

# ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW

Volume IV • 1994

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## INTERVIEWS

**Michael Woo, Former Los Angeles City Councilmember**

**Linda Wong, Co-Chair of RLA**

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## FEATURE ARTICLES

**The Power of Collective Voice**

*Kathy Yep*

**Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit**

*Henry Der*

**Asian Americans in Government**

*Pan S. Kim*

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## COMMENTARY

**"No Filipinos Allowed:" From Stockton 1930 to Washington 1993**

*Gloria Megino Ochoa*

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Reflections on A Different Mirror**

*James Toma*





The *Asian American Policy Review* is published annually by an editorial board of graduate students at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley.

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ASIAN  
AMERICAN  
POLICY  
REVIEW

Volume IV

Political Empowerment in the Asian Pacific American Community

John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University

Graduate School of Public Policy  
University of California at Berkeley

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eaders may recognize an echo of the past in this, the fourth edition of the *Asian American Policy Review*. Like our predecessors, we on the *Policy Review* are committed to providing a scholarly, non-partisan forum to discuss contemporary issues and events. By providing a bridge between academia, activism and public policy, we seek to encourage dialogue about and within the Asian Pacific American community, as well as shape and influence the policies affecting the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States.

The *Policy Review* counts elected officials, practitioners and scholars among its contributors. Their articles, interviews, and commentaries offer the public an informed lens to the latest issues and events affecting Asian Pacific Americans. It is no wonder, then, that after only five years of publication, the *Policy Review* has served as required reading for courses taught at the University of California, San Diego, and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. In the past year, we have received requests from the halls of Congress, and mayoral offices around the country for copies of our earlier editions. Volume I has since sold out, and we expect our other editions to soon follow.

Our themes have varied. Pieces on immigration, education, health care, and domestic violence have all appeared in past volumes. And yet, despite this wide spectrum of voices and issues, readers of the *Policy Review* will find a common thread that ties our volumes together: the challenge of recognizing and wrestling with the ethnic, generational, and regional diversity within the Asian Pacific American community. We believe the *Policy Review* is one avenue for our community to emphasize shared concerns and overcome past differences in efforts to promote political organization and representation.

Our latest publication is no exception. Volume IV: *Political Empowerment within the Asian Pacific American Community* grapples with the politics of our diversity yet again. The interviews with former Los Angeles mayoral candidate **Michael Woo** and Rebuild Los Angeles Co-Chair **Linda Wong** offer two different paths to urban renewal. Whereas Woo encourages Asian Pacific Americans to pursue elective office and careers in government, Wong considers community involvement and private sector initiatives as the real catalysts of change. Both Woo and Wong, however, agree that Asian Pacific Americans must participate more directly in the political life of American society if their needs are to be addressed.

Collective mobilization is a central theme in **Kathy Yep's** article on anti-Asian violence.



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Yep shows how Asian Pacific Americans, responding to a rise in anti-Asian violence and the poor responsiveness of public officials, have formed secondary institutions to voice their concerns and demonstrate against racial injustice. As the Executive Director of Chinese for Affirmative Action, **Henry Der** would be the first to recognize the importance of collective action. However, as he notes in his article on San Francisco school integration, Asian Pacific Americans must be careful not to pit themselves against each other or other minority groups.

The need for outside activism may decrease as more Asian Pacific Americans assume positions in the public sector. Government then should be more sensitive to concerns within the community. But, as **Pan S. Kim** outlines in his survey of Asian Pacific Americans in the public sector, their numbers remain few. The commentary by **Gloria Megino Ochoa**, however, suggests that times are changing. Although Ochoa narrowly lost her race for Congress, she nevertheless gained broad support from a variety of groups. The example Ochoa and Woo have set should send a strong signal to other Asian Pacific Americans that their ethnicity is no longer a barrier to political office.

Finally, Volume IV features our first book review. **James Toma** offers his critique of Ron Takaki's *A Different Mirror*, which chronicles the immigrant experiences of seven ethnic/racial groups as they forge an identity for themselves within this country.

Volume IV, like the editions preceding it, represents the bi-coastal efforts of graduate students at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. Funding for this edition was made possible through the generous contributions of the Parker Montgomery Fund, Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc., the Graduate School of Public Policy, the Office of the Dean of the Graduate Division, and the Asian American Studies Department at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Kennedy School Student Government at Harvard University. A special word of thanks goes to Pete Zimmerman, Joseph Cerny, and Joe Castro for their support and encouragement throughout the past year.

D.C.K

J.S.

P.Y.T.

*Cambridge*

*January, 1994*



## An Interview with Michael Woo

*Michael Woo was a fellow at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University in the Fall of 1993. Prior to his fellowship, he was a member of the Los Angeles City Council for eight years, and was a finalist for the Los Angeles mayoral race in 1993, receiving 46% of the vote. In the last several months, Mr. Woo has spent his time speaking to numerous Asian American audiences around the country. In 1994, he announced his candidacy for the position of Secretary of State of California. Mr. Woo also plans to teach part-time.*

**Q:** Was there an event in your life that inspired you to enter public service?

**A:** I don't think there was any single event. As I was growing up, my family encouraged me to think about getting involved in politics. Both my grandfather and my father were very actively involved in the Chinese community. In fact, my father, who was more involved in Republican party politics, became the "man to see" for politicians who were trying to understand the Los Angeles Chinese community.

My own political views were somewhat different than my father's. Nevertheless, I always grew up with the expectation that adults would be involved in activities beyond the immediate family

and the family business. So, in a way, my career was an extension of what was possible for the earlier generations in my family.

**Q:** Did you find it hard to develop political views different from your parents, especially your father?

**A:** We would have disagreements that probably were more pronounced when I was an adolescent or a college student than today. But I think it's just a matter of accommodating differences. My success in politics became a source of vicarious pleasure for my family (*laughter*) even though they may not have shared my political views.

**Q:** You mentioned your college days. Wasn't the University of California at Santa Cruz a hotbed of radicalism?



**A:** Oh, I think that's an overstatement. Santa Cruz was one of the less political campuses of the UC system, particularly because it was so removed from urban centers and because the academic life of the university was so all-encompassing.

**Q:** Were you involved in student politics?

**A:** Well, when I was an undergraduate there really wasn't much in the way of student politics in the sense of student government. In fact, I think many students prided themselves on the absence of a student government. On the other hand, many of the broader national causes that swept across the country affected Santa Cruz. I remember in 1969 going to my first demonstration in San Francisco, a march against the war in Vietnam. I remember participating -- by participating I mean sitting in the audience -- in teach-ins about the war. In the spring of my freshman year in college, I became involved in my first political campaign helping a Congressman who was seeking the Democratic nomination for the US Senate. This was my introduction to politics.

My interest in politics was furthered

during my undergraduate years in college, but it wasn't because Santa Cruz was a hotbed of radicalism.

**Q:** You've attained a certain amount of success now. What would you say were some of the political hurdles that you had to overcome? What advice would you give to people entering public life about how to overcome those hurdles?

**A:** Well, first of all, as an Asian American

interested in running for public office, it is essential to consolidate one's support within one's own ethnic community, because it is essential to develop a financial base to be a candidate. There are few situations in which Asian Americans can comprise

an effective voting base, but they can do a lot in terms of both fund raising as well as volunteering in campaigns. An Asian American candidate needs to be able to start out with a consolidated base of support from his or her own community.

Beyond that, an Asian American cannot win an election without the ability to build coalitions with other groups. This second goal does not necessarily conflict with the first, but it may be difficult for

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other groups.**



some Asian American candidates to accomplish both.

In my case I think I've been largely successful at both, although obviously in the most recent election not as well as I would have liked. But I think this is the dilemma Asian American candidates face that most candidates of other ethnic backgrounds do not.

**Q: In terms of building coalitions, what type of person votes for Mike Woo?**

**A:** Well, I should first point out that I lost my first election for city council partly because I wasn't able to put a coalition together in my 1981 campaign. I had difficulty in my first campaign because a lot of non-Asian voters did not think I could represent their needs. I was only able to succeed in winning the election four years later because I'd had that much more experience reaching out to people of different backgrounds.

In my case, certain issues became prominent because I was involved in municipal politics. Another Asian American candidate, looking at the state level or federal level, would probably see a different array of issues.

But in my case the issues which crossed ethnic lines were issues such as stopping overdevelopment in hillside

areas, or encouraging desirable commercial development in the decaying parts of Hollywood, or issues about crime and safety. These are some of the issues that brought me forward in the first place back in 1985.

**Q: What made you run for the council in 1981 and in 1985? What made you think you would win?**

**A:** Well, I'd been interested in the quality of life in cities for a long time - that's why I went to graduate school in city planning. My subsequent work, both for a nonprofit organization in San Francisco and as a legislative aide, was focused on many of these same issues. Therefore, it was very natural for me to get involved in city government.

My first campaign in 1981 took place because I was ready to do something else. In addition, I was familiar with the issues in the district because the council district overlapped the state senate district of the state senator I'd worked for. I thought I was ready for it. I didn't know if I would win; but I did think this race was winnable.

**Q: During your recent campaign, some considered you visionary in your approach to reviving Los Angeles. Some of your opponents thought you were mis-**



guided. Both camps, however, would agree that you don't fit the mold of someone with a city planning degree. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

**A:** I think that's a fair assessment, but I would add that most people don't know what city planners do (*laughter*)! Unlike lawyers and doctors and others, city planners don't have an identifiable public image. I think there is a very foggy notion at best of what city planners do. On one hand that worked in my favor. When I was campaigning, people assumed that my graduate school training prepared me for holding office (*laughter*)!

On the other hand, I think there are some people who have a negative image of city planners based on a bad personal experience they've had. There are different images of the planning profession out there. In general, I would say the general public does not understand what planners do and what city planning is about.

### **Mentors**

**Q:** You mentioned earlier your political differences with your father. Can you tell us about how your political views were shaped?

**A:** Well, first of all, let me distinguish between the historical circumstances that

shaped my father's political views and those that shaped mine. I think we reflect differences not only in generations but in political eras. My father, like many other immigrants from China or other places around the Pacific Rim, came to this country to seek opportunity and to flee Communism. During the 1940's and 1950's, the Republican Party was more staunchly anti-Communist and more staunchly pro-business than the Democratic Party. This, combined with some personal experiences with the government officials who helped reunite our family in the United States, led not only my father but also my mother and my grandfather to identify with the Republican Party.

These factors are still at play with many Asian American immigrants who come here today, whether we're talking about Korean Americans or Chinese Americans or others.

In fact, in my family's case, then Senator Richard Nixon introduced a special bill in the Senate to enable my grandmother to come here from China in spite of the restrictive immigration quotas. This was not that unusual a practice, but it made my family very grateful. Otherwise it might have taken them many more years to reunite. These personal reasons combined with broader ideological beliefs



regarding anti-Communist and pro-business policies helped make my family more Republican than Democratic. There were also some innate cultural affinities in terms of the conservatism within the Chinese community.

My political views were shaped during high school and college in the 1960's and the early 1970's, when the issues were very different. Instead of looking at the world from the point of view of an immigrant who was seeking to establish a small business or someone who had fled from Communism, my vantage point was as an Asian American making career decisions as an assimilated American as well as one facing some of the larger issues of race and poverty in urban areas. And of course the overwhelming issue at that time was the Vietnam War, which led me more naturally into the Democratic Party.

So I think that if you examine the difference in the historical eras when my political views were shaped versus the time when my parents' political views were shaped, it's understandable how we ended up differently.

**I was not going to be a morning glory candidate who would disappear. . . I had a serious commitment to the community.**

**Q: Did you have any particular mentors?**

**A:** I could probably mention several individuals. Senator David Roberti, who is now the president *pro tem* of the California Senate, was one. He offered me a job in Sacramento which was instrumental to my political career. He not only helped me learn the ropes in Sacramento, but also encouraged me when I decided to step out

on my own and run for the city council.

Some of my professors at Berkeley had a major impact on me. Professor T.J. Kemp Jr., a former Berkeley city councilman as well as a former planning director of San Francisco, embodied for me a combination of interests in electoral politics as well as a serious commit-

ment to city planning.

Allan Jacobs, the head of the planning school at Berkeley, had a major impact on me. He taught me to understand case studies in urban planning and to look at cities in analytical ways. Leonard Duel, who is a public health professor at Berkeley and my graduate school advisor, guided me to ways of thinking about social change.



**Running For Office**

**Q:** That's great. What advice would you give to younger Asian Americans who want to get involved in the public sector or politics?

**A:** First of all, I would encourage them to get a good education. I think the value of an education cannot be underestimated, no matter how much that sounds like a cliché. Then I would also encourage young people to experiment with different kinds of roles and take advantage of the flexibility of youth and opportunities to travel and see other parts of the world or the country. I think that's very important.

I didn't do as much of that as I would have wanted to, although I've done more traveling in the last few years. It's very broadening. It's also an opportunity that is easier to take advantage of when young. In terms of politics, I would encourage young people to get experience by working either as interns, volunteers, or paid staff in some capacity to see what the system is really like.

**Q:** Do you think risk-taking is important?

**A:** Unfortunately, yes (*laughter*). But I think that the risks can be managed, because I think there's a difference between the risk of a career path with less

financial security than becoming a doctor versus the risk involved in running for public office. That's not to say that all Asian Americans who are interested in politics have to run for public office. There are many different ways, either through staff positions, appointed roles, or other kinds of roles, which would enable Asian Americans to get more involved than they are today.

**Q:** You talked about how developing a coalition and consolidating a base was a key feature of your second campaign. What were some of the issues involved?

**A:** Well, after I lost my first election, I wasn't sure what I really wanted to do. It was not my goal at that time to run for the city council or for some other public office again. So I went back to work for Senator Roberti, but instead of going back to Sacramento, I stayed in Los Angeles and worked over the next several years with many of the groups I'd met during the course of my first campaign. This helped send the message that I was not going to be a morning glory candidate who would disappear after the campaign was over but rather that I had a serious commitment to the community.

I settled down. I became a homeowner for the first time. I worked with



many different groups to resolve concerns such as the fear of opening up a garbage dump in Griffith Park. Consequently, this enabled me to work with neighborhood groups, the Sierra Club, and even elderly renters who lived in the district. I think this helped to alleviate fears that I was only getting involved in the community for personal political reasons.

**Q:** So few Asian Americans actually run for political office. Since you've been there, perhaps you can shed some light on the whole process. What exactly does one do? What's the day-to-day routine?

**A:** Well, the daily routine of a candidate varies depending on what kind of office the candidate is running for. In my case, running for city council was a full-time job. I had to take a leave of absence from my regular job which meant, first of all, that I had to have enough money saved up to live on or have some other source of income to be able to campaign for several months without a regular income.

It also meant that I had to be able to put together a base of support. In building this base you rely on your past contacts, your past associations, and your past relationships with other people. A campaign depends in large degree on the ability to raise money. Unless the candidate is inde-

pendently wealthy, he or she will have to raise money from other people to accomplish the goals of the campaign. This is an extremely important precondition which a wise candidate should not ignore (*laughter*).

But the candidate also has to make a clear appraisal of the possibility of winning, of analyzing the realistic prospects for putting votes together in a campaign.

**Q:** Did you spend much time during the campaign to raise money?

**A:** It varied from campaign to campaign. In my 1981 and my 1985 campaigns before I was elected, I spent a large part of my day on the telephone raising money. I would spend a large part of my morning raising money, and in the afternoon go out and walk door-to-door to meet the voters. Then in the evening I'd schedule events in the district to meet voters or raise money.

So I would summarize the main requirements of a candidate are to raise money, meet voters, and make a good impression on them. That's about it. Some first-time candidates make the mistake of trying to run their own campaign. That is, they try to be their own campaign manager. This is understandable given the degree of personal commitment which a political candidacy requires. But I consider a candidate's involvement in cam-



campaign management to be a distraction from the main two goals which again are raising money and making positive impressions on people.

The extent to which a candidate worries about whether his bumper sticker are gold and blue or green and orange distracts him from what needs to be done.

### **Asian American Candidacy**

**Q:** Can Asian American candidates ever avoid being labeled as just "Asian American" candidates?

**A:** I think that it is possible for an Asian American candidate to transcend that ethnic label but only after establishing his or her credentials beyond the label. For example, in my case, my 1989 reelection campaign had very little to do with my ethnic background. I think in my first two campaigns, I had to prove myself to non-Asian voters, by demonstrating that I could understand the needs of non-Asian constituents. And so I had to find ways to prove that in spite of my Chinese background I would be a supporter of the state of Israel; that I could be a defender of the rights of young Latinos; or that I would regularly attend the April 24th commemoration of the massacre of Armenians at the hands of the Turks. I had to be able to demonstrate that my ethnic background

was not a barrier to my effective advocacy on the part of my constituents.

Once I got elected in 1985 and actually served as councilman and took positions on issues unrelated to my ethnic background, I was able to successfully transcend my ethnicity. So by 1989 it wasn't really a factor in my re-election campaign.

But it meant that in the intervening four years between my 1985 election and my 1989 election, I had to carry two burdens: first, demonstrating to my electoral constituents in the 13th council district that I would be fighting hard on their behalf. second, demonstrating to my Asian American supporters, most of whom were outside of my district, that I would not turn my back on them or ignore them after winning the election.

It's natural for one's earliest and most enthusiastic supporters to wonder what the newly elected candidate is going to do for them. But if I became so preoccupied with the Asian American communities to the detriment of my service to my electoral constituents, then I would be caught in a terrible bind. I think I was able to effectively deal with those simultaneous burdens enough so that, during my 1989 election, Asian Americans generally didn't feel I was ignoring them, and my constituents also felt by a 71% margin that I was doing a good job for them.



**Q:** Do you think in the recent mayoral election, you had to make a conscious effort not to portray yourself as being too close to the Asian American community?

**A:** I don't think I had to do that any more so than I did during my city council campaigns. That is, I don't think it's necessary for me to disavow the Asian American communities (*laughter*). But I think the greater challenge is demonstrating what I would do to work with other people. I ran into the same problem in the mayoral campaign as in my 1981 city council campaign. There were people in many parts of the city who really didn't know me well. It wasn't so much that I would only care about Asian Americans, but I think that among many long time residents of the city there was a perception

I cared more about ethnic minorities than I did about Caucasians.

For example, I was at a wedding of two Vietnamese Americans one Sunday, and a Chinese American supporter came up to me and expressed concern about whether I had aligned myself too closely with African-Americans during the campaign. He said that he knew of Chinese

Americans who otherwise might have been my supporters, but were disturbed that I seemed too close to Blacks.

**Q:** Do you think that's due to racism within the Asian American community?

**A:** I think that it may reflect some anti-Black bias among Asian Americans. But it also reflects a valid point about the need of my campaign to reach out to white voters more. It also raises a point about the diversity of the Asian American communi-

ty itself. Many non-Asian Americans perceive that there is a single unified Asian American community. In reality an Asian American candidate has to find a way to persuade Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Thai

Americans, Indo-Americans and many others that he or she can relate to their communities. Even within those communities there are divisions.

Take the Chinese community for example. The Cantonese-speaking people may feel neglected if one pays too much attention to Mandarin speaking people. Or those who are close to mainland China

**it's popular for  
politicians to blame  
immigrants because  
immigrants . . .  
can't participate  
in the process.**



may feel offended if one shows openness to Taiwan. There are so many different ways in which a community can be divided, and yet a candidate has very limited time in which to build bridges.

It can be a fatal distraction for the candidate to have to spend too much time building support within the community that ought to be among the candidate's earliest supporters.

**Q: Given that Asian Americans are not monolithic, do you think there could ever be a pan-Asian political agenda?**

**A:** It's hard to say in the short term because there is so much diversity within the community. A short term agenda might include small business needs, public education, and joint efforts against racial discrimination. It may be instructive for Asian Americans to think about analogies between Asian Americans and Jewish Americans.

One hundred years ago, it may have been more difficult to build coalitions between Jews from Russia, Jews from Germany, and Jews from the Middle East. And yet over a period of time, and partially in response to bitter experiences such as the Holocaust, the Jewish community has been able to manage a remarkable degree of public unity.

The distinctions between Asians from different countries around the Pacific Rim are likely to stay intact for a long time, particularly as immigration results in an increase in the number of Asian Americans here. But over time it may be possible for Asian Americans, particularly the younger generation of Asian Americans, to learn to work together with other Asian Americans more effectively than in the past.

**Q: Because many have a common language now - English?**

**A:** Yes (*laughter*).

**Q: You mentioned that you having to balance the interests of your constituents and also keep in mind the interests of Asian Americans who aren't part of your district. How do you feel you've been as a role model, and also as a representative of the Asian American community?**

**A:** I have looked for opportunities to work with the community. I spent a lot of time going out to events in the various Asian American communities: banquets, parades, meetings of community organizations. Also, I employed Asian Americans on my staff. The position of councilman in Los Angeles is a good position to hold, in



part because each councilman has a large number of staff.

