

26th

ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW



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26th

ASIAN AMERICAN
POLICY REVIEW

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2015 - 2016 STAFF

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REMARKS FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DANIEL YOUNGWON LEE

INTRODUCTION

Every election cycle, we see a recurring phenomenon take place in communities across the countries. Candidates emerge and begin a courtship with key minority blocs. 2016 has been no different. While many demographics are often targeted for their political support—women, African Americans, Latinos—Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are strikingly absent from such engagement and dialogue.

And this is why the Asian American Policy Review exists. For twenty-six years, the journal has ensured that there is a space where the thoughts and ideas of our people can be voiced and heard.

This year's journal pays particular attention to the interplay of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and politics. George Villanueva provides his commentary on the role the Filipino community played in the local elections of Los Angeles. Paul, Elena, and Jonathan Ong analyze the growth of the Asian American electorate and the potential power they can wield in the future of our country's politics. Our first feature article from Misha Tsukerman investigates the role Asian American politicians have played in the narrative of the Republican Party.

Besides politics, the twenty-sixth edition of the Asian American Policy Review also explores the stories not often told from the API community. Hyein Lee and Margaret Chin discuss the challenges faced by second-generation Asian American workers in the finance industry. Susan Nakaoka tells the story of Donnie Chin, an Asian American community activist from Seattle, and examines how his fight for his community personifies the struggle Asian Americans face in cities across the country.

We continue our tradition of showcasing creative expression by sitting down with pianist Vijay Iyer, where we discuss not only his music, but his thoughts on the role Asian American and Pacific Islanders can play in engaging identity and race in America. To close this year's journal, poet and playwright Chiori Miyagawa provides us with a set of evocative and compelling poems that touch on the complexity that marks the Asian American identity.

I would like to thank our publisher, Martha Foley, and our faculty advisor, Richard Parker, for their incredible patience and mentorship. A special thank you goes out to Fred Wang for his continued support and belief in our work over the years. Finally, I must extend my gratitude to this year's editorial team. Their hard work and dedication to not only our journal but to our communities has been an inspiration for me that I cannot begin to describe in words.

Daniel Youngwon Lee
Editor-in-Chief

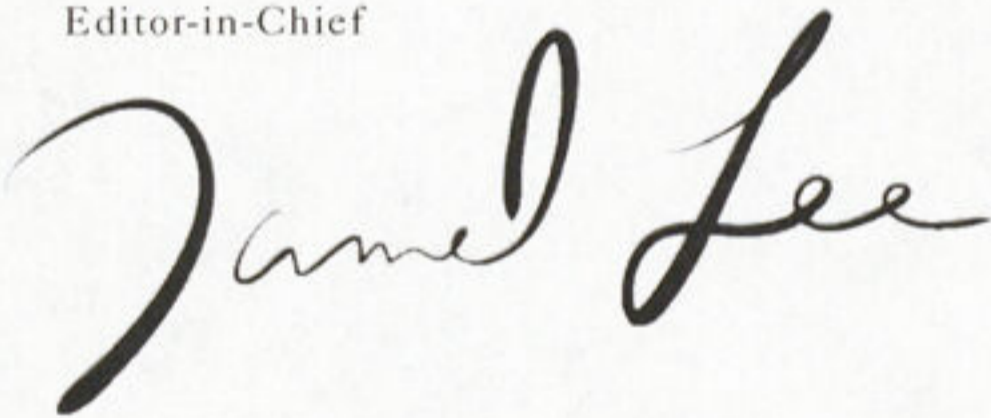
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D" and "L".

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CALL FOR PAPERS

DEADLINE DECEMBER 4, 2015

The Asian American Policy Review (AAPR) at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government is now accepting submissions for its twenty-sixth edition, to be published in the spring of 2016. 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.

SECTION 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

SUBMISSION 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) email 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.
- Media, film, and book reviews should be 800 to 1,000 words in length.
- All figures, tables, and charts must be clear, easy to understand, and submitted as separate files.

E-mail submissions and any questions you may have to: aapr@hks.harvard.edu.

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FILIPINOS FOR GARCETTI: ETHNIC POLITICAL ORGANIZING IN LOS ANGELES AND ASIAN AMERICAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CITIES

GEORGE VILLANUEVA

INTRODUCTION

Asian Pacific Islanders have been identified by the US Census Bureau as the fastest growing racial population in the United States in this decade. Despite this demographic explosion, little research has been done on the disaggregation of Asian American ethnicities and their participation in electoral politics. In addition, most of the studies that do emerge focus on Asian American political participation at the state and national levels, creating a need for scholarship on how Asian American groups engage in electoral politics at the local level. This work contributes to the body of multiethnic political engagement microstudies in major cities through the examination of Filipino Americans—who now make up the largest Asian American ethnic group in the City of Los Angeles—organizing of Filipinos for Garcetti. The campaign was made up of Filipino American community advocates who organized community support, fundraisers, and votes for Eric Garcetti's successful bid to become the forty-second mayor of Los Angeles.

Mainstream media coverage of the 2013 Los Angeles mayoral campaign focused on general campaign activities and major endorsements by elected officials, developers, established advocacy groups (e.g., unions), celebrities, and political insiders. Unsurprisingly, the critical emergence of grassroots ethnic political organizing and civic engagement—especially from newer ethnic minorities such as Asian Americans and Latinos, who together make up a majority of the city's population—was largely disregarded by the mainstream media. But the lack of media coverage did not reflect the substantial role that these groups played in the election.

Multiethnic civic engagement has generally focused on candidate outreach to ethnic groups, but studies would be incomplete without an examination of whether ethnic groups self-organize to become collectively engaged in the political process. Asian Americans in particular cannot rest assured that their rising populations in major cities will guarantee resources from city governments and politicians. Instead, Asian American ethnic groups must continue to think about and engage in political organizing that offers pathways for civic engagement and political visibility.

Informed by 'Communication Infrastructure Theory' (CIT)—a framework that emphasizes the construction of community through local storytelling networks—I argue that *Filipinos for Garcetti* adds to the emerging practices of Asian American civic engagement in cities by demonstrating the critical role of ethnic-specific political organizing. *Filipinos for Garcetti*, with its connection to the longer history of Filipino American community organizing, activated local Filipino storytelling networks for civic engagement by advocating for resources from Mayor Garcetti before, during, and after the mayoral campaign.

In addition to academic sources, this article is informed by the author's own participation and observation of Filipino American community activism and LA city politics during his years as a Council District 13 field deputy, Filipino American advocate, and doctoral student at the University of Southern California. From 2001 to 2003, the author served as the first Filipino American field deputy for Councilmember Garcetti and was assigned to the Temple Beverly corridor, later officially named Historic Filipinotown. The author, along with two other Filipino Americans on Councilmember Garcetti's staff, maintained critical relationships and advocated within government in the interest of the Filipino American community during the Councilmember's twelve-year tenure.

This analysis of the political ethnic organizing by Filipinos for Garcetti yields three significant implications for Asian American civic engagement in cities: (1) it shows how newer ethnic immigrant storytelling networks in cities must be activated by members of that storytelling network for the purposes of civic engagement, (2) it highlights the emergence of 'new minority politics,' which expands the traditional Black-White paradigm and explains why candidates must pay attention to Asian American integration into local electoral politics, and (3) it demonstrates the importance of political representation within city government to the process of racial formation and immigrant integration for Asian American communities.

Part I will briefly introduce the theoretical framework of CIT and recent applications of the theory. Part II will discuss the Filipino American community's history of activism and organizing in Los Angeles. Part III will explore the activation of the Filipino American community for Garcetti. Finally, Part IV will discuss some of the implications of analyzing the success of *Filipinos for Garcetti* through the lens of CIT.

1. COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE THEORY

Communication Infrastructure Theory is a social-ecological framework that articulates the local dynamics of urban communities by examining their communication infrastructure. According to CIT, the communication resources of a community are constructed through two components: the

Storytelling Network and the surrounding Communication Action Context. Because a community is based on its members' shared stories, it is critical to examine and invest into resources that facilitate these connections.

The first component is the 'Storytelling Network'—the network of actors within a community—which consists of three nodes: (1) residents and families, (2) community organizations, and (3) geo-ethnic media, or local media aimed at a particular ethnicity or geography. As we will discuss later, empirical research has shown that strengthening the connection and integration of these nodes is critical to increasing civic engagement and collective efficacy.

The second component is the 'Communication Action Context,' which recognizes that storytelling networks are embedded within a local environment that can facilitate or impede communication between residents. Some examples of these pieces are: quality and availability of parks or other public spaces, real and perceived public safety, quality of schools and community centers, and other environmental characteristics—all of which are dependent on the local place.

As research teams have applied the storytelling network to more engaged, community-based research, the word "activation" has emerged to indicate the benefit of moving the storytelling network toward specific advocacy goals. The CIT framework has been especially useful for those occupying a hybrid researcher-advocate role because it can be used both to inform organizing strategies and to analyze their success.

Previous CIT research has demonstrated that when a local storytelling network's nodes are strongly connected, there is a positive impact on neighborhood belonging, civic participation, and collective efficacy—three crucial elements of civic engagement in urban communities. Other scholars have used the CIT approach to local storytelling networks to both inform and analyze the launch of a hyper-

local news website called Alhambra Source. This platform successfully engaged local residents from the multiethnic Chinese, Latino, and Anglo suburban city of Alhambra in Southern California to contribute community journalism to the news website.

Researchers from the USC Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism have also successfully applied the CIT framework to activate local storytelling networks in the community surrounding the university. The first, a translational website called MetaConnects shares community-based research and tools for practitioners seeking to promote social change in their local neighborhoods. The second, a community-wide project at USC called Ride South LA, brought researchers, community organizations, and local residents together to design a mobile phone engagement strategy that celebrates the neighborhood's cultural landmarks through bicycle tours while advocating for improved bicycle infrastructure.

This paper focuses on the value that CIT can add to a community practitioner-scholar's understanding of community activation in service of civic engagement in cities. For this current work, it is beneficial to use CIT as a conceptual framework that views the Filipino American community in Los Angeles as a specific storytelling network that was activated for the purposes of ethnic political organizing during the 2013 Los Angeles Mayoral campaign. As this case will illustrate, Filipino Americans have had a long history of activating their own storytelling network in Los Angeles for the purpose of community building. This longer history of self-activation by Filipino Americans enabled the recent manifestation of the political organizing that took place in Filipinos for Garcetti.

2. FILIPINO AMERICAN COMMUNITY ACTIVISM FORMATIONS IN LOS ANGELES

Filipino American community activism in Los Angeles must be situated in the broader context of the racial, cultural, and political

representation of Asian Americans in the United States. Race scholars Michael Omi and Howard Winant see such community activism as 'racial formations,' understood as processes of "historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized." Scholars have used racial formation theory to examine Asian American community identity constructions in suburban geographies such as the San Gabriel Valley, a large Asian American enclave just outside of Los Angeles. These studies reveal the significant impact of the Chinese population on the local place and how their ethnic identities shaped their negotiation of everyday life in response to the structural expectations of whiteness that dominated—and continue to dominate—the region. Racial formations are primarily executed in these studies to show the resiliency of Asian American communities as they adapt to ethnic and racial tensions that are provoked by changing demographics.

Scholars have pointed to Filipino American struggles for ethnic and political representation as a racial formation project that is structured in response to whiteness and to the history of exclusion that subjugated Filipino Americans as an invisible community. After the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, abolished immigration quotas based on country of origin, the Filipino American community began to organize more aggressively. The Filipino American ethnic recognition movements in Los Angeles were a resulting racial formation project which disrupted structures of Whiteness and how capitalism in the United States expects to consume Asian American culture. Scholars also point to the history of mobilizing for a Filipinotown in Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s as a formation constructed in dialectical relationship with the expectations that Whites and the dominant capitalist culture have regarding the consumption of Asian American ethnicities in the same way that the United States has consumed

Chinatowns—as the categorized place in cities to experience and to consume the ethnic other through restaurants and cultural tourism.

Filipinotown movements have taken longer to establish because they have not fit neatly into these expectations of place—even in a city like Los Angeles where Filipino Americans have historically been the second-largest Asian American ethnic group. Instead, Filipinotown movements have been more in line with the goal of memorializing and recognizing the community's ethnic heritage. This analysis drives home the point that Filipino Americans have felt the need both to organize themselves in response to structures of White expectations and consumerism of the other, and to activate their own storytelling networks to advocate for their own political, cultural, and community interests.

The Filipino American community's activation of its own storytelling networks for community activism after the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act led to the creation of a host of Filipino American community-based organizations that have since advocated for community interests. These organizations have primarily worked out of the Temple-Beverly corridor, a locality that served as one of the original areas where Filipino immigrants settled in the 1940s after being displaced by redevelopment efforts downtown earlier in the twentieth century. Key organizations include Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA), Filipino American Service Group, Incorporated (FASGI), FilAm ARTS, and the Pilipino Workers Center (PWC). Some of these organizations have been operating since the 1970s. These organizations create robust Community Organizations nodes within the CIT framework and serve as a resource to facilitate the broader civic engagement of the Filipino American community.

For example, SIPA has been serving local Filipino families with social services for over three decades while dedicating resources to community and economic development in the Temple-Beverly corridor. FASGI has played a significant role in registering Filipino American voters, supporting Filipino American World War II Veterans, and providing transitional housing for vulnerable populations. FilAm ARTS has served as a site for Filipino cultural schooling and has organized the annual Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture since 1992. PWC has been instrumental in organizing recent immigrants and domestic workers for worker rights campaigns while also building an affordable housing development in the area to stave off gentrification. This existing storytelling network, created in large part by the work of these community-based organizations, played a pivotal role in pushing for resources for the community and maintaining a relationship with elected officials, including then-Councilmember Eric Garcetti.

3. ACTIVATING THE FILIPINO AMERICAN COMMUNITY FOR GARCETTI

Mayor Eric Garcetti was the councilmember representing the Thirteenth Council District in Los Angeles before running for mayor. Existing Filipino-American storytelling networks were first brought to Councilmember Garcetti's attention when the community was activated to push for the establishment of a Filipinotown city designation for the Temple-Beverly corridor, which was located in the Thirteenth Council District. The successful designation of the Temple-Beverly corridor as Historic Filipinotown did not come until August 2002, when then-Councilmember Garcetti worked with Filipino-American community activists to hold a community consultation process and introduce legislation a year after his election. The 'Historic' label was intended to recognize the area as both the original gateway and the current locality for Filipino immigrant settlement, business presence, and community-based activity. A significant political relationship was formed between the Filipino American community and Garcetti through this process, and as a result, Garcetti maintained a staff position assigned to the Historic Filipinotown neighborhood throughout his tenure that was held by a rotation of three

Filipino Americans.

This was important because even though Councilmember Garcetti and his staff were responsible for the whole council district, the Filipino American staff members were able to bring the broader interests of Filipino Americans to light. This included endorsing and assisting with the effort to use a city park in San Pedro as the site of the annual Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture. Filipino American staff were also in a better position to learn about sources of city funding that could be made available for beautification projects in the Historic Filipinotown area. This knowledge, combined with the Filipino American staff members' interest in making resources available to the Historic Filipinotown community, helped to connect projects such as the Filipino World War II Veterans monument in Historic Filipinotown and streetscape improvements that reflected the cultural heritage of Filipinos in the neighborhood with needed financial and political support—further strengthening the area's communication action context and enabling greater community connections.

The Filipinos for Garcetti operation during the Los Angeles mayoral campaign came directly out of the previous work that then-Councilmember Garcetti's former Filipino American staff had engaged in with the Filipino American community. This group served as the lead organizers for activities leading up to the 2013 mayoral election and were intent on activating the Filipino American storytelling networks for the purpose of civic engagement. It was clear from observing years of electoral politics in Los Angeles that racial and ethnic groups did not gain power with elected officials exclusively by collectively protesting for resources outside of government; it also required participation in campaign activities that led to the election of candidates who paid attention to the interests of those organized communities that helped put these candidates in office.

With this goal in mind, Filipinos for Garcetti organized two primary fundraisers attended by close to one-hundred supporters each and which resulted in over \$25,000 in campaign contributions. Additionally, the lead organizers helped to recruit Filipino Americans for phone banking and neighborhood canvassing across the city. Lastly, the lead organizers served as points of contact for Filipino ethnic media that wanted to report on the campaign's engagement of Filipino Americans.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF FILIPINOS FOR GARCETTI

ACTIVATING ETHNIC STORYTELLING NETWORKS

The storytelling network component of CIT is a helpful framework to use when thinking about the activation of the various Asian American ethnic communities that now call cities in the United States home. Politically, the Filipinos for Garcetti case demonstrates the activation of a Filipino ethnic storytelling network by Filipino American organizers and participants in pursuit of a goal of civic engagement during the 2013 mayoral campaign. It also illustrates that organizing ethnic groups to participate in local electoral politics will require ethnic-specific strategies led by organizers of the same heritage who come from the community.

We have seen this same phenomenon of storytelling network activation by ethnic and racial members of particular communities in the history of Black Power movements in the 1960s, and more recently in the Black Lives Matter organizing taking place across the nation. Black Lives Matter organizers overtly address the significance of Black community members organizing their movements for their own advocacy interests—coalescing in large part around the stories of racial tension and police brutality in their own communities and across the country. Filipino community activism both before and after the 2013 mayoral

election serves as an example of Asian American ethnic storytelling network activation and will continue to have the most success and relevance if the Filipino American community itself takes leadership of this movement.

It is important to highlight that the activation of the Filipino American storytelling network by Filipinos for Garcetti took shape through various strategies that were aimed at the Filipino ethnic experience. The fundraising events that carried the Filipinos for Garcetti name were particularly useful because they distinguished themselves from traditional fundraisers named after the general campaign or sponsored by specific individual hosts. The ethnicity-specific campaign moniker signified that the effort was paying attention to Filipino Americans as a collective within the city instead of focusing on specific individuals.

Supporters who spoke Tagalog, the primary Filipino dialect, were also recruited to participate in campaign phone banking that targeted Filipino households. Even though many Filipino Americans speak English due to the history of American colonialism in the Philippines, Filipinos who spoke Tagalog were more likely to feel comfortable communicating about the campaign with callers who possessed similar language and cultural capabilities. This observation underscores the findings of Philippine studies scholars who argue that speaking Tagalog is a form of resistance to American colonization, and that Filipino diasporas will exert Tagalog as an expression of power over their own everyday lives outside of their homeland.

These ethnic-specific strategies activated by organizers of Filipinos for Garcetti augmented general campaign activities that used traditional voter outreach that did not effectively reach the greater potential voters of Filipino heritage, like television ads and English language materials. An ethnic storytelling network approach encourages city electoral campaign

practitioners to consider the different ethnic language and cultural contexts that may need to be considered in order to produce better civic engagement outcomes among the diverse Asian American communities in cities.

Shifting Demographics and New Minority Politics

Along with the burgeoning Latino populations across the nation, major cities are faced with constituent politics that are vastly different from the racial and ethnic makeup of the previous century. Indeed, Aoki and Nakanishi contend that the demographic rise of Asian Americans and Latinos constitute “new minority politics” that transcend the historical Black-White dichotomy that dominated electoral politics of the past. This is particularly the case with major cities like Los Angeles, whose ethnic diversity requires new multiethnic strategies for civic engagement. Demographers project that in Los Angeles, the Asian American and Latino populations will continue to increase through 2030 while white and Black populations decrease. From 2000 to 2010, the Asian Pacific Islander population in the City of Los Angeles has seen a 20 percent increase. In the City of Los Angeles, Filipinos are the largest Asian American ethnic group (See Table 1).

Table 1

2010 Asian American Population in the City of Los Angeles

Ethnic Group	Total Population
Filipino	122787
Korean	108282
Chinese	61950
Japanese	32619
Indian	32996
Vietnamese	19969
Thai	12349
Taiwanese	4559
Cambodian	3446

Source: 2010 US Census, City of Los Angeles Office of Immigrant Affairs

From a numbers perspective it makes political sense for politicians and city governments to engage Filipinos as part of this landscape of the “new minority politics.” Yet, as political scientists point out, the increasing number of Asian Americans does not translate into political participation. Furthermore, one cannot assume that politicians will automatically pay attention to new ethnic minority groups when efficient and successful political campaigns depend on targeting those constituencies, such as White and Black voting blocs, that are already engaged. Therefore, it was critical for Filipino Americans to take it upon themselves to organize their own community storytelling networks toward a goal of political recognition and presence.

The reality of a “new minority politics” surfaced in Los Angeles in 2015 when, for only the second time in Los Angeles’ history, an Asian American was elected into the City Council. When Councilmember David Ryu, a Korean American, won his hotly contested City Council seat, he took political organizing and Asian American civic engagement to a new level by showing the promise that Asian American ethnic groups are not limited to political organizing, but are also able to make up the face of elected officials in major cities like Los Angeles. Even though a broad multiethnic coalition brought him to office, he was backed by substantial Asian American financial support and votes from the Koreatown neighborhood that is partially located within his district. The coalescing of storytelling networks around a candidate that showed clear interest in ethnic-specific

communities throughout their career paralleled much of what occurred in the organizing for Filipinos for Garcetti.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION MATTERS

As the lead organizers for Filipinos for Garcetti learned from their past positions within Councilmember Garcetti's office, representation on staff and on city commissions provides political visibility and access for communities in the city. Even though the race and ethnicity of government representatives do not necessarily translate into ethnic minorities receiving attention within electoral politics, this ethnic consubstantiality does indicate to newer ethnic minorities that efforts are being made to increase their belonging in the city. Consubstantiality is defined by noted communication scholar Kenneth Burke as "a practice-related concept based on stylistic identifications and symbolic structures, which persuade and produce acceptance: an acting-together within, and defined by, a common context." Consubstantiality with ethnic communities is aligned with the canons of communication scholarship on civic engagement, as scholars like Burke have long established the significance of consubstantiality as a strategy for political rhetors, governments, and media to establish identification with their audiences or constituencies.

As an example, one of the major Filipino American newspapers, *Asian Journal*, covered the city council confirmations of several Filipino Americans who were appointed to various citywide commissions. Political representation within city government is newsworthy for Filipino American communities in Los Angeles largely because it establishes a form of ethnic consubstantiality between local government and Filipino Americans. For Asian American civic engagement on the whole, Filipino American political representation within elected official staffs and appointed commissions expands beyond the celebration of Asian American population growth; it shows that political institutions charged with public policies that govern neighborhoods can—and should—be ethnically representative of shifting demographics. The activation of ethnic storytelling networks for the purpose of civic engagement is critical to the emergent multiethnic face of Los Angeles, but at the end of the day Filipinos for Garcetti as a political organizing vehicle can also be evaluated by outcomes related to political representation within city government. As Asian American scholar James Lai declares, there is a dearth of Asian American political representation at the elected official government level—both in terms of elected officials and staff—in major cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. For this reason, when it comes to political representation, it is important to study both the voting patterns of Asian American groups in multiple cycles and whether the community is making in-roads into positions within elected official staffs and related government bodies.

For the measure of political representation that ensued as a result of Filipinos for Garcetti political organizing, we can assess the Filipino American makeup of the mayor's staff and citywide citizen commissions appointed by the mayor one year after his inauguration in July 2013. One year in office is an appropriate juncture to assess representation because the mayor and his senior staff have had the necessary time to establish the administration's full staff and appoint members to the various citizen commissions that oversee citywide policies.

By the first year of Mayor Garcetti's tenure, about nine of the mayor's staff and eleven appointed citizen commissioners were Filipino Americans—roughly four percent in each category. Staff positions held by Filipino Americans included important posts in External Affairs and the newly-opened Immigrant Affairs Office; Filipino Americans were also appointed to significant commissions including Area Planning, Building and Safety, Transportation, Affordable Housing, and Municipal Elections. With the Filipino American community making up roughly four percent of the 3.8 million residents of the City of Los Angeles, the mayor's appointments roughly reflect the city's demographics for the Filipino American community. More importantly, the seniority and significance of these roles provides insight and access for the Filipino American community's storytelling networks to continue to mobilize themselves toward greater civic engagement.

CONCLUSION

Filipinos are the largest Asian American ethnic group in the City of Los Angeles, and while this alone warrants that city elected officials pay attention to the concerns of Filipino Americans, it should not be assumed that elected officials will account for the community automatically. Instead, Filipino Americans will need to organize around their community interests and engage political institutions to ensure that city resources are distributed to the neighborhoods in which they live and work. From the perspective of Communication Infrastructure Theory, this article demonstrates the long history of Filipino Americans activation of their own storytelling networks for community building and, subsequently, for civic engagement that led to the political organizing of Filipinos for Garcetti during the most recent mayoral campaign. Moreover, this case takes seriously the emergent "new minority politics" landscape in the country and illustrates an on-the-ground account of a racial formation project focused on Filipino Americans building relationships with existing political institutions. To underscore an earlier point, Filipino Americans, like other ethnic groups of the past, are active citizens willing to productively contribute to public life; they have not stood on the sidelines when it comes to political representation in cities.

Asian American ethnic groups should activate their own storytelling networks and turn the discourse

circulated by residents, community organizations, and ethnic media toward issues of civic engagement that will lead to political organizing that advocates for greater resources from city governments for their communities. This investment into pieces of the Communication Action Context will ensure that the communities are better able to self-organize in the future. Asian Americans will continue to make up the fastest growing racial population, especially in the most populated cities of the country; yet, there is a dearth of Asian American political representation at the government level in major cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Filipinos for Garcetti shows that there is a way to bring the Asian American communities' concerns to light and to encourage their greater participation within public life.

