



HARVARD Kennedy School
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW

VOLUME 21, 2010–2011
AN HKS STUDENT PUBLICATION

INSIDE

FEATURE ARTICLES

The Forgotten Fishermen
Affordable Housing in New York City
“Asian” Category in MCAS Tracking

RESEARCH

DREAMs Deterred
Defensive Naturalization
Sangha in New York

INTERVIEWS

Jennifer 8. Lee
Mike Kim

REVIEW AND COMMENTARIES

Beyond Black and White
Confucian Confusion
Building an Effective Asian American
Service Organization



HARVARD Kennedy School
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

ASIAN AMERICAN

POLICY REVIEW

VOLUME 21, 2010–2011

AN HKS STUDENT PUBLICATION

The articles, commentaries, interviews, book reviews, and additional editorial content appearing in the *Asian American Policy Review* do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the sponsoring university, or the members of the advisory boards.

© 2011 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved. Except as otherwise specified, no article or portion herein is to be reproduced or adapted to other works without the expressed written consent of the editors of the *Asian American Policy Review*.

ISSN# 1062-1830

Where Leaders Come to Learn

HARVARD

Continuous learning is no longer an option – it's a necessity.

Effective leaders know the importance of building new skills, networking, and keeping up with innovative ideas and the latest research.

With programs in areas such as leadership, strategy, negotiations, governance, and finance, Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education focuses on giving senior executives the skills they need to tackle complex public problems.

For more information on Executive Education programs offered by Harvard Kennedy School, visit www.hks.harvard.edu/ee/journal or call 617-496-0484.




HARVARD Kennedy School

Executive Education

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Current volumes are available at \$40 per copy for libraries and other institutions, \$20 for individuals, and \$10 for students. Back issues are also available for purchase.



DONATIONS

Donations in support of the *Asian American Policy Review* are tax-deductible as a gift under the John F. Kennedy School of Government's nonprofit IRS 501(c)(3) status. Grants and other contributory assistance should specify intent for use by the *Asian American Policy Review* in order to facilitate processing.

For all inquiries regarding submissions, advertising, and subscriptions, please contact us at:

Asian American Policy Review
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
79 John F. Kennedy Street Cambridge, MA 02138

Phone: (617) 496-8655
Fax: (617) 384-9555
aaprjournal@gmail.com
<http://www.aaprjournal.org>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The AAPR staff would like to specially acknowledge and thank the following individuals for their committed support of our journal:

Fred Wang
Dean Chris Fortunato
Richard Parker, faculty advisor
Martha Foley, publisher
Lori Goldstein, copy editor
Ace Creative, production

ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW: 2010–2011 EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-Chief:

Uyen Doan

Senior Editor:

Helen Leung

Research Editor:

Thao Anh Tran

Commentary Editor:

Francis Choi

Features Editor:

Quinnie Lin

ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW: 2010–2011 BUSINESS STAFF

Editor-in-Chief:

Tommy Tseng

Senior Editor:

Elisa Park

Public Relations Manager:

Yuki Kondo-Shah

Publisher:

Martha Foley

Faculty Advisor:

Richard Parker

CONTENTS

1 **Editors Remarks**

FEATURE ARTICLES

3 **The Forgotten Fishermen: Recommendations to Support the Southeast Asian Community in the Gulf Coast**

by Jean Shiraki

9 **The Struggle for Quality Affordable Housing in New York City: Asian Americans for Equality**

by Peter Gee, Douglas Nam Le, Richard Lee, Jo-Ann Yoo, and Christopher Kui

19 **The “Asian” Category in MCAS Achievement Gap Tracking: Time for a Change**

by Philip Lee

RESEARCH

29 **DREAMs Deterred: Filipino Experiences and an Anti-Militarization Critique of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act**

by Tracy Lachica Buenavista and Jordan Beltran Gonzales

39 **Defensive Naturalization and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment: Chinese Immigrants in Three Primate Metropolises**

by Paul M. Ong

57 **A Pure Land in the East: Study of a *Sangha* in New York: Influence of Internment Camps on Community Development**

by Ayako Sairenji

INTERVIEWS

67 **As All-American as General Tso’s Chicken: An Interview with Jennifer 8. Lee**

Interviewed by Quinnie Lin

71 **Rescuing Refugees: An Interview with Mike Kim**

Interviewed by Thao Anh Tran



REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

- 79 **Beyond Black and White: Asian Americans, Mass Incarceration, and the Criminal Justice System**
by Harvey Gee
- 87 **Confucian Confusion**
by Jay Chen
- 95 **Building an Effective Asian American Service Organization**
by Sandy Dang

EDITORS REMARKS

In this, our twenty-first volume, the *Asian American Policy Review* continues to provide a forum for highlighting issues and presenting voices from within the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. The twenty-first edition, which includes a diverse range of perspectives, explores issues at the forefront of national policy debates.

From the impact of the DREAM Act on undocumented Filipino populations, to the ensuing economic uncertainty faced by Vietnamese Americans after the Gulf Coast oil spill, to the space occupied by Asian Americans in education debates, the articles in this volume offer a snapshot of salient policy issues through the lens of the AAPI community. In addition, our authors examine the politicization of Chinese American naturalization patterns, the cultural uniqueness of a Japanese American Buddhist church in New York City, and racial disparities within the criminal justice system. One article describes the activist movement to secure equality through affordable housing in New York City's Chinatown, while another discusses the creation of successful Asian American service organizations. In addition, our interviews provide a glimpse into two worlds, from the media spotlight to the North Korea-China border.

We express our deepest thanks to all of the authors and interviewees for their thoughtful contributions to this year's journal. We are grateful to our sponsors for their generous support, and we thank Richard Parker and Martha Foley for their guidance. Finally, a special acknowledgement is due to our editorial staff members for their hard work and tremendous attention to detail in bringing the journal to life.

Happy reading.

Sincerely,

Uyen Doan
Editor-in-Chief

Tommy Tseng
Editor-in-Chief

HARVARD JOURNAL OF ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY

Subscription Form

ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW
ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF

VOLUME XXI

The 2010–2011 *Asian American Policy Review* staff is proud to present the twenty-first edition of our journal. Founded in 1989, *AAPR* is the first nonpartisan academic journal in the country dedicated to analyzing public policy issues facing the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

RESERVE YOUR COPY OF VOLUME XXI TODAY

\$20 individuals

\$40 institutions

Checks should be made out to Harvard University—AAPR

NAME (print) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Mail this form with your check to:

Asian American Policy Review
Harvard Kennedy School
79 JFK Street, Cambridge MA 02138
Phone: (617) 496-8655 Email: aapr@hks.harvard.edu

The Forgotten Fishermen: Recommendations to Support the Southeast Asian Community in the Gulf Coast

by Jean Shiraki

Jean Shiraki is the Daniel K. Inouye Advocacy and Policy Coordinator at the Japanese American Citizens League's (JACL) Washington, DC, office. She focuses mainly on health care, education, environmental justice, and Japanese American cultural preservation policy. Shiraki's role at the JACL includes organizing leadership conferences in the nation's capital as well as coordinating for the national JACL Convention. More recently, she has responded to the BP oil spill crisis in the Gulf Coast and has engaged local community organizations and different entities of government to work together for a better solution. Prior to Washington, DC, Shiraki was a consultant in Los Angeles and San Francisco where she was engaged by the U.S. Department of the Interior in support of its defense of the largest civil class-action lawsuit against the U.S. government, which involved the alleged mismanagement of the Individual Indian Money trusts for more than a 100-year period. Shiraki has a B.A. in health and humanity and a minor in East Asian languages and cultures from the University of Southern California. She was born and raised in Wailua, Kaua'i.

When BP's Deepwater Horizon offshore oil rig exploded off the coast of Louisiana on April 20, 2010, Gulf Coast communities braced themselves for the challenges of yet another environmental disaster. Still recovering from the aftereffects of 2005's Hurricane Katrina, these communities have been slowly and steadily rebuilding their economies and livelihoods. The BP oil spill had huge ramifications for the Gulf Coast since its seafood and commercial fishing business is a \$21 billion industry, accounting for approximately one-fifth of the seafood production in the United States (Dade et al. 2010).

For Southeast Asians residing along the Gulf Coast, the spill was the latest hardship for members of this community who had escaped their homelands following the takeover of the Communist regime and had come to the United States. In the 1970s, upon arriving in the United States, many Southeast Asian refugees settled on the Gulf Coast and began to get involved in the fishing and seafood industry as it did not require English proficiency. Today, Vietnamese Americans account for one-third of all commercial seafood workers in the Gulf Coast. Meanwhile, at least 80 percent of the Southeast Asian community depends on the seafood industry for its livelihood (Esclamado 2010). Frustration, anxiety, and economic concerns stemming from the oil spill continue to challenge the community's recovery efforts.

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) partnered with OCA (formerly known as the Organization of Chinese Americans) and several organizations from the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) and took multiple trips to Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana in July, August, and

September 2010 to hear firsthand the community's concerns after the oil rig explosion. In all three states, these organizations participated in meetings with community-based organizations (CBOs) and local congressional offices. They also hosted town hall meetings and small focus groups. I have gone on multiple assessment trips with OCA and, in this article, speak on behalf of JACL and OCA for their first account assessments of the Southeast Asian community.

The length and scope of this article do not allow me to address the numerous institutional, governmental, and organizational issues surrounding the oil spill. As such, this article only aims to assess the implications of decisions that affected the Southeast Asian community and to offer recommendations on ways to provide support to families in the Gulf Coast.

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Language Access

Language access is one of the major barriers facing the Southeast Asian community in its efforts to recover from the oil spill crisis. Government agencies and organizations assisting the community must recognize this as a critical issue that needs to be addressed. Translated materials disseminated to the impacted community should emphasize accuracy, clarity, and cultural sensitivity. JACL and OCA recommend that there be a culturally sensitive program for the Southeast Asian community that tailors to its specific needs throughout the entire process. This includes filing paperwork and seeking counsel. Educational materials regarding the oil spill that seek to inform residents in the area of environmental issues and health concerns should

be available in different languages. In order to dispel confusion and provide effective assistance to a community seeking to overcome a traumatic event, language access is extremely important.

Claims Process

In August 2010, JACL and OCA attended a town hall meeting hosted by U.S. Senator for Louisiana Mary Landrieu and Attorney Ken Feinberg, who has been tasked by the Obama administration to oversee the BP claims process, in Kenner, LA. As Feinberg presented the claims process for the Gulf Coast, we raised the issue of having appropriate interpreters and translated materials for the Southeast Asian community. Currently, there are only four interpreters in Feinberg's claims office to assist the entire Southeast Asian community in the Gulf Coast. The 2000 U.S. Census reported 75 percent of Vietnamese adults older than twenty-five have difficulty speaking in English (Mississippi Coalition of Vietnamese American Fisherfolk and Families 2010). This statistic affirms the importance of having competent interpreters working in the claims office. Since the language involving the claims process is very technical, CBOs have been working diligently to act as liaisons between community members and the claims office and help process the paperwork (CBOs typically spend one to two hours per person). Therefore, JACL and OCA recommend that the claims office hire and train more interpreters so it can better assist the community. Feinberg and the claims office should be held accountable for failing to provide a sufficient number of interpreters to effectively process the claims for the Southeast Asian community.

In addition to the language access issue associated with the claims process, the timeliness of processing the claims for compensation has been a major concern. When Feinberg first announced the claims process, there was a commitment to having a forty-eight-hour turnaround time. His pledge has remained an empty promise. Many members of the Southeast Asian community who filed claims in the first week that the claims office opened, August 23, 2010, have yet to receive any compensation. The claims office should strive to process and distribute compensations in a timely manner.

Unity Among Community-Based Organizations and More Coordination Among Government Agencies

Since April 2010, many CBOs have been working tirelessly to help residents along the Gulf Coast overcome the effects of the oil spill crisis. Having the appropriate capacity is always an issue among CBOs, and therefore, it would be beneficial for groups to communicate and coordinate more effectively with each other. During the second assessment trip in August 2010, while recognizing the efforts of grassroots organizations, JACL and OCA along with other organizations recommended the formation of a joint coalition along the Gulf Coast. We also jointly called for more effective correspondence among government agencies. Strong interagency communication is crucial in assisting the community. In addition, it is important for the different governmental agencies to have a more uniform and transparent process for communication available to local and national community organizations.

Mental Health

The inability of males in the Southeast Asian community along the Gulf Coast to provide for their families has had a negative impact on the men's mental health. Consequently, there has been a noted increase in the level of male aggression at home. During the small focus groups conducted by JACL and OCA, male participants voiced concerns about their inability to provide for their families. Due to the lack of availability of well-trained clinicians of Southeast Asian descent, addressing the mental health of the Southeast Asian community will continue to be a challenge. The National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMA), which accompanied JACL and OCA on one of the assessment trips, recommends developing a local mental health advisory council to guide the community's recovery from the long-term mental health issues. Resources for more culturally sensitive and bilingual training must be made readily available. Of the \$52 million BP devoted to mental health services and distributed to the four Gulf States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, \$10 million was directed toward the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). It remains uncertain, however, as to the level of access to these resources the Southeast Asian communities will gain. As stated before, the Southeast Asian community is recovering from a series of traumatic events: escaping the Vietnam War, Hurricane Katrina, and most recently, the BP oil spill. Funding needs to be allocated toward training more clinicians to restore the Southeast Asian community's spirit and mental health.

Future of Gulf Coast Seafood Industry

We were fortunate to have visited the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) labs in Pascagoula, Mississippi. While there, NOAA briefed us about the process of seafood monitoring and testing in the Gulf, which the organization has been continuously doing. The samples are being tested chemically and also through sniff and taste tests to detect contaminants and/or other harmful toxins. Fisherfolk have expressed concerns regarding the validity of these tests and remain unaware of their high accuracy. It is a challenge to ensure food safety and to overcome fears of whether the Gulf seafood, which accounts for one-fifth of the nation's seafood, is safe to distribute and eat. In an effort to help sustain the Gulf Coast seafood industry, NOAA and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should work together to ensure seafood safety and to better educate the entire nation about the validity of these tests. These two agencies should include the Southeast Asian fisherfolk community in their outreach campaign. In a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner, they should educate this community about their methods and inform affected community members of the progress of the tests NOAA and FDA are conducting. Due to the lack of access to information about water openings or closures, some members of the Southeast Asian community have been fined for violating the rules, despite these fines being avoidable.

Future Job Development

By far, one of the ongoing challenges for the fisherfolk communities in the Gulf Coast is job development. Since it is predicted that the fishermen will not be able to fish in the Gulf Coast in the near future, they must find other ways to

support their families. The Southeast Asian community is very hesitant about new job training as the fishermen are only familiar with working for themselves, not under a superior. Fishermen are also naturally concerned about entering fields with which they are completely unfamiliar. As such, JACL and OCA recommend job training and job development that will promote the entrepreneurship spirit. The claims process should address the issues of compensation and reimbursement for training. It would be beneficial to train and keep the fisherfolk community in the Gulf as opposed to moving these individuals out of state to ensure that the community will be around when it is needed again in the future once the industry is revived. Job development is a major barrier that needs to be addressed; hopefully sustainable solutions can be worked out for the community.

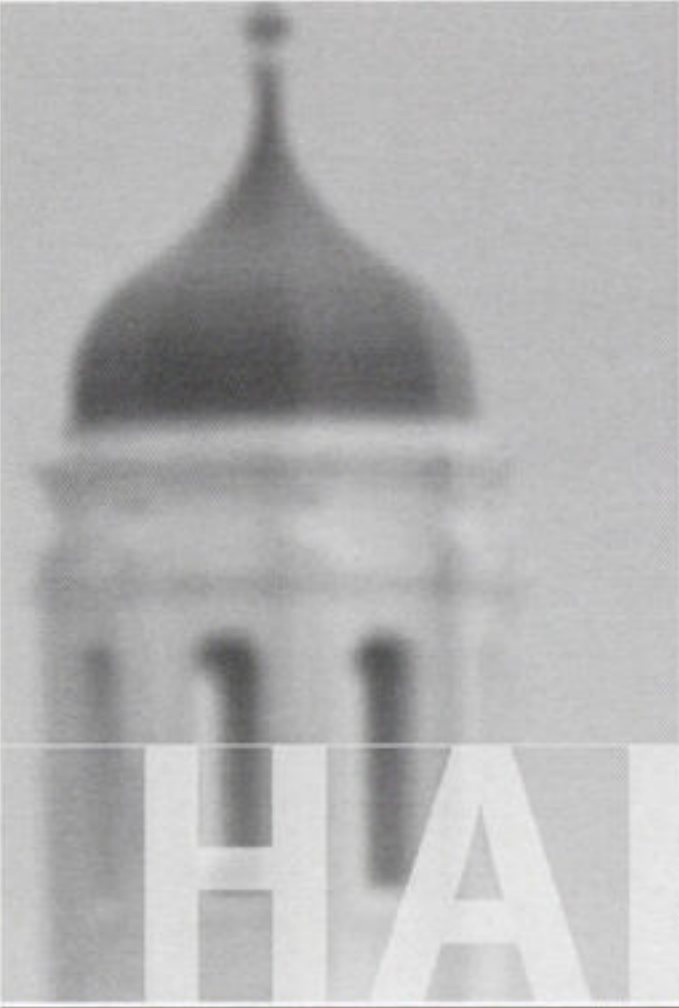
Future Outlook

As we look into the future, coordinated efforts and increased access to resources are more important than ever. When the oil well was capped in July 2010, government agencies stepped back and reduced assistance efforts in the Gulf Coast. The sense of urgency to restore the livelihoods of the Southeast Asian community in the Gulf Coast still needs to be a priority. Though the Exxon Valdez Alaskan oil spill occurred in 1989, the fishing communities and environment are still in recovery today, more than twenty years later. This shows the need to maintain momentum and to continue working steadily to restore the Gulf Coast communities and seafood industry. Even though the oil well has been capped, government agencies and community organizations should continue to work to address the disaster's long-term effects such as job loss, environmental damage, and mental

health. Given the vital role the Southeast Asian fisherfolk community plays in sustaining the Gulf Coast industry, its inclusion is essential in discussions concerning the future of the industry. The community should not be denied access simply because its members lack English proficiency. As refugees, they sought out the American dream and, therefore, have the right to equal opportunity as any other American in this country. There are many challenges to overcome in such a disaster, and this can only be accomplished by coordination between all community groups, government entities, business corporations, and private philanthropists. JACL and OCA call for all entities to work closely together in ensuring that the once thriving Gulf Coast will emerge victoriously from this crisis.

REFERENCES

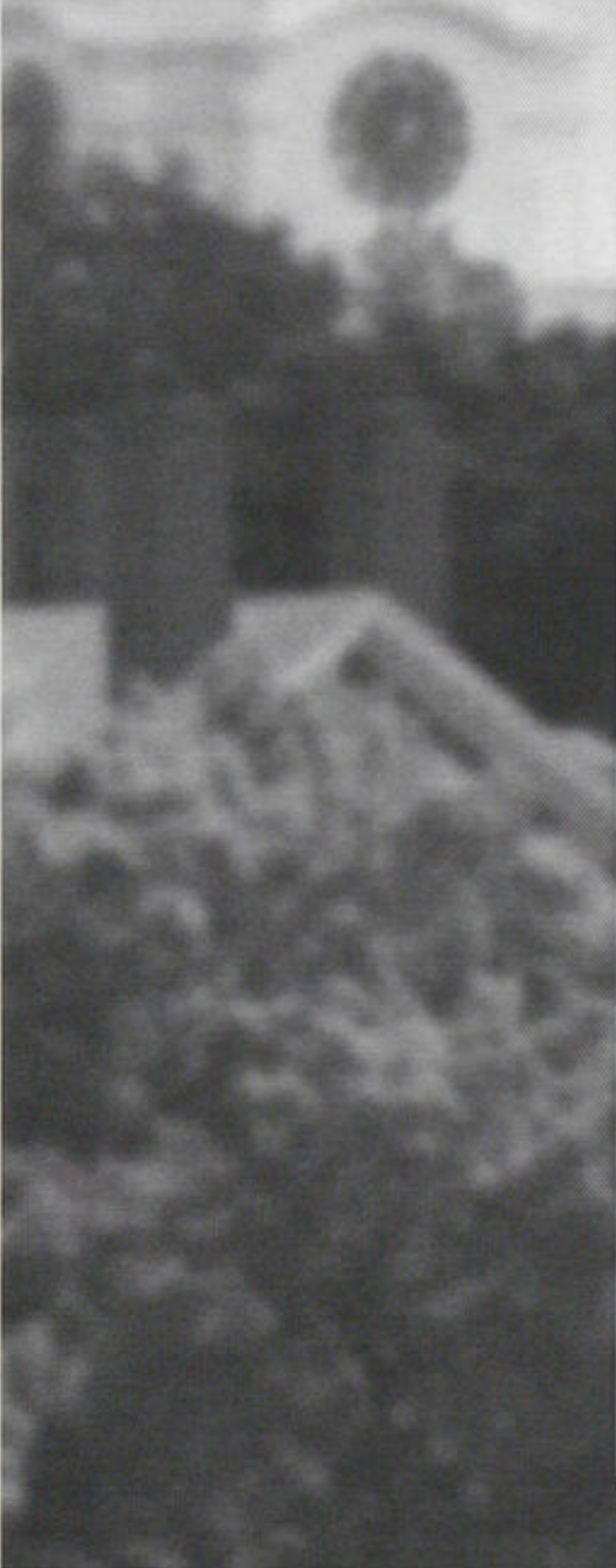
- Dade, Corey, Jeffrey Ball, and Aoun Sahi. 2010. Some fishing halted, but impact is unclear. *Wall Street Journal*, May 3 (http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704608104575220622021775434.html?mod=WSJ_hps_MIDDLEForthNews).
- Esclamado, Leo. 2010. Vietnamese Americans speak about BP oil drilling disaster. Mary Queen of Viet Nam Community Development Corporation (MQVN CDC): Regional Gulf Coast Press Conference by Vietnamese Americans to Speak on the BP Oil Spill Disaster, June 12.
- Mississippi Coalition of Vietnamese American Fisherfolk and Families. 2010. Impact of BP oil spill on Vietnamese American communities and seafood industry. Mississippi Coalition Preliminary Report.
- Reuters. 2010. Timeline: Gulf of Mexico oil spill. October 29 (www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE69S2LX20101029?pageNumber=1).
- Southeast Asian Fisherfolk Community. 2010. Focus groups conducted by JACL and OCA. Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, July 7–10, August 15–19, September 9–10.



Where Leaders Come to Learn

HARVARD

Continuous learning is no longer an option – it's a necessity.



Effective leaders know the importance of building new skills, networking, and keeping up with innovative ideas and the latest research.

With programs in areas such as leadership, strategy, negotiations, governance, and finance, Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education focuses on giving senior executives the skills they need to tackle complex public problems.

For more information on Executive Education programs offered by Harvard Kennedy School, visit www.hks.harvard.edu/ee/journal or call 617-496-0484.



HARVARD Kennedy School
Executive Education

The Struggle for Quality Affordable Housing in New York City: Asian Americans for Equality

by Peter Gee, Douglas Nam Le, Richard Lee, Jo-Ann Yoo, and Christopher Kui

Peter Gee is the Associate Director of Resource Development and Programs at Asian Americans for Equality where he manages day-to-day operations for the resource development department and youth programs. Gee previously worked as the Executive Policy and Planning Associate at God's Love We Deliver where he helped launch the agency's client advocacy program focused on medical nutrition therapy. He serves on the board of directors for Community Healthcare Network. Gee completed his undergraduate degree at the University of California, Berkeley, and his master in public policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University with a focus on community development.

Douglas Nam Le is Asian Americans for Equality's Community Development and Partnership Manager. He is responsible for community-based planning, organizational outreach, capacity building, and developing new initiatives. He was formerly a partnership specialist with the New York Regional Census Center where he mobilized diverse stakeholders in the Bronx and Manhattan to raise community awareness about the 2010 Census. In 2005 he cofounded the

Vietnamese Community Health Initiative. He is a member of CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities and has served on its board of directors since 2008 as treasurer. He holds a degree in urban studies from Columbia College and completed a master's in urban planning at NYU Wagner School of Public Service with a focus on economic development and housing policy.

Richard Lee is the Public Policy and Legislative Advocate at Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE). For years, AAFE has been a vocal community advocate, and Lee has been serving at the forefront of its advocacy campaigns. He has advocated for deeper housing affordability in projects, such as the city's Willets Point and Hunters Point South development plans, and is advancing key city and statewide legislation. Lee received his B.S. in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University and is currently pursuing his master's in public administration at NYU Wagner School of Public Service with a concentration on public policy analysis.

Jo-Ann Yoo is the Special Assistant to the Executive Director and Director of Development at Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE). She brings a wealth of experience in program management, operations, and advocacy in the fields of community development and immigrant rights. Yoo joined AAFE in 2002 as program manager of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation's Residential Grant Program. Prior to AAFE, she worked at the New York Immigration Coalition where she served as the administrative and special projects director. She also serves on the board of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development. Yoo received her J.D. and her B.A. from the University of Denver.

Christopher Kui is the Executive Director of Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE). During his tenure, AAFE has raised more

than \$88 million to build 700 housing units for low-income and homeless individuals and families and more than \$244 million in mortgage financing on behalf of immigrant and low-income families to purchase homes. Kui is the founder and currently chairs the board of directors of Renaissance Economic Development Corporation, a nonprofit organization providing financing and technical assistance to immigrant-, minority-, and women-owned small businesses. Kui, a Chinese American who immigrated to New York from Hong Kong in 1970, holds a bachelor's in economics from New York University and a fellowship in government from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

In serving New York City over the last three decades, Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) has evolved from community advocate to community builder. Today, the organization works for community development and empowerment on many fronts: producing affordable housing, offering social and legal services, providing tenant and minority advocacy, encouraging civic participation, helping individuals build assets, and initiating economic development. This article examines the continuing struggle for quality affordable housing in New York City. The history of affordable housing in Manhattan is intertwined with the founding and growth of AAFE. As we explore how Asian Americans are affected by the current state of affordable housing we'll also discuss AAFE's past and future role in Manhattan.

HISTORY OF THE FIGHT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN MANHATTAN'S CHINATOWN

In 1974, construction began on the Confucius Plaza high-rise development, a federally funded project in the heart of New York City's Chinatown. Despite city policies requiring employment opportunities for minority workers, the builder refused to hire Chinese applicants. Outraged by this blatant discrimination, a coalition of Chinatown residents, students, and professionals came together to demand the right of access for Asian Americans to those construction jobs.

The leaders formed Asian Americans for Equal Employment, later renamed Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE). AAFE coordinated demonstrations, marches, and picketing around the Confucius Plaza site. The sustained effort at Confucius Plaza spilled over beyond the Chinatown and Asian American communities. African American and Latino construction workers and activists also came to the site and held protest signs written in English and Chinese to show their solidarity with the protesters. After six months of unrelenting demonstrations, the Confucius Plaza struggle ended with AAFE's first victory for minority rights and equal employment when the builder was pressured into hiring twenty-seven minority workers, including Asian Americans.

After experiencing victory with Confucius Plaza, AAFE continued to play a leadership role in civil rights in the 1970s and beyond. For example, in 1975, when an Asian American engineer was stripped and beaten by the police for a minor traffic violation and then charged with assault, AAFE helped to organize a protest of more than 20,000 people at New York's City Hall, which led to the New York

Police Department dropping the charges. AAFE also led local protests against anti-Asian violence that was happening across the country. For instance, in 1973 in San Francisco, Chol Soo Lee, a Korean American, was wrongly convicted of murder for killing a gang member and ultimately sentenced to death. AAFE organized pickets to gain exoneration for Lee in New York City in solidarity with the California activists. AAFE also demanded justice for Vincent Chin, who was murdered in Michigan in 1982 in a racially motivated attack. In addition, AAFE rallied to raise awareness about the mistreatment of Vietnamese refugees by other Asian countries and called for an end to apartheid in South Africa.

AAFE's path toward community builder began when it started its first housing clinics in 1979 and discovered that residents in Chinatown were living in extremely hazardous conditions. People were crowded into basements and other nonresidential spaces that were illegally subdivided into tiny rooms. The high demand for living space allowed landlords to ignore housing codes and occupancy standards and to demand elevated rents and "key money" (cash payments to secure the option to rent). In the course of its work, AAFE realized that there was no place to refer these people for help. For one, city agencies and community organizations that dealt with housing issues lacked Chinese-speaking staff. Again, AAFE took a leadership role by serving as a link between the existing housing groups and the Chinatown community.

Soon, many people in Chinatown were coming to AAFE for housing help. Tenants came to complain that their heat and hot water had been shut off or that they were being harassed and intimidated

by their landlords. Garment factory owners were being evicted to make room for expensive new offices. With skyrocketing real estate prices in New York and downtown neighborhoods like SoHo and the East Village becoming increasingly fashionable, landlords were evicting low-income and small business tenants in order to cash in on the new trends.

In response, AAFE launched a campaign called "Fight Gentrification and Save Chinatown!" With the fighting words of "housing is a right," AAFE organized tenant associations and trained tenant leaders. However, in 1981, a new ordinance creating a Special Manhattan Bridge District (SMBD) was passed, encouraging real estate speculators to build high-rise luxury condominiums in place of the neighborhood's existing tenements. Fearing that many more low-income Chinatown residents would be displaced, AAFE filed a class-action lawsuit against the city in 1983 known as *AAFE v. Koch*.

The case was decided in AAFE's favor in the New York State Supreme Court, which marked an unexpected victory in the fight for affordable housing. While the decision was later reversed in the Court of Appeals, the lawsuit served as a significant obstacle to developers, keeping the worst effects of the ordinance at bay.

The *AAFE v. Koch* lawsuit proved that opposing gentrification was not enough; it was time to deliver some concrete results. The organization had already built a reputation as an important advocate for New York's Asian American and immigrant communities, but AAFE's second decade presented the organization with a new set of challenges.

As AAFE staff members expanded their work in the community, they were constantly reminded of the importance of creating affordable housing. The effects of the SMBD had been neutralized, but Chinatown's housing was still woefully inadequate, with many local residents living in rundown tenements built more than a century ago. In January 1985, the Red Cross asked for AAFE's help in assisting fire victims from a destroyed apartment building at 54 Eldridge Street. With no heat or hot water, the tenants had resorted to using electric heaters in the dead of winter. The old, over-loaded wiring ignited a blaze that killed two elderly people and left 125 tenants homeless. It took fourteen months to find city housing for the displaced tenants, who ended up living far from their jobs and their children's schools in Chinatown.