So I had more flexibility than many elected officials would have to be able to hire people of different ethnic backgrounds to work for me. But it was especially important for me to have at least one Asian American on my staff to be able to work with the Asian American community.

I've also had Asian Americans on my staff, not specifically to work with the community but to do other things not related to ethnicity. But having an Asian American on the staff was very important for me to be able to live up to people's expectation of what I needed to do.

### **Shoring Up Support**

**Q:** Despite your inclusive and multi-ethnic platform, you received less support than you wanted from the Latino, Jewish and Caucasian communities in LA. In hindsight, what do you think you could have done to increase your appeal in those communities?

**A:** Well, I suppose that's something I'll be thinking about for a long time (*laughter*). I don't really have an immediate answer. A stronger positive message earlier in the campaign would have helped. My defeat in the election, I think, can be attributed to several different factors which include the

disparity in the amount of money I raised compared to the amount of money my opponent raised and strong feelings of anti-incumbency among voters.

There was a combination of fears about the city's future which led many of these voters to support Richard Riordan rather than me. These included fears about crime, fears about ethnic change, and fears about what some people called the prospect of Los Angeles becoming a Third World city. For some voters, the choice between Richard Riordan and me became a plebiscite on the future direction of the city. That choice was compounded by our inability to come across with a calm, reassuring message for voters who felt very anxious about the city's future.

**Q:** Some Korean Americans may have felt that your ties were too strong to the African American community, especially your ties with councilman Mark Thomas. They may not have liked Mr. Thomas' comments regarding the Korean American community. How would you characterize your relationship with that community?

**A:** My relations with the Korean American community are generally good. We had a very hard-working headquarters with volunteers in Koreatown. I feel good



about the degree of enthusiasm that I was able to generate among younger Koreans Americans. Among older Koreans, there may have been the predictable reluctance of members of one Asian ethnic group to support members of another Asian ethnic group.

Also, votes that I cast may have made an impact. For example, I voted in favor of a local ordinance which made it difficult for owners of liquor stores to rebuild their businesses on their previous locations without obtaining a conditional use permit. This was a bitterly fought battle in city council. But I finally decided that I could not deny that there was an excessive concentration of liquor stores in South Central Los Angeles.

I also supported alternative ways of rebuilding those businesses or relocating those businesses to other areas. But the positions I took may have cost me some votes among Korean Americans.

Unfortunately, in politics, you can't make everybody happy at the same time. Someone who loses a vote on one day does not necessarily lose all future votes. Nor does the winner on one day always win on all subsequent votes. But those on the losing end ought to redouble their efforts to get involved in the process to change the outcome in the future.

### **Rebuilding Los Angeles**

**Q:** You mentioned the need for more than just liquor stores in South Central. What do you see as the key components - housing, business, schooling or others, that help a community grow?

**A:** When you look at an area such as South Central Los Angeles, it's hard to single out any one factor as the most essential because there's a shortage of so many crucial needs of the community: jobs, decent schools, affordable housing. I think it's important for government not to try to do too much at the same time for fear of raising people's expectation beyond the level of reality.

But it makes sense to combine answers to several of these needs. For example, if the city could provide funding to build affordable housing, not only would it satisfy a crucial need, but it could also provide jobs for people within the community and could help young people who may lack the experience or skills.

**Q:** It's been almost 17 months since the LA Riots. Do you think the problems that prompted some of the violence and looting are being adequately addressed by government or by the private sector?

**A:** I think the creation of the Rebuild LA



committee let the government - specifically the mayor and city council - off the hook. Expectations about what Rebuild LA could accomplish as a private, nonprofit organization were raised to an unrealistic level. This has led to a high degree of cynicism around the city about the future of Rebuild LA and about the general response of society to the rioting.

**Q: Public/private partnerships have been created to address similar urban unrest. Do you think that this is the most adequate paradigm?**

**A:** Public/private partnerships can make a big difference. But I think that many of the underlying causes of urban misery, not only in Los Angeles but in other cities, come back to broader national or global factors that go beyond the ability of a local public/private partnership to address.

### ***Immigration***

**Q:** You mentioned global factors. What are your feelings about the impact of immigration on our schools, and more generally on the quality of life?

**A:** Well, undoubtedly, immigration results in additional costs to the education system, the health care system and to other public services. The studies which have been conducted lead to conflicting conclusions about the overall net benefit or cost to the American society from legal and illegal immigration. So it's hard to say what the real answer is.

Nevertheless, it's popular for politicians to blame immigrants, because immi-

grants by definition are not citizens and therefore can't participate in the process. An interesting dilemma is then faced by naturalized immigrants or the sons or daughters and grandsons and granddaughters of immigrants who may be affected by general hysteria about

immigration. At this point, immigrants are still a useful target for politicians, because not many people rise to their defense, and they are an easy scapegoat for our domestic problems.

**Q:** As the number of Asian Americans and Latinos continues to grow through immigration, how can we allay the xenophobic fears alive in certain parts of Los Angeles and in parts of America?

**some people may still think of race relations as a primarily white and black issue.**



**A:** Someone should organize an educational effort to let Americans know about the positive effects of immigration on our economy, on our culture, and on other aspects of American life. Also, some way ought to be found to remind the children or the grandchildren of immigrants that they would not be here if immigration was not possible. I think there is a disturbing tendency, not only in connection with immigration but also with other subjects of public debate, for Americans to suffer from amnesia or shortness of memory about their own history.

But the larger problem is that the rise of anti-immigrant feeling can lead very naturally to hateful attitudes about anybody who looks foreign. That's the way in which American citizens are harmed by the rise of anti-immigrant hysteria.

**Q:** How do you think the perception of race impacts the policy arena, given the fact that a segment of the Asian American population isn't as well to do as portrayed in the mainstream media?

**A:** The model minority stereotype makes it difficult for Asian American leaders to convey the needs of people in the community for services. It becomes more important for those who are aware of the need to speak out and demand a fair share.

**Q:** Do you think that public policy is still driven by a Black/white paradigm?

**A:** I notice this particularly in publications coming out of the East Coast (*laughter*). So I'd say the answer is "yes" depending on the myopia of the writer. I think that it's especially complicated in Los Angeles because we have so many different groups that are competing for attention. Part of the problem in discussing these issues on a national level is that some people may still think of race relations as a primarily white and Black issue. The examples of other cities -- the multicultural experience of other cities -- do not fit this simplistic distinction. I was just reading something yesterday -- what was it -- it was an article in the *New York Times* about the NAACP and its efforts to obtain concessions from some company. The journalist habitually equated the term "civil rights" with Black and white tensions, and that was all it meant. That was just another example of a distinction that may make sense in some localities but no longer makes sense in many of the big cities of the country.

**Q:** Has government been able to respond to that new paradigm?

**A:** Well, I think it varies depending on the



setting. Mediating ethnic disputes was easier when it was only a choice of white or Black. For example, if a government agency were to offer a contract to provide some service and a white-owned company received a contract this time, then perhaps the next contract offering could be given to a Black-owned company, and there would be some feeling of parity.

That allocation of rewards is much more difficult if it's not an either/or situation but rather if there are several different groups competing for these contracts. However, there may not be enough contracts available to be able to provide one for every single group.

**Q:** How would you deal with such a situation?

**A:** Well, it varies. It may be desirable to encourage partnerships between groups that otherwise would be competing. In other words, rather than looking at a competition as something Black or white that shuts out Latinos or Asian Americans, perhaps there could be some cooperation encouraged among the different ethnic groups.

Perhaps a contract or some other kind of benefit could be broken up or divided into smaller parts so that more than one group could benefit. There are probably

creative ways to deal with this dilemma, and the larger long term need for groups that lose out is not to resign themselves to always losing out.

If a group fails to be chosen on one occasion, that shouldn't necessarily mean that they will never be chosen. There has to be some way of demonstrating fairness and equity. ■







## An Interview with Linda Wong

*Linda J. Wong is Co-Chair of RLA (formerly Rebuild Los Angeles), the non-profit group established by Mayor Tom Bradley to assist in the economic revitalization of the city after the April 1992 civil unrest. She has spent most of her professional life in the public interest arena, as Regional Counsel for the Southern California office of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and later as Executive Director for California Tomorrow and the Achievement Council.*

**Q:** How did you get first involved in the nonprofit sector?

**A:** Well, it has a lot to do with my family background. When my mother came over from China, she was quarantined on Angel Island for about six months at the age of thirteen. When she was finally released by the immigration authorities and reunited with her family, she was enrolled in the public school system in Northern California.

In those days, schools in California were segregated, so all the Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks were confined to certain schools in a local community. At that time there was no such thing as bilingual education. On her first day in school, my mother was placed in a classroom full of second graders even though she was

thirteen years old.

The teachers assumed that somehow my mother would learn English by osmosis. Of course, it never happened so she dropped out and never finished school. It was hearing what my mother experienced, as well as the discrimination that my dad encountered, that really provided the motivation for me to go into public interest law and stay there for most of my adult life.

### ***Building Bridges***

**Q:** Most community activists work within their own community. How did you come to address other communities' issues of concern?

**A:** It was purely by accident. One day out of the blue, I received a phone call from a former colleague of mine from my legal services days who asked me if I was looking for a position. He told me that



there was a staff attorney opening available over at MALDEF, and of course, I said to him, "Are you kidding? Me go to work for the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund? I mean, can't you tell who I am?"

But he really wanted me to consider it and asked me to interview with the Directing Attorney for the LA office, which I did. To my shock and chagrin, he offered me the position. I had to think about it and took about two weeks to think it over before I accepted.

**Q: Were the community groups receptive to having a diverse leadership?**

**A:** Absolutely not - neither the people in the Asian-American community nor people in the Mexican-American community. This is in the early 1980's. In addition to hostility and suspicion, I had to deal with a great deal of nationalism because people were wondering what my motives were. People within the Asian American community asked me, "Why don't you work for an Asian American organization instead?" Well, at that point in time the legal center hadn't been established yet. And even if it had

been, I thought, well, it might be better in the longer run to work for a Latino civil rights organization. As it turned out I was right.

**Q: Do you think the climate's changing?**

**A:** No, I don't. Even now, well over ten years since I started working for MALDEF, I don't encounter many people who have worked in another ethnic community

besides their own. It is still an unusual phenomenon, and it's very disappointing, because there's a lot to be gained from the experience. Not only do you begin to realize the common interests that exist between different communities but you really learn a lot and you grow as an individual.

People tend to gravitate to what is familiar. There is still an overriding

tendency for people to stay within their own community. Right now we need more of the opposite, the kind of bridge building which is still rare.

**Q: How do you think diverse communities form those bridges?**

**There is still an overriding tendency for people to stay within their own community. Right now we need . . . the kind of bridge building which is still rare.**



**A:** I think they have to take a different tack from that of the past. In the past, these kinds of ligatures were established primarily through coalitions. But coalitions are very temporary kinds of institutions where people come together in a reactive state in response to a crisis or to a particular issue.

If you work on that kind of crisis-oriented issue-by-issue basis, you don't have the opportunity to build ongoing relationships, and that's what's needed. People really have to make a concerted effort to proactively reach out to individuals and organizations outside their normal realm of being. That's happening to an increasing degree, but in the overall scheme of things it's still very unusual.

### ***Beyond Coalitions***

**Q:** Having worked with different activists in the Latino community, are there any nuggets of wisdom you've gained that could help the Asian American community.

**A:** I think all of us recognize that there are common issues that affect both communities. Certainly, the issue of education, particularly for foreign-born children affects both ethnic communities. The discriminatory effects of immigration policy at the federal level certainly has an impact

on both Latinos and Asian Americans. There are employment-related issues such as access to certain kinds of resources that have been denied to both communities. Building common ground is really important. Again, though, it needs to be done in a more consistent way, and it should not be limited simply to coalition relationships.

This can be nurtured in the colleges with the different student groups, whether they're Asian, Latino or African-American, to really make a concerted effort to work together on common issues.

In the last few years, it's been very difficult to do that because the issue of Affirmative Action, for example, has been a very divisive one, racially and ethnically. That has hurt the bridge-building efforts. But now there are other issues, particularly here in California where we have budget cuts impacting students across the board. These are concerns that could and should provide an opportunity for organizations to work together.

**Q:** You mentioned that Affirmative Action, and recent debates around higher education policy have pitted Asian Americans against Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos. How would you persuade an audience of Asian American parents that Affirmative Action is the right thing to do?



**A:** Affirmative Action plays a very critical role in leveling the playing field. Asian Americans have a very hard time understanding what that means. Most Asians, particularly those who are recent immigrants to the United States, assume that if you work hard enough, then somehow the rewards will automatically gravitate to you, but that's not the case.

It's a very difficult process, partly because within the Asian and Asian American culture, there is no tradition of volunteerism and community activism.

Let's take another more recent issue in addition to the Affirmative Action dilemma: the notion of an Asian American studies department for an undergraduate university. The contrast between what happened in UCLA over the battle for Chicano studies to what happened at Irvine for Asian American studies is really stark. Asians at Irvine were much more low key about making their demands public to leadership on the campus.

I think it would have been different had those students had more of a tradition and history of involvement in community activism. We have to nurture that involvement which is necessary regardless of what ethnic community you're talking about. And we don't have that. So it's no surprise to me that you constantly have to convince Asians of the need for

Affirmative Action, because they've not encountered those kinds of discriminatory acts that other ethnic minorities have. Or if they have, they've been more subtle and they've not felt them as much.

**Q:** You've had a certain amount of success with organizations. What kind of hurdles did you have to overcome achieve this success?

**A:** I never really had a mentor to guide me in my career or professional choices. The problem is much more serious for Asian American women than for Asian American men. But overall, the lack of a mentoring relationship or network to help you learn the rules of the game has proven to be a real disadvantage for Asian Americans.

And so when I look back at my professional life, I think that while I've gone a long way, I still have much further to go.

First, there are very few Asian American women who are in the public interest arena. Second, very few have had extensive administrative experience outside of the traditional fields of business or education.

Third, very few Asian American women are in positions of public leadership. We're beginning to see more outspoken people within our community. But



overall, I think relative to African Americans and Latinos, our numbers are very, very small. I've basically learned from on-the-job training. When you don't have a mentoring relationship or a more formalized leadership development process, then you really end up learning by trial and error.

I would not have a young person interested in the public interest field go through what I went through, because it was very hard and draining emotionally.

There is a very serious void within the Asian American community that needs to be filled to generate more people to occupy positions of leadership responsibly, and not just by reason of position or title but as genuine leaders able to inspire people.

**Q: What kind of advice would you give to Asian Americans who are interested in going into the public service arena?**

**A:** I would really encourage people to take risks, to do things that they normally would not do. I'm going to make a generalization but I think Asians, particularly younger Asians, tend to be very cautious in making their career decisions. There is family pressure to take those career paths that are relatively safe.

We live in a time of tremendous of social turmoil. But this turmoil provides a

unique opportunity to do things differently from the past, to develop new strategies, to create and nurture new institutional forms. Asians need to take that qualitative leap forward and do something that under normal circumstances they would never consider.

It is in these times of turbulence that you have the best opportunity to make long-lasting change. So we are really going through a quantum leap in the same way that our predecessors did back in the 1960's with the Civil Rights movement, when the convergence of separate movements pushed the country into a deep turmoil that was needed and proved to benefit disenfranchised communities. The paradigm is again shifting. It's not just an institutional paradigm; it is a broader societal paradigm redefining our values and how we interact with each other.

What we're experiencing now is a precursor to a very different kind of community, one that is clearly post-European. A community that may very well be, in a positive sense, multilingual, where our societal values will reflect an amalgam of traditional Western European values like individualism but are linked with a larger notion of interdependence and the importance of being part of a larger body.

It's not going to be easy, and I don't think we've hit bottom yet. The ethnic ten-



sions and racial polarization in Los Angeles will get worse. But I know race relations will get better, because the crisis will alert more people to the need to confront the issues rather than run away from them. They cannot just move to Oregon or Colorado, closing their minds off to these problems.

**Rebuild LA**

**Q:** Where do you think Rebuild L.A. fits into that shifting paradigm?

**A:** RLA can provide a different model for economic development in our disenfranchised communities. It is not an accident that the private sector has taken a lead. It's because of the vacuum left by government. The fact is our government, at the local and federal levels, no longer has the capacity to address these social problems. It doesn't have the funds, the institutional mechanisms, or the understanding.

The fact that business leadership has taken on educational reform and, through RLA, the challenge of economic development bodes well. Not all of the business leaders understand the importance of

addressing the needs of the neglected areas of LA County.

We have an opportunity to marry two different strategies -- the traditional top-down with the bottom-up process -- which is essential to working in Los Angeles. We are a huge community, in terms of population and geographic area, and there is no other way for any long-term strategy to take root other than through the bottom-up.

The historical approach to solving

social and economic problems has been for the government to come in. That's not an empowering strategy. The bottom-up strategy of getting community input and participation from the very beginning needs to be married with the top-down process. RLA has a board that reflects those

different social and economic approaches to problem solving.

In my conversations with RLA board members, I've found that this board is very unique. It brings together a room full of people who in their normal lives would never interact with each other, or have any interest in talking to each other.

Yet on the board we have the resident

**The fact is our government, at the local and federal levels, no longer has the capacity to address these social problems.**



manager for a public housing project seated at the same table with CEOs of major corporations. The board cuts across professional, geographic and racial lines.

**Q: What would you say your biggest challenge is at RLA so far?**

**A:** Developing the linkage between the private sector orientation of RLA with the bottom-up strategy of community empowerment. It's one of the most challenging tasks anybody can undertake, but it's absolutely critical. Otherwise, nothing will take root in our neglected areas. RLA needs to leave vital institutions that have the support of community residents, and will strengthen the community's economic and social fabric.

**Q: What qualities allow RLA to act as a facilitator for groups with so many different interests?**

**A:** The facilitator role evolved only after a gradual process. In the beginning it wasn't clear what specific role RLA would play in the economic revitalization of Los Angeles. The facilitator role is important in a large urban community which is as populous and spread out as is Los Angeles.

I've discovered the overall infrastruc-

ture that allows people to access resources is very weak and sometimes nonexistent. It surprises and shocks many individuals, particularly those from outside of Los Angeles. We have no system to pull together resources from a variety of sectors. In cities like Chicago, the system is much more developed.

We've learned through trial and error; it is a work in progress. RLA is a laboratory, not just an organization. It's a laboratory to develop new strategies and approaches. RLA not only intends to solve some historic problems like the disinvestment in inner cities, but also attempts to develop new relationships, both between people and agencies, and among organizations at all levels. If RLA carries out its work successfully over the next four years, then we will leave behind not only a network of individuals with working relationships but a network of organizations that heretofore had never worked together.

That in itself is extremely valuable, because we don't have the financial resources to continue to duplicate our efforts. We have to pull together the disparate efforts and organizations dispersed throughout Los Angeles.

**Q: What are RLA's goals next year?**

**A:** Our focus is to help restore economic



## **An Interview with Linda Wong**

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vitality to the neglected areas of Los Angeles. Our priority will be economic development via small business. We will work with existing small businesses in Los Angeles by helping them to stabilize, grow and create more jobs.

First, RLA will provide technical support and assistance to small business entrepreneurs. We will facilitate access to capital, allowing them to expand and hire more people. When RLA did its preliminary research on small business in LA, we found that LA has 55,000 small businesses in the neglected areas alone. This 160 square miles of community has a population of two and a half million people.

If those 55,000 small businesses hired one additional person, we could create 55,000 jobs over the next three and a half years. The obstacles to employment creation are primarily the lack of capital and technical support.

Another component of the strategy is offering alternative financing vehicles for entrepreneurs. These could include a community loan fund or an equity fund we plan to develop over the next year.

There is a third priority, and that is linking small business development with housing development. We need a better planned and conscientious housing development process. When housing is built in neglected communities, it needs to be

linked with mass transit that is accessible and affordable to local residents. Housing should be linked with economic activity, and social and health services so that people don't have to travel long distances.

We hope to create healthy communities, places with a quality of life that will allow individuals to prosper, live in safety, and provide a future for themselves and their families.

Two additional priorities are community resource development and government initiatives. The community resource development arena entails linking small business entrepreneurs with community resources, primarily day care and youth development. Small businesses don't have the revenue and capacity to build on-site day care programs for their employees. We also want to emphasize youth development. In last year's civil unrest, a large number of youth engaged in looting or arson. We need mentoring programs and other efforts focused specifically on young people from elementary school age up to the early 20's.

The final priority that we identified is government initiatives to link RLA with elected officials and government agencies at the local and federal levels.

### ***Private/Public Partnerships***

**Q:** The formation of public/private part-



nerships like RLA has followed unrest in Detroit and Newark. What is the best paradigm or model to follow ?

A: I think public/private partnership is a paradigm that is appropriate for the current conditions we live in. Had Los Angeles waited until city government responded, it would have been like *Waiting For Godot*. I am not casting blame on the mayor's office or Tom Bradley, but it was very clear that the city government did not have the capacity to take on the challenge of reconstruction. Not just reconstruction in the form of rebuilding the properties, but in laying the foundation for the development of a new Los Angeles, for neglected areas.