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NAVIGATING THE ROAD TO WORK: SECOND-GENERATION ASIAN AMERICAN FINANCE WORKERS

HYEIN LEE &
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ABSTRACT

With a growing population of college-educated, 1.5 and second-generation Asian Americans joining the labor force, it is necessary to examine how young professionals are transitioning from the world of higher education to the work world. While recent public interest in diversity issues focuses on the boardrooms and executive suites, it is important to examine processes occurring earlier on in the work lives of Asian Americans to better understand longer term outcomes and seemingly natural trends in employment. Our study uses interview data from forty-two 1.5 and second-generation Asian Americans working in the financial services industry, mainly in New York City, to examine the processes involved in choosing to pursue a finance career upon college graduation and finding a job in a competitive industry. Our findings show that contrary to common assumptions, respondents experienced significant parental conflict in negotiating a career in finance and, as a result, peer networks were important in redefining frameworks of success. Furthermore, institutional mechanisms of support were crucial

in operationalizing their professional aspirations and landing a job out of college. However, variance in available opportunities and the capacities as well as limitations of social capital suggest the impact of broader structures of inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Literature on the post-1965 second-generation children of immigrants indicates that overall, second-generation Asian Americans are experiencing significant upward mobility when compared to their immigrant parents. According to quantitative measures of success, including educational attainment and household income, particular ethnic groups are outperforming their White counterparts.²

The success of Asian Americans in the education system, and particularly higher education, is well documented in immigration literature. However, there is almost no research about the labor market incorporation of second-generation Asian Americans. There is an assumption that because Asian Americans are overrepresented in elite colleges and universities, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors, they transition smoothly into the work world. However, while it is true that the expansion of diversity initiatives in hiring processes in corporate America since the 1980s, post-civil rights, has allowed Asians as well as Latinos and Blacks to get their foot in the door at entry-level positions, little is known about this process and how Asian Americans even attain jobs, let alone navigate their professional lives and career trajectories over time.

This transition into the work world is crucial for many reasons. One of which is that as college graduates become young professionals in a post-industrial economy, the amount of time spent at work and with colleagues has steadily increased in the last couple of decades. Subsequently, individual's identities, social networks, and different forms of capital are increasingly rooted in

professional ties as opposed to other community ties. However, despite the central role of work in the lives and social mobility of Americans today, the work experience of Asian Americans as a whole has been understudied as compared to other minority groups and women.³

What is known is that although Asian Americans, including the foreign-born, comprise almost 6 percent of the US population, over 10 percent of the student population on most college campuses, and 15 to 20 percent at elite college campuses, they make up only 0.3 percent of corporate officers.⁴ Moreover, this lack of leadership positions is true even in fields where Asian Americans are overrepresented, most noticeably in tech. Equivalent and older studies in law and business indicate surprisingly similar results. In other words, the glass or bamboo ceiling has been at the center of attention when it comes to existing research on Asian Americans in the workforce.⁵

However, focusing on a phenomenon at the mid career overlooks processes occurring much earlier on and assumes seemingly natural work patterns of Asian Americans—often leading to affirmation of stereotypes. For example, why is it that Asian Americans are overrepresented, particularly in entry-level positions in industries like tech and finance? What are the push and pull factors in considering career paths for Asian Americans?

Our study of 1.5 and second-generation Asian Americans focuses on individuals working in the financial services industry and will be the first to examine how professionals of different generations transitioned from college into industries symbolic of the post-industrial work world. We seek to answer why and how Asian Americans choose to apply to certain jobs in certain fields during college and explore the multiple processes involved. Using interview data from 42 Asian Americans working in finance, mostly in New York, as well in few other cities including San Francisco and Chicago, we examine routes into the financial services industry and the significance of parental involvement and peer networks. In doing so, we added contribute a more nuanced understanding of why so many Asian American college graduates choose a job in finance that moves beyond common cultural stereotypes and observe the significance (or insignificance) of race and/or ethnicity in this process.

ASIAN IMMIGRANTS AND THE SECOND GENERATION

The growth rate of Asians in America experienced its heyday in the initial couple of decades following the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Asian-born immigrants tripled from 825,000 to 2.5 million between 1970 and 1980 and continued to almost double to approximately 5 million in the 1980s. During this time there was a subsequent increase in the number of native-born Asian American children as the foreign-born established families, and as of 2013 US-born Asian Americans make up almost 26 percent of the Asian population. The first generation of native-born Asian Americans who were born in the 60s and 70s are turning 50, and those who came by the time they were 12 (1.5 generation) are close to 60 years old.

SECOND GENERATION ASSIMILATION AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Given the substantial population of 1.5 and second-generation Asian Americans, there are no studies of the grown children of Asian immigrants in the children of immigrants literature. We are left to believe that the majority of the Asian American second generation recently graduated college and entered the work world. Along the way, they set the standard for success.⁶ The second generation and children of immigrants' literature, for the most part, describes their immigrant parents, their ethnic resources, and the second generation's educational attainment.⁷ All of these authors are mostly optimistic about incorporation and the upward mobility of the majority of the second generation. There is a consensus that a college degree is the greatest driver of achieving intergenerational mobility, while

factors such as socioeconomic status, access to networks and resources, the context of reception, as well as race and ethnicity are also significant.

ASIAN AMERICANS AND THE SUCCESS FRAME AND IMMIGRANT BARGAIN

There are a few studies of Asian Americans in the workplace, and just about all of them do not distinguish the results from the foreign-born, the 1.5 or second generation, and the American-born. Most of these studies find that Asian Americans hit a glass ceiling; their earnings, holding educational level steady, are lower than White Americans. They have a much more difficult time reaching management level or even surpassing it.⁸

However, there is even less written about the process of how young adults approach their world at the nexus of higher education and work. The most significant ideas that lend themselves to how Asian Americans may choose their career paths have been the "success frame," "achievement mindset," and "immigrant bargain."⁹ Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou posit that the definitions or frameworks of success and achievement mindsets are associated with the parents' own level of education and immigration status. The hyper-selectivity of the Asian immigrant groups has led to a narrowly defined framework of success and achievement across all classes. Lee and Zhou stress that the success frame is exacting (one must earn top grades, graduate as high school valedictorian, earn a degree from an elite university, go to graduate school, and work in coveted, high-status, high-paying professional fields). On the other hand, the immigrant bargain stresses the idea that success is really tied to how the children can repay their parents' sacrifices during the immigrant and settlement journey. The success framework and the achievement mindset according to Lee and Zhou are transmitted to their 1.5 and second-generation children despite parents' language and cultural differences and resettlement challenges. The

immigrant bargain is also communicated over time to the children. Both sets of concepts have been used to explain Asian American education achievement, but these concepts have not been examined in the context of the transition from college to work. There is an inherent gap in our literature that misses out on young adult Asian Americans.

METHODS

This paper examines how frameworks of success and achievement play out in the context of work for Asian Americans and challenges the assumption that Asian Americans having a “natural” proclivity toward certain industries. Our study of the 1.5 and second generations draws from interviews with forty-two Asian Americans working in the financial services industry, many of them in New York City. We adhered to the census and American Community Survey’s definition of the financial services—“securities, commodities, funds, trusts, and other financial investments”—and interviewed people in jobs such as investment banking, securities dealing, and portfolio management. We did not include people in the retail sides of the financial industry such as retail banking.

The interviews lasted approximately ninety minutes, and respondents were asked a range of questions not just pertaining to their professional lives but also about their upbringing, education, and social networks. Respondents were recruited through snowball sampling from personal contacts, as well as through outreach to college alumni networks (e.g., New York University, Columbia, Harvard), and through attending events hosted by organizations promoting Asian American professionals.

Our interviewees are all American-born or immigrated to the United States by the age of twelve. They consist of individuals who graduated from college within the last thirty years, with the most recent having graduated within the last five years. The majority of this group graduated from the nation’s top colleges and transitioned into working at the nation’s leading financial services companies in New York and other cities (see

Table 1 and Table 2). Therefore, our respondents represent the immigrant elite, meaning they either achieved great intergenerational mobility through higher education and work or their upper middle class upbringing and parents’ socioeconomic status.

These narratives are useful for several reasons. First, they provide insight into how Asian Americans navigate their first steps into the work world and identify their frameworks of success and reference groups when it comes to life during and after college. Second, their perceptions of the bureaucratic system and understanding of how to best position themselves when it came to securing employment upon graduation demonstrate how Asian Americans construct and ascribe meaning to the realities of their professional life. Finally, this cohort of Asian Americans, although statistically represent a homogenous group of “successful cases,” exemplify a broad spectrum of experiences and perceptions.

There are limitations to this approach. First, our sample is not random and predominantly consists of East Asian Americans—particularly Chinese and Korean Americans. Thus, our findings are not representative of the experiences of Asian Americans as a whole. However, while there are no reliable statistics on the ethnic breakdown of Asians working in finance, there is a high level of visibility of East Asian Americans working in this industry. Second, although there is no comparison group to examine the particular experiences against other racial groups, immigrant elites were interviewed specifically, in part to control for the backgrounds of Whites, who are the predominant group in the finance workforce. It is important to note that the purpose of this paper is to expand the scope of literature on the children of immigrants by looking at the incorporation of Asian Americans into the labor market and using finance as a case study.

Table 1: Respondents by Graduation Year, Gender and Ethnicity

Graduation Year	1980s		1990s		2000s		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Chinese American	3	5	8	3	6	4	29
Korean American	1		2	4	2		9
South Asian American			1				1
Japanese American		2		1			3
Totals 42	4	7	11	8	8	4	42

Table 2: Respondents by School and Gender

School	Ivy League, Stanford, MIT	UChicago, NYU, UC, Swarthmore, Haverford, Vassar, etc.	SUNY, CUNY, UWash, St. Johns, etc.	
Male	5	8	6	19
Female	11	7	5	23
Total	16	15	11	42

WHY FINANCE?

The finance industry is central to America's economy—contributing to 8 percent of the country's GDP—and Wall Street in New York City is the epitome of this industry.¹⁰ College graduates, many from the most elite institutions across the country, seek to begin their career in the financial sector as junior analysts. In addition, the work that is demanded from these professionals is symbolic of work in a knowledge-based economy, where soft skills are valued just as much as the hard and where subjective judgments of character can make or break one's career.

Subsequently, in order to better understand how and why Asian Americans get jobs in certain industries, it is useful to examine how the processes involved operate within this specific sector. The high-power nature of this field, where personal income tends to be relatively high, is the appropriate setting to ask questions about establishing careers among the highly educated.

FINDINGS

FAMILIAL APPROVAL: NEGOTIATING THE FINANCE TRACK

College is now seen as a place where young adults come of age, find themselves, and cement their worldviews as individuals. This time period along with the first couple of years after graduation are seen as the formative years of one's life—a narrative very much consistent with all-American themes of independence and “making it” on your own. Our respondents' accounts of their experiences in college and finding jobs resonated with these themes of hard work and self-sufficiency. At the same time, family dynamics, particularly parental influence and values, played a central role in their decision-making processes.

The substantial literature on how immigrant families negotiate educational success for the second generation identifies how Asian parents leverage various forms of capital and ethnic resources to place their children in competitive middle and high schools. They seek

residency in middle-class suburbs, establish social networks where information flows on how to navigate the American education system, and create new resources (e.g., ethnic media, cram schools) to set up pathways of success benefiting children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.¹¹ And although parents have less of a direct hand in steering children once they enter college, they are vocal in their expectations of success.

These stereotypes to a certain extent have been supported by empirical evidence and our interviews when it comes to how Asian parents focus on a linear trajectory of success by pushing their children into specific majors that will lead to a professional degree (i.e., JD, MD, PhD) and a career in the STEM fields. While this reflects an immigrant parenting strategy that believes a professional degree in technical fields will offer security and better protect their kids from subjective evaluation, bias, and potential discrimination from professors, peers, employers, and customers, it also reflects a monolithic definition of success that had to be challenged by our respondents.

Parental emphasis on the prestige of going to an Ivy League school, obtaining a professional degree, and pursuing a job in science, technology, engineering, or medicine was a source of parent-child conflict for many of our respondents. While it may be assumed that finance, a historically elite industry in America, would easily fit in to this definition of success, we found that for most of our respondents this was not the case. Parents were rigid in their desires for their children to be in one of the four STEM fields, and subsequently the young-adult children had to negotiate, in many cases for years, to prove the legitimacy of their industry. A key reason as to why parents did not approve of a job in finance was that it did not require education beyond a bachelor's degree. For some, this framework of success bled into their own. Take the following comments

from Alice, a twenty-seven-year-old who works in the finance industry with just a BA:

Yeah, I think it's the status, prestige thing, coming from an Asian background, is one of the hindrances to my career. To me, money doesn't matter. I would take a job that paid less than what I'm making now if it's regarded as a prestigious job, like a teacher in Korea. In Korea they're respected, but it's not a baller job. I guess it's the culture I was raised in and what my parents value; it's the prestige over the money. I think a lot about the people I graduated with; my roommates in college—a lot of them are going to med school and law school, and it makes me think ‘what am I doing?’

And to me, coming from a Korean background, prestige is really important—it involves having an advanced degree—like being a doctor or lawyer. That kind of stuff always crosses my mind, especially because I think if I really motivated myself I could go down that path of going to get an advanced degree, but I also want to stay true to my natural interests—like I'm not interested in med or law school. That's the conflict in my mind all the time these days; do I want to go for prestige?

Alice has two siblings—one has a PhD, and another is currently pursuing one. Alice represents what Tomas R. Jimenez and Adam L. Horowitz define as having a “hyper-achievement” mindset, where norms are redefined by extreme levels of academic success among Asian Americans. For all of our respondents, a bachelor's degree was a given—the equivalent of a high school degree by “American standards.” Moreover, graduate degrees were seen as an end—a success in and of itself—and were encouraged by parents if their children were pondering a career outside of the STEM fields. Due to this limited definition of success, a

job in finance was viewed as less preferable and created conflict between parents and children. Parents of higher socioeconomic backgrounds preferred their children going into medicine or engineering in particular. They wanted their children to match or surpass their own educational and professional status. The sentiment of these educated parents was verbalized by Erica, who quoted her father as saying, "My kids should be the best that they can," which to Erica meant that she ought to pursue a PhD. Her father further illustrated why a degree and job in medicine or engineering were valuable:

In medicine you treat sick people and they get well. In engineering, you build useful objects. These skills are always necessary and these jobs will be secure.

In opposition to the security and social status of jobs in medicine and engineering, parents were incredulous of what a corporate job could offer and demonstrated a vague understanding of what jobs in the finance sector actually entailed. Despite being college-educated themselves, the majority of our respondents' parents did not work in finance or in large corporations, which contributed to the parents' lack of appreciation of these jobs. To them, finance was nebulous. As Erica put it, "My dad asked, 'You're playing with someone else's money?'" Dave, a thirty-year-old working in finance with a BA, whose parents owned their own business in Taiwan, reflected on his parents' attitude toward his career track:

They just tell me that I have to figure out what I want to do, even though I think I have. But they think I'm putting a lot of time into a job that doesn't pay well. They always comment on how the money is hard-earned and doesn't seem worth it.

Even some working class parents, who were focused on not wanting their children in the manual labor-driven industries they were a part of (such as the garment and restaurant

industries), expressed concerns or tepid support for their children. Despite our respondents fulfilling the "immigrant bargain"—where children take jobs repaying their parents in status, reputations, and wealth—a few noted that it took years, several promotions, and a hefty salary before their parents gave their tacit approval of their career choices.¹²

Thus, despite being a high-paying job and despite the mainstream perceptions of finance being a high-power, high-status industry, finance jobs were not a part of the success frame for Asian parents. Therefore, disagreements between our respondents and their parents on what constituted success oftentimes led to intense negotiations, emotional stress, and further reinforced the respondents' belief that they attained employment and professional success autonomously and through hard work without external help and parental support. Nevertheless, the dialogue between parent and child indicate that familial approval or, at the very least, reconciling different frameworks of success played a role in the decision-making process to pursue a job in finance.

SUCCESS FRAMEWORKS: THE ALLURE OF FINANCE FOR ASIAN AMERICANS

Our respondents established their own definitions of professional success and motivations for seeking a job in finance. Lauren Rivera chronicles why students across elite universities favor jobs in the finance industry, and we found that Asian Americans, just like their non-Asian American peers are drawn to its material perks.¹³ Starting salaries are lucrative and are among the highest for recent college-graduates. With annual bonuses, recent graduates can easily earn between \$80,000 and \$100,000, allowing for a smooth transition into a somewhat "luxurious" lifestyle upon graduation. These jobs provide paths for upward mobility and continuous opportunities for professional development and promotions. They also have an early hiring process. Successful

completion of a summer internship after junior year of college usually leads to a full-time offer come fall semester of senior year. Another avenue for early employment is through campus recruitment during the same time. Thus, despite sharing an appreciation for job security and salary with their parents, the second generation sought this stability through different means. Ally, a twenty-eight-year-old analyst, reflected on her decision to go into finance:

I thought about which jobs could reproduce the standard of living I was accustomed to and the standard of living I envisioned myself having after college—which would also appease my parents. I knew I was good at data analytics and enjoyed working with big data so finance seemed like the obvious choice.

Moreover, the majority of our interviewees were embedded in expansive networks of Asian American friends and peers in college who were pursuing a job in finance or majoring in business or business-related studies. This, combined with a genuine interest in business studies, reinforced a peer culture legitimizing finance as a valuable career option. In addition, similar to the immigrant-parent strategy of establishing ethnic resources and social networks allowing for the sharing of information on how to navigate the American school system, we found that our respondents benefited from information that was passed through their peer networks about campus recruitment events and internship opportunities. Others partook in Asian American business fraternities or made use of on- and off-campus events hosted by Asian American professional organizations, through which they were able to increase their social capital and general knowledge of the finance industry. In other words, they relied on ethnic, specifically Asian American, resources to find leads and pathways to employment. As a result, even individuals who started off with few connections and knew little about

how to get their foot in the door were able to rely on their friends. Here, Dave describes his scramble to find a job:

I panicked senior year of college. I didn't go to [my college's business school], so all these finance kids were a step ahead of me with internships and everything. But I wanted to get into finance. I have friends from [the college's business school], so I got all my information from those friends about what to put on my resume, and I used high school connections as well . . . I didn't have any internships, so I had to rely on connections from Taiwan, like, 'Oh Uncle Liu knows someone, maybe he can help me out.' When it comes to finding jobs it's all about pulling strings, especially for people from Taiwan.

Despite being American-born and identifying as Taiwanese American, Dave identified the importance of co-ethnic ties and connections. The ties to other Asian Americans interested in business were strong enough that for those who were still undecided about their career track up until senior year, finance became the logical option, as so many others around them were going down that path. These respondents got caught up in the job search frenzy that occurred during internship or full-time recruiting season. Feeling the pressure to find an impressive opportunity, finance became a natural and viable option that they pursued by applying to internships and attending career fairs and interviews alongside friends. This also led to further, independent investigations of the resources available to land a job in finance.

Jennifer, a forty-two-year-old Columbia graduate, is such an example. She felt that among Asian American families, "there was only a narrow way of doing things, so that if you didn't follow that path, you were unworthy." Jennifer did not want to be a doctor as her parents wanted and had difficulty deciding on a career, which made her feel incompetent. After observing the activities of her friends and listening to the opinions of others looking for a job in finance, she decided to explore the services available at the career office and received training on interview etiquette. Jennifer then attended receptions sponsored by financial services firms and found she enjoyed discussing job prospects with company representatives. As a result, Jennifer established her own framework of success that viewed finance as an admirable career.

FINDING A JOB: THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Based on their experiences in college, with their peers, and in the career recruitment process, our respondents placed a job in finance as their first choice. There were strong material incentives to join the industry and the allure of finance was reinforced by social circles and networks reaffirming their framework of success. However, due to the majority of our interviewees experiencing dissonance with their parents' expectations and their parents' lack of knowledge of the industry, a common pattern that arose from the interview data was a narrative strongly emphasizing how hard work, individual effort, and excellence in hard skills led to getting a foot in the door and landing entry-level jobs. What these narratives implicitly demonstrated, however, was the crucial role of institutional support and limitations of their own social network.

Overall, the majority of our respondents were able to land jobs that satisfied their personal expectations upon graduating college. This was relatively true even for those looking for jobs during periods of recession (1990s Dot-Com bust, 2001 fall of the Twin Towers, and 2008 Recession). However, when asked how they found their first job out of college, responses usually entailed a detailed account of an incredible amount of work and elaborated on a stressful period in their lives where respondents felt they had to "figure it out" for themselves—emphasizing that they received no material and little emotional support from their parents. Ally, who is a graduate of the University of Rochester, described her arduous job

search during her senior year of college:

There were no [corporate] receptions, because University of Rochester is not a tier 1 school. It's not like Ivies where companies visit the campus . . . but the University of Rochester participated in job fairs across different cities in the country . . . I attended these fairs in DC, Chicago, and then New York . . . you submit your resume prior to the fair, and if they like you, you get to interview with them during that fair. So not only did I get to meet a lot of companies, but I got to interview . . . A lot of the job search was done on my own, by being resourceful, getting information from the career center.

experience demonstrates, depending on the competitiveness of the school, there was variation in the types of opportunities available to students.

For most of our interviewees, their first point of contact with the finance industry was through campus recruiting or career fairs as opposed to personal connections to the industry through acquaintances or family. Most were offered jobs after participating in the on-campus recruiting process during fall and winter of senior year or after completing a summer internship after their junior year. Only two of our interviewees found summer internships with the help of their parents. One other was specifically offered an internship through a minority opportunity program, the Sponsors for Educational

time jobs. These sessions were dominated by financial services firms that also hosted receptions, information sessions, and conducted interviews at top-ranked colleges.

However, what is problematic about our respondents focusing on individual effort is that it downplays the inequalities inherent to the institutionalized support systems available by campus. Not surprisingly, individuals from Ivy League colleges overwhelmingly had positive memories of participating in robust on-campus recruitment, despite simultaneously emphasizing how difficult the process was for them. In addition, those from top-tier schools were more likely to secure employment after summer internships as opposed to waiting for the fall recruitment round during senior year. Hugh, the participant in the minority opportunity program, was confident he would be offered a permanent job after his summer internship. His internship experience included meeting executives through the SEO fellows program as well as meeting other SEO fellows and sharing interview insights with each other. Thus, junior year internships not only provided early exposure to real work experience but also a head start in forging new networks in the corporate world. Individuals from lesser known but nonetheless competitive schools found the job search process to be much more rigorous and exhausting.

In addition, the reliance on career centers and campus-mediated access to companies demonstrate that despite the central role Asian American and peer social networks played in disseminating information about resources and opportunities available to them, there were limitations to this social capital. For example, while in college, few of our respondents knew established professionals who could personally refer them to specific positions or help them along in the interview process. Alice's description of her job search exemplifies how differences in college resources and mechanisms of support pushed her to capitalize on who she knew to

I WAS MOTIVATED BY THE FACT THAT I REALLY NEEDED A JOB. I REMEMBER THOSE [INTERVIEWS] WERE TOUGH BECAUSE THEY WERE CASE STUDIES AND WERE VERY TECHNICAL. THEY GIVE YOU MATH QUESTIONS YOU DON'T EXPECT; GOING INTO THOSE INTERVIEWS, I HAD NO IDEA, ESPECIALLY IN THE BEGINNING, I HAD NO IDEA WHAT I WAS DOING, HOW TO INTERVIEW. I WAS PRETTY CONFUSED, BUT I FIGURED OUT WHAT TO DO.

Ally wanted to clearly communicate that her route to her first job out of college was a product of independently navigating a complex road. However, what most of our respondents mentioned, but rarely valued, were the institutional support systems, such as campus recruitment, career fairs, and career centers set in place to provide access a variety of financial services firms—many of which are powerful players in the industry. And as Ally's

Opportunity (SEO).

Thus, institutional mechanisms of access to employment were crucial in allowing Asian Americans to define their own success frameworks independent of their parents. Most importantly, they were key in operationalizing their aspirations. From the oldest to the youngest interviewees, all remembered stories about campus recruitment and interviewing season for summer internships and full-

find job openings:

I found the job search hard; coming from a smaller liberal arts school; I didn't have the same networks, abilities as people who were at schools closer to or in a major city. I saw myself relying on friends, friends of friends, basically my own networks to find jobs. It was a lot of pressure on myself; me figuring it out on my own. My parents weren't able to support me, which I find is often the case for [White people].

But I wanted to be self-reliant and I wanted to push for a career. I found my first job through a friend of a friend; I'm not sure otherwise how I would have found a job and I also think luck plays a big role. I mean naturally I turned to my career development center at the University; I did use that network, but it really didn't lead to much. The most effective strategy was getting in touch with people through postings of alumni and friends of friends on the university center, on the school's website. I also went to career fairs at school and [nearby colleges]. I had to branch out. I also went on ideally.com and indeed.com.

The social network that I relied on for jobs was like 99.9% Asian, specifically Korean, and I would say those relationships were the most effective in getting leads. I had friends and professors at school who weren't Asian who tried to help me, but in terms of those who had really good and reliable leads, they were Korean, partially because we were closer.

Similar to Ally, Alice was making a point as to how it was through her concerted efforts connecting with ethnic friends that she found her first job out of college. In doing so, she implied her self-reliant road to employment as the more morally just route compared to others who had personal connections. At the same time, Alice downplayed how she felt disadvantaged coming from a small, liberal arts school, which did not have the capacity nor reputation to have its own corporate receptions or recruitment fairs. She felt stretching her own capacities was the correct response to overcoming obstacles. In addition, in maintaining a meritocratic narrative, she racialized the process of the job search by suggesting her White peers often benefited from personal connections to industry insiders, as well as identifying that her co-ethnic networks were most reliable in achieving results due to an affinity toward one another. However, unlike the White peers she referred to, her own connections were useful in finding reliable leads, but not in securing employment. Thus, personal connections proved to be highly useful in locating where the opportunities were, but not necessarily in obtaining them.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The popularity of cultural arguments and frameworks of understanding differences between social groups based on stereotypes has given rise to the assumption that a significant number of Asian Americans obtain jobs in finance as a product of their excellent quantitative skills and natural proclivity toward the industry. The absence of literature and research on how Asian Americans transition between college and the work world has also contributed to the notion that this process is smooth and relatively easy for the children of immigrants who receive ample parental support.

