Asian immigrants, resulting in a 70% increase in the U.S. Asian population in the past eight years.

In assessing admissions policies that discriminate against Asian Americans, it is important to distinguish between public and private universities and colleges. The discrimination in state universities affects a larger number of Asian American students,

for 83.3% of them choose 2-4 year public colleges and universities, while only 16% attend private 4 year colleges. Moreover, evidence of discrimination in public institutions is more accessible; unlike private colleges and universities, public institutions have clearly stated and widely publicized criteria for admissions. State systems of higher education are supported by state legislatures which ultimately, are responsible to its constituents — the people of the state. Thus, in California, it was the pressure of Asian Americans — who composed 35.2% of the Asian and Pacific Islander population in the U.S. — that led to an independent audit of the University of California, Berkeley's admissions records from 1981 to 1987. This led to the most highly publicized case of discrimination in admissions policy against Asian American applicants. Ling-chi Wang, in his paper "Meritocracy and Diversity in Higher Education: Discrimination Against Asian Americans in the Post-Bakke Era," clearly outlines the way in which the University of California, Berkeley discriminated by holding down Asian American undergraduate enrollment to "around 25% since 1983."

In private universities and colleges, the problem of proving discrimination in admission is more complicated: admissions criteria have never been clearly defined in objective, measurable terms. Private institutions report to their own Board of Trustees, which bears the final responsibility for the educational direction and financial well-being of the university. If they choose to respond to charges of discrimination, it is primarily out of a regard for their public image, an attempt to avoid confrontation with their minority student body and alumni, or a concern that federal government funds might be withdrawn because of failure to comply with Equal Opportunity guidelines. It is in providing enrollment data to the National Center for Educational Statistics

that private institutions are vulnerable because of their dependence on large amounts of federal funding. As this data is used by federal and state agencies in policy development, program planning, and budget allocation, careful monitoring in this area is vital. Moreover, herein lie opportunities for public policies that can meaningfully impact on the admissions policies of private institutions.

In the meantime, monitoring admissions policies in private universities becomes a yearly task for Asian American student groups, who are characterized by high membership turnover and are often poorly organized, inexperienced at gathering data, and culturally averse toward antagonism and aggressive confrontation with an administration. Furthermore, students in these groups are unlikely to find family support for political activism, and their own experiences with discrimination on the East Coast are probably inconsistent and tangential.

Retention

Admissions policy is not the only issue of concern: equally important is the number of Asian American students who graduate. Various reports nationwide have compared the number of Asian American college graduates to their white counterparts. At University of California at Berkeley, 71% of the whites in the Class of 1987 graduated, compared with only 67% of Asian Americans. Asian Americans in the Classes of 1984, '85, and '86 at a small, private, East Coast university were less likely than non-Asians to graduate at the end of four years when matched on the basis of SAT scores, gender, level of parents' education, private or public secondary schools. These lower retention rates may stem from the

stressful environment facing Asian American students. Stereotypes of the "model minority" as academic overachievers do not improve these tensions. It should be noted that the U.S. Department of Education statistics from 1986 cite contrary findings, in which 27% of Asians attained bachelor degrees within six years of high school graduation, compared to 20% of whites.

In state universities, the lower retention data may reflect the growing numbers of Asian Americans who have difficulty passing the English writing proficiency requirements. There are many puzzling facets to this problem. The majority of college-bound Asian Americans are born in a foreign country; one out of four do not consider English their best language. In addition, a contradiction exists in the fact that Asian American students who are admitted to college and pass all the necessary courses required for a bachelor's degree still fail the English writing proficiency exam. At best, this raises questions on the quality of education at state institutions of higher learning. To address the cross-cultural factors underlying the issue of written proficiency, creative programming needs to be developed for Asian American students. They are discouraged from expressing their feelings in an alien society where they struggle to find a personal voice, and through a cultural-based socialization that reinforces non-verbal and non-emotive forms of communication.

State universities might also follow the initiative of schools that teach courses in ethnic literature. Asian American writers like Hisaye Yamamoto, John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, Frank Chin, Carlos Bulosan, Evelyn Lee, Janice Mirikitani, along with oral histories of Asian immigrants in America, are largely excluded from 20th century American literature courses. Asian American students respond to Asian American literature for its relevance — the read-

ings validate their feelings and experiences. More importantly, such writings help many to find their inner voices. Finally, questions must be raised on the inability of English departments to reach this particular student population. The challenge of teaching in this century may require a restructuring not only of the way in which literature is selected but also of the way in which it is taught, and the ways in which a student's performance is best evaluated.

Supportive Services

Finally, although Asian Americans are admitted under minority quotas, they do not share the same options and opportunities that other minority students enjoy. For admissions purposes, members of the "model minority" are chosen on equal terms with white applicants and receive special consideration only when ethnicity helps fill the minority quota. In addition, Asian Americans are seen as super science whiz kids on the dubious basis of Westinghouse Science contests and data presented yearly by the National Research Council on doctorate recipients from United States universities. In the latter report, the proportion of Asian and Asian American doctorates is noted to be higher than the proportion of Asian Americans in the United States. No mention is made of the fact that a large number of these Ph.D.s are foreign-born, with bachelor's degrees from their native universities.