With a \$500 million deficit, and a mayor in his last term, Los Angeles had no assurance that any of the mayor's initiatives would continue after he left office. RLA proved to be the most viable vehicle to undertake this task.

RLA can be a model for future efforts elsewhere. There is a role for the private sector. However, there is a simultaneous

need to change the relationship between traditional business leadership and community-based leadership. They have never worked together as peers. The relationship usually has been one of philanthropy or charity, with companies giving money or other donations to community-based organizations.

The challenge RLA has for the remainder of its existence is to develop a peer level working relationship between community and private sector leaders.

Q: As one of four Co-Chairs of one of the most visible groups in LA, do you feel you were chosen to represent the voice of the Asian American community?

A: I would not be here were it not for the fact that many people within the Asian American community felt

the need to diversify the leadership of RLA. It's to the credit of RLA that it made the effort to diversify. No other organization has such ethnic and racial diversity at the leadership level.

Many people ask how I can work

**There is a role for the private sector. However, there is a simultaneous need to change the relationship between traditional business leadership and community-based leadership.**



together with three peers at the top of the leadership structure. I will not say that it is an easy process, but it is necessary. We want to send a message to the public that there is a need for diverse leadership.

In terms of my specific role as an Asian leader, one of the most glaring issues has been that of the Asian-American business people whose properties were destroyed. In the past year, RLA has been unable to take up the issue for a variety of reasons. But it has been my own priority to focus on the plight of the Asian merchants. To help them not only rebuild but convert their existing business operations into other kinds of enterprises. We need a much more diversified economic base. We have found that most minority businesses tend to be in a few narrow categories.

If you want to strengthen the economic infrastructure in the Asian community and other ethnic communities, you need a whole spectrum of economic enterprises flourishing in our communities.

**Q: What is the impact of the model minority stereotype—and how does it affect the social service needs of low income Asian Americans?**

**A:** It masks the breadth and depth of the problems within Asian American communities. The cultural reluctance among

Asian Americans to disclose social problems within their families as well as within the larger community is a major concern. We must persuade key outside leaders, in the political or philanthropic arenas, to address the serious social service needs within the Asian American community.

Leadership education for Asians, your journal, the Asian American Dispute Resolution Center—all help document the scope of the problem. We are building relationships now that will allow us to become more effective in the long term, in securing the resources that Asian American communities need. Even small businesses in the Asian American community tend to be very marginalized. Most Asian businesses have never been able to make a qualitative leap in terms of expansion and hire non-family members.

Even though Asians can utilize their extended families to obtain capital to start up businesses, they don't have access to formal financial networks that will allow them to secure additional resources for expansion.

### ***Immigration***

**Q:** Let's turn to immigration issues. Current proposals on curbing illegal immigration include the use of a tamper proof ID card to replace the Social Security card and withholding health



care benefits and citizenship rights for illegal immigrants. What impact do you think this is going to have on the Latino and the Asian American communities?

**A:** Those proposals will have absolutely no impact on stemming illegal immigration to the United States, because they miss the whole point of the phenomenon. We're seeing the consequences of a major economic restructuring taking place in all of the advanced industrialized countries. The phenomenon of undocumented immigration is not limited to the United States. We see it in Europe where it is not just a result of the civil turmoil in Eastern Europe but also of the economic disparity between the Northern European countries that have an industrialized economic base and the Southern European countries that are more rural.

The difference I see between now and the early 1980's when I became involved in the immigration issue is the economic restructuring that began primarily in heavy industries, like the automotive and steel industries, has now permeated every sector. It's throwing a lot of people out of work, who in the past would have had a secure lifetime job.

Immigration issues are not being addressed through these proposals. They're really nothing more than smoke

and mirrors. Sanctions alone will not do anything to stem the flow of undocumented immigration. Neither will the elimination of access to health and social services for undocumented immigrants. People will be a lot sicker, but it's not going to stop people from leaving their country to come to the United States.

As hard as you try to be rational and focus on what the logical strategies to solve the problem are, there is a visceral reaction that surfaces which overwhelms any kind of rational debate. The visceral reaction comes primarily from the majority of society that is white, middle class, English speaking, and which is very afraid of this immigrant community that is minority, non-English speaking with a different set of values.

That cultural collision ignites a lot of the backlash. The central solution is a long-term internal and economic development policy for developing countries that allows them to strengthen their own internal economic infrastructure, to provide the kinds of jobs that people are searching for when they come here.

Through NAFTA we have a unique opportunity to actually take a step in that direction. If we focus on those long term issues, then I think we will begin to see a decline in the phenomenon of illegal immigration. There also has to be political sta-



bility in Mexico. For example, when Jean Baptiste Aristide was in office undocumented immigration from Haiti to Southeast Florida dropped - from a flood to a trickle.

The primary reason was the hope among Haitians that they could build a democratic society. Once Aristide was overthrown, the flow of undocumented immigrants leaving Haiti escalated.

**Q: What impact does immigration have on public schooling in California?**

**A:** Immigration will push the public school system to confront its own institutional racism. And I don't use those words lightly. Normally, I don't use those words at all. But there is no doubt in my mind that the educational needs of immigrant students are not being

addressed, not only because of the lack of political support, but because the resources are not made available.

There is a gap between the school reform movement and the educational needs of immigrant and refugee students. In California, we have yet to learn what it takes to teach immigrant school children.

It is shocking that we haven't developed the knowledge to train our teachers to teach effectively in an urban classroom with a mix of students that often will speak at least ten different languages.

About 52% of all the students enrolled in our public schools in California are students of color. Limited English-proficiency students, make up about 20% of the overall student enrollment statewide in all of our public schools. By the end of this decade, that proportion will grow to one out of four. Unless we take radical steps,

we will lose a whole generation of students.

**Q: How responsive are organizations like the National Education Association and the California Teachers' Association to accrediting and providing extra pay for bilingual teachers?**

**A:** It is very controversial issue in mainstream educational organizations. They have not resolved the political conflicts over the merits of bilingual education which is usually the context in which this whole debate is placed.

The problem is that the debate focuses on getting students to learn English, not

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And I don't use  
those words lightly.**



necessarily getting them to learn history, science, and mathematics. As long as this continues, we're not going to be able to move ahead. Unfortunately, organizations like the NEA and other teachers' groups fear this issue because the debate becomes one of objective. Are you going to teach these kids English? Well, they can learn English, but they may not be able to read. I strongly believe that educators must become more vocal about the need to address the problems that immigrant students face.

By now we should have accumulated a tremendous body of knowledge about teaching students whose first language is not English, and about the kinds of instructional strategies that work for students who come from culturally diverse backgrounds.

I would hate to see anyone go through the same kind of traumatic experience that my mother went through when she first immigrated here. If you see that kind of experience repeated then we've not made any progress.

**Q:** It seems that one part of the debate is about learning English. Beyond that, it's about learning to become American. How do we get past that debate?

**A:** Los Angeles is going through a major

social shift. Notions of what we are as a community and the kinds of values that support the community infrastructure are changing, but neither deliberately nor consciously. They're changing because of the sheer impact of demographics.

Many people are afraid of the changes because they've spent their whole lives operating on certain assumptions. Many of those assumptions are based on European, Judeo-Christian concepts of individual liberty which define a set of relationships, individual and institutional.

The philosophical framework that forms the foundation of our community is being changed by people who think differently and have a very different set of social values. As we undergo this shift, we can ease the pain by ensuring that the personal relationships are strong. Then we go to the next step of building the organizational and institutional relationships.

As I said earlier, it's important to go beyond the coalition context that most communities and organizations have functioned in. We have to find a way of sustaining those relationships, whether it is working for another ethnic organization that does not focus on your own community, or making a very conscious effort to build personal working relationships that eventually will become institutionalized.

Every single community in the United



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States is going to go through a change. The only differences are the timing and the magnitude.

It's encouraging that there are people like the two of you who made the decision to go into the public arena, and go in a different direction from what most Asian students have tried over the last ten years. We lack the critical mass but I think we're getting there. ■



## The Power of Collective Voice

Kathy Yep

*Kathy Yep recently graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude from the Ethnic Studies program at the University of California, Berkeley. Working with Asian Americans for Community Involvement, she coordinated the lobbying efforts of a multiracial coalition for a Santa Clara County Hate Crimes Tracking ordinance. She also has worked with the California Fair Employment and Housing Commission researching and analyzing community responses to hate crimes. Kathy plans to attend law school to study employment and hate crimes law.*

**H**ate crimes are defined by California statutes as acts of violence, harassment, or property damage motivated by prejudice due to a victim's race, color, sex, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup> Leaving no community untouched, the prevalence of hate crimes is rapidly rising across the nation. In 1990, anti-Asian violence increased 62% nationwide. In 1991, vandalism aimed at African Americans and Jews increased 30%, and in the major metropolitan areas of the United States, anti-gay and lesbian violence increased 31%.<sup>2</sup>

Within this context of increasing hate violence directed against all groups of color, gays and lesbians, and Jewish people, Asian Pacific Americans are disproportionately targets of race-motivated crimes for their population size. A report on ethnoviolence in Boston found that the

"rate of racial violence was significantly higher in the Asian community than for any other racial group from 1983 to 1987." In New Jersey, the attorney general released a report in 1988 that listed Asians as the victims of 26% of racial-bias crimes, although Asians comprised only 1.5% of the population.<sup>3</sup>

Since the watershed beating death of Vincent Chin in 1982, anti-Asian violence has been located in the forefront of Asian Pacific American consciousness.<sup>4</sup> While the Asian Pacific American community may have a heightened sense of awareness to racial violence, the issue of anti-Asian violence has yet to be injected into the lexicon of mainstream public discourse. On April 29, 1992, a tempest of rage and fury rocked the entire nation over the miscarriage of justice in the Rodney King beating. Just a few weeks later, a white Los



Angeles Police Officer was cleared of charges for shooting two Samoan brothers, Pouvi and Italia Tualaulelei, twenty times in the back.<sup>5</sup> While both King and the Tualauleleis faced racial prejudice and concomitant police brutality, the Tualauleleis received no comparable public outpouring of support and recognition.

This differential reaction points to the eclipsed reality of anti-Asian violence and Asian Pacific American issues on the whole by the broader community. Anti-Asian violence is an area ripe for study because it has confronted Asian Pacific Americans since their arrival in the United States and because it is symptomatic of broader economic, social, and political dislocations facing the community.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Asian Pacific American communities have successfully mobilized around issues of anti-Asian violence on national, state, and local levels.<sup>7</sup>

This paper focuses on anti-Asian violence as a means to investigate questions of Asian Pacific American political participation and empowerment. Using a case-study approach, this paper analyzes the community mobilization efforts around three cases of anti-Asian violence which prompted extensive Asian Pacific American community mobilization but minimal coverage by the mainstream press: the 1989 beating of Frank and

Melvin Toy, the 1991 shooting deaths of Pouvi and Italia Tualaulelei, and the 1983 stabbing death of Thong Hy Huynh.<sup>8</sup>

The first section provides an overview of each case describing the incident, background of the community, and the type of community mobilization efforts. The next section analyzes the structure of the organizations, whether pan-ethnic or ethnic-based, and examines the role of identity politics in the selection process. Then, the paper examines the type of mobilization efforts on a continuum of reactive mobilization to proactive mobilization. Lastly, the paper explores how the socio-economic class, educational background, and occupational status influenced the placement of the community organizations along this continuum.

This study explores how the socio-economic status and ideology of different Asian Pacific American community members led to certain types of mobilization over others. Socio-economic status, defined as educational background and occupational status, plays an influential role by providing access to financial and technical resources and by providing access to an ideological structural analysis of anti-Asian violence. However socio-economic status alone does not determine the nature of Asian Pacific American mobilization; ideology and identity poli-



tics of the constituents also shape the definition of the "problem" of anti-Asian violence and subsequent "solutions."<sup>9</sup>

### **I. THE 1989 RACIAL BEATING OF FRANK AND MELVIN TOY**

In Castro Valley, California on November 25, 1989, a group of white male teenagers knocked An Won, a 20-year-old Korean man, to the asphalt with blows to the head. As An Won was repeatedly punched and kicked in the head and the body, the youths shouted, "I'm going to kill you f-cking Chinaman." Some of the teenagers then surround-

ed 28-year-old Chinese American Melvin Toy, wrestled him to the concrete pavement, and beat and kicked him in the head and body. When 59-year-old Chinese American Frank Toy attempted to pull one of the assailants off of Melvin, three teenagers jumped Frank, threw him against the concrete pavement, and kicked Frank in the head and body. Upon hearing sirens from approaching police cars, the attackers fled although one of them yelled to Melvin, "I'll be back Chinaman. You're dead Chinaman."<sup>10</sup> A few hours after the incident, Frank had visible bruises

on his neck, both shoulders, the front of both knees, and on his legs from the hip to the knees. Melvin's eyes were swollen shut and the blood vessels on his eyeballs were hemorrhaging; he continues to suffer from weekly migraine headaches which feel like "someone jabbed a knife in [his] left eye and keeps twisting it." A few days

after the racially-motivated attack, the Toys found ice cream slathered over the windows and doors of their store, the same place where the beating had occurred; and on the day the Toys filed a civil suit, the family received a death threat on their answering machine which

referred to the beating.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Community of Castro Valley**

A brief background on the suburb of Castro Valley provides context for the hate crime and for the actions of the Asian Pacific American and general community. Castro Valley is a middle class unincorporated community in southern Alameda County of Northern California. With a population of approximately 48,000 people, Castro Valley is 80% Caucasian. According to the 1990 Census, Castro Valley has 9% Chicanos, 8% Asian Pacific

**Castro Valley Asian Pacific Americans transformed their anger and terror into a source of collective action.**



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Islanders, 3% African Americans, and 0.4% Native Americans. The Castro Valley Asian Pacific American community is predominately East Asian and middle class. Many of the new Asian Pacific American residents are immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong.<sup>12</sup>

The Toy beatings were not an isolated instance of racial violence in Castro Valley. Over the years, the small population of people of color in Castro Valley have endured a wide variety of hate crimes - African American youths severely beaten by three white men who yelled racial slurs, a Palestinian American family physically and verbally threatened by a white neighbor who yelled racial epithets, and Jewish and Black homes painted with swastikas and obscene graffiti.<sup>13</sup>

Despite this history of racial violence, the over 80% white community of Castro Valley has minimized the racial overtones of the Toy beatings (i.e. "It was just a fight. Not racist.") and the brutal nature of the beatings (i.e. "I know the family [of the assailant]. He's a good boy, a minister's son").<sup>14</sup>

### ***The Beginning of Asian Americans Together (AAT)***

Six months after the beating, many members of the Asian Pacific American community were unaware that the racial-

ly-motivated beating had occurred. When friends of the Toys and former customers wrote scathing letters to the local paper about the poor response on the part of the government, County Supervisor Mary King responded by contacting the Asian Law Caucus, a civil rights organization in San Francisco, California. The Asian Law Caucus then contacted Millie Gee Poon, a former staff attorney and current resident of Castro Valley. On July 25, 1990, thirty Asian Pacific American residents of Castro Valley, including Melvin Toy, met in Supervisor King's office "to voice mutual concerns over recent racially related attacks in Castro Valley."<sup>15</sup> The informal group was named Castro Valley Asian Americans Together (AAT) and the first event organized was a community-wide meeting attended by over 150 people on August 16, 1990.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Organizational Activities***

AAT's activities are broad-based but center mostly on educational and proactive measures rather than structural or service-providing reform (see Table 1).

Castro Valley Asian Pacific Americans transformed their anger and terror into a source of collective action. A significant portion of the group's focus is on educating community members on the prevalence of anti-Asian violence, their rights,



and the resources available to them. These constructive and active efforts serve to empower community members to be aware of their rights and to demand them.<sup>17</sup>

Although AAT did not focus its energies on legal redress for the Toys, the Toys initiated and actively pursued justice through the legal system. At the end of the criminal suit, only one of the assailants, Jon Ramsdell, was tried. Ramsdell plea-bargained down from felony charges and received probation. The Toys then filed a civil suit against the

attackers and the attackers' parents. Five families settled out of court and agreed to pay a total of \$190,000. The sixth defendant, Jerry Gibbs Jr., was ordered by Alameda County Superior Court Judge Ronald Sabraw to pay approximately \$337,000 to the Toys for "medical expenses and other damages."<sup>18</sup>

## II. THE SHOOTING DEATHS OF POUVI AND ITALIA TUALAULELEI

On February 12, 1991, at 11:41 p.m., Compton police officer Alfred Skiles, a 42-year-old white male, was dispatched to

**Table 1: Summary of Asian Americans Together's Activities**

<b>EDUCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Textbook Evaluation:</b> reviewed state-approved social science textbooks</li> <li>• <b>Faculty Diversity:</b> evaluated "affirmative action" plan; lobbied for specific hiring positions for teachers of color</li> <li>• <b>Educational Outreach:</b> conducted educational workshops for Asian Pacific Americans for general Castro Valley community; published newsletters</li> </ul>
<b>HATE CRIMES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Victim Assistance:</b> advocate for victims; organize neighborhood watch groups</li> <li>• <b>Community Reporting Network:</b> track hate crimes through reporting forum</li> <li>• <b>List crimes in Newsletter</b></li> </ul>
<b>ELECTORAL POLITICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Endorse Candidates:</b> Castro Valley School Board candidate</li> <li>• <b>Staff Government Offices:</b> Alameda County Supervisor Mary King</li> <li>• <b>Encourage Asian Pacific American government appointments (i.e.) Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council</b></li> <li>• <b>Organized Asian American meeting with Assemblyman Johan Klehs</b></li> </ul>
<b>YOUTH DEVELOPMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coordinate Career Seminar with Asian Pacific American professionals</b></li> <li>• <b>Conduct College Information and Scholarships</b></li> <li>• <b>Organize Asian Pacific American speakers in the schools</b></li> <li>• <b>Recognize youth achievements in the newsletter</b></li> <li>• <b>Sponsor community art contest: "express heritage through art"</b></li> </ul>



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Julie Tualaulelei's house in response to her report of domestic violence. Shortly after midnight, Julie's husband and brother-in-law, Pouvi and Italia Tualaulelei, drove into the driveway. As 34-year-old Pouvi and 22-year-old Italia stepped out of their car, Skiles approached them and the three men exchanged heated words.

The police version stated that a scuffle then ensued when "one or both of the men allegedly made a grab for Skiles' 9mm handgun in its holster and then Skiles shot at both men." The Tualaulelei version stated that Skiles told Italia and Pouvi to kneel and as soon as Pouvi dropped to his knees, Skiles shot Italia and Pouvi.

Both sides agree that Skiles then emptied his semiautomatic pistol at the two men, reloaded, and shot a second clip at Pouvi and Italia. The police version stated that Pouvi and Italia charged Skiles after the first clip was emptied. However, the Tualauleleis contended that after Skiles emptied his first clip of 10 bullets into the back and side of Pouvi and Italia, Skiles walked "calmly and unhurriedly" around the car, reloaded his gun with a second clip, yelled to Pouvi and

Italia to "get on their feet," and then came back and shot his second clip at them. The dead bodies of Pouvi and Italia were lying face down not far from one another. The autopsy showed that Pouvi sustained 12 bullet wounds with eight in the back and Italia was shot eight times with five bullets striking him in the back.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Community of Compton**

Compton is located in Los Angeles County, California, and consists of a total

population of approximately 130,000 people. Compton's population is 38% African American, 27% Mexican, 7% White, and 1% Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American. Predominately working class, the estimated per capita income of Compton in 1987 was \$6,965.<sup>20</sup>

To the Samoan American community, the

1991 murder of the Tualauleleis by Compton police officer Skiles fits into a long history of hostile relations and police harassment. The 1991 shooting deaths occurred just after the Samoan community was recovering from a 1989 instance of savage police brutality. In February of 1989, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's

**The Samoan community has utilized both institutional and mass protest measures through the political and legal system.**



Department responded to a noise complaint in relation to a Samoan American bridal shower in a residential home. Dressed in riot gear, over 100 Sheriff's deputies dragged people out of the home and beat them with clubs after having made them lie face down.<sup>20</sup> The outrage over the excessive use of violence in the Tualalauleis' murder was fueled further by the earlier 1989 beatings. Many Samoan Americans believed excessive use of force in both cases stemmed from police internalization of racial stereotypes of Samoans as "big, violent, and primitive."<sup>22</sup>

The stereotypes of Samoans as "aggressively violent" were used as a key component by the defense attorney in portraying Officer Skiles' shootings as self-defense. For example, Officer Skiles' defense attorney described Pouvi and Italia as "two beefy Samoans" during the trial and at one point asked the jury: "Wouldn't you be scared a little bit? You would be scared to have these two big Samoans coming at you."<sup>23</sup> The defense attorney skillfully pressed the jury to conjure images of "violent" Samoans in order to justify Skiles' shooting a second clip of bullets into the backs of unarmed Pouvi and Italia.