Instead, our research identifies the more intricate and nuanced processes involved in deciding to pursue a career in finance. First, contrary to the expected high levels of parental approval, we found that parents were more likely to be skeptical or unsupportive of their children taking a finance job as it did not fit into their rigid framework of success. Despite most of our respondents obtaining high-paying entry-level jobs in an industry widely acknowledged to be high-power and high-status in the American mainstream, parents were incredulous of finance jobs that only required a bachelor's degree and lacked the prestige of occupations in STEM fields

requiring advanced degrees. Subsequently, disagreements between our respondents and their parents on what constituted success often led to intense negotiations and complicated our respondents' decision-making process in regards to choosing a career in college.

In response to this tension, Asian Americans established their own frames of professional success and motivations for seeking a job in finance. Asian Americans, like their non-Asian American peers in the industry, were drawn to its material benefits. Substantial starting salaries and an early hiring process that oftentimes guaranteed full-time employment before college graduation offered strong incentives of job security and a comfortable lifestyle post-graduation. In addition, due to the embeddedness of Asian Americans in networks of peers who reaffirmed frameworks of success where a finance career was central, finance itself came to possess a certain level of prestige.

Due to the parental conflict arising from different value systems of what constitutes a viable career, young professionals felt strongly that they were able to get their first jobs out of college through individual effort, hard work, and possessing excellent hard skills. However, in doing so the crucial role and differences in institutional support across colleges as well as the limitations of social capital were downplayed.

The institutional mechanisms of access to employment, such as career centers and job fairs, were crucial in allowing Asian Americans to define their own success frameworks independent of their parents and operationalizing their aspirations. However, there were inequalities in the support systems available by campus. Respondents from top-ranked colleges were more likely to be hired for summer internships through on-campus recruitment, others from lesser-known yet academically competitive schools were pushed to pursue opportunities off-campus and found the process more precarious and experienced more unknown

variables.

Finally, despite Asian American networks being a reliable source of information for campus resources and job leads, they did not necessarily have clout in securing employment. The majority of our respondents did not have personal connections to an established industry insider that could influence actual hiring processes, suggesting the limitations of social capital. Therefore, this work not only provides insight into the under-researched topic of Asian Americans in the work place but also raises further questions on how broader mechanisms of stratification operate within institutions of higher education, the labor market, and the interconnectedness between the two.

ENDNOTES

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EMERGENCE OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN ELECTORATE: AWAKENING THE “NEXT SLEEPING GIANT”

BY PAUL ONG, ELENA ONG, AND
JONATHAN ONG

ABSTRACT

As the fastest growing racial population in America, Asian Americans are emerging as the “Next Sleeping Giant” in American politics. We estimate that by the year 2040, Asian American voters will double in number, comprising 7 percent of the electorate. There will be a significant re-composition by nativity and age, along with rapid growth of multi-racial Asian Americans. This growth creates

opportunities to increase political power and challenges to find a common agenda that transcends ethnic and racial differences. Although outcomes cannot be precisely predicted, what will materialize can be shaped by the actions taken individually and collectively.

INTRODUCTION

The Immigration Act and Voting Rights Act enacted during the mid-1960s created what Paul M. Ong, Melany De La Cruz-Viesca, and Don T. Nakanishi call the "Next Sleeping Giant" in American politics, the Asian American electorate.² The ending of racially biased restrictions on immigration has renewed large-scale migration from Asia has made Asian Americans the fastest growing population in recent years. Over the past fifty years, both of these acts transformed America's social and political landscape. For example, in 1965, Asian Americans were less than 1 percent of the nation's population. Today, Asian Americans comprise 6 percent of the nation's population, and equally important, there are more than 4,000 Asian American elected and appointed officials.³ Unquestionably, both the population and the number of public officials have the potential to continue growing.

To get a sense of what the future could offer, we have developed projections of the number of Asian American registered voters. Our major finding is that their number will likely to double to about 12 million by 2040, pushing them from 4 percent to 7 percent of the electorate. Moreover, they will be the fastest growing electorate over the next quarter century. This phenomenal growth is driven by larger demographic dynamics. The US Census Bureau projects that between 2015 and 2040, the number of Asian Americans, including Asians alone and those in combination with another race, will increase by 74 percent, making them the fastest growing demographic group (by race and Non-Hispanic origin) in the United States.⁴ Equally important is

the shift in demographic composition. Naturalized immigrants will continue to comprise the majority of Asian American voters, but US-born voters will grow at a faster rate, with US-born registered voters accounting for a majority of the net increase.⁵ Differential growth will be particularly noticeable among younger adults, creating a generational age gap between US-born Asian Americans and most foreign-born Asian Americans among voters. These age and birthplace (nativity) factors, along with a more rapid growth of (younger and more) multi-racial Asian Americans, suggest a diversity, and potential divergence, of interests among subgroups of Asian American voters.

Our projections build on the ones produced by the US Bureau of the Census but are unique relative to other projections of the Asian American population and the Asian American electorate.⁶ Instead of using a simple linear extrapolation for all Asian Americans, collapsing Asian Americans with "others," or reporting only for "Asians Alone," this project utilizes demographic projection techniques that enhance the US Census Bureau's most recent 2014 National Population Projections.⁷ The project also takes into account differences in racial classifications⁸ and utilizes statistical models to project the absolute and relative size of Asian American eligible voters and Asian American registered voters.⁹ As with all population projections, ours is based on past patterns to inform assumptions of future trends of migration flows and vital statistics. Many of these factors change slowly, thus are relatively stable over time (e.g., birth and death rates). Others have a higher degree of uncertainty. Future international migration in particular is problematic, and highly subject to foreign affairs, national security and politics. Given these inherent uncertainties, the projections should be viewed as a possible scenario, rather than a guarantee of what will materialize. It is a necessary starting point for planning for the future.

The projected growth of the Asian

American electorate raises fundamental questions about emerging political challenges and opportunities. For example, are there strategies to increase registration rates beyond what is currently projected? Are there strategies to increase voter turn-out rates? Considering that Asian Americans have a low voter participation rate, how can culturally and linguistically appropriate policies and programs be leveraged to increase higher naturalization and voter registration rates to further advance civic engagement and political participation? Among voters, how will the compositional shift by age and nativity shape concerns and priorities? Could there be a generational-divide on social and economic issues? Given the growing number of Asian American voters, will it be possible to have political candidates and/or agenda that can unite Asian Americans into an effective voting bloc? Where will Asian Americans—particularly multiracial Asian Americans - fit into the nation's political landscape when one out two Americans is a person of color, and one in ten Americans is AAPI? Beyond the pan-ethnic question—as American becomes "majority minority" or "minority majority" - will Asian Americans identify with, and unite, with other people of color?

The authors address some of these issues in the last sections of the paper, using our opinions and commentaries from community leaders and scholars of color¹⁰. As with many long-term planning exercises, envisioning the future is inherently guided by normative values, about beliefs of what is desirable and what defines a "good society." Most of the time, those values are implicit, reflecting those that are currently dominant. For this paper, it is important to be transparent, to layout the underlying ideology when discussing the potential implications of the projections of the Asian American electorate. For us, it is equally important to build political power that honors the historical civil rights gains that have made the growth of

the Asian American electorate possible over the last half century, and into the next quarter century.

BACKGROUND

This section presents the projected growth of Asian Americans from 2015 to 2040, and its composition by key subpopulations, including those registered to vote. Over the next quarter century, the Asian American population (Asians alone and Asians in combination with other races) will grow by 74 percent, from 20.5 million to 35.7 million. This increase is more than three times that of the US total population, and greater than any other major racial and ethnic group (See Figure 1). By 2040, nearly one in ten Americans will be Asian American.

SEE FIGURE 1

The voting age Asian American population (those eighteen years old and older) will also grow by 80 percent, compared to Hispanics who will grow by 77 percent, non-Hispanic Blacks by 38 percent, and non-Hispanic Whites at 1 percent (See Figure 2). The growth rate is particularly high for Asians of mixed race, although this due to their relatively small numbers in 2015.

SEE FIGURE 2

Figure 3 reports the number of Asians alone and multiracial Asians (mixed Asians) in the United States in 2015 and the projected numbers for year 2040. The Asian-alone segment will continue to be a large majority of the total Asian American population, as well as the Asian American voting age population. However, the number of multiracial Asians will have a much higher growth rate. This group will grow by 130 percent, compared to 75 percent for Asians alone. Among adults of voting age, multiracial Asians will grow at a rate of 104 percent, significantly higher than the 69 percent rate for Asians alone.

SEE FIGURE 3

FIGURE 1

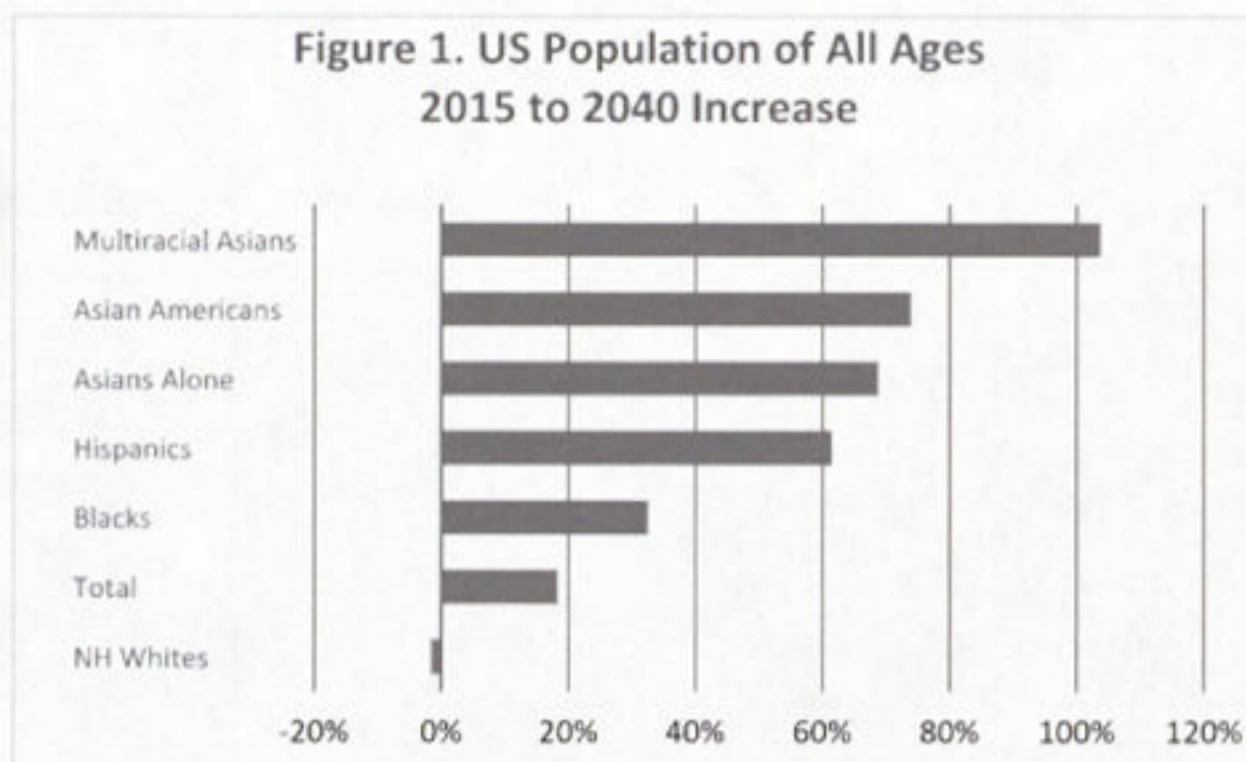


FIGURE 2

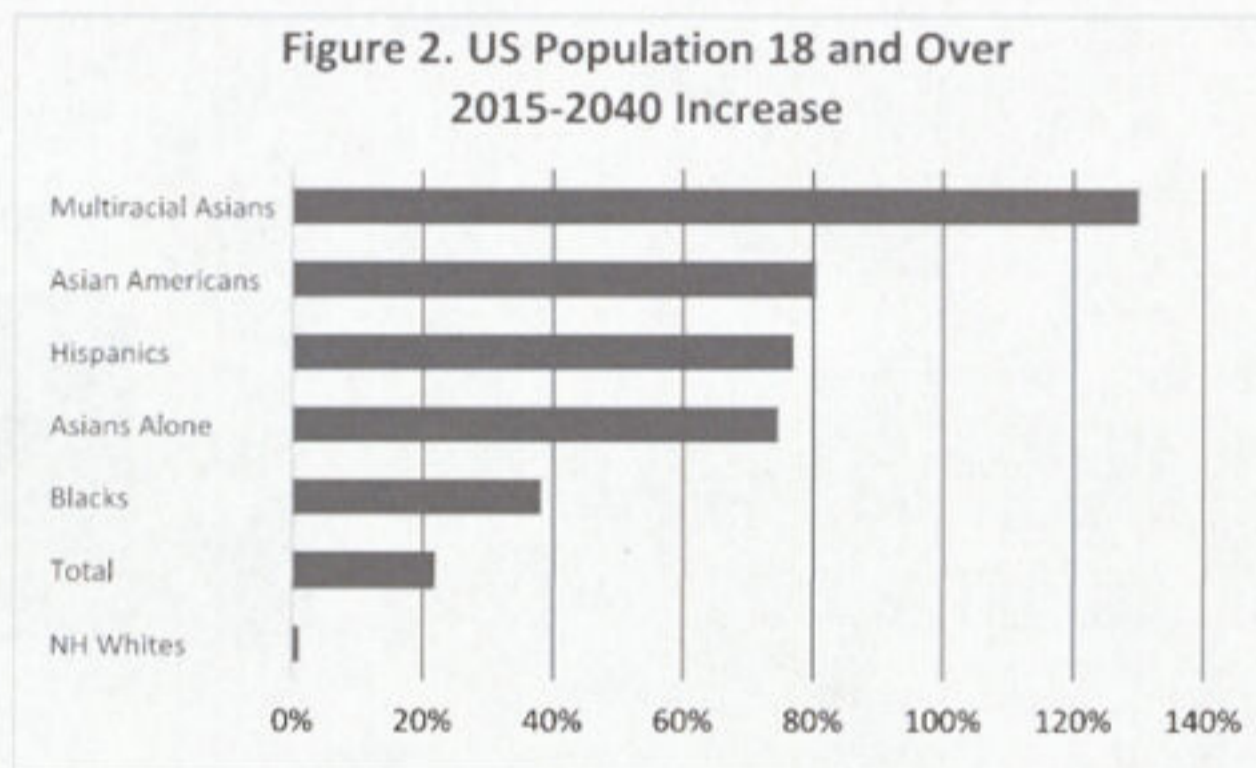
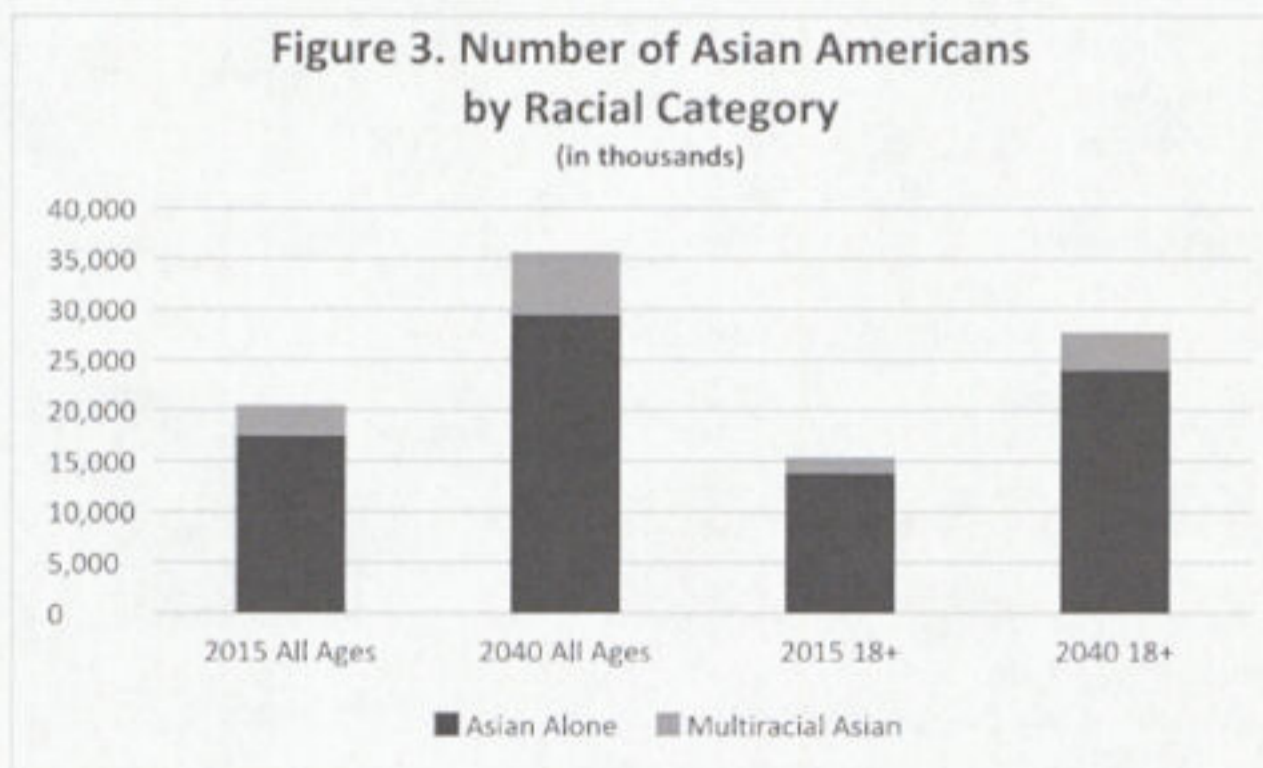


FIGURE 3



The rapid growth of the Asian American population (74 percent) fuels an even faster growth rate among Asian American eligible voters (92 percent)¹¹, and an even greater rate among Asian American registered voters (107 percent).¹² According to our projections, Asian American registered voters will grow from 5.9 million in 2015, to 12.2 million by 2040. By 2040, one in fifteen registered voters will be Asian American. The increase will make Asian Americans one of the fastest growing electorates in America, by major racial and ethnic groups.¹³ (See Figure 4).

SEE FIGURE 4

There will be important shifts in the demographic composition of the Asian American electorate by age and nativity. As reported in Figure 5, Asian American registered voters who are naturalized immigrants will continue to be in the majority, though the number of US-born registered voters will grow much more rapidly, bringing them much closer to parity with those who are naturalized citizens.¹⁴ In 2015, nearly two-thirds of Asian American registered voters were foreign-born, but a quarter of a century later, only slightly more than half will be.

SEE FIGURE 5

The composition by age groups of Asian American voters will change moderately (See Figure 6). In 2015, 29 percent of Asian American registered voters were eighteen to thirty-four years old, 38 percent were thirty-five to fifty-four years old, and 33 percent were fifty-five and older. By 2040,¹⁵ 25 percent of Asian American registered voters will be eighteen to thirty-four years old, 38 percent will be thirty-five to fifty-four, and 37 percent will be fifty-five and over. Those fifty-five and over will grow by 132 percent, making them the fastest growing Asian American voter age segment. As a consequence of the shift in age composition, the median age of Asian American registered voters will increase

FIGURE 4

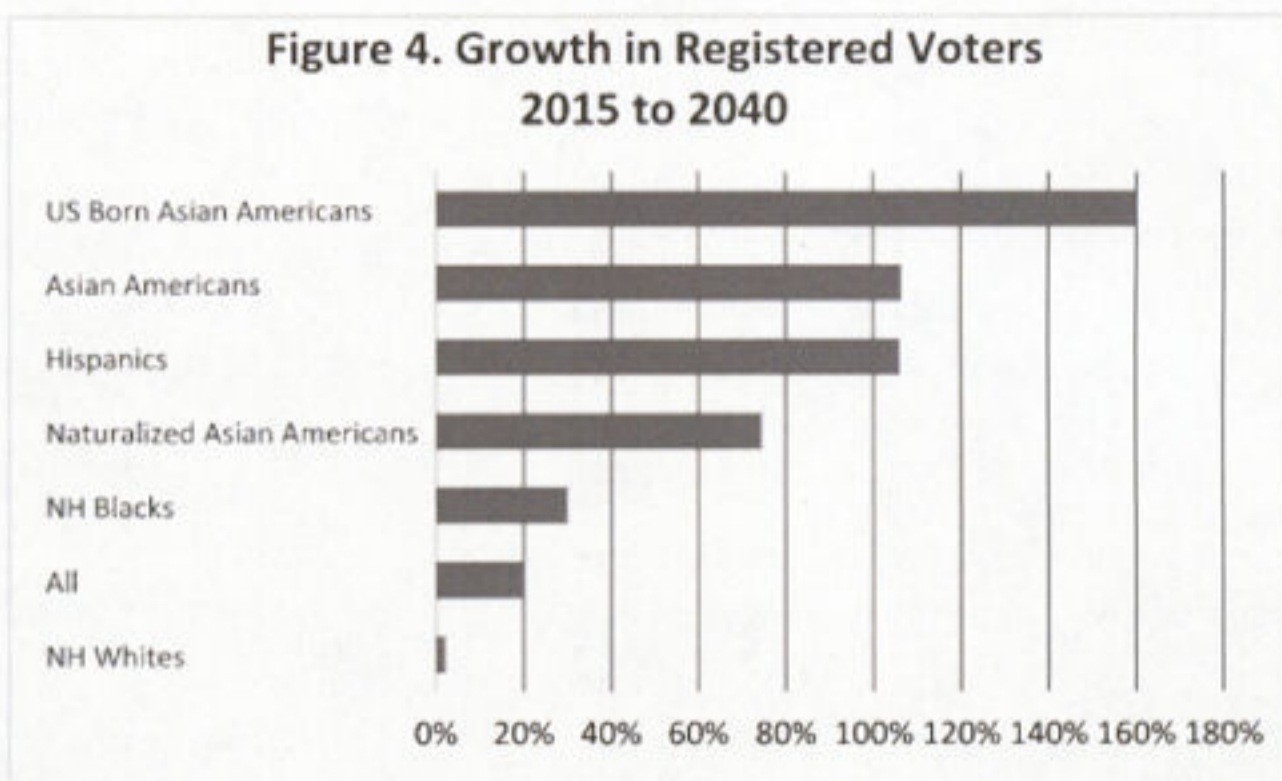


FIGURE 5

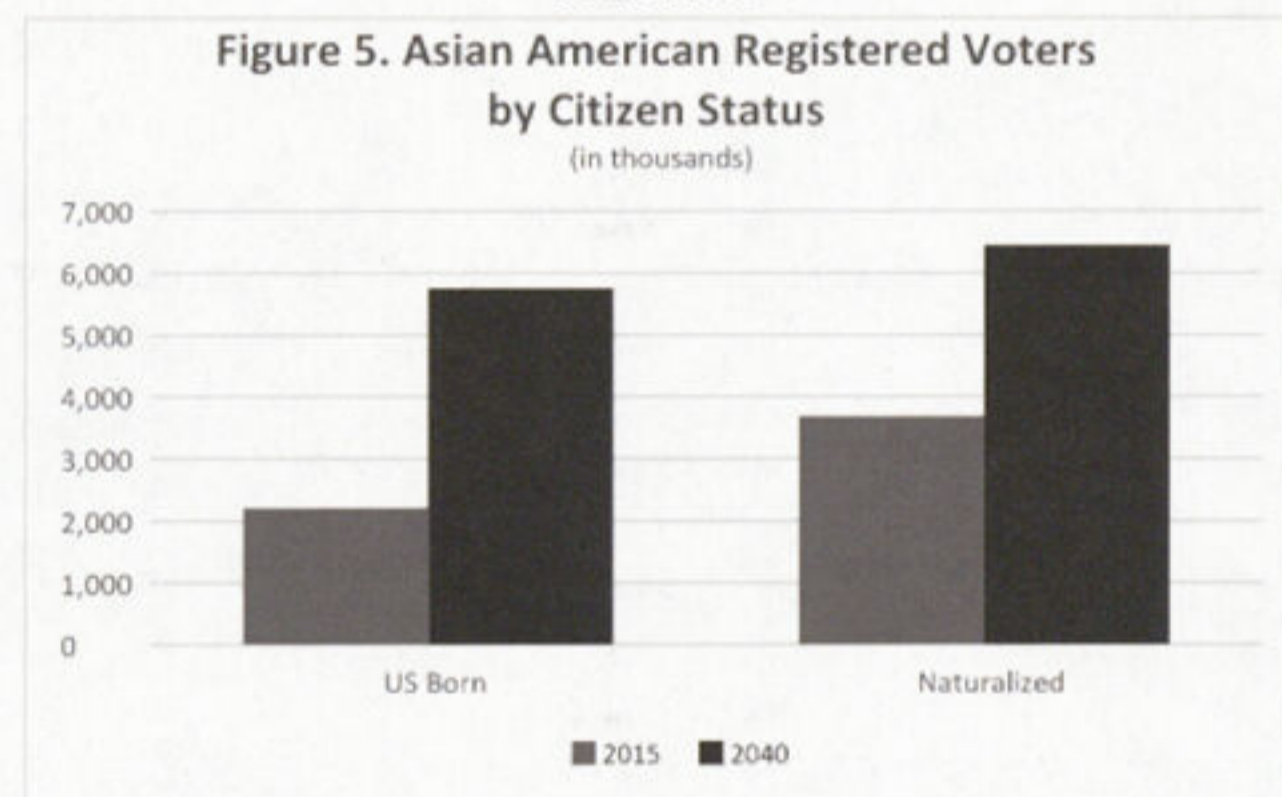
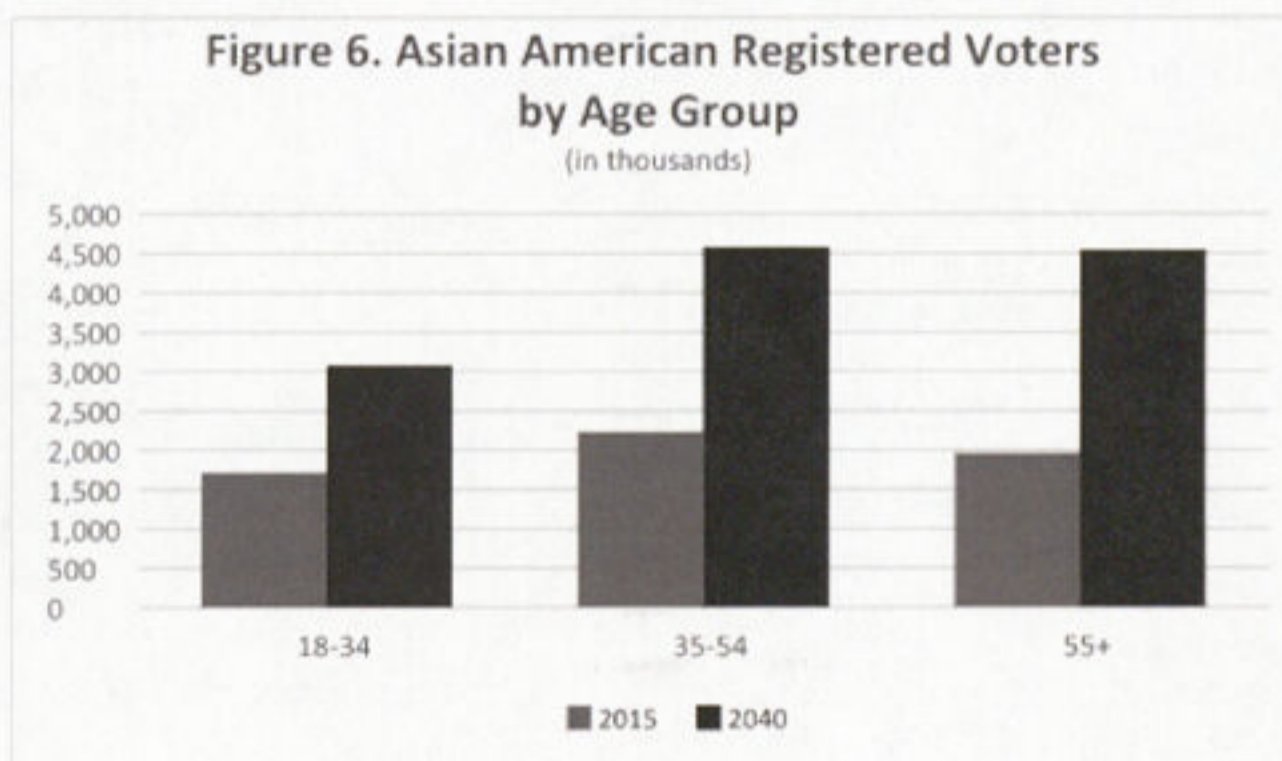