After this experience, AAFE resolved to create transitional housing in the neighborhood to minimize disruption in people's lives. The staff found two vacant buildings at 176 and 180 Eldridge Street and began to seek financing for rehabilitation that could provide both temporary and permanent low-income housing. These buildings, the Equality Houses, were the city's pilot usage of the Low-Income Tax Credit.¹

In 1989, the first elderly and low-income tenants moved into their new apartments in the Equality Houses. As AAFE became a property owner, the organization made even greater efforts to communicate with tenants about their role in making better housing a reality. AAFE's tenant organizers educated the new buildings' residents about their rights and responsibilities and helped create tenants' associations to address larger issues affecting the quality of life in the neighborhood.

CHANGING NEIGHBORHOODS: MOVING BEYOND MANHATTAN'S CHINATOWN TO OTHER IMMIGRANT GATEWAYS

Chinatown remains the iconic gateway for New York City's Asian American community. However, over the past three decades, other prominent and more rapidly expanding Asian American neighborhoods have taken shape throughout the city. The American Community Survey's 5-Year Estimates (2005-2009) indicate a significant growth of the Asian American community throughout New York City (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). While New York City's population increased by 3.7 percent between 2000 and 2009, the Asian American community grew by 16.7 percent during the same time period. Now representing 12.2 percent of New York City's 8.3 million residents, NYC's Asian American community is diverse: 45.6 percent Chinese; 22.9 percent Indian; 9.1 percent Korean; 7.2 percent Filipino; 3.2 percent Bangladeshi; 3 percent Pakistani; 2.5 percent Japanese; and 1.8 percent Vietnamese (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

In the previous decade, Chinatown in Manhattan, Flushing and Jackson Heights in Queens, and Sunset Park in Brooklyn were known to be the immigrant "gateway communities" for the Asian American community. Data from the American Community Survey indicates that today the largest concentrations of Asian American New Yorkers as a share of local population still live in Flushing (43.9 percent Asian) and Chinatown and the Lower East Side (35.3 percent Asian). However, the neighborhoods with the next largest shares of Asian American New Yorkers lie in the periphery of the traditional gateways, such as Bayside (34.8

percent Asian) and Fresh Meadows (31.8 percent Asian), near Flushing, as well as Woodside and Sunnyside (33.9 percent Asian) and Elmhurst (32.3 percent Asian) near Jackson Heights—all neighborhoods in Queens.

While growth of the Asian American community continues in historic Asian American neighborhoods such as Jackson Heights, Queens (growth of 38.4 percent), and Sunset Park, Brooklyn (growth of 28 percent), nontraditional Asian neighborhoods have experienced even faster growth of the Asian American population. For example, the Asian American population in Bay Ridge and Bensonhurst in Brooklyn has grown 77.9 percent and 87.8 percent, respectively.

The shift of Asian Americans living in certain neighborhoods throughout New York City since the 2000 U.S. Census also tells an interesting story. The Chinatown, Two Bridges, and Lower East Side neighborhoods of Manhattan witnessed a 33.9 percent increase in population overall, however, there was relatively no growth in the Asian American population during this time. While there are many factors for this change in the demographic makeup of these neighborhoods, the shift can at least partially be attributed to the high demand and escalating cost for housing in the area during this period. The neutral net growth of the Asian American population in Lower Manhattan is likely caused by the displacement of long-time, low-income residents and the rapid gentrification of the area. While the Asian American community still has a strong presence in Flushing, Queens, since 2000 the Asian population in that area has decreased 13.1 percent compared to an overall decrease of only 3.1 percent of the total Flushing population. Many of these Asian Flushing

residents have moved to adjacent neighborhoods such as Bayside, Corona, and Hillcrest where there are more affordable housing choices.

Additionally, the Asian American population has grown in four of the five most severely overcrowded neighborhoods: Sunset Park in Brooklyn and Elmhurst, Corona, Jackson Heights, Woodside, and Sunnyside in Queens. In recent years, New York City has reported that overcrowding, defined as 1 person per room within a housing unit, affects 21 percent of Asian renter households (New York City Department of City Planning 2008). The severe overcrowding rate (1.5 people per room within a housing unit) among Asian households is 6.1 percent—the highest rate among all racial/ethnic groups in the city and well above the citywide median of 4.7 percent (NYU Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy 2009). This is not surprising considering that the average household size for foreign-born New Yorkers is 2.7 persons compared to 2.1 persons for native-born residents. The limited supply of quality affordable housing available to immigrant communities has created situations where homeowners illegally convert basements, attics, and other livings spaces into unregulated rental units. While this practice leads to additional overcrowding and potentially unsafe living conditions, homeowners are often impelled to convert these rental units as a result of their own affordability pressures. Also, because these neighborhoods have some of the oldest housing stock in the city, severe overcrowding has caused fire hazards and led to numerous building fires and deaths in recent years. These tragedies have led to the demolition of affordable housing stock and the displacement of low-income families. The

crowding situation for Asian American immigrant households is critical and highlights the severe lack of housing choice for this population.

Today, Chinatown, Sunset Park, and Jackson Heights have significant poverty rates among their residents, and some of the highest rent burdens in the city are also reported in significantly Asian American neighborhoods like Elmhurst, Corona, and Flushing in Queens and Bensonhurst in Brooklyn. A study of rental housing affordability among immigrant households coauthored by AAFE in 2008 found that “for households with income of less than half of the area median income (about \$37,000 for a family of 4), nearly 82% of immigrant tenants pay more than 30% of their income for rent, and more than 50% pay over half their income for rent” (Pratt Center for Community Development 2008). The median rent burden, defined as “the median percentage of income spent on gross rent,” for the city was 30.1 percent, however, for Asian American New Yorkers the burden was 33.4 percent—the second-highest share among all racial/ethnic groups (New York City Department of City Planning 2008).

Due to the ever-shifting fabric of the Asian American community across the five boroughs of New York City, and the increasing need for affordable housing in diverse Asian American neighborhoods, community-based organizations like AAFE are committed to remaining responsive to the emerging needs of the communities we serve.

ADVANCING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CHINATOWN AND BEYOND

The need for affordable housing in New York City is substantial, particularly in Asian American communities that continue to live in overcrowded and unsafe conditions. AAFE has continued to build upon the work of the past thirty-seven years by making it an organizational priority to preserve New York City’s rapidly shrinking affordable housing stock and to develop new sources of affordable housing.

The preservation of New York City’s and New York State’s rent-regulated housing units is crucial for the growing Asian American community and is AAFE’s primary advocacy objective. Rent-regulated housing is New York’s largest source of affordable housing, but because the state and city no longer construct rent-regulated housing and because of major loopholes in the law, thousands of rent-regulated housing units are lost each year. In order to advocate for the protection of these affordable housing units, AAFE has been developing policy and legislation to close some of these loopholes and is utilizing the same grassroots organizing that formed the foundation of AAFE. In fact, community organizing remains at the heart of AAFE’s initiatives because it allows for the civic participation of an obviously overlooked constituency that often faces cultural and language barriers. One such campaign AAFE is currently engaged in is preventing the practice of demolition of rent-regulated housing by intentional neglect.

In New York, because of a regulatory loophole, a demolished rent-regulated unit does not need to be replaced, allowing unscrupulous landlords to intentionally neglect rent-regulated buildings in the hopes of demolishing the

buildings and replacing them with more profitable developments, leading to mass gentrification.

More and more, landlords are acquiring rent-regulated buildings and then ignoring tenant pleas for critical repairs. Despite numerous citations issued by the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB), landlords often wholly ignore violations and are unresponsive, unhelpful, and evasive when brought to court. Eventually, when the building is on the brink of collapse, the landlord calls the DOB on his or her own building, citing concerns for the safety of his or her own building's residents. By then, the DOB has no choice but to vacate the tenants and issue a demolition order on the building, clearing the way for the landlord to develop new projects on this land and permanently destroying an already diminishing part of the city's affordable housing stock. Essentially, landlords are rewarded financially for intentionally neglecting their buildings and endangering the safety of the tenants.

AAFE has witnessed several machinations of this trend in Chinatown, most recently at 128 Hester Street. Music Palace, the last theater in Chinatown, shut down in 2000. A developer purchased the building on 91 Bowery soon after and tore it down before it could be landmarked. The developer began plans to erect a hotel in its place. In addition to Music Palace, the developer purchased 128 Hester, a wholly rent-regulated building immediately adjacent to 91 Bowery. The landlord began construction of the hotel on Music Palace's former spot while intentionally undermining the structural integrity of the building at 128 Hester. The landlord received numerous violations, several of which required critical structural repairs. Yet, those violations were ignored.

On August 5, 2009, the landlord called the DOB on his own building, 128 Hester, on the grounds that the building sustained irreparable structural damages. The entire building was vacated, leaving sixty residents homeless. Additionally, the landlord managed to acquire the right to demolish the building, opening up an unchecked and unbridled opportunity to develop the site without the worry of rent-regulated tenants who would hinder massive profits. Sadly, a similar case is currently happening to another group of tenants at 11 Essex Street. In this case, the landlord ignored several DOB citations, which eventually led to the deterioration of the foundation and rear exterior wall. It is no longer a structurally sound building.

AAFE has been advocating for legislative and policy changes by meeting with key elected officials and government agencies, but it has been the strength of community organizing that has enabled AAFE to be the most effective. Through extensive internal research using available city data, AAFE has been able to identify buildings at serious risk for demolition and organize these residents to form tenant associations to defend their rights. Education and outreach efforts are being coordinated to arm residents with information on housing rights so they can directly voice their concerns to government agencies and elected officials. It is community organizing that allows a voice of one to become a voice of many.

Advocacy and grassroots organizing aim to preserve the existing affordable housing stock, but because affordable housing units are being lost faster than they are being built, AAFE is increasing work on the campaign to expand affordable housing development. What began with the Equality Houses has now

transformed into a portfolio of more than 650 units, enabling AAFE to become the largest affordable housing developer in Lower Manhattan. It has continued to improve the overall quality and supply of affordable housing in Chinatown and the Lower East Side and throughout parts of Queens.

Lack of land for new construction coupled with limited financial resources to compete aggressively with private real estate developers has emboldened AAFE to seek out new solutions beyond the traditional means of developing affordable housing to protect rent-regulated housing, especially in the outer-borough of Queens. AAFE's solution includes purchasing small-to-mid-sized properties off the private real estate market and preserving them as affordable housing units. AAFE has also been purchasing abandoned single-, two-, and three-family homes and renovating them to provide affordable home ownership options, as well as helping families facing foreclosures to stay in their homes and fighting the deterioration of neighborhoods across New York City.

These efforts, in tandem with our organizing and advocacy work, are AAFE's comprehensive approach to community development and help stem the dislocation of seniors, low-income and working families, students, and other residents who add to the vibrancy of New York City's Asian American neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION

Looking back at almost four decades of community organizing, the impact of AAFE's work is significant. Yet despite our successes, we are disheartened by the fact that the same social justice issues that helped to start AAFE remain in our

community: shortage of meaningful economic opportunities for newcomers, unscrupulous landlords taking advantage of tenants who lack resources to fight predatory displacement tactics, families struggling to find decent housing, significant gaps in culturally and linguistically sensitive government services, and seeming ignorance of the Asian American community's complexities.

However, we remain hopeful that we can tackle and fight these injustices, armed with diverse and powerful resources. We rely on the dynamic community organizations we partner with, an endless pool of young and sophisticated talent eager to engage in the struggle for social justice, and technology to distribute our message to the greater community.

As the first community development organization serving the Asian American community in New York City, AAFE strives to create other housing and economic development groups and promote complementary service delivery with social service agencies. We continue to organize forums to raise awareness among all services groups, work with other immigrant and newcomer communities for fairer government agency practices, and create opportunities to bring our community to the policy table.

REFERENCES

- Enterprise Community Partners. n.d. Financial products: Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (www.enterprisecommunity.org/financial_products).
- New York City Department of City Planning. 2008. Consolidated plan annual performance report 2007: Affirmatively furthering fair housing statement (www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/pub/publist.shtml).
- NYU Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy. 2009. State of the city's housing &

neighborhoods (<http://furmancenter.org/research/sonychan/2009-report>).

Pratt Center for Community Development. 2008. *Confronting the housing squeeze: Challenges facing immigrant tenants, and what New York can do*. Pratt Center for Community Development and the New York Immigration Coalition, October 16.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2009. *American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2005-2009* (www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release).

ENDNOTE

¹ The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is a federal tax credit program that gives incentives for the use of private equity in the development of affordable housing aimed at low-income Americans. LIHTC accounts for nearly 90 percent of all affordable rental housing created in the U.S. today (Enterprise Community Partners n.d.).

HARVARD JOURNAL OF ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY

Call for Papers

The *Asian American Policy Review* (AAPR) at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University is now accepting submissions. Founded in 1989, AAPR is the first nonpartisan academic journal in the country dedicated to analyzing public policy issues facing the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.

We seek papers exploring (1) the social, economic, and political factors impacting the AAPI community and (2) the role of AAPI individuals and communities in analyzing, shaping, and implementing public policy. We strongly encourage submissions from writers of all backgrounds, including scholars, policy makers, civil servants, advocates, and organizers.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The AAPR will select papers for publication based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of topic to AAPI issues and timeliness to current debates
- Originality of ideas and depth of research
- Sophistication and style of argument
- Contribution to scholarship and debates on AAPI issues

SUBMISSIONS GUIDELINES

- All submissions must be previously unpublished and based on original work.
- All submissions must be formatted according to The Chicago Manual of Style.
- Authors are required to cooperate with editing and fact-checking and to comply with AAPR's mandated deadlines. Authors who fail to meet these requirements may not be published.
- All submissions must include a cover letter with (1) author's name, (2) mailing address, (3) e-mail address, (4) phone number, and (5) a brief biography of no more than 300 words.
- Research articles should be 4,000 to 7,000 words in length and include a 100-word abstract.
- Commentaries should be 1,500 to 3,000 words in length.
- All figures, tables, and charts must be clear, easy to understand, and submitted as separate files.

Please e-mail submissions and questions to *Asian American Policy Review* at aapr@hks.harvard.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Uyen Doan
Editor-in-Chief

Tommy Tseng
Editor-in-Chief

The “Asian” Category in MCAS Achievement Gap Tracking: Time for a Change

by Philip Lee

Philip Lee is a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education where he has been selected as a Harvard University Presidential Scholar. Prior to starting his doctoral studies, Lee was the Assistant Director of Admissions at Harvard Law School where he led the office’s diversity outreach initiatives for four years. In addition, he has served as an adjunct faculty member at New England Law/Boston, teaching appellate advocacy to second-year law students in the fall semester for two years. Lee has also taught an informal seminar at Harvard College entitled “Race, Racism, and American Law.” Prior to his teaching and administrative work at Harvard and New England Law, he was a trial attorney for five years, working first as an Assistant Corporation Counsel at the New York City Law Department and later as an associate at a white-collar criminal defense boutique in Manhattan. Lee is a magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa graduate in psychology and sociology from Duke University and holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School where he interned at Harvard Defenders, the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Boston, and the Criminal Justice Institute. He is admitted to practice law in the State of

New York and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Data gathered on Asian American students in public school by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is aggregated into one general “Asian” category, which may skew the results, both perpetuating an enduring myth and masking any true gaps that may exist for certain Asian American subgroups. As explored in this article, achievement gap tracking for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is an apt example.

The MCAS was implemented to meet the requirements of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1993). The Education Reform Act specifies that the testing program must:

- Test all public students in Massachusetts
- Measure performance based on the Massachusetts curriculum learning standards
- Report on the performance of individual students, schools, and districts

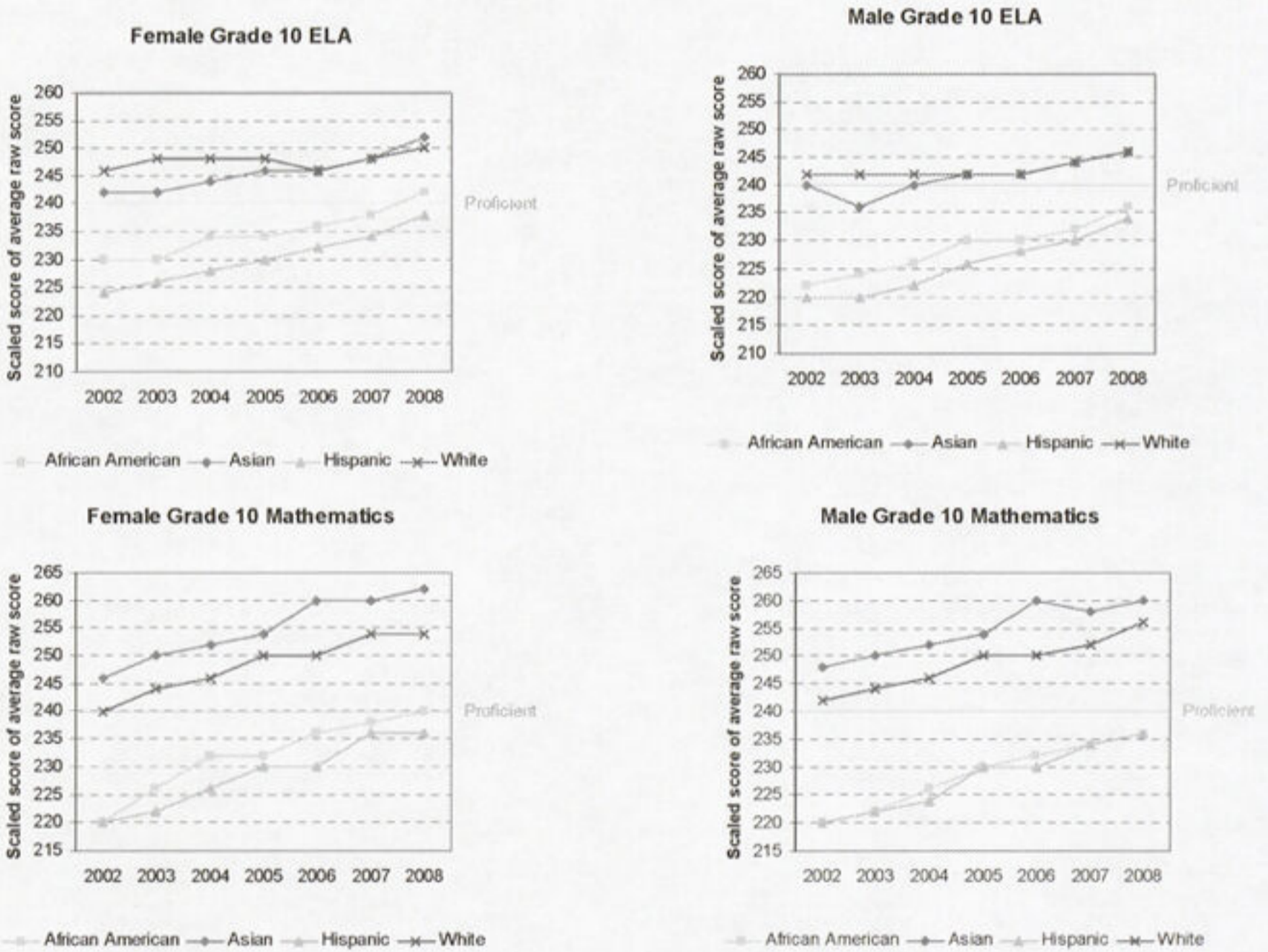
As required by the Education Reform Act, and for school accountability purposes related to the No Child Left Behind Act, students in Massachusetts must pass the grade 10 tests in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics as one condition of eligibility for a high school diploma (in addition to fulfilling local school requirements) (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1993).

In a November 7, 2008, memorandum to members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Mitchell D. Chester distributed information

regarding MCAS achievement gaps from 2002 to 2008. The analysis detailed racial and gender score discrepancies in the ELA and mathematics tests (Mass.Gov 2008). Chester’s graphical display of the MCAS racial achievement gap places Asian American students well above the proficiency line and above most other groups of students (see Figure 1). Similar aggregate Asian American data can be

seen on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Web site (www.doe.mass.edu) in school-specific graduation rates, grade retention, dropout rates, plans of high school graduates, and student exclusions reports. Indeed, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education broadly defines “Asian” as follows: “A person having origins in any of the

Figure 1 — Gender disaggregated: Race and ethnicity



original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent" (Mass. Gov 2010).

In this article, I posit that this aggregation of many subgroups into one general "Asian" category perpetuates the myth of Asian Americans as a model minority while downplaying any achievement gap that exists for certain Asian American subgroups. I conclude with a policy recommendation—a call to track information on the Asian American subgroups—to address this concern.¹

ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES AND METRO BOSTON

Asian Americans Nationally

According to national census data reported in 2000, 11.9 million people (i.e., 4.2 percent of the U.S. population) reported that they were Asian. However, significant differences exist between the subgroups of this "Asian" category. Educational attainment is one example. Approximately 80 percent of the total U.S. population, twenty-five years and older, had at least a high school degree, while the percentage for all Asian Americans was around 85 percent (Reeves and Bennett 2004). Focusing on certain subgroups within the Asian category, we see that the corresponding percentages for Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Hmong were much lower than the total population and the total Asian numbers, at about 62 percent, 50 percent, 47 percent, and 40 percent, respectively. Furthermore, in 1999, the poverty rate for the total U.S. population was 12.4 percent, while the rate for all Asian Americans was 12.6 percent (Reeves and Bennett 2004). Again, focusing on the same Asian subgroups as we did for high

school degree attainment, we see the poverty rates for Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Hmong were much higher than for the total population and total Asian category, at around 16 percent, 19 percent, 29 percent, and 38 percent, respectively.

Differences between Asian groups can also be observed in educational outcomes. For example, in a 1988 study that compared eighth-grade students in a nationally representative sample on scholastic aptitude tests, Vietnamese and Filipino students were similar in math scores to White students, whereas Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and South Asian students scored much higher than any of the other racial and ethnic groups (Sakamoto and Xie 2006). Further, Vietnamese students were the only Asian American group whose average verbal test score was below the national average. Finally, Vietnamese students were the only group among native-born Asian Americans less likely to complete high school than African American students (Sakamoto and Xie 2006).

Given the national data, it is reasonable to believe that substantial variation in Massachusetts among Asian American subgroups exists, particularly in educational outcomes; however, by classifying the many subgroups into a single category, these disparities are difficult to detect. Thus, in order to uncover any hidden achievement gap that is not evident from the way that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires school districts to collect and report their students' race data, I propose a disaggregation of the data as a first step in uncovering any disparities. I turn my analysis to metro Boston—a large area in

Massachusetts in which a number of distinct Asian groups reside—to illustrate my point.

Asian Americans in Metro Boston

In 2000, the Asian American population of metro Boston was 223,424, comprising more than 4 percent of that area's total population (Watanabe et al. 2004).² The Asian American population grew more than 70 percent in this area in the 1990s, as compared to a growth rate of less than 6 percent for the overall population. Fifteen Asian ethnic subgroups had at least 500 members in metro Boston, including Chinese (78,415), Indian (41,240), Vietnamese (31,511), Cambodian (18,890), Korean (15,615), Japanese (9,699), Filipino (7,415), Laotian (3,576), Thai (1,969), and Hmong (1,038) (Watanabe et al. 2004).

Paul Watanabe, Michael Liu, and Shauna Lo (2004, 4) recognize:

The histories and experiences of these groups are as diverse as their number and much too difficult to ably summarize in a short space. The Chinese, for example, have been a presence in this region for several decades, and they have been influenced by several immigration regimes stretching back prior to the Chinese exclusion period well over a century ago. Indians immigrated to this region in significant numbers only after passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965. Southeast Asian groups, including Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Thai, and Hmong, began arriving in substantial numbers, many as refugees, less than thirty years ago. The Japanese and Korean communities are each comprised of a large number of college and graduate students.

In addition to the differing histories of immigration into the area, other intra-group differences among Asian American ethnic groups are mostly consistent with national data. For example, Asian Americans in metro Boston had an aggregate poverty rate of 12.3 percent, but there was substantial variation within the category (Watanabe et al. 2004). While South Asian Indians and Laotians had the lowest poverty rate, both at about 5 percent, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Cambodians had some of the highest rates at around 17 percent, 21 percent, and 24 percent, respectively. Adding another level of complexity to the analysis, Vivian Louie (2005, 70) observes:

For immigrant children of working-class backgrounds [e.g., many Southeast Asian students in Metro Boston], the stakes are arguably complex. On one hand, they face the social stresses common to migration across social class, such as loss of status and cultural markers and transitions around language. On the other hand, they confront the additionally daunting task of having a single generation to make the dramatic leap up the educational ladder far beyond their parents' relatively low levels of formal schooling [citations omitted].

Therefore, the varied Asian American groups may have different educational outcomes because of significant differences in immigration history, socioeconomic status, and cultural capital that are not being acknowledged by the current racial category of "Asian."

These intragroup differences suggest that it makes good policy sense to disaggregate the Asian American groups in Massachusetts' achievement gap analysis to determine if the schools are

allocating resources to those groups that need the most assistance. However, as illustrated by MCAS achievement gap tracking, most educational institutions do not track race data in this way. In fact, doing so would cut against the grain of a widely accepted myth that Asian Americans are a monolithic model minority. In the next section, I explore some theoretical frameworks for understanding the history and current perpetuation of the myth of the model minority.

LINKING THE "ASIAN" RACE CATEGORY TO THEORY

Asian Americans as the Monolithic "Model Minority": Social Reproduction and Power/Language in Historical and Political Context

Jay MacLeod (2008) explains, in the context of socioeconomic inequality, that social reproduction theorists "show that schools actually reinforce social inequality while pretending to do the opposite." Further, Samuel Bowles (1977) draws attention to the ways schools utilize a hidden curriculum to reproduce and legitimize modern inequality. Finally, Michel Foucault (1977) focuses on the ways in which the very categories and labels that are imposed on others by experts and authority figures can be forms of social control. Informed by social reproduction, hidden curriculum, and Foucaultian perspectives, I argue that the Massachusetts Department of Education (indeed, most American educational institutions) by uncritically grouping and labeling Asian groups under one comprehensive category is engaging in patterns of social reproduction (i.e., reproducing educational inequality by making certain Asian groups invisible) by perpetuating the myth of the model minority and making

it difficult to track any achievement gap that exists for subgroups within this larger group.

The category of "model minority" has been imposed on Asian Americans since the 1960s. During the heart of the civil rights movement, a number of articles praised the successful assimilation of Asian Americans into American society as compared to that of other minorities. For example, sociologist William Petersen (1966), in a *New York Times Magazine* article entitled "Success Story, Japanese-American Style," lauded the efforts of Japanese Americans who avoided becoming a group of "problem minorities" despite widespread racial discrimination. Petersen (1966, 21) wrote:

They have established this remarkable record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort. Every attempt to hamper their progress resulted only in enhancing their determination to succeed. Even in a country whose patron saint is the Horatio Alger hero, there is no parallel to this success story.

Later that same year, a *U.S News and World Report* article entitled "Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S." said: "At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation's 300,000 Chinese Americans are moving ahead on their own, with no help from anyone else" (1966, 6).

Subsequent articles reflected a mainstream perception that Asian Americans were a minority group that, through sheer effort and determination, made itself impervious to the effects of racism and succeeded in America ("Success Story: Outwhiting the Whites," *Newsweek*, 1971; "Asian Americans: 'A Model Minority,'"

Newsweek, 1982; “The Drive to Excel,” *Newsweek*, 1984; “America’s Greatest Success Story: The Triumph of Asian Americans,” *The New Republic*, 1985 [Bell, 1985]; “America’s Super Minority,” *Fortune*, 1986 [Ramirez and Loos 1986]; “Education: The New Whiz Kids,” *Time*, 1987 [Brand 1987]; and “Why They Excel,” *Parade* 1990 [Butterfield 1990]).

This perception is problematic for a number of reasons. First, the model minority myth serves to justify the status quo by creating a false dichotomy: model minorities versus problem minorities. The model minority provides an example of a minority group that can “transcend” race and racism through its own hard work while the problem minorities are to blame for their own failures. This blame-the-victim reasoning is too simplistic to account for the complicated racial barriers arising from the effects of hundreds of years of legalized racial oppression that continue to exist today. Similar to MacLeod’s (2008) analysis of the role of schools in reproduction theory, proponents of the myth that Asian Americans are America’s model minority are engaging in patterns of social reproduction by reinforcing racial inequality while pretending to do the opposite. In other words, while claiming that they are celebrating the decline of racism, they are actually reproducing racial inequalities by perpetuating a myth of a minority group that can be presented as an example that race is not a significant obstacle to success in this country. Further, this false dichotomy downplays the long and painful history of White supremacist laws, policies, and actions against Asian people in the United States.³

Second, aggregating all Asian Americans into a “success story” category makes certain Asian American subgroups

unlikely to get the assistance they need if they are struggling in school or other areas. Since the data will be analyzed in its aggregate, any subgroup-specific achievement gap will be rendered invisible. As a parallel to Bowles’s (1977) critique of schools and the hidden curriculum within them, the way in which the racial categories (e.g., “Asian”) that schools use to track their students are presented—as normal and fixed instead of as constructed and otherwise problematic—is serving to reproduce and legitimize racial inequality.

Third, the imposition of a “model minority” label by the majority onto a relatively powerless minority divulges the asymmetrical power relations inherent in such a labeling. Indeed, as Foucault (1977) reminds us, this very process of labeling becomes a form of social control. In other words, to call another group a “model minority” is not an empowering self-definition by those being so defined. Instead, it is an identity imposed on Asian Americans by others (e.g., see the articles mentioned above) who are attempting to downplay the very real effects of racism in this society by creating a supposed exception to racism.

Although relying on a single Asian category to track the MCAS achievement gap may make it appear that one minority group is succeeding in America, this classification does not capture the significant intragroup differences that may exist between the various Asian American subgroups. In the final section, I propose a way in which the Massachusetts Department of Education can track these differences.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

A Modest Policy Proposal: Collect Accurate Data by Disaggregating the "Asian" Category

For the reasons set forth above, I would suggest that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education require that school districts disaggregate the "Asian" category to capture the true diversity of this large umbrella category and reallocate resources to subgroups in which any achievement gaps can be identified.