### ***Samoan Community Mobilization***

The Samoan American community has

protested the Tualalaulelei shooting deaths throughout the entire criminal justice proceedings using forms of both institutional and mass protest (see Table 2). Pre-existing ethnic-based organizations were used to mobilize the community. While the community later formed "Justice for the Tualalauleis Committee," the leadership and structure of pre-existing ethnic-based groups remained the same.

A summary of Samoan community activism around the Tualalaulelei case shows an emphasis on monitoring the criminal proceedings and organizing. The Samoan community has utilized both institutional and mass protest measures through the political and legal systems. For example, the Samoan Council of Chiefs met with various officials, including the Compton City Council and County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. The Samoan community also has monitored the criminal proceedings, pressed for both state and federal civil rights suits, and filed for a \$100 million law suit.<sup>24</sup>

While the Samoan community has been able to use existing structures to voice their concerns over the Tualalaulelei case, they have also been able to utilize the power of grass-roots, mass community protest. Throughout the entire criminal proceedings, the Samoan community organized mass demonstrations in different



**Table 2: Chronological Summary of Events and Samoan Community Mobilization**

DATE	EVENT
February 11, 1991	• Pouvi and Italia Tualalelei shot 20 times and killed by Officer Alfred Skiles.
February 19, 1991	• Samoan community in Compton organizes protest demonstrations at El Camino College and Compton City Hall with about 500 people participating.
March 8, 1991	• Autopsy shows that Pouvi and Italia were shot 20 times with most of the bullets hitting them in back.
March 11, 1991	• Samoan students organize a protest demonstration at El Camino College.
March 12, 1991	• Samoan Council of Chiefs organize a demonstration in front of Compton City Hall to demand better communication between police and Samoans, over 500 people participated.
April 10, 1991	• The Tualalelei family files a \$100 million lawsuit against the police.
October 16, 1991	• Officer Skiles is charged with two counts of voluntary manslaughter and released on \$30,000 bail.
October, 1991	• Tua'au Pele Faletofo, chairperson of the Samoan Council of Chiefs expresses outrage over manslaughter charges to the press.
April 27, 1992	• Trial against Officer Skiles begins.
April 29 - May 1, 1992	• Trial interrupted because of uprisings over acquittal of Los Angeles Police officers who beat Rodney King.
May 13, 1992	• Jury deadlocks 9-3 in favor of acquittal. Judge Reid declares a mistrial.
May 13 - 18, 1992	• Samoan community holds meetings to encourage non-violent response to the mistrial.
May 19, 1992	• Los Angeles County Samoan community meeting of 150 people denounces the hung jury.
May 21, 1992	• Over 250 protesters march for two hours outside the Compton Courthouse. Police officers posted at corners and helicopters flying overhead.
May 29, 1992	• A second protest demonstration is held outside of Compton courthouse to protest the mistrial.
June 3, 1992	• Los Angeles Superior Court Judge John Reid refused to allow prosecutors to retry Skiles on two manslaughter charges since "no jury would convict Skiles with the same evidence."
June 3, 1992	• Samoan American community activists hold a news conference to urge the U.S. Department of Justice to open an investigation into civil rights violations.
Summer, 1992	• Fuiavailili Ala'ilima, Riyad Koya, and other Samoan activists issue a press release to solicit support for a letter-writing campaign to the District Attorney's office to file hate crimes violations.



areas of the community -- schools, churches, etc. These mass protests have served to raise awareness about the Tualaulelei case in both the Samoan community and the community-at-large.

Some efforts have been made to link the Tualaulelei case with the broader problem of anti-Samoan violence perpetrated by the police. For example, the Samoan Council of Chiefs asked for the reopening of past cases of possible police misconduct against Samoans by the District Attorney's Office, hiring of more Samoan police officers, offering classes in Samoan culture for officers on the force, and creating an autonomous office to investigate police brutality complaints. However, unlike AAT and DARE, these broader issues are seen as peripheral to obtaining justice in the Tualaulelei case. At this time, the main purpose of the organizing efforts is to raise the consciousness of the Tualaulelei case and to demand proper legal recourse. However, the Samoan community may broaden its scope of organizing after the legal proceedings have concluded, as the Asian Pacific American community did in the Vincent Chin case.<sup>25</sup>

### **III. THE STABBING DEATH OF THONG HY HUYNH**

After weeks of racial tension and verbal altercations, on May 4, 1983, at about

10:30 a.m., Russell "Rusty" Clark and James "Jay" Pierman, two white students, confronted 17-year-old Thong Hy Huynh, Bon Chau, and two other Vietnamese students. After using racially derogatory remarks, Clark struck Bon Chau in the face at least two times. Pierman warned the other Vietnamese students not to interfere with Clark and then visibly waved a military-like knife around. When Chau hit the side of Clark's head with a backpack full of books, one Vietnamese student jumped on Pierman's back. As Huynh approached Pierman's right side, he was stabbed twice below the rib cage. Huynh died two hours later while receiving emergency surgery.<sup>26</sup>

The morning of Huynh's funeral, leaflets and stickers carrying the banner of the "White Student Union" were distributed around the Davis High School campus. The leaflets decried the influx of non-whites to California and accused immigrants of taking jobs away from white people. Several months after Huynh was killed, a memorial planter box for Huynh was spray-painted with swastikas and the epithet, "Death to Gooks." In the summer of 1985, the Huynh memorial was defaced with the words "free James Pierman" and swastikas.<sup>27</sup>

#### **The Community of Davis**

Davis is an affluent college town locat-



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ed in Yolo County in Northern California, a short distance away from the state's capital, Sacramento. With a total population of approximately 47,000 people, Davis is 80% white. According to the 1990 Census, Asian Pacific Islanders are the second largest racial group at 13%, followed by Chicanos, African Americans, and Native Americans in descending order of population size.<sup>28</sup> The Davis Asian Pacific American community is a blend of old and recent immigrants -- East Asians involved in agriculture for generations, working class Southeast Asian refugees entering the agricultural labor market, and middle class Hong Kong and Taiwanese immigrants.

As a predominately white, middle class, college community, Davis appears to be politically "progressive." However, before and since Huynh's stabbing death, Davis community members have been subjected to a wide range of racist incidents. For example in 1984, white male high school students circulated a petition urging Mexican American students to return to Mexico, and in October 1991, a bomb threat and racial slurs were left on the answering machine of the Asian American Studies Department at UC Davis.<sup>29</sup>

### ***The Beginning of Davis Asians for Racial Equality (DARE)***

A year after Huynh's stabbing death, two murders provided the impetus for the formal organizing of Asian Pacific Americans in Davis. In February of 1984, Nai-Yan Li, a Chinese visiting scholar, was struck by an automobile and in April 29 of 1984 Tzieh-Tsai "Frank" Luo, a Taiwanese visiting scholar, was stabbed to death outside of apartment by an assailant. While racial motivation was never clearly established in these two murders, the coincidence of the racial background of the victims less than a year after Huynh's murder heightened the Asian Pacific American community's sense of anxiety and fear. To address these concerns, on the evening of March 16, 1984, approximately 100 people participated in a candle-light march from the UC Davis campus to Davis City Hall.<sup>30</sup> After the march, the Davis Police Department contacted march organizers and "requested that they assist the police in being more responsive to Asian American concerns." Asian Pacific American community members who gathered to discuss these goals eventually formed Davis Asians for Racial Equality (DARE).<sup>31</sup>

Covering a broad range of areas, DARE has battled racial violence in many arenas (see Table 3). These activities include both proactive projects such as educational outreach in primary and sec-



Table 3: Summary of Davis Asians for Racial Equality's activities

CATEGORY	ACTIVITY
Huynh Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commemoration - donated money for memorial , lobbied for inscription.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Dissemination - published quarterly newsletter since Summer of 1985</li> <li>- conducted recruitment and outreach at Davis community events</li> </ul>
Primary and Secondary Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Dissemination- participates in quarterly "Friendship Days" at Davis High School which encourage cross-cultural friendships and exchange</li> <li>-donated 200 books related to Asian Pacific Americans to the public schools</li> <li>- lobbied for and assisted "Fifth grade immersion project on discrimination"</li> </ul>
Media Portrayal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsored workshop on Asian stereotypes in film, television, and ads</li> <li>• Participates in KOVR Channel 13 Television Asian Advisory Task Force to provide input and programming ideas to the station</li> </ul>
Civil Rights Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participated in national redress movement for Japanese American internment</li> <li>- Sponsored ads in 3 local newspapers about "Day of Remembrance" ceremonies</li> <li>- Distributed info. on how to file for redress and reparations</li> <li>• Lobbied against government removal of Mrs. Iwasaki, a 83-year old widow and Tule Lake internee, from her land</li> <li>• Investigated "Asian Romance," a mail-order bride company based in Davis</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruited Asians and other people of color for employment in School District</li> </ul>
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-sponsored 1985 School Board Candidates' Forum</li> <li>• Participates on Davis High School and on city Human Relations Commissions</li> <li>• Published analysis of Davis boards and commissions</li> </ul>
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local: lobbied for tracking ordinance</li> <li>• State: lobbied against 1986 Proposition 63 - English Only, 1986 Proposition 64 - adverse impact on AIDS, and 1986 Proposition D - undo civil rights legislation</li> <li>• Federal: lobbied against 1986 executive order to ban affirmative action</li> </ul>
Hate Crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized around issues such as light sentence of white murderer of an Asian man</li> <li>• Conducts reports of hate crimes</li> <li>• Coordinates workshops about responding to racism and legal resources</li> <li>• Co-sponsored report analyzing hate crimes in Davis from 1988 to 1991</li> </ul>
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compiled a resource list of translators to volunteer for 24-hour dispatch center</li> <li>• Conducted Police training on interpersonal skills and human relations</li> <li>• Recognize people of color in the police force</li> </ul>



ondary schools, and reactive projects such as incident reporting and victim assistance.

This wide range of projects shows how DARE conceptualizes anti-Asian violence in a broad sense and along different axes. For example, when DARE investigated an Asian Mail Order Bride company, it illustrated that anti-Asian violence must be analyzed along both racial and gender lines. When DARE spoke out against the broadcast of a white supremacist movie, it was targeting cultural violence.<sup>32</sup>

DARE was not involved in the legal proceedings against Huynh's murderers. DARE member Dick Nishi observed that the Davis Asian Pacific American community was "too green" at the time. However, Nishi notes that the Asian Pacific American community learned from the experience and now have organized a formal structure to monitor incidents and subsequent legal proceedings.<sup>33</sup>

### **IV. DISCUSSION**

In this section, the two main areas of inquiry will explore how these three respective communities structured their organizations, along pan-ethnic or ethnic lines, and how they selected their types of mobilization, reactive or proactive.

#### **Structure of Organizations**

Perpetrators of anti-Asian violence

often blur the distinction among the Asian ethnicities when directing their hate. Since all Asian Pacific American community members are subject to anti-Asian violence, it seems that most Asian Pacific Americans would form pan-ethnic organizations. However, this is not necessarily the case. The Compton Samoan community decided to form an ethnic-based advocacy organization whereas the communities in Davis and Castro Valley formed organizations around the pan-ethnic umbrella of "Asian American." The case studies show that the ethnic-based form of organizing is more beneficial for some communities and the pan-Asian organizing for others. Ideology and population size interacted dynamically to guide one community towards ethnic-based and the others towards pan-Asian organizations.

#### **Population Size**

In all three cities, the Asian Pacific American community comprised a small portion of the total population (12% in Davis, 8% in Castro Valley, and 0.3% in Compton).<sup>34</sup> The Asian Pacific American communities in Davis and Castro Valley responded to their small population size by forming a new organization and casting the widest net possible for membership and recruitment.

The Samoan community in Compton



bypassed the limitations of their small population size by utilizing pre-existing ethnic-based organizations which encompassed Samoans in all of Los Angeles County. Although the Compton Samoan community is relatively small in numbers, they see themselves in connection with other Samoan communities in Los Angeles County. As a result, they plugged in their relatively small community of 1,295 in Compton into a community of over 12,000 spanning Los Angeles County.

When the Samoan community responded to the killing of the Tualauleleis and the subsequent criminal proceedings, it used existing internal structures such as the churches and the Samoan Council of Chiefs which represents 36 area chiefs in Los Angeles County. To illustrate, in preparation for the Skiles verdict, the Samoan Council of Chiefs organized a community outreach effort in which leaders spoke at churches, schools, and community centers to urge a peaceful response.

Population size plays a role in selecting the structure of the organization, but is not a sufficient explanation on its own.

For example, the Davis Vietnamese community could have addressed its small population size by linking with the Sacramento Asian Pacific American community instead of forming a pan-Asian organization in Davis. The limits of population size as an explanatory factor lead to the discussion of the role of ideology and identity politics.

### **Ethnicity, Age Group, and Asian America**

The ideology and identity politics of the constituents greatly influence the decision to organize a pan-ethnic or ethnic-based shield. To understand the use of pan-ethnic organization, it is critical to understand the origins of the pan-Asian rubric as a political tool. Professor Michael Omi describes the context from which the concept of "Asian Pacific American" evolved:

**the Samoan  
community of  
Compton does not  
necessarily perceive  
"Asian Pacific America"  
as inclusive of their  
experiences**

concept of "Asian Pacific American" evolved:

"The term 'Asian American' was a political label that emerged in the 1960s. It was meant to convey the similarities in the historical experiences of primarily Chinese,



Japanese, and Pilipinos, and their respective treatment at the hands of various white institutions."<sup>35</sup>

As Omi points out, only certain sectors of the Asian Pacific American community employ the pan-ethnic nomenclature. Mostly participants in the 1960's civil rights movements and college students enrolled in Asian American Studies courses embrace the concept of an "Asian American" identity and organize based on a pan-ethnic principle. Both the 1960's participants and the college students have been exposed to and accept the framework of "Asian Americans." Similarly both have been exposed to and accept the use of the political construct as a paradigm for analyzing institutional, cultural, and individual racism against Asian Pacific Americans.

AAT and DARE both organized as pan-Asian organizations, and many of the members fit the profile of individuals who would use the pan-Asian identity. Many members of AAT and DARE were in college during the civil rights movement and/or actively participated in the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement, and the 1969 Third World Strike at San Francisco State and University of California at Berkeley. For

example, Millie Gee Poon, co-founder of AAT, participated in the creation of the UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies program as an undergraduate during the Third World Strike. In her interview, Poon spontaneously linked this background with her organizing efforts around anti-Asian violence in Castro Valley. Given their personal history in the civil rights movement, individuals transferred a consciousness of "Asian American" to their organizing against anti-Asian violence. The use of the pan-Asian rubric in Castro Valley and Davis was a natural progression for the AAT and DARE members.

Similarly, the ethnic-based organization in the Tualalelei case is a logical extension of the identity politics of the Compton Samoan community. While the construct of "Asian America" may be empowering and utilized as a basis of mobilization by certain sections of the Asian Pacific American community, not all Asian ethnic groups identify themselves as part of "Asian America." Professor Omi describes how the increasing diversity in the Asian Pacific American community changes the context for identifying with a collective "Asian American" community:

"The new immigrants, encompassing a diverse range of class origins and ethnic identi-



ties, make it increasingly difficult to speak of a "shared" [Asian American] experience. [For example] the life of a third-generation Japanese American . . . is very different from that of a recently arrived Hmong refugee."<sup>36</sup>

Unlike the predominantly East Asian communities of Castro Valley and Davis, the Samoan community of Compton does not necessarily perceive "Asian Pacific America" as inclusive of their experiences, and therefore did not join or create a pan-Asian organization.

The supposedly "shared" Asian Pacific American experience was not viewed as inclusive of the specificity of Samoan and Samoan American context. Community organizer Riyadh Koya delineates the distinctions between Samoan and Asian Pacific American concerns:

"Asian Pacific American concerns are primarily demographically and culturally based with East Asian and Pilipino concerns. Samoans and other Pacific Islanders are demographically, culturally, and [often] socio-economically distinct [from these ethnic

groups]. The Samoan community has stronger cultural and political links with other indigenous and colonized communities such as Hawaii, American Samoa, Native Americans, Micronesia, Guam, Belau, Puerto Rico."<sup>37</sup>

Because of this unique and specific context, many members of the Compton Samoan community felt the need for ethnic-based advocacy groups. When working within a pan-Asian organization, there is too great a risk for the specific needs of the Samoan community to be subsumed.

For the small Asian Pacific American communities in Castro Valley and Davis, the predominately East Asian community members embraced the pan-ethnic rubric to bring together the different parts of the small Asian community. For the small Samoan population in Compton, members of the Samoan community identified and organized as Samoan Americans and not as Asian Pacific Americans. With this ethnic-based strategy, the Samoan community had immediate access to pre-existent advocacy structures, as well as avoiding the possibility of a predominately East Asian pan-Asian organization not addressing their specific needs. Thus, all three communities selected an organizational



structure which maximized the conditions in their community and also reflected their political ideology about racial identity.

### **Type of Mobilization**

The three case studies show the various forms of community mobilization efforts (i.e. mass protest, educational outreach, legislation) in a variety of institutional settings including schools, the courts, media. The three communities' mobilization efforts can be classified along a continuum from the narrow scope of "reactive mobilization" to the very broad scope of "proactive mobilization."

"Reactive mobilization" is advocacy that responds to a problem, for example legal suits, hate crimes tracking, reporting, and victim assistance. This type of organizing addresses the needs and concerns of the community after an incident of anti-Asian violence has occurred and is geared towards handling the symptoms and aftermath. An example of this type of mobilization is lobbying the U.S. Department of Justice to file federal civil rights violations

in the Tualaulelei cases. Law suits can address immediate needs and provide tangible results, and they have the potential to impact other hate crimes by setting a precedent. The legal route attempts to remedy the situation in the aftermath of the hate crime.

Reactive mobilization provides critical support for immediate needs in the crisis situation, but the tools of social change within this category are limited. For

**Although a community may be limited to the legal definitions of a hate crime, focusing efforts on legal justice addresses immediate concerns and provides a potentially high yield of results for relatively small input.**

example, by working with the legal system, the problem of anti-Asian violence is limited to pre-existing legal definitions. If a violent racial act does not "fit" the legal criteria, then by implication this humiliating act is not a "hate crime." The community can organize only within the restricted time frame and structure dictated by the criminal justice system. In this way, the players in the legal sys-

tem which include the law enforcement officers, the district attorney, the judge, the jury etc. hold discretionary power over the community in defining the hate crime. As a result, the community is placed in a position of responding to these actors and are



shunted out of "defining" the problem and the solutions.

"Proactive mobilization," which lies on the opposite end of the mobilization continuum, serves to create alternatives. Transcending the narrow legal definition of "hate crimes," proactive mobilization organizes around a more broad definition of "hate violence." This broader definition highlights the structural nature of racial violence and embraces the wide spectrum of verbal and physical violence, as well as institutional and individual violence.

Proactive projects attempt to address the structural causes of hate violence and focus upon institutions which replicate and perpetuate hate violence - school, media, legislature, workplace. For example, in the area of education, the dearth of information about Asian Pacific Americans in the curriculum is connected to anti-Asian violence. Accordingly, DARE donated over 200 books related to the history and culture of the Asian Pacific American experience to the Davis public schools.<sup>38</sup> DARE donated materials which would "encourage and compliment school district's efforts to improve cultural awareness and acceptance."<sup>39</sup> This donation of books recognizes the context of anti-Asian violence as symptomatic of ignorance of racism and the history and culture of different racial groups. Changes

in the curriculum combat the perpetuation of stereotypes and anti-Asian revisionist history and also provide materials for Asian Pacific American students to learn about themselves as subjects and not objects. Consequently, the development of racist attitudes and perceptions can be quelled.

This example of proactive mobilization in the area of education illustrates how the Asian Pacific American communities situated hate crimes against the broader context of anti-Asian violence. Anti-Asian violence was conceptualized as symptomatic of broader economic, social, and political dislocations on institutional, cultural, and individual levels. Proactive mobilization involves appropriating the power of definition and rearticulating the problem and thus reasserting the community's own subjectivity.

Although addressing the causes of anti-Asian violence is crucial, these projects work on a long-term framework and do not address the immediate needs of survivors of hate crimes and their community. Proactive mobilization does not necessarily cover the basic necessities of the crisis situation.

Although the distinction between reactive and proactive may be blurry in some instances, this framework serves as a means to classify, compare, and interpret



the different forms of community organizing. This comparison of reactive and proactive mobilization is not meant to suggest one is more effective than the other or that they are mutually exclusive. As the organizing efforts in Davis and Castro Valley demonstrate, reactive and proactive mobilization can co-exist and overlap.

### ***Selecting a Type of Mobilization***

Given the range of mobilization efforts along this continuum, what leads community groups towards one end of the spectrum over the other? This section examines how ideology and socio-economic resources influenced the interpretative leap from the "fact" of anti-Asian violence to the different kinds of policy formation.