FIGURE 6

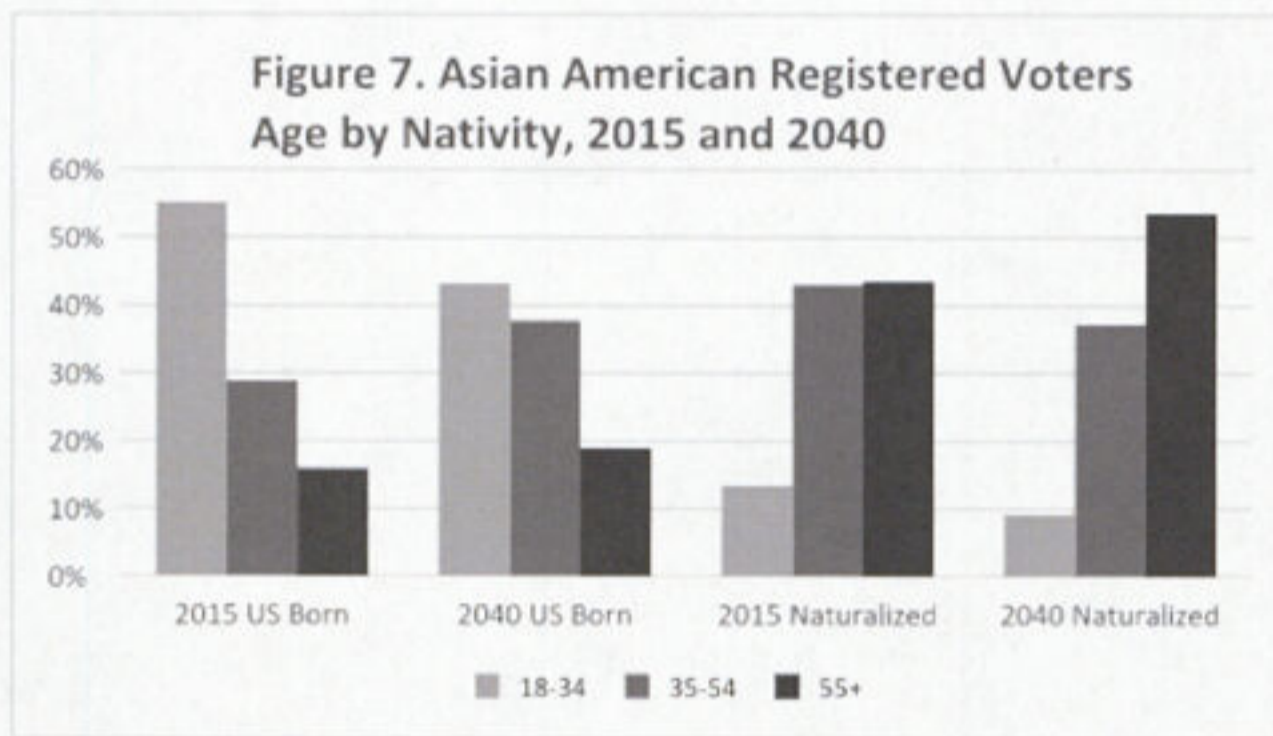


slightly, from forty-five years old in 2015 to forty-eight in 2040. The median age will increase from thirty-three to thirty-seven years old among the US-born, and from fifty-two to fifty-six years old among the foreign-born.

That's because there will be an 160 percent increase among US-born Asian American registered voters, which is more than twice that of the 75 percent increase among naturalized Asian American registered voters. In fact, US-born Asian Americans will make up a majority of the net increase in registered voters between 2015 and 2040 . The different growth rates translate into a sizeable re-composition of the vote by nativity.

Disaggregating age groups by nativity reveals considerable demographic differences, as seen in Figure 7. In 2015, US-born young adults (eighteen to thirty-four) constituted a significant majority, 56 percent, of US-born Asian American registered voters, while those who were middle-aged (thirty-five to fifty-four) constituted 29 percent, and those who were older than fifty-five constituted 16 percent of US-born Asian American registered voters. By 2040, however, young US-born registered voters (eighteen to thirty-four), will constitute only 43 percent of US-born Asian American registered voters, while 38 percent will be middle aged and 19 percent will be fifty-five or more years old.

FIGURE 7



The naturalized foreign-born segment is quite different. It is older, and comprised disproportionately of Asians who came to the United States as a result of the Immigration & Naturalization Act of 1965, and the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1975. In 2015, only 44 percent of all naturalized Asian American registered voters were fifty-five and over, but by 2040, 53 percent

FIGURE 8

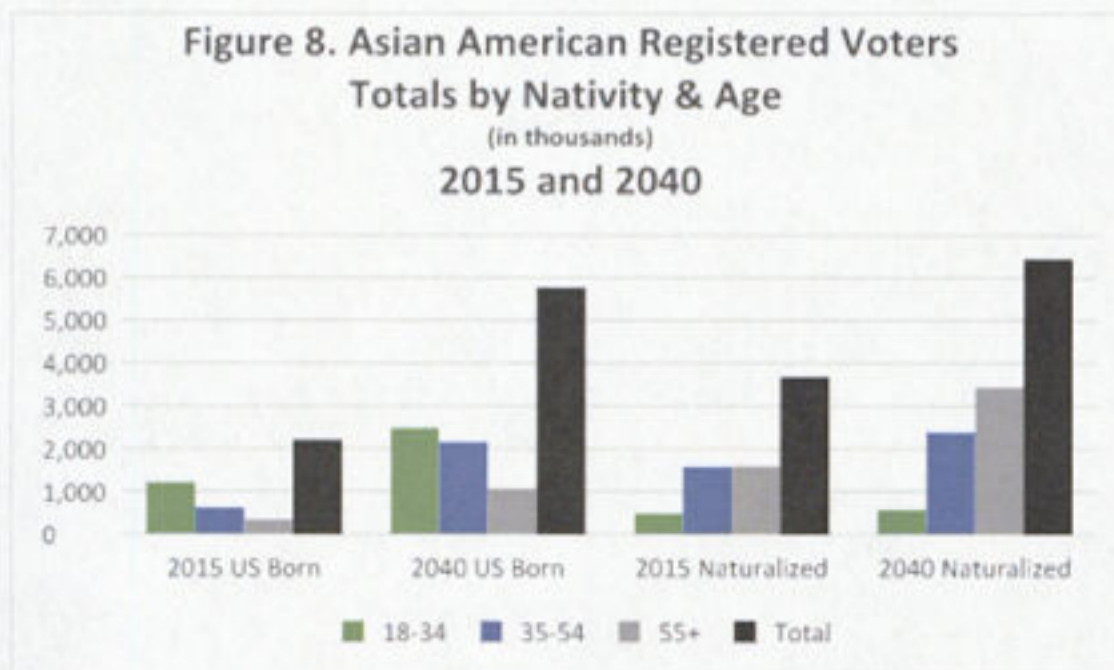
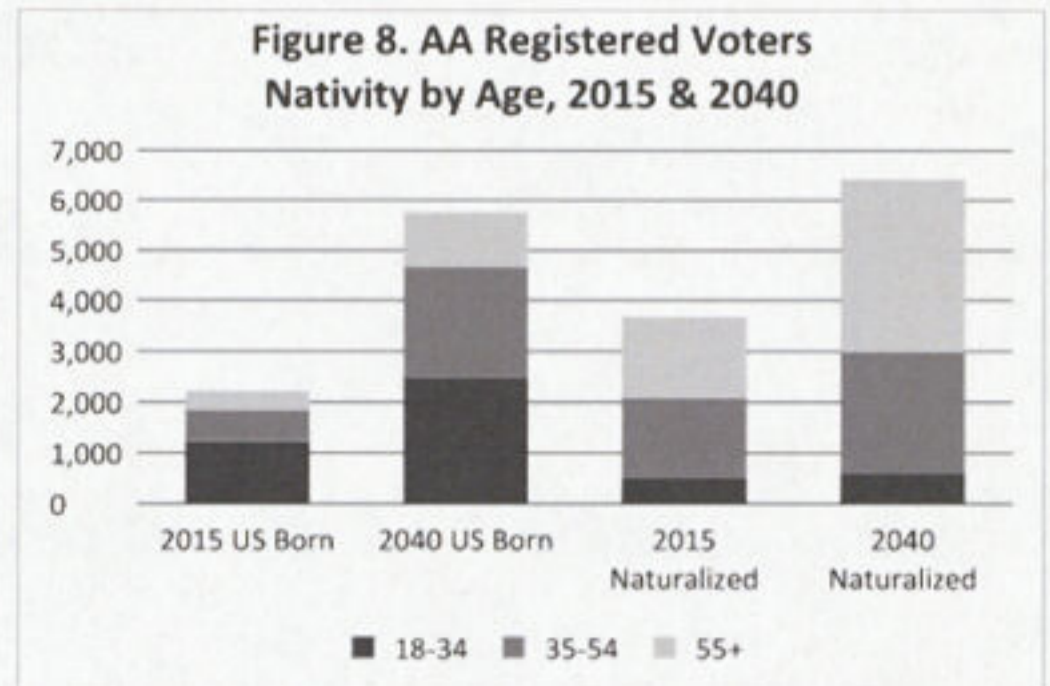


FIGURE 8



will be. During this period, the youth share will decline from 13 percent to 9 percent, and the middle-aged share will decline from 43 percent to 37 percent.

Figure 8 provides additional details by reporting the absolute number of Asian American registered voters. The overall contours of the distribution by age and the change over time are the same as those in Figures 6 and 7. Figure 8, however, identifies which groups will emerge as key segments for political outreach and voter contact. For example, the largest net increase will be among younger US-born Asian Americans and older naturalized Asian Americans. Because of differences in each segment's concerns and priorities, along with cultural differences among the groups, outreach efforts will have to customize the message and means of communication for each segment.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ASCENT IN THE ASIAN AMERICAN ELECTORATE 2040

This section explores some of the possible profound political implications associated with the projected rapid growth of the Asian American registered voters. There is much truth to the cliché that demographics are not destiny. There is room to maneuver, to chart a path to the future consistent with Martin Luther King's "arc of the moral universe . . . [that] . . . bends towards justice." To become a meaningful force, it is critical that we maximize Asian American political engagement, formulate a thoughtful progressive agenda, and establish the institutions and practices that move us from demographic potential to real political power. We must identify both the emerging opportunities and challenges.

We start by noting that the projected 7 percent of all registered voters is based on current patterns of naturalization and registration rates, which leaves considerable room for improvement. Asian Americans currently have a low voter registration rate, and there are thousands of established immigrants who have not yet gained citizenship. In other words, there are opportunities to change naturalization and registration rates, which could further increase the number of future Asian American voters. This is a point also made by Mee Moua, President and Executive Director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice:

These population projections are informative and should be used as a guide when we talk about allocating resources to support and maximize our community's civic participation. If we value an informed citizenry, these numbers imply that we would want to make sure that our outreach and public education efforts include language and community access as a core strategy both in reaching our older, foreign-born citizens, as well as the younger, US-born populations.

Fundamental is the principle that community-based organizations and advocacy groups should allocate resources to cultivate future generations. This will require diversifying the efforts geographically. Janelle Wong, director of the Asian American Studies Program, University of Maryland College Park, states:

To make growth in population and registration count decisively, however, community-based and advocacy organizations should devote resources to the places where the Asian American vote is not only growing, but also most likely to be influential (fast growing population and small margins of victory for the candidates; Nevada, North Carolina, Virginia are good targets).

While it is easy to lay out such strategies for the future, it remains an open question as to whether community and advocacy groups have the ability to commit resources to programs that may produce benefits in some distant future. The reality is that most have difficulties in adequately addressing today's demands. At best, most plan for a few years into the future, despite the need to develop a blueprint for AAPIs in 2040.

There is also the challenge of building the political institutions and

pipelines to maximize the opportunities to elect Asian Americans, as well as other non-Asian American candidates who will champion Asian American issues. Because the population will not be evenly distributed throughout the country, the greatest opportunities are in cities and regions where Asian Americans will be heavily concentrated, as noted by Linda Trinh Vo, 2015 President of the Association for Asian American Studies:

In concentrated areas, the growth in the Asian American voter electorate could parallel the number of Asian Americans running for office and winning elections. Those winning office can encourage, directly and indirectly, other Asians to run for election by showing that it's possible for an ethnic candidate to get elected, or by endorsing and mentoring junior candidates. There are already cases in which the majority of the viable candidates running for office are Asian Americans at the school board, city council, and county supervisory races, which have resulted in majority Asian American members. These local elections are crucial for Asian American politicians to acquire political experience, gain name recognition, and increase their networks, a foundation that helps propel them into state and national office. District elections, rather than at-large elections, are proven to be beneficial to ethnic politicians, since these newcomers to the political process can rely on ethnic voters, donors, and volunteers, and candidates can focus their energy and funds within a concentrated area.

To maximize the potential created by the growing number of Asian American voters, political organizations must expand the pipeline infrastructure to nurture future political leaders.

National politics for Asian Americans will also change because they can make the margin of difference in tight presidential races, particularly in swing vote states where there are sizable shares of Asian Americans. Republicans and Democrats are just beginning to understand the significance of the Asian American swing vote. At 7 percent of the vote in 2040, political candidates will want to court the Asian American vote. According to S. Floyd Mori, CEO and president of the Asian Pacific American Institute on Congressional Studies:

"Asian Americans are a very fluid voting base and every election is a new opportunity to court the Asian American vote. Cultivating Asian American voters and gaining their loyalty is pivotal to a political party's future. Securing the Asian American vote in areas with large concentration, and in swing vote states, will be a political game changer. Political parties should also cultivate candidates who can appeal to, be responsive to, and turn out, the Asian American vote."

To do so, candidates will need to understand that the Asian American vote is not a monolith. They, along with local candidates, need to understand Asian American values, beliefs and opinions.

Unfortunately, identifying a core set of future concerns and priorities is difficult given the evolving composition of the Asian American population. For example, foreign-born Asian American voters may carryover the cultural values and concerns of their native countries. As a result, international relations and foreign policy, international trade and finance, education and immigration could be a high priority. Recently naturalized Asian American voters may have greater need for in-language registration forms, town halls, election booklets and ballots. In contrast, second, and subsequent, generations may take their right to vote for granted, and not turn out to vote unless there is an issue that resonates with them. Second generation Asian Americans share values with the US mainstream, and the issues that are likely to turn them out to vote, are issues related to equality, the environment, health care/elder care affordability, college affordability, affordable housing, bullying, medical debt and credit card debt.

The emergence of a multi-racial Asian America (those who are Asian American in combination with another race) further adds to the population's complex diversity. As mentioned before, this group will experience much a higher growth rate than for Asian Americans alone, although the former

will still be a small minority. Nonetheless, their increasing presence resonates with a larger transformation of inter-racial relations in the United States, one that is embodied in a growing acceptance of inter-racial marriages and families. At the same time, the emergence of this group may require a re-definition of who is Asian American. As Professor Jerry Kang, UCLA's vice chancellor for equity, diversity and inclusion, reminds us, racial categories are socially constructed, subject to collective action:

To say something is a social construction is ultimately to remind us that we have a choice. 'Asian American' is a concept, experience, identity that is constructed. That means we have a choice. One of the goals of thought leaders, politicians, academics, and activists is to help inform, construct, motivate, constitute, inspire, and critique this identity.

While the growing numbers of multi-racial Asian Americans (along with the growing number of more acculturated second and third generation Asian Americans) provide an opportunity to re-define group identity, they also offer an interesting possibility, one that could be aligned with a "New Blended Majority." Professor Manuel Pastor, director of USC's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, sees potential in this group:

One of the fascinating sub-stories in the data is the rise of multi-racial Asians—that is, those who claim not just Asian heritage but find themselves squarely in what the authors call the 'Blended New Majority.' There is a suggestion that this is a group that might have a particular advantage in forging and sustaining bridges between communities by dint of their own mixed backgrounds.

It remains to be seen if this potential will be actualized.

Given the growing differences by age and nativity, along with ethnicity and socioeconomic class, diversity can become a major barrier to creating a common pan-ethnic

political agenda that unites Asian Americans into an effective and cohesive voting bloc. As Melany De La Cruz-Viesca, assistant director of UCLA Asian American Studies Center, notes:

Recent studies have indicated that Southeast Asian ethnic groups such as Hmong, Cambodians, and Laotians have higher rates of poverty, lower income, and lower educational attainment rates--a very different experience than the six largest Asian subgroups. The lumping of all Asian American ethnic groups under the aggregate 'Asian' category masks a high degree of variation in social and economic status across these subgroups. From 2000 to 2010, the growth of the Asian American population was driven primarily by immigration. This was evidenced by the 2010 Census including three new Asian subgroup categories: Bhutanese, Burmese, and Nepalese. The US Census Bureau now reports data on 23 different Asian ethnic groups. Ethnicity, along with nativity and many other demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, mixed-race, class) will have major implications on whom will represent the Asian American Electorate in 2040.

The political complexity of cultural and class diversity raises an important concern as articulated by Professor Emeritus Don Nakanishi, former director of UCLA's Asian American Studies Center.

... is it realistic to have such a positive and largely monolithic and linear vision of the Asian American political future? Can we assume that most of the extremely diverse sectors and groups of Asian America will march together under the same banner of Pan-Asian American unity, share common political interests, and generally cooperate and support one another rather than compete against each other?

Developing a common pan-ethnic agenda will be challenging, but it could also be very beneficial.

Another question is whether Asian Americans will become a part of the "old majority" comprised of

non-Hispanic whites, as implied by some social scientists, or become part of the "new majority," which includes African Americans, American Indians, Latinos, and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. According to Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., former dean of UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, much work is needed to overcome hurdles:

For some time now pundits and scholars have theorized about the potential for interethnic political coalitions. Much of this work, however, was based on Black and Latino efforts to work together towards a common political agenda. It has been only recently that researchers have included Asian Americans in the coalition paradigm. And much of that work focused on particular case studies or data that did not capture the surge in Asian American populations . . . the activation of a sense of group consciousness depends on the specifics of a given political environment. In other words, in contexts where issues are of central importance (e.g., immigration, affirmative action), Asian Americans are more likely to be motivated to participate in politics. This can lead to higher rates of coalition politics (pan-ethnic or otherwise), on one hand, but on the other it may decrease the likelihood of joining a broader coalition because the interests of Asian Americans are not simpatico with that of other minority groups.

If Asian Americans can solve or transcend racial and ethnic differences, it might be possible for Asian Americans to have even greater political influence and greater social impact.

A quarter century may seem very far away, but the individual and collective actions we take today will shape and transform the future. Inaction means we let others determine how the demographic trajectory will translate into political outcomes. The grand challenge is whether Asian Americans will achieve the political potential inherent in the demographic trajectory—in other words, will we re-define the narrative and create our own destiny? While we can put forth possible ideas, ideas are only 5 percent of the solution; 95 percent is perspiration. Indeed, implementation is critical. We need to implement strategies and policies like naturalization and registration drives, build the capacity of community and advocacy groups, expand the pipeline of political candidates, and raise political voice to ensure accountability by public officials. This will require hard work, vision, engagement, collaboration, and tenacity. We should not seek influence just for the sake of power. We should champion Asian American concerns and priorities, and not be trapped by narrow group interest. We must transcend differences, and promote the greater good and social justice. The choice is ours to make. But make no mistake, Asian Americans have benefitted from the fruits of the civil right movement that eliminated racial bias and barriers in immigration and voting laws. This is a debt that ought to be repaid over the next quarter century as we awaken the Asian American electorate, the "Next Sleeping Giant" in American politics.¹⁶

ENDNOTES

1 Paul Ong conceptualized the projection project and led the overall modeling, Elena Ong led the effort to interpret the political consequences of the projections, and Jonathan Ong assembled the required data and helped refine the methodology and run the population models.

2 Paul M. Ong, Melany De La Cruz-Viesca, and Don T. Nakanishi, "Awakening the New "Sleeping Giant?": Asian American Political Engagement," *AAPI Nexus*, 6(1):1-10, Spring 2008.

<http://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/asian-american-voters-increase-52574>

3 Don T. Nakanishi and James Lai. *National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac, Fifteenth Edition (2014-2015)*. UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2015. <http://www.aasc.ucla.edu/aascpress/books/pa15th.aspx>

4 Unless otherwise noted, Asian American refers to the inclusive category of Asians alone and Asians in combination with another race.

5 This includes those born in the US, and those born abroad to US citizens.

6 Ruy Teixeira, William H. Frey and Robert Griffin. "States of Change. The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate, 1974-2060." February 2015. Center for American Progress.

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Taeku Lee. "2014 Midterms: Patterns and Paradoxes in Voting Among Asian Americans." Brookings 2014 Midterm Election Series. October 29, 2014. www.brookings.edu/blogs/fixgov/posts/2014/10/29-2014-midterms/

7 US Census Bureau (2014), "2014 National Population Projections," <https://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2014.html>.

The US Census Bureau (2014) reports age-specific projections by nativity only for Asian Americans alone. Our projections supplement those projections with ones for multiracial Asian Americans to produce counts for an inclusive count of both Asian Americans alone and Asian Americans in combination with another race.

8 The project also accounts for the differences in the racial/ethnic categories used for the Bureau's population projection models and the categories used for other Bureau data sources, such as the decennial census and the American Community Survey. The projections' categories are consistent with those used by the US National Center for Health Statistics. For a discussion on the differences, see:

Ingram DD, Parker JD, Schenker N, Weed JA, Hamilton B, Arias E, Madans JH. United States Census 2000 population with bridged race categories. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 2(135). 2003.

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged_race.htm

9 A person must be 18 years or older, and citizenship by birth or naturalization to be eligible to register. For discussion on the stages that ultimately determines the rate of voter registration among Asian Americans, see:

<http://bit.ly/1TmsMU0>

10 The selected commentaries are based on private correspondences between the authors and the contributors, published here with permission to use their statements for this project. Full comments are available from the authors.