Hence, a large number of special summer programs that recruit minority students to the sciences are not available to Asian Americans, who are not considered an "underrepresented minority" in the sciences. This unfortunate phrase has its own prejudices which imply that the representation in a profession should be determined by the proportional population size of a

particular ethnic group. The University of Rochester Medical Center, Ohio University, the University of California at Irvine, and the University of California at Los Angeles are a few of the universities whose summer scholars program for pre-meds and health professionals exclude Asian American students. Asian Americans are perceived as not needing any help or support in the sciences. Yet no studies specifically validate the assumption that Asian Americans as a group are superior science students. Close scrutiny of Asian American students in a small East Coast college and their non-Asian counterparts raised questions on whether or not Asian-Americans "pursuing academic programs in the sciences are often pushed by that selected pursuit into poorer academic performance, higher rate of withdrawals and lower graduation rates." For Asian Americans, the option of attending these summer programs might prove enriching and increase their opportunity to attend graduate school in the sciences. The current ban may prove to be harmful to society as the demand for more scientists and sophisticated technicians grows.

Moreover, Asian Americans also suffer from discrimination in the social sciences despite the shortage of Asian American scholars in these fields. In 1980, Asian American faculty constituted 3.3% of all American post-secondary instructors. Of these, 51.4% were in engineering; 18% in the physical sciences and 15.3% in biological sciences and math. Thus less than 15% of Asian American scholars are in the humanities and the social sciences.

Yet, Asian Americans are ineligible for many graduate support programs in the social sciences and the humanities. Asian American post-doctoral candidates, who could serve as mentors and role models for undergraduates, cannot apply for Minority Scholar positions in residence programs at

19 of the nation's most prestigious small private colleges: Bates, Bowdoin, Bryn Mawr, Colby, Colorado, Davidson, Grinnell, Haverford, Franklin & Marshall, Macalester, Oberlin, Occidental, Pomona, Reed, Rhodes, Swarthmore, the University of the South, Vassar and Wellesley. The existence of these Minority Scholar positions is even more ironic in the face of the

(Asian American students) are held to stringent requirements in admissions to colleges and universities, but their unique qualities and bi-cultural heritage are not acknowledged by institutional support systems.

shortage of Asian American scholars in the humanities and social sciences.

Finally, the recent peak in Asian American student enrollment rates occurs at a time when most universities are facing tight budget lines and insufficient funds to hire supportive staff to help Asian American students. The few minorities in student services and support, including counseling and career placements centers, are predominantly black and overcommitted. Hence, while Asian American students are admitted as minority students, no special services in terms of staff and support are available for them.

The "model minority" stereotype has many drawbacks. Asian American students seem to be admitted to colleges and universities on the basis of two criteria: 1) academic test scores and the strength of their abilities and performance as students; 2) their status as a minority. They are held to stringent requirements in admissions to colleges and universities, but their unique qualities and bi-cultural heritage are not

acknowledged by institutional support systems. Asian American students alone are left to face the perils of positive stereotyping as the "model minority."

An Interview with Representative Robert T. Matsui

Congressman Robert T. Matsui is the Representative from California's Third District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Educated at the University of California at Berkeley and the Hastings College of Law, Rep. Matsui founded his Sacramento law practice in 1967 and was elected to the Sacramento City Council in 1971. Re-elected in 1975, he became vice-mayor of Sacramento in 1977. The following year, he was elected to Congress and has remained the Third District's representative since then.

Months after his birth, Rep. Matsui and his family were sent to the internment camp at Tule Lake, California during the Second World War. In the U.S. Congress, Rep. Matsui played a leadership role in the passage of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, which mandated a national apology and redress payments to individuals interned during the war.

What issues do you see facing the Asian American community in the 1990s?

I think the first issue for the Asian American community will be defining ourselves as an ethnic group, and that has a number of different subissues. One is, are we Asian Americans? Or are we Filipino Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans? I'd like to think this will be a very significant issue as we go into the 1990s. We've demonstrated in the Eighties that as a group — as Asian Americans — we do have economic clout, we have academic power, we have power in the technical sciences. We are now demonstrating that we have some political leadership as well.

That's the reason why we have to define exactly who we are. Working well on the technical side of issues, like being

Westinghouse Scholars and having people go to Harvard and some of the great public educational institutions does not require us to be identified as Asians, or as Filipinos, or as Taiwanese. But in the political arena, we're going to have to define ourselves — that's going to be the really big issue. How do we bring in fifth generation Chinese Americans and recent Cambodian Americans under one umbrella, if we choose to go in that particular direction?

Bear in mind that one of the things that is somewhat misunderstood about the Asian American community is that when everybody talks about the "model minority", "the super minority", and the "minority of the Nineties", they are really talking about our technical competence. If one looks at the stories in *Newsweek* magazine, *Time* magazine, and the *New York Times*

magazine, its always about our technical skills—the fact that we are great scientists, great biochemists. But very rarely have they touched upon our management skills; they never talk about the CEO of a major Fortune 500 company. Or do they talk about political leadership in the Asian American community?

In fact, it's ironic that Peru will probably have the first Asian American head of state, Roberto Fujimori, before any other country. Before Brazil, the United States,



or any other country, on the basis of a fluke to some extent. In the United States, we haven't really become political players. We're just starting to do that now. That's why I think that issue of "who we are" is going to be very important.

In addition to that, we're going to have to address the historic issues that we have always addressed. Discrimination is still there; I think its rampant, and could even be worse in the Nineties because you're seeing more and more people coming from many of the Pacific Rim countries. When there are few numbers, you're not noticed but when there's a large number it could create a backlash. In California you're

seeing more of that. You're seeing Asian Americans go to places that they haven't in the past, like the Carolinas, where there was a recent murder.

I think admissions to universities is a major issue of concern. We don't want to be in a position where we pit ourselves against Blacks and Hispanic community. At the same time we want to make sure that all the qualified Asians get in. So we have to walk a tightrope to some extent. All these issues are on the table in the Nineties. And over all of these is the issue of "who we are." Are we one group, or a series of subgroups? Can we be divided?