While I would not completely eradicate the "Asian" category, in order to comply with current federal government demographic race tracking policies (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Education requirements) and to foster a pan-Asian American political identity,⁴ I would propose to track the subgroupings when the schools gather racial background data through additional checkboxes capturing the largest Asian American populations in the state of Massachusetts:

Asian

Please specify:

Cambodian

Chinese

Filipino

Hmong

Indian

Japanese

Korean

Laotian

Pakistani

Taiwanese

Thai

Vietnamese

Other Asian (please specify: _____).

Or, as a simpler alternative, I would propose that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education require the use of an open-ended response after the "Asian" identifier:

Asian (please specify: _____).

Either of these approaches would be the first step in keeping track of any achievement gap that exists within the broad "Asian" category. After the data is collected, resources can be reallocated in a way that assists the groups that need the most help.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the way in which the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is collecting its race data for purposes of tracking achievement gaps makes it difficult to observe differences between Asian subgroups. I propose that the Department of Education require the state's school districts to disaggregate the "Asian" category into its subgroups in order to more accurately track how the separate subgroups are performing. While acknowledging that the very identification of struggling Asian groups would cut against the popular myth that Asian Americans are a monolithic model minority, I contend that this first step is necessary in order to deliver resources to those with the most need.

REFERENCES

- Bell, David A. 1985. The triumph of Asian-Americans: America's greatest success story. *The New Republic*, July 15.
- Bowles, Samuel. 1977. Unequal education and the reproduction of social division of labor. In *Power and ideology in education*. Edited by Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey, 137–153. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Brand, David. 1987. Education: The new whiz kids. *Time*, August 31.
- Butterfield, Fox. 1990. Why they excel. *Parade*, January 21.
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 1993. Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, St. 1993, c. 71.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Madness and civilization*. New York, NY: Vintage Press.
- Louie, Vivian. 2005. Immigrant newcomer populations, ESEA, and the pipeline to college: Current considerations and future lines of inquiry. *Review of Research in Education* 29: 69–105.
- MacLeod, Jay. 2008. *Ain't no makin' it: Aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood*. Third edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Mass.Gov. 2008. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002–2008 MCAS achievement gap analysis: Additional information. Memorandum to members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. From Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Mitchell D. Chester. November 7 (www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/1108/item10.html).
- . 2010. 2009–10 Massachusetts state report card, Part VII: About the data. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/staterc/definitions.aspx?fyCode=2009>).
- Newsweek. 1971. Success story: Outwhiting the whites. *Newsweek*, June 21.
- . 1982. Asian-Americans: A “model minority.” *Newsweek*, December 6: 40–51.
- . 1984. The drive to excel. *Newsweek*, April 1984.
- Petersen, William. 1966. Success story, Japanese-American style. *New York Times Magazine*, January 9.
- Ramirez, Anthony, and Barbara C. Loos. 1986. America's super minority. *Fortune*, November 24 (http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1986/11/24/68318/index.htm).
- Reeves, Terrance J., and Claudette E. Bennett. 2004. We the people: Asians in the United States. Census 2000 Special Report 17. U.S. Department of Commerce (www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-17.pdf).
- Sakamoto, Arthur, and Yu Xie. 2006. The socioeconomic attainments of Asian Americans. In *Asian Americans: Contemporary trends and issues*. Second edition. Edited by Pyong Gap Min, 54–77. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- U.S. News and World Report. 1966. Success story of one minority group in U.S. *U.S. News and World Report*, December 26.
- Watanabe, Paul, Michael Liu, and Shauna Lo. 2004. Asian Americans in metro Boston: Growth, diversity, and complexity (<http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/metro-and-regional-inequalities/metro-boston-equity-initiative-1/asian-americans-in-metro-boston-growth-diversity-and-complexity/watanabe-asian-american-boston-2004.pdf>).
- Wei, William. 1993. *The Asian American movement*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Note that I do not advocate for the eradication of the “Asian” category altogether. For federal government reporting (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Education counts), this category is currently required. Furthermore, as I mention later in the article, the Asian American political movement has been historically based on pan-Asian American unity; starting in the 1960s, the different groups have come together

as an assertion of collective political power. So instead of eliminating the “Asian” category, I suggest that we keep it and further track Asian subgroups for the specific purpose of identifying any hidden achievement gap that is not being addressed.

² Paul Watanabe, Michael Liu, and Shauna Lo (2004, 1) define metro Boston as “the census geographic area defined as the ‘Massachusetts (part); Boston-Worcester-Lawrence-Lowell-Brockton-MA-NH New England county metropolitan area.’ This area includes Bristol, Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, and Worcester counties, and 192 cities and towns.”

³ Examples of such actions include racist immigration and naturalization laws like the Whiteness requirement for naturalization from 1790 to 1952, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the widespread lynching of Chinese people throughout the American West during and after the Gold Rush, the legalized educational segregation of Asian American school children until 1954, the internment of more than 110,000 Japanese American citizens during World War II, and the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982.

⁴ William Wei (1993) explores the Asian American political movement and highlights the ways in which pan-Asian American unity was essential in Asian Americans’ struggle for civil rights.

HARVARD JOURNAL OF LGBTQ POLICY

Subscription Form

LGBTQ POLICY JOURNAL ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF **VOLUME I**

The 2011 *LGBTQ Policy Journal* staff is proud to present our inaugural issue. This first volume features timely essays, candid and engaging interviews, and cutting-edge commentaries, including:

An explanation from the policy counsel of the National Center for Transgender Equality of the need for fair and accurate identification for transgender people. An analysis of LGBTQ youth and their experiences in the child welfare and juvenile systems. An examination of the needs and policy issues related to HIV and the aging LGBT population. An inquiry into anti-LGBT bias in Chinese-speaking Americans in Southern California. A roundtable discussion moderated by Timothy Patrick McCarthy and including commentaries from Desiree Flores, Arthur Lipkin, Rev. Irene Monroe, and Glenda Testone on the health and safety of LGBTQ youth.

Fill out the form below to reserve your copy of the **LGBTQ POLICY JOURNAL** at the Harvard Kennedy School.

NAME (print) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Payment:

- \$10 for students and low-income individuals
 \$20 for individuals and nonprofits \$40 for institutions

Please enclose payment and make checks payable to "Harvard University"; write LGBTQ Policy Journal in the note field.

Mail order forms to:

Martha Foley c/o

LGBTQ Policy Journal at the Harvard Kennedy School

79 John F. Kennedy Street

John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University

Cambridge, MA 02138

Tel: (607) 342-7994 | Fax: (617) 384-9555

Email: lgbtq.policy@gmail.edu

DREAMs Deterred: Filipino Experiences and an Anti-Militarization Critique of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act

by Tracy Lachica Buenavista and Jordan
Beltran Gonzales

Tracy Lachica Buenavista is an assistant professor in the Department of Asian American Studies at California State University, Northridge. She teaches classes on race and racism as well as Asian American immigration. Her research uses Critical Race Theory to examine the contemporary neocolonial experiences of Filipinos in the United States as well as the institutional barriers to higher education faced by students of color.

Jordan Beltran Gonzales is a doctoral candidate in the Comparative Ethnic Studies program at the University of California, Berkeley. His dissertation focuses on Filipinos and Mexican Americans in the Bataan Death March in the Philippines during World War II as well as on issues of postwar discrimination. His research interests include multiracial experiences, race and popular culture, and U.S. militarization.

ABSTRACT:

For almost a decade, U.S. elected officials have employed various strategies to create congressional support for the federal Development, Relief, and Education for

Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The DREAM Act is one of the few pieces of proposed federal legislation that would provide a pathway to legal permanent residency for some undocumented immigrants. In this article we use Filipino experiences as a case study to critique two major provisions of the DREAM Act, namely the good moral character requirement and the military enlistment option, and advocate for policy makers to reconsider the current provisions of the DREAM Act.

According to a report released by the Pew Hispanic Center, there are 11.9 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, 1.5 million of whom are under the age of eighteen (Passel and Cohn 2009). While the majority of undocumented immigrants are from Mexico and other Latin American countries, 11 percent come from Asian countries.¹ Since 2001, undocumented immigrant advocates² have been rallying to pass the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The DREAM Act is one of the few pieces of proposed federal legislation that would provide a pathway to legal permanent residency for some undocumented immigrants.

In this article, we examine the DREAM Act in the context of Filipino American history. Immigrants from the Philippines compose the largest undocumented Asian ethnic group, with more than 300,000 residing in the United States (Hoefler et al. 2009). We use Filipino experiences as a case study to critique two major provisions of the DREAM Act, namely the good moral character requirement and the military enlistment option, that would lead to eligibility for legal permanent residency. In doing so,

we argue that passage of the DREAM Act creates the potential to criminalize progressive activism and to pipeline youth into the U.S. military. We advocate for policy makers to reconsider the current provisions of the DREAM Act and to implement ones that aim to increase undocumented immigrant postsecondary education access and degree attainment.

THE FEDERAL DREAM ACT

The proposed DREAM Act is legislation that provides a potential pathway to legalized status for undocumented youth. Persons seeking to obtain legal status in the United States through the DREAM Act must fulfill the following provisions:

- Have entered the United States before the age of 15
- Be twenty-nine years of age or younger when the bill is enacted
- Have lived in the United States for at least five consecutive years prior to enactment of the bill
- Have graduated from a U.S. high school, or have obtained a GED, or have been accepted into an institution of higher education
- Have good moral character
- Submit biometric and biographic information and complete security and law enforcement background checks
- Undergo a medical examination
- Register for the Selective Service
- Pay a surcharge in connection with the initial application

If the provisions are met, a person can apply for the DREAM Act. A person who successfully applies for the DREAM Act is granted conditional nonimmigrant status for an initial five years. After five years, the individual is eligible to apply for a

five-year extension if he or she shows evidence of: (1) demonstrated good moral character during the initial five-year period of conditional status; (2) continuous residence in the United States; and (3) attainment of a degree from an institution of higher education, completion of at least two years of postsecondary education in good standing toward a bachelor's degree, or U.S. military service for at least two years.

Once these provisions are met and after a total of ten years of conditional status, a person is eligible to apply for legal permanent residency. Eligibility also requires that a person demonstrate that within ten years of conditional status he or she has paid taxes; maintained good moral character; lived continuously in the United States; once more submitted biometric and biographic information and completed security and law-enforcement background checks; and can read, write, and speak English and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of American history, principles, and government. Legal permanent residency is desirable because with such status a person becomes eligible for naturalization.

In a report released by the Migration Policy Institute, Jeanne Batalova and Margie McHugh (2010) estimate that of the 2.1 million potentially eligible undocumented youth and young adults, 62 percent would not be able to obtain permanent legal status through the DREAM Act. Their estimates are based on current trends of Latino educational attainment, poverty, and English proficiency. Missing from their report is better consideration of undocumented Asian experiences. Although they recognize the significance of the DREAM Act serving as the only contemporary option for

undocumented people to legalize their status, we use their analysis as an important point of departure from which to critically examine the limitations of the DREAM Act.

DREAM ACTIVISM AND THE PRIVILEGING OF EDUCATION

For almost a decade, elected officials have employed various strategies to create congressional support for the DREAM Act. These strategies include attempts to pass the bill off as part of comprehensive immigration reform, as stand-alone legislation, and as an amendment to the defense authorization bill (Olivas 2010). In December 2010, the DREAM Act was passed in the House of Representatives but failed in the Senate, a result that has propelled proponents to increase their organizing efforts (Julianne Hing 2010b).

The DREAM Act has taken center stage in contemporary political debates about immigration namely due to the staunch activism as well as detention of undocumented youth. There have been a few instances in which undocumented Asian youth have been featured as advocates for the DREAM Act, including the 2007 testimony of Tam Tran before the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law³ and the award-winning keynote speech by David Cho at the 2010 Campus Progress National Conference.⁴ More recently, in late 2010, the detention of community college student Steve Li⁵ and the almost deportation of doctoral candidate Mark Farrales⁶ have played an important role in showing the racial and ethnic diversity of undocumented youth. However, with the exception of these individual cases, little attention has been paid to the relevance

of the DREAM Act to the Asian American community (Chan 2010).

Consistent in all the aforementioned examples is the central role that higher education plays in the political discourse for the DREAM Act. Many of the organizing campaigns have included mock graduations, testimonies from high-achieving undocumented students, and conference and symposium-style events held at universities and colleges across the United States. While these actions are significant in countering prevailing stereotypes of undocumented people as uneducated and underachieving, they are also misleading in that they construct a narrative of individual merit by undocumented youth, which must be acknowledged and rewarded with the passage of the DREAM Act. Missing are the stories of undocumented youth who have not been able to access college due to the institutional barriers to higher education. Overall, it is estimated that as few as 5 to 10 percent of undocumented high school graduates go on to postsecondary education (Gonzales 2009).

Though it is projected that the passage of the DREAM Act would propel more youth to pursue college, the reality is that the individual merits and determination of undocumented students face a difficult opponent in the pursuit of educational attainment. This opponent is the combination of larger institutional factors—high secondary push-out rates, poor postsecondary access and retention rates, increasing college costs, and ineligibility for important forms of financial aid⁷—that will deter young people from fulfilling the educational provisions of the DREAM Act. Taking into consideration the current education trends affecting undocumented youth, the likelihood of legal permanent residency eligibility

through the postsecondary education provision is low.

In the following sections, we use Filipino experiences to discuss the potential ways in which this policy may impact undocumented Asian ethnic communities.

Through a sociohistorical examination of Filipino experiences in the United States we aim to reveal the narrow ability for the DREAM Act to enact the mass legalization that so many of its advocates and opponents anticipate. More specifically, we evaluate two key provisions of the DREAM Act—good moral character and military participation—to assert an anti-militarization stance and make a radical intervention in the public discourse around the DREAM Act.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOOD MORAL CHARACTER AND SURVEILLANCE

Considering the long list of provisions a person must complete before he or she is even eligible for conditional status under the DREAM Act, there is vast room for error that would close the door to legalized status for many undocumented people. One of the most ambiguous eligibility requirements is the assertion of “good moral character.” This concept is not clearly defined, and more is known about what practices do not constitute good moral character.⁸ Actions deemed counter to good moral character include practices that are conditioned by the circumstance of being undocumented, such as providing false information, including legal status, on documents. Despite the popular belief that these are malicious attempts to take advantage of “the system,” they instead represent the fear of being detected, unemployed, and/or detained. In the words of Bill Ong Hing, the “illegal activity [of undocu-

mented immigration] is the result of pressures our own policies ... have induced” (2010).

In addition, with the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, which enables increased surveillance of anyone residing in the United States, there is the potential to misinterpret any action as one that is lacking good moral character (Romero 2003). For example, radical political activism can be mistaken as “crimes against the government” and “offenses that jeopardize national security”—two practices in violation of good moral character. Within the Filipino American community, there is a long history of government surveillance and the subsequent criminalization of progressive politics. Notions of Filipinos as “Oriental criminals” were invoked during the McCarthy era of the early 1950s when Filipino labor organizers, such as members of Local 7 in the Pacific Northwest, were surveilled by the U.S. government and targeted as communists who were suspected of plotting the overthrow of the U.S. government (CFFSC 2004). Despite even the successful defense trial of Local 7 members, many undocumented Filipinos were still charged as members of the Communist Party and deported due to the broad terms of “subversive activities” within the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. What we can learn from this history is that heightened surveillance increases the potential for undocumented people to be policed for their status and to have their moral character questioned. One contemporary example of such policing is Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070, which mandates the increased policing of suspected undocumented immigrants.

Further, demonstrating good moral character has not protected undocumented Filipinos from being victimized

by a broken immigration system. In 2004, undocumented Filipino immigrants gained national attention with the deportation of the Cuevas family of Fremont, CA (CFFSC 2004). The Cuevas family represents many Filipinos who immigrated to the United States on tourist visas and overstayed to escape political and economic turmoil in the Philippines. The Cuevas parents worked several jobs to provide for their three children, all of whom attended college and were unaware of their undocumented status until they received deportation orders. Attempts to highlight the family's good moral character and its incorporation into American society were used in appeals to enlist California senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to introduce a private bill that would provide the family with permanent residence (Estrella 2004). Despite the family's obvious record of good moral character, no private bill was introduced and the deportation orders were upheld, thus showing the unreliability of the good moral character provision to protect the ability for undocumented immigrants to remain in the United States.

A LEGACY OF MILITARY PARTICIPATION

If there is any lesson from which we can draw, it is that history repeats itself. The United States has often used the military to make promises related to citizenship and benefits to immigrants that it has at times failed to keep. More specifically, DREAM Act proponents can learn from the history of Filipino World War II veterans.⁹ During World War II, 250,000 Filipinos in the Philippines were inducted into the U.S. military to assist in the American defense against the Japanese in the Pacific (Canonizado Buell et al. 2008; Levs 2009; Raimundo 2010). For their

service, Filipinos, along with other Allied soldiers in other countries, were to earn American citizenship and veteran benefits. The Rescission Act of 1946, however, prevented Filipino veterans from actually receiving any benefits. Soldiers from the Philippines were the only soldiers from the sixty-six Allied countries who did not receive proper veteran status and benefits. While in 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided lump sum settlements to surviving Filipino veterans, the attempt was vastly symbolic because a majority of veterans had died before this recognition and survivors had only one year to apply and access their money.

Currently, DREAM Act discussions rarely highlight the relationship between the policy and the role of the military.¹⁰ However, the U.S. Department of Defense is explicit about this connection. In the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2010-12, five strategic goals were directed at the outcome of military preparedness (OUSD 2009b). Strategic goal 2 is to "shape and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force." In particular, this goal is charged with the recruitment, retention, training, and education of military personnel to sustain and "effectively" leverage the personnel life cycle. Further, the way in which this subgoal is to be accomplished is outlined in performance objective 2.1.1:

Recruit the All-Volunteer Force by finding smart ways to sustain quality assurance even as we expand markets to fill manning at controlled costs as demonstrated by achieving quarterly recruiting quality and quantity goals, and through expansion of the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program and the

once-medically restricted populations, as well as the DREAM initiative.

The above performance objective acknowledges the concern of maintaining a volunteer workforce during a time of war and specifically names the DREAM Act as a “smart” mechanism from which to draw more personnel. While we cannot project the ability to successfully accomplish this goal and performance objective, we can draw on current military practices to learn of the potential success and impact of such strategies.

Asians are underrepresented among both enlisted personnel and officers within all branches of the military, with the exception of the Navy (OUSD 2009a). In the Navy, Asian Americans represent 6 percent of enlisted personnel compared to 5 percent of the relevant civilian population. Arguably, Filipinos compose a significant portion of Asian Americans in the Navy due to their historical recruitment (Espiritu 1995; Schirmer and Shalom 1987). Racial underrepresentation is important because it provides the foundation for personnel recruitment strategies (Peachey 2007). In fact, in southern California, a region with one of the largest Asian American populations, Asian American enlistment has increased at a disproportionate rate compared to other racial groups. In 2009, Asian American enlistment rose 80 percent in Los Angeles County, followed by 37 percent for Latinos and 14 percent for African Americans (Watanabe 2009).

Military enlistment is particularly precarious during this time of war. People of color are heavily recruited, overrepresented in combat positions, and discharged early or dishonorably at higher rates than Whites (Mariscal 2004; Peachey 2007). Additionally, with the passage of

the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004, there was an influx of immigrant enlistees due to a provision that promised to speed up and streamline naturalization processes as well as grant posthumous citizenship (Espinoza 2008; Peachey 2007). The latter provision is important to consider because, although immigrants still make up a small portion of people on active duty (3 percent), immigrants are disproportionately represented among military casualties (8 percent).

DISCUSSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The DREAM Act is fraught with several problematic provisions. First, deep faults within our higher education system make the education provisions of the DREAM Act unrealistic and implausible for mass legalization. The DREAM Act is holding undocumented students to a higher educational attainment standard than most Americans ever reach; the vast majority of adults lack a four-year college degree. Thus, we recommend concurrent legislation be developed that increases funding for public education, as opposed to policies that are reliant on high-stakes testing and assessment (e.g., No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top). Additionally, while the DREAM Act only enables students with conditional nonimmigrant status to have access to federal loans and work study, providing federal grants might better encourage postsecondary access. These would be structural interventions in the widening education gap that would support the educational pipeline explicitly for people of color—undocumented and documented alike.

Second, the overarching criteria that determine good moral character have beset this provision with subjective

accusations. Radical Filipino politics have often been deemed a threat to national security, while others' actions have not been deemed "good enough." We recommend that instead of attempting to assess the contributions and achievements made by individuals, more focus needs to be placed on eradicating the increased policing and criminalization of undocumented immigrants.

Third, the exploitation of Filipinos in World War II serves as a stark warning for the military provisions of the DREAM Act. Although during World War II the U.S. Congress compelled Filipinos into the military through promises of inclusion into the political, social, and economic fabric of the United States, these promises were not fulfilled for the vast majority of Filipinos. Thus, we recommend removal of the military provisions in the DREAM Act to reduce the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants to military service and premature death.

This analysis is not meant to take away from the resilience of undocumented youth with aspirations for higher education, but rather it is a charge for meaningful structural change through education and immigration reform, which does not overly rely on the achievements of individuals nor perpetuate the military industrial complex. We understand the nature of neoliberal immigration reform and welcome the impact that the DREAM Act will have on a small minority of undocumented youth. However, considering the history of the U.S. government's treatment of and unreliable promises to Filipinos, the larger claims of the current provisions of the DREAM Act are unsubstantiated. Therefore, we advocate for progressive immigration policy that acknowledges and mediates the role of

the United States in facilitating undocumented immigration.

REFERENCES

- Batalova, Jeanne, and Margie McHugh. 2010. DREAM vs. reality: An analysis of potential DREAM Act beneficiaries. Migration Policy Institute Insight (www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/DREAM-Insight-July2010.pdf).
- Canonizado Buell, Evangeline et al. 2008. *Filipinos in the East Bay*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing.
- Cesar, Stephen. 2010. UC San Diego doctoral candidate granted year's reprieve from deportation. *Los Angeles Times*, December 29 (<http://articles.latimes.com/2010/dec/29/local/la-me-1229-deport-release-20101229>).
- Chan, Beleza. 2010. Not just a Latino issue: Undocumented students in higher education. *Journal of College Admission* Winter/206: 29–31.
- Critical Filipina/Filipino Studies Collective (CFFSC). 2004. Resisting Homeland Security: Organizing against unjust removals of U.S. Filipinos (http://bayanusa.org/downloads/resisting_home_sec.pdf).
- Dowd, Alicia C., and Tarek Coury. 2006. The effect of loans on the persistence and attainment of community college students. *Research in Higher Education* 47(1): 33–62.
- Espinoza, Jean P. 2008. Overview and analysis of the Development, Relief, Education for Alien Minors Act (Dream Act): "What was not but could be." ExpressO (http://works.bepress.com/jean_espinoza/1).
- Espiritu, Yen Le. 1995. *Filipino American lives*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Estrella, Cicero A. 2004. Exiles of the American dream. *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 1 (http://articles.sfgate.com/2004-07-01/news/17434219_1_american-dream-children-parents).
- Gonzales, Roberto G. 2009. Young lives on hold: The college dreams of undocumented students. New York: College Board Advocacy (<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/>

profdownload/young-lives-on-hold-college-board.pdf).

Hing, Bill Ong. 2010. Asian Americans and immigration reform (<http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=billhing>).

Hing, Julianne. 2010a. Feinstein intervenes for DREAMer Steve Li. *Colorlines*, November 19 (http://colorlines.com/archives/2010/11/feinstein_issues_private_bill_for_dreamer_steve_li_calls_for_dream_act.html).

———. 2010b. Obama: There was “no reason” for Senate to reject DREAM Act. *Colorlines*, December 18 (http://colorlines.com/archives/2010/12/obama_reaction_to_dream_act_vote.html).

Hoefer, Michael, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker. 2009. Estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population residing in the United States: January 2008. Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security Office of Immigration Statistics.

Kim, Dongbin. 2007. The effect of loans on students’ degree attainment: Differences by student and institutional characteristics. *Harvard Educational Review* 77(1): 64–100.

Levs, Josh. 2009. U.S. to pay “forgotten” Filipino World War II veterans. CNN.com, February 23 (http://articles.cnn.com/2009-02-23/us/forgotten.veterans_1_philippine-veteran-filipino-world-war-ii-filipino-veterans-equity?_s=PM:US).

Mariscal, Jorge. 2004. No where else to go: Latino youth and the poverty draft. *Military Veterans & Foreign Affairs Journal*, December 30 (www.veteranstoday.com/2004/12/30/no-where-else-to-go-latino-youth-and-the-poverty-draft).

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD). 2009a. Population representation in the military services: Fiscal year 2008 report. Prepared by CNA for OUSD (<http://ngycp.cna.org/PopRep/2008/summary/poprepsummary2008.pdf>).

———. 2009b. Strategic plan for fiscal years 2010-12. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense (www.cpms.osd.mil/ASSETS/60522B

438BD746308E08477E07C90F7D/FY2010-12%20PR%20Strategic%20Plan%20(Final%20Public%20-%20signed)(4%20January).pdf).

Olivas, Michael A. 2010. The political economy of the DREAM Act and the legislative process: A case study of comprehensive immigration reform. *Wayne Law Review* 55: 1757–1810.

Passel, Jeffrey S., and D’Vera Cohn. 2009. A portrait of unauthorized immigrants in the United States. Pew Hispanic Center Report, April 14 (<http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf>).

Peachey, Titus. 2007. Military recruitment, communities of color and immigrants. Mennonite Central Committee (<http://co.mcc.org/us/co/stories/militaryrecruitment.html>).

Raimundo, Antonio. 2010. The Filipino veterans equity movement: A case study in Reparations Theory. *California Law Review* 98(2): 575–624.

Romero, Victor C. 2003. Noncitizen students and immigration policy post-9/11. *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal* 17: 357–366.

Schirmer, Daniel B., and Stephen R. Shalom, eds. 1987. *The Philippines reader: A history of colonialism, neocolonialism, dictatorship, and resistance*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. 2010. A guide to naturalization. U.S. Department of Homeland Security (www.uscis.gov/files/article/M-476.pdf).

Watanabe, Teresa. 2009. Asian Americans drive Army recruiting boom in L.A. *Los Angeles Times*, December 16 (<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/16/local/la-me-asian-mil16-2009dec16>).

ENDNOTES

¹ The estimates do not account for those immigrants of Asian descent entering the United States from Latin American and Central American countries.

² Comprehensive coverage of “DREAM activism” can be found at www.dreamactivist.

org, an online resource for undocumented youth and progress regarding the DREAM Act.

³ Tam Tran was born in Germany, the country to which her Vietnamese refugee parents escaped after the Vietnam War. A nationally recognized DREAM activist, Tran was killed in a car accident in May 2010. Her testimony can be read at: www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/dream/tam-tran-2007-05-18.pdf.

⁴ David Cho is a 1.5-generation Korean who attends UCLA. He was recognized as a winner in the Campus Progress and Huffington Post College National Keynote Contest. His award-winning speech can be seen at: www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/08/campus-progress-national_n_638093.html.

⁵ Steve Li is a Peruvian national of Chinese descent who was detained for being undocumented. His case is one of the most recent of undocumented Asian youth to be highlighted in the media. It garnered attention in part due to community-based efforts to rally U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) to intervene in his deportation proceedings based on his potential eligibility for the DREAM Act (Julianne Hing 2010a).

⁶ Mark Farrales is a 1.5-generation immigrant from the Philippines who was granted a one-year reprieve from deportation. His detention garnered widespread attention due to his status as a Harvard University graduate and current doctoral candidate at the University of California, San Diego (Ceasar 2010).

⁷ With conditional status, undocumented students will have access to some financial aid, namely federal loans and work study. This condition is predicated on the notion that undocumented students will readily attempt to access such aid. However, this assumption is not supported by current literature on financial aid patterns practiced by students of color and low-income students. For example, researchers have found that loans have a negative effect on college persistence and degree attainment (Dowd and Coury 2006; Kim 2007).

⁸ For examples of practices that counter good moral character, see U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2010). This list is not necessarily definitive since good moral character is partially determined on a case-by-case basis.

⁹ The term “veteranos” refers to Filipinos who fought on behalf of the U.S. military in the Philippines during World War II. Due to the Rescission Act of 1946, Filipino soldiers in the Philippine Army and Philippine Scouts are not officially recognized as American veterans, but we use the term to respectfully acknowledge their participation alongside soldiers from other Allied nations.

¹⁰ While dominant DREAM Act discourse focuses on the education provision, there exist organized efforts denouncing the military provision of the proposed legislation. Some examples include the online resource 67% (<http://67percent.net>) and an anti-DREAM Act position paper by the Association of Raza Educators (www.razaeducators.org/position-papers/PositionPaper_FederalDreamAct.pdf).

COOP MEMBERSHIP

A GREAT IDEA!

**LAST YEAR COOP MEMBERS
RECEIVED 8.9% OF THEIR COOP
PURCHASES BACK**

**IF YOU ARE ALREADY SHOPPING
AT THE COOP AND YOU ARE NOT
A MEMBER, IT REALLY MAKES
SENSE TO JOIN.**

**VISIT OUR MEMBERSHIP SERVICES DESK OR
JOIN ONLINE AT WWW.THECOOP.COM**



www.thecoop.com

Defensive Naturalization and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment: Chinese Immigrants in Three Primate Metropolises¹

by Paul M. Ong

Paul M. Ong is a Professor in the School of Public Affairs and the Asian American Studies Department at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He has done research on the labor market status of minorities and immigrants, work and welfare, and environmental inequalities. He is currently engaged in several projects, including a study of the Asian American experience in Los Angeles and New York and an evaluation of the implementation of environmental justice policies and programs. Ong received his Ph.D. in economics from the University of California, Berkeley, and in 2010 was the Thomas Tam Visiting Professor at CUNY's Graduate Center. He was the founding chair of UCLA's Department of Urban Planning, director of UCLA's Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, acting director of UCLA's Institute of Industrial Relations, founding editor of AAPI Nexus (a policy-oriented journal published by UCLA's Asian American Studies Center), and founding director of the UC AAPI Policy Multi-Campus Research Program.

ABSTRACT:

During the 1990s, the number of immigrants naturalizing in the United States surged in response to growing anti-immigrant sentiment, politics, and legislation. Geographic variations can mediate the temporal changes in naturalization rates, as is evident among Chinese immigrants in three metropolitan areas (Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco). An analysis of micro-level data shows that naturalization rates increased substantially between 1990 and 2000 in the two West Coast cities, where anti-immigrant hostility was most intense; this outcome holds even after controlling for individual demographic characteristics. Rates also increased among the elderly, who were at the greatest risk of being adversely impacted by national welfare reform enacted in 1996.