11 The multivariate logistic models that account for naturalization rates by age, nativity and years in the United States, and multivariate logistic models account for voter registration rates by age and nativity and for presidential and non-presidential elections. Micro-level data from the 2011-2013 American Community Survey are used to estimate the naturalization model. Description of that data can be found at http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/public_use_microdata_sample/. Micro-level data from the 2010 and 2012 November voter supplement file of the Current Population Survey, Description of that data can be found at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/>.

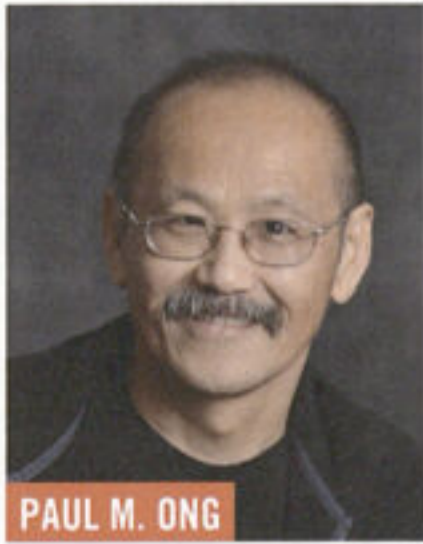
12 The differences in growth rates are due to changes in the composition of the Asian American population by age, nativity and years in the United States. For example, older adults tend to register at a higher rate, so an aging population would tend to have more registered voters.

13 The projections for groups other than Asian Americans are adjusted for by age category, and age category and nativity for Hispanics.

14 For this report, the category "US-born" also includes a small number of individuals born abroad to parents who are US citizens.

15 Growth rate is the increase divided by base. Net increase is the difference between the projected and base. Thus the US-born share is the net increase of US-born divided by net increase of all Asian American registered voters.

16 The rapid growth of the Asian American will have other ramifications beyond the political sphere. A forthcoming 2016 special issue of UCLA's AAPI Nexus explores the social, cultural, economic and policy implications.



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“BUT IN THE SOUTH, WHERE ASIAN AMERICAN POPULATIONS ARE SMALL, THERE IS LESS PERCEIVED RISK OF DISPLACEMENT OF WHITE LABOR. AS A RESULT, IT MAY HAVE BEEN SEEN AS LESS THREATENING TO WHITE INTERESTS TO ALLOW GOVERNORS HALEY AND JINDAL TO SUCCEED AT A HIGH LEVEL. THERE WERE NOT PROVERBIAL FLOODGATES FOR HALEY AND JINDAL TO OPEN, AND THUS THE THREAT OF THEIR SUCCESS TO THE WHITE POWER STRUCTURE IS SUFFICIENTLY CABINED SO AS TO BE NONTHREATENING.”

COVERING FOR, AND THROUGH, CONSERVATISM: BOBBY JINDAL & NIKKI HALEY

MISHA TSUKERMAN

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in US history, the American mainland has two Asian American governors at the same time.^{1,2} What is even more notable is that Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley are both Indian-Americans, conservative Republicans, and come from states with small Asian American populations.^{3,4} Between these two governors, and popular right-wing pundits like Michelle Malkin and Dinesh D’Souza, Asian American conservatives are taking an increasing role in the political life of our nation, despite the fact that Asian Americans by and large vote for the Democratic Party and skew toward more liberal politics.⁵ What explains these apparent outliers?

This paper will seek to explore how the American Right and Republican Party view Asian Americans, where Asian Americans fit in the dominant black/white paradigm, and how Asian Americans can provide cover for racist policies and rhetorical counterarguments to the modern welfare state. This paper will then seek to situate the legacy of Asian Americans in American politics by examining

the life of Dalip Singh Saund, a Sikh congressman from California, and the parallels between the Mississippi Chinese who were imported to the Mississippi Delta to replace newly emancipated blacks, and who eventually became complicit with the white power structure. With this foundation in place, the paper will next turn to Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley and seek to answer two key questions: First, why has the Republican Party, a party associated with whiteness and nativism come to embrace them? Second, how have they chosen to present themselves to appeal to their overwhelmingly white (and likely nativist) constituents and followers?

BROUGHT INTO THE FOLD: HOW THE RIGHT VIEWS ASIAN AMERICANS AND WHAT IT WANTS FROM THEM

The Republican Party knows it has a demographic problem.^{6,7} The Republican electoral base is getting older and whiter in a country that is getting younger and more diverse. The Asian American community, while numerically smaller than the Latino and Black communities, is the fastest growing minority group in the nation.⁸ This is significant not because Asian Americans are an electoral majority unto themselves in most districts, but as Chairman Emeritus of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Congressman Mike Honda stated, “[a]s the fastest growing ethnic community in the country, we are the margin of victory.”⁹ It is a common adage in the political world that to win an election you need “fifty plus one,” meaning one must capture 50 percent of the vote plus only one more vote, Asian Americans, even in relatively small numbers can be that vote.

Republicans lost the White House in 2008 and 2012 to a Democratic Coalition that better reflects our future demography.^{10,11} Asian American support for President Barack Obama actually rose from 62 percent in 2008 to 73 percent in 2012.¹² Though Republicans remain strong in many states, the party’s outlook to capture the presidency in 2016 is bleaker than ever if Republicans are unable to “build a bigger tent” among younger voters and voters of color.¹³

In pursuit of this goal, the GOP has sought to reach out to the Asian American community by launching the Asian Republican Coalition (ARC) in 2014. Interestingly (or perplexingly) defined the group’s membership as “open to all Americans, including Asian Americans and those of us like [ARC Vice-Chairman Thomas Britt] who are not ethnically Asian but have spent twenty years living in Hong Kong.” This affiliation also “includes people related to Asian Americans, who visit or live in Asia, are studying an Asian language or dating an Asian American.”¹⁴ This is comical, if not insulting, and implicitly assumes that “open to all Americans” would not include Asian Americans by default. Dating an Asian American does not give one the lived experience of being a person with Asian ethnic heritage, and all its attendant macro and micro aggressions.

Given these ham-fisted attempts, it bears examining exactly who the Republicans think Asian Americans are, why they believe Asian Americans will be interested in joining their party, and what they hope Asian Americans can do for them beyond simply voting into office.

WHY THE REPUBLICAN PARTY THINKS ASIAN AMERICANS WILL JOIN AND WHY THEY HAVEN’T

Republican rationales for why Asian Americans would make “natural Republicans” are well worn in modern political discourse and essentially restate the model minority myth.^{15,16} ARC Chairman John Ying states: “We very strongly believe there’s a very good fit between what the party traditionally has been about and what I think will drive a comprehensive Asian American community.” Ying believes those “values include a strong work ethic, a focus on family, emphasis on education, and a strong belief in entrepreneurship and personal freedom.”¹⁷ New York Times columnist Thomas B. Edsall writes “[i]n some ways, Asian-American voters, combining personal wealth, entrepreneurial success, high incomes,

traditional family values and a strong work ethic, would seem to be ideal recruits for the more conservative political party.”¹⁸ Charles Murray of the conservative think tank, the American Enterprise Institute, puts it most clearly:

It’s not just that the income, occupations, and marital status of Asians should push them toward the right. Everyday observation of Asians around the world reveal them to be conspicuously entrepreneurial, industrious, family-oriented, and self-reliant. If you’re looking for a natural Republican constituency, Asians should define “natural.”¹⁹

What is to explain the falsity of these prognostications? Perhaps it is that Asian Americans perceive and resent that to Republicans, and conservatives more generally, they are not viewed as genuine Americans. A number of recent studies have put data to this point.²⁰ Essentially, Asian Americans are regularly made to feel like foreigners in the United States through racial microaggressions such as the infamous question, “where are you really from?” or the backhanded compliment of “wow, your English is great.”²¹ What’s more, Asian Americans may have it right. They really are seen as less American than other Americans.²² Studies have shown that to the average American, Kate Winslet (who is British) is considered more American than Lucy Liu (who is, in fact, American).²³ Yet, Asian Americans are just as likely as white Americans to self-identify as American and hold patriotic attitudes, making these attacks on their identity more painful. Furthermore, Asian Americans associate these feelings of social exclusion with the Republican Party, perhaps not a surprise in this era of immigrant bashing. In a recent study, Asian Americans exposed to a race-based presumption of not being citizens were more likely to view Republicans as close-minded, ignorant, less likely to represent people like them, and to have negative feelings toward them.²⁴

As Asian Americans associate these things with Republicans, when they hear Donald Trump’s rhetoric on building a wall across the entirety of our southern border to keep out Latinos, another group that can be perceived as outsiders, do they ask themselves if the Asian American community is next? This is to say nothing of Jeb Bush’s inartful attempt to talk back his rhetoric around “anchor babies” as being offensive to Latinos by saying he meant the statement to be about Asians.²⁵

WHAT THE RIGHT HOPES ASIAN AMERICANS CAN DO FOR THEM

Beyond the obvious desire for more voters and donors to shore up the party’s electoral chances, the GOP can benefit from adding more Asian Americans to their ranks in two distinct ways: to blunt charges of racism for racist and regressive policies that primarily affect communities of color, and as a way to racially triangulate blacks and Latinos vis-à-vis Asian Americans and whites.

Republicans have long sought people of color willing to be standard bearers for their policies and to insulate them against charges of racism. Bilal Ahmed writes that Governors Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal, when expedient “emphasize their immigrant roots in order to lend desperately-needed token diversity to Republican policies that otherwise verge on white supremacy.”²⁶ In the 2016 Republican presidential primary field, the standard bearer of this goal was presidential candidate Ben Carson, and to a lesser degree Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz. National news correspondent Joy-Ann Reid noted, “Ben Carson is the ideal candidate of color for the right, . . . [h]e rejects race as a construct for explaining social and economic mobility, just as white conservatives do; and he even rejects the public programs that helped his own family survive, mirroring the donor class of his party who want to get rid of those programs.”²⁷ Journalist Jelani Cobb goes further to note that Carson’s race (and calm demeanor) have inoculated him from charges

of racism and orientalism when he stated that a Muslim could never become president because Islam is inconsistent with the Constitution.²⁸ A similar dynamic can be seen in Rubio and Cruz’s appeal to the right.²⁹ It is easier for a politician of color to act under the aegis of colorblindness and enact and advocate for policies that hurt communities of color. It is one thing to have white politicians argue against the resettlement of Syrian refugees it is something else to have two brown American politicians go on television and refuse to cooperate with the resettlement of brown Syrian refugees.^{30,31}

Thus, the Republican Party actively seeks people of color to promote its agenda, and it is no coincidence both Jindal and Haley have been tapped to be the Republican “respondents” to President Obama’s State of the Union addresses. Jindal gave the response to Obama’s first State of the Union address in 2009 and Haley responded to Obama’s final State of the Union address in 2016.³² In the address Haley sought to strike a softer tone, with what some considered to be an attempt to show a contrast between her vision of the party versus that of Donald Trump. A number of conservative bloggers responded harshly; Ann Coulter tweeted that “Trump should deport Nikki Haley” and “Nikki Haley says ‘welcoming properly vetted legal immigrants, regardless of religion.’ Translation: let in all the Muslims.” Katie McHugh, a reporter at Breitbart News tweeted “I for one am shocked Nimrata Randhawa Haley has no clue about America’s heritage & dissed it for political points.”^{33,34} These bookends to Obama’s time in office were meant to show an alternative person of color to that of the Democrats. It should also be noted that Rubio delivered the response in 2013.³⁵ Haley’s name is also being floated as a potential vice-presidential pick for the GOP, while Jindal’s was similarly floated in 2012.^{36,37}

But beyond actually enacting and advocating for conservative policies, Asian Americans also serve

as a rhetorical racial triangulation point for conservatives; an example of a “successful race” that whites can point to, to show that factors other than institutional white dominance explain the lower social status of black Americans. UC Irvine Professor Claire Jean Kim explains that in moving beyond black and white, to a field of racial positions, Asian Americans have been racially triangulated by major opinion-makers including white elected officials, journalists, scholars, community leaders, and business elites. Kim posits this racial triangulation occurs on a plane with two axes—superior/inferior and insider/foreigner—with whites in the superior/insider position, vis-à-vis Asian Americans in the superior/foreigner position and blacks in the inferior/insider position (Figure 1).³⁸

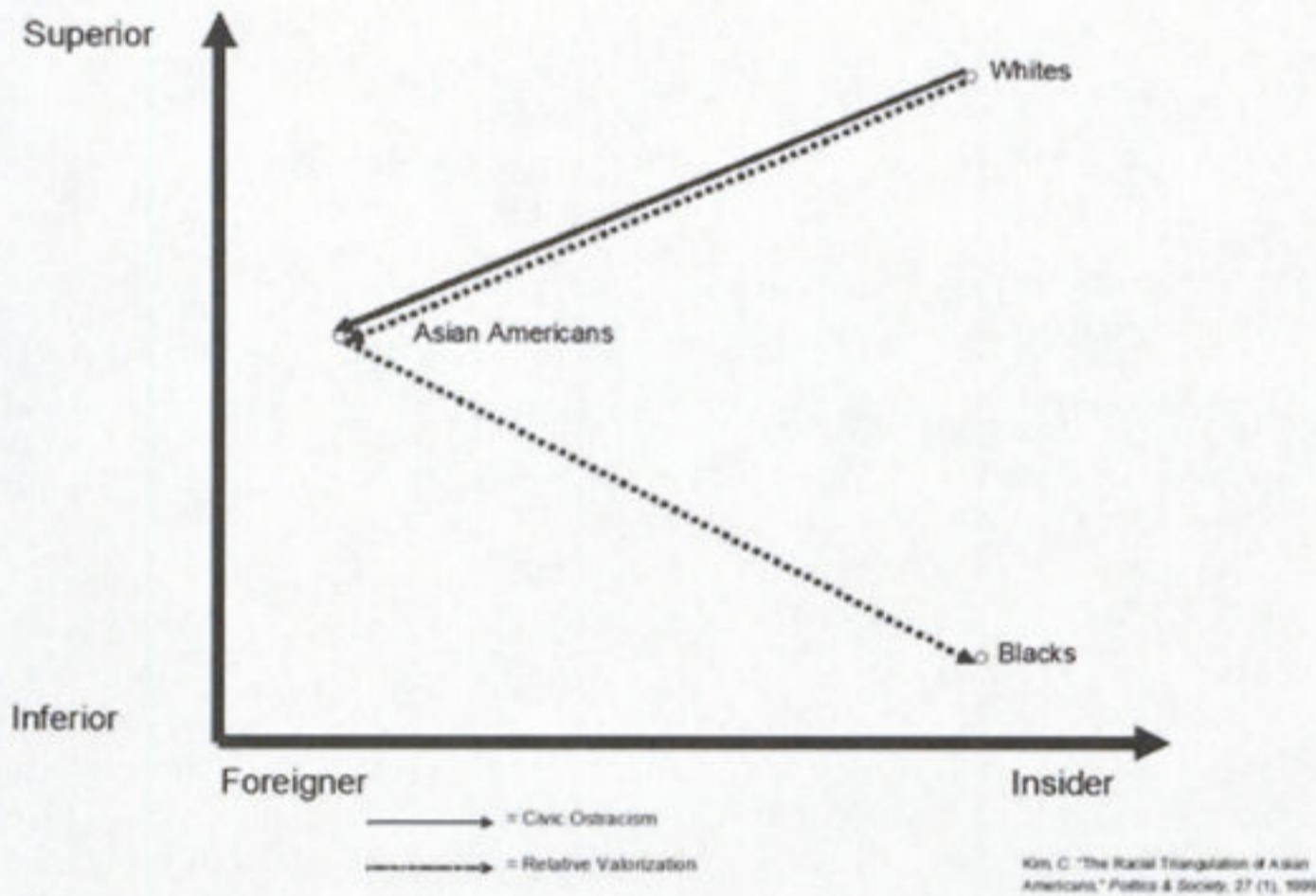


Figure 1

This positioning is meant to act as a normative blueprint for who should get what in terms of opportunities, constraints, and possibilities, all within a system built to reinforce White dominance and privilege. Essentially, Asian Americans may be selectively valorized without being allowed fully in to American society, while still being used for rhetorical effect to black Americans, saying something to the effect of “they became successful and they’re not even insiders, what’s your excuse?” Or as Bilal Ahmed phrases it, when Haley says that blacks in her state have placed limits on themselves she is saying it “as a minority-that-could” to a “minority-that-can’t.”⁴⁰

Notably, Kim’s model does not necessarily map neatly on to Haley and Jindal’s careers. Kim’s conception of racial triangulation requires the civic ostracization of Asian Americans, otherwise the model moves from a triangle into simply a straight-line hierarchy (Figure 2). Yet being the chief executive of a state would suggest that both of these politicians have moved from the superior/foreigner position to something closer to the superior/insider position.

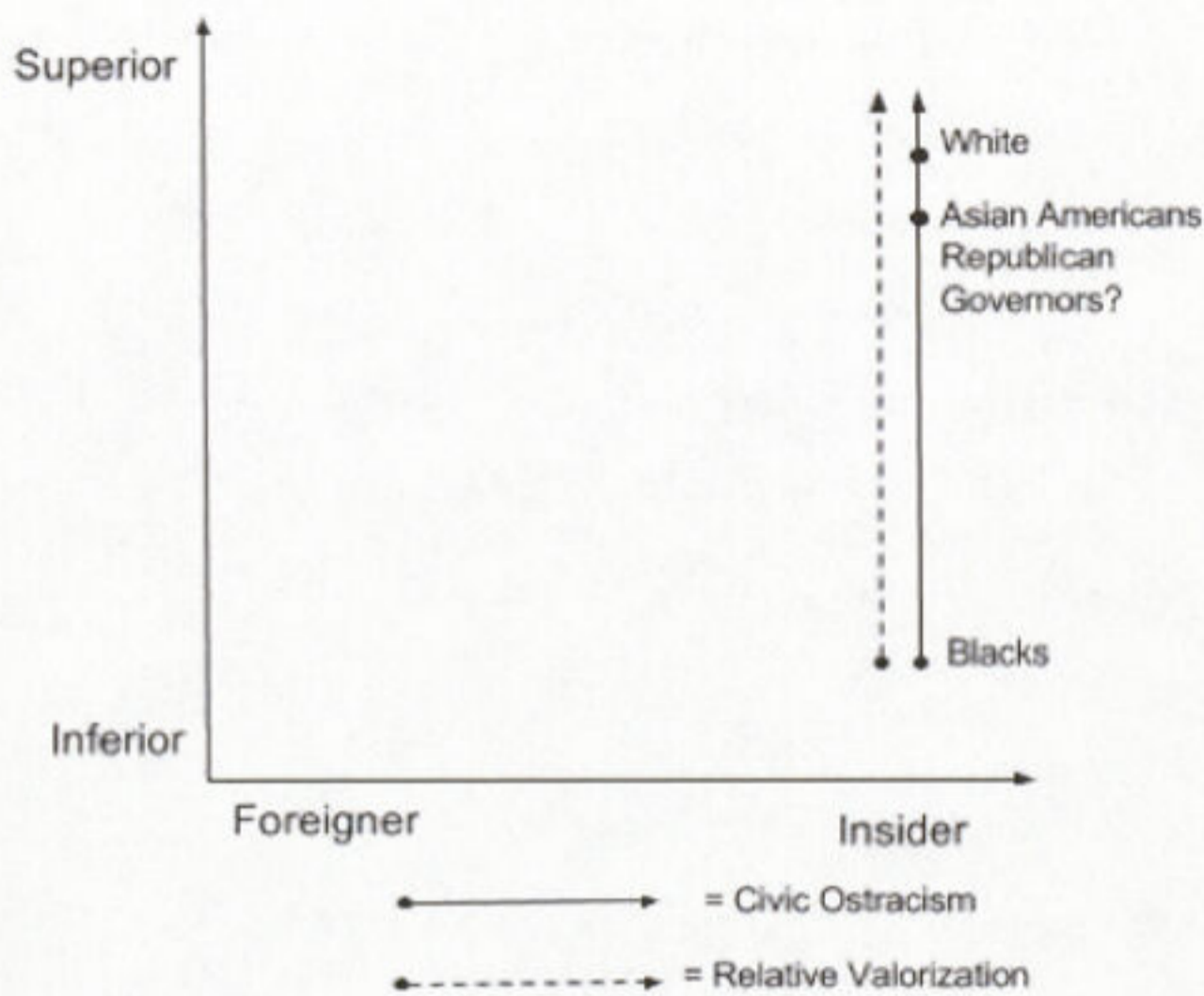


Figure 2

Though this would seem to do violence to Kim's model by allowing Asian Americans to be both a superior and an insider (rather than a superior and a foreigner), it could also suggest two things. First, that these two candidates did something that moved them, individually (vs. Asian Americans as a whole), into the insider group. Or it could suggest that these two candidates have been promoted as outliers and proverbial carrots for both Asian Americans and other people of color. An example of what minorities willing to tow the party line get for their cooperation and complicity. If it is the latter, despite varying from Kim's racial triangulation model, it essentially accomplishes the same white supremacist goals by making only two limited exceptions.

Professor Devon Carbado of UCLA School of Law has described the second theory as "racial exceptionalism." That when the outsiders (Jindal and Haley) make the insiders (the white Republican power structure) feel comfortable, by demonstrating dissimilarities to other members of their race through racial exceptionalism, they are "racial exceptions." Insiders (in this case whites) expect outsiders

to make them feel uncomfortable. When those outsiders do not create the expected discomfort, (perhaps by covering, as discussed below,) they can be afforded privileges that are withheld from non-exceptional outsiders of the same race. Also, in addition to cover for racist policies, racial exceptions serve the role of confirming the stereotypes about their race.⁴¹ If Haley and Jindal are exceptional for their race/ethnicity, then by definition, other South Asians are not exceptional and Whites may continue to hold stereotypes about them without cognitive dissonance.⁴²

With respect to how Jindal and Haley fit into these two theories, it is worth remembering the tried and true phrase, "all politics is local." Jindal and Haley succeeded in states with small Asian American populations.^{43,44} In Western states, Asian Americans, with their higher populations had historically been viewed as a threat to white labor, leading to more cultural and legal hostility. The famous case of *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* is an example of legislative hostility to competition between White and Chinese launderers in San Francisco.⁴⁵ But in the South, where Asian American

populations are small, there is less perceived risk of displacement of white labor. As a result, it may have been seen as less threatening to white interests to allow Governors Haley and Jindal to succeed at a high level. There were not proverbial floodgates for Haley and Jindal to open, and thus the threat of their success to the white power structure is sufficiently cabined so as to be nonthreatening.

FROM MISSISSIPPI TO CENTRAL CALIFORNIA: EARLY EXAMPLES OF ASIAN AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN AMERICAN POLITICS

This section will examine two separate instances of Asian American participation in American politics as precursors to the ascent of Governors Haley and Jindal. First, by looking at the Chinese who were brought to the South after the Civil War to replace recently emancipated African Americans during reconstruction and how the Chinese sought to gain some of the privileges of whiteness. Second, by tracing some salient aspects of the career of Congressman Dalip Singh Saund of California and how he presented himself as a candidate to white voters.

SITUATING ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE SOUTH: THE POSTBELLUM CHINESE

The influx of Asian Americans to the South was a direct response to the Emancipation Proclamation enacted during the Civil War. As with other industries in the West, Chinese workers were sought to counter the increased bargaining power of the local recently emancipated African Americans labor force. None other than famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass framed the importation of Chinese laborers as such:

In the vigorous efforts now making to import Coolies from China—a kind of Asiatic slave trade—with a view to supplant the black laborer in the South, in the unwillingness to allow the negro to own land in the determination to exclude him from profitable

trades and callings, there is clearly seen the purpose to crush our spirits, to cripple our enterprise and doom us to a condition of destitution and degradation below all other people in America.⁴⁶

These imported laborers came to Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Georgia, with each group fitting in to the local culture in different ways, but in each place situating themselves between blacks and whites within the preexisting racial hierarchy.

In Mississippi, James Loewen argues the Chinese understood that the local culture only recognized race as a binary. After moving in status from sojourner (planning to return to China) to immigrant (planning to settle in the Delta), the Chinese sought to move from being grouped with blacks to being grouped with whites. In the relatively rural Mississippi Delta, populations were too sparse to support a Chinatown. Instead, after moving on from insufficiently lucrative sharecropping, the Chinese became primarily engaged in the grocery business, initially serving mostly black patrons. Loewen writes that in the initial years, from the late nineteenth century through the mid-1920s, black-Chinese relations were cordial. The earlier sojourner generation of Chinese intermarried with blacks, who were often their second wives (with the other wife still in China).⁴⁷ Yet, as the Mississippi Delta Chinese moved from sojourner to immigrant, they became more willing to put down blacks in their efforts to move up the racial hierarchy.