It's very difficult to coalesce because they do have different problems. For example, I'm looking to run for the Senate in 1992, but what I'm finding is that when I go to different ethnic groups, some of them look at my candidacy with pride. Others look upon it more pragmatically. I won't go into which groups that might be, but I think recent immigrants look at it more pragmatically because they have different kinds of problems to a large extent. They have refugee problems, problems of settlement, problems of feeling integrated into communities, and bilingual education. On the other hand, among fourth and fifth generation Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans, people that have been more successful — even if they're more recently successful — might look at it more with pride due to the fact that we'd like to see someone of Asian ancestry become a leader. We see them in the field of biochemistry as scientists, and now we'd like to see them among the political leadership as well.

During the Martin Luther King Birthday celebration, people contemplated the issue of how much change there has been since the day that Dr. King spoke of his dream. What changes have you seen, both positive and negative, for Asian

Americans since the 1960s?

I don't think that the Asian American community has been impacted by the great civil rights movement of the 1960s. It's interesting, but to a large extent, the Asian American community was not players in the 1960s. It was as if the Asian American community did not exist with respect to the civil rights movement. That was also true for almost every national group of Asian Americans in existence in the sixties. The civil rights movement was a great national movement, but if you talk to Asian Americans who were in leadership roles during that period of time, it was almost as if that period went by and never happened. I think part of the reason is that we were not seen as major political players in the 1960s and 1970s.

Asian Americans did not identify with the political system, and the civil rights movement was a major political movement in this country. We were "non-players" because we were not politically active in the 1960s as a group or a subgroup. In other words, if you look at the civil rights movement, the individuals that went down to Selma and Mississippi were not by and large Asian Americans.

That would be totally different today. I think the younger people in the colleges and universities would be involved in those movements. But I don't think that Martin Luther King's birthday has — in the Asian American community — generated the understanding that it has in the general population as a whole. I think the younger generation is much different, because they understand that political power is just as important as academic and technical power.

Have you seen progress over the years in public attitudes towards Asian Americans?

You have regions of the country where there's frustration because of trade issues and competitiveness, and Asian Americans are scorned and used as scapegoats. But generally speaking, I think the American public views Asian Americans as a very productive and very important group in the United States. The danger, of course, is that they confuse Asian Americans with Asian nationals. There are more and more Asian nationals coming in to the United States. And that's neither bad nor good, it's just a fact. As a result, there's a lot of confusion. As you well know, for Asian Americans, citizenship attaches itself to a lot of different kinds of benefits, emotional benefits and others. If they treat us as non-citizens, as nationals of another country, even the psychological impact is very negative.

As a result, there is potential danger. A good example is in immigration legislation. If you view an "Asian" as an Asian, rather than as an Asian American or an American of Asian ancestry, that person may not get a job. That's why citizenship is so important. That's why Asian Americans and Americans of Asian ancestry have to continue to make sure that people understand that these are American citizens. I think, frankly, the redress legislation was very important because it called attention for the first time to the American citizens incarcerated in 1942. These weren't "Asians" — these were American citizens. Frankly, that story had never been told in the dramatic way that it was through the Congressional passage of H.R. 442. I think that we have to constantly, unfortunately, repeat that message. This is something that Italians as Americans do not have to do, something that people of Swedish ancestry do not have to do, but we as Americans of Asian ancestry have to do. I don't think we can ever end it nor can we ever come to a point where we can say, "Well this is the

end, we've finally achieved success." I think we're always going to have to continue to make our case. I think that's something that we should always be vigilant of; that's why you're always going to see national organizations of Asian Americans.

That brings us to policies that may affect Asian Americans, such as the immigration legislation you referred to. Can you think of other instances where the policymakers must keep in mind these issues when developing policy?

I think that question underscores something. I think it's important that instead of asking which *issues* policymakers must keep in mind when dealing with policies affecting Asian Americans, we should be asking how we can get Asian Americans into *positions* of policymaking. That's where we lack political sophistication.

That question is a very common. How can we influence leaders? Well, wait a minute. Why don't we want to be leaders? During the 1984 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco, I was appalled. Everyday from nine o'clock to twelve o'clock, the Asian American Caucus of the Democratic Party would be meeting. After the second day I asked some of the leaders, why are we doing this? Is the goal to become chair of the Asian Pacific Caucus of the Democratic Party? Why isn't the goal to become the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee? We shouldn't lower our expectations.

I've even had that problem. When I was running for Congress in 1978, Asian Americans — people at the Capitol, people who should have known better, staff people — said 'you can't do it, you can't do it.' Even now, as I was deciding to run for the United States Senate, I spoke to some Asian American leaders: "You're going to run for ... Senate?" They don't perceive themselves

in positions of leadership. We have to overcome that. Part of the reason I want to run is just to show that it can be done. Maybe it will develop a little ethnic pride in our community. Maybe that'll open the door for a few other Asian Americans who are being held back by that same attitude. I think that's one of the real problems. We don't need to talk about how to influence people if they are *ourselves*.

...instead of asking which issues policymakers must keep in mind when dealing with policies affecting Asian Americans, we should be asking how we can get Asian Americans into positions of policymaking.

Is there a need for a national political organization?

I think there is a need for one or a number of them. I think we should be multi-faceted. I think we should not only have a national political organization, but also national organizations involved in management training. Again, we're great as scientists and we finally have an Asian American chancellor at the University of California at Berkeley -- I think that's a major achievement. Certainly we need to get Asian Americans in many of the Fortune 500 companies throughout the United States. Not in the technical area, but to run one. I'll tell you the reason why: you need to breed familiarity. I've been on the Hill in Washington for twelve years. People now feel comfortable with an Asian American in the United States Congress. I'm on Ways and Means, I deal with lobbyists, I deal with CEOs of companies and corporations. They don't see me as an aberration now. That's

going to make it easier for my son, hopefully. And maybe your children and maybe you yourself to become members of Congress or political leaders. That's why it's so

There's a lot of young leadership now. Fifteen years ago, there wouldn't have been; I see a bright future.

important that we get people in top management positions in these major corporations. Instead of "this Asian American is my boss," there's "John Watanabe is my boss." That's what you want them to say.