The socio-economic characteristics of the different Asian Pacific American community members shaped the definition of the problem of anti-Asian violence and the development of certain types of mobilization over others. In a middle class community like Castro Valley, the Asian Pacific American community organized proactively and reactively. In a working class community like Compton, the Asian Pacific American community organized reactively. In a socio-economically diverse community like Davis, middle class, college-educated, professional Asian Pacific Americans took the leadership role and

guided the organization towards both proactive and reactive forms of organizing. Two possible factors involved in these patterns of mobilization are exposure to ideology and access to resources.

### ***Exposure to Ideology***

A college education provided exposure to ideologies and analytical frameworks correlated with structural proactive mobilization. For example, many of the college-educated members of DARE studied Asian American Studies in college and participated in student of color movements. The Asian American Studies courses provided the space to dissect and analyze paradigms on race, class, and gender hierarchies such as internal colonialism and the revolutionary writings of scholars like Albert Memmi, Antonio Gramsci, and Franz Fanon. As a result, they were made aware of and employed the structural analysis of racism to DARE's agenda. In addition, the fact that DARE's projects target both the causes and symptoms of anti-Asian violence can also be correlated with DARE's strong organizational ties to the Asian American Studies program at the University of California at Davis. The educational background provides exposure to causal and structural analysis of anti-Asian violence and generates the resources to implement the projects.



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### **Access to and Utility of Existing Resources**

Availability of resources from educational background, occupational status, and socio-economic background can either increase or limit immediate access to avenues of addressing anti-Asian violence. Community organizations framed the problem of anti-Asian violence in a way which utilized the existing resources of their members. For example, the occupational status of "professional" provided access to many resources and areas of reform. Teacher's aides provided an entree for AAT into the primary and secondary school system. Professors and students provided access for DARE to the resources of the University of California at Davis Asian American Studies program. Lawyers and law students of AAT and DARE provided knowledge of civil rights statutes and the inner-workings of the legal system. Finally, the middle class status of AAT and DARE members provided the financial resources and the time to maintain a non-profit organization.

Similarly, the amount of socio-economic resources shaped the availability and viability of options for the Samoan community in Compton. As a working class community, the Samoan community received the greatest utility of resources through the legal system, since it requires

the least amount of economic and political power. Theoretically, individuals regardless of race and socio-economic background are subject to the same protection and punishment under the law.<sup>40</sup> Historically, disenfranchised groups with limited resources turned to the legal system for justice over other avenues of social change. June Jordan describes the role of legal social change for the African American community; many parallels to the Compton Samoan community exist in terms of the limited available options for social change:

"Redemption from this North American purgatory of institutionalized and hallowed racism could not come to Black people through money - we did not have any of that; or through numbers - we were the few among many who despised us; or through political power - we possessed no legal access to political power. Our route to redemption was the law."<sup>41</sup>

As Jordan suggests, the limited access to other options of social change pushes the legal system to the forefront as the most viable option for social justice. Although a



community may be limited to the legal definitions of a hate crime, focusing efforts on legal justice addresses immediate concerns and provides a potentially high yield of results for relatively small input.

Both working class and middle class communities selected reactive mobilization avenues. However, because middle class organizers had greater exposure to ideological structural frameworks and/or greater access to resources, middle class Asian Pacific American communities also included proactive mobilization efforts.

### **V. SUMMARY**

Thong Hy Huynh,  
Pouvi Tualaulelei, Italia

Tualaulelei, Melvin Toy, and Frank Toy were violently killed or brutally beaten because of their race. Members of the different Asian Pacific American communities channeled their rage, despair, and fear from the violence into a powerful source of collective mobilization.

The Asian Pacific American communities in Castro Valley, Compton, and Davis provide blueprints for organizing against anti-Asian violence in both predominately white suburbs and predominately people of color neighborhoods, working class

and middle class communities, as well as pan-ethnic organizations or ethnic-based organizations. The three communities studied employed a wide spectrum of organizing strategies ranging from reactive to proactive measures -- educational outreach, mass protest, legal redress, electoral political participation, research analysis, etc. While both ends of this spectrum

are effective and needed, proactive mobilization allows the community to move from objects of the hate crime to subjects who define the causes and symptoms of hate violence; the Asian Pacific American community is injected as the principal actor rather than being

shunted as an external observer of the decision-making process.

The selection of strategies is shaped by the socio-economic status of the constituents. Resources such as socio-economic background, occupational status, and educational background influenced the availability of time, access to institutions, and exposure to frameworks. For example, exposure to analytical and political frameworks in college led to more structural and long-term analysis and a middle class background provided access to the

**The selection  
of strategies is  
shaped by the  
socio-economic  
status of the  
constituents.**



resources to pursue long-term projects. Similarly, limited resources led to reactive projects such as a law suit which would yield greater results from relatively minimal input. In a predominately middle class community or in a socio-economically diverse community, the Asian Pacific American communities organized both reactively and proactively. In predominately working class communities, the Asian Pacific American community so far has organized only reactively. The case studies demonstrate a correlation between the type of mobilization and the availability of resources.

This paper examined how the Asian Pacific American community defined the problem of anti-Asian violence and crafted solutions around these definitions. More specifically, the paper discussed what types of organizing the Asian Pacific Americans selected and explored the relationship between ideology and socio-economic class in influencing why certain avenues were selected over others. Future research should move to a different level by exploring why certain types of anti-Asian violence are "defined" as anti-Asian violence and used to mobilize the Asian Pacific American community. For example, what is the relationship between organizing efforts against domestic violence and rape with the Asian Pacific American

movement against "anti-Asian violence?" These lines of inquiry focus on questions of what and why certain forms of anti-Asian violence garner mass mobilization over other forms of anti-Asian violence.

The analysis of what communities did and why they selected certain avenues of reform over others also leads to other questions about the nature of mobilization efforts in the Asian Pacific American community. In California, Asian Pacific Americans are the fastest growing minority group. Nationwide the Asian Pacific American population is expected to triple in the next three decades.<sup>42</sup> From 1980 to 1990, Asian Pacific Americans increased their population by 193% nationwide and 127% in California.<sup>43</sup> How will these striking demographic changes interact with the nature of political mobilization if the resources of constituents shape the venue for organizing? Will socio-economic status, educational background, and occupational status of immigrants influence the kind of mobilization? Will the typology of mobilization follow ethnic- and class-based patterns?

In terms of the type of mobilization, the case studies demonstrate that middle class, college educated, professional Asian Pacific Americans organized in both proactive and reactive forms whereas working class communities utilized limit-



ed resources with reactive mobilization. If this framework were to be applied to recent immigrants, then a working class Laotian immigrant would be likely to organize reactively if in a predominately working class Asian Pacific American community and organize both proactively and reactively in a diverse socio-economic Asian Pacific American community.

However, socio-economic status is an insufficient determinant by itself. Ideology and identity politics also play a critical role in shaping the nature of mobilization, as discussed in the structure of organizations section regarding pan-ethnicity. The cases demonstrated that exposure to ideology and structural paradigms were connected to proactive mobilization. In other words, even though an Asian Pacific American community may have access to many resources, without the ideological structural analysis, they may not necessarily organize in proactive areas. For example, a recent, affluent Taiwanese immigrant may have the resources to organize in reactive and proactive areas, but he/she may not have been exposed to, accept, or employ ideological structural analysis of racism which would lend towards proactive forms of organizing. In sum, there are at least two crucial factors to observe as the Asian Pacific American community rapidly expands -- how the

economic resources and ideological exposure to structural analysis interact in relation to the placement on the mobilization continuum.

These questions are of critical importance to the Asian Pacific American community due to dramatic demographic changes. As the largest group of legal immigrants in the United States, the Asian Pacific American community faces an urgent challenge to effectively mobilize and stake out its place in a rocky political, social and economic terrain. The development of this political muscle is an evolutionary process. These case studies on anti-Asian violence provide a window into a phase of this evolution. ■



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**Appendix 1-A:**

**Vincent Chin and Contemporary Campaigns Against anti-Asian Violence**

Current community mobilization efforts around anti-Asian violence are shaped and influenced by previous contemporary Asian Pacific American mobilization campaigns. To adequately understand the case studies, it is critical to understand the legacy of the organizing campaign around the Vincent Chin murder.

On June 19, 1982 in Detroit, Michigan, Vincent Chin, a twenty-seven-year-old Chinese American, was fatally bludgeoned in the head by two white male unemployed autoworkers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz. Ebens and Nitz, mistaking Chin for Japanese, had yelled, "Its because of you mother f-cking Japs that we're out of work." Ebens and Nitz were sentenced to three years probation and fined \$3000.

Outraged by the outcome of the criminal proceedings, the Detroit Asian Pacific American community formed American Citizens for Justice (ACJ) to pursue justice in the Chin case.

Eventually, a federal jury convicted Ebens of civil rights violations and acquitted Nitz. However, the Ebens conviction was overturned on a technicality and at

the retrial, Ebens was acquitted. At the conclusion of the legal proceedings, Ebens and Nitz never had to spend a day in jail for beating Vincent Chin to death (Espiritu, p.143).

ACJ organized on many fronts: a national letter-writing campaign with over 15,000 letters sent to government officials and the press, a fund-raising campaign with speaking tours by Chin's mother and ACJ representatives, mass demonstrations, and a publicity campaign with coverage by both national and local networks. Asian Pacific American communities also mobilized around the Chin case (i.e. San Francisco Asian Americans for Justice and Southern California Justice for Vincent Chin Committee). Eventually, ACJ formed the Asian American Center for Justice to monitor anti-Asian incidents and provide other social services for Asian Pacific Americans (Espiritu, pp. 140 - 151).

Despite the disappointing results in the legal arena, the Vincent Chin case was a watershed in several ways. One, Chin's beating death and subsequent miscarriage of justice were wake-up calls to Asian Pacific Americans across the country that they were not part of the "American" fabric and that any Asian ethnic group was a potential target for anti-Asian violence (Espiritu, p. 145).

Two, the advocacy around the Vincent



Chin case constructed the framework for Asian Pacific Americans to be "more willing to speak out on the issues of anti-Asian violence" (Espiritu, p. 153). The Vincent Chin campaign was the first national Asian Pacific American campaign organized specifically around anti-Asian violence as the lead issue. This marked the beginning of a proliferation of Asian Pacific American organizations geared primarily towards addressing anti-Asian violence (i.e. Break the Silence Coalition in San Francisco, Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence in New York City) and the creation of racial violence projects within existing civil rights organizations (i.e. Boston-based Asian American Resource Workshop, San Francisco-based Asian Law Caucus, Philadelphia-based Asian Americans United and Los Angeles-based Asian Pacific American Legal Center).

Three, the Asian Pacific American community learned from the Chin murder how to monitor the legal system prior to the conviction and how to lobby regarding anti-Asian violence. During the legal proceedings in the Vincent Chin case, organizers learned how to actively monitor and lobby the proceedings. In later anti-Asian violence cases such as the 1989 beating death of Jim Ming Hai Loo in North Carolina, the 1989 shooting deaths of five Southeast Asian schoolchildren in

California, and the 1992 beating death of Luyen Phan Nguyen in Florida, the Asian Pacific American community mobilized prior to the legal proceedings by utilizing techniques and networks developed from the Chin case.

Four, the community formed a pan-ethnic organization over an ethnic-based organization to address the Chin case and anti-Asian violence. Although the organizers in the Chin case were largely Chinese American, the group decided to organize under a pan-ethnic umbrella.

Five, the Chin campaign provided an example of Asian Pacific American organizing with tools of social change previously unavailable to the community due to discriminatory policies (i.e. *Ozawa v. United States* (1922) which forbade Asian immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens). Political scientist Don Nakanishi notes that "these discriminatory policies delayed Asian Pacific American political participation until the second and subsequent generations during the post-World War II period" (Nakanishi). With these changes and greater access to political, legal, and educational systems, it is critical to examine how the Asian Pacific American community could utilize these avenues of advocacy.



**Appendix 1-B:**

**I. BACKGROUND ON ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE:**

The three cases are a part of an evolutionary movement of Asian Pacific American political participation in general and specifically around anti-Asian violence. The three hate crimes were the product of over 100 years of anti-Asian institutional, cultural, and individual violence. In *Asian Americans: An Interpretative History*, Professor Sucheng Chan classifies the history of anti-Asian violence into seven main categories: prejudice (i.e. "model minority myth" and "welfare dependents"); economic discrimination (i.e. California 1913 Alien Land Laws and 1850 Foreign Miners Tax); political disenfranchisement (i.e. 1790 Naturalization Law and 1922 Ozawa case); physical violence (i.e. 1908 Live Oak, California, expulsion of Asian Indian farm laborers ); immigration exclusion (i.e. 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act); social segregation (i.e. 1850, article XIX of the California State Constitution and 1933 California anti-miscegenation laws); and incarceration (i.e. World War II incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans) (Chan, pp. 45 - 58). As each Asian ethnic group immigrated to and settled in the United States, they were con-

fronted with varying forms of anti-Asian violence. The recent increases in anti-Asian violence continues a pattern of over 100 years of institutional, cultural, and individual hate violence.

**II. CAUSES OF ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE: INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC LINKS**

The nature of the United States' relationship with Asian nations impacts Asians in America. The United States has an extensive history of military conflicts against Asian countries: the 1898 Philippine War, the 1942 World War II and postwar involvement with Japan, the 1954 Korean War, the "cold war" with Communist China, the Vietnam war beginning in 1962 and military involvement in Southeast Asia until the mid-70's, and most recently, the 1991 Persian Gulf War. With the many wars against Asian countries, the role of the "enemy" is easily displaced onto Asian Pacific Americans. The hostility is transferred to Asian Pacific Americans who become the perpetual "foreign-enemy-other" (California Attorney General, pp. 25-26).

Correlations between military conflicts with Asian countries and domestic anti-Asian violence are demonstrated by the unconstitutional imprisonment of 120,000 people of Japanese Ancestry after the U.S.



entered World War II, the 1989 beating death of Chinese American Jim Ming Hai Loo by white men who blamed Loo for their brothers' deaths in Vietnam, and the anti-Arab graffiti and vandalism targeting many Arab Americans during the 1991 Persian Gulf War (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Issues Facing Asian Americans*, p. 26).

### **Economic Downturn**

Historically, economic downturn often leads to the scapegoating of Asian Pacific Americans and other people of color. Professor Sucheng Chan cites examples of anti-Asian violence during periods of economic crisis: "The string of arson in California [targeting Chinese] in 1877 took place at a time when the effects of the depression of 1873 finally reached California and the 1930 Watsonville riot [targeting Pilipinos] occurred during the depths of the Great Depression" (Chan, p. 53).

With the end of the "Cold War," the United States faces deficit spending, high unemployment, and the absence of an "evil empire" to justify its military spending. As a result, the new "evil empire," or scapegoat, is Japan, with its alleged "unfair trading practices" and "buying of America." Newscasts in the early 1980's showed disturbing images of "autowork-

ers and others in Detroit slamming at Japanese-made cars with sledgehammers" (Espiritu, p. 142). In 1982, Chinese American Vincent Chin was beaten to death by two white male unemployed auto workers who yelled, "it's because of you motherf-cking Japs that we're out of work" (California Attorney General, p. 43).

### **Media Portrayal**

Stereotypes, ethnic slurs, and caricatures abound in varying forms of media which serve to perpetuate and perpetrate anti-Asian violence. For example, recent movies such as "Mr. Baseball" and "Rising Sun" perpetuate the the myth of Japanese economic invasion even though most foreign-owned real estate is owned by British and Dutch investors (California Attorney General, p. 26). The myth of "Japanese buying America" is just one end of the continuum of hate violence which ends with physical violence.

The veiled racialized meaning of "buy American" and the potential for physical violence is clear. When a Southern California elementary school teacher asked her sixth grade class to draw what they thought "Buy American" meant, children drew pictures of bombs dropping and of people kicking a man with slanted eyes. The artwork of the 10- and 11-year-olds demonstrates the internalization of the



racial implications of "Buy American" and the powerful influence of the media in perpetuating violence against Asians Pacific Americans (Hayashi).

### ***Asian Pacific American Population Changes***

Currently, Asian Pacific Americans are the fastest growing minority group in the United States. The total Asian Pacific American population in the United States has grown five times in the past three decades, jumping from 500,000 in 1960 to 7.3 million in 1990. Studies estimate that by the year 2050 the total Asian Pacific American population will leap to 38.8 million (Hatamiya, p. 6).

Increasing population size translates into greater visibility. The historical record shows that increases in Asian Pacific American immigration have led to immigration restrictions and exclusion. Immigrants are often perceived as depriving white Americans from jobs or as burdening the economy by freeloading of the welfare system (Asian Resource Workshop, p. 6). In April of 1991, for example, California Governor Pete Wilson publicly blamed the influx of Southeast Asian refugees and other immigrants for exacerbating the estimated \$12.6 billion budget deficit by relying on educational, health, and welfare services (Chen, p.

A18). With this current economic context of high unemployment and dramatic Asian Pacific American population increases, the rapid expansion of the Asian Pacific American community promises to be a factor in shaping the future of race relations and anti-Asian violence.



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## **Appendix 1-C:**

### **Methodology:**

Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included key informant interviews and organizational documents. Key informant interviews were conducted with a cross section of people involved in some capacity with the case studies: Asian Pacific American organizers, Asian Pacific American community members, hate crimes litigators, etc. Organizational documents include newsletters, press releases, brochures, and reports. Key informants were identified through the snowball method of referral. Secondary sources included periodical articles, government reports, journal articles, and books. Periodical articles ranged from mainstream (i.e. *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Examiner*) to vernacular sources (i.e. *Asian Week*, *Pacific Citizen*). Government reports ranged from federal (i.e. U.S. Civil Rights Commission) and state (i.e. California Attorney General), to local (i.e. City Council).

### **Case Study Selection**

After a general review of anti-Asian violence cases from 1980 until 1992, the three case studies were selected because they highlighted different aspects of the

same criteria -- ethnicity of victims, socio-economic class of Asian Pacific American community and general community, type of mobilization, and ethnic structure of organizing. Although generalizing from only three case studies does have constraints, the in-depth analysis of three cases will hopefully counterbalance these limits.

### **Terminology**

Throughout the paper, "Asian Pacific American" is used as a general pan-ethnic term to refer to all Asian ethnic groups.

The terms "hate crimes" and "hate violence" are not used interchangeably. "Hate violence" refers to violence perpetrated at the institutional level (i.e. World War II incarceration of 120,000 people of Japanese Ancestry), cultural level (i.e. movie portrayals), and individual level (i.e. verbal racial epithets yelled by one person to another). In addition, "hate violence" encompasses both verbal and physical violence and is perceived as a product of political, economic, and social dislocations.

"Hate crimes" is considered a subset of hate violence and refers to a narrow legal definition. According to California statutes, hate crimes are defined as "acts of violence, harassment or property damage motivated by prejudice due to the victim's race, color, sex, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation" (State Bar of California).







**Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit:  
School Desegregation and the San Francisco  
Chinese American Community**

Henry Der

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**R**ace-based remedies to aid disadvantaged racial minorities to achieve equality have become one of most maligned and misunderstood social policies in America today. Throughout the 1980s, the Reagan-Bush administrations unsuccessfully sought to overturn race-based court orders and federal regulations. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s admonition that individuals be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character has become a rallying cry for "merit" to be the sole determinant in the distribution of educational and promotional employment benefits.

Asian Americans have greeted race-based strategies with contradictory, if not somewhat unsettled, feelings. Some Asian Americans have been vocal advocates of specific set-aside opportunities in public contracts to nurture and promote minority

businesses. Asian American professionals have cautiously embraced race-conscious promotional programs designed to break the glass ceiling against racial minorities in the workplace. In contrast, Asian Americans have vigorously protested university freshman admission policies and practices that limit the enrollment of Asian Americans at highly-selective colleges and seemingly grant preferences to other racial groups.<sup>1</sup>

For more than two decades, the clash between "merit" and "race-conscious remedies" has shaped the troubled relationship between the San Francisco Chinese American community and court-ordered school desegregation action. In 1970, led by the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, Chinese American parents unsuccessfully challenged court-ordered busing in city schools. Chinese American



groups then established private "freedom schools" to avoid mandatory busing of their children.<sup>2</sup> Chinese Americans also failed in their effort to be granted intervenor status in the SF NAACP school desegregation lawsuit as the 1983 Consent Decree was being finalized.

Criticism against the eleven-year-old Consent Decree and its race-based enrollment guidelines remains intense in the Chinese American community. Many believe that, among all racial groups, Chinese American students bear today the heaviest desegregation burden and are disproportionately denied access to schools of their choice and academic excellence, in spite of their hard work and commitment to strong educational values.<sup>3</sup> Critics of the Consent Decree have equated the enrollment guidelines with discriminatory freshman admissions policies at the university level.