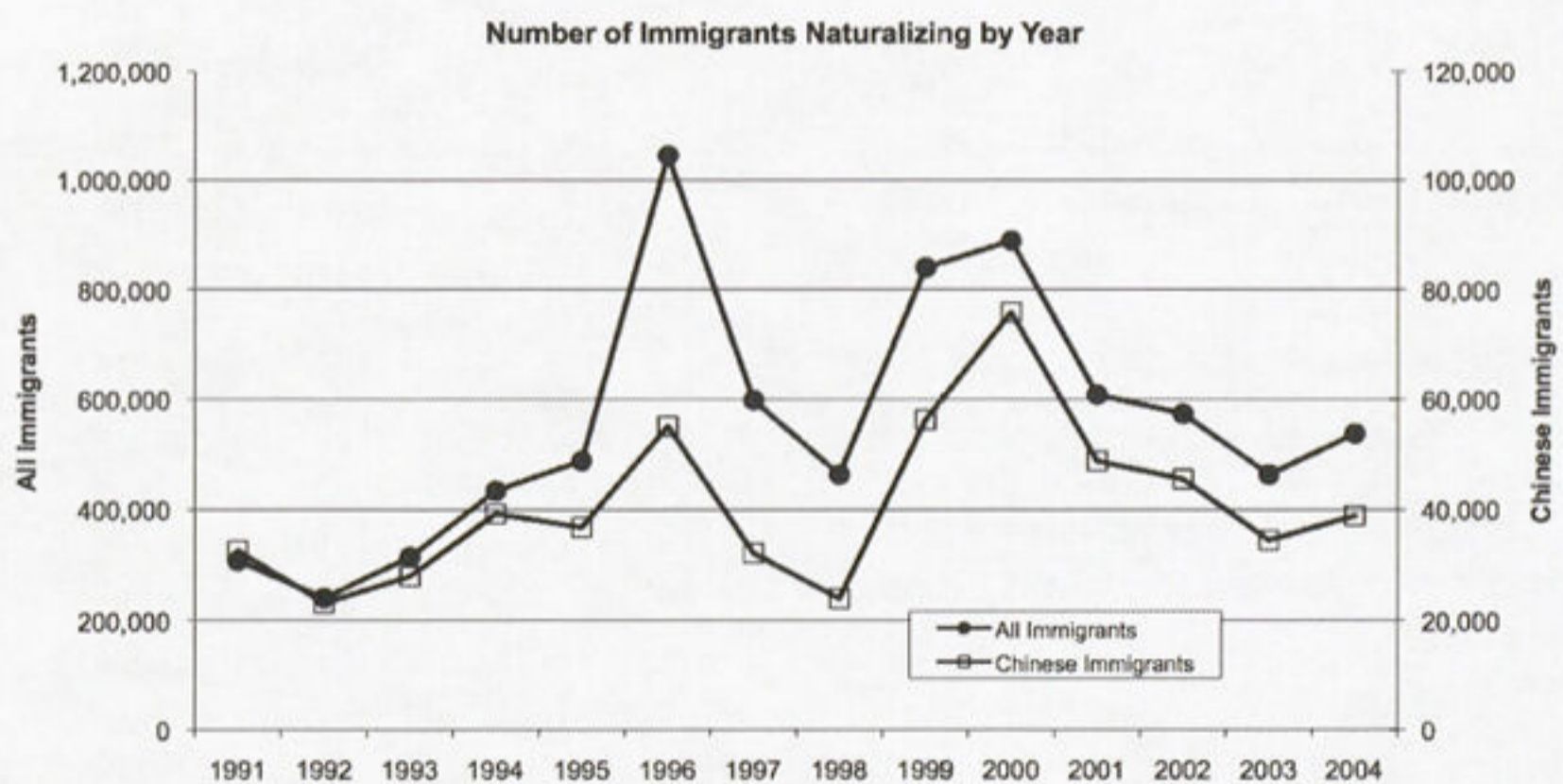
During the 1990s, there was a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants seeking and receiving U.S. citizenship. Between 1990 and 1999, 4.7 million persons gained citizenship, compared to just over 2 million in the 1980s, and the high rate has continued into this century (Simanski 2006; Fix et al. 2003). The numbers could have been even greater, but the quantum jump in those petitioning the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service² overwhelmed the agency's ability to process requests, leading to delays in accepting applications (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2002). The increase was driven in part by a growth in the total number of immigrants, from 8 million in 1990 to 12.5 million in 2000, which included nearly 2.7 million undocumented aliens who became eligible for naturalization in the 1990s under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Other factors influencing the number seeking

citizenship include changes in immigrants' timing and patterns, for example, newer immigrants waited fewer years before naturalizing than earlier cohorts, and among more established immigrants who had not naturalized there was a renewed interest in becoming a citizen (Baker 2007; Baker 2009). The latter two phenomena are associated with defensive naturalization, the act of seeking citizenship in response to increasing anti-immigrant sentiment such as that which existed in the 1990s.

This article examines how the 1990s affected one particular group, Chinese immigrants, who also experienced a dramatic increase in naturalization during this period. As shown in Figure 1, there is similarity in the temporal patterns (relative ups and downs) of the annual number of Chinese immigrants and the total number of immigrants who

naturalized between 1991 and 2004, with peaks during the major election years. (Chinese immigrants are defined as those who came from China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong.) These peaks are due in part to heightened individual political awareness and to efforts by organizations to increase the number of immigrant voters (Estrada and Vargas 1997). While the absolute numbers are impressive, it is equally important to examine whether the odds of being a naturalized citizen changed during the 1990s. The naturalization rate can change because of shifts in the demographic composition of the population, so the key empirical question is whether there was an increase in the rate after accounting for individual characteristics associated with naturalization. Moreover, if there was a *ceteris paribus* increase, was it greater in geographic areas where anti-immigrant sentiment

Figure 1 — Number of all immigrants and number of Chinese immigrants naturalizing, 1991–2004. (Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2002; U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2006.)



was more intense and among those most adversely affected by legislative and policy changes? This article addresses these questions by analyzing micro-level data from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census for Chinese immigrants in three metropolitan areas: Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. The article begins by reviewing the literature on naturalization. It then offers some background information on the case study and presents the empirical results from multivariate models. It concludes with a discussion of scholarly and practical implications of the findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEFENSIVE NATURALIZATION

Defensive naturalization is a phenomenon related to how societal-level political decisions affect the relative cost of not being a citizen compared to the benefits of being one. As political climates change, so do the opportunities and motivations for naturalization (Volpp 2001; Van Hook et al. 2006). Historically, becoming a citizen entitled immigrants to legal rights, such as the right to own land, participate in electoral politics, and have protection against deportation. During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, some groups were prohibited from becoming citizens because of *de jure* racial discrimination. Such restrictions were largely eliminated during the latter part of the twentieth century. While there were benefits to naturalizing, including the right to public services, certain employment, and business contracting opportunities (Volpp 2001; Schneider 2001), at the same time, there were also costs to becoming a citizen, including the time commitment required for the complicated application process, increased obligations (e.g., serving on juries), and the potential loss of benefits

received from an immigrant's country of origin (Yang 1994). Within this cost-benefit framework, major political and legislative changes can significantly alter the incentives to naturalize. When the societal climate turns anti-alien, one potential response by immigrants is to seek protection through citizenship. Naturalization also opens up new opportunities to become politically active, thus influencing political decisions and public policy through voting and public demonstrations (Félix et al. 2008).

At the national level, anti-immigration activities in the 1990s took the form of anti-immigrant legislation and policies that limited services and rights given to noncitizens. The most prominent was the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (also known as the Welfare Reform Act), which restricts benefits for legal immigrants (Yoo 2003; Fix et al. 2003). The act has a disproportionate impact on the elderly because of the restrictions on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In addition, other pieces of legislation at the time affected the process of naturalizing. For example, the cost of replacing permanent resident cards rose. The legislative and policy changes created grave concerns and even fear among immigrants, which in turn motivated noncitizens to naturalize, thus contributing to the surge discussed earlier (Rytina and Saeger 2005; Van Hook et al. 2006).

The surge, however, varied from one location to another, as evident in the differences in naturalization rates between the United States and Canada as well as among states and local communities (Bloemraad 2006; DeSipio et al. 2006; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Duncan and Waldorf 2009). Unique local conditions, along with variations in the

way national policies are implemented, create disparate pressures, incentives, and opportunities to naturalize. At one extreme is California, which has had a long history of antagonism against aliens in its midst. As large-scale immigration continued over the last three decades of the twentieth century, so did the hostility in the state. In a xenophobic response to the growing number of non-English speaking immigrants, California voters approved two propositions in the 1980s to make English the official language (Loo and Ong 1998). This contemporary anti-immigrant movement in the Golden State culminated in 1994 when voters approved California Proposition 187, which attempted to prohibit undocumented immigrants from receiving publicly funded benefits (it was appealed, deemed unconstitutional, and never implemented). Four years later, 61 percent of the voters favored Proposition 227, which limited bilingual education.³ Between 2003 and 2005, voters and elected officials became entangled in a heated debate over driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants (DiCamillo and Field 2005). While much of the attention was focused on undocumented aliens, the animosity often spilled over to other immigrants.

Not all regions of the United States were caught up in the growing anti-immigrant fervor. In New York, for example, there were legislative attempts to provide services and rights to immigrants, indicating a more pro-immigrant climate.⁴ During this time, several bills were introduced that provided legal noncitizen immigrants with voting rights traditionally reserved for naturalized citizens (Sontag 1992). Noncitizens in New York City were already able to vote in local school board elections, a privilege

that existed throughout the latter part of the twentieth century.⁵ The City of New York also responded to the Welfare Reform Act by creating a citizenship assistance program benefitting immigrants who would lose access to federally funded programs (Gilbertson and Singer 2003). The more pro-immigrant climate is evident in Georges Sabagh and Mehdi Bozorgmehr's comparison to Los Angeles: New Yorkers are "far more accepting and welcoming" of post-1965 immigrants than Angelenos (2003, 99).

While anti-immigrant sentiments are well-documented, the impact on naturalization is difficult to estimate. Along with the political context, the level of acculturation, demographic characteristics, and economic status influence the odds of being a citizen (Portes and Curtis 1987; DeSipio 1987; Yang 1994; Ong and Nakanishi 1996; Pantoja et al. 2001; Yang 2002). Moreover, empirical evidence pointing to defensive naturalization has been mixed. Some studies assert that anti-immigrant sentiment discourages naturalization, while others do not show a strong relationship between anti-immigrant legislation and naturalization rates (Pantoja et al. 2001; Jones-Correa 2001; Balistreri and Van Hook 2004). In addition, most studies focus on Latinos, a population that is significantly affected by IRCA (increasing naturalization) but that is also a large undocumented population (decreasing naturalization), which are factors that confound the analysis. Despite these issues, the majority of the available studies support the proposition that defensive naturalization contributed to the observed citizenship surge in the 1990s.

CHINESE IMMIGRANT CASE STUDY

Chinese immigrants were not only adversely impacted by the political changes discussed above but were also affected by other high-profile issues—such as the 1996 U.S. presidential fundraising scandal, in which it was alleged that China attempted to influence the result of the election, and the case of Wen Ho Lee, a nuclear scientist investigated for espionage in 1999—that created a hostile anti-immigrant environment for many Chinese Americans (Wang 2003; Turnbull 2003). Examining how the 1990s affected this particular group can provide additional insight into defensive naturalization for four reasons. First, Chinese immigrants were not significantly affected by the confounding effects of IRCA, a contributor to the surge among Latinos and, in particular, among Mexican-Americans.⁶ Second, Chinese Americans are broadly distributed throughout the United States and not limited to one major region. The geographic variation among the Chinese provides more variation in the political context. The third reason is that, in available data sets, the number of Chinese is sufficiently large, thus enabling empirical analysis. Finally, limiting the case study to one immigrant group minimizes cultural and ethnic differences that may affect the naturalization process.

This case study takes advantage of the regional differences by examining the odds of Chinese naturalization in three primate metropolises: New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. These regions have well-established Chinese populations (Newbold 2004), each roughly the same size, and collectively account for nearly half of all Chinese in the United States (see Table 1, which shows the total and Chinese populations reported in the

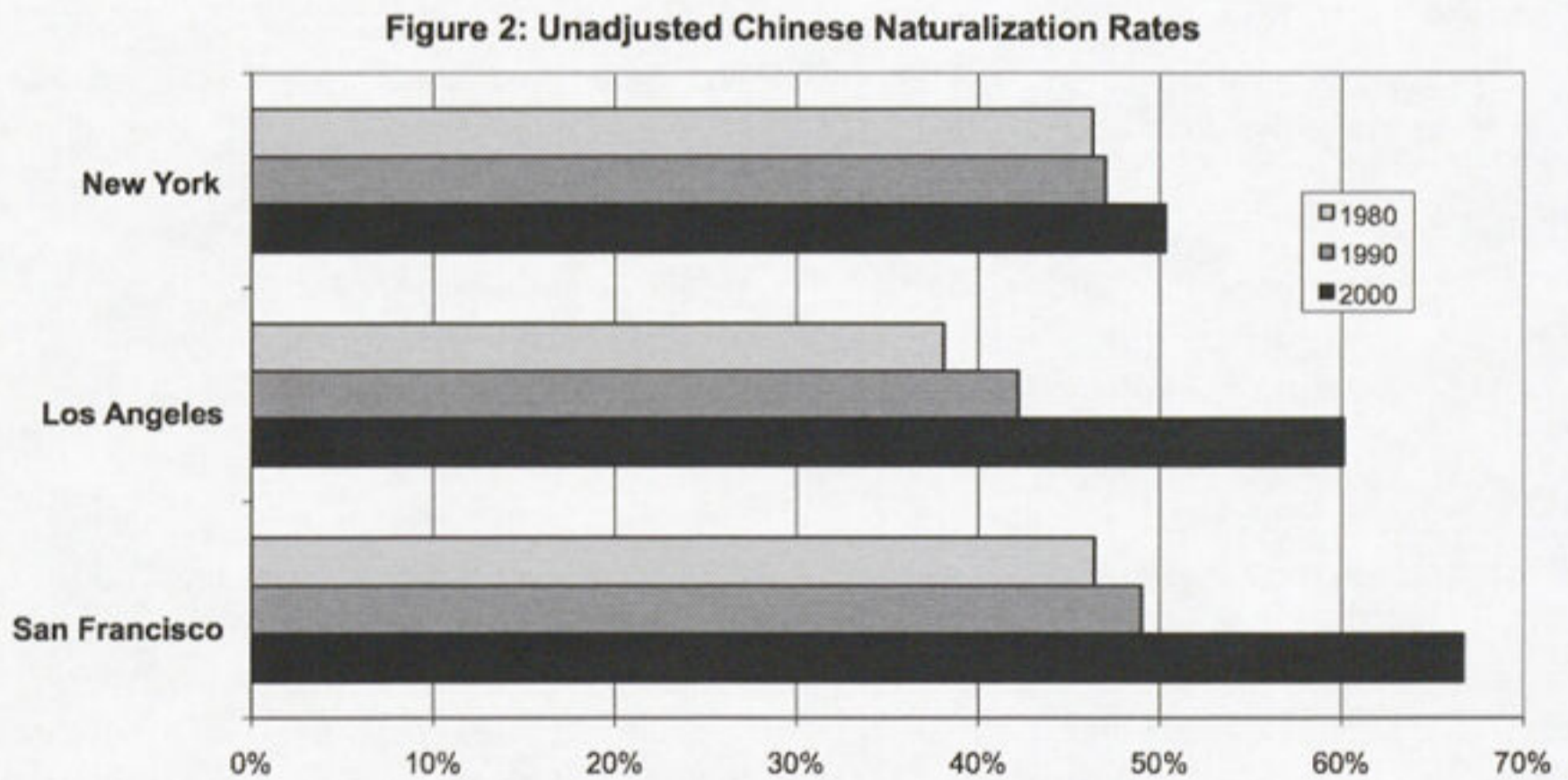
2000 U.S. Census for metropolitan statistical areas, or MSAs, each made up of a cluster of adjacent counties that forms an integrated economic region). One difference seen among the three cities is in the Chinese share of each region's total population, ranging from a high of 8.4 percent in San Francisco to a low of 3.4 percent in Los Angeles. The Chinese in New York had the good fortune of residing in a pro-immigrant region, as discussed earlier. While both those in San Francisco and Los Angeles suffered from California's anti-immigrant politics, those in the Bay Area also encountered a controversy involving what was perceived as anti-Asian discrimination in the public school and higher education (Ming 2002). Furthermore, the Chinese in the San Francisco area composed a larger share of the total population, which gave them greater potential to influence local politics through voting (Ong and Lee 2001); consequently, there was an additional incentive for those in San Francisco to naturalize. Based on these contextual differences, one would hypothesize that the increase in the naturalization rates would be most pronounced in the Bay Area and least pronounced in New York, with Los Angeles falling in the middle.

The information summarized in Figure 2 partially supports the hypothesized variations in the change in naturalization rates. These estimate rates are based on tabulations of adult Chinese immigrants in the U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMSs) for 1980, 1990, and 2000. Before the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment in the 1990s, none of the regions experienced a significant increase in the naturalization rate between 1980 and 1990. The naturalization rate changed dramatically for the two

Table 1 — Chinese by Metropolitan Area, 2000 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau FactFinder Web site, Summary File 4 (SF 4), http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en.)

	MSA Total	Chinese	% Chinese of Total	% of U.S. Chinese
New York	9,314,235	372,382	4.0%	15.4%
SF-Oakland	4,123,740	346,591	8.4%	14.3%
Los Angeles	9,519,338	326,093	3.4%	13.5%
San Jose	1,682,585	117,898	7.0%	4.9%
Boston	3,406,835	71,063	2.1%	2.9%
Chicago	8,272,768	68,622	0.8%	2.8%
Washington	4,923,153	62,959	1.3%	2.6%
Orange County	2,846,289	59,063	2.1%	2.4%
Honolulu	876,156	53,662	6.1%	2.2%
Seattle	2,414,616	51,555	2.1%	2.1%
United States	281,421,906	2,422,970	0.9%	100.0%

Figure 2 — Unadjusted Chinese naturalization rates.



California metropolises in the subsequent decade. This is consistent with the assertion that the change in political climate provided additional motivation for immigrants to become citizens. However, there is no noticeable difference in the increases for San Francisco and Los Angeles (17.7 percentage points and 17.9 percentage points, respectively); consequently the pattern does not support the a priori assumption that the increase would be the most pronounced in the Bay Area. Finally, the statistics show that New York had the smallest increase in naturalization rates between 1990 and 2000, which is consistent with the hypothesized interregional effects. This relatively small change in New York, however, could also be due in part to a rapid growth in the absolute and relative number of newly arrived immigrants who were not eligible for naturalization.

While the aggregated statistics in Figure 2 are informative, they have limitations. The most important is that they do not control for critical individual characteristics identified in previous studies, for example, age, gender, length of residency in the United States, education, English language ability, and place of birth. As Table 2 shows, there are important differences in these demographics across the three regions. For example, the Chinese in New York were more likely to have limited English abilities, the Chinese in San Francisco were more likely to have been in the country the longest, and the Chinese in Los Angeles were better educated. Not reported in the table, but equally important, are the differences across decades. Changes in demographic characteristics can affect the odds of being naturalized, thus accounting for some of the temporal and interregional changes in the naturalization rates.

Moreover, the aggregated rate does not provide any insight into how national-level changes affect naturalization patterns for subgroups. One would expect, for example, that the elderly would pursue defensive naturalization in response to the restrictions on SSI imposed by welfare reform.

To take these other factors into consideration, a logistic regression model is used to account for the influence of individual characteristics on the probability of naturalizing. Data from 1980, 1990, and 2000 is used to determine trends over the two decades and across the three regions. The dependent variable is the discrete naturalization outcome, and the functional form is as follows:

$$\Pr(\text{Naturalization}) = \frac{e^{\beta Z + \epsilon}}{1 + e^{\beta Z + \epsilon}}$$

for Naturalization in (1,0)

Z is the vector of all independent variables, beta (β) is the vector of estimated coefficients, and epsilon (ϵ) is the error term. The vector includes the list of demographic variables mentioned earlier and seen in Table 2. Maximum likelihood is used to estimate the multivariate logit model. The estimated coefficients can be transformed into changes in the probability or odds ratios. The marginal effect associated with a one-unit change in an independent variable is calculated as follows: $\Delta \Pr / \Delta x = C[p(1-p)]$, where p is the grand mean (probability) for the sample. The regression results can also be used to calculate the impact of a one-unit change in an independent variable as an odds ratio (the probability of one outcome relative to the alternative outcome), which is equal to $\exp(\beta)$. For dichotomous variables, the estimated impact is relative to the excluded category.

Table 2 — Demographics Characteristics for Adult Chinese in Sample

	All 3 MSAs	San Francisco MSA	Los Angeles MSA	New York MSA
Naturalization Rate	52.0%	57.4%	50.7%	48.5%
Demographics				
Male	47.4%	46.2%	47.0%	48.8%
Age	44.1	45.6	43.1	43.7
Years in the United States				
0-5 Yrs in U.S.	22.6%	20.7%	24.1%	22.8%
6-10 Yrs in U.S.	21.5%	19.5%	22.4%	22.3%
11-15 Yrs in U.S.	18.4%	17.8%	19.1%	18.4%
16-20 Yrs in U.S.	14.5%	13.7%	14.7%	15.0%
21 or More Yrs in U.S.	23.1%	28.3%	19.7%	21.4%
Education				
Less Than High School	35.3%	34.1%	26.0%	44.1%
High School	17.3%	16.8%	15.8%	19.0%
Some College	19.0%	21.2%	22.6%	14.2%
Bachelors and Higher	28.4%	27.9%	35.6%	22.8%
English Speaking Ability				
Very Well	29.1%	30.1%	31.8%	26.0%
Well	28.0%	27.9%	32.2%	24.7%
Limited	28.0%	28.4%	25.6%	29.8%
None	14.8%	13.6%	10.5%	19.5%
Place of Birth				
PRC/Taiwan	62.8%	62.6%	52.3%	71.9%
Hong Kong	13.3%	16.6%	10.5%	12.8%
Others	23.9%	20.8%	37.2%	15.3%
Census Year				
2000	50.3%	49.6%	50.7%	50.5%
1990	34.5%	33.7%	36.8%	33.2%
1980	15.2%	16.6%	12.4%	16.3%
Place of Residence				
San Francisco	31.7%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Los Angeles	31.3%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
New York	37.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Sample Size	66,907	21,782	22,505	22,620

Source: Tabulations by author from PUMS data.

Five empirical specifications are estimated. The first specification uses a single logit regression and pools all observations from the three regions and three time periods. This approach assumes that the beta (β) for demographic variables is invariant across time and region and that regional and temporal differences are captured separately as shifts in the intercept. The second specification also uses a single logit regression and pools all observations but estimates the effects of the interaction between time and location. The third specification uses a set of three logit regressions, a separate regression for each region with pooled observations from all three time periods within that region. This specification allows the beta (β) for demographic variables to vary across regions. The fourth specification also uses three logit regression, a separate one for each time period with pooled observations from all three regions within that time period. This allows the beta (β) for demographic variables to vary across decades. The fifth specification uses nine logit regressions, one for each region and decade combination, which allows the beta (β) for demographic variables to vary across both region and time. The main purpose of the last specification is to test whether we observe an increase in the naturalization rate of the elderly relative to the non-elderly between 1990 and 2000. As hypothesized earlier, the restriction on SSI should have increased the incentive for older immigrants to seek protection through citizenship. Because the impact is national, the effect should be present in all three regions.

MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

Table 3 reports the estimated coefficients and associated odds ratios for the first set of regressions. Model 1, which is based on the first specification described in the previous section, includes four dummy independent variables for each MSA and each decade, with San Francisco as the excluded category, and for each decade, with 1980 as the excluded category. Model 2, which is based on the second specification described in the previous section, includes eight dummy variables for each decade-MSA combination with 2000 San Francisco as the excluded category.

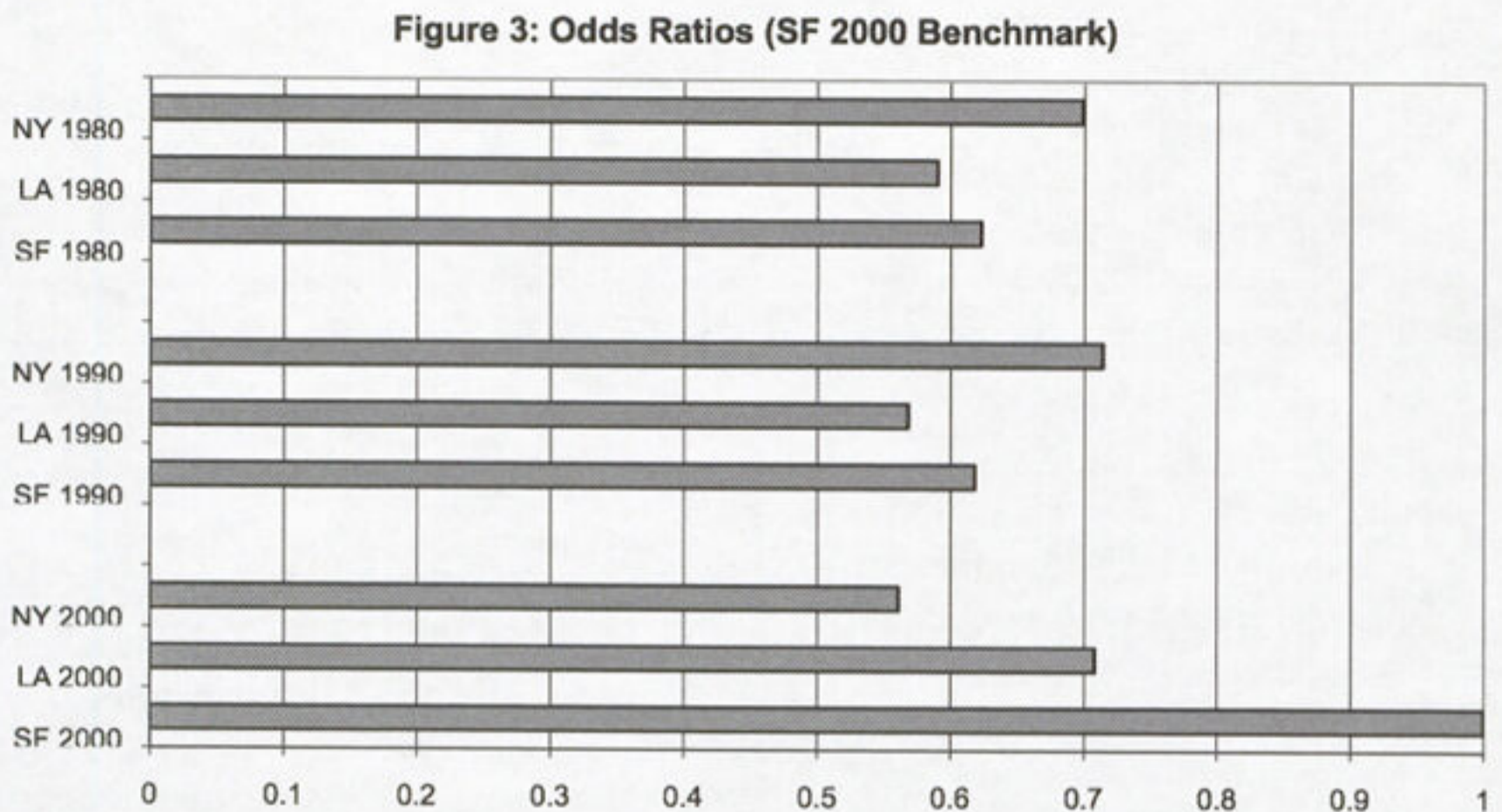
In both models, the estimated coefficients are highly statistically significant, roughly of the same value, and consistent with those found in previous studies. In Model 1, the odds of naturalizing increase with age up to fifty-seven years and then decrease for each additional year of age. The inflexion point for Model 2 is fifty-five years. The naturalization odds also increase with years in the United States, English language ability, and educational attainment up to a few years of college. Those from Hong Kong were more likely to be a citizen, due perhaps to the influence of British colonialism.⁷ In Model 1, the odds are higher in 2000 than in the other two decades and higher for those in San Francisco than in the other two regions. The results from Model 2 indicate that in 2000, immigrants in San Francisco had significantly higher odds of naturalizing than all other combinations of place and decade, after accounting for other factors.

Figure 3 provides a graphical interpretation of the results from Model 2 for the relative odds ratios for all nine MSA-decade combinations. Since 2000 SF is the excluded or reference group, the odds ratio is equal to one by definition. For

Table 3 — Logit Results, Pooled Sample

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coefficient	Odds Ratio	Coefficient	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-3.113***		-2.820***	
Demographics				
Age	0.022***	1.022	0.022***	1.02
Age Squared / 1000	-0.194***	0.824	-0.201***	0.82
Male	-0.194***	0.824	-0.193***	0.83
Years in the United States				
6–10 Yrs in U.S.	2.164***	8.703	2.171***	8.76
11–15 Yrs in U.S.	3.302***	27.158	3.318***	27.61
16–20 Yrs in U.S.	3.951***	51.982	3.956***	52.27
21 or More Yrs in U.S.	4.853***	128.177	4.862***	129.27
Education				
High School	0.276***	1.318	0.278***	1.32
Some College	0.493***	1.637	0.496***	1.64
Bachelors and Higher	0.245***	1.278	0.239***	1.27
English-Speaking Ability				
Well	0.155***	1.167	0.152***	1.16
Limited	-0.227***	0.797	-0.232***	0.79
None	-1.577***	0.207	-1.573***	0.21
Place of Birth				
Hong Kong	0.178***	1.195	0.161***	1.18
Others	-0.017**	0.984	-0.033***	0.97
Census Year				
2000	0.110***	1.116	NA	NA
1990	-0.017*	0.983	NA	NA
Place of Residence				
Los Angeles	-0.207***	0.813	NA	NA
New York	-0.222***	0.801	NA	NA
Census Year * Place				
LA 2000	NA	NA	-0.345***	0.71
NY 2000	NA	NA	-0.578***	0.56
SF 1990	NA	NA	-0.482***	0.62
LA 1990	NA	NA	-0.566***	0.57
NY 1990	NA	NA	-0.337***	0.71
SF 1980	NA	NA	-0.474***	0.62
LA 1980	NA	NA	-0.527***	0.59
NY 1980	NA	NA	-0.358***	0.70

Figure 3 — Odds ratios (SF 2000 benchmark).



each MSA, the pattern shows relatively little difference in the odds of naturalizing between 1980 and 1990. The most interesting change is between 1990 and 2000. As hypothesized, San Francisco experienced the greatest increase, and the change is substantial. Los Angeles also experienced an increase, but not as large as that of the Bay Area. New York had the smallest increase and in fact experienced a decrease in the odds ratio. These patterns are consistent with the a priori expectation about how variations in political context translate into regional and temporal changes in naturalization rates, *ceteris paribus*.