There's a need for all kinds of different national organizations of Asian Americans for training, for development, and for assistance. I think we have to start thinking about helping others as well; we can't go it alone. That's why the "umbrella" is extremely important. We *can* form a national organization that would deal with the needs of those of us in this country and I think we have to begin that process. That means bringing in the fifth generation with the recent immigrant and getting them to work together.

In order to put together an organization like that you're going to need money and skill. There's money in the Asian American community and we have the skill—there's no question about that. There's a lot of young leadership now. Fifteen years ago, there wouldn't have been; I see a bright future. If you look at the young Asian Americans now getting out of Harvard, Stanford, Berkeley, and other great universities and going on to graduate schools, they're going into law, business, public policy and all kinds of professions -- not just the sciences. Wait 'til the mid-nineties. They're going to be demanding

mid-level management, moving up to be CEOs, and more are going to get involved in politics. A very bright future.

Any final words?

I would probably want to reiterate that we have to be willing to take risks as Asian Americans, especially the younger generation. I don't mean to sound pious when I say this, but all of our ancestors came across 6,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean somehow. I can't imagine anything more frightening than to come over to the United States from one of the Pacific Rim countries. You don't have the language, the customs are different... It was much easier for East Europeans to come over because *at least* there was some commonality despite the tremendous difficulties for them. But for my grandparents to have come in the 1890s and the early 1900s to this country was remarkable—the fact that they made it, and had a kid that went to high school and had a grandson who came to the United States Congress. When one thinks about it, it's remarkable that that could possibly happen. They took risks.

It's funny, to a large extent, that we discourage risk taking in our own community, and I think we have to encourage more risk taking. That's why it's going to be so important that we make sure in the Nineties that we talk about political leadership and risk taking in politics. Politics is the toughest job in the world in terms of risk taking. If you flunk an exam, only you and your teacher know about it, but if you lose a political race, the whole community knows about it. That's why it's very difficult for anybody to run for public office.

Historically, it has been even more difficult for Asian Americans because to some extent we don't like to lose and we like to save face as a group. We have to overcome that because our democratic system

requires us to be risk takers. Defeating Dan Lundgren in 1988 was a defining event in California politics for the Asian American community. I'm glad we did it. But I've been told, "Oh, we can't do it because he's going to hurt us in Washington or if he becomes treasurer its going to be damaging to us." That's always the case. If you don't take anyone on, you're going to have a problem. The reality is that we're not going to let someone who's values differs from ours stand in our way. We have an obligation as citizens of this country to challenge them for our children and our grandchildren. That was a great victory and it was defining, because I think it left us with confidence and recognition in the general community increased—the political ramifications were unbelievable. All of a sudden we became major players in California politics.

An Interview with Henry Der

Henry Der is the executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) in San Francisco. Following his graduation from Stanford University, Mr. Der joined the Peace Corps and worked in Kenya. Upon his return to the United States, he taught English as a Second Language at a local community college. In 1973, he joined CAA as a project director of a federally funded Right To Read Project, and a year later, was asked to assume the position of executive director. Mr. Der has won numerous awards in recognition of his work on civil rights issues. On August 8, 1988, he was awarded the Edison Uno Memorial Civil Rights Award by the Japanese American Citizens League.

Chinese for Affirmative Action is a membership-supported civil rights organization. Its mission is "to advocate for equal access to economic, employment and educational opportunities for all persons, in order to eliminate those societal conditions that foster bigotry and racial discrimination against Asian Americans and other minorities who have experienced a history of discrimination."

What issues do you see facing the Asian American community in the 1990s?

Several. Racism, misunderstanding and distrust of Asian Americans will increase in direct proportion to the growth of the national Asian population and to the steady flow of Asian immigrants and refugees. Migration of Asian families away from the traditional neighborhoods has generated resentment and fear among individuals who view Asians stereotypically. The growing presence of Asians in California, New York, Texas, and many other states has made people much more nervous about us.

Racial slurs and epithets against Asian Americans continue unabated. The well-publicized comment of Pat Bowlen, the Denver Bronco owner, about San Fran-

cisco 49er's Jerry Rice's [a black football player] being a "Chinaman" demonstrates the lack of progress over the last two decades by the Asian American communities to sensitize and educate the American public about offensive racial attitudes and stereotypes. *Chinese for Affirmative Action* (CAA) publicly protested Bowlen's comments. He apologized and admitted ignorance over the nature of the term "Chinaman." As our protests became public, however, hate calls and letters found their way to our offices.

For the last 20 years, CAA has been fighting the use of racial slurs. Community protests succeeded in removing a San Francisco Registrar of Voters who referred to Chinese-speaking voters as "those goddamned Chinks" who do not deserve any special treatment. He eventually got reassigned to

work under a Chinese American supervisor in the billing division. A high-level mental health official resigned after CAA protested his reference to Chinese Americans as "Chinks" in a staff meeting.

The individuals responsible for these racial slurs were not uneducated hillbillies

*...the Asian community as a whole
and as individuals cannot afford
to be silent about racial
stereotyping.*

with little or no contact with Asians. The utterance of these racial slurs reflects the insensitive, cavalier belief that anti-Asian sentiment can be expressed by public officials or responsible business leaders with impunity.