Has court-ordered school desegregation disproportionately denied Chinese American students equal educational opportunities and access to academic excellence? If Chinese Americans have not been responsible for policies or practices

that have led to segregated schools, what responsibilities, if any at all, do Chinese Americans bear in desegregating public education? Does the implementation of race-based remedies, designed primarily to provide equal opportunities for a historically disadvantaged group, lead to "reverse discrimination" against other racial groups?

To explore these questions, I will analyze the enrollment pattern of Chinese students in San Francisco city schools and its

relationship with those of other racial groups. Section I of this essay will review objections lodged against the Consent Decree race-based enrollment guidelines and their perceived effects on Chinese American educational opportunities.

Section II will determine whether Chinese students carry a greater burden of mandatory bus-

ing to reduce racial concentration in San Francisco city schools and whether smaller racial groups take advantage of the enrollment guidelines, at the expense of Chinese Americans.

Section III will review whether Chinese American high school students

**Has court-ordered school desegregation disproportionately denied Chinese American students equal educational opportunities and access to academic excellence?**



have been disproportionately denied access to schools of their choice, including the highly-renowned, merit-based alternative Lowell High School.

Section IV will suggest differences among socio-economic class more than the implementation of race-based remedies, determine which Chinese students gain access to schools of choice and equal educational opportunities.

Section V will discuss the adoption of a framework in which Asian Americans and other racial minorities might increase school choice and access to academic excellence.

### **I. BACKGROUND TO CONSENT DECREE: OBJECTIONS TO RACE-BASED ENROLLMENT GUIDELINES**

The 1983 Consent Decree in *San Francisco NAACP v. San Francisco Unified School District* (C-78-1445) acknowledges nine racial groups: whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, American Indians, and other non-whites. The Consent Decree specifies that (1) no racial group shall constitute more than 45% of the student enrollment at any regular school or 40% at alternative schools; (2) at least four racial groups shall be represented at each school site. The primary objective of these enrollment guidelines is the elimination of racial segrega-

tion, isolation or concentration in San Francisco public schools.<sup>4</sup> With the assistance of an annual state allocation of \$28 million, the Consent Decree also seeks to achieve academic excellence throughout the school district.<sup>5</sup>

For the purpose of school desegregation, there is only mandatory busing at the K-5 level in San Francisco.<sup>6</sup> The school district buses K-5 students who are assigned to schools (generally characterized as non-neighborhood schools) not within walking distance of the student's residence. If students of a racial group reach the enrollment cap at an assigned K-5 neighborhood school, the "overflow" is also bused to a non-neighborhood school.

Students can submit an "optional enrollment request" (OER) to be released from their assigned school to attend another regular school or alternative one. Student enrollment at all alternative schools is based on OERs. Attendance at these alternative schools constitutes voluntary integration or school choice.

Of the approximately 64,400 San Francisco public school students, Chinese students constitute the single largest racial group, 25% of all students; Hispanics, 20%; Blacks, 18%; whites, 15%; other non-whites, 12%. In the 1992-1993 school year, Chinese student enrollment came within six percentage points of the race-based



enrollment caps at 29 schools; Hispanics, 22; Blacks, 14; whites, 4.

Constrained by enrollment guidelines, the size of the Chinese student population has led groups like the Chinese American Democratic Club (CADC), a vocal critic of the Consent Decree, to conclude:

"Chinese American students bear by far the heaviest burden of complying with the Consent Decree's desegregation rules, face unequal access to schools of their choice because they reach the ethnic quota-based ceiling at a faster rate and in greater numbers, and currently have restricted access to 30% of the total schools in the district."<sup>7</sup>

CADC's conclusion suggests that the enrollment caps have caused a disproportionate number of Chinese students to be denied the opportunity to attend schools of their choice through the OER process. CADC has also argued that the 45%/40% enrollment guidelines enable smaller racial groups like whites, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, and other non-whites to have an "unfair advantage" to increase their representation at schools of their choice without ever reaching the enrollment cap, but at

the expense of Chinese students.<sup>8</sup>

Individuals and groups like CADC have called for substantial modification, if not abolition, of the enrollment guidelines to reflect changing student demographics. In particular, Consent Decree opponents cite the use of differential cutoff scores by racial group to admit freshman students to the merit-based, alternative Lowell High School to be in compliance with the 40% cap as a compelling reason to abandon the enrollment guidelines and to base on all admission decisions on "merit."<sup>9</sup>

### **II.K-5 SCHOOLS AND MANDATORY BUSING: UNFAIR ADVANTAGES FOR SMALLER RACIAL GROUPS?**

Critics of the enrollment caps suggest that the Consent Decree racial guidelines have disproportionately forced more Chinese students to attend non-neighborhood schools than other racial groups. If so, we should observe: (1) relative to other racial groups, more Chinese students being bused out of their neighborhoods to attend non-neighborhood schools, or (2) the percent of Chinese students in non-Chinese neighborhood schools being considerably higher than the percent of Chinese K-5 students living in those non-Chinese neighborhoods.

Therefore, this section of the analysis will review the neighborhood residence of



K-5 students by race, the racial breakdown of K-5 schools by neighborhood, and the level of busing by racial group to achieve school desegregation. Further, this section will analyze whether smaller racial groups take advantage of the enrollment guidelines at the expense of Chinese students.

There are 72 K-5 schools in San Francisco: 55 regular schools, 14 alternative ones, and 3 educational centers for newly-arrived immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

San Francisco has 20 neighborhoods as defined by census tract boundaries. Even though K-5 students of every racial group live throughout the city, racial concentration of K-5 students exists in virtually every neighborhood. Black students dominate the K-5 population living in 7 neighborhoods; Hispanics, 4; Chinese, 5; whites, 8; other non-whites, 2 (see Table 1).

In 21 K-5 schools, the percentage of Black representation in non-dominant neighborhoods is at least 6 percentage points higher than the percent representation of Black K-5 students living in these neighborhoods. There are 14 K-5 schools where Chinese are similarly situated; 13 K-

5 schools, Hispanics; 5, other non-whites; 1, whites. This data suggests that Black K-5 students attend more non-neighborhood schools to achieve school desegregation than any other racial group (see Table 2).

Mandatory busing of K-5 students largely affects neighborhoods on the east side of San Francisco, home to low-income Blacks, Hispanics, Chinese and other non-whites. Middle-class white, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean K-5 students who live on the west side of San Francisco have

generally not been assigned to non-neighborhood schools, thereby avoiding mandatory busing (see Table 3).

To determine the extent to which specific racial groups are required to bear responsibility for school desegregation, let us calculate the number of K-5 students by race who are bused and attend non-

neighborhood K-5 schools. If we examine the net percent difference between percent school representation of a racial group and its percent representation of K-5 students living in the neighborhood, the net percent difference times the total school enrollment yields the number of students by racial group who contribute to school

**economic status  
combined with the  
race of the student  
appears to be more  
closely correlated  
with the level  
of academic  
achievement.**



## Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit

desegregation (see Table 4).

This analysis calculates that 1,241 Black students are assigned and bused to attend K-5 schools located outside of their neighborhood; 1,171 Hispanic K-5 students; 925 Chinese students; 255 other non-whites; 33 whites.

There is little evidence that Chinese students bear the "heaviest burden" of desegregating K-5 schools in San Francisco. The Consent Decree enrollment caps have not resulted in a disproportionate number

of K-5 Chinese students attending non-neighborhood schools. Notwithstanding Chinese students reaching the enrollment caps at more schools than other racial groups, the evidence cited above suggests that other racial groups, specifically Blacks and Hispanics, are playing a greater role than Chinese in desegregating San Francisco public schools.

Now let us examine whether the existing enrollment caps have enabled whites, other non-whites, and other smaller racial

TABLE 1: Percent Racial Breakdown of K-5 Students Living in San Francisco Neighborhoods\*

NEIGHBORHOOD	HISPANIC	WHITE	BLACK	CHINESE	OTHER NON-WHITE
Bay/Htr Pt.	11.0	3.6	<b>60.2</b>	6.7	14.0
Bernal Hts	<b>48.2</b>	13.6	12.4	4.0	9.7
Chinatown/NB	4.6	5.4	2.3	<b>77.5</b>	10.6
Excelsior	<b>39.4</b>	10.2	4.9	15.3	6.3
Haight/Ashbury	9.9	<b>27.3</b>	<b>46.5</b>	2.6	7.9
Inner Richmond	3.8	21.6	6.1	<b>36.3</b>	<b>26.7</b>
Inner Sunset	6.0	<b>37.9</b>	3.4	<b>32.2</b>	10.1
L. Merced/Mt. D	12.0	<b>36.3</b>	8.9	19.2	10.2
Mission	<b>68.1</b>	7.4	6.1	5.7	7.5
Noe V./Eureka	<b>31.7</b>	<b>38.1</b>	11.6	3.7	7.7
North of Market	16.1	8.1	6.1	24.2	<b>39.5</b>
Oceanview	14.7	8.4	<b>45.8</b>	15.5	7.3
Outer Richmond	3.8	<b>26.4</b>	3.9	<b>40.3</b>	16.2
Outer Sunset	5.2	23.5	3.1	<b>46.5</b>	13.1
Pacific/Marina	5.4	<b>48.5</b>	5.0	22.7	9.2
Portola/V.V.	20.2	4.3	<b>34.4</b>	17.1	12.7
Presidio	9.2	<b>42.9</b>	<b>31.0</b>	0.0	7.9
S. of Mkt/Ptr Hill	16.8	9.5	<b>34.8</b>	5.1	16.2
Treasure Is.	6.7	<b>60.2</b>	15.1	0.2	5.4
West Addition	11.0	8.6	<b>57.2</b>	6.0	10.9

\* The percentage for each neighborhood does not total 100% because the table has excluded the percent representation of Japanese, Korean, American Indian, and Filipino K-5 students.

(bold type indicates racial dominance - a minimum 25% concentration of a racial group in a neighborhood)



groups to gain an "unfair advantage" by attending certain neighborhood and/or alternative schools at the expense of Chinese students.

Some critics argue that, if the district-wide 22% representation of Chinese K-5 students can only double at neighborhood schools without exceeding the 45% enrollment cap, then enrollment caps should be equalized for all racial groups so that the percent district representation of smaller racial groups like Japanese, Koreans, and other non-whites can only double at neighborhood schools without exceeding a "floating cap."<sup>11</sup> For example, Japanese constitute only 1.1% of all K-5 students in the district; the enrollment cap for this racial group would be 2.2% at all regular K-5 schools.

With the exception of one school located on a military base with a 60% white K-5 population, there is no regular K-5 school wherein the percent white representation is more than double the overall 16% representation of white K-5 students in the district. White students seem to attend alternative schools located in neighborhoods with dominant white K-5 student population. There is little, if any, net difference between percent white enrollment at these alternative schools and percent white K-5 students living in these neighborhoods (see Table 2).

Discounting the Japanese bilingual education program located at one school site, if the enrollment caps for Japanese were set at double their district percent representation, Japanese students would exceed this "floating cap" by a total of 21 students, distributed throughout 4 dominant Chinese neighborhood K-5 schools. Koreans would exceed such a "floating cap" by a total of 14 students in dominant Chinese neighborhood schools. Such numbers of Korean and Japanese students are insignificant and can hardly be described as displacing Chinese students from their neighborhood schools. Filipino students exceed double their percent district representation at 4 K-5 schools, but all of which are located in non-Chinese neighborhoods (see Table 5).

This evidence about mandatory busing and the enrollment patterns of smaller racial groups strongly suggests that the proponents of "merit" have established an incorrect cause-effect relationship between race-based enrollment guidelines and responsibilities imposed on Chinese students to desegregate city schools. Contrary to the perceived, negative effects of the enrollment guidelines, more Chinese K-5 students are able to attend their neighborhood schools than any other racial group.



## Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit

Table 2: Racial Breakdown of K-5 Schools Compared to Racial Breakdown of K-5 Students Living in San Francisco

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL	HISPANIC	WHITE	BLACK	CHINESE	ONW
Bayview	11.0	3.6	60.2	6.7	14.0
Carver*	12.0	6.0	44.7	2.4	24.9
Drake*	8.4	1.8	44.7	0.3	40.4
Drew*	13.8	16.5	39.7	2.8	20.7
B. Harte	37.3	4.2	44.0	1.7	10.4
Bernal Heights	48.2	13.2	12.4	4.0	9.7
Flynn	41.9	6.0	29.4	4.3	11.3
Revere	38.4	4.8	24.6	3.1	10.9
Serra	38.8	14.2	9.6	8.8	16.2
Chinatown/North Beach	4.6	5.4	2.3	77.5	6.3
Garfield	36.9	4.7	12.0	40.1	4.4
Parker	38.8	4.5	8.6	37.8	5.8
Redding	6.0	10.0	2.2	40.6	35.5
Sp Valley	28.4	2.9	13.6	39.8	12.5
C. Stockton	42.2	1.8	3.0	44.3	7.7
Yick Wo *	1.2	0.0	10.4	40.7	24.5
Excelsior	39.4	10.2	4.9	15.3	6.3
Cleveland	43.6	8.0	17.1	10.4	6.7
Guadalupe	23.8	5.8	21.3	11.6	11.9
Hillcrest	27.0	4.0	31.5	13.9	7.7
Longfellow	29.5	4.7	6.7	9.9	9.1
Monroe	41.9	13.5	5.2	15.5	5.4
SF Comm*	28.6	24.8	26.1	4.3	7.3
Haight/Ash	9.9	27.3	46.5	2.6	7.9
DeAvila	6.6	13.1	26.1	31.4	15
Grattan	7.8	26.8	26.3	20.1	9.8
McKinley	15.8	27.5	24.3	8.9	3.4
Muir	41.4	3.9	32.2	5.7	8.5
Inner Richmond	3.8	21.6	6.1	36.3	26.7
Lilenthal*	10.2	38.2	13.4	16.1	10.8
McCoppin	3.5	11.7	6.4	42.8	24.7
Peabody	1.1	18.9	2.9	43.3	27.3
Sutro	6.7	26.9	12.1	33.8	17.0
Inner Sunset	6.0	37.9	3.4	32.2	10.1
West Portal	6.7	22.7	13.0	43.9	8.8
Clarendon*	10.5	32.5	6.3	7.7	11.4
Jefferson	3.5	29.7	1.7	42.8	14.1
L. Merced/Mt. Davidson	12.0	36.3	8.9	19.2	10.2
Glen Park	42.7	8.0	24.7	8.6	8.9
Lakeshore*	11.8	33.3	21.3	17.8	6.2
Miraloma	18.5	22.7	21.7	20.4	10.4
Sloat	10.2	31.3	21.3	19.8	10.7
Sunnyside	30.1	11.9	11.6	15.7	11.6
Mission	68.1	7.4	6.1	5.7	7.5
Bryant	43.9	8.6	18.9	13.6	11.6
Hawthorne	38.7	13.3	14.6	20.9	6.3
Marshall	43.6	3.7	4.9	12.5	23.2
Moscone	35.2	3.6	12.8	19.0	17.3
Noe/Eureka Valley	31.7	38.1	11.6	3.7	7.7
Alvarado	44.4	14.9	30.9	0.7	6.5
Buena Vista*	40.4	33.0	7.9	0.3	15.2
Douglas*	39.3	20.1	26.0	2.3	6.8
Edison	43.2	6.7	35.5	2.7	7.7
Fairmount	35.1	10.9	40.9	1.9	4.2



Rooftop*	17.6	38.0	17.3	11.9	8.8
Sanchez	43.0	5.3	<b>28.4</b>	7.3	10.1
Oceanview	14.7	8.4	45.0	15.5	7.3
Ortega	10.0	12.8	40.4	9.2	11.1
Sheridan	20.4	5.0	38.1	12.3	8.4
Outer Richmond	3.8	26.4	3.9	40.3	16.2
Alamo	5.0	25.8	3.5	39.6	15.0
Argonne*	3.6	23.9	9.4	39.2	11.9
Cabrillo	3.3	25.1	<b>11.1</b>	41.3	11.1
Lafayette	4.9	30.6	<b>11.6</b>	29.6	17.0
Outer Sunset	5.2	23.5	3.1	46.5	13.1
Scott Key	4.9	23.2	7.7	44.0	12.3
Lawton*	7.0	22.1	11.7	39.7	13.3
Stevenson	9.8	18.9	3.2	44.2	9.4
Ulloa	7.2	16.7	<b>15.2</b>	37.7	9.4
Pacific Hts	5.4	48.5	5.0	22.7	9.2
Sherman	7.1	29.6	4.9	<b>43.5</b>	9.4
Portola/Visitation Valley	20.2	4.3	34.4	17.1	12.7
El Dorado	17.8	1.9	36.9	15.9	11.1
ER Taylor	28.4	6.6	23.0	18.9	10.1
Visitation Valley	11.8	3.2	23.4	36.1	13.0
SOM/Potrero H	16.8	9.5	34.8	5.1	15.2
Carmichael	<b>27.0</b>	5.3	5.6	<b>12.0</b>	9.9
S. King	<b>32.7</b>	5.0	29.6	<b>14.6</b>	17.2
Webster	<b>42.0</b>	5.4	27.8	12.0	9.1
Treasure Island	6.7	60.2	15.1	0.2	5.4
Treasure Island	7.5	44.6	11.9	4.6	<b>19.0</b>
Western Addition	11.0	8.6	57.2	6.0	10.9
Cobb	11.7	8.1	41.3	<b>28.6</b>	5.7
G. Gate	<b>22.8</b>	4.8	26.2	<b>36.3</b>	9.1
New Tradition*	10.9	18.1	39.3	6.3	17.5
Weill	3.3	5.7	43.4	<b>38.4</b>	6.8

\*School enrollment of alternative schools is based totally on optional enrollment requests, not on neighborhood residence. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to ascertain percent school representation of a racial group is higher than percent representation among K-5 students living in neighborhood.

\*\* According to Mr. Dennis Garden, Director of SFUSD Transportation Department, boundaries of certain schools include areas of adjoining neighborhoods. Racial breakdown of neighborhood does not reflect the racial breakdown of actual school boundary area.

Boundaries of Guadalupe School include areas in Portola/Visitation neighborhood; Glen Park, in Noe/Eureka Valley; Sloat, in Oceanview; Sunnyside, in Excelsior; Spring Valley, in North of Market; Edison, in Mission; Sanchez, in Mission; Redding, in North of Market.

\*\*\* Visitation Valley Elementary School receives no bused students. Students live in walk-area of Visitation Valley.

( bold type indicates that a racial group's representation is at least 6 percent higher than its representation among K-5 students in non-dominant neighborhoods )



**Table 3: K-5 Busing Patterns for School Desegregation**

Sending Neighborhood (Dominant race group)	Receiving School
<b>Bayview Hunter's Point (Hispanic)*</b>	Bryant, Edison, Fairmount, Hillcrest, Revere, Sanchez, ER Taylor*, Ulloa
<b>Bernal Heights (Hispanic)*</b>	Bret Harte
<b>Chinatown/North Beach (Chinese)*</b>	Cobb, DeAvila, Golden Gate, Hawthorne, Marshall, Starr King, Webster, Weill
<b>Haight/Ashbury (Black &amp; White)*</b>	Hawthorne, Parker, Stockton
<b>Inner Richmond (Chinese &amp; Other Non-White)</b>	DeAvila
<b>Inner Sunset (White &amp; Chinese)</b>	Miraloma
<b>Lake Merced (White)</b>	Ortega
<b>Mission (Hispanic)*</b>	Alvarado, Starr King, McKinley, Muir, Parker, Spring Valley, Stockton, Webster
<b>Noe/ Eureka Valley (Hispanic &amp; White)*</b>	Miraloma
<b>North of Market (Other Non-White)*</b>	Carmichael, Marshall, Treasure Island
<b>Oceanview (Black)</b>	Miraloma, Ulloa, West Portal
<b>Portola/Visitacion Valley (Black)*</b>	Alvarado, Cleveland, El Dorado, Hillcrest, ER Taylor*
<b>Presidio (Military - White)</b>	Alamo, Cabrillo, Golden Gate
<b>South of Market/Potrero Hill (Black)*</b>	Parker
<b>Western Addition (Black)*</b>	Bryant, DeAvila, Garfield, Hawthorne, Lafayette, Moscone, Sherman, Spring Valley, Sutro
* Eastside Neighborhood	

### **III. SCHOOL CHOICE AND HIGH SCHOOL MOBILITY**

Chinese students have reached the enrollment cap at three comprehensive high schools and three alternative high schools, including Lowell High. Critics of the Consent Decree contend that this Consent Decree-imposed "capping out" by race has restricted the mobility of Chinese high school students or their access to schools of choice.

This section of the analysis will discuss whether the race-based enrollment guidelines restrict the mobility of Chinese high school students from attending schools of choice or the number of Chinese high school applicants granted an optional enrollment request (OER).

The school district assigns every high school student to one of seven comprehensive high school (or one of the continuation high schools if extenuating academic or social circumstances require such an assignment). A student can file an OER to attend one of the alternative high schools or a non-assigned comprehensive high school.