To test the robustness of the regional and temporal results from Model 2, six additional models based on the third and fourth specification described in the previous section are estimated using partially pooled samples and the same set of independent demographic variables used in Models 1 and 2. Only the relevant results are reported in Table 4. The estimated coefficients for the other independent variables are consistent with

a priori expectation. The top panel reports the coefficients and odds ratios for the three separate models, one for each decade. San Francisco is the excluded region (that is, the benchmark for the other two regions), thus by definition, its odds ratio is 1.00. The regional differences are small and similar for 1980 and 1990 but are large for 2000. Moreover, the pattern for the last decade is consistent with the hypothesized order: the highest odds for San Francisco, the lowest for New York, and Los Angeles falling in between. The bottom panel reports the coefficients and odds ratios for three additional models, one for each MSA. The year 1980 is the excluded time period (that is, the benchmark for the other two decades), thus by definition, its odds ratio is 1.00. For each MSA, the pattern shows very little difference in the odds of naturalizing between 1980 and 1990. In both San Francisco and Los Angeles, the odds decreased between 1980 and 1990, although the decrease is either small or statistically insignificant. There is, however, a noticeable increase between

1990 and 2000, with San Francisco experiencing a much larger jump. New York, on the other hand, did not experience a change between 1980 and 1990 but did experience a decrease between 1990 and 2000. Overall, the patterns from the regressions using partially pooled samples are consistent with the hypothesized impacts.

Our last set of models investigates whether the restrictions on SSI might have motivated elderly immigrants to pursue defensive naturalization. Full interaction models are used, that is, separate logit regressions for each region and decade combination. The main independent variables of interest are age and age squared. Because the impact of welfare reform is national, it is expected that the effect would be present in all three regions. The relevant results are illustrated in Figure 4, which includes the findings for the two decades exhibiting the most significant change: 1990 and 2000. To simplify the graph, only the results for San Francisco and New York are reported, but Los Angeles exhibits similar patterns. In all three MSAs for 1990, the age effect followed an inverted U-shape pattern, which is based on the estimated coefficients that are very statistically significant. The odds of naturalizing increased until the early or mid-40s and then decreased after this age. This indicates that the elderly did not perceive that naturalization provided sufficiently net benefits relative to their younger counterparts. In 2000 for all three MSAs, the odds of being naturalized did not exhibit a convex pattern, and each additional year of age in the upper range increased the probability. The temporal change in the age profile is remarkable because all three MSAs support the hypothesis that national-level anti-immi-

grant legislation had a predictable impact on the elderly throughout the United States.

CONCLUSION

This study's findings highlight three conclusions regarding defensive naturalization. First, the results of this study are consistent with literature that finds a strong relationship between anti-immigrant sentiment and the odds of naturalizing (Pantoja et al. 2001). These results add to the literature by documenting similar findings for Chinese immigrants during the 1990s, but the story is more nuanced. The response varied across the examined regions and subgroups. The increase was greatest in San Francisco, the area with the most hostility (and greatest opportunity to influence local politics), and lowest in New York, the most pro-immigrant region. Moreover, the results show a dramatic change in the age pattern, with an increase among the elderly, the subgroup at greatest risk due to welfare reform.

Second, defensive naturalization has broader political implications. As these residents become citizens, many vote and engage in other realms of civic participation, some of which are directed against anti-immigrant candidates and initiatives. During the 1990s, advocacy groups also tapped into the increasing political interest by implementing voter registration drives and "turn out the vote" programs (Chin 1996; Estrada and Vargas 1997; Bui et al. 2004; Magpantay 2004; Wong 2004). The surge in naturalization, then, has played an important role in making Asian Americans the emerging "sleeping giant" in American politics (Ong et al. 2008).

Third, the surge in naturalization among Chinese immigrants has implications for

how assimilation is conceptualized. Political incorporation is a key component of assimilation, and gaining citizenship is seen normatively by the larger society as a desirable behavior because it represents a change in allegiance from the sending country to the receiving country. Defensive naturalization, on the other hand, is similar to economic assimilation, which is instrumental and rational rather than being sentimental and intrinsically valuable. This is not to negate the

importance of acculturation and the realignment of national identity. A more useful way to conceptualize defensive naturalization is to see it as an important component of assimilation. Indeed, it can reinforce other forms of immigrant political incorporation and open opportunities for further assimilation. Nonetheless, defensive naturalization should be seen as a fundamentally unique behavior, one that is contingent on the political climate.

Figure 4 —Age effects on the odds of naturalizing

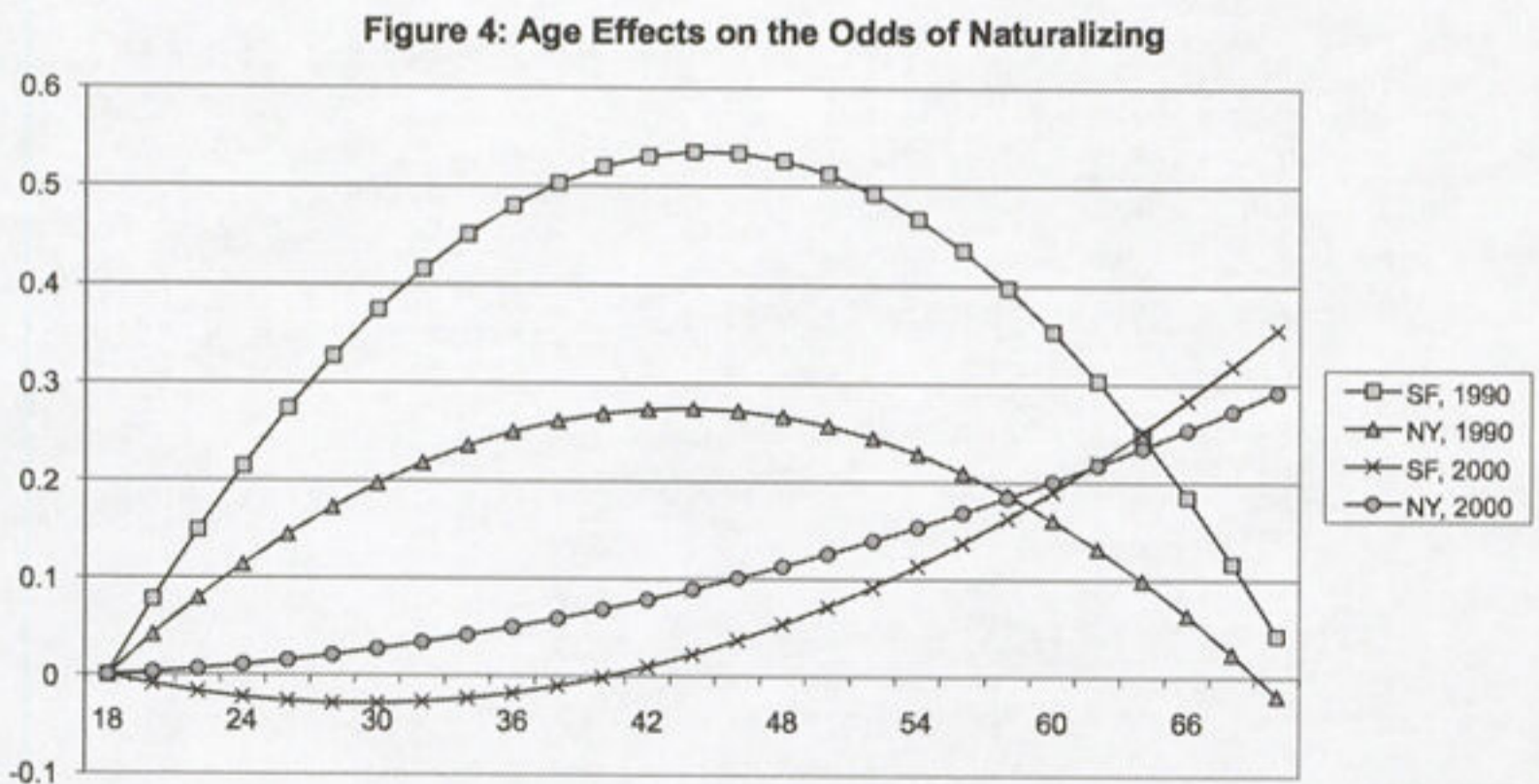
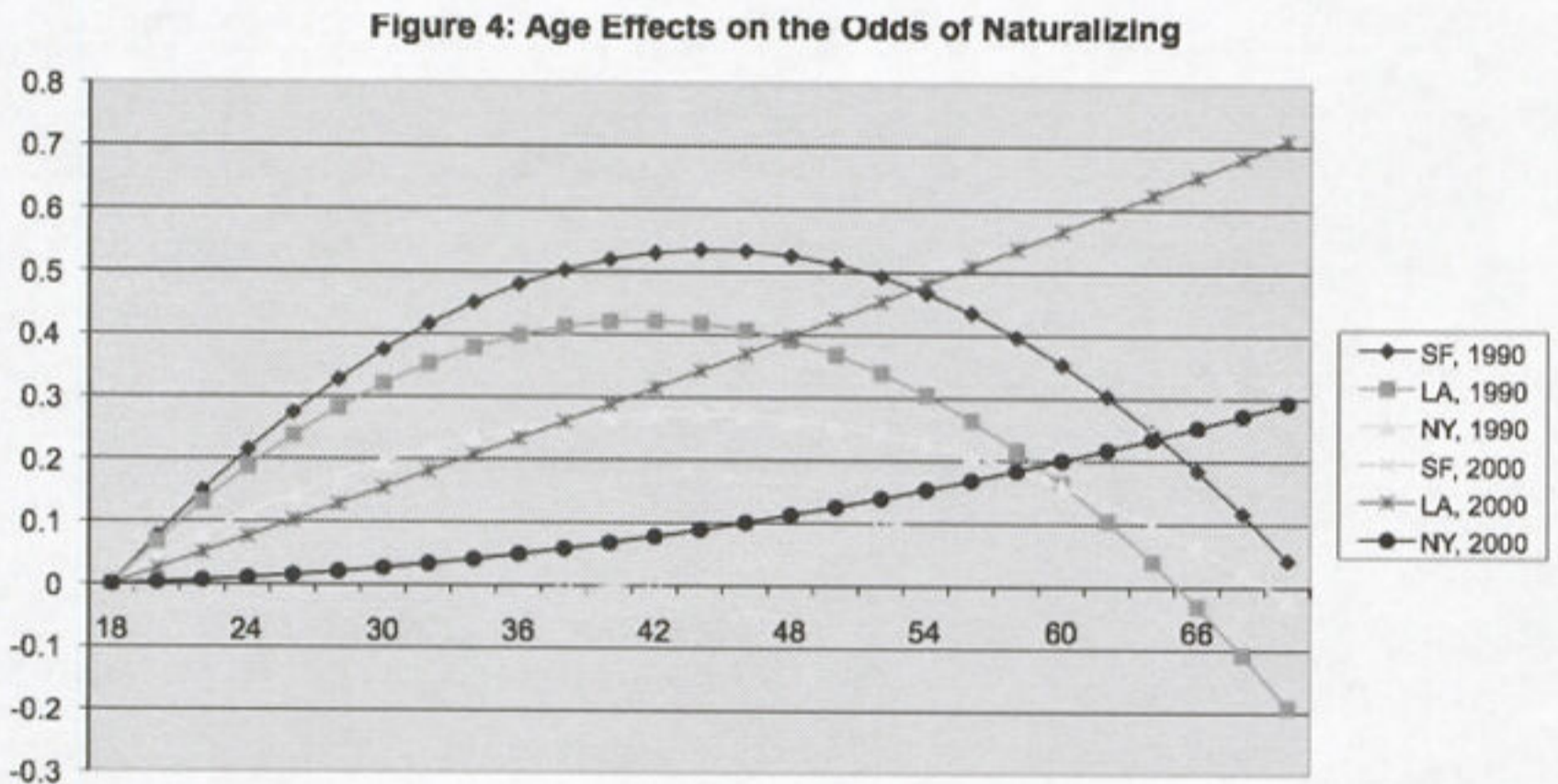


Table 4 — Selected Logit Results, Partially Pooled Sample

	By Census Years		
	1980	1990	2000
Coefficients			
Los Angeles	-0.130	-0.189	-0.295
New York	0.091	0.147	-0.559
Odds Ratios			
Los Angeles	0.878	0.828	0.745
New York	1.095	1.158	0.572
	By Metropolitan Areas		
	San Francisco	Los Angeles	New York
Coefficients			
1990	-0.012*	-0.055	0.008*
2000	0.491	0.104	-0.194
Odds Ratios			
1990	0.988	0.946	1.008
2000	1.634	1.11	0.824

* not statistically significant at .05 level

REFERENCES

- Baker, Bryan C. 2007. Fact sheet: Trends in naturalization rates. Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics (www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ntz_rates508.pdf).
- . 2009. Fact sheet: Trends in naturalization rates: 2008 update. Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics (www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_natztrends_fs_2008.pdf).
- Balistreri, Kelly Stamper, and Jennifer Van Hook. 2004. The more things change the more they stay the same: Mexican naturalization before and after welfare reform. *International Migration Review* 38(1): 113–130.
- Bloemraad, Irene. 2006. Becoming a citizen in the United States and Canada: Structured mobilization and immigrant political incorporation. *Social Forces* 85(2): 667–695.
- Bui, James Dien, Shirley Suet-ling Tang, and Peter Nien-chu Kiang. 2004. The local/global politics of Boston's Viet-Vote. *AAPI Nexus: Voting* 2(2).
- Chan, Sewell. 2006. Metro briefing — New York: Manhattan: Immigrant voting bill. *New York Times*, April 6.
- Chin, William. 1996. Cultivating the Asian Pacific American vote: A survey of voter registration strategies in the San Francisco area. *National Asian Pacific American political almanac*. Edited by Don T. Nakanishi. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center.
- DeSipio, Louis. 1987. Social science literature and the naturalization process. *International Migration Review* 21(2): 390–405.

- , Natalie Masuoka, and Christopher Stout. 2006. The changing non-voter: What differentiates non-voters and voters in Asian American and Latino communities? Irvine, University of California: Center for the Study of Democracy.
- DiCamillo, Mark, and Mervin Field. 2005. Californians oppose issuing driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. The Field Poll, Release 2156.
- Duncan, Natasha T., and Brigitte S. Waldorf. 2009. Becoming a U.S. citizen: The role of immigrant enclaves. *Cityscape* 11(3): 5–28.
- Estrada, Leobardo, and Marcos Vargas. 1997. The effects of anti-immigrant sentiment and public policy on California immigrant rights and service organizations. Report to the Aspen Foundation. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.
- Félix, Adrián, Carmen González, and Ricardo Ramírez. 2008. Political protest, ethnic media, and Latino naturalization. *American Behavioral Scientist* 52(4).
- Fix, Michael E., Jeffrey S. Passel, and Kenneth Sucher. 2003. Trends in naturalization. Brief No. 3 in Series "Immigrant Families and Workers: Facts and Perspectives." Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Gilbertson, Greta, and Audrey Singer. 2003. The emergence of protective citizenship in the USA: Naturalization among Dominican immigrants in the post-1996 welfare reform era. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26(1): 25–51.
- Jones-Correa, Michael. 2001. Institutional and contextual factors in immigrant naturalization and voting. *Citizenship Studies* 5(1): 41–56.
- Loo, Chalsa, and Paul Ong. 1998. Language acquisition, cultural shift, and the English-only movement. *Chinese America: Mental Health and Quality of Life in the Inner City*, 109–132. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Magpantay, Glenn D. 2004. Ensuring Asian American access to democracy in New York City. *AAPI Nexus* 2(2).
- Ming, Racy. 2002. Desegregation in a diverse and competitive environment: Admissions at Lowell High School. *Urban Education* 37(2): 173–192.
- Newbold, Bruce. 2004. Chinese assimilation across America: Spatial and cohort variations. *Growth and Change* 35(2): 198–219.
- Ong, Paul M., and Don T. Nakanishi. 1996. Becoming citizens, becoming voters: The naturalization and political participation of Asian Pacific immigrants. In *Reframing the Immigration Debate*. Edited by Bill O. Hing and Ronald Lee, 275–305. Los Angeles: LEAP Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center.
- , and David E. Lee. 2001. Changing of the guard? The emerging immigrant majority in Asian American politics. In *Asian Americans and politics: Perspectives, experiences, prospects*. Edited by Gordon H. Chang, 153–172. Washington, DC, and Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press.
- , Melany Dela Cruz-Viesca, and Don Nakanishi. 2008. Awakening the new "sleeping giant"? Asian American political engagement. *AAPI Nexus* 6(1): 1–10.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura. 2001. Citizens by choice, voters by necessity: Patterns in political mobilization by naturalized Latinos. *Political Research Quarterly* 54(4): 729–750.
- Portes, Alejandro, and John W. Curtis. 1987. Changing flags: Naturalization and its determinants among Mexican immigrants. *International Migration Review* 21(2): 352–371.
- Ramakrishnan, Karthic S., and Thomas J. Espenshade. 2001. Immigrant incorporation and political participation in the United States. *International Migration Review* 35(3): 870–909.
- Rytina, Nancy. 2002. IRCA legalization effects: Lawful permanent residence and naturalization through 2001. Washington, DC: US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Office of Policy and Planning Statistics Division (www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/irca0114int.pdf).
- , and Chunnong Saeger. 2005. Annual flow report: Naturalizations in the United States: 2004. Washington, DC: US Department

of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.

Sabagh, Georges, and Mehdi Bozorgmehr. 2003. From "give me your poor" to "save our state." In *New York and Los Angeles: Politics, society, and culture — A comparative view*. Edited by David Halle, 99–123. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schneider, Dorothee. 2001. Naturalization and United States citizenship in two periods of mass migration: 1894–1930, 1965–2000. *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21(1): 50–82.

Simanski, John. 2006. Working paper: Mapping trends in naturalizations: 1980–2003. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics (www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/NatzTrendsRpt1980-2003.pdf).

Sontag, Deborah. 1992. Noncitizens and right to vote; Advocates for immigrants explore opening up balloting. *New York Times*, July 31.

Turnbull, Spencer K. 2003. Wen Ho Lee and the consequences of enduring Asian American stereotypes. In *Asian American politics: Law, participation, and policy*. Edited by Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai, 303–316. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. 2002. 1999: Statistical yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice Immigration and Naturalization Service.

———. 2003. 2001: Statistical yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. 2006. 2004 yearbook of immigration statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.

Van Hook, Jennifer, Susan K. Brown, and Frank D. Bean. 2006. For love or money? Welfare reform and immigrant naturalization. *Social Forces* 85(2): 643–666.

Volpp, Leti. 2001. Obnoxious to their very nature: Asian Americans and constitutional citizenship. *Citizenship Studies*. 5(1): 57–71.

Wang, Ling-chi L. 2003. Race, class, citizenship and extraterritoriality: Asian Americans and the 1996 campaign finance scandal. In *Asian American politics: Law, participation, and policy*. Edited by Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai, 281–295. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Wong, Janelle S. 2004. Getting out the vote among Asian Americans in Los Angeles County: The effects of phone canvassing. *AAPI Nexus* 2(2): 49–66.

Worth, Robert F. 2004. Push is on to give legal immigrants a vote in the city. *New York Times*, April 8.

Yang, Philip Q. 1994. Explaining immigrant naturalization. *International Migration Review* 28(3): 449–477.

———. 2002. Citizenship acquisition of post-1965 Asian immigrants. *Population and Environment* 23(4): 377–404.

Yoo, Grace J. 2003. The fight to save welfare for low-income older Asian immigrants: The role of national Asian American organizations. *AAPI Nexus* 1(1): 85–100

ENDNOTES

¹ I am indebted to the Russell Sage Foundation and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center for partial funding of this project, to the UCLA Lewis Center for administrative support, and to David Lee, executive director of the Chinese American Voters Committee, for his assistance. The last version of this paper was completed while in residence as the Thomas Tam Visiting Professor, CUNY Graduate Center. I alone am responsible for the content.

² The Immigration and Naturalization Service ceased to exist under that name in 2003, when most of its functions were transferred to three new agencies within the newly created Department of Homeland Security.

³ These anti-alien political efforts occurred during a period of increasing racial tension,

which included efforts to turn back civil rights, specifically in the form of wedge issues such as the 1996 California Proposition 209, which prohibited discrimination and preferential treatment by public entities (passed 55 percent to 45 percent), and the 2003 California Proposition 54, which sought to prohibit state or local governments from classifying people by race, ethnicity, or nation of origin (defeated 36 percent to 64 percent).

⁴ Interestingly, California and New York have been the states with the largest numbers of newly naturalized immigrants. Residents of the Golden State comprised 28 percent of the nation's immigrants who naturalized in the 1980s and 35 percent in the 1990s. Those in the Empire State constituted the second-largest group during both decades, comprising 17 percent in the 1980s and 16 percent in the 1990s (Simanski 2006).

⁵ However, immigrants lost this limited voting right when the school boards were dismantled and bills extending voting rights did not pass (Worth 2004; Chan 2006). The problem with the boards was related to corruption and ineffectiveness rather than immigrant participation.

⁶ In 2001, 103,234, or 75 percent, of those naturalized through IRCA were from Mexico, which was the leading country of birth of persons naturalizing in that year. Two years prior, in 1999, 207,750 Mexican Americans were naturalized (Rytina 2002; U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2003).

⁷ For the purposes of this study and because of data limitations, Chinese immigrants from Taiwan are considered immigrants from mainland China.



HARVARD Kennedy School

JOAN SHORENSTEIN CENTER on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS the Shorenstein Center has brought together the interconnected worlds of media, politics and public policy. The Center illuminates the intersection of these areas in both theory and practice through teaching and research, conferences and public discussions, a visiting fellows program and other initiatives.



TEACHING. Faculty affiliated with the Center teach courses on political communication, public opinion, new media and the intersection of press, politics and public policy.



STUDENTS. The Center offers Kennedy School students access to internships, positions as research assistants, skills-based digital workshops and scholarships.



FELLOWSHIPS. An opportunity for outstanding journalists or scholars to pursue their research in a collegial and intellectually stimulating environment.



PUBLIC PROGRAMS. Weekly speaker series events with distinguished scholars and practitioners attract students, faculty and members of the community.



GOLDSMITH AWARDS IN POLITICAL JOURNALISM. The Goldsmith Awards include a prize for investigative reporting, two book prizes and a career award.



RESEARCH. Faculty members and Fellows pursue research in areas such as nonprofit journalism, coverage of climate change and political polarization.

www.shorensteincenter.org

A Pure Land in the East: Study of a Sangha in New York: Influence of Internment Camps on Community Development

by Ayako Sairenji

Ayako Sairenji is an adjunct professor of Japanese at St. Peter's College in Jersey City, N.J. Having completed a master of philosophy in sociology in 2010, she is currently studying the sociology of religion toward a Ph.D. at The New School for Social Research and writing a dissertation on the Japanese American Christian congregations in the tristate area. Born and raised in Tokyo, Japan, she came to the United States as an international student in 1997.

ABSTRACT:

This study of a Japanese American Buddhist congregation in New York City reveals the effect that the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II had on community building. Following World War II, membership in the Buddhist community in New York City grew dramatically, only to be followed by a decrease within a couple of years. However, those people who stayed created a close-knit, active community. This article focuses on both the history of the Buddhist community in the United States

as well as the uniqueness of Japanese Americans in New York City. With the end of the “good old days,” the congregation needs to be open to communities outside of the Japanese lineage to survive.

To most scholars studying ethnicity in America, “Japanese Americans in New York” are not a familiar category. While extensive scholarly research has been done on people of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast, those on the East Coast have been neglected. However, for more than half a century on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, a Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land School), a Buddhist temple, has witnessed the lives and history of people of Japanese ancestry in the New York area.

The Japanese American Buddhist Church (JABC),¹ was founded in New York in 1938. It stands as one of only five temples of the fifty-six that belong to the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) to be located in the Eastern District (Buddhist Churches of America n.d.). Since the majority of the BCA temples are located on the West Coast, where there is a large number of people of Japanese ancestry, the congregations on the East Coast have drawn little attention. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 288,854 Japanese live in California, while only 37,279 Japanese are listed as residents of New York State. About 60 percent of that number are residents of New York City (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

This study probes the transformation of the JABC from a Japanese-ethnic Buddhist church to a multi-ethnic Buddhist congregation, particularly focusing on the aftermath of World War II. Through discussions with individuals who have been to the BCA churches on the West Coast, I make the claim that the

location of the JABC makes the culture of the church fairly unique. JABC's ethos and character are distinct in that the church is located in an area where fewer Japanese are living and fewer people of Japanese ancestry are attending the church, which has become a multicultural community. The JABC's history, however, is part of the history of people of Japanese lineage in the mainland United States.

THE BUDDHIST SCHOOL COMES TO THE UNITED STATES

Jōdo Shinshū is one of the Buddhist schools that evolved in Japan around the Kamakura period, from 1192 to 1333. As such, the question is why Japanese immigrants would bring this particular religious school to the United States in the late nineteenth century. According to Tetsuden Kashima (1977), more than 60 percent of Japanese immigrants between 1889 and 1993 were from Hiroshima, Kumamoto, Yamaguchi, and Fukuoka, which are southern parts of Japan where Jōdo Shinshū has a strong influence. Whether one had actively practiced Jōdo Shinshū in Japan or not, the Buddhism might have reminded the Japanese immigrants of their home country.

In mainland America, Jōdo Shinshū was originally incorporated as the Buddhist Mission of North America (BMNA). Around World War II, the BMNA changed its name to the BCA. When Jōdo Shinshū was first brought to the United States in the late nineteenth century, not only American society but also the Japanese Consul in Seattle had an unfavorable view of the idea of introducing Buddhism to North American society. In contrast, Japanese immigrants were hoping to find a place for their religion in a foreign country that was inhospitable toward them. In fact, Japanese immi-

grants in California sent a petition to Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan, in 1889 to send Buddhist monks to them. However, because of the conditions in the country, Jōdo Shinshū ministers were limited to working only among Japanese.

Kenneth Tanaka (1999) notes the effect the attitudes had on limiting the Jōdo Shinshū ministers' missionary work at the beginning of their time in North America:

A Buddhist representative met with the Japanese Consul in Seattle, but...this government official was not favorable to the idea of bringing Buddhism to the United States...The Consul was annoyed by the idea and inquired whether the American government would allow the entrance of a "foreign religion." He saw Buddhism as a threat to the relationship between the two people [the Japanese and Americans]. (Tanaka 1999, 5).

This Japanese government official's attitude suggests fear of arousing unnecessary public attention from North American society toward the immigrants. The existence of the Japanese themselves was peculiar enough to society; furthermore, Buddhism was still unknown among North Americans. The fear of unknown elements could evoke more severe antipathy toward people of Japanese ancestry. Tanaka further writes:

These priests had been invited to meet existing spiritual needs. Consequently, the priests found themselves being discouraged by their lay "hosts" from actively propagating beyond their communities. The lay members needed their priests to help create a social oasis within the sea of racial hostility. (Tanaka 1999, 6)

The history of Japanese Americans and Buddhism, especially in the early twentieth century, is greatly shaped by race and ethnicity. Japanese Buddhism, as it went through hardships with people of Japanese lineage, gradually began to serve as a refuge for people who were unable to find a place in the new society and began to symbolize and confirm their identity, which was denied to them by North American society.

When Japanese immigrants came to California, they became “colored”; the physical characteristics of Japanese immigrants were very different from those of the Caucasians who had power in the country and were considered people of no color—that is, White. Although early immigrants from Japan faced racial hostility from the beginning, those immigrating during the time of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 faced escalated anti-Japanese sentiment.

Fear of aggressive Japanese who did not know their proper place spurred the racist agitators. *The San Francisco Chronicle* whipped up its readers with lurid headlines: “Japanese a Menace to American Women”; “The Yellow Peril: How Japanese Crowd out the White Race”; “Brown Men, an Evil in the Public Schools”; “Brown Artisans Steal Brains of Whites”; “Crime and Poverty Go Hand in Hand with Asiatic Labor” (Spickard 1996, 28).

In his book, Ronald Takaki (1993) quoted William Smith’s story, which concerns a Japanese man in California [WHO CAME?] from Hawaii in the 1920s. As the man recounts it:

In one instance, I went to a barber shop to get my hair trimmed. On entering the shop, one of the barbers approached me and asked for my

nationality. I answered that I was Japanese, and as soon as he heard that I was of the yellow race, he drove me out of the place as if he were driving away a cat or a dog. (Takaki 1993, 266)

Japanese immigrants were discriminated against not only by individuals, but also by legislation:

As early as 1893, Japanese had been rejected for naturalization on the grounds of racial disqualification, but after 1910 the denials served to Japanese applicants became more regular and consistent. At last, in 1922 the U.S. Supreme Court...declared once and for all that Japanese aliens were not white and hence were ineligible for American citizenship. (Ueda 1994, 29)

Eventually this anti-Japanese sentiment led to the Asian Exclusion Act, part of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924.

In this environment of hostility, the BCA became a place where people of Japanese lineage could affirm one’s identity. Paul Spickard writes, “Religion was not a regular activity in the schedule of most people, but it was an important part of one’s identity, linking one to a web of relationships in one’s family and community” (1996, 54). Moreover, more people of Japanese ancestry became Buddhist as a reaction to the anti-Japanese movement. Richard Hughes Seager (1999) writes:

The unjust nature of this legislation actually helped to increase the number of American Buddhists. Many Japanese Americans had been hesitant to identify themselves as Buddhist, but exclusion encouraged them to band together for welfare and security. As a result, the temple also became increasingly important as the headquarters for

a range of social and cultural services from Japanese-language schools to rotating credit systems and as a center in which continuity with Japanese culture could be maintained. (Seager 1999, 55).