The Stockton mass murder and injury of innocent Southeast Asian elementary school children by Patrick Edward Purdy is a painful reminder that the Asian community as a whole and as individuals cannot afford to be silent about racial stereotyping. Even though relatives, friends and work associates heard Purdy express his anti-Asian, anti-minority sentiments, there was no indication in the State Attorney General's investigation of Purdy that any one of these individuals ever protested or challenged Purdy's perceptions of Asians. Silence greeted his expressions of hatred and condemnation of Southeast Asians; this silence served to legitimize racial hatred in Purdy's mind.

It can be uncomfortable, awkward and intimidating to confront racial stereotypes at the workplace or in other public settings, but Asian Americans need to develop individual and group strategies to combat blatant and subtle misunderstandings. The Asian American community as a

whole must continue to work with other minority groups to strengthen our country's civil rights enforcement laws. In addition to that though, individual efforts by Asian Americans to combat racial slurs and stereotypes can never be considered insignificant or a waste of effort.

Another big issue in the 1990s will be the fight to improve employment and promotional opportunities. In the last two and a half decades, Asians have made some inroads into entry level and professional employment. The proliferation of Asian American employee groups within corporations and public agencies signals in part the growing impatience over the lack of sufficient promotional opportunities. Other Asians still struggle to gain entry into non-traditional, blue collar work which may not require a college degree.

There will be an increase in the number of complaints filed by Asian Americans with federal and state civil rights enforcement agencies. These civil rights officials need to understand that American society cannot measure affirmative action's success by merely examining the representation of Asian Americans in entry-level positions. Federal and state civil rights agencies have to develop new understandings of the subtle and not-so-subtle forms of harassment and denial of promotional opportunities experienced by Asian American in the workplace.

Having a working relationship with mass media is critical. Accurate and timely news and information about and for Asian Americans will enhance our ability to influence public policy affecting housing, employment, educational and social opportunities. The paucity of Asian-owned broadcast stations and the low representation of Asian Americans on editorial staffs in the news media need to improve. Unfortunately, the 1980s witnessed a dramatic decline in public affairs programming for

Asians and other minorities.

Having community members, especially limited English proficient immigrants, understand and use information technology is essential to the social, economic and political integration of Asian Americans in mainstream activities. Access to information technology can bolster effective communication between underfunded social service providers and the needy in the community, as well as between the Asian American public and the governmental entities that are responsible for emerging community needs.

During the Martin Luther King Birthday celebration, people contemplated the issue of how much change there has been since the day that Dr. King spoke of his dream. What positive or negative changes have you seen for Asian Americans as director of CAA?

Whether they want to admit it or not, Asians have been a big beneficiary of the civil rights movement—the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the implementation of affirmative action programs. We have benefitted as much as Blacks in many different agencies and companies. Asian Americans have an obligation to understand the social-political context in which some of these opportunities have been made available to them and they need to stop convincing themselves that they did it solely on merit. Prior to the passage of the historic civil rights laws of the 1960s, many college-educated Asian Americans could not even get low entry-level jobs with many private corporations. Some Asian American World War II veterans experienced difficulty in purchasing homes in a non-Asian neighborhoods. The civil rights movement broke some of these discriminatory barriers for Asians and other minority groups as well as

for African Americans.

But have you seen any progress in public attitudes towards Asian Americans?

I haven't seen much improvement. Public commentators and some employers have been quick to label Asian Americans as "model minorities." [This label] is divisive and creates tension among ethnic minority groups. The underlying message is "Why can't African Americans and Hispanics pull themselves up by their own bootstraps? ...these other minority groups should overcome discrimination like Asian Americans have."

The "model minority" syndrome simply ignores the different history and patterns of discrimination afflicting the various minority groups in America. In order to secure equal opportunities, different affirmative action strategies are necessary to accommodate the disparate levels of progress achieved by each minority group. Asian Americans must resist the temptation to believe that we are better than other minority groups and have an ironclad hold on "family" and "community" values. Being a "model minority" has not accelerated the advancement of Asian Americans into higher skilled jobs. Nor has this label stemmed the flow of harassment and employment discrimination experienced by Asian Americans in white-collar jobs.

What are some particularly good or bad public policies which affect the Asian American communities?

By far, the most controversial public policies affecting Asian Americans are bilingual education, voting, and social services. Proponents of the English-only movement have exploited widespread antipathy against Asian immigrants and have perpetuated the lie that bilingualism impedes the acquisition of the English language and holds individuals as captives of their "ethnic leaders." On the

contrary, by having good bilingual programs, you can actually develop stronger English skills. And also by having bilingual services and skills, people have a better understanding of their rights.

A number of companies both in the private and the public sector are finally acknowledging the reality that people who don't speak the English language fluently are not going to go away. They are making an effort to learn English but it does take them longer to learn English than it would take a child at the kindergarten to fifth grade level.

What about a good public policy?

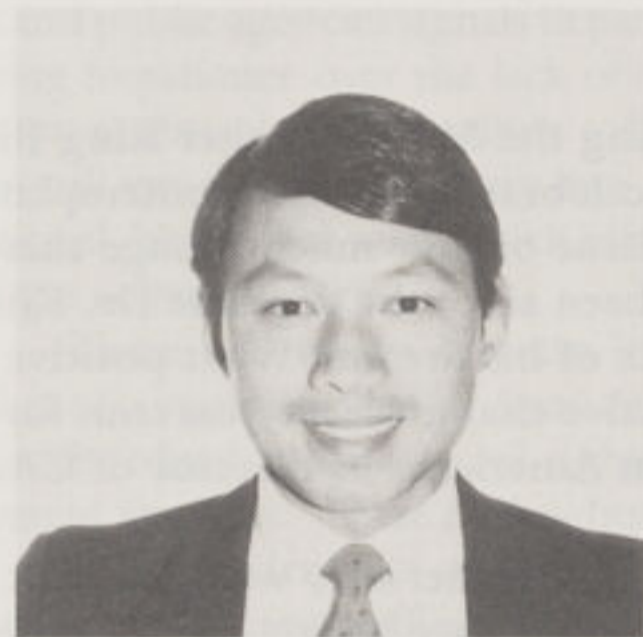
Federal anti-discrimination employment and housing laws have opened many doors for Asian Americans. Many community members have not been in the United States long enough to understand the gravity of the history of race discrimination against Asian Americans and other minority groups. The anti-discrimination laws give them the right and opportunity, if needed, to challenge institutional practices and to secure a fair share of publicly-supported services without jeopardizing their citizenship or immigration status in America.