The most striking example of this comes from the case *Gong Lum et al. v. Rice et. al.*⁴⁸ This case arose from the plaintiff's desire to send his daughter to the local white school. Lum argued that under *Plessy v. Ferguson*, his daughter was not being provided with either separate and equal facilities, or allowed to attend the white school despite the fact that she was fully Chinese and not black or mixed (colored in the legal parlance of the time). More provocatively, Lum asserted that

whites were the "law-making race" in the state and through this power created special schools for whites to avoid mixing with blacks. Lum went further to say:

If there is danger in the association [with Negroes], it is a danger from which one race is entitled to protection just the same as another . . . The white race creates for itself a privilege that it denies to other races; exposes the children of other races to risks and dangers to which it would not expose its own children. This is discrimination.⁴⁹

This argument boldly challenged the motives of whites in maintaining separate schools, while validating racist views about the dangers of black schools. This disparagement came at the expense of the community to which these grocery owners owed their livelihood. Lum's challenge ultimately failed with the Supreme Court ruling that his daughter, as a member of the "yellow race," qualified as "colored" and was thus properly placed in black schools. Loewen argues, without support, that this argument was never truly accepted by the plaintiffs but was used merely as a basis for argument.⁵⁰

Loewen writes that the Mississippi Chinese eventually got into the good graces of the white ruling class by further disassociating with blacks. The Chinese community enforced this isolation, forcibly ostracizing those married or cohabitating with black women until these couples either were extremely isolated (black communities were not supportive of these mixed couples either) or broke up. There are reported incidences of Chinese leaders conspiring with wholesalers to either stop selling to these ostracized Chinese, or to only sell to them at substantially higher prices. Crucially, Chinese leaders also committed to not attempting to have intimate relationships with whites either. As the civil rights movement gained steam, some of the Chinese grocers joined the white Citizen's Councils, which have been described as "organizations of white

segregationists and supremacists who opposed integration" and the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.^{51,52}

Claire Jean Kim argues that the relative acquiescence of white Southerners, as compared to white Californians, to allowing the Chinese to raise their place in the regional racial hierarchy can be explained by the fact that the Chinese were simply not the sort of economic competitor to whites in the South as they were to Whites in California. Greater privileges for the Chinese were economically inconsequential in ways which would not have been true with the black community; a more economically powerful constituency of blacks would have turned southern culture on its head. Furthermore, the presence of a more rigid and established racial caste system made white Southerners feel like they had little to lose in permitting "a slight shift in the racial positioning of the intermediate group."⁵³ As long as they kept to their liminal place in the racial hierarchy, some of the benefits of whiteness could be safely conferred.⁵⁴

*THE FIRST OF HIS KIND:
DALIP SINGH SAUND,
CONGRESSMAN*

This section will briefly examine the career of Dalip Singh Saund, a Sikh congressman from California's central valley and the first South Asian person elected to Congress. This section will seek to take note of the positions Saund took vis-à-vis his opponents, the image he sought to craft for himself, and how both may have helped him create his foothold in American politics. This section will also make use of Saund's autobiography, an inherently political document, written during his fourth year as a congressman. Titled "Congressman from India," it presents an image of a man, born to be a politician and long admiring of the United States, ostensibly getting his start in politics advocating for Indian independence from the United Kingdom.

Dalip Singh Saund was born in India, and graduated from the

University of Punjab with a degree in mathematics.⁵⁵ Saund writes that he was inspired reading about President Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric on self-determination and the leadership of President Abraham Lincoln, almost mythologizing him as an American Patriot while growing up in rural India.⁵⁶ Saund travelled to America with the intent of staying for only two to three years to study food preservation and canning at the University of California, Berkeley.⁵⁷ It is at this time, Saund writes, that he stopped wearing his turban, but he does not elaborate on this choice in his autobiography.⁵⁸

After graduating and moving into agriculture in California's Central Valley Saund experienced a number of instances omitted from his autobiography, such as being denied accommodations for him and his mixed-race family at a hotel. Eventually the discrimination against Saund and his family extended to the treatment of his children at school and to the ostracization of his wife from social activities such as book clubs. Under the pretext of allergies, his wife and children moved back to Los Angeles while the future congressman stayed in the central valley, meeting with his family on a regular basis.⁵⁹ Saund's autobiography makes no mention of this discrimination precipitating the moving of his family out of the region. His autobiography is generally sparse on accusations of overt racism, and Saund consistently makes concerted attempts to show grace toward those who made racist attacks on him.

On his third attempt, Saund was elected to become a Justice of the Peace. Saund distinguished himself by being tougher on vice than the political establishment was used to. For instance, the police and courts had a habit of arresting sex workers once a month, fining them, and then releasing them. But as Justice of the Peace, Saund imposed ninety-day jail sentences, essentially breaking the business model that made the prostitution consistently profitable. This also had the effect of overloading local jails, making the charging practices of local law enforcement stricter.⁶⁰ This sort of "tough on crime" approach may be seen as a way for Saund to distinguish himself from the local political structure and to help him push back against his foreign-ness through hyper morality. It is harder to frame an orientalist "other" as more morally depraved than the white community when he is tougher on vice.

Following his election as Justice of the Peace, Saund ran for Congress, beating his Republican opponent by supporting President Eisenhower's policies more thoroughly, despite being a Democrat. In particular, Saund supported Eisenhower's policies on farm subsidies, immigration, and education. These efforts may have been Saund's attempt at trying to out-American his opponent, by voicing even stronger support for an incumbent president. Saund's race played a prominent factor and he was named in attack ads as Dalip Singh Saund, rather than D.S. Saund, the name he used in campaign materials. ⁶¹ This effort to be known by his abbreviated name is an example of "covering," a practice Professor Tehranian describes as covering and shaping aspects of one's identity to fit, often successfully, the dominant white culture and aesthetic.⁶²

THE ELECTED OFFICIALS

This section will examine the lives and careers of Governors Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley and seek to draw parallels between their respective rises to the statehouse with the experiences of the Mississippi Chinese and Congressman Saund. As Section II sought to answer "why" the Republican Party and conservative movement would want to promote politicians like Jindal and Haley, this section will seek to answer "how" Haley and Jindal made themselves palatable to their voters. At the end of the day, party elites cannot decide who should win; politicians must determine how to appeal to voters.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? PIYUSH & NIMRATA: RELEVANT DETAILS ON THE GOVERNORS' LIVES

Born Piyush Jindal in 1971 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Jindal adopted the name "Bobby" from one of the brothers in "The Brady Bunch."^{63,64} Jindal was raised Hindu and converted to Catholicism in high school, reading his Bible by flashlight in his closet to hide from his parents.⁶⁵ Jindal's rise in politics progressed through stints at the McKinsey Corporation, state and federal public health departments and organizations, as president of the University of Louisiana system, to the House of Representatives, and finally the governorship of Louisiana.⁶⁶ Most recently, Jindal ran a failed campaign to be the Republican nominee for president in 2015. Jindal's only electoral loss (not including the 2015 presidential race) was suffered during a 2003 gubernatorial campaign. Jindal's staffers blamed the defeat on the concerns more conservative Baptist voters in Northern Louisiana had over his background.⁶⁷

Many people in the Indian American community have seen their support of Jindal fall while his political star has risen. Some believe that Jindal's early donors have faded away from lack of engagement. When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a rally in New York in 2014, Jindal did not attend and was booed by the crowd when his name was mentioned. Jindal has been mocked by the South Asian community, in both America and the Subcontinent, for being perceived as trying to "whitewash" his ethnicity leading famously to the popular Twitter hashtag "#bobbyjindalissowhite."^{68,69} Jindal has also been mocked for a portrait loaned to him by a constituent where his skin tone on canvass was decidedly lighter than real life.⁷⁰ Jindal, for his part, has winked at the controversy, releasing a shirt declaring him "Tanned, Rested, and Ready" at the start of his presidential campaign.⁷¹

Nikki Haley was born Nimrata Randhawa in Bamberg, South Carolina in 1972 to a Sikh family. "Nikki," a nickname that means "little one," began her career with an accounting degree from Clemson

University, where she met her husband Michael Haley. Before going into politics, Haley worked for a waste management company and as CFO of her family's business, which sold gowns, suits, and jewelry.⁷² Haley first ran for office in 2004, joining the South Carolina state legislature after a primary race where she was called both a Buddhist and a Muslim.⁷³ Her Republican opponent also brought to attention that she was registered to vote as Nimrata Randhawa. ⁷⁴ Haley was elected governor in 2010, and re-elected 2014.⁷⁵

During her 2010 gubernatorial race, Haley appeared to downplay her Sikh heritage, emphasizing her attendance at Methodist services (although she attends both Methodist and Sikh services) and changing references on her website under the heading "Question: Is Nikki a Christian?" from an answer referencing "Almighty God" to one referencing Christ.⁷⁶ Unusually, Haley in her 2001 voter registration card identified herself as "white."⁷⁷ Haley was also called a "raghead" by South Carolina state senator Jake Knotts, saying "We already got one raghead in the White House . . . we don't need another one in the Governor's Mansion."⁷⁸ Knotts later apologized for the remark, characterizing it as an "unintended slur." Since the remarks, Knotts lost his seat in the South Carolina to a write-in candidate.⁷⁹

WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO TELL US: THE UNDERLYING MESSAGES TO THEIR CHOICES

With both of these candidates, one can see attempts to "whitewash" or "deracialize" their campaigns. Perhaps, given the racial hostility both have faced, this is not entirely unreasonable. Commentators have argued that Haley and Jindal's apparent whitewashing seems unnecessary in the present day.⁸⁰ But while this may be true at the national level, and particularly with more Democratic voters, this does not necessarily hold for conservative Republican rural southern voters.⁸¹

This idea that possessing some degree of racialization is an advantage can be seen in President Obama's political image and "working identity" as discussed by Professor Devon Carbado. Carbado defines working identity as "being constituted by a range of racially associated ways of being, including how one dresses, speaks, styles one's hair; one's professional and social affiliations; who one marries or dates; one's politics and views about race; and where one lives." This includes both the perceived choices one makes about his self-presentation (the racially associated ways listed above) and to the perceived identity that is the result of these choices (how racialized we determine a person to be). Carbado discusses Obama's struggle to maintain his appeal among both white voters by "not being too black" and black voters by being seen as "black enough." To win, President Obama's electoral coalition required both blacks and whites to vote for him, and he had to craft his "working identity" through various acts and around various pitfalls to maintain his appeal across a broad coalition.⁸² No easy feat.

Yet, the story is different for Haley and Jindal. Their electoral coalition does not depend on large numbers of South Asians and whites to vote for them. Instead, because of the demographics of their state and party, a winning coalition can essentially be just whites.^{83,84} Thus, Haley and Jindal do not have to walk Obama's tight rope; their decisions on self-presentation are simpler. It is to their benefit to have as white of a working identity as possible. Put another way, if attempting to gain one Asian American vote costs Jindal or Haley two white votes, and white votes alone are enough to win, they only need to appeal to white voters.

But, few people of color can completely pass for white. Those seeking to appeal to white sensibilities must settle on partial passing strategies. Carbado calls this "strategic passing," which can be done by either distancing oneself from the Outsider group or embracing the Insider group. ⁸⁵ One can see clear efforts by Haley and Jindal to distance themselves from their South Asian roots. The anecdote about Jindal's father asking

a friend to wear western dress to a victory party or choosing to not attend Prime Minister Modi's rally in America both appear to be an attempt by Jindal to disassociate himself from the South Asian Outsider group (as viewed by the broader populace).⁸⁶ For examples of embracing the Insider group (i.e., the white republican power establishment and white voters more generally), one need only look at the prominent role Christianity plays in the public personas of Jindal and Haley. Carbado humorously cites the tongue-in-cheek website "stuff white people like" as things that are stereotypically associated with whiteness and thus not blackness, or brown-ness, in this context.⁸⁷ This could be an explanation for Jindal's late-in-life adoption of hunting.⁸⁸

Additionally, when voters are less informed about specific candidates, gender, race, and ethnic information become more salient. Thus, Jindal and Haley may be seeking to make their "foreign" ethnicity less salient to white voters.⁹⁰ A recent study has shown that for South Asians seeking statewide office, the use of a nickname may increase their chances of victory by a shocking 25 percent.⁹¹ This logic seemed apparent to Congressman Saund and his opponents as well, in his presentation as "D.S. Saund" versus how his opponent presented him as "Dalip Singh Saund."⁹²

Professor John Tehranian's observations on the whitewashing that Americans of Middle Eastern descent engage in are instructive. Tehranian argues that under what he describes as the four "axes of covering"—"association, appearance, affiliation, and activism"—Middle Easterners cover and shape aspects of their identity to fit, often successfully, the dominant white culture and aesthetic. This is problematic, Tehranian argues, because while it has enabled individuals to avoid discrimination, it has made it "more difficult for the community, as a whole, to systematically fight invidious discrimination and stereotyping in the long term."⁹³ This desire for individual safety and

the conference of the benefits of the white majority's privileges is what drove the Mississippi Chinese to disassociate themselves from the black community, file suits like Gong Lum, and join white Citizens' Councils.

Applied to Jindal and Haley, this might read that their whitewashing has made it easier for them, individually, to win their offices, but has made it harder for South Asian candidates running for office who do not desire to cover their ethnic identity to get elected. Tehranian also posits that Middle Easterners can more successfully cover, compared to other people of color, because the phenotypical characteristics of Middle Easterners are more prone to ambiguity due to successive waves of diverse populations in the Middle East.⁹⁴

The first of Tehranian's axes is association, typically with recognized whites to obtain white bona fides. A salient historical example of this could be seen in what the Chinese did in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, where Chinese immigrants already residing in the United States had to prove their legality through the testimony of "one credible white witness."⁹⁵ Haley's husband Michael, a Captain in the Army National Guard and combat veteran provides the association of a bona fide white person in a way that shows a deep commitment and familiarity through the bonds of their marriage. The late Congressman Saund's wife, Mariana, was also white.⁹⁶ As with association, active disassociation can also speak volumes by omission. The South Asian community at home and abroad were critical of Jindal's handling of the murders of two Indian students at Louisiana State University, with some believing that he did not want to appear too sympathetic for fear of "being tarred by the minority brush."^{97,98}

Appearance, the second axes, is described by Tehranian as changing one's outward appearance or name to downplay ethnic features. For Middle Eastern men, this might mean going from Mohammed to Moe or Ali to Al. As discussed above, our two governors have gone from Nimrata to Nikki and Piyush to Bobby. Tehranian also notes the saliency of facial hair as a semiotic landmine for Middle Eastern men, and indeed it can be the same for South Asian men.⁹⁹ Jindal's face is notably clean-shaven, and he does not support the moustache popular with many men of the subcontinent.¹⁰⁰ Also, Sikh women are also not supposed to cut their hair, and it would appear that Governor Haley gets regular haircuts.

The third axes is affiliation, where the person covering tries to blur the lines between ethnicity and nationality.¹⁰¹ This can take place without a wholesale rejection of one's ethnicity or cultural heritage. In the cases of Jindal and Haley, one can see a similar type of affiliation and covering at work through their public exhortations and reminders about their own Christian faith. Bobby Jindal and his wife Supriya, were quick to note in a "60 Minutes" interview that they do not observe many Indian traditions and that he wants to be known simply as an American, not an Indian American.¹⁰² Jindal has gone as far as to say that "[i]t's time for the end of race in America."¹⁰³ In his failed bid for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, Jindal, seeking an activist base to propel his candidacy, actively wooed Christian clergy in Iowa and South Carolina and tried to shape his public person as an "evangelical Catholic."¹⁰⁴

Jindal has also been an outspoken Islamophobe.¹⁰⁵ Jindal has made pains to define European and American culture as characterized by "freedom" with the omitted subtext that this was not true of the Muslim world. Jindal has described "non-assimilationist Muslims" as a threat and has continued to repeat Islamophobic talking points about certain neighborhoods in Europe as being "no-go" zones where non-Muslims are not allowed, a point even Fox News has apologized for and retracted.¹⁰⁶ While America has no shortage of Islamophobic politicians, charges of Islamophobia ring less strident when the spokesperson is also a brown-skinned man. By putting his Islamophobia so unabashedly in the public eye, Jindal is both doing the bigot's dirty work, and as a result, associating himself more closely with the conservative white power structure. Jindal's bigotry is whitening. This

echoes the membership of Chinese grocers on white Citizens' Councils in Mississippi.

One can see a similar blurring with Governor Haley's website change discussed above.¹⁰⁷ In the American psyche, it is easy to conflate Christianity with whiteness and America. For Jindal and Haley, by emphasizing their Christian faith, the two converts may be trying to blur the affiliations of their non-white, and thus non-American, ethnic backgrounds. And some members of the Indian American community are not buying it.¹⁰⁸

The fourth, and final axes, is activism. The political affiliations, preferences, and causes with which one engages, or disengages, can be an act of covering. In Tehranian's example, he presents the disengagement of the Middle Eastern Americans with elected office and with fighting to protect their civil rights as a way to stay safe, "lest they be associated with militant ethnics and become racialized." At first glance, this would seem to be the opposite of what Jindal and Haley have done given their over-a-decade involvement with elected office and their current positions as chief executives of their states. But as conservative politicians, the potential racialization is the exact opposite as that feared by the Middle Eastern Americans in Tehranian's example. Tehranian argues that Middle Eastern Americans have eschewed political participation for fear of being associated with the civil rights struggles of other minorities.¹⁰⁹ When one speaks of the "Civil Rights Movement" they are undoubtedly referring to the struggle of African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s, calling to mind images of leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. Indeed, in America, due to the dominant white power structure, civil rights movements inherently involve non-whites asking of or fighting the white hegemony for equal rights. It is inexorably a "colored" activity.

But when the elected officials are engaged in conservative politics with those closely aligned with the

dominant white power structure, political activism of this sort can be its own type of covering. Jindal's and Haley's politics are essentially mainstream, or even right wing, conservative issues, with some being particularly partial to the Republican party's evangelical wing. There are echoes of this in Congressman Saund's tough on vice jurisprudence. Being "more moral" than everyone else, cuts against associations that whites have about "heathen" and "immoral" non-Christian brown people.¹¹⁰

Jindal has denounced the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* legalizing same-sex marriage, issuing a statement that the decision "tramples on states' rights" and that "[m]arriage between a man and a woman was established by God, and no earthly court can alter [it]."¹¹¹ Jindal has also passed by executive order an edict that would block the government from pulling licenses and tax benefits from a company because of the owner's view of same-sex marriage. This order was based on a bill that failed in Louisiana's legislature and was opposed by LGBT advocacy groups, as well as local businesses and multinational corporations such as Dow Chemical and IBM.¹¹² Jindal has also sued Planned Parenthood,¹¹³ opposed the settlement of Syrian refugees,¹¹⁴ urged an end to birthright citizenship,¹¹⁵ opposed the expansion of Medicaid,¹¹⁶ called for an elimination of all Louisiana income and corporate taxes,¹¹⁷ opposes affirmative action,¹¹⁸ and signed into law numerous bills friendly to gun owners.¹¹⁹

Perhaps a position most illustrative of this concept, conservative activism as covering in pursuit of whiteness, can be found in Jindal's response to the Jena Six. In 2006 protests erupted over harsh charges brought against six black teenage students in Jena, Louisiana, for severely beating a white student in response to three nooses that were hung on a campus tree. The Jena Six, as they were named, were charged with attempted murder.¹²⁰ In response to the protests over this selective enforcement and overcharging by the prosecutor, Jindal responded "We don't need anybody to divide us . . . [w]e certainly don't need outside agitators to cause problems." At first glance, this seems a fairly innocuous response. But the phrase "outside agitators" has a long tradition with southern segregationists dating back to the civil rights movement. Segregationists sought to frame the civil rights movement as the work of outsiders stirring up trouble that was not actually there.¹²¹ Perhaps Jindal was cloaking himself in the language of the segregationist tradition of the whites in his state, in active opposition to his black constituents.

Haley's record is more mixed under the activism axes. Haley led Republicans in South Carolina to remove the Confederate flag from the state capitol following the grisly racially motivated shooting of a African American Church in Charleston which left nine dead. This was no small act of leadership given that a poll conducted after the shooting still showed 35 percent of the population supported leaving the flag up despite the heinous act of domestic terrorism.¹²² She has even uttered the phrase "black lives matter," though in a way which chided the movement.¹²³ Still the phrase is anathema to most of her party. Haley has also had a fractious relationship with her Republican dominated state legislature, though not necessarily on matters of ideology, but rather between the power balance of the executive and legislative branches of the state government.¹²⁴ One of Haley's key legislative priorities has been to pass an ethics reform bill, which recalls Congressman Saund's time as a judge, where he staked his rise on enforcing a stricter morality than the dominant white power structure was accustomed to. Still Haley has supported controversial voter identification laws that many believe are designed to suppress turnout among black voters.¹²⁵ Haley has also opposed proposals to resettle detainees from Guantanamo Bay, opposed the resettlement of Syrian refugees, been an outspoken critic of labor unions, and refused to expand Medicaid.¹²⁶

Both Jindal and Haley have adopted restrictionist rhetoric on immigration reform. Jindal has advocated for building a border fence and that

undocumented immigrants must not only pay a fine but also speak English and show a "willingness to assimilate."¹²⁷ Bilal Ahmed cannily observes Jindal began his *National Review* op-ed with the reliable saw "as a son of immigrants to this country." Haley, for her part has made it a point to emphasize that her parents were legal immigrants, and thus manages to identify herself and her family as the "right" kind of immigrants, with America's population of undocumented immigrants as the "wrong" kind of immigrants.¹²⁸

CONCLUSION

It is tempting to think that the success of these two South Asian politicians mean we have made progress as a nation toward accepting more diverse candidates. One might think it even more encouraging that both governors hail from below the Mason-Dixon Line, where a culture of racism and bigotry led to the bloodiest conflict in US history.¹²⁹ But given what some believe to be the goals and motivations of the Republican Party in promoting these candidates, the lengths these candidates have gone to become palatable to the voters of their states, and the policies they have enacted once in office, it is hard to find cause for celebration. To the extent that there is normative value in the sheer presence of diversity in American politics, the aforementioned factors suggest it is not worth it.

Our goal should be to live in a country where to succeed at the ballot box, South Asian politicians can use their full names, where palatability is not predicated on Christianity, and one does not have to appeal to white voters by promising to do things to other communities of color that would draw charges of racism if the politician were white. Progress has to be more than just skin deep.

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“FOR JINDAL AND HALEY, BY EMPHASIZING THEIR CHRISTIAN FAITH, THE TWO CONVERTS MAY BE TRYING TO BLUR THE AFFILIATIONS OF THEIR NON-WHITE, AND THUS NON-AMERICAN, ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS. AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE INDIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ARE NOT BUYING IT.”

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THE MAKING OF A COMMUNITY WARRIOR: DONNIE CHIN AND SEATTLE'S INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

SUSAN NAKAOKA

ABSTRACT

This article documents exploratory research on the history of Seattle's International District (ID) through the voice of one of its sons, Donnie Chin. Despite the prevalence of the model minority myth, which posits that Asian Americans have worked hard and fared well, police harassment and neglect on the part of city services was a reality in the ID. The International District Emergency Center (IDEC), a grassroots volunteer association, is described as an example of political resistance. Chin, the founder of the IDEC and true community warrior, personifies the role of Asian Americans' fight for the right to the city.

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the citizen uprisings over the grand jury verdict in Ferguson, Missouri and the development of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, communities of color are fighting to expose the long history of brutality and neglect on the part of public safety officials and emergency services. The Ferguson case, in which nineteen-year old Michael

Brown was fatally shot by a police officer, became a symbol for decades of community resentment regarding the relationship between public emergency services and low-income neighborhoods. Other similar incidents involving boys, girls, men, and women of color have shed more light on the complex interaction between race and access to public safety, creating renewed attention in the media and literature. Although previous scholars have highlighted the African American community's relationship with the police, the discriminatory interaction between public safety and Asian American communities is under studied.¹

Donnie Chin, a fourth generation resident of Seattle's International District (ID), was intimately familiar with the neglect and harassment at the hands of the city's police and public safety officials. Chin's great grandfather was run out of Chinatown during the Seattle Riot of 1886, which was a labor struggle, spurred by racist, anti-Chinese sentiment. Despite this violent incident, Chin's family returned and remains in the ID to this day. Chin's commitment to the neighborhood was evident by his over forty-five-year involvement in the International District Emergency Center (IDEC), a volunteer organization he founded as a middle school youth in 1968.

The IDEC provides first aid, community patrol services and security to the Asian American community and is one of only two ethnic-based volunteer emergency services organizations still in operation. The Bedford Stuyvesant Volunteer Ambulance Corps serves African Americans and other groups in New York by providing ambulance services, and community training in emergency medicine.² The IDEC was started due to the neglect and harassment from the police and fire departments, a similar impetus to the African American and other ethnic-based volunteer groups that have existed in the past century.

In two in-depth interviews in his basement office in the ID in September of 2014, Chin describes the neglect and corruption of the

police and fire department in the late 1800s to the mid-1900s ("we were robbed and exploited by the police and fire department all the time"), why his organization started ("No one cares about what happens down here!"), and the institutional and social inequities spurring the longevity of his twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, volunteer-run program.³ This narrative showcases how a small, volunteer run organization has survived for forty-six years to provide much-needed emergency and medical services to an underserved immigrant population in Seattle. The story of the IDEC has become tragically important due to the July 2015 shooting death of Chin. In light of this huge loss, the board members and volunteers are reexamining the role and function of the IDEC.

This paper utilizes Critical Race Theory and the Right to the City literature as an analytic lens to identify historical moments of the ID. It uncovers the lessons learned by the Asian American community and the need to build alliances with current community organizing such as the Black Lives Matter movement. Specifically, social justice issues during the early history of Seattle's Chinatown (early 1900s), and the ID during the civil rights era (1950s to 1970s) are analyzed to show how Asian Americans experienced neglect and harassment by public safety officials and how they organized to simultaneously demand public services and to provide their own. Although Chin's sudden death has led to some uncertainty about the future of the IDEC, the trajectory of his family and the organization shows how a grassroots movement utilized a radical approach to community organizing, involved youth to create social change, and inspired generations of residents to demand social and public services as part of the rights to their city.

In the current political climate, where rights are contested and racial justice movements such as Black Lives Matter are targeting institutional racism, the role for Asian Americans should be clear.

Chin and the IDEC provide an example of political resistance that connects the Asian American experience to other people of color, addresses structural racism and is connected to the larger civil rights movement.