Given such encounters with a hostile North American society, the Japanese Buddhism brought by Japanese immigrants was destined to become a defender of people of Japanese ancestry.

World War II drove people of Japanese ancestry residing in the United States into further hardship; people of Japanese lineage on the West Coast and their community leaders were sent to internment camps. The War Relocation Authority, a U.S. agency, engaged in the evacuation of more than 120,000 people of Japanese lineage during World War II. According to a U.S. Department of the Interior archived document, "Some 120,313 persons of Japanese descent came under the custody of the War Relocation Authority between May 8, 1942 (the date the Colorado River Relocation Center opened) and March 20, 1946 (the date Tule Lake closed)" (1946, 2).

People of Japanese lineage reacted to this hostility in opposing ways: some assimilated by converting to Christianity and others affirmed their identity as Japanese through adherence to Buddhism. Confirming the former, Taitetsu Unno writes: "To be Buddhist was regarded as unpatriotic, and many young people became Christians because the adoption of Christianity was the hallmark of becoming more American" (1998, 13). By becoming Christians, those Japanese could show their aim for acculturation into North American society.

Buddhists were in a more awkward position than Christians because of their

religion, which was assumed to have closer bonds to the Japanese nation. As Seager writes, "Despite a formal statement of loyalty issued by BMNA leadership, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began to investigate all Japanese Americans, but especially those in the Buddhist community" (1999, 57).

Regardless of their religious affiliation, some non-Christian Japanese people also attended the Christian church to have a feeling of security. Kashima states:

Many Nisei Buddhist apparently were afraid to attend the religious institution of their parents: thousands listed "no preference" in their religion and many even became Christians... There was a marked increase in church attendance. Buddhists and Shintoists went to the Christian church because they felt that there would be more protection for them. (Kashima 1977, 54).

This tendency can also be seen in the New York area; a poll conducted in 1942 by the Survey Committee, clearly shows more Nisei indicated their religious affiliation with Christianity (Survey Committee 1942). The survey was conducted with the cooperation of the New York Church Committee for Japanese Work, Japanese Methodist Church and Institute, Japanese Christian Institute, the Japanese American Buddhist Church, Japanese American Committee for Democracy, Young People's Christian Federation of New York, and Tozai Club of New York, an alliance of Japanese American organizations that is deeply rooted among people of Japanese lineage in the New York area. According to the Survey Committee, "One of the first revelations uncovered following the outbreak of the war was the deplorable absence of any up-to-date, comprehensive data concern-

ing the Japanese residents of this area... local leaders could not speak with authority on any phase of the diverse problems or possibilities presented here" (1942, viii-ix).

According to this survey, among Nisei (literally in Japanese "second generation"; name for a child of a Japanese immigrant who is born in the United States) in the New York area, Christians exceeded Buddhists in number; 20 out of 260 Nisei expressed Buddhism as their religion, while 193 Nisei indicated their religious affiliation as Protestant (see Table 1). Buddhism was more popular among Issei (literally in Japanese "first generation"; name for a Japanese immigrant, especially to the United States): 191 out of 700 Issei were Buddhists, while 274 Issei were Protestants (see Table 2).

This survey, which was conducted during World War II, shows a high percentage of Protestants even among Issei, who were from a country where Protestantism was a minority religion. But, at the same time, for some Issei, affirming their identity could be connected to seeking their roots in Buddhism, which was brought from Japan. For some Nisei who were born in the United States and were "Americans," however, Christianity, and particularly Protestantism, the mainstream religion in the United States, could provide them with a sense of belonging in society.

The choice of religion among Japanese and Japanese-Americans at that time was not necessarily a result of their own spiritual quest; rather it was a method or "defense mechanism" of adaptation and acculturation to a new environment. By putting pressure on the Japanese to fit in, North American society influenced people of Japanese lineage choosing

the religion that was dominant in society — Christianity.

JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK CITY

In order to better understand the Japanese American community in New York, it is important to discuss the differences in the history of West Coast and East Coast Japanese. In 1869, the Japanese started to migrate to the West Coast as "imin," immigrants who came to the United States as laborers. By contrast, migration to the New York area started somewhat later, in the 1890s, and often comprised those people who came to New York as "hi-imin," "students, merchants, businessmen, and professionals [who] were required to have a middle school education or its equivalent" (Sawada 1996, 14). Moreover, while the Japanese population on the West Coast grew rapidly, the rate on the East Coast was not as dramatic. For example, the Japanese population in 1900 in California was 10,151, while 1,170 were recognized in New York City during that year. In 1920, 71,952 were identified as living in California (Sawada 1996), and only 3,926 were identified in New York City. In 1940, 93,717 were counted in California (Yoo 2000), while in 1942, the Survey Committee in New York City estimated 1,750 Japanese people, 650 of which were Nisei, the second-generation Japanese (1942, 11).

Later, Japanese Americans, especially younger Nisei, moved to the New York area from the relocation camps. According to the War Relocation Authority, "In July 1945 it was estimated that approximately 5,000 had resettled in New York, of which about seven out of ten were Nisei" (U.S. Department of the Interior 1947, 160). According to another

Table 1 — Nisei Men and Women's Religion in 1942

Type	Total number	Percentage	No. of Men	Percentage	No. of Women	Percentage
Christianity						
Protestant	193	74.2	77	72.7	116	75.3
Catholic	12	4.6	3	2.8	9	5.9
Buddhism	20	7.7	7	6.6	13	8.4
Not Specified	35	13.5	19	17.9	16	10.4
Total	260	100.0	106	100.0	154	100.0

Source: The Survey Committee (1942)

Table 2 — Japanese (Issei) Men and Women's Religion in 1942

Type	Total number	Percentage	No. of Men	Percentage	No. of Women	Percentage
Christianity						
Protestant	274	39.1	207	34.9	67	75.3
Catholic	16	2.3	16	2.7	0	5.9
Buddhism	191	27.3	171	28.8	20	8.4
Not Specified	219	31.3	199	33.6	20	10.4
Total	700	100.0	593	100.0	107	100.0

report by the War Relocation Authority, New York was a better place for evacuees to find jobs:

New York City, which had a prewar Japanese population of about 2,000, attracted about that same number of resettlers. Many new evacuee-owned businesses were established, and virtually all types of employment and professional opportunities were open to the resettlers in accordance with their skills. (U.S. Department of the Interior 1947, 90)

George, whose name has been changed for privacy, is a Nisei Japanese American from Hawaii. His experience confirms the War Relocation Authority's report. He was serving in the army in Hawaii and, after the war, went to California. However, even if he had been qualified to work for certain jobs, there weren't any to be found; it was difficult for people of Japanese ancestry to get a job in California just after the war. This difficult situation in California made him move to New York in the early 1950s. Since arriving in New York, he has lived on the Upper West Side, an area he remembers many young Japanese Americans, who'd gathered together to have fun, calling home.

Roku Sugahara writes in the *Pacific Citizen*, a newspaper for the Japanese American:

Here in upper Manhattan around 110th and Broadway, which a cluster of Nisei call home and fireside, the prevalent opinion is they plan to stay put. They like it here and plan to stay.

You can't blame them. They have good jobs, a bank account, tidy, but tiny apartments, children in school, friends in the neighborhood, and the

essential elements that constitute a full life. (Sugahara 1947, 5)

Many Japanese American organizations were also located in that area. Such an existing community made the Upper West Side of Manhattan a good place for Japanese Americans to settle.

POST-WORLD WAR II GROWTH OF THE JABC

After World War II, the Japanese American Buddhist Church experienced a rapid growth in its membership, as the *sangha*, a Buddhist community, became home for people of Japanese lineage. Some of those members were people who moved to New York from the relocation camps on the West Coast. These people developed strong ties, creating a closely knit community at the JABC. Through its cultural activities, the JABC supported the lives of its members and provided reinforcement and reaffirmation of their identity as people of Japanese ancestry.

Right after World War II, the membership of the JABC almost doubled. In 1940, before the war, only about seventy people, including twelve White Americans, were recognized by a newspaper reporter (*PM's Weekly* 1940). By 1946, however, the JABC had almost 140 members, and there were close to 160 members in 1947. This influx indicates that the church was an important place where Japanese people could meet other individuals of Japanese lineage in the process of establishing their lives in a new location. Some elderly members have noted that the church helped people to find a place to live and sometimes allowed people to stay at the church dormitory.

While many of those who migrated to the East Coast and joined the JABC after the war returned to the West Coast after a few

years, others decided to settle in the New York area, reestablishing their lives and raising their children in this location.

The Good Old Days

After the 1950s, the influx of people ceased, but the church continued to thrive due to its stable membership. With the end of the war, individuals were gradually released from the pressure of being deemed people from a hostile country, and various activities within the JABC sustained the members' memories of their country of origin and their ancestors. These activities were able to create a virtual realm of Japan within North American society. For example, "Japanese Movie Night," lasted three days at certain times. People would enjoy Japanese movies, rented from major Japanese movie companies, while they ate Japanese foods and sweets prepared by the volunteers. Such three-day fund-raising bazaars even attracted people from outside the community. In the 1950s and 1960s, JABC members pounded about 7,000 pounds of glutinous rice to make *mochi*, a very important dish for the New Year (today only about 400 pounds are used). The Japanese traditional dance festival, the *obon*, was a major summer event that attracted a variety of people. Until the mid-1960s, the church activities sometimes appeared in newspapers in the New York area. Those years were, as a member expressed, the "good old days." This active *sangha*, however, soon showed signs of decline in the 1970s as members' children reached college age and those children either left the city or became busy with their jobs. In addition, the JABC's history shows that the church community was very active and thrived until the mid-1970s, when some of their affiliated organizations decided to discontinue their activities.

The necessity of experiencing an ethnic community in a religious setting has somewhat diminished, for the needs of individuals of Japanese lineage are no longer the same. Today, there are many ways that people from different countries connect to their homeland. Moreover, resident workers and their families at Japanese-affiliated companies often stay in New York for only a few years, and Japanese students also come and go. Therefore, the church lacks the stable community that would support and help develop the *sangha*.

THE JABC TODAY

The JABC *sangha* has historically provided a rich community for people, especially those of Japanese lineage. The people who so directly experienced anti-Japanese sentiment after World War II and who met at and contributed to the prosperity of the JABC greatly affected the present congregation; the lives of people of Japanese ancestry in the New York area are, in fact, a significant part of the overall history of Japanese Americans in the United States.

As time has gone by, the *sangha* has changed, especially as people in North America have become more interested in Asian culture. The JABC is now facing the question of how to negotiate cultural differences and make Buddhist teachings understandable to people beyond the community.

Japanese cultural elements in the JABC, such as Japanese language and rituals, have helped to preserve the ethnicity of the church members in a foreign country. Ironically, those cultural elements have reinforced Buddhism as a minority religion among Asians, and, at times, hinder the church from attracting recognition and acceptance from those

outside the Japanese community. Consequently, with the passing of some of its elderly members, others leaving the church, and few people of Japanese lineage joining, the JABC has had to seek ways of attracting the attention of people outside of the Japanese American community in order to survive. Further, as the church has taken root in American society, certain challenges and conflicts have become inevitable for the JABC as the culture of the church is gradually being redefined.

One day an incident made me wonder what makes a person Japanese. A fourth-generation little girl sat on the floor of the JABC and let out a deep sigh. Her grandmother, who is a second-generation Japanese American, said to her that she was just like an “Ob chan” (elderly woman). The girl proudly replied to her grandmother that she did not speak Spanish. Her mother, grandmother, and I laughed loudly, and her grandmother told her that “Ob chan” is Japanese. The girl then proudly said that she is Chinese. The grandmother admonished her granddaughter by telling her that she is a Japanese girl and by saying that she wants her to grow up as a Japanese girl. That incident made an impression on me. That little girl is losing touch with her Japanese culture, but the JABC is one small place that can help her hold onto her Japanese heritage and learn about the country of her ancestors. At the same time, the church is a place where her grandmother can hand down the Japanese culture that she learned from her parents who were from Japan.

The JABC is transitioning from an ethnic church to a multicultural Buddhist church. As a *sangha*, it is a place where people from different backgrounds can show their acceptance of each other and

seek a future within an often harsh society. While “Japaneseness” continues to exist, it is actually created through plural ethnicities in which each member enjoys the others’ culture—Japanese, the multicultural society of the United States, and an alternative Japanese world in New York. The JABC’s new culture is not aimed at the active elimination of Japanese cultural activities but rather the active enhancement of past, present, and future possibilities.

One of the long-time, non-Japanese American members said that the JABC has many nonreligious activities and also has historical roots. Having many nonreligious activities is not a matter of right or wrong; rather it is part of the dialectic of religion and culture. The member continued to note that the line between religion and nonreligious activities is often arbitrary; most people at the church speak English so that people at the church can communicate with one another, regardless of ethnicity, and that is, he believes, important.

While Buddhism in the United States remains a minority religion, its meaning has changed; people have a more positive image of Buddhism than they did a hundred years ago when Asians were regarded more negatively by European Americans. The JABC’s thriving community after World War II was a result of the artificial distribution of people of Japanese lineage from the internment camps. Those people built families around the same time, which resulted in a thriving congregation in the 1950s and 1960s but also the declining congregation by the 1970s. However, the relaxed attitude of the people at the JABC and the accumulation of the people’s memories are continuing to provide a sanctuary. It

is, however, a multi-ethnic, multicultural sanctuary.

REFERENCES

Buddhist Churches of America. n.d. Our temples/churches (www.bcahq.org/index.php/our-templechurches).

Kashima, Tetsuden. 1977. Buddhism in America: The social organization of an ethnic religious institution. *Contribution in Sociology*, 26. Westport: Greenwood Press.

PM's Weekly. 1940. Religion: N.Y. Buddhists temple is a brownstone. *PM's Weekly*, October 13.

Sawada, Mitziko. 1996. *Tokyo life, New York dreams: Urban Japanese visions of America, 1890–1924*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Seager, Richard Hughes. 1999. *Buddhism in America*. Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series. New York: Columbia University Press.

Spickard, Paul. 1996. *Japanese Americans: The formation and transformations of an ethnic group*. New York: Twayne Publishers.

Sugahara, Roku. 1947. They like it in New York. *Pacific Citizen* (San Francisco), April 12.

Survey Committee. 1942. *A social study of the Japanese population in the greater New York area*. New York: The Survey Committee.

Takaki Ronald (ed.). 1993. *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Quoting William C. Smith, *The second generation Oriental in America*, Honolulu, 1927. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993.

Tanaka, Kenneth K. 1999. Issues of ethnicity in the Buddhist churches of America. *American Buddhism: Methods and findings in recent scholarship*. Edited by Duncan Ryuken Williams and Christopher S. Queen. England: Curzon.

Ueda, Reed. 1994. *Postwar immigrant America: A social history*. The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.

Unno, Taitetsu. 1998. Shin Buddhism in the West. *Engaged pure land Buddhism: Challenges*

facing J do Shinsh in the contemporary world. Edited by Kenneth K. Tanaka and Eisho Nasu. Berkeley: Wisdom Ocean Publication.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000. Profiles of general demographic characteristics 2000: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, California, Donald L. Evans.

U.S. Department of the Interior. 1946. *The evacuated people: A quantitative description*. Reported by J.A. Krug, secretary, and D.S. Myer, director. War Relocation Authority. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

———. 1947. *People in motion: The postwar adjustment of the evacuated Japanese Americans*. Reported by J.A. Krug, secretary, and R.K. Candlin, acting chief. War Agency Liquidation Unit, formerly War Relocation Authority. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Yoo, David K. 2000. *Growing up Nisei: Race, generation, and culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924–49*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Table 1 — Nisei Men and Women's Religion in 1942

ENDNOTES

¹ In this article, for privacy purposes, the church's real name has not been used, and the fictitious name of the Japanese American Buddhist Church is used in its place.

As All-American as General Tso's Chicken: An Interview with Jennifer 8. Lee

Interviewed by Quinnie Lin

*Jennifer 8. Lee is author of the New York Times best-selling book *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles* and producer of the documentary "The Search for General Tso." She was a reporter for the New York Times for nine years, during which time she covered technology, Washington, DC, crime, poverty, and culture. A 1999 graduate of Harvard College, Lee was the vice president of the Harvard Crimson. In 2009, she successfully organized alumni to support the hiring of Asian American studies professors at Harvard College. Lee has also appeared on TED.com, the Colbert Report, the Martha Stewart Show, and the Today Show.*

Quinnie Lin is a first-year master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She graduated from Harvard College in 2009 and has traveled to Rwanda, Switzerland, and China to work on issues of legal rights and transitional justice. Lin is also passionate about ethnic studies and finding innovative ways to provide access to higher education for disadvantaged youth.

Asian American Policy Review Features Editor Quinnie Lin interviewed Jennifer 8. Lee via telephone on December 25, 2010.

AAPR

You majored in applied mathematics and economics at Harvard College. What motivated you to choose a career in the media over careers in those fields?

LEE

There's a difference between what you would do for four years inside a classroom and forty years outside of a classroom. Applied math and economics were things that I wanted to learn inside the classroom, but other things, like history and writing, I could learn without necessarily requiring the discipline of a classroom.

I knew that I wanted to be a journalist because of a summer program I had done before college. I decided to approach journalism in college through internships. It was very much based on an apprenticeship model at that time. It was a trade rather than a profession that needed specialized training. I was lucky to have jumped through a lot of hoops early.

I did go through the recruiting process during my senior year at Harvard College. As an Asian American female who could write and had a math background, I was an appealing candidate, and I got job offers from investment banks and consulting firms and took a job with McKinsey. I deferred this job to go to Beijing, where I received an offer from the *New York Times*. But, actually, after a week of interviews, I decided I never wanted a job where I would wear pantyhose every day. My parents were okay with my decision because my mother had always wanted to be a journalist and all their friends had heard of the *New York Times*. It was also great because they were able to see my work on a regular basis.

AAPR

You have been involved with the Ethnic Studies program at Harvard College, both before and after the founding of the Ethnic Studies minor in 2010. Could you talk about how the alumni organized for this cause?

LEE

There were a few alumni who were once part of the Asian American Association (AAA) who felt that it was a good time to approach the Harvard administration about endowing Asian American studies professors. I don't think we thought it was going to happen so quickly. I had imagined a five-year timeline in terms of the frame of the discussion. But in terms of organizing the alumni and having faculty who were ready, it was only a year after we started the discussion with the administration that they agreed to the endowment. One thing that helped was reading a senior thesis by Sophia Lai [graduate of Harvard College, '04], about Asian American studies at Columbia and a University of California school. It gave me a historic context for understanding why Ethnic Studies was once shunned by the academy, because it came from a history of protest, but now it is becoming one of the hottest spots in some areas of research.

AAPR

You were in the Asian American Association when you were at Harvard College. How was your experience in AAA?

LEE

There were many different Asian ethnic groups at Harvard, many of them cultural, such as the Chinese Students Association and Taiwanese Students Association. What was really interesting about the Asian American Association was that it was very politically minded.

Two of my classmates formed an Asian American studies group. For me, it was really meaningful to be among like-minded Asian Americans who were aware of the issues we faced; these classmates were not only involved in AAA in college but were involved as alumni. When we crossed paths years later, one of the reasons we managed to work together on the Ethnic Studies program was because many of these Asian American alumni were the ones who were involved in AAA when they were in school.

AAPR

Let's talk about your writing. In your book *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles*, you travel all over the world to document "how Chinese food is more all-American than apple pie." Could you talk more about what prompted you to write this book?

LEE

If you ever want to write a book, you have to be absolutely obsessed with the topic because it takes up at least three to four years of your life. It's a very long process. For me, Chinese food in America was a topic that I was very passionate about. This was in part because there were so many differences between the Chinese food I had growing up in the United States and the food I ate while I was in China. Growing up, I did not necessarily realize that some of the "Chinese" food we had here was really American until I went abroad. I then realized that American Chinese food was really an allegory for myself. General Tso's chicken looks Chinese, seems Chinese, but is in fact very American. This is also true of us—American-born Chinese. We look Chinese, and people ask us all the time, "where are you from?" but we're American. Ultimately, this is what the book was about.

AAPR

Did you make any revelations about your identity as you traveled throughout the world to do research for *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles*?

LEE

It helped me understand my place in the context of the Chinese diaspora. The United States is the largest immigrant-accepting country in the history of the world, and China is the largest immigrant-producing country in the history of the world. So understanding how I stood at the cross section of that was a great revelation. I also learned how the Chinese adapted to their local environments, no matter where they landed.

In my travels, I met Chinese-Jamaicans, Chinese-Australians, Chinese-Thai, etc. Ultimately, I realized that Chinese-Americans were only part of the picture, and it was amazing to see all these diverse cultures that came from immigration and my role as part of that.

AAPR

With the exception of a few prominent Asian American actors and newscasters, Asian Americans still seem to play a small role in the U.S. media. Do you agree with this statement? If so, what do you think are the barriers that prevent Asian Americans from playing a more prominent role?

LEE

It's a twofold question: Is it because the talent pool is too small? Or is the talent pool being blocked by prejudices against Asian Americans? I would say that the talent pool is probably getting better. An interesting phenomenon that I've observed by watching YouTube is that the channels that get the followings are often those of Asian American singers/songwriters. While I was on the subway

yesterday, I saw a busker who was an Asian American blues guitarist. It struck me at that moment that this is a creative generation of serious Asian American talent.

It also depends on how you define media, because if it's defined as a broader picture of the creative arts, Asian Americans are very strong — in fashion and design, for example. Then it becomes a question of institutional barriers in certain sectors of the media. A friend of mine did a movie that was about an Asian American family. A television network approached her and offered to buy her show, but they asked her whether she could make the family White.

On the other hand, it's becoming increasingly common for ensemble casts to have Asian American characters. There are shows like "Grey's Anatomy" with Sandra Oh, who originally auditioned for the show's character of Miranda Bailey [not an Asian American character], as opposed to "ER" where there were no Filipino nurses or Indian doctors on the show for the first couple of seasons, which is completely illogical if you know American medicine.

From a behind-the-scenes, production perspective, there's actually a pretty good critical mass of Asian Americans involved in film, especially in the technical areas. The fact that people in the film industry are aware of [the underrepresentation of Asian Americans] makes me optimistic. Every year at Sundance there is a large reception for Asian Americans involved in film. It's a great event to see all those who are passionate for the medium.

Not to mention, the head writer for "The Office," Danny Chun [Harvard College '02], is Korean American, and one of the producers/writers from "30 Rock," Vali Chandrasekaran [Harvard College '03], is Sri Lankan American. They are

coming through the Harvard Lampoon Network, an old boys' network, which now includes Asian Americans.

AAPR

How do you think that the portrayal of Asian Americans, particularly Asian American women, in the media has transformed over the years since Anna May Wong became Hollywood's first Asian American actress in 1922?

LEE

I think ensemble casts have been a good thing for Asian American actors. While it's hard to cast an Asian American as the lead in a drama or a comedy, networks feel more comfortable throwing an Asian American into a larger cast, which has given a lot of people breaks.

Sandra Oh's character in "Grey's Anatomy," Cristina Yang, contributed to changing the way that Asian American women are portrayed on television. I have been watching Sandra Oh's career for a long time, back [when she worked] with Mina Shum [on the movie] "Double Happiness" in 1994. She is really funny, but [like I said earlier] she originally auditioned for Miranda Bailey in "Grey's Anatomy," not an Asian American character, before trying out for Cristina. I think it's an improvement over the character of Ling Woo in [the 1990s TV show] "Ally McBeal," who was very much the stereotypical dragon lady. Margaret Cho had a show called "All American Girl," which didn't work out for a variety of reasons, but I wonder whether it was too early for a show that focused on the Asian American family.

I would like for Asian American females in the media to be funny and break the stereotype. While I was on tour for *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles*, I was told quite a few times that I should

consider going into stand-up comedy. One thing I always say to people who tell me this is that it would be hard for me to be successful in stand-up because the people who are traditionally portrayed as funny in American media are predominantly Jewish or Black. The future isn't in the hot Asian woman on "Lost," who was speaking Korean anyways, but in the funny Asian American woman. Humor is one of the highest levels of achievement in television.

AAPR

What advice would you give to Asian Americans who aspire to work in the media?

LEE

In order to do something well, you need passion, talent, and discipline. If you find a career you want to go into, you need to ask yourself if you have these qualities. You might not know whether you have the talent, but if you have the passion and discipline, you can work hard enough to find out if you have the talent. You need the discipline because there's always an element of luck in achieving success and you have to be prepared. There is a lot of rejection in all of these fields, so you have to keep plugging away at it.

Rescuing Refugees: An Interview with Mike Kim

Interviewed by Thao Anh Tran

Mike Kim is the founder of Crossing Borders, a nongovernmental organization providing aid to North Koreans. Sparked by what he saw on a 2001 trip to China, in 2003 Kim gave up his financial planning business in Chicago and left on a one-way ticket back to China. While living in Yanji, China, at the North Korea-China border, he operated undercover as a student of North Korean taekwon do. During his time there, Kim learned of the hundreds of thousands of North Koreans fleeing to China and personally led some in search of freedom. After helping refugees for four years, Kim returned to the United States and attended Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business where he earned an M.B.A. in 2009. He now travels and speaks widely to raise awareness of the plight of North Korean refugees. Kim is also the author of Escaping North Korea, which documents his experiences working along the border.

Thao Anh Tran, a first-year master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, is a Pickering Fellow. She previously worked on the China Desk at the U.S. State Department and at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. During the 2009-2010 academic year, Tran conducted research on the Korean-Chinese community in Yanji, China, as a Fulbright Fellow. Tran received her B.A. in international affairs and Asian studies

from George Washington University and will join the U.S. Foreign Service upon graduation.

On October 27, 2010, Asian American Policy Review Research Editor Thao Anh Tran interviewed Mike Kim in Cambridge, MA.

AAPR

What motivated your decision to leave behind a very well-paid job to go to China? How did you get involved with helping North Korean refugees?

KIM

In 2001, I had a financial planning business based in Chicago. Business was doing great...I thought I had a career in financial planning. I asked my assistant to clear out my calendar for two weeks so I could travel to China...It was there that I met some North Korean refugees. My response was, "What's a North Korean refugee?" I had no idea that there were refugees in China. I'm Korean American, born and raised in Chicago. But I had never known about this situation. At that time, in 2001, not that many people knew. It was then that I began to learn about the famine, sex-trafficking problems, and the gulags.

In particular, one girl I remember meeting was a victim of sex trafficking. She was a sixteen-year-old girl sold to a fifty-seven-year-old Chinese farmer. She was raped by her human traffickers and then raped by the man that she was sold to. That just blew me away. I returned to the States, and after a few months of wrestling, I just said I have to do something about this while I'm young and mobile. I could take some risk. I wanted to do a Peace Corps type of thing. So [in January 2003], I bought a one-way ticket, packed a couple of bags, and moved to China.

AAPR

How did you come across these refugees when you were in Northeast China?

KIM

When I traveled, I went with somebody who worked with the churches there in China. It was in these churches and various shelters that I had met these North Koreans. North Korean refugees are often hiding out in churches. It's interesting that there are stories of North Koreans coming over into China, and they are told to look for a cross, and these people will help you. And they know nothing about what a church is. They know nothing about what a cross is. A lot of times, they'll go to these churches for assistance, and [the churches] end up sheltering them and hiding them. It was through these churches that I got to meet a lot of North Korean refugees.

AAPR

I read that you had the opportunity to go into North Korea. How did this opportunity come about?

KIM

When I got to China, I didn't know exactly what I would do. The two choices were helping out the North Korean refugees...or, you can go into North Korea and try and influence change that way, by doing business inside the country. I was exploring both. I had just gotten started in assisting refugees, creating orphanages and shelters. We started the organization Crossing Borders. But I was also curious about doing business inside North Korea and also wanted to do both even though people had told me, "You've got to choose one or the other. It's too dangerous to be doing both refugee work and go inside North Korea."

I took a three-day trip, and I had some higher-level government contacts that helped [take] me across [the border]... We were looking into import/export, talked about seafood, sand. I didn't know there was a market for North Korean sand. And we began to talk through these things as possibilities. They told me, "If you come and build a building, give us about \$100,000 dollars, we'll put your name on it." They gave me the whole propaganda tour in North Korea. But it was primarily to talk about business.

AAPR

While you were in North Korea, were you able to meet any North Koreans? Did you have any exchanges with them?

KIM

It was very limited. I had my minders, of course. There were three people [with me]. A driver [and] a woman who was the guide. And interestingly, I just remember—it was a funny moment—because I'm from Chicago, and she had a Chicago Bulls bag. It was "Buls" with one "L." It must have been a counterfeit bag that she had gotten somewhere that she was carrying around. And then I had the state security guy. Those three were with me all the time.

My interactions were limited to local government officials, the employees at stores, restaurants, and the market where they sell food and clothes...I remember one moment, as I tried to take a picture of some of the poorer areas...the state security guy grabbed my hand. He said, "No, you can't take pictures of these things. Only take pictures of good things. And, when you leave, tell the world how wonderful North Korea is." It was a very conscious effort to not let me document anything negative in North Korea.

AAPR

Were you allowed to return to North Korea after that trip? Or did you choose not to return because you wanted to devote your time entirely to the advocacy efforts?

KIM

I had to have a reason to be at the China-North Korea border. As you know, it's a very out of the way place, and foreigners stand out. The question I'd often get is, "What are you doing here?" And then I'd answer, and then they'd say, "What are you really doing here?" Because people are very suspicious.

My purpose for being there, what I told people, was that I was training in the North Korean style of tae kwon do. One of North Korea's exports is their brand of tae kwon do, which they tout as the most superior martial arts in the world. They have about seventy schools abroad, the last time I checked. They have one there at the border with two instructors from Pyongyang, North Korea, that are commissioned to teach the brand of tae kwon do.

To convince people that I was there for this reason, I had to train every day...[As a result], I developed a very close relationship with the North Korean Tae Kwon Do Association. I helped sponsor their national team to put on an exhibition in Yanji.

So I developed a close relationship, and they invited me to come back to Pyongyang to either compete in a tournament or just to visit and to watch. There were opportunities to go back. But, at a certain point, I decided the more I'm doing this work, it's not safe to go into North Korea. I had to draw a line and said, "I'll choose the refugee work instead."

AAPR

You mentioned in our conversation earlier that you actually lived next to a police station. How did you manage to live undercover for more than four years?

KIM

I never had any training in this type of work. Really, most of the people that go into this type of work don't have any experience trying to live below the radar... We tried to be very cautious in communicating, even back with the U.S. We were fortunate to not have had any major incidents during my time there.