What should policy makers keep in mind and who should they talk to when they make a new policy that might affect Asians?

A policy maker has an obligation to make sure that he or she understands the affected communities *vis a vis* the proposed public policy. They have to go out and talk to a cross-section of people in the community or else talk to key groups. In order to be responsive to emerging social and educational needs, public policy makers have to understand the diverse socio-economic characteristics of the Asian American community. National leaders have to examine data and trends related to Asian American diversity at the regional, state, and national levels.

Is there a need for a national organization to represent Asian Americans?

There are existing national organizations like the Japanese American Citizens League, the Organization of Chinese Americans, and the Chinese American Citizens Alliance. They play a vital role in the advocacy and articulation of public policy issues central to the interests of their members. It is unfeasible and impractical, though, to expect one national organization to encompass the interests and concerns of all six million plus Asian



Americans. No one should hide from or be ashamed of the tremendous diversity that exists within the Asian American community as a whole and within each Asian subgroup. Furthermore, there are subgroups of professional interests — engineers, health workers, lawyers, business persons, contractors, journalists, K-12 educators, post-secondary educators — which have formed either local, regional, or national organizations.

Look at where the Asian communities are located. Over one-third of all Asians live in California. Asian Americans remain highly concentrated on the West and East Coasts, Texas, and Hawaii. Because of the highly concentrated demographic makeup in these regions, developments in one regional area inevitably have national implications.

For example, the Asian American Task Force focused their University Admissions investigation on freshman admissions practices at the University of California at Berkeley. The persistent work of the Task Force triggered heated debates and inquiries about freshman admission practices in other nationally-selective universities and colleges.

So, I don't think that it is feasible or practical to have just one national organiza-

Asian Americans need to be outspoken. If we don't speak out, no one is going to be educated.

tion that would encompass all interests. For the simple reason that Asians are into so many different things and issues that you need to have flexibility.

Do you feel that there is a strong sentiment that Asians don't belong in this country? If so, why?

Historically we were considered sojourners, and we were made to be sojourners because people were not given citizenship status during the early days here in America. It was not until World War II that permanent resident aliens of Chinese origin were even permitted to become naturalized citizens of this country. We are always afflicted with the comment that [we] really don't belong here, that [we] should go back to Asia, when in fact, some Asian families are third, fourth, or fifth generation.

Recently-arrived immigrants with limited English skills know that, upon their arrival in America, they will be accused of not being as loyal or accustomed to American ways. And that is very hurtful and very painful. The pain though, is no less intense for third or fourth-generation Asian Americans.

What can be done to change this sentiment?

Asian Americans need to be outspoken. If we don't speak out, no one is going to be educated. We were criticized by certain people that said, "gee, you're making a big thing about nothing [regarding the Pat Bowlen incident]. Why don't you worry about the drug problem in East Palo Alto?" I don't want to downplay the severity of the crisis of the drug problem in East Palo Alto, but being concerned about it does not mean that we should not be concerned about racial epithets which exemplify, in some instances, deeply held racist attitudes against Asians. We have got to speak out.

In a recent news commentary, Dan Rather of the CBS Evening News criticized the federal budgeting process and likened the confusion among the federal legislators over the development and approval of the national budget as "Chinese accounting". What does "Chinese accounting" mean? Chinese Americans are not responsible in any shape or form for the formation of the national budget. Where does Rather get the idea that Chinese accounting is less admirable than accounting by another racial group? "Chinese fire drills," "Chinese budgeting methods," "Chinese walls" - none of these racial terms and stereotypes have anything to do with Chinese people. All of this is pretty outrageous and we have to work at speaking up.