THE ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK: ASIAN AMERICANS AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

The demand for public safety and social services is an element of the larger fight of the right to the city movement. Harvey (2003) elaborates upon this movement as one that centers self-determination and empowerment, "The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart's desire"⁴. Based on the writings of Henri Lefebvre, the movement pushes for a more radical politics of organizing, one that mobilizes local power towards systems change on a national level. There is less clarity, however, on how residents can claim this right.⁵ A more radical practice for right to the city advocates suggests that one component lies in the importance of local power through community organizations, "building local power through organizations based on a sense of solidarity, belonging, and shared history."⁶ Thus, although Asian American community based service organizations such as the IDEC may not solely focus on broader policy change, but their ability to organize local residents to demand resources, their willingness to align their experiences with those of other oppressed groups, and their desire to bind their identities to historic ethnic neighborhoods as their cultural homespace is in line with the future of the right to the city movement.

Because race is not explicit in the right to the city framework, a Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach is a useful paradigm for Asian American historic ethnic neighborhoods. The history and context of these communities are mired in raced, classed and gendered oppression that led to spatial injustices. CRT centers the intersectional web of oppression and exposes the power and privilege driving resulting inequities based on race. CRT's origins in analyzing the impact of legal remedies is also useful, as housing discrimination, police harassment and racial violence are all examples of racism that has impacted the ID and other Asian immigrant communities.

Multiple scholars have inserted an Asian American presence in the foundational CRT scholarship.⁷ Matsuda (1987) stresses the importance of "voices from the bottom" when working towards legal remedies such as Japanese American Redress and Native Hawaiian claims for reparations and sovereignty, "The collective experience of day-to-day life in a country historically bound to racism reveals something about the necessity and the process of change."⁸

Chang (1993) called for an Asian American moment in legal scholarship. Citing violence against Asian Americans, nativistic racism and the model minority myth, he explains the danger: "The portrayal of Asian Americans as successful, permits the general public, government officials, and the judiciary to ignore or marginalize the contemporary needs of Asian Americans."⁹ As one remedy, the literature calls for critical coalition building to bring CRT from theory to action.¹⁰ In the legal case focused on the rights of Thai and Latina garment workers, CRT was translated to social justice practice by making connections to other oppressed groups and empowering the workers to use those ties to work together.¹¹

Asian American exclusion (through citizenship and immigration policy), anti-Asian violence and the dangers of the model minority myth are prevalent themes in the recent growing CRT literature¹². This body of work on Asian Americans and CRT provide three themes that serve to anchor this analysis: The centrality of racism in the experience of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans, the importance of narrative and voices from within the community and the use of coalition-building as a way to combat structural racism. Understanding the early history of the Chinese

in Seattle provides the context of race-based exclusion and anti-Asian violence.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

Donnie Chin's paternal great grandfather came to the Seattle area from Toisan, China in 1880 and started a laundry business on Mill Street. The area became known as a Chinese neighborhood since immigrants were recruited for cheap labor and were excluded from purchasing land and from living in more desirable areas. The Chinese immigrants worked in the lumber mills, public works, small businesses and factors. Leading up to the 1882 exclusion of Chinese immigrants, the anti-Chinese movement became known as the "Chinese problem," since White laborers viewed them as competition.¹³ The racialization of the Chinese as "gamblers, convicts and murderers" who were socially undesirable to the city prevailed the political and social realm of the city.¹⁴

This hostile environment, culminated in the 1885 to 1886 anti-Chinese riots, a series of murders and mob violence that led to the forced removal of virtually all of the Chinese residents from the Seattle area, including Chin's great grandfather. The Knights of Labor (primarily working-class European immigrants) and the "Law and Order" group, made up of prominent citizens and city officials" led the riots.¹⁵ Although federal troops were sent in to protect the Chinese, they ended up participating in brutal attacks on the laborers.¹⁶ Thus, in this early history of the Chinese in Seattle, there was a clear message that the police and military were not for them. Not only did they withhold protection, but they were active participants in violence and exclusion of the Chinese.

Once Chinese immigrants were virtually eliminated, Japanese, and Filipinos began to fill the labor void and entered diverse industries such as farming, railroads, lumber and fishing (canneries).¹⁷ Although Chinese eventually returned to

the area, including Chin's great grandfather, the backdrop of anti-Asian sentiment was still prevalent in the memory of the community. Chin's grandfather, born in the Seattle area, became a jeweler and opened a store in "new" Chinatown in 1910. This store, which also sold sundries and collectibles, was handed down to Chin's father, Dun "Don" Hing Chin. The store eventually became known as the Sun May Company, currently located in Canton Alley and still owned by the Chin family.

Other examples of the forced segregation and expulsion of Asians were the race-restrictive covenants that excluded Japanese from renting or purchasing homes in West Seattle, Magnolia and other neighborhoods.¹⁸ An anti-Filipino movement which was marked by violence and scapegoating by the labor movement was prevalent from 1918 to 1930.¹⁹ By the 1900s, the Nihonmachi section of the ID was a central space for the Japanese immigrant community, "on weekends, laborers flocked to the district for baths, haircuts, and entertainment, chiefly gambling and prostitution."²⁰ Manilatown was another section of the ID and served the local Filipino laborers and broader community. Longtime activist Bob Santos described the area as he knew it, "For me, the International District became a central part of my life, beginning with the times I spent as a child in my father's hotel room, and in the restaurants, barbershops, gambling parlors, and pool halls of the area. For all of us, the International District meant a sense of community."²¹

In April of 1942, people of Japanese ancestry were forcibly removed from Seattle to "assembly centers" before being moved to concentration camps. In the weeks preceding the Japanese removal, the community started to be divided from the outside and within. One example is of the Japanese porters at the King Street station who were replaced with Filipinos that wore buttons saying "Filipino."²²

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE ID

The population in the ID grew dramatically after the war, and by 1950, the population had increased by 30 percent. The area became known as a "racial ghetto" where city resources were not responsive to resident needs.²³ Doug Chin (no relation), historian of the ID and one-time staff member of the ID Youth Council, stated, "Public safety has always been an issue - it was a red light district, gambling, prostitution, paying off cops, all of that stuff."²⁴ By the late 1960s, the number of residents in the ID dramatically declined from the post-war spike as conditions in the area deteriorated.²⁵ Families moved out, leaving mostly elderly, single, low-income persons that were in desperate need of health care and social services.²⁶

As a business owner, Dun "Don" Hing Chin became a community leader. Chin recalled, "My father became involved in civic activities here in the community . . . he helped start up a lot of the first generation organizations such as the family surname associations, the chamber of commerce, the Chinese businessman's group and the Jackson Street Community Council."²⁷ The Jackson Street Community Council was indeed unique, as it was formed in 1946 to support businesses, social services and community development in the multi-racial context of Seattle. African Americans, Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans and Japanese Americans were represented in the organization, which rotated leadership to ensure ethnic groups had shared governance. It was during this time period the area became known as the International District, to recognize the multi-racial history and to promote solidarity. Since the elder Chin was active in this council, and later became the director of the International Improvement Association (InterIm), a pan-Asian American community development organization, Chin was exposed to multi-racial and multi-ethnic coalition building at a young age.

In further describing the strategy of identifying with the larger civil

rights movement. Chin stated:

That was in the 60s during the civil rights campaign. We piggybacked on a lot of things the African American community was doing because their issues were the same as our issues. Poverty is still poverty. Racism is still racism. The idea was to get everyone to work together, kind of an offshoot of what the Jackson Street Community Council was doing. They started InterIm, the International District Improvement Association and my father became the director. They looked into getting better healthcare, improving the housing situation, and having a youth program that would incorporate youth the area. The target was residents who needed a whole lot of assistance, mostly non-English speaking elders²⁸.

Chin had a tangible reverence for his father: "My father quit the chamber of commerce because they were too busy emphasizing on 'Chinese only.' He quit all that to join InterIm. He took a huge risk, he got kicked out of his family association. My father was BOLD like my grandfather was BOLD."

THE INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT EMERGENCY CENTER

Amidst the multi-racial and pan-ethnic community building and organizing activities of his father and other notable activists such as Santos, Chin and friend Dean Wong started the Eagles Club, which later became Asians for Unity. In some ways these groups were the precursor to the IDEC since the main activities of Asians for Unity were to check in on the elderly residents and patrol the neighborhood. In 1968, at the age of thirteen, Chin formed the all-volunteer, all-youth group called the IDEC. Dean Wong and Chin's sister Connie were two of the earliest members. The atmosphere in the low-income community was one in which there was little trust in the police and other city services. Doug Chin, whose parents owned a restaurant, stated, "Some restaurant and night club owners had to pay off the police. They came in and ate at the restaurant that my parents owned, the International Cafe. In the 1960s, it was a bad place, prostitutes, pimps, and all that kind of stuff would go on there."²⁹

In describing the impetus for the formation of the IDEC, Chin stated:

Well, the emergency center started up because we saw a need to have a community controlled emergency service because our local services were [made up of] criminals and nobody trusted them . . . Our police from top to bottom front to side were all criminals. they would come and rob us at our stores . . . as a child you're thinking: "The police are coming to rob us today." That's something that you are not ever taught [in school]. And they robbed everybody down here. So nobody trusted the police. The fire service also came to rob people because they would come in and try to sell you tickets to their event and if you didn't buy them the next day you were out of compliance . . . and the health department would come down and they would try to get a cut off of things too because if you didn't pay their inspectors off, your restaurant couldn't open the next day. So they [ID restaurant owners] had to pay off the health inspectors too. And then the building inspectors came by to look at everything and if you didn't pay those guys off then your building also didn't comply. We were being sucked clean by everybody down here and getting absolutely no services. So, as children we saw this going on and we said 'No, we have got to do something about this,' so we started up the emergency center, and we did that in 1968 . . . we were from all grade school through the 7th grade.³⁰

Dressed in second hand store military gear and armed with first aid tips and street smarts, the youth group provided much needed services to the elderly and low-income residents that were used to police harassment, rather than support. Chin described their thinking at the time,

The thing we could do [to help] was to patrol the area to see where the problems were. Since we didn't trust anybody, we didn't call for anybody. Remember, at that time, 911 was not invented yet. None of this stuff that you see now, the layered services, there was none of that going on, zero. They didn't come here for nothing. Basically, we thought 'no one cares what happens down here!'³¹

Focusing on first aid, crisis intervention and prevention (assisting clean-ups and safety upgrades in single room occupancy hotels), the group developed skills and legitimacy over time. One of their first tasks was to connect patients to a newly formed community health center:

Since we knew where all of the elders were, we would go pick people up and walk them over there [to the health clinic]. Our main emphasis was to keep watch over the area somewhat, so that they knew eyes out were out there. We couldn't do much because we were children, but we could report things to our parents. My dad was head of the Chamber of Commerce and I would say, 'hey dad, these things are going on' and he could make a phone call to whoever he knows with the city government.³²

During the early years of the IDEC, the relationship with the police remained strained.

We knew that the work we were doing was dangerous because the police hated us and tried to arrest us numerous times. So, then we turned instead to the fire services. Because all the firemen, though we didn't trust them, we had to work with them. So with the fire service we told them 'We are not in here to hassle you. We want to help you work in our community. We have people who are bilingual we could help you at emergency scenes we could translate for you. We know how to do first aid. People are calling us for help, not you.'³³

Thus, a relationship with fire and emergency response began to form. Patrolling the area for emergency situations were an important part of the early years of the IDEC. Although today this may seem excessive, many low-income seniors lived in single room occupancy hotels where they had little communication with outsiders. Chin explained,

Most people did not have phones. The only phone would be in the lobby which would be a pay phone at the desk. They would use intercom system, so if you had an emergency you would push a button in your room and down in the central lobby a little arrow would tick and if the guy was awake he would see it move and he would go upstairs walk up four or five flights of stairs to see what was wrong with you or what you needed. And then had to walk back down the stairs call up the private ambulance. By the time you got someone to help you, you would be dead by then! So what we did then was we patrolled inside peoples buildings and we walked up and down peoples hallways with a first aid kit to see what peoples needs were and pretty soon we were overwhelmed by the needs and we knew then that we had to get better training.³⁴

Chin was proud of a particular idea that the IDEC tried to implement. The youth wanted to start a three-digit emergency phone number so that the elders could reach them quickly. They had tried to use "222," and Chin, at twelve years old, was working with the phone company to get it to work. Although the phone company did not have the capacity to follow through on the program, Chin cites this as another example of how the youth were ahead of their time and dedicated to keeping their community safe.

The group of middle school youth had formed a community response to the city's neglect and harassment. Because of Chin's previous exposure to multi-racial and multi-ethnic organizing, he was deliberate about the structure of the group. The group would embody unity for Asian youth, value dignity of elders and low-income residents, and promote solidarity within the community and with other civil rights issues.

THE ENDURANCE OF THE IDEC

The IDEC were soon overwhelmed with the amount of need they found in the ID. Chin's uncle, a World War II combat medic, provided some first aid training. As some of the old guard of the police force and fire department began to retire, new personnel had a different, more inclusive approach in the community. An example was Medic One, a program started in 1976 to provide emergency services training to firefighters and to increase community involvement in medical services. Chin remembers when the staff of the Medic One met the IDEC youth,

The Medic One folks were pretty astounded when they came in the door and saw there were children doing the work. Back then we had first aid bands out of rice sacks, we had a yellow cross or something sewn into our clothes which were old military outfits and helmets we bought at goodwill for 10 cents. They just fell out! They couldn't believe a group of ghetto kids, uneducated, could come up with all of these programs that they were trying to do with formal city departments. We just went out and did it.³⁵

The key to the success of the IDEC youth was their familiarity with the community. As youth from the area, they knew many of the elders, they were familiar with the gang members and patterns of violence and they had tangible survival and communication skills that they could offer. Chin explained the continued partnership with the Medic One program:

The Medic one program started and the new medics were watching us assist them on calls. From that point on, they said they better work with us and we became trainers with the Medic One program. So, as high school students, we would go to Medic One and train all their medics in "ghetto stuff." We would train them in weapons, street drugs, security around a homicide. We were kids. We still do this training today, we train in 4 counties. Every medic who comes through the program goes through our training.³⁶

Medic One, its founder Dr. Michael Copass admired Chin and the IDEC and eventually other first responders learned to love them. Paramedics gave them supplies, the police and fire department became more collaborative and the IDEC had a radio system that was linked in with the 911 calls.³⁷

The IDEC also responded to other needs in the community. In 1970, a fire at the Ozark Hotel in Seattle claimed the lives of twenty. Immediately following, buildings codes changed which necessitated costly repairs to housing in the ID. Scores of low-income residents in the ID were at risk of losing their housing. Chin and other community leaders got involved by helping building owners make the necessary repairs. In the case of the Milwaukee Fire Watch, they went a bit further:

We found that over half of the buildings in the ID did not comply [with the new fire codes] the next day. And those codes required that you needed to have fire stops in areas, enclosed stairwells, detection systems, and alarms that actually worked. From that period on, InterIm and other groups' entire focus was on housing. . . . So one

big project we did was that we took over a hotel, with the landlords permission, and managed it and ran it for a year and a half. And we did that 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, volunteering. So we went in with a couple hundred volunteers and we cleaned out the entire building from top to bottom. We took out 30 tons of debris. That became a project which was called the Milwaukee Fire Watch. So, we had human beings in that building 24 hours a day, patrolling the hallways, watching for safety issues and fire issues. That was a huge project because we brought in people who had no clue about the district, and they learned everything they could have within that year. They were walking the hotels, talking to the residents, picking up trash, and I'm talking trash, tons and tons of trash. It gave them a whole new view of what it is like living here in the ID. You can read all of the books you want, and not have a clue what its like to be poor and live in the ghetto. So for a lot of folks it really opened their eyes. These folks who came there as youth volunteers were in college or in high school, but later they became leaders in the community.³⁸

Although the Milwaukee Fire Watch was a broader community effort, it is an important part of the IDEC history because it exemplifies their work in a few ways. First, it targeted the ultimate goal of public safety. Since the buildings would be deemed unsafe, the IDEC felt it was within their purview and a top priority. Second, it impacted the low-income elders who were one of their main constituencies. Third, it showed the commitment of volunteers—keeping twenty-four-hour shifts for over year was a major feat for any organization. Fourth, it showed the power of engaging youth volunteers from outside the community. Many of the volunteers were high school and college students from the surrounding areas. Not only did this bring renewed energy to the ID, it educated the volunteers on the quality of life in the ID and social justice issues. Thus, in a sense they were reconnected to this cultural homespace and remembered their experiences when they became professionals and community leaders later in life.

DEMANDING THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

The IDEC members worked alongside the individuals of other organizations to fight for housing, healthcare and childcare. When they wanted the city to fund a staff member for their youth council, they had to fight to be heard:

It wasn't until [we] walked in and said "this is what we need." [that things began to change]. So, the youth council that we started, we hired Doug Chin and we wanted to get funding. We went to the county and some other people, and they said, 'get outta here' . . . we're here in the middle of the ghetto, and [they] funded zero of them, all these years, until we stepped in that doorway. They said 'No, you don't meet the criteria and were not going to fund you.' We said 'We don't meet what criteria? Aint nobody more ghetto than us. We all pay taxes and we get nothing back.' And I can remember at that meeting, Doug Chin got up and said 'You people are all racist' and we walked out the door. They were running down the hallway trying to give us money. We thought, 'Nah nah, we don't want it like that. We should have this money. We pay taxes. We get no services from you guys.' And from that day on, that was a dramatic point in getting some funding down here . . . when we walked out of those meetings.³⁹

Chin described how this strategy was directly related to lessons from the Black Panthers and their stories of demanding city services, "Because we knew the panthers. If they could do that, we could do that. So, we took a hint again from the Black community and what they were doing." In addition to the youth council, the consistent attention on youth was Chin's passion. He mentored youth and tried to keep them busy and off the streets.

Dean Wong, whose radio name was Dragon Two, while Donnie's was Dragon One, characterized Chin's relationship with youth, "It was Donnie's

“BECAUSE OF CHIN’S PREVIOUS EXPOSURE TO MULTI-RACIAL AND MULTI-ETHNIC ORGANIZING, HE WAS DELIBERATE ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE GROUP. E GROUP WOULD EMBODY UNITY FOR ASIAN YOUTH, VALUE DIGNITY OF ELDERNS AND LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS, AND PROMOTE SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND WITH OTHER CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES.”

way . . . treat kids with tenderness and toughness. Tough love is what it's called. I think he did that to make them listen. To filter out the non-essential information and get to the core message of IDEC. To serve the community. Treat the elders with respect. Learn about your culture and history."40 Chin was credited with spearheading the effort for a park:

When I was a child, the only park we had was the streets. The emergency center was asked what the kids would want, since we had a lot of kids coming through our place and we said, look, they have no where to play out there, except the streets, they come to the center all the time and play. So we asked the kids what do you want. They said "we want a park" so then we went to the city council and we went to Sam Smith, the only Black on the council. We said "Mr. Smith we need a park for the kids to go to" and he worked on that thing, got it funded, had a place bought and we put up the ID children's park—through the hard work of Sam Smith and InterIm. And that would never have gotten funded if that man was not in that office. Never. And that was helpful because we knew him, we voted for him, he came down to see what our needs were and that's how you work with the city government. You want your tax money to work for you, too.⁴¹

What made the IDEC unique from other groups, was the longevity in providing first response emergency services as a volunteer group. The work was dangerous, and they interacted with individuals from within the community that were committing crimes. When asked how they were able to dodge intimidation from gang members, Chin explained:

They knew that if they were doing something stupid, we ain't going to give them no slack, but if they needed assistance, we wanted them to call us. Because our thing was that we wanted to help everyone. So I had guys who tried to shoot me before, call me for help. We're not your friends, but if your momma's having a heart attack, I want you to call me.⁴²

As his voice became quiet, Chin finished: "[We responded to a lot of shootings]. We treat everybody and try to save who we can. And those who we cant save, we try to tell the other guys we did the best that we could. Cant save this brother here, he was shot in the face. And uh, it's been tough over the years. We see all the bad stuff down here." Chin's bravery, commitment to the community and passion for civil rights was the core of the IDEC. Doug Chin asserts, "For all practical purposes, Donnie Chin and the IDEC were the same thing - the organization was primarily Donnie."⁴³

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND THE ID

Today, the volunteer IDEC members continue to train county workers in how to access hard to serve populations, cultural competence and other "street smarts" necessary to serve the community. They have a city radio that alerts them to emergencies and requests their help, Chin explained, "So now, if you need help you call 911, if they need help they all us. It's totally reversed—a city department is calling a community agency. The concept is different." With twenty members, and three to four volunteers on call at any one time, the IDEC is an integral part of the ID's emergency response system. A city grant funds the program for three hours a day, meaning that twenty-one hours per day is still run on a volunteer basis. Talking about how the relationships have changed, Chin explained:

It changed a lot over time. It changed a lot because our main threat before was city officials, they were trying to rip us off, whereas as now we try to work with everybody and they've become a lot more honest and people that we actually know and trust that we put in those positions through our vote. So that now, before our emphasis then was trying to hide from all these people because they were trying to rip us off, so now that we would call these people up because we are able to work with them. Like today, the Washington state legislators are here on tour to see what the community needs.⁴⁴

Housing is still the lead issue for the ID, and projects such as Hirabayashi Place, a mixed use development by InterIm, promise more affordable housing. There are still a significant number of vacant buildings, however, that are not serving useful purposes for the community.

The ID has also changed demographically. Since the 1980s, Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees have settled Little Saigon, to the east of Interstate 5 highway which cut through the original boundaries of the ID when it was built. Young African immigrants frequent some hookah lounges that have sprouted up on the boundaries of the ID. Some community members have pointed to the lounges as trouble, but community leaders tread carefully on making sure language about the space does not turn divisive.

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Going on his forty-sixth year with the IDEC, Chin still patrolled the streets and monitored the police scanner for calls in the ID. During the early morning hours on 23 July 2015, Chin responded to a call of a dispute in the neighborhood and was shot three times while sitting in his truck. Chin later died at the hospital. Community leaders and residents are still hoping for answers about the incident as they mourn the loss of their local hero. The shooting is believed to have been the result of two rival groups who were in the area after leaving one of its hookah lounges⁴⁵

State and local officials expressed their condolences and admiration for Chin following his death. The ID community, which includes Asian Americans that live elsewhere but consider the ID their cultural home, continues to grieve their huge loss. Dean Wong, the original IDEC member stated, "He is a legend in this community. He is our hero. He is our angel in a ghetto package."⁴⁶

Community leaders and organizations call for a response. Some are critical of the hookah lounges and the violence that they potentially attract. Others want more community policing, a fitting request since Chin had worked towards that all of his life. Yet others simply want the shooters brought to justice.⁴⁷ A group of community advocates, led by Doug Chin, started the Donnie Chin Children's Park Naming Committee in order to push the city to change the name of the International Children's Park to honor Donnie. After a slight delay due to an existing city policy that requires an individual to be deceased for three years before a park can be renamed, the Mayor released a statement on 17 February 2016 to announce he would start the process of changing the Park name to the Donnie Chin International Children's Park.⁴⁸

The IDEC is in a state of waiting. Dicky Mar, the current board president, explained that the current group of IDEC volunteers voted to keep the organization going in some form. Maintaining the twenty-four-hour patrol of the community, however, was unrealistic to ask of anyone.⁴⁹ Chin is rather impossible to replace. Most likely, trainings in first aid, emergency preparedness and personal safety can continue. Advocacy on community issues is also possible. They are also trying to maintain the relationship that Chin had developed over the years with the police and fire departments.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The story of the IDEC provides impetus to insert the story of Asian Americans into the national dialogue on race, police relations and neighborhood safety. Often overlooked in discussions of racial oppression, Asian Americans have long experienced unfair treatment and countered it with resilience and strength. Policy recommendations should include the support of grassroots organizations that have deep ties to the communities with which they work. Comprehensive community development, in the form of affordable housing, healthcare and childcare services, will address longstanding institutional discrimination. The future of these neighborhoods depends on recognition of the history and context of each

community.

Chin and his family's story provides a blueprint for political resistance in claiming the right to the city. Chin's bold personality and unwavering dedication to the community influenced his determination to demand rights and resources for the ID. He understood the connection between these resources and social justice. Doug Chin speculated,

I think Donnie did what he did because he saw the need there, especially a need to help out the poor and the elderly down there and other people who needed help. And, one of the important things down there, for him was the preservation of the Asian American character of that area. In that sense, he could see it fit in with civil rights, cultural identity and historic preservation⁵¹.

When viewing the story of the ID through a CRT lens, three themes are clear. The story of the early history of the ID, as well as the civil rights era shows the reality of Asian exclusion and persistent discrimination towards Asians. This is in line with the CRT tenet that racism is the central organizing feature of US society. Second, Chin's voice and his family's legacy in the ID is crucial to understanding the history of the neighborhood. This narrative, or voice from the bottom, elucidates the struggles and social justice issues of the neighborhood unlike other stories that may write off the ID as a popular destination spot for Asian food and culture, rather than a historic ethnic neighborhood filled with rich, Seattle history. Finally, CRT suggests coalition-building and a dedication to social justice, not just theory. Thus, the determination of Chin's father and Chin to build alliances with other Asian Americans as well as African Americans, is an example of how critical coalitions can make positive change in the community.

In the highly racialized political environment, Asian Americans seemingly have to choose between fulfilling the role of the model minority, or aligning themselves with the broader racial justice movement, including Black Lives Matter. Chin was clear where he would stand. Making connections between the lived experiences of Asian Americans and African Americans, Chin recognized the importance of learning from the African American civil rights movement. The tragic death of the IDEC leader forces the community to discuss the future of the organization. Now, with positive relationships with law enforcement and public safety, should the IDEC remain?