I've noticed that a lot of the people that do the underground railroad work in crossing countries and trying to get to South Korea are captured within a year. I did that work initially. I helped four teenagers get into the British Consulate in Shanghai and then two women, I led a journey through—they call it the 6,000 miles—through China, the Southeast Asian countries, and ultimately into Bangkok, Thailand... I was very fortunate to have a perfect batting average and to have gotten everyone there safely. But I noticed everybody that does that gets captured and blacklisted within a year or imprisoned. So we said, "We're going to leave that to other groups."

AAPR

How did you manage to establish trust to the extent that the North Korean refugees were willing to let you help them?

KIM

It takes time. I remember my first time meeting North Korean refugees. They would sit as far away from me as possible. They were taught Americans are evil people. As soon as they knew I was from the U.S., they were very scared. It was very difficult to earn their trust. I think there is

this process of them knowing that you're there to help them. You don't want anything from them. They saw that we would feed them, take care of any medical issues that they had, give them shelter and work.

Over time, the trust was developed, but it's not an easy process. There's also the intangible. I think people are smart. After enough time passed, they knew we generally didn't want anything from them. We weren't using them for any purpose. We were there to support them, to either live safely in China or to return to North Korea.

AAPR

Were there cases where people actually wanted to go back to North Korea instead of continuing the journey to South Korea?

KIM

I wrote in my book an interesting statistic by the UN. In their estimate, 50 percent of North Korean refugees return to North Korea, which is a huge number. And just informally, from looking at the refugees I know, I would say that's about accurate. The North Koreans come to China, and they have to face a decision: "Do I want to make the ultimate risk to go to South Korea? If I'm captured and repatriated to North Korea, the price is imprisonment, torture, and quite possibly death for attempting to get to South Korea." Or, "do I try to live in China with the help of these people?" And there, they have kind of a pseudo life, where they don't have rights. They have to be careful. They don't have citizenship unless they purchase citizenship later on. Or, "I can return to North Korea and be together with my family and my friends and have a very different experience than I would have in China or South Korea." We've found that a number of people do want to go back to

North Korea because they're very uncomfortable in China.

AAPR

In cases where the refugees want to return to North Korea, what forms of assistance does your organization provide to these refugees?

KIM

We really give people the choice, but we encourage them to go back to North Korea. They'll come [over to China] however often they can to reconnect with us, and they'll tell us about life in North Korea. We'll give them seed money to start businesses. We encourage them to employ other North Koreans. That was our ultimate goal for them. We thought that was the best life for them in North Korea...China is a very difficult life, and it's just a temporary staging point. South Korea is also very difficult. A lot of the North Koreans that are in South Korea say they want to return to North Korea.

AAPR

Let's talk about your post-China experience. Your book, *Escaping North Korea*, was a huge success. Do you have any plans to write a sequel or do other things based on the stories that you've heard?

KIM

No plans for a sequel. Most of the stories I can tell I put into the book. And the other ones are stories that I didn't get permission to tell, so I can't really write a sequel with that. We are working on translations. Interestingly, the first translation for the book is going to be Turkish. And then, we're working on, I believe, Romanian and Dutch translations. We are also working on the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese translations. But nothing's been decided yet.

The most exciting thing I'm working on in relation to the book is, after my interview on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, we started getting calls from Hollywood, and people were asking us for the rights to turn it into a movie. The project got picked up by William Morris Endeavor, which is a major Hollywood agency. And we're now in development, working on turning it into an action type of film.

AAPR

In terms of the future of North Korea, given that the media has been covering the succession news extensively, what are your personal thoughts on this issue? What do you think will be the impact of leadership change for North Korea? Where is North Korea heading?

KIM

There's a lot of conversation about Kim Jong Un being educated in Switzerland, being more exposed to the international community; there is the hope that there will be positive reform because of that. Because he's so young and inexperienced, I don't think there will be much change in the short term... But, with a smooth transition, I think he'll be very much guided by other people.

However, my hope is that the country will continue to open up. What I can speak to is—by living at the border for four years and living together with the North Koreans, spending time with them daily, and hearing them talk about life in North Korea for hours and hours, and meeting new refugees coming in and out regularly—I was able to have my finger on the pulse of the country. I saw tremendous change during my four years there... When a North Korean came into our shelters, we would tell them about the world. We'd show them; set them up

with Chinese TV, Korean-Chinese TV, South Korean cable, and Korean books. When they returned to North Korea, they'd tell people about the things that they've learned. That flow is causing an Information Age in North Korea, where people are learning the truth about the outside world. By having my finger on the pulse, I got to see this happening during those four years. And I left in 2006.

Now it's 2010. We see, even in the media now, reports of the country opening up, some protests and riots and anti-regime literature. And the underground, the black market, DVD market, with South Korean dramas and Western films. It's a progression of the country opening up. It's something that I'm optimistic that we'll continue to see in the years to come, as a result of the refugee flow. And I hope to see something like a China model, where the country continues to open up little by little.

AAPR

Is there anything that you would ask of the U.S. government in terms of policies or interventions?

KIM

As far as the U.S. government, I would love to see this funding from the North Korean Human Rights Act actually happen. Our organization, Crossing Borders, and many others have been put on several short lists for people to potentially receive funding. Whether it's us or not, I think it's very important to provide that kind of funding for the organizations doing that type of work. So the monies, from what I understand, have been appropriated. But, for many years now, it hasn't been distributed to the different organizations. I would love to see that happen in the near future.

AAPR

In addition to speaking with the students at the Foreign Service Institute, have you had other opportunities to interact with U.S. policy makers or Chinese policy makers?

KIM

Not Chinese policy makers. That'd be an interesting conversation. And I'd love to connect with them if there was ever an opportunity to. I think one of the things I would love to have a conversation with them...about is my views towards Chinese policy towards the North Korean refugees or the impact of...Chinese policy on the North Korean refugees.

As far as U.S. policy makers, nothing formal...When I was in the border regions, I'd come back once a year. And I'd always stop off in Chicago and DC. And, as you can relate, it was so weird coming back after living in the villages, and hiking in the mountains, and back-packing, and coming back to civilization. Coming to DC, it was always important for me to connect with the bigger picture and what's going on with U.S. policy, the U.S. government's role, and what's going on in the larger international community related to North Korea.

And vice versa, I think it's important for people in the DC community, the policy community, to have their finger on the pulse of what's going on there at the border. So I would meet with key figures whenever I returned. I remember meeting with [former Kansas] Senator [Sam] Brownback a couple of times, meeting with [former] Ambassador Mark Palmer regularly, who's now my mentor and wrote the foreword to the book. We would regularly keep in touch with the State Department's trafficking persons, combating human trafficking persons office. I remember a conversation with John Miller, the head at the time,

where we would just sit down and have conversations about the sex trafficking issue there at the border. I think it's important for the two worlds to stay connected.

AAPR

Given the success of your nongovernmental organization (NGO), for individuals, especially those in the Asian American community, who would like to engage with advocacy organizations, where should they start?

KIM

I would love to see more start-ups, NGO start-ups, and specifically in this space. I just watched *The Social Network*...It's exciting to see start-ups develop. You hear about these things in Silicon Valley, [but] I'd love to see more of that in the non-profit space, and, particularly with North Korea, be fully supportive and excited to see what happens when one, two, three people get together and say, "I just want to help out North Korea or help North Korean refugees and try to figure out ways that they can help."

For me, my question was, what is not being done? What's a space that people are not in? And I wanted to do that. I didn't know any young Asian American or any young American that had moved to the border and lived there and tried to help that way. I knew people that were trying to help from the U.S., and that's important work. I knew people trying to help from Korea. But that was the open space I saw. I said, "I'm going to move there because I feel like I can fill that void." So, I think that's a question, what's the open space that no one's doing anything about? And, who can I do it with? So I would suggest, once people have identified that, they find the people, one or two people. I had two other friends

that we started with by making a Web site and that's how it started out. Our Web site was to raise awareness, and that gave birth to the organization Crossing Borders.

AAPR

For those who may have never heard about North Korean refugees before reading this interview and would like to learn more about the issue or help the refugees, what concrete actions should they take?

KIM

As far as, I guess, concrete action, it'd be first learning about the situation yourself. So, reading a book, picking up a DVD, watching a documentary or a movie, watching an interview. Once you're impacted by that, then tell somebody. Word of mouth is powerful, and raising awareness, at that level, is something very concrete that we can do. That's something everybody can do.

And I've seen that happen through the book, through other people's books, other people's media projects, where the impact of word of mouth is tremendous. So you're touched by something, and you tell someone else. I'd love to see, again, this North Korean issue become a more "popular one," where people are aware of it.

AAPR

For those of us who cannot personally go to the North Korea-China border, how can we help?

KIM

For those that are looking for an issue to get involved in, the North Korean issue is a great one. It's on the front of the newspapers. It's got everyone's attention for various reasons. And it's become more of a popular issue. Not the human rights, but North Korea. Because of that, I think

there's a lot of potential for North Korean human rights to become a Darfur type of issue where it's more popular in the coming years.

I think it's a great one to be involved in because it's really the last country like this, with this level of control, this type of personality cult, these types of conditions in the country, and that level of poverty. I would encourage people to get involved whatever way they can. They could connect with an NGO and any type of group that their values align with. If you can connect with an NGO, I think that's a great starting point. You could give financially. You can volunteer in various ways... [Whether] you're a graphic designer or photographer or a software engineer here, you can go over to the border and give people real-life vocational skills.

You could visit the border, and I think people would be deeply impacted by doing that. As a result, very few might decide, as I did, to give up everything and devote a few years to helping North Koreans... It's been great, since 2001, seeing the issue gain more and more attention and more people getting involved here in the States.

HARVARD JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC POLICY

Subscription Form

AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW
ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF **VOLUME XVII**

The 2011 volume features forward-looking articles, frank interviews,
and reflective commentary.

Fill out the form below to reserve your copy of the HARVARD JOURNAL
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC POLICY now!

NAME (print) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Payment:

- \$20 individuals \$40 institutions
 Payment enclosed (make checks payable to "Harvard University")

Mail order forms to our office:

Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy

John F. Kennedy School of Government

79 John F. Kennedy Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

Tel: (617) 496-8655 | Fax: (617) 384-9555

Email: hjaap@ksg.harvard.edu

Beyond Black and White: Asian Americans, Mass Incarceration, and the Criminal Justice System

by Harvey Gee

Harvey Gee is an attorney with the Office of the Federal Public Defender, Capital Habeas Unit, in Pittsburgh, representing inmates on death row in Pennsylvania. He is a former trial attorney with the Office of the Colorado State Public Defender and was a volunteer attorney with the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia. His article about recent developments in lethal injection litigation, "Eighth Amendment Challenges After Baze, Lethal Injection, Civil Rights Law Suits, and the Death Penalty," is scheduled to be publishing in spring 2011 by the Boston College Third World Law Journal.

REVIEW OF:

The Sentencing Project's Reducing Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System: A Manual for Practitioners and Policymakers (2008) and Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2010)

The American criminal justice system is in need of reform. In this article, I consider two recent insightful contributions to the criminal justice literature: *The Sentencing Project's Reducing Racial*

Disparity in the Criminal Justice System: A Manual for Practitioners and Policymakers (2008) and Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010). These volumes provide the foundation for my thesis: Asian Americans are too often ignored in discussions of criminal justice. This idea reinforces the notion that Asian Americans occupy an ambiguous space in the racial hierarchy, being placed below Whites but above African Americans and Hispanics. This article illustrates how most contemporary treatments of criminal justice issues function within the traditional Black-White framework of racial analysis and argues for an expansion of the dialogue in an effort to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between race, criminal law, and criminal procedure (Wu 2002).

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Sentencing Project is a national, nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, that promotes criminal justice reform and alternatives to incarceration. The organization has released the second edition of the manual *Reducing Racial Disparity*, authored by Ashley Nellis, Judy Greene, and Marc Mauer. *Reducing Racial Disparity* asserts that illegitimate or unwarranted racial disparity in the criminal justice system results from the dissimilar treatment of similarly situated people based on race. The context varies. In some instances, this may involve overt racial basis while in others it may reflect the influential factors that are only indirectly associated with race. The authors explain that structural racism can also cause racial disparity (Nellis et al. 2008). Resting on the foundational belief that issues of race and class influence the likelihood of involve-

ment with the criminal justice system, *Reducing Racial Disparity* states that racial disparity in the system is linked to higher crime rates, inequitable access to resources, poor legislative decisions, and overt racial bias (Nellis et al. 2008).

To begin, *Reducing Racial Disparity* blames Three Strikes recidivist laws across the country, which have been costly and have had a disproportionate effect on minorities. The laws also have resulted in excessive imprisonment of many older offenders who are not likely to reoffend (Nellis et al. 2008). According to the report, the legislation has no real effect on lowering crime. The report also focuses on discretion, which is a component of the criminal justice system that is employed on a daily basis and can lead to racial injustices (Nellis et al. 2008). The report discusses racial profiling, where patrol officers use traffic stops as a pretext to search vehicles driven by minorities for drugs, and asserts that “most studies of traffic stops find, however, that discovery of contraband such as weapons and drugs is no more likely to be found among white drivers than among African American drivers” (Nellis et al. 2008). The report also notes that minorities, especially African Americans, are more likely to be incarcerated than White offenders and less likely to be allowed to return to their communities (Nellis et al. 2008).

Finally, *Reducing Racial Disparity* shows the widespread racial disparity that exists in the criminal justice system and how it undermines the principle that the criminal justice system is effective and equitable. The high rates of minority incarceration reflect a complex set of socioeconomic and community problems that are rooted in inequalities in access to education, jobs, livable wages, and affordable housing (Nellis et al. 2008).

MASS INCARCERATION AND COLOR-BLINDNESS

In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander, law professor at Ohio State College of Law, offers a compelling thesis: a racial caste system exists in the United States because of harsh sentencing laws aimed at African Americans that lead to mass incarceration. While this system was officially applied against African Americans during the Jim Crow era, it is now unofficially enforced. According to Alexander, mass incarceration is a systematic, racialized social control functionally similar to Jim Crow (Alexander 2010; Bedi 2003).

Alexander offers a frank conversation about the role of the criminal justice system in creating and perpetuating a hierarchical racial stratification scheme in the United States. Her thesis flies in the face of the belief that African American men are incarcerated largely because of poverty or poor choices (Alexander 2010). Alexander begins by explaining that Jim Crow laws arose from the ashes of slavery and evolved into unofficial subordination and subjugation.

The majority of *The New Jim Crow* is devoted to examples of how the criminal justice system has gone awry. First, Alexander discusses the U.S. prison population (the highest in the world), and, in particular, she highlights the dramatic increase over the past thirty years from 300,000 inmates to more than two million in 2000 as a direct consequence of the drug war. There are racial disparities in sentencing causing Black men to be sentenced to prison on drug charges at a rate twenty to fifty times greater than that of White men (Alexander 2010). Eighty percent of young African Americans in large cities have criminal records, and because of the

stigma attached to them, Alexander contends that these individuals are marginalized as a racial subcaste, becoming permanent second-class citizens.

Second, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, too many African Americans were incarcerated and millions of others faced barriers in employment, housing, and education and were denied the right to vote (Alexander 2010). Alexander explains that once a person has an arrest record showing a felony, he or she will face discrimination, stigma, and exclusion and lose the privileges of citizenship such as voting and jury service (Alexander 2010).

Third, the majority of arrestees are not serious criminals. Eighty percent of drug arrests between 1980 and 2000 were for nonviolent minor offenses. Surprisingly, the growth of drug arrests was not as a result of serious offenses.

Fourth, it is a myth that African Americans, unlike Whites, choose to be criminals. Instead, Alexander suggests that African Americans are not more likely to use or sell prohibited drugs than Whites but are arrested at higher rates for the same conduct because of conditions created by limited law enforcement resources and political constraints (Alexander 2010).

During the race to incarcerate in the 1980s and the 1990s, Alexander recalls that prison incarceration was still characterized in race-neutral terms even though it was clear that it was racial minorities, not Whites, who were being incarcerated en masse. Alexander is at her most theoretical in contending that mass incarceration assigns to Blacks the racial stigma of criminals, but when applied to White criminals, it becomes a

nonracial stigma (Alexander 2010; Davis 2007). She argues that this conflation of Blackness with crime, which is in part fostered by politicians and enabled by propaganda for the war on drugs, has been used to perpetuate racial discrimination against Blacks.

Alexander concludes that the concept of color-blindness as public policy is flawed since it construes African Americans and Hispanics as raceless people who are ill-equipped to function in society. She argues that “colorblindness prevents us from seeing the racial and structural divisions that persist in society” (Alexander 2010). These theories, and the similar arguments offered in *Reducing Racial Disparity*, are further strengthened when considering the racialized stereotypes surrounding Asian Americans.

PUNISHMENT AND ASIAN AMERICAN STEREOTYPES

In “Punishing the ‘Model Minority’: Asian-American Criminal Sentencing Outcomes in Federal District Courts,” University of Maryland Professor Brian Johnson and scholar Sara Betsinger explore the treatment of Asian American offenders in the federal justice system. Their article is the first systematic investigation of racial disparities in the sentencing of Asian Americans (Johnson and Betsinger 2009). Johnson and Betsinger examine Asian American sentencing disparities through three variables: federal guideline deviations, incarceration, and length of sentence. As shown below, their study supports theories claiming race and ethnicity do, in fact, matter in the justice system. On this issue, Johnson and Betsinger assert, “[B]road patterns of racialized justice continue to characterize contemporary punishment decisions” (2009).

According to Johnson and Betsinger, Asian Americans and Whites are relatively close in social standing due to shared characteristics of higher educational attainment and lower poverty and unemployment rates (2009). The authors further presume that Asian Americans have enjoyed a positive image in mainstream America due to the model minority myth. The myth lends itself to influencing mainstream America's belief that Asian Americans are unlikely to commit crimes.

I disagree with Johnson and Betsinger on this particular point. The public is becoming more and more aware of the existence of Asian American criminals through mainstream media coverage of recent tragic events. Indeed, false perceptions that Asian Americans are not as capable of committing violent crimes have been challenged by the Hmong hunting cases in Wisconsin (Haga 2007), the Virginia Tech killings (Chou and Feagin 2008), the immigrant center tragedy in New York in 2009 (Fernandez and Schweber 2009), and the hostage situation at the Discovery Channel in the summer of 2010 (Brumfield 2010). If nothing else, these findings inform the Johnson and Betsinger report and invite subsequent follow-up empirical studies.

Notably, the Johnson and Betsinger article mentions nothing about the martial arts stereotype of Asian Americans. The stereotype of the martial artist can hurt Asian Americans when they themselves are victims of crimes. In fact, this ill-conceived perception of all Asian American men as dangerous martial artists has led to deadly consequences. A young unarmed Asian American man in Kansas was shot and killed by a neighbor on the basis that he was an expert in martial arts and was an "imminent threat

to him and the firing of the gun appeared reasonable to the defendant" (State v. Simon 1982). In finding that the defendant was justified in his use of deadly force to defend himself, the Supreme Court of Kansas wrote:

Defendant is an elderly homeowner in Wichita. Steffen Wong, a young man of Oriental extraction, rented half of the duplex next door. By virtue of Mr. Wong's racial heritage, defendant assumed he was an expert in the martial arts. Defendant was afraid of Steffen Wong, and heated words had been exchanged between the two. Defendant was fearful because more "Orientals" were moving into the neighborhood, and one had expressed interest in purchasing defendant's home" (State v. Simon 1982).

In accordance with the Johnson and Betsinger study and other writings in the critical race canon, the model minority myth has contributed to the view that Asian Americans are one monolithic ethnic group that has achieved success through education and hard work without the assistance of governmental benefits (Wu 2002). Such a myth is disingenuous, masking the reality that Asian Americans are still affected by discrimination as well as minimizing the existence of Asian gangs (Ahn 2004; Lee 2006).

The belief that Asian Americans are experiencing success compared to other racial minorities—by socializing and marrying outside their ethnic group, moving into White neighborhoods, and expanding their presence in the media, for instance—lends itself to the misrepresentation that Asian Americans do not experience racial subordination (Gotanda 1992; Da 2007) and that they have earned

“honorary White” status (Chou and Feagin 2008).

Significantly, the Johnson and Betsinger study seems to support the argument that, in the context of criminal sentencing, the model minority myth has elevated Asian Americans to a constructed “honorary White” status. Asian American offenders were punished similarly to White offenders for all offenses examined with the exception of immigration for which Asian Americans were punished more severely (Johnson and Betsinger 2009).

When reviewing the federal sentencing rates of Asian Americans, it is important to be cognizant that unlike defendants in state court, defendants in federal court tend not to be charged with violent crimes, property, or gun offenses. Common federal charges include: immigration law violations, narcotics violations, wire and mail fraud, forgery, postal offenses, cyber crime, and child pornography offenses. As the authors note, most of the Asian American cases examined involved fraud or other white-collar crimes (Johnson and Betsinger 2009).

Additional conclusions may be drawn at the state level. In its 2008 Report to the Legislature, the California Administrative Office of the Courts states that African Americans and Hispanics were arrested for felonies at rates significantly higher than their proportion in California’s population. Asian Americans and Whites had the lowest rates of arrest and were more likely than the other two groups to receive intermediate sentences consisting of probation, jail, or a fine (Administrative Office of the Courts 2008). These statistics show that Asian

Americans are treated relatively leniently for similar charges.

Further, with regard to violent offenses, the Report to the Legislature showed that Asian Americans and Whites with miscellaneous priors were less likely to be sentenced to prison compared with African Americans and Hispanics. Likewise, Asian Americans and Whites with no prior records were more likely to receive acquittals or dismissals in felony drug cases than African Americans and Hispanics (Administrative Office of the Courts 2008).

Like the Johnson and Betsinger study, the Report to the Legislature shows the gap in treatment between Asian Americans and Whites. For instance, Asian American first-time offenders charged with violent offenses and first-time offenders charged with miscellaneous charges were more likely to be sentenced to prison, whereas White first-time offenders with similar charges were more likely to receive intermediate sentences (Administrative Office of the Courts 2008).

In addition, Asian Americans with miscellaneous prior convictions were also treated worse than Whites. Whites were more likely to be acquitted of charges or have their case dismissed (Administrative Office of the Courts 2008). This pattern continues when examining defendants with prior commitments. Asian Americans charged with violent offenses were more likely to receive a prison sentence than Whites and were less likely to have their cases dismissed or be acquitted at trial (Administrative Office of the Courts 2008).

The above examples show Asian Americans as the beneficiaries of more lenient sentences than African Americans and Hispanics. Additional information is

available from Sharon Davies's examination of studies of the incarceration rates in Oregon, Washington, and Utah to determine which minorities are overrepresented in prison (2003). Davies determined that Asian and White defendants were more likely to receive probation than incarceration. Taken as a whole, these studies and statistics illuminate the inherent racial disparities in the justice system.

CONCLUSION

I end by returning to the claim I made at the beginning: discussions about criminal justice reform have thus far neglected Asian Americans. *Reducing Racial Disparity* and *The New Jim Crow* certainly add to the continuing discussion of racial justice and the need for criminal justice reform. There is also hope that more attention will be paid to Asian Americans and criminal justice. For example, in October 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama reestablished the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, which seeks to improve the quality of life of underserved Asian American communities through increased participation in federal programs. The initiative focuses on five primary areas: sustainable communities, education opportunities, economic growth, healthy communities, and civil rights. This is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, until more citizens and legislators are willing to have more inclusive discussions about these issues and pass effective legislation to address racial disparities in the criminal justice system, the problems will undoubtedly persist.

REFERENCES

- Administrative Office of the Courts. 2008. Report to the legislature pursuant to Penal Code Section 1170.45. 2008 report on this disposition of criminal cases according to the race and/or ethnicity of defendant. Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts.
- Ahn, Daniel. 2004. Profiling culture: An examination of Korean American gangbangers in Southern California. *Asian Law Journal* 11.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Bedi, Sheila A. 2003. The constructed identities of Asian and African Americans: A story of two races and the criminal justice system. *Harvard BlackLetter Law Journal* 19.
- Brumfield, Sarah. 2010. Siege Discovery Channel bomber shot dead grisly end to a TV drama. WLNR, September 3.
- Chou, Rosalind S., and Joe R. Feagin. 2008. *The myth of the model minority: Asian Americans facing racism*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Da, Xiaofeng Stephanie. 2007. Education and labor relations: Asian Americans and blacks as pawns in the future of white hegemony. *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* 13.
- Davies, Sharon L. 2003. Study habits: Probing modern attempts to assess minority offender disproportionality. *Law and Contemporary Problems* 66.
- Davis, Angela J. 2007. *Arbitrary justice: The power of the American prosecutor*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fernandez, Manny, and Nate Schweber. 2009. An eldest son's failure and paranoia, unspoken until a sudden, final barrage. *New York Times*, April 12.
- Gotanda, Neil. 1992. Asian American rights and the "Miss Saigon Syndrome." In *Asian Americans and the Supreme Court*. Edited by Hyung-Chan Kim. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Haga, Chuck. 2007. In the woods, mistrust lingers among hunters. *Star Tribune*, January 14.

Johnson, Brian D., and Sara Betsinger. 2009. Punishing the "model minority": Asian-American criminal sentencing outcomes in federal district courts. *Criminology* 47(4).

Lee, Jason H. 2006. Dislocated and deprived: A normative evaluation of Southeast Asian criminal responsibility and the implications of societal fault. *Michigan Journal Race & Law* 11.

Nellis, Ashley, Judy Greene, and Marc Mauer. 2008. *Reducing racial disparity in the criminal justice system: A manual for practitioners and policymakers*. Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project(www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_reducingracialdisparity.pdf). *State v. Simon*. 1982. 231 Kan. 572, 575.

Wu, Frank H. 2002. *Yellow: Race in america beyond black and white*. New York, NY: Basic Books.



HARVARD Kennedy School

Center for Public
LEADERSHIP

A decade of developing global leaders.

10

www.hks.harvard.edu/leadership

Confucian Confusion

by Jay Chen

Becoming the youngest board member in district history and setting a record for the most votes received by a first-time candidate, Jay Chen was elected to the Board of Education for the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District in California in November 2007. Chen, who is serving the same Hacienda Heights public school district from which he graduated in 1996, graduated from Harvard University and previously was a management consultant with Bain & Company and TechnoServe. He also worked in Central and South America as a travel writer for Let's Go publications. Chen was elected to be the pledged delegate from his congressional district for U.S. President Barack Obama during the 2008 Democratic National Convention and helped mobilize nearly 100 Asian American activists to campaign for Obama in the critical swing state of Nevada. He was elected to the California Democratic State Central Committee with the top vote in 2009. Fluent in Mandarin and Spanish, he is a recipient of the Lions Clubs International Leo of the Year Award and has also been an education columnist for the local press.

As public schools across the United States grapple with the effects of the worst economic climate since the Great Depression, in which the only things that seem poised for growth are budget cuts, layoffs, and achievement gaps, it is

surprising that the most controversial issue to hit my school district concerns the acceptance of free books and funding to expand a Chinese language class for some of our students.

But as a member of the Board of Education for the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District in California, that's the twilight zone I've been embroiled in since January 2010. It was then that the board approved an agreement with the nonprofit Hanban, which is affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, to create what is called a Confucius Classroom at Cedarlane, a predominately Latino middle school in Hacienda Heights, CA.

Since 2009, Cedarlane has been offering a popular introductory Chinese language and culture elective to sixth- and seventh-grade students. Besides learning simple phrases and songs, students get a primer on traditional Chinese customs, such as learning about the Chinese New Year and the zodiac characters. For most participating students, this is their first formal exposure to Chinese culture.

The agreement with Hanban helps Cedarlane expand the existing program to more students by providing additional books (with nearly 1,000 to choose from) and up to \$30,000 in support to purchase computers or to fund field trips. Like any donation received by the school, the books must be screened for appropriateness, and like any other class at the school, the Chinese course is taught by a certified teacher based on a curriculum that is board-approved. By becoming part of the international Confucius Classroom network the Cedarlane class itself remains unchanged; it just becomes available to more students.

THE OPPOSITION

While many, including myself, see this association with Hanban as an innovative opportunity to educate more students at no extra cost—especially important during a recession—our board meetings have incurred a small but outspoken cadre of vocal opponents since the decision was made. Among others, this group includes a former district superintendent, elderly war veterans, local retirees, and a disgruntled former professional basketball player for a team in China. What they all share in common, besides not having any children in the district (many don't even live in the district), are steadfast accusations that the school board is trying to promote Communism in the classroom.

As retiree Bobby Fraker stated to the Associated Press, “These children have young brains that are very malleable, and they can be indoctrinated with things that America would not like” (Adelman 2010). Ex-superintendent John Kramar, who was my superintendent when I was a student in the district, said to the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* (2010b) that the program would become a vessel of political and philosophical propaganda and that “culture has no place in the classroom,” a sentiment also shared by retired school maintenance worker Rudy Chavarria, the lone board member of the five to vote against the measure (San Gabriel Valley Tribune 2010a; Velazquez 2010a, 2010b). Resident Teresa Macias was more blunt with her criticisms, proclaiming that “if it comes from Communist China, it is tainted with Communism” (Mandvi 2010).

It is not just this particular class that the critics oppose; practically everything related to China has become a target, including training opportunities for

teachers and administrators, study abroad opportunities for students, and unrelated personal trips made to China by board members. The situation has become personal, with me being labeled by one opponent as a Marxist due to my education at Harvard. Extra security has been called for meetings, and one board member has retained legal counsel to protect himself from slander.

The opposition has engaged in a paper war aimed at ferreting out any evidence of collusion between board members and Communist China. Our district has already spent more than \$30,000 (and rising) in legal and administrative fees to respond to Public Records Act requests that have been lodged, including a demand for all e-mail messages ever exchanged between any board members who voted yes on the Confucius Classroom. If their modus operandi was to eliminate the financial benefit the district was getting from the program, they arguably have achieved it.

The opponents to the program have found a staunch ally in the editorial pages of the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, which has covered the controversy zealously. One editorial compared the Chinese government's promotion of Chinese language and culture to the Venezuelan government teaching economics (San Gabriel Valley Tribune 2010a). That Chinese language and culture actually originated in China, making the country's educators somewhat knowledgeable on the subject, was apparently beside the point.