If the race-based enrollment guidelines are discriminatory against Chinese students, as the critics of the Consent Decree contend, then several observations about Chinese high school enrollment and attendance pattern should be evident:



**Observation #1:**

Of all high students school granted an OER, the percentage of all Chinese students granted an OER should be lower than the district-wide percentage of Chinese among all high school students.

**Observation #2:**

The high number of Chinese students regularly assigned to comprehensive high schools, located in dominant Chinese neighborhoods, should severely limit the number and percentage of Chinese students granted OERs to attend these high schools, relative to other racial groups.

**Observation #3:**

The ratio of Chinese students granted an OER to regularly assigned Chinese students should be lower than the ratio for most other racial groups.

***Analysis of Racial Breakdown of HS Students Granted an OER on District-wide Basis:***

In the current 1993-1994 school year, a total of 19,002 high school students is

enrolled in San Francisco public schools. Chinese students constitute the single largest racial group, 30.54% or 5,804 students. Hispanics constitute 16.30% of all high school students; Blacks, 15.49%; other whites, 11.92%; other non-whites, 11.94% (see Table 6).

The school district has approved the optional enrollment requests of 7,505 high school students to attend either one of the six alternative high schools or a non-assigned comprehensive high school. Of the students granted an OER district-wide, 34.32%, or 1,544 high school students, are Chinese (see Table 7). The percent of Chinese students granted an OER is +3.78 percentage points higher than the district-wide representation of this racial group (see Table 6).

In contrast, Hispanic students constitute only 16.30% of students granted an OER, or 1.81 percentage points *below* the district-wide representation of Hispanics; Blacks, 11.42% or 4.07 percentage points *below* their district-wide representation; white, 13.67%, or +1.75 percentage points *higher* than their district-wide representation. The percent of other racial groups -- Japanese, Korean, Filipinos, and other non-whites -- is within plus/minus one percentage point of their respective district-wide representation.

This data suggests that, among all



## Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit

**TABLE 4: Number of K-5 Students Contributing to School Desegregation by Race**

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL	PERCENT SCHL REP.	PERCENT IN NGHRD	PERCENT NET DIFF.	TOTAL SCHL ENRL	NO. OF STUDENTS
<b>BLACKS</b>					
<u>Bernal Heights</u>					
Flynn	29.5	12.5	17.1	415	71
Revere	24.7	12.2	12.2	524	64
<u>Chinatown/North Beach</u>					
Parker	8.6	2.3	6.3	291	19
Garfield	12.0	2.3	9.7	274	27
Spring Valley	13.6	2.3	11.3	560	64
<u>Excelsior</u>	17.1	4.9	12.2	374	46
Cleveland	31.5	4.9	26.6	555	148
Hillcrest					
<u>Inner Richmond</u>					
Sutro	12.1	6.1	6.0	305	19
Inner Sunet					
West Portal	13.0	3.4	9.6	599	58
<u>Lake Merced/Mt. Davidson</u>					
Glen Park	24.7	8.9	15.8	361	57
Miraloma	21.7	8.9	12.8	401	52
Mission					
Bryant	18.9	6.1	12.8	301	39
Hawthorne	14.6	6.1	8.5	556	48
Moscone	12.8	6.1	6.7	358	24
Noe/Eureka Valley					
Alvarado	30.9	11.6	19.3	352	68
Edison	35.5	11.6	23.9	479	115
Fairmount	40.9	11.6	29.3	430	126
Sanchez	28.4	11.6	16.8	398	67
Outer Richmond					
Cabrillo	11.1	3.9	7.2	414	30
Lafayette	11.6	3.9	7.7	631	49
Outer Sunset					
Ulloa	15.2	3.1	12.1	414	50
<b>BLACK TOTAL</b>					<b>1241</b>
<b>HISPANICS</b>					
<u>Bayview</u>					
Bret Harte	37.3	11.0	26.3	480	127
<u>Chinatown/North Beach</u>					
Parker	38.8	4.6	34.2	291	100
Garfield	36.9	4.6	32.3	274	89
Spring Valley	28.4	4.6	23.8	560	134
Commodore Stockton	42.4	4.6	37.8	740	280
<u>Haight</u>					
McKinley	15.8	9.9	5.9	236	140
Muir	41.4	9.9	31.5	331	105
<u>Lake Merced</u>					
Miraloma	18.5	12.0	6.5	401	26



<u>Noe/Eureka</u>						
Alvarado	44.4	31.7	12.7	352	45	
<u>South of Market/Potrero Hgt.</u>						
Carmichael	27.0	16.8	10.2	393	40	
Starr King	32.7	16.8	15.9	419	67	
Webster	42.0	16.8	25.2	331	84	
<u>Wester Addition</u>						
Golden Gate	22.8	11.0	11.8	504	60	
<b>HISPANIC TOTAL</b>					<b>1171</b>	

<b>CHINESE</b>						
<u>Haight/Ashbury</u>						
DeAvila	31.4	2.6	28.8	452	131	
Grattan	20.1	2.6	17.5	399	70	
McKinley	8.9	2.6	6.3	236	15	
<u>Mission</u>						
Bryant	13.6	5.7	7.9	301	24	
Hawthorne	20.9	5.7	15.2	556	85	
Moscone	19.0	5.7	13.3	358	48	
<u>Pacific Hts</u>						
Sherman	43.5	22.7	20.8	510	106	
<u>Portola/Visitacion</u>						
Visitacion	36.1	17.1	19.0	432	92	
<u>SOM/Potrero Hill</u>						
Carmichael	12.0	5.1	6.9	393	28	
Starr King	14.6	5.1	9.5	419	40	
Webster	12.0	5.1	6.9	331	23	
<u>Western Addition</u>						
Cobb	28.6	6.0	22.6	293	64	
Golden Gate	36.3	6.0	30.3	503	153	
Weill	38.4	6.0	32.4	424	138	
<b>CHINESE TOTAL</b>					<b>925</b>	

<b>OTHER NON-WHITES</b>						
<u>Haight/Ashbury</u>						
DeAvila	15.0	7.9	7.1	452.0	32	
<u>Mission</u>						
Bryant	11.6	7.5	4.1	301.0	13	
Marshall	23.2	7.5	15.7	328.0	52	
Moscone	17.3	7.5	9.8	358.0	35	
<u>Treasure Island</u>						
Treasure Island	19.0	5.3	13.6	901.0	123	
<b>OTHER NON-WHITE TOTAL</b>					<b>255</b>	

<b>WHITES</b>						
<u>Mission</u>						
Hawthorne	13.3	7.4	5.9	556	33	
<b>WHITE TOTAL</b>					<b>33</b>	



## Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit

high school students, Chinese students have achieved the highest number and percentage of optional enrollment requests

granted to attend alternative or non-assigned comprehensive high schools. Further, Hispanic and Black students are

**TABLE 5: Percent of Ethnic Breakdown at K-5 Schools Compared to K-5 Students Living in the Neighborhood**

NEIGHBORHOOD	PERCENT SCH. REP.	PERCENT IN NGHRD	PERCENT NET DIFF.	TOTAL SCHL ENRL	NO OF STDTS
<b>JAPANESE</b>					
<u>Inner Richmond</u>					
Alamo	3.8	2.2	1.6	713	12
Argonne	2.9	2.2	0.7	413	3
Lilenthal	3.8	2.2	1.6	186	3
McCoppin	2.9	2.2	0.7	376	3
<u>Inner Sunset</u>					
Clarendon*	28.2	4.6	23.6	393	117
<b>KOREANS</b>					
<u>Inner Richmond</u>					
Alamo	3.8	3.3	0.5	713	4
Argonne	2.6	3.3			
McCoppin	3.5	3.3	0.2	376	1
Sutro	3.0	3.3			
<u>Inner Sunset</u>					
Ulloa	2.9	1.9	1.0	414	4
<u>Lake Merced/Mt. D.</u>					
Miraloma	2.7	4.5			
<u>Oceanview</u>					
Ortega	4.7	0.2	4.5	359	16
<u>Outer Richmond</u>					
Lafayette	4.0	3.3	0.7	631	5
<b>FILIPINOS</b>					
<u>SOM/Potrero H</u>					
Carmicahel	39.7	17.8	21.9	393	86
<u>Excelsior</u>					
Guadalupe	25.1	23.3	1.8	395	9
Longfellow	39.9	23.3	125.3	464	77
<u>Oceanview</u>					
Sheridan	15.1	7.0	8.1	387	32

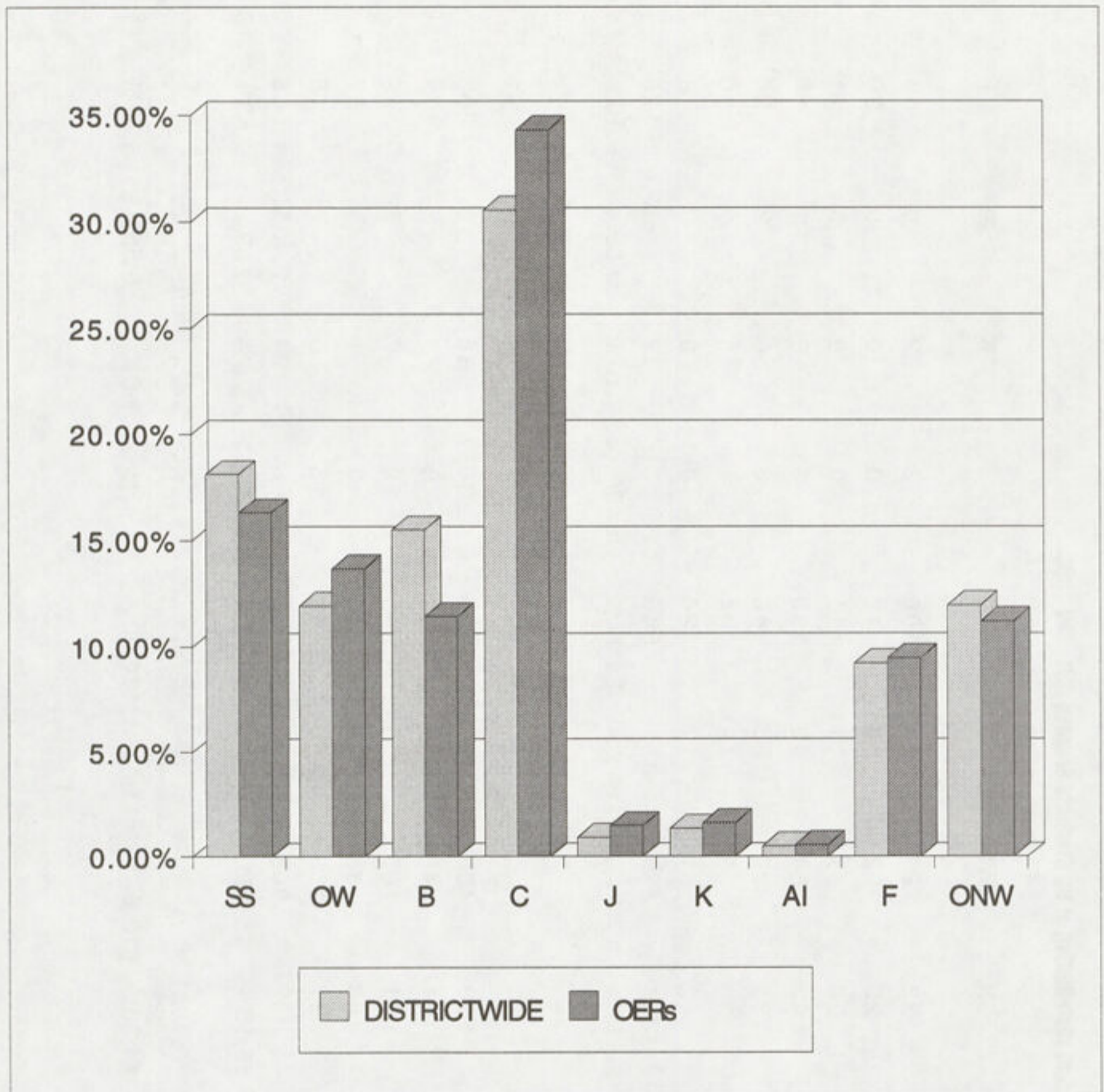
\*Japanese Bilingual Education Program



less well-represented among high school students who have been granted an OER. The percent representation of Hispanic

and Black students granted an OER falls below their respective district-wide representation.

**TABLE 6: Number and Percent HS Representation and OERs Granted by Racial Group - Fall 1998**



	H	OW	B	C	J	K	AI	F	ONW	All
# Students - Districtwide	3442	2265	2944	5804	175	254	93	1756	2269	19002
Percent Districtwide	18.11%	11.92%	15.49%	30.54%	0.92%	1.34%	0.49%	9.24%	11.94%	100.00%
# OERs Granted	1223	1026	857	2576	110	121	41	711	840	7505
Percent OERs Granted	16.30%	13.67%	11.42%	34.32%	1.47%	1.61%	0.55%	9.47%	11.19%	100.00%
difference (%oer-%district)	-1.81%	1.75%	-4.07%	3.78%	0.55%	0.27%	0.06%	0.23%	-0.75%	



TABLE 7: Number and Percent Distribution of HS Students Granted OER - Fall 1993

	H	OW	B	C	J	K	AI	F	ONW	ALL
<b>Comp. H.S.*</b>										
Lincoln	23	27	28	106	3	2	0	14	50	253
Balboa	25	2	14	12	0	0	0	29	5	87
Galileo	20	7	11	111	0	0	3	11	43	206
Washington	42	51	42	190	3	9	1	16	90	444
McAteer	131	30	53	40	0	6	2	26	12	300
Mission	38	3	16	64	1	0	0	20	15	157
Wilson	42	1	17	20	0	0	0	9	8	97
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>1,544</b>
<b>% Subtotal</b>	<b>20.79%</b>	<b>7.84%</b>	<b>11.72%</b>	<b>35.17%</b>	<b>0.45%</b>	<b>1.10%</b>	<b>0.39%</b>	<b>8.10%</b>	<b>14.44%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Alt. H.S.**</b>										
ISA	167	86	61	120	2	2	6	47	34	525
Lowell	223	450	120	1185	66	85	12	263	329	2,733
Burton	191	48	284	402	0	3	2	172	103	1,205
Wallenberg	81	105	55	245	19	7	3	49	85	649
O'Connell	183	63	96	43	3	1	5	37	26	457
SOSA	57	153	60	38	13	6	7	18	40	392
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>2033</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>5,961</b>
<b>% Subtotal</b>	<b>15.13%</b>	<b>15.18%</b>	<b>11.34%</b>	<b>34.11%</b>	<b>1.73%</b>	<b>1.74%</b>	<b>0.59%</b>	<b>9.83%</b>	<b>10.35%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>All OERs</b>	<b>1223</b>	<b>1026</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>2576</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>7,505</b>
<b>% ALL</b>	<b>16.30%</b>	<b>13.67%</b>	<b>11.42%</b>	<b>34.32%</b>	<b>1.47%</b>	<b>1.61%</b>	<b>0.55%</b>	<b>9.47%</b>	<b>11.19%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

\* December 14, 1993

\*\* October 14, 1993



### **Racial Breakdown of Students Granted OER at SF Comprehensive High Schools:**

There are seven comprehensive high schools. Chinese students have reached the enrollment cap (within six percentage points) at three of these comprehensive high schools - Lincoln, Galileo, and Washington. No other racial group comes close to reaching the enrollment cap at any of these seven comprehensive high schools (see Tables 8 and 9).

Notwithstanding "capping out," Chinese students granted an OER to attend each of these three high schools, located in dominant Chinese neighborhoods, constitute the largest number and percentage of OER students there (see Table 3).

The overall representation of Chinese students at the seven comprehensive high schools is 30.74%. Of this 30.74%, 4.69% or 543 Chinese students attend the comprehensive high schools on an OER basis, by far the largest number and percentage compared to all other racial groups.

So as to avoid bias due to the size of a racial group, let us examine the ratio of the number of students granted an OER to the

number of regularly-assigned students by racial group at the comprehensive high schools. A one-to-one ratio would indicate that, for every student of a racial group attending the comprehensive high schools on a regularly-assigned basis, there is one student of the same racial group granted an OER to attend one of these seven comprehensive high schools.

Among all racial groups, Chinese and Hispanics achieve the highest ratio of 0.18

-- number of OER students to number of regularly-assigned student -- at these comprehensive high schools. White and Black students achieve the lowest ratio. The ratio for all students is 0.15 (see Table 10).

This data suggests then that regularly-assigned Chinese students do not cause this racial

group to reach the enrollment cap at Lincoln, Galileo, and Washington. Chinese students granted an OER appear to be responsible for this racial group reaching the enrollment cap at these three comprehensive high schools. Further, notwithstanding the size of its high school population and the existence of enrollment caps, Chinese students achieve the highest

**the educational needs of all low-income racial minorities deserve the highest public priority and a diverse set of remedies.**



## Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit

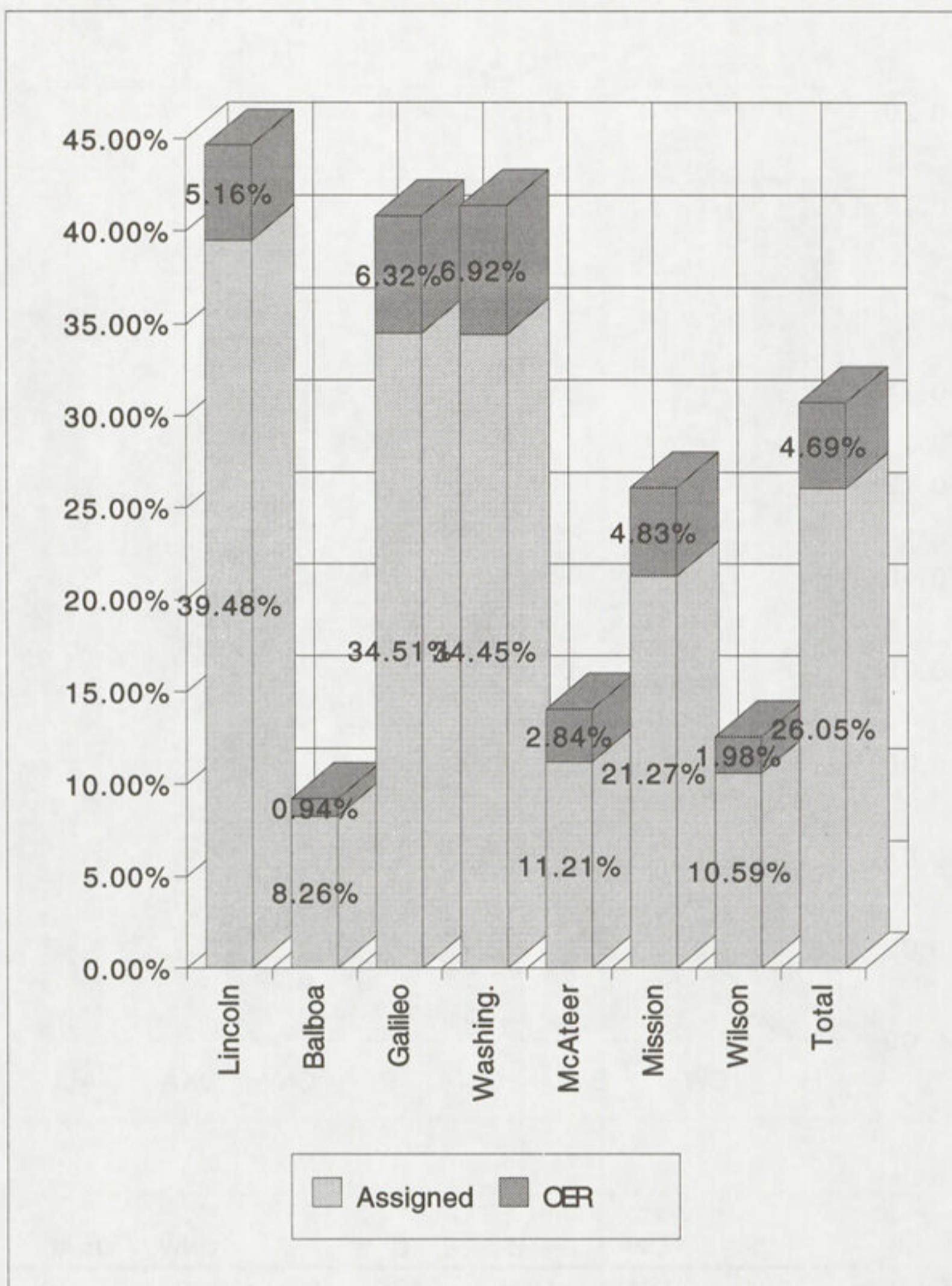
**TABLE 8: Percent Regularly Assigned and OER Students at SF Comprehensive High Schools - Fall 1993**