When asked about the current state of the ID, Chin was hopeful:

We have Amazon [company] right down the street, the infrastructure for transportation comes down the district (waterways, bus systems, freeways all come through the ID). The ID is part of Seattle for the next generation so our kids won't think of it as a ghetto anymore. Hopefully it is a place where you will feel comfortable having your kids walk up and down the alleyway, a place you want to come to rather than where you have to be. Hopefully, we will see a lot less discrimination against us and I hope for the best. I won't be here to see it but I hope for the best.⁵²

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A black and white portrait of Vijay Iyer, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark pinstriped suit jacket, a light-colored dress shirt, and a white tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

DON'T CALL IT JAZZ: AN INTERVIEW WITH VIJAY LYER

INTERVIEWED BY DANIEL
YOUNGWON LEE

VIJAY IYER IS A GRAMMY-NOMINATED COMPOSER PIANIST DESCRIBED BY PITCHFORK AS "ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING AND VITAL YOUNG PIANISTS IN JAZZ TODAY," BY THE LOS ANGELES WEEKLY AS "A BOUNDLESS AND DEEPLY IMPORTANT YOUNG STAR," AND BY MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO AS "AN AMERICAN TREASURE." HE WAS NAMED DOWNBEAT MAGAZINE'S 2015 ARTIST OF THE YEAR AND 2014 PIANIST OF THE YEAR, A 2013 MACARTHUR FELLOW, AND A 2012 DORIS DUKE PERFORMING ARTIST. IN 2014 HE BEGAN A PERMANENT APPOINTMENT AS THE FRANKLIN D. AND FLORENCE ROSENBLATT PROFESSOR OF THE ARTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

This interview took place on 2 February 2016.

AAPR: How did you begin playing the piano? Was there something particular about jazz that drew you to it?

IYER: I wasn't drawn to any particular style or genre. It's just that I was improvising on the piano, this very exploratory thing that had no name. It wasn't given a name until I was in high school. I got to be in this jazz ensemble that rehearsed every day, and so that's why it got called jazz—because that's what I was suddenly doing.

Because of that, there was a directive for me to learn more about that language, that idiom, and how to function as a pianist playing in an ensemble in that context. It's not just about reading notes that are on the page. You have to have expertise on how to work with the fundamentals, how to interact with people, and how to create in real time.

So that's when it became, "OK, you're now playing jazz piano," [laughs]. It didn't have a name before that. It was just me kind of doing whatever I wanted on the piano. And it still is [laughs]. So, I don't really use that label that much. It's not useful to me.

AAPR: What do you find problematic with the term jazz? Is it a label used for marketing purposes?

IYER: The term itself seems to be something that separates. Like you were saying before our interview, most of your readers might not be familiar with jazz. Do you know how often people say that to me?

AAPR: I can imagine a lot.

IYER: Basically every day. That word is a way to isolate you as an artist. That's what it's always been when you look at it as a category, which is an emergent category only from the last one hundred years. And it's completely tied to the record industry. It's a term of business.

You mentioned marketing, and that's part of it, but there are more transactions involved. It's not just about selling records. The word is best suited to name the industry. If you look at the music that's been called that, it's so hugely diverse. The label has no meaning. It's like saying instrumental music. It doesn't really tell you anything about what's going on.

I also find that there's a history, especially among African American musicians, of resistance to that term, particularly for the reason that it serves to delimit your mobility as an artist.

It's not useful to think in terms of genres; that's how I see it. From the perspective of making music, it's more about people, not about genre. Genre is a way of stereotyping people.

AAPR: Some argue that these kind of labels exist to make it more accessible for people who aren't familiar with music of different forms.

IYER: I'll put it this way: it's an ethnic tag, you know? The reason why I said a lot of elder musicians, and particularly elder African American musicians, have resisted the tag is because it's historically served as a limiting frame, as a cage. It has reduced the impact of the music and it's a way of dismissing it. You will often see white musicians described as transcending genre or making universal music that appeals to everybody.

INTERVIEW

WE FORGOT THAT
MUSIC COMES FROM
PEOPLE. MUSIC
DOESN'T COME
FROM GENRES; IT
DOESN'T COME
FROM MACHINES. IT
COMES FROM PEOPLE
MAKING CHOICES
TOGETHER, FROM
COMMUNICATION.
WE'VE TRICKED
OURSELVES OUT OF
REMEMBERING THAT.



They're considered mainstream artists, and everyone else is tagged with some term that ethnicizes or racializes them. I've associated myself with different artists who rejected the term and from them I learned to keep critical distance from it or apply critical pressure on it.

AAPR: Has this sensitivity come from working directly with these elder musicians, or is this something that you've experienced yourself?

IYER: It came from both. I learned from observing elder musicians and apprenticing with them—reading their words and studying their music. I saw that more people reject the term than embrace it [laughs].

I also saw how it worked for me, and still does to this day. For example, I will do an extensive interview with someone for a major newspaper, and the headline will say something like, "All That Jazz," [laughs] no matter what I talk about. We can talk about politics and race, cognitive science, or composing, but it will still be tagged as "All That Jazz" or something flippant. It will be treated unseriously. That's the kind of thing that tends to happen no matter what you do as soon as you are tainted with that label.

The other thing is that jazz has represented a specific kind of way for white people to listen to black people. It was a way for white people to enter that artistic space themselves.

It was much later when Asian Americans entered the frame, and when we did, it was as people who didn't quite belong. Asian Americans were treated as a sort of misfit. The way critics would write about us was mostly through highlighting difference and making that difference seem like it was conjoined with ethnicity. So, if you had creative ideas of your own, it was because you were Asian. Not because you sat and thought about stuff and worked on it for a long time with different people.

Difference compactifies all these different dimensions and becomes a primary way for people to talk about you. It could happen in multiple ways. Sometimes it's specifically in terms of references like, in my case, talking about the complexities of Indian music or something like that. It could also be about, as I've said in my speech at the Yale Asian American alumni reunion in 2014, a sort of model minority framing where your music is reduced as cerebral, as mathematical, which is a way of saying it has no soul because you have no soul, because you're not a full-fledged human being or you're not a full-fledged American in particular. But it is also a way of suggesting that Black music has no intellect—a kind of double-edged sword.

I am mindful of all these tags because they lead you down that chain. But if I'm given the privilege of being in a room or space with an audience, then we can all have an experience together where it's not about the ethnic stuff. It can move past that to a raw, interpersonal experience, which isn't to say that it completely leaves the frame, but it can be eclipsed by other things. I trust that process, and I believe in it. I stake my life on that process. It makes it seem like this kind of utopian idea about the melting away of difference in music, but it's more . . .

AAPR: . . . more spiritual?

IYER: Yeah, but I'm also aware that it ends and evaporates, and then we're all still stuck with the same systemic situations [laughs]. It doesn't necessarily alter that situation. But, it can momentarily disrupt, eclipse, or distort those situations. That's why I do it.

AAPR: What do you think of the new ways people are consuming music, and in general, the arts, these days?

IYER: Well, new things emerge from that process. For example, records are only a hundred years old. Before that, music was a social experience—if you were listening to music, you were listening to people. Records made it possible initially to hear each other out of the space of shared time and shared space. Music could travel without the bodies, the people, that made it.

And then we let that rule the day for a while. We forgot that music comes from people. Music doesn't come from genres; it doesn't come from machines. It comes from people making choices together, from communication. We've tricked ourselves out of remembering that.

But, what it also has done is allow people, for maybe the first time ever, to have a solitary experience with music that wasn't there. So that gives me personal time with people that I can't even predict. It's not that different from writing a book, where someone who reads that book has in some way spent time with you that is out of the time of everyday life. That's kind of what recordings do. People can strap on their ear buds and go jogging with

my records [laughs] or put it on the car or live with it. They may listen to something multiple times, and things could be revealed on multiple listenings that weren't apparent the first time. It then becomes a very different relationship, which is also nice to explore, which is fundamentally different.

AAPR: What I find fascinating about your career is that you had other interests besides music that preoccupied your time.

IYER: Well, what happened was that I couldn't even imagine or figure out how to even become a musician from the standpoint I was at—which was, like you, a child of immigrants. My parents came here a little more than fifty years ago and like a lot of non-Western immigrants then, they were of a certain kind. They weren't artists. They would never be artists and that's exactly why they were allowed in: because they were curated. You had to have some scientific or technical training so that you could help Americans beat the Russians [laughs].

These clichés about who we are come from that. But what that led to was people like us who had no ideas on how to become an artist, and what the path [is] from being sort-of-okay at music to making it your life, and is that even possible, and does anyone even want you to? Like, will the world let you do this? Is there a place for someone like me in culture? And at the time during the 1980s, the answer was no. I didn't see anybody like me anywhere—not on TV, in the newspaper, or on the radio. Zero. There wasn't any obvious way for me to become a musician because there was no clear precedent from our community.

It was basically up to us, my generation, when we came of age. We were the first generation born to that wave of mid-60s, non-Western immigrants, so we had to figure out where to situate ourselves. Should we go along with what our parents did, and what they knew, or could we do something else?

Even then, I still didn't know. It took me until I was twenty-three to make that choice, to make music the center of my life. And even then, I kind of hedged [laughs]. I left a physics PhD program, but instead what I did was create my own interdisciplinary PhD program while making records and touring. It was like, "Well, if this doesn't work out, I'll have a PhD." [laughs] It's the deepest hedge imaginable.

AAPR: I did something similar in undergrad. I pursued a music degree, but made sure to have another degree in something more "safe."

IYER: Yeah, none of my students are majoring in music because they think it's a crazy idea. I agree with them. Becoming an artist . . . no school can really teach you that because it's about responding to the moment you're in. Your teachers don't know about that because they come from another moment. I don't even suggest to my students that I know how to become a musician today, or how to become an artist today. I just give them ideas that they could work with and that might help them make a decision at some point in their lives about that. Also, to expose them to ways other people did it so they have some point of reference.

AAPR: Things have come full circle now. You're here at Harvard—you're one of those "elder musicians" to a younger generation.

IYER: [laughs] Well, I'm sort of in the middle.

AAPR: I'm not saying that you're old!

IYER: You can tell people I'm forty-four years old, just so they have some sense of things!

AAPR: What do you see your role is as a teacher and mentor?

IYER: I didn't want to come here with a grand plan because, like I said, this is what I know from the path I've been on, but students are on a different path. They're here in a different moment, and they're merging into a very different context.

And some of them may be like how I was as an undergrad. Some of them might think they might not be musicians or artists. The ones who come to me are mostly musicians, but they might not think that it's an option available to them in the long run. They might just be scared to contemplate it. So, I just give them a space to contemplate it and examine it up close. Try it out for a while [laughs].

Like, what if you were an artist? What does that mean? What's your responsibility to your community? To your

fellow artist? To the discipline? Who's your audience? What is this music you're trying to play? Where is it coming from? Who made it first? Do you have your own voice? Can you collaborate? Can you build things together? Can you build a community around that?

It ends up being a very deep, interdisciplinary set of questions. It involves music making, but it also involves a lot of reading and writing. It requires asking some hard questions of yourself.

I have a lot of Asian American students in my course and this month we've been studying a hundred years of black creative music, of which emerged under these extremely dire conditions. If you're trying to play that, then what's your relationship to that history? Maybe you're a person of color and you can imagine some sense of solidarity, but maybe also you don't experience the kind of everyday proximity to terror that these artists, these people did. So, what's your relationship to that? You have to ask yourself that. Some people kind of freeze in their tracks while considering these questions.

AAPR: In a conversation with Krishna Lewis, you discussed how as a person of color in America you have had experiences that can touch upon that systemic oppression African Americans face. However, you stress that that you don't reinsert yourself in that narrative because this country was born on a specific anti-black prejudice. But as a person of South Asian American, in this time of heightened Islamophobia and distrust of people from a certain region of the world, do you sense an extension of that kind of oppression?

IYER: You don't have a pattern of police shooting Muslims on sight. You do have outbreaks, or a pattern of lone white gunman attacking Sikh temples or mosques. And that's horrible, tragic, and I fight that.

I guess I'm careful about aligning these newer narratives with these deeply rooted ones because unfreedom is at the core of this country and it's a particular kind of unfreedom that had to do with the revoking of personhood from Africans. That was there from the beginning. That was there before we had a Declaration of Independence and a Constitution.

There are histories of exclusion, which are almost as old in the way that policy is related to perceptions of foreignness and, in particular, non-Western foreign difference—that's also a defining characteristic of this country. So I'm always thinking about my relationship to all of that.

However, there's also a way for Asian Americans to say "we're oppressed too" but that's also commensurate with centuries of domination. That's the kind of thing I think about every day because I then start thinking about what I can do from the position I'm in. I can try to spin a narrative or a homily about Asian and African solidarity, or I can try to assert that "we're all oppressed too" kind of stuff.

But, I can also try to enact a vision of how that might change through the practice of collaboration and performative enactment of community in music making. I try to be present, humble, and listen to people who are actually in those subject positions and see what I can do with them, for them. Sort of surrender to the positions that they're in and let them inform me on what makes a good ally.

That's the position I see myself in because it's hard for me to say I'm oppressed too when I'm a MacArthur Grant-winning, tenured Harvard professor. I'm tenured! [laughs] I don't have much to complain about. But what I have to do instead is to put that to use. That's really what any of us with any amount of privilege have to do. Not just what should you do, but what you have to do. Every chance we get.

AAPR: I'm fascinated by the charge you have for social justice. Has this fire and awareness of what you can contribute to this kind of discourse always been with you?

IYER: It's an ongoing discovery for me.

AAPR: I mean, I can't imagine you had these kind of thoughts when you were in your high school jazz band or university jazz combos—or maybe you did.

IYER: No, no, not so much. I didn't think that people were even paying attention to me [laughs]! "Who cares what I think," I thought [laughs].

Well, it happened in the Bay Area in a way. It happens to a lot of people there. A certain kind of consciousness dawns because there is a certain kind of solidarity there that emerges that is astonishing. You don't see in many

other places in the US.

And then there were particular groups I fell in with during my time there. The most pivotal along these lines was Asian Improv. They are a collective of Asian American musicians making radical, creative music that was inspired by the Black radical tradition. But not just inspired by, but also in direct dialogue with those artists. Some of these people actually worked with Amiri Baraka and Black activists in Oakland. They used music as a kind of community organizing among Asian Americans in the area. They brought in aspects of their heritage into the music in a critical way, in a really creative and interesting way—not to try to make stuff that sounded Asian but to sort of performatively engage with identity.

The other thing was that I was always presented in an activist context, in a community-organizing context. So then they invited me to hang around and put out records on their label and play in their festivals, things like that. I ended up learning from them. And they presented a clear example for me on how I might find my own way, being who I am in the context of this music. These were individuals like Jon Jang, Francis Wong, Mark Izu, Miya Masaoka, and a few others. They were all really influential to me. They gave me an important context for me to try some ideas and figure out my relationships to all of this.

So between that and working with these African American visionary artists like Steve Coleman, George Lewis and others, I found that music is always about community. I mean, it's about ideas too [laughs]. It's rigorous and there's a system behind it and it's very carefully conceived, but political questions are never outside the frame.

AAPR: There's a connection between your new album and your upcoming residency at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. What can your listeners expect from both experiences?

IYER: The album is called *A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke*. It's a collaborative effort with Wadada Leo Smith, a legendary trumpet player, composer, and experimental musician. Totally brilliant—he's nurtured me. I was in his band for several years and I learned a tremendous amount from that experience. He's originally from Mississippi and then moved to Chicago where he was part of the AACM—Association of Creative Musicians—a collective of Black experimental musicians from the Southside of Chicago. He was shortlisted for the Pulitzer Prize recently, and [is] a tremendously accomplished visionary. We just had a chance to make a duo album, and that's just what it is [laughs].

As for the Met engagement—as part of their events when they open at the Met Breuer next month, they'll be hosting an exhibit of works from an artist named Nasreen Mohamedi, this artist from India who made these abstract pen ink drawings that are really incredible. They're hard to describe. But, they commissioned me to do something that was in response to her work. Wadada and I brought this duo together and jointly created a suite of music and an album. The title comes from her writings, so it's partly us building off the relationship we had for some time—almost twenty years now—and partly us responding to her work, her life, and her artistry.

AAPR: To close our conversation, what would you say to budding Asian American musicians or creatives out there? Especially to those who are unsure about whether to pursue their artistry or something more “safe?”

IYER: You have to be passionate. If you want to become a musician, it has to be because you are passionate about music. Not because of the business, not about success, not about winning or proving anything to anybody. It has to be about the music first and foremost. The music is what will lead you to make the right choice.

The other thing is music is its own reward because it does something that nothing else does, and to have it in your life is a gift. If you want to simply achieve success, you shouldn't be going into music because that's not a reason to go into it. And if you do go into it, you probably won't succeed. Even the great ones don't. And even if they do, they have periods of success and periods of the opposite. They experience great losses in their lives.

It's very hard to sustain a lifelong career in music. I mean, life is long and it only keeps getting longer [laughs]. You'll probably live at least ten years longer than I will. You have to have a long view of these things. Do you want to make music for the next seven or eight decades? And if so, how are you going to make it worthwhile for yourself, and not in the sense of what seems like immediate questions like paychecks and stuff [laughs], but more like what will be the guiding questions and guiding principles that will sustain you as an artist for your whole life. That's the real question. That's much more real than any of those other questions because a life is long, you know? Signing up for this kind of thing for your whole life? You really have to be serious about it.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

ASIAN IN THE DECADE OF HOPE

EIGHT AXIAL POEMS*
BY CHIORI MIYAGAWA

* Axis (n): a straight line about which a body or a geometric figure rotates; one of several imaginary lines describing the positions of the planes by which a crystal is bounded; the second vertebra of the neck on which the head and first vertebra turn on a pivot.

- The Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Holding

On the night of the second victory,
I stayed up late waiting for his speech.
I danced with my husband, *Born to Run*.

When he came on the Chicago stage,
life was good. No surrender.
But where was his Asian sister?
In the colorful celebratory circle,
no Asian people were seen.
A runaway American dream.

Queen of Shangri-La

I was at dinner, a white table cloth, gnocchi, asparagus.
There was news that a polling place in New York City
was requiring Asian voters to recite the pledge of allegiance.
One young white woman at the table was appalled
and whipped her lap with the cloth restaurant napkin.
"We don't have a problem with Asians!" she paused not
having said enough, then added, "Not right now!"

I sank heavily down under the table into my own pool of
vomit without an antidote. The fate of assimilation was
as powerful as a curse. I had gouged out my eyes
like Oedipus, a preemptive action to dodge the fate of killing
my culture and marrying a white man. I may have been here
forever. No backup force was coming my way.

Some years later, I'm told "Asians are not underrepresented,"
in a meeting about making piles of jet-inked papers.
Excuse me? I say in a noticeable non-Asian-woman tone.
Wait. Slipping and sliding, I had managed to become
a tight-rope walker. I shouldn't float all that mainstream
success over Niagara Falls. Besides, who cares? We were
a l r e a d y n o t u n d e r r e p r e s e n t e d .

So I've decided to become Queen of Shangri-La
(dreamed by a white man in authentic English, unmistakably
Asian without a threat or bother.)
The next time white people tell me I'm blind or they are
color-blind, I can simply excuse myself from the table

saying:

*I'm Queen of Shangri-La,
My position is an exhausting one.*

POETRY

The One and Only

In the desert of Afghanistan,
darkness coughs and chokes
while dreams of steam raise
in faraway hometown.
Subway, soup, streets crowded,
translations are always needed.

The enemy wasn't the enemy.
It was us, who was them, who wasn't him.
Eat the same food in friendly hellhole
while tasting metallic missteps.
The number six doesn't stop at
ceaseless unfertile souls.

Memories could confuse the fever.
It was his unlucky year.
He should have never flown.
He should have never.

I'm still thinking about you.

—For Private Danny Chen (1992–2011)

Unrequited Love

It began in November.
I was a winner for several months,
a heart samurai in waiting.
The country was mine, time
was mine, and winter mild.

Except I never sent in my rsvp.
The next winter began severe,
wrecked my character with
blizzards the size of everyman.

Today, the cupboards look excellent,
yet traces of tea in the big white house
are withering while I keep looking for
my invitation to the anniversary bash.

I tiptoe around the radio
anticipating the word
no one is going to say,
not even at the end of the show.
The word for us 5.6%.

Shadow Hero

He looks down to his left,
which of course is our right,
our day, his night,
our future, his unknown.
From Russia with love.

Sometime before, I was in love
with our nation's First, proud of
his sentences. His height and heart.
Occasional charming grins
meant for me through TV.

Lately I've hung on, surfing the
allegiance of explanation, exasperation,
mortification, and back on my feet again,
shaking off bitter dust. After all, our
First wakes to a heap of daily loathing.

But now, there is this American
in Moscow. It's a hell of an irony.
He is young, white, and even on Skype,
good-looking. Speaks like an Ivy Leaguer.
The crushing virtue of his heroism.

You didn't single-handedly kill my love of
our First. I had already been telling myself:
We made history. Is this right?
I don't know how to end this song.

—For Edward Snowden (1983–present)

Save the City by Dying

Sitting in a patrol car, protecting their streets and
soiled Institutions. Made news for a few weeks,
some details omitted. The man who killed
two policemen didn't live in New York City,
wasn't protesting against brutality or disparity.
The killer was just an insane outsider killer, still
he chose his targets carefully.

Liu and Ramos, ransoms paid in a time of
madness, unluckily-colored cops in blue.
If they were white, the city would have
burned, military tanks rolled, protest signs
outlawed, interracial friendship banned,
red bandanas barred, lights flashing,
the news, bigger and louder and longer,
reporting consequences of capitalist rage.

Liu was an immigrant,
like the Irish once were,
like the entire Chinatown is,
every Chinatown, all the Asians
—registered voters, scientists,
computer programmers,
bankers, restaurant workers,
and playwrights—*foreign*.

Liu's *un-Americanness* saved the city.
We mourned. And then we forgot.
There were no fires. No curfews.

Quietly you go,
Wenjian Liu.
I'm thinking about you.

—For Officer Wenjian Liu (1982–2014)

Mornings

After seven years, my entire wardrobe is coming apart and I don't have a thing to wear to the supposedly important hearing. Mornings are the hardest. I don't even have a minute to brush my teeth and hair before I'm knocked down flat by the forces not even intending to hit me. Not even aware that I'm standing here. Asians, we tend to blend into pastel-colored flower wallpapers, not native, always slightly exotic. It has been like this for years, but I still can't admit to myself I don't need a new outfit, there is no support group, no revolution, only the make-believe of me. You don't see. I'm not here.

Holding (Again)

In the middle of utter chaos, someone like me
should not write an autobiography.
It can lead to cancelation of my first and second
languages swirling around the foot of Sierra
Mountains, in the ruins of a makeshift town with
temporary street signs. I've been a tourist.

And all over the free world, new detention
centers are opening, yet to be abandoned
to the future, built to stop someone else's desire
by people who already have it. How will I visit
t h e s e f o r b i d d i n g p l a c e s ?

I'm a global tourist, busy making travel plans
for tragedy on another side of the world, only to
m i s s t h e t r a i n a g a i n .
I'm Citizen Dream. Rickety but holding.



CHIORI MIYAGAWA IS A NEW YORK CITY-BASED PLAYWRIGHT AND WAS A RADCLIFFE ADVANCED STUDY FELLOW AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY FROM 2008 TO 2009. HER PLAYS ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR MAGIC REALISM AND POETIC QUALITY. THEY HAVE BEEN PRODUCED BY OFF-BROADWAY THEATERS AND AT RENOWNED PERFORMANCE SPACES IN NYC AND REGIONALLY. TWELVE OF HER PLAYS ARE COLLECTED IN TWO BOOKS: THOUSAND YEARS WAITING AND OTHER PLAYS BY SEAGULL BOOKS AND AMERICA DREAMING AND OTHER PLAYS BY NOPASSPORT PRESS. HER PRODUCTIONS INCLUDE THIS LINGERING LIFE (Z SPACE, SAN FRANCISCO), I HAVE BEEN TO HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (OHIO THEATER, PRODUCED BY VOICE & VISION THEATER); ANTIGONE PROJECT (WOMEN'S PROJECT), AMERICA DREAMING (VINEYARD THEATER), NOTHING FOREVER AND YESTERDAY'S WINDOW (NEW YORK THEATRE WORKSHOP) AND OTHERS. SHE HAS BEEN AN ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE AT NEW YORK THEATER WORKSHOP, WHERE SHE DESIGNED AND MANAGED THE FIRST PHASE OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM FOR PLAYWRIGHTS OF COLOR, AND AN ASSOCIATE ARTIST OF DIRECTOR JOANNE AKALAITIS AT THE PUBLIC THEATER, WHERE SHE DESIGNED AND MANAGED ASIAN AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS WORKSHOPS. SHE IS A RECIPIENT OF MANY FELLOWSHIPS INCLUDING A NEW YORK FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS PLAYWRITING FELLOWSHIP, A MCKNIGHT PLAYWRITING FELLOWSHIP, A VAN LIER PLAYWRITING FELLOWSHIP, AN ASIAN CULTURAL COUNCIL FELLOWSHIP, A ROCKEFELLER BELLAGIO RESIDENCY FELLOWSHIP IN ITALY, AND A MAP FUND FROM CREATIVE CAPITAL. SHE IS AN ALUMNUS OF NEW DRAMATISTS (2006–2013) AND A FACULTY MEMBER IN THE THEATER AND PERFORMANCE PROGRAM AT BARD COLLEGE WHERE SHE TEACHES PLAYWRITING. *PHOTOGRAPHED BY JODY CHRISTOPHERSON



HARVARD Kennedy School

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