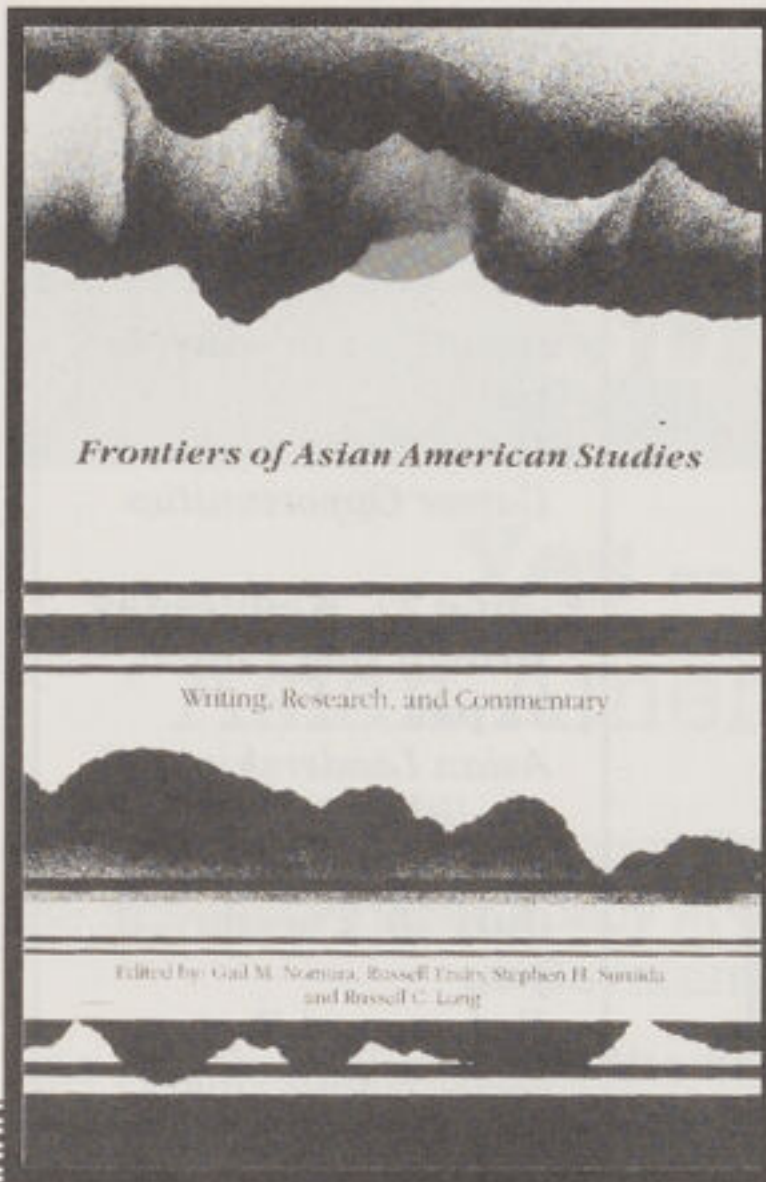
Any final words?

In the 1980s, a lot of students have felt tremendous pressure to pursue careers in the traditional paths because their sense of self-worth was defined by their jobs and their earnings. Community based organizations did not have the luxury of having a lot of students coming back to do community work. The late 60s and 70s were a different time.

I hope that through ethnic study courses and multi-cultural education, students will learn more about Asian American history and the Asian American experience, and feel

that they can contribute to the Asian American community by working in community organizations or civil right projects or programs. Ironically, CAA is feeling the effects of some of the civil rights successes of the last two and a half decades. The push to integrate Asian Americans in the workplace has created goals and dreams for Asian Americans beyond the community. But we need to remember that their dreams must bring them back to the community.

Interview by Jaithara Sookprasert, April 17, 1990.