A more recent editorial by the *Tribune* went so far as to state that Chinese classes should only be taught by American citizens of primarily Taiwanese background (San Gabriel Valley Tribune

2010b). That our laws allow anyone with legal working status to be employed, including immigrants with a work visa or green card, is apparently irrelevant, as is the fact that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 deems discrimination in hiring based on race and national origin illegal.

Indeed, attending one of our board meetings on a night where there are rancorous public comments, during which reason, civility, and civil rights seem to be thrown out the window, or reading the sensationalized local newspapers can feel like a step back in time to the McCarthy era of the 1950s.

This is not to say that we have not had our share of supporters as well. The parents at Cedarlane have expressed nothing but enthusiasm for the new Chinese elective, the arrival of which happened to coincide with a whopping fifty-six-point improvement in the school's Academic Performance Index score (California's statewide school evaluation system). This number is among the highest gains of any school in Los Angeles County. Current students, parents, and community members have voiced their support for the program during public comment (that is, when opponents have not shouted them down) and have refuted the opposition's claims to the point that they feel numb and silly from repeating themselves. More objective coverage, compared to the locals, has come from the national press with the Associated Press, Fox News, the *Los Angeles Times*, NBC, and most recently BBC and *The Daily Show with John Stewart* covering the issue.

THE CHINESE LANGUAGE COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL (HANBAN)

Ostensibly at the center of all this unease is Hanban, the public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education whose purpose is to provide Chinese language and cultural resources around the world, the same way the United States encourages a better understanding of itself through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Peace Corps. Alliance Francaise and the Goethe Institute accomplish similar goals for France and Germany, respectively.

While relatively unknown to most Americans, Hanban is already quite established and respected among educators and policy makers. In 2006 the College Board, which administers the SAT and AP tests that are a prerequisite for admission to selective U.S. colleges, began a partnership with Hanban to provide AP Chinese classes and training for U.S. Chinese teachers (College Board 2006).

The Asia Society, upon whose board sit leading U.S. industrialists and policy makers including John Negroponte (former director of U.S. intelligence) and West Virginia Senator John D. Rockefeller, agreed in 2009 to help Hanban create 100 Confucius Classrooms over the next three years in the United States (Asia Society 2010).

Through the Confucius Classroom program schools can request Chinese teaching aides to come to their districts at little or no cost to the district, fulfilling one of the goals established by former U.S. President George W. Bush's 2005 National Security Language Initiative, which named Chinese a strategic language and encouraged the recruitment of foreign students to teach at U.S. colleges

to make up for the shortage of qualified U.S. language teachers (Brown 2005).

From Oregon to Rhode Island, dozens of schools across the country have already taken advantage of this program, and to date there are more than sixty Confucius Classrooms across the United States and hundreds more around the globe. News archives show that none of these schools has experienced the type of backlash we have encountered in Hacienda Heights, and most importantly, none of the classes have reported any of the Communist brainwashing fervently predicted by our opponents, who also seem to ignore that Communism is already taught as part of our regular curriculum of social studies, world history and U.S. history.

WHY STUDY CHINESE?

The need for Americans to learn Chinese is probably obvious to readers of this journal. At the very least, it will help reduce the number of people getting embarrassing tattoos.¹ On a more worldly level, Chinese is already the most widely spoken first language in the world, and in 2010 China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy. It is only a matter of time before China overtakes the United States as producer and consumer in chief.

If the United States wants to secure its foothold in the world that China is rapidly remaking, we will have to begin committing at least a fraction of the energy to studying China as that country has committed to studying us. In 2010, more than 120,000 Chinese graduate and undergraduate students filled U.S. campuses, a 30% increase from the year before, helping China surpass India as the number-one source of foreign students studying in the United States (Strauss 2010). In contrast, during the 2008-2009

academic year there were fewer than 14,000 American students studying in China (Embassy of the United States 2010).

The Chinese students that are making the leap to understand America are getting younger as well. While most of the Chinese students in the United States are in graduate school, there was a 50 percent increase in college freshmen in 2009-2010 over 2008-2009 (Strauss 2010). Couple this with the fact that practically all of these students are ineligible for financial aid and are paying the full tuition that American families are less and less able to afford, and it becomes clear that the Chinese see tremendous value in learning from us and about us at an earlier age. Shouldn't we be reciprocating?

The failure of Internet behemoths such as Google and Yahoo to establish a presence in the world's largest Internet market indicates that China is not going to be a passive consumer of U.S. products but will be a producer, innovator, and fierce competitor. We ignore the language and culture of this country at our own economic peril, a lesson not lost on Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, who told a Stanford audience that "I'm taking an hour a day, and I'm learning Chinese. I'm trying to understand the language, the culture, the mind-set—it's just such an important part of the world. How can you connect the whole world if you leave out 1.6 billion people?" (News.com.au 2010).

The need to understand China is even understood by the staunchest opponents of the Confucius Classroom in Hacienda Heights. In fact, and quite ironically, the strongest opponents of our program have initiated similar programs in the past. It was Superintendent John Kramar who

created our district's first sister-school partnership with a Communist Chinese school in 1997, right after I graduated from this district, when China was a far more Communist state than it is today. He subsequently made two trips to China as part of an official school delegation, in 1997 and 1999, the same type of trip that he and his cohorts are now scrutinizing.

Bobby Fraker, as the founder of the student exchange program World Experience, not only brings students from countries such as the Czech Republic to Hacienda Heights, but also places American students in the People's Republic of China, which conceivably would put them at even greater risk of the indoctrination she claims would take place if they studied Chinese in the comfort of Hacienda Heights (Irwin 2010; World Experience n.d.). Obviously, there is a disconnect somewhere. If these individuals have initiated similar education programs and pursued similar goals in the past, what have they really been protesting?

A FEAR OF THE GROWING CHINESE DIASPORA

While I do not doubt that some of the opponents are sincerely confused about the purpose of this Chinese class at Cedarlane and that some actually believe there are Communist messages hidden in the flash cards and picture books, I also suspect that what made our community a flash point for dissent was not just what was being taught but who was making the decision for it to be taught. Suffice it to say, our school board does not look anything like the governing bodies in Tennessee, North Carolina, and the multitude of other districts that have implemented Confucius Classrooms without suspicion or complaint.

At first glance, Hacienda Heights would not seem a likely candidate for cultural strife. Decades ago this was the quintessential *Leave It to Beaver* town, and in the 1980s it was still all-American enough for the movie *Back to the Future* to use it as a backdrop. Good schools plus a lift on immigration quotas kicked off a steady influx of Taiwanese families in the 1970s, and while generally welcomed by preceding residents, tensions and fissures eventually took shape.

In the mid-1980s protests erupted over a plan to build a Taiwanese Buddhist temple in the hills of Hacienda Heights over fears of gong-banging and animal sacrifices. The temple was eventually completed (and remains the largest in North America), but in 1996 Hacienda Heights again found itself at the heart of controversy when a visit to the Buddhist temple from former U.S. Vice President Al Gore fed into ongoing accusations that China was trying to funnel donations to the Democratic party. A political witch-hunt ensued in which donors with Asian-sounding names were investigated and harassed on their right to contribute to the democratic system, a traumatizing event that cast a pall over Asian American political participation nationwide for many years.

Hacienda Heights remains an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County in part because of these tensions. Multiple efforts for city-hood have gone down in flames at the ballot box over the decades, with the latest occurring in 2003 after fears were raised of Chinese American candidates dominating the council (Adelman 2010).

Nevertheless, after a vigorous campaign in 2007 I surprised many by winning a seat on the school board to become the

third Asian American on a board of five, pushing our district into the rarified realm of majority Asian governing boards overseeing minority Asian communities (according to the 2000 Census Hacienda Heights is 41 percent White and 36 percent Asian). While the vast majority of residents do not find the racial composition of the board to be an issue, a small minority have and still do. For them, generating opposition to the Confucius Classroom program has been a convenient proxy for highlighting and attacking the Asianness of our school board, though they have not been shy about doing the latter either. In fact, during my most recent interaction with one opponent, Rudy Obad, which was captured by BBC, he proclaimed that he had “more of a right to be in this country” than I did, and at a recent board meeting, he demanded that board member Norman Hsu go back to China “and stay there!”

That our district is the first in the United States with a majority Asian board to adopt a Confucius Classroom and is also the first to receive any racist blowback from opponents—some of whom have supported similar opportunities in the past—is more than just happenstance. It speaks to a festering xenophobia lurking beneath the surface of our communities in which innocent motivations can be too easily questioned and unfairly clouded merely because of the color of one’s skin or the sound of a last name.

Anti-Sinoism is an issue that Chinese and Taiwanese Americans will confront with greater frequency as China continues its acceleration and the United States continues a shaky recovery that has left more and more Americans unsettled and seeking answers. The rise of anti-Sinoism in the face of uncertainty is nothing new in U.S. history. Leland Stanford rode that

sentiment all the way to the California governor’s mansion in 1862, proclaiming in his inauguration speech that “the settlement among us of an inferior race is to be discouraged by every legitimate means. Asia, with her numberless millions, sends to our shores the dregs of her population” (Stanford 1862). Within twenty years that belief had gone national and the Chinese Exclusion Act was created, marking the first and only time that a racial group was specifically barred from entering the United States. It was not until World War II and our need to ally with China that the act was revoked.

China’s reemergence on the world stage after decades of civil and cultural revolution following the second World War reignited suspicion toward ethnic Chinese in the United States, as best exemplified by the aforementioned accusations of illegal campaign contributions from the Chinese and Taiwanese community and by the race-based persecution of Wen Ho Lee, a nuclear scientist investigated for espionage, in 1999.

Prejudices are rarely accused of being well-reasoned, and anti-Sinoism certainly does not break that mold, as seen by the habit of practitioners to haphazardly conflate Taiwanese and Chinese loyalties, despite the fact that the two nations have been at odds with one another for more than half a century and more than a thousand missiles stand ready for launch across the Taiwan Strait.

Not surprisingly, facts such as all three Asian board members having roots in Taiwan (my parents were born there)—not China—and one board member actually fleeing Indonesia to Taiwan to escape Communism are not enough to dissuade opponents of the Confucius Classroom that a sinister Chinese

conspiracy is not taking place. It also doesn't seem to matter that the program is serving a primarily non-Chinese community.

Despite the mudslinging, recall threats, and heated rhetoric I've been confronted with, I am glad that I am in this position. Far too many elected officials from both sides of the aisle choose to incite fear, rather than understanding, from the foreign and the unknown. The 2010 midterm elections, which featured an enormous uptick in anti-China fearmongering, are the most recent example of this abdication of responsibility (Chin 2010). That is why I am convinced of the need to expand language and culture offerings beyond and before the typical high school requirements, as we have through our innovative Cedarlane program and our dual-language Mandarin immersion program at nearby Wedgeworth Elementary School. We must prepare future generations to do more than just complain about the changing world around them; we must train them to be able to compete.

REFERENCES

- Adelman, Jacob. 2010. Hacienda Heights clashes over Confucius. Associated Press, April 25.
- Asia Society. 2010. Asia Society Confucius Classrooms Network. Education and Learning, Asia Society (<http://asiasociety.org/education-learning/chinese-language-initiatives/asia-society-confucius-classrooms-network>).
- Brown, Sarah. 2005. Bush announces strategic language initiative. *Daily Princetonian*, December 16 (www.dailyprincetonian.com/2005/12/16/14188).
- Chin, Josh. 2010. Fear mongering 101: Anti-China campaign ads. China Real Time Report Blog, *Wall Street Journal*, October 22 (http://blogs.wsj.com/chinareal-time/2010/10/22/fear-mongering-101-anti-china-campaign-ads/?mod=rss_WSJBlog).
- College Board. 2006. China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language and the College Board announce new Chinese language and culture initiative. College Board Press Release, April 19.
- Embassy of the United States, Beijing, China. 2010. Record number of Chinese students studying at United States colleges and universities. Press Release, November 15 (<http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/111610p.html>).
- Irwin, Richard. 2010. Foreign exchange students welcomed by World Experience in Hacienda Heights. *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, July 29.
- Mandvi, Aasif. 2010. Socialism studies. *Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, June 8.
- News.com.au. 2010. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg determined to learn Chinese language. News.com.au, October 19 (www.news.com.au/technology/facebook-founder-mark-zuckerberg-determined-to-learn-chinese-language/story-e6frfro0-1225940614496).
- San Gabriel Valley Tribune Editorial. 2010a. Our view: Cancel "Confucius classroom." *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, February 11.
- . 2010b. Our view: Hacienda La Puente school board makes right move. *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, September 16.
- Stanford, Leland. 1862. Inaugural address. Delivered January 10 (<http://governors.library.ca.gov/addresses/08-Stanford.html>).
- Strauss, Valerie. 2010. China overtakes India as No. 1 source of foreign students in U.S. The Answer Sheet Blog, *Washington Post*, November 15 (<http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answer-sheet/research/china-overtakes-india-as-no-1.html>).
- World Experience. n.d. People's Republic of China (www.worldexperience.org/programs.php?id=38).
- Velazquez, Maritza. 2010a. China class materials stoke ire; Indoctrination claim

dismissed by teachers. *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, May 21.

———. 2010b. Hacienda La Puente Unified School Board votes to implement “Confucius Classroom.” *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, February 2.

ENDNOTES

¹ For examples of people receiving tattoos of Chinese characters that do not mean what they thought they meant, see the blog, “Hanzi Smatter: Dedicated to the Misuse of Chinese Characters in Western Culture,” <http://hanzismatter.blogspot.com/>.

Building an Effective Asian American Service Organization

by Sandy Dang

Sandy Hoa Dang was born in Hanoi, Vietnam, the country she and her ethnic Chinese family were forced out of when she was nine years old. After three years in refugee camps in Hong Kong, her family was resettled in Brooklyn, NY. Dang overcame many obstacles to obtain a college education. As an immigrant, she understands having to rebuild one's social and economic infrastructure. As a result, she founded the Asian American Leadership Empowerment and Development for Youth and Families (AALEAD) organization to help Asian American immigrants create better lives for themselves and to build a supportive community in the United States. For her work at AALEAD, Dang was selected as one of the twelve Washingtonians of the Year 2001. She is the recipient of the Pablo Eisenberg Award for Neighborhood Leadership, the Asian American Bar Association Educational Fund Community Service Award, the National Women's Political Caucus Community Service Award, the 100 Washingtonians to Watch in the Millennium, the Asian American Bar Association Educational Fund Community Service Award 2006, the Mayor's Neighborhood Action Award, and the 1999 Linowes Leadership Award for Community Service. Dang also currently serves on the

Board of Directors of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, on the Community Advisory Board of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and on the Community Advisory Council for WETA Television.

My experiences in building an Asian American service organization in the District of Columbia at a time when there were 6,000 newly arrived Vietnamese refugees taught me important lessons that may be helpful to future generations of social entrepreneurs. In this article, I share the issues I encountered during the process of building an organization to help refugee children move out of poverty through education. These lessons learned form a model that I refer to as the “trying – failing – learning – succeeding” method.

BACKGROUND

In 1995, there were 6,000 newly arrived Vietnamese refugees in Washington, DC. The group consisted mostly of former political prisoners and Amerasians, children of Vietnamese mothers and American fathers. These refugees had endured extreme hardship during the war and its aftermath, and many reported being tortured and abused.

As new arrivals, they faced an array of challenges, from language and cultural barriers to access to education, employment, and housing. Their needs, however, were invisible to most governmental and nonprofit agencies as well as mainstream society for a variety of reasons. Many of these reasons were specific to DC itself, including the lack of a tradition in DC regarding resettling refugees, its challenges in serving disadvantaged native English-speaking residents, its lack of capacity for addressing the needs of newcomers, and the relatively small

percentage of Asian American residents living in the majority African American city.

As a consequence, many Vietnamese refugee students were dropping out of school, joining street gangs, and becoming juvenile delinquents. Teenage pregnancy was also on the rise. My discussions with refugee parents revealed that they felt helpless and hopeless as they watched their children failing in school and in life.

Despite the problems, I knew that these children had the potential to learn, to go on to college, and to move out of poverty, just like my siblings and I had done not that long before. In addition, I understood that there was only a narrow window of opportunity to help these students avoid falling into the cycle of poverty. This led me to become the director of the Indochinese Community Center – Youth Leadership Project (ICC-YLP).

In 1995, with a \$100,000 four-year grant from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, I created four programs that replicated the strategies that my parents, teachers, and others had used to help me and my siblings escape the cycle of poverty, even though we had faced many of the same issues confronting the Vietnamese refugee children in DC. These strategies included: daily after-school enrichment, mentoring, leadership training, and family support.

I created these programs because I believed that these parents and youth were their own agents of change. Given the proper structures, they would see themselves as their own greatest resource. My role was to support and encourage them to realize their own potential.

Using my Vietnamese language and cultural skills, I created a small “village” where parents and youths came together to establish a sense of community. For example, I went into the community, knocked on doors, and made home visits, not as a typical mainstream social worker but as a caring relative. I addressed these parents as if they were my aunts and uncles. Through such interactions, I was able to earn their trust, and, consequently, they were open to sharing their stories and learning how to help their children succeed.

Gradually, parents and students took an active role in shaping the collective purpose of the center, which was to help the children graduate from high school and attend college. As a result, they became advocates for themselves and their community. For example, the parents and students spoke out at public meetings with school principals, the school superintendent, and elected officials to share their concerns and challenges. These Vietnamese American students and families were no longer invisible to school officials, government agencies, private foundations, and other nonprofit organizations.

In addition to mobilizing parents and students, I recruited hundreds of professionals, community members, college students, and retirees to serve as volunteer tutors and mentors for the children. Our mentoring program recruited caring professionals from diverse backgrounds and ethnic groups to provide one-on-one mentoring to the students. This program allowed volunteers to directly experience and witness the urgent needs of our students and families, which resulted in many volunteers going beyond their expected duties to support parents and students. For example, one of our

volunteers recognized that her mentee had the academic potential to enter a private school. She asked the permission of her mentee's parents to help the student apply. After many hours of hard work, her mentee received a scholarship to attend a prestigious private high school in DC.

Over the years, our volunteers contributed a lot more than just their time in serving the students. Many of our volunteers recruited their friends and colleagues to become volunteers as well and to donate financial resources to the center. Additionally, many volunteers became active promoters of our work at the center and advocated for the children and families.

In addition to our volunteers, I built partnerships with a broad range of nonprofit and governmental agencies, which then leveraged new resources for the ICC-YLP. As a result, within four years, the ICC-YLP had helped hundreds of students achieve academic success, graduate from high school, and go on to college.

FOUNDING AALEAD

In 1998, as the four-year federal grant came to an end, I realized that the ICC-YLP must continue but not as a project of our parent organization, the Indochinese Community Center. The needs of the target audience and the leadership structure required to meet those needs were too different from the mission and structure of the ICC itself. As a result, I recruited an advisory board and convinced ICC to support a "spin-off" of the project, which would be an independent organization named Asian American Leadership, Empowerment and Development for Youth and Families (AALEAD). Although we initially served

only Vietnamese Americans, we chose this name because we hoped that in the future we would serve more than one Asian American group.

In June 1998, with a \$15,000 seed grant from a private foundation, AALEAD became the first Asian American youth development organization in the Washington, D.C. region. As an independent organization, one of our biggest challenges was to raise adequate resources to continue our current programs. However, because AALEAD was a continuation of a successful youth project, many private foundations were willing to support us. In the first year, I wrote twenty proposals and received a total of \$200,000 in grants. In addition, our board of directors hosted an annual fundraising dinner each year. It was exhilarating to have a wide range of support from individual donors as well as corporate sponsors.

As the leader of AALEAD, I had a vision of building an effective and efficient organization while also developing "best practice" model programs. I believed that our children and families deserved high-quality programs to help them achieve our collective goals, but that we could also be laying the groundwork for model programs that could be replicated in other communities for other youth and families.

To achieve this vision, I developed an evaluation system that tracked our participants' academic progress and outcomes. During the early stages of AALEAD, we manually recorded and tracked our students' academic progress. We used both quantitative and qualitative data to monitor our programs' effectiveness. For example, I recruited a graduate student to conduct an evaluation of our

mentoring program. Through her evaluation, AALEAD recognized some strengths as well as weaknesses of the program. Consequently, we changed the way we oriented and supported mentors.

GROWING AALEAD

In addition, as AALEAD grew and developed, we learned to formalize its programs by developing a curriculum for our after-school academic enrichment program for elementary school children. Furthermore, we developed a manual for our mentoring program that had formalized training and follow-up processes for our mentors and students. Because of our commitment to learning and to holding ourselves accountable to our students and families, AALEAD was able to attract capacity-building investment from large foundations such as the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation (EMCF) and Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP).

AALEAD was one of a few Asian American organizations that received capacity-building grants to grow and scale up our operation. In 2003, EMCF and VPP provided a total of \$375,000 for AALEAD to strengthen its organizational structure and prepare for its expansion. In addition, EMCF and VPP provided hands-on technical assistance to AALEAD. For example, EMCF sent its director of evaluation to help AALEAD refine its theory of change and performance measurement. With the capacity-building grant, AALEAD was able to hire a deputy director, formalize our program evaluation, and establish a sound internal financial system.

After two years of strengthening our infrastructure, both VPP and EMCF provided additional resources for AALEAD to grow and expand its program to other locations in the Washington, DC,

metropolitan area. In 2005, as I thought about expansion and growth, a list of complex questions started to emerge. For example, should AALEAD continue its focus on serving only Vietnamese Americans? If not, how would AALEAD make the transition from serving Vietnamese Americans to serving other Asian American ethnic groups? How would AALEAD address the community's needs given the language and cultural diversity among Asian American immigrants? How would AALEAD prioritize diverse needs?

On the one hand, it was clear that AALEAD could not remain as a neighborhood organization because many of the Vietnamese American families we served had moved out of the District of Columbia to nearby suburbs. Our board of directors and I recognized that in order for us to survive and thrive we must adapt to the fast-changing environment. Within a year, AALEAD worked with an external consultant to develop a five-year strategic plan. Through reviewing demographic and census data, it was clear where and how AALEAD should expand its services to serve a large population of Chinese American students and families. As a result, our strategic plan helped AALEAD successfully expand our services to a suburban community just north of DC in Montgomery County, Maryland.

After implementing the first phase of the strategic plan in 2006, I decided that this would be the best time to prepare AALEAD for my leadership transition. After more than a decade of watching other social services groups decline and fail because of leaders who did not plan properly for their departures, I resolved to leave AALEAD when it was strong and in the hands of a competent, well-trained leadership team.

I worked closely with the board and the senior management team to plan for the transition. Within two years, I implemented a plan to train staff, engage the board, and document the history of the organization. Furthermore, I secured funding for the board to hire an executive search firm to identify candidates for my position. I left AALEAD on September 30, 2007, but agreed to serve as an advisory board member to the organization, which I have continued to support. As a result of the transition efforts, AALEAD has continued, under a new executive director, to achieve funding and programmatic successes, despite a difficult environment for fundraising and educational attainment, especially for immigrant and refugee students.

REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In the years since leaving AALEAD, I have spent time reflecting on my experiences in building an Asian American service organization in a city that has less than 3 percent Asian American residents.

Through this process, I realized that what I have learned could be helpful to other social entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders who want to address the needs of minority groups in a location where there are few services available to address their needs.

I understand that it is not easy to replicate model organizations and model programs. An organization's location is crucial in determining whether duplication is feasible. Thus, it may not be a simple process to replicate AALEAD's successes elsewhere. However, I want to share ten general lessons that I hope will help people who want to make changes in their own community:

1. Build a strength-based approach. AALEAD is a successful organization

because of our decision to work with both parents and youths. AALEAD understands that our parents and our youths are our greatest resources. They have the ability to be their own agents of change in improving their lives, helping their families, and building their communities. AALEAD's role is to support parents and youths so that they can develop and realize their own potential.

2. Build strategic partnerships. In my experience, it is critical to identify organizations and leaders who can help grow your organization. AALEAD was successful because of our partnership with key strategic partners such as the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, and the Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, DC Chapter. This advice is relevant to building organizations in general but even more important for Asian American organizations in cities without large Asian American populations. For example, in the early stages of development, AALEAD had to look for partners who could provide in-kind resources. At the time, LAYC's executive director provided a space for AALEAD to run our programs. LAYC was an effective partner because AALEAD was not a competitor.

3. Ask for help. As a new executive director, I had to learn how to write grant proposals, establish a board of directors, manage staff, develop programs, and network with strategic partners. As a young leader, I quickly learned that I had to find mentors who would be willing to teach and coach me. Many of these mentors gave me their time and expertise because they believed that by helping me they were helping the children at the center. Since they had no formal role at AALEAD, I felt comfortable sharing

critical issues with them and getting their advice. This also had the benefit of allowing me to get feedback on critical issues without overstepping personal or organizational boundaries with fellow staff and board members.

4. Establish a diverse board of directors.

At AALEAD, we recruited board members from diverse backgrounds, including both successful members of the Vietnamese American community as well as those with no previous experience working with that community. The only relevant criterion was they shared our vision and cared deeply about our families and our work. Furthermore, as part of our bylaws we have always included two parents and four youths currently participating in our program to serve on our board. This has the double benefit of keeping the board engaged in the real-world problems facing our target audience while giving our parents and youths contacts outside the community and a chance to learn how nonprofit boards operate.

5. Fight the model minority myth. In our earliest days, fundraising was a challenge because of the public perception that Asian American children are all whiz kids and do not need help to succeed. In order to fight this myth, I often invited program officers from private foundations to our center to meet our parents and children. In addition, I asked them to come with me on home visits. These home visits proved to be extremely effective because the program officers got to directly experience the needs of our families. Furthermore, they were able to share what they witnessed with other foundations. In addition to these home visits, I also worked with reporters and other media outlets and encouraged them to write stories about our communities. On one occasion, I helped a *Washington Post*

reporter write an article about a Vietnamese Amerasian man who still longed to meet his biological father. This article helped illustrate the plight of Amerasian families.

6. Be careful about scaling up your organization. There are unique challenges in scaling up an Asian American service organization. One of those challenges is transitioning from serving one ethnic group to serving two or more ethnic groups. Since AALEAD started out serving only Vietnamese American children in one neighborhood, our organization was an anchor to the local Vietnamese community. For many years, Vietnamese was the primary language at the center. When AALEAD decided to expand our programs to serve Chinese American students, our students, families, and staff experienced a severe sense of loss. AALEAD could have done a better job of preparing our youths, families, staff, and volunteers for this transition.

7. Recruit bilingual professional staff.

One of the challenges in building an Asian American organization is recruiting competent and qualified bilingual staff. For many years, AALEAD had the funding to hire a bilingual Vietnamese social worker but AALEAD was not able to recruit one. As Jim Collins points out in his book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't*, a company must get "the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus." Getting the right people on the bus is a challenging task for many Asian American organizations because there is a shortage of qualified Asian American bilingual social workers, counselors, and senior nonprofit managers in the United States.

8. Evaluate staff. As a manager, I learned that staff performance evaluation is a

critical component of running an effective organization. However, as a community-based organization, staff evaluation can be a difficult task because of the familial environment. Despite this, it is extremely important that staff get both positive and constructively critical feedback regarding their performance. Taking care to be friendly without being a friend of subordinates is also a difficult but important issue to keep in mind in small Asian American nonprofits.

9. Be a change agent in the broader system. Over the years, I came to realize that changing public schools and health and human services systems is the key to effecting broad-based social change. One of the reasons that AALEAD came into existence was because the District of Columbia Public Schools had failed to address the needs of Vietnamese American students. In order to help our students, it was necessary that AALEAD advocate for systemic change. It was not enough to provide services to students. AALEAD had to work collaboratively with other advocates to change the existing public system for all students, not just Vietnamese Americans.

10. Lead by example. Over the years, I recognized the importance of leadership. As the founder and executive director, I had to be aware of maintaining an appropriate role with staff, volunteers, youths, parents, and community members. While this is an issue in any organization, the lines can get blurred in a community such as the one I was in where parents would refer to me in kinship terms and staff would hang out together because of the long hours needed to accomplish all of our tasks. Being a woman leader in a community where such a thing was rare also meant that my leadership was constantly being

scrutinized and occasionally challenged. Ongoing vigilance, outreach to board and community support, and feedback from mentors fortunately helped me to address these and other issues before they became a crisis.

MALCOLM WIENER CENTER FOR SOCIAL POLICY

The Malcolm Wiener Center is a vibrant intellectual community of faculty, masters and PhD students, researchers, and administrative staff striving to improve public policy and practice in the areas of health care, human services, criminal justice, inequality, education, and labor.

The work of the center draws on the worlds of scholarship, policy, and practice to address pressing questions by:

- carrying out research on important policy issues affecting the lives of those most vulnerable and needy
- providing professional education for those in the world of practice
- educating the next generation of academics and policy scholars
- ensuring that research and education are closely tied to and draw from politics and practice in the field
- developing working partnerships with the broader policy community

For more than two decades the Malcolm Wiener Center has been an influential voice in domestic policy through faculty work on community policing, welfare reform, youth violence, education, urban poverty, youth and the low-wage labor market, American Indian economic and social development, and medical error rates.

Our research portfolio is both broad and deep, spanning many academic disciplines, encompassing traditional research as well as executive sessions, case-based research and action research, and employing a variety of research methodologies. It is inspired by our focus on bettering the lives of our fellow citizens, particularly those who are most vulnerable and needy.

MALCOLM WIENER CENTER FOR SOCIAL POLICY

The Malcolm Wiener Center is a vibrant intellectual community of faculty, masters and PhD students, researchers, and administrative staff striving to improve public policy and practice in the areas of health care, human services, criminal justice, inequality, education, and labor.

The work of the center draws on the worlds of scholarship, policy, and practice to address pressing questions by:

- carrying out research on important policy issues affecting the lives of those most vulnerable and needy
- providing professional education for those in the world of practice
- educating the next generation of academics and policy scholars
- ensuring that research and education are closely tied to and draw from politics and practice in the field
- developing working partnerships with the broader policy community

For more than two decades the Malcolm Wiener Center has been an influential voice in domestic policy through faculty work on community policing, welfare reform, youth violence, education, urban poverty, youth and the low-wage labor market, American Indian economic and social development, and medical error rates.

Our research portfolio is both broad and deep, spanning many academic disciplines, encompassing traditional research as well as executive sessions, case-based research and action research, and employing a variety of research methodologies. It is inspired by our focus on bettering the lives of our fellow citizens, particularly those who are most vulnerable and needy.

WEB SITE: www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wiener



HARVARD Kennedy School

MALCOLM WIENER CENTER
for Social Policy