Frontiers of Asian American Studies

Writing, Research, and Commentary

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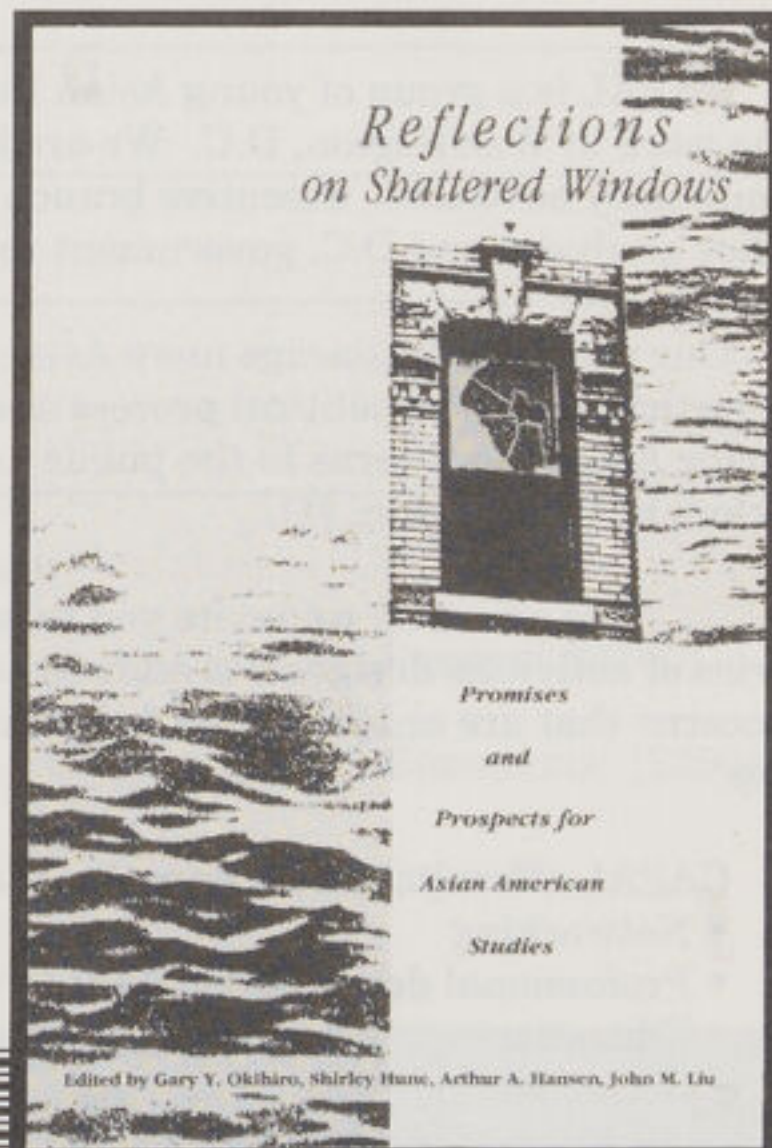
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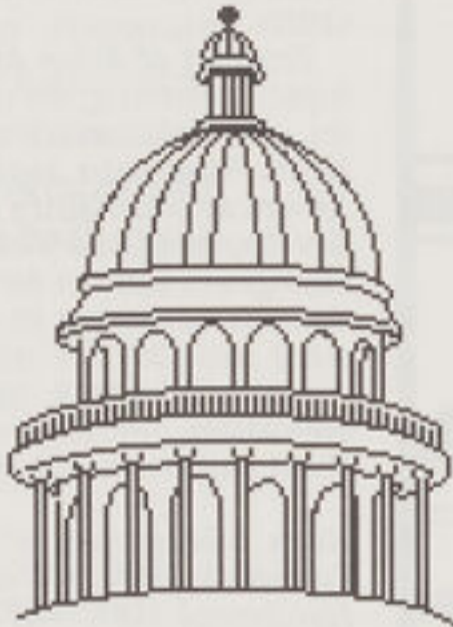
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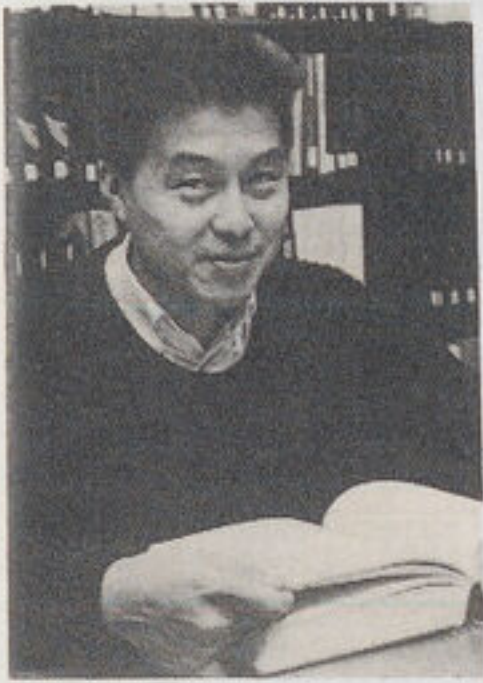
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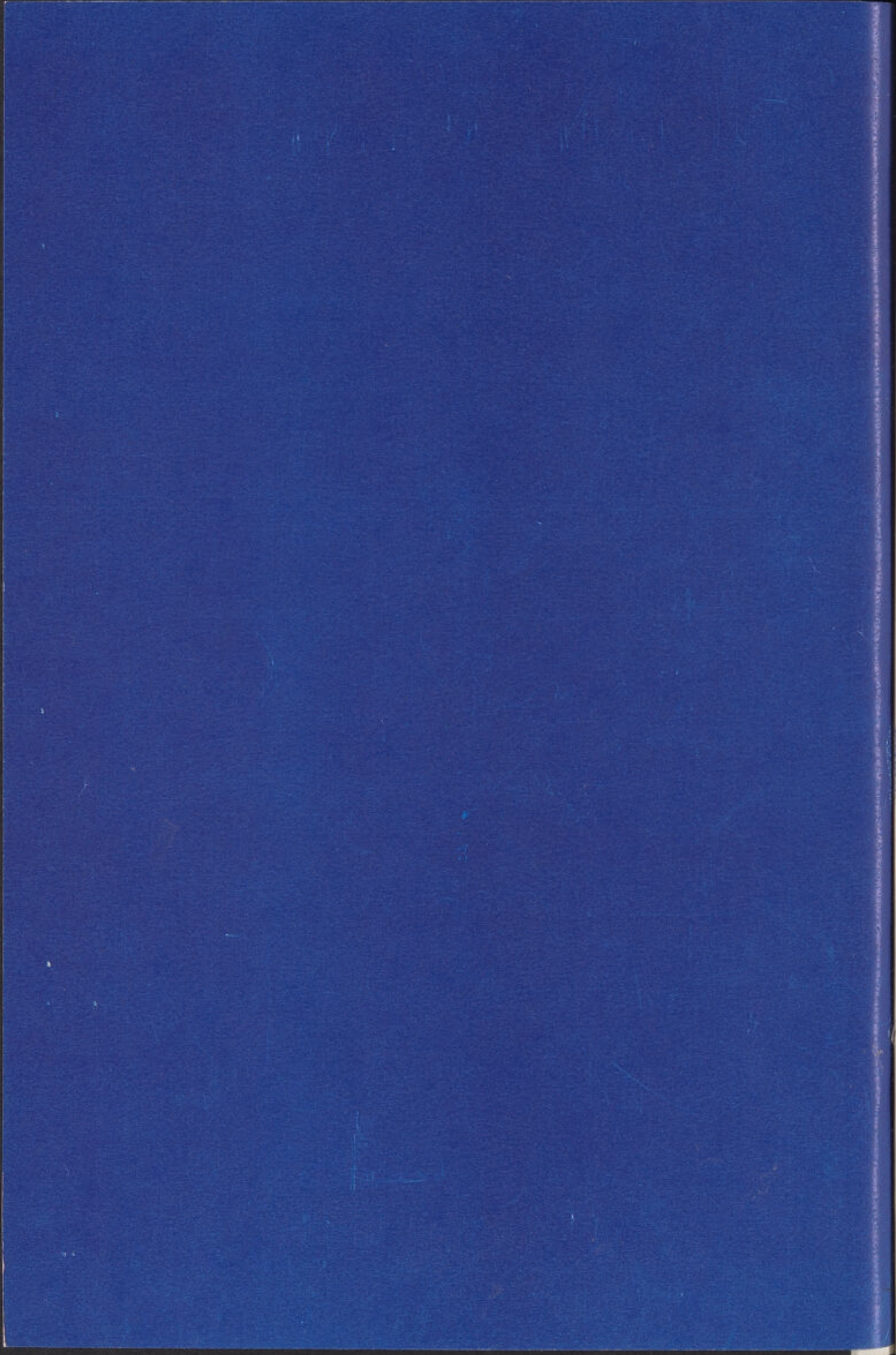
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