	H	OW	B	C	F	ONW	JKAI*	ALL
<b>Lincoln</b>	135	288	197	917	154	290	73	2,054
Assigned	112	261	169	811	140	240	68	
OER	23	27	28	106	14	50	5	
% Assigned	5.45%	12.71%	8.23%	39.48%	6.82%	11.68%	3.31%	87.68%
% OER	1.12%	1.31%	1.36%	5.16%	0.68%	2.43%	0.24%	12.32%
<b>Balboa</b>	378	54	275	117	365	75	7	1,271
Assigned	353	52	261	105	336	70	7	
OER	25	2	14	12	29	5	0	
% Assigned	27.77%	4.09%	20.54%	8.26%	26.44%	5.51%	0.55%	93.15%
% OER	1.97%	0.16%	1.10%	0.94%	2.28%	0.39%	0.00%	6.85%
<b>Galleo</b>	136	159	272	717	97	342	33	1,756
Assigned	116	152	261	606	86	299	20	
OER	20	7	11	111	11	43	3	
% Assigned	6.61%	8.66%	14.86%	34.51%	4.90%	17.03%	1.14%	87.70%
% OER	1.14%	0.40%	0.63%	6.32%	0.63%	2.45%	0.17%	11.73%
<b>Washington</b>	167	448	327	1136	81	473	114	2,746
Assigned	125	397	285	946	65	383	101	
OER	42	51	42	190	16	90	13	
% Assigned	4.55%	14.46%	10.38%	34.45%	2.37%	13.95%	3.68%	83.83%
% OER	1.53%	1.86%	1.53%	6.92%	0.58%	3.28%	0.47%	16.17%
<b>McAteer</b>	463	169	366	198	94	94	26	1,410
Assigned	332	139	313	158	68	82	18	
OER	131	30	53	40	26	12	8	
% Assigned	23.55%	9.86%	22.20%	11.21%	4.82%	5.82%	1.28%	78.72%
% OER	9.29%	2.13%	3.76%	2.84%	1.84%	0.85%	0.57%	21.28%
<b>Mission</b>	501	43	157	346	142	128	9	1,326
Assigned	463	40	141	282	122	113	8	
OER	38	3	16	64	20	15	1	
% Assigned	34.92%	3.02%	10.63%	21.27%	9.20%	8.52%	0.60%	88.16%
% OER	2.87%	0.23%	1.21%	4.83%	1.51%	1.13%	0.08%	11.84%
<b>Wilson</b>	320	42	275	127	135	106	5	1,010
Assigned	278	41	258	107	126	98	5	
OER	42	1	17	20	9	8	0	
% Assigned	27.52%	4.06%	25.54%	10.59%	12.48%	9.70%	0.50%	90.40%
% OER	4.16%	0.10%	1.68%	1.98%	0.89%	0.79%	0.00%	9.60%
<b>Total</b>	2,100	1,203	1,869	3,558	1,068	1,508	267	11,573
Assigned	1,779	1,082	1,688	3,015	943	1,285	227	10,019
OER	321	121	181	543	125	223	30	1,544
% Assigned	15.37%	9.35%	14.59%	26.05%	8.15%	11.10%	1.96%	86.57%
% OER	2.77%	1.05%	1.56%	4.69%	1.08%	1.93%	0.26%	13.34%
<b>RATIO</b> (OER to Assigned)	0.18	0.11	0.11	0.18	0.13	0.17	0.13	0.15

\* Japanese, Koreans, and American Indians



**TABLE 8: Percent Regularly Assigned and OER Students at SF Comprehensive High Schools**

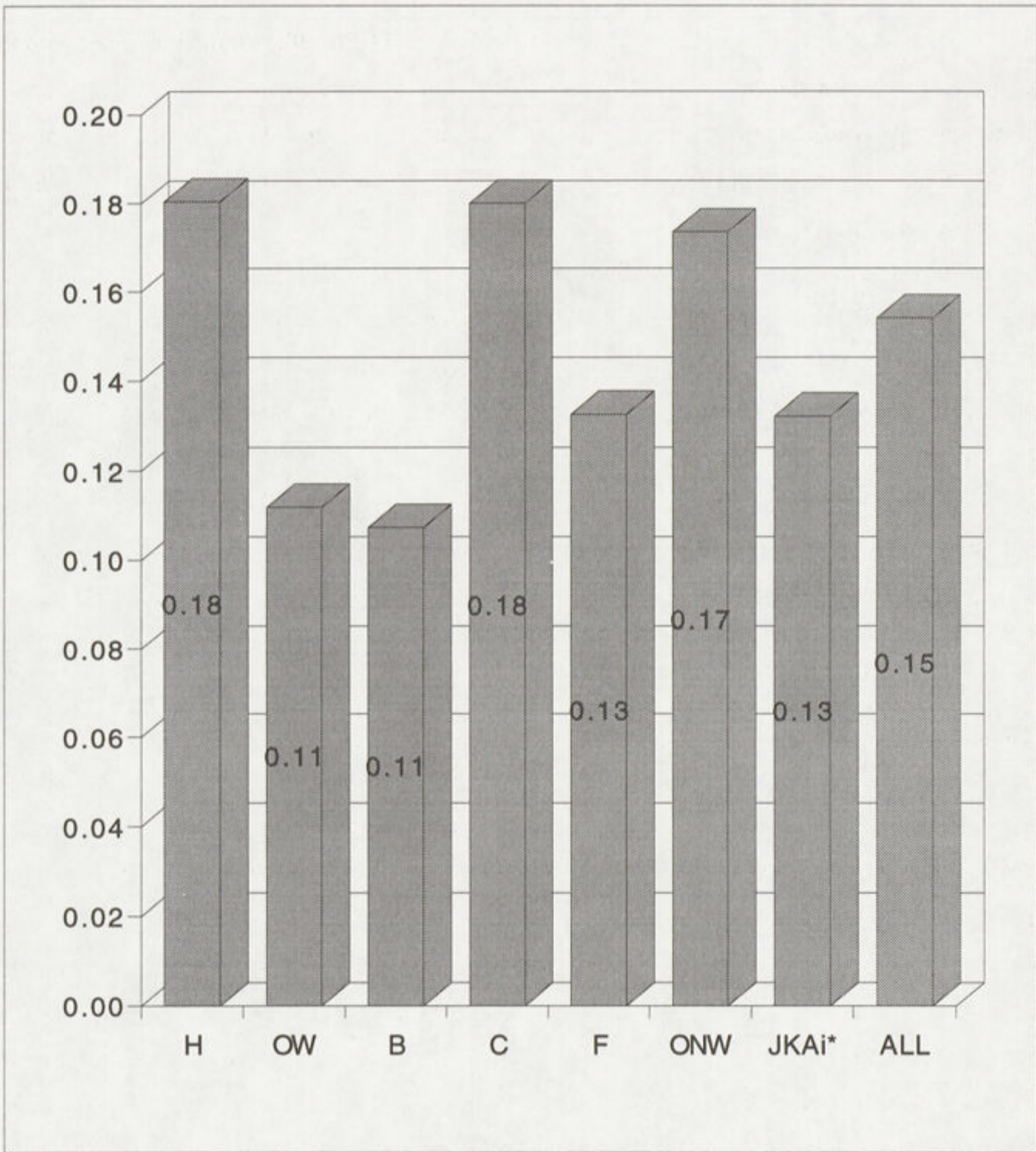


	Lincoln	Balboa	Galileo	Washington	McAteer	Mission	Wilson	Total
%OER	5.16%	0.94%	6.32%	6.92%	2.84%	4.83%	1.98%	4.69%
%Assigned	39.48%	8.26%	34.51%	34.45%	11.21%	21.27%	10.59%	26.05%



**Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit**

**TABLE 10: Percent Regularly Assigned and OER Students at SF Comprehensive High Schools - Fall 1993**



	H	OW	B	C	F	ONW	JKAI*	ALL
# OER	321	121	181	543	125	223	30	1544
# Assigned	1779	1082	1688	3015	943	1285	227	10019
Ratio	0.18	0.11	0.11	0.18	0.13	0.17	0.13	0.15

\* Japanese, Koreans and American Indians



rate of mobility and choice among all students who attend the comprehensive high schools.

***District-wide Mobility and Choice Among All Racial Groups:***

Of the 19,002 students enrolled in San Francisco high schools, 7,505 students have been granted an OER to attend an alternative or non-assigned comprehensive high school. The district-wide ratio of the number of students granted an OER to the number of students regularly-assigned is 0.65. Or stated in another way, for every student regularly-assigned to a high school, there is a 0.65 student who has been granted an OER (see Table 11).

Among all racial groups, Japanese, Korean, and American Indian students collectively achieve the highest ratio of 1.09. (Japanese alone achieve a ratio of 1.69; Koreans, 0.91; American Indians, 0.79.) The ratio for this combined group is skewed because of the small size of these racial groups and the disproportionate percentage of Japanese and Korean students living on the west side of San Francisco, thereby having greater access to alternative high schools. Therefore, this analysis will compare the ratio of OER to regularly-assigned students among the major racial groups.

Among the major racial groups, white

students achieve the highest ratio of 0.83 of OER to regularly-assigned students. Chinese students are close behind at a ratio of 0.80. Black and Hispanic students achieve the lowest ratio, respectively 0.41 and 0.55. The ratio for Filipino and other non-white students is close to the district-wide ratio of 0.65 (see Table 11).

This analysis suggests that, notwithstanding the race-based enrollment guidelines and "capping out," Chinese have achieved virtually the same high degree of mobility and choice as whites in high school enrollment. Furthermore, among all racial groups, Black and Hispanic students remain the most disadvantaged in achieving mobility and access to alternative and non-assigned comprehensive high school opportunities.

There is little statistical evidence to indicate that the Consent Decree enrollment caps have disproportionately restricted access of Chinese high school students to optional enrollment opportunities. This analysis has found that, of all the racial groups granted an OER, the percentage and number of Chinese high school students district-wide are the highest.<sup>12</sup>

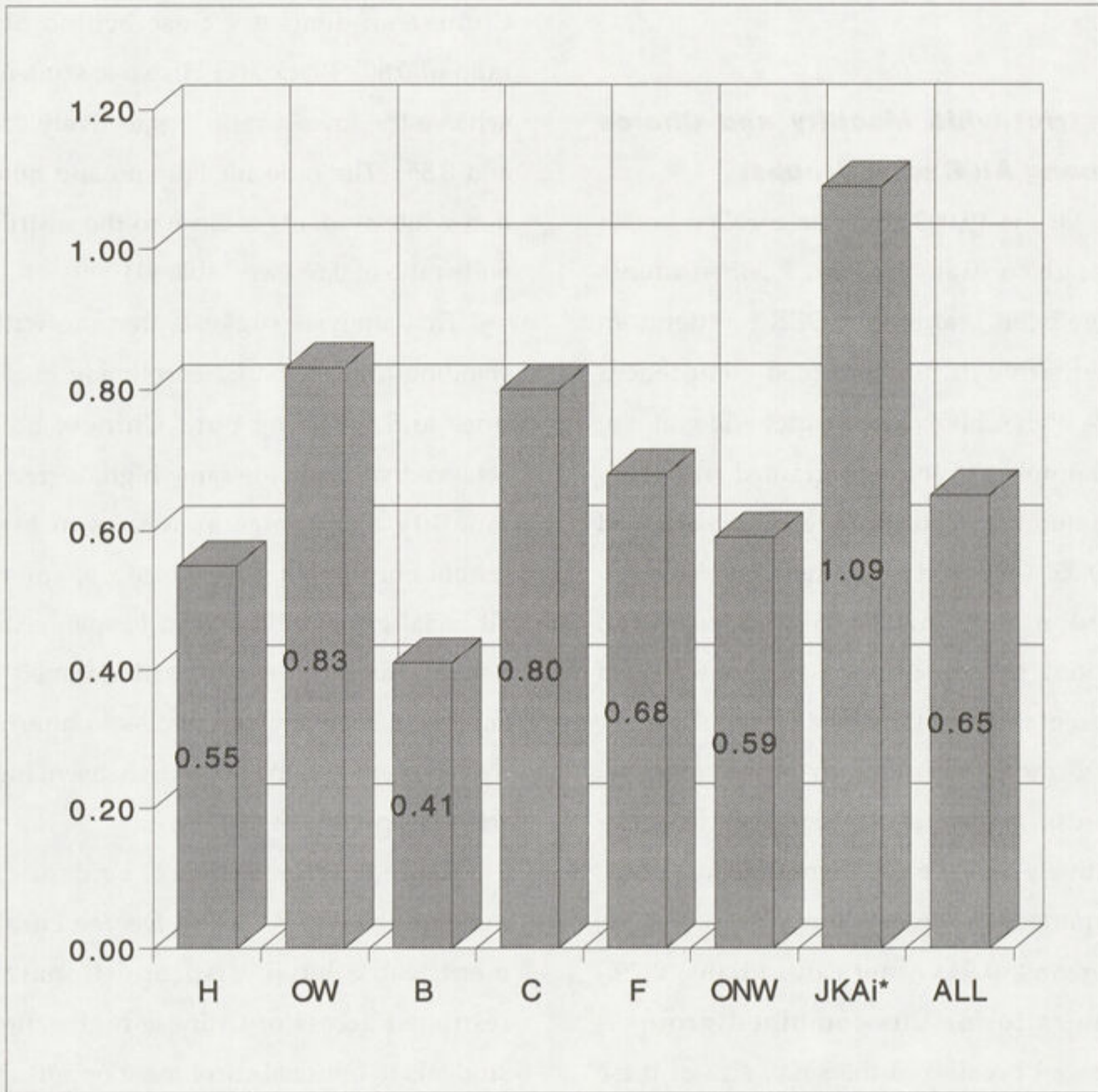
***IV. EDUCATIONAL PLIGHT OF LOW-INCOME CHINESE STUDENTS***

Rather than focus on the perceived effects of the race-based enrollment guide-



## Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit

**TABLE 11: Ration of OER to Assigned High School Students by Racial Group - Fall 1993**



**NUMBER OF OER AND ASSIGNED HS STUDENTS**

Status	H	OW	B	C	F	ONW	JKAI*	ALL
OERs	1223	1026	857	2576	711	840	272	7505
Assigned	2219	1239	2087	3228	1045	1429	250	11497
Total	3442	2265	2944	5804	1756	2269	522	19002

\* Japanese, Koreans, and American Indians



lines, the Chinese American community would better spend their resources to improve the plight of low-income, low-achieving Chinese students. This section of the analysis will briefly discuss the strong correlation between low-income status, low academic achievement, and desegregation responsibilities in the San Francisco public schools.

In San Francisco, 42% of all K-5 students receive free lunches. This student assignment to federally-sponsored lunch programs indicates low-income status.

Among the 17 regular and alternative K-5 schools with a dominant Chinese student population, the percentage of students on free lunch at schools located on

the west side is less than or equal to the district average of 42%. Similarly, at all 7 K-5 schools with a dominant white student population, the percentage of students on free lunch at each of these 5 schools is exceedingly low (see Table 12).

In contrast, with the exception of one dominant Chinese K-5 school located in Pacific Heights, the percentage of students at the dominant Chinese K-5 schools, located on the east side, is well above the district average of 42% (see Table 12).

There is a correlation between the poverty status of Chinese students living on the east side and low academic achievement. Again excluding the one dominant Chinese K-5 school located in Pacific

TABLE 12: K-5 Schools Within 6 Percent of Enrollment Cap and Percent of Students on Free Lunch

Chinese Schools/Percent Free Lunch		White Schools/Percent Free Lunch	
Alamo	11.80	Treasure Island	36.80
Cabrillo	31.60		
Garfield	<b>54.70</b>		
Jefferson	21.30		
Scott Key	16.70		
McCoppin	43.90		
Peabody	<b>75.20</b>		
Redding	8.20		
Sherman	<b>71.60</b>		
Spring Valley	36.70		
Stevenson			
West Portal			
Weill			
Argonne	6.00		
Lawton	19.30		
Yick Wo	<b>52.30</b>		
		Alternative	
		Buena Vista	11.10
		Clarendon	3.90
		Lakeshore	
		Lilenthal	
		New Traditions	
		Rooftop	

(bold type indicates percent on free lunch well above the district average of 42% on free lunch; also eastside schools)



## ***Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit***

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Heights, among the 6 dominant Chinese K-5 schools on the poorer east side, 4 of them ranked in the bottom half of all K-5 schools in California-wide (CTBS) reading tests in the 1990-1991 school year; 4 in the bottom half, in CTBS language arts; 3, in CTBS mathematics.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, of the 10 dominant Chinese K-5 schools located on the wealthier west side plus the one in Pacific Heights, 9 of them ranked within the top 20 schools in reading; 10, in language arts; 10, in mathematics.

Of the 6 dominant White alternative schools, 5 of them ranked within the top 10 schools in reading; 4, in language arts; 3, in mathematics.

Whether a school reaches the enrollment cap for a racial group does not appear to be a salient factor in terms of academic achievement. Instead, economic status combined with the race of the student appears to be more closely correlated with the level of academic achievement. Students at dominant, middle class Chinese K-5 schools, located on the west side of the city, do well academically; students at dominant, low-income Chinese K-5 schools do not do nearly as well.

The disparity in academic achievement between westside and eastside Chinese K-5 students eventually affects access to a merit-based, alternative high

school like the acclaimed Lowell High School. Students of other racial minority backgrounds are also similarly situated.

In the 1992-1993 school year, nearly a half of all Chinese public school 8th graders attended a middle school located on the east side of the city. Two-thirds or more of Black and Hispanic public school 8th graders attended middle schools also located on the east side (see Table 13).

Of all Chinese applicants for the Fall 1993 Lowell freshman class, less than one-fourth attended a middle school located on the east side. Three-fourths of all Chinese applicants attended either a westside or private middle school. Two-thirds of all Black and Hispanic applicants also attended a westside or private middle school (see Table 14).

Lowell High School selects its freshman students based on the ranking of applicants' grades and test scores. Given their lower economic status, Chinese and other racial minority students on the east side are clearly discouraged or feel that they will not be admitted to Lowell. Therefore, they do not apply in the same proportion as their representation among all 8th graders.

Low-income Chinese students and other racial minorities who live on the east side bear the burden of mandatory busing. They also experience lower academic



TABLE 13: 1992-93 Middle School Attendance of 8th Graders - Westside vs. Non-Westside

	H	OW	B	C	J	K	AI	F	ONW	All
<b>WESTSIDE MS</b>										
Aptos	84	62	87	35	4	11	0	32	29	344
Giannini	20	60	55	162	1	6	0	27	48	379
Hoover	41	77	41	151	10	9	0	13	34	376
Presidio	11	87	17	174	20	15	2	9	48	383
Roosevelt	10	50	48	124	0	7	1	8	47	295
Lawton	7	8	8	25	1	0	0	1	8	58
Westside Subtotals	173	344	256	671	36	48	3	90	214	1,835
<b>%Westside</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>NON-WESTSIDE MS</b>										
Burbank	78	20	52	20	0	0	0	51	28	249
Denman	72	8	36	22	0	1	0	83	15	237
Everett	103	43	42	30	0	0	5	10	24	257
Francisco	9	12	28	125	1	0	0	8	77	260
Franklin	47	10	53	132	0	0	0	8	16	266
ML King	20	14	78	29	0	0	2	24	14	181
Lick	78	19	58	7	0	0	3	9	7	181
H. Mann	79	42	23	36	0	1	2	12	8	203
Marina	13	38	48	140	5	8	1	8	48	309
Potrero Hill	74	30	40	13	0	0	1	32	16	206
Visitacion Vly.	30	4	56	36	0	0	1	25	19	171
SF Comm.	8	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	15
Non-Westside Subtotals	611	242	516	591	6	10	15	271	273	2,535
<b>% Non-Westside</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>ALL MS ATTENDANCE</b>	<b>784</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>772</b>	<b>1262</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>4370</b>

achievement than their respective counterparts who live and attend schools located on the west side of the city.

Relative to other racial groups, race-based enrollment guidelines have not disproportionately affected Chinese students, in terms of school choice, access to alterna-

tive schools or association with high-achieving students. On the other hand, economic status and neighborhood of residence determine, to a large extent, which students within a specific racial minority group will achieve access to school choice and academic excellence.



## Clash Between Race-Conscious Remedies and Merit

TABLE 14: Non-Public, Westside, and Non-Westside Applicants for Fall 1993 Lowell Freshman Class

	Non-Public	Westside	Non-Westside	All
Hispanic	67	38	51	156
% Hispanic	43%	24%	33%	100%
Other Whites	150	167	43	360
% Other Whites	42%	46%	12%	100%
Black	26	26	25	77
% Black	34%	34%	32%	100%
Chinese	206	316	160	682
% Chinese	30%	46%	23%	100%
Japanese	10	20	1	31
% Japanese	32%	65%	3%	100%
Korean	12	28	1	41
% Korean	29%	68%	2%	100%
Filipino	89	20	36	145
% Filipino	61%	14%	25%	100%
Other Non-Whites	43	82	45	170
% Other Non-Whites	25%	48%	26%	100%
American Indian	2	0	0	2
% American Indian	100%	0%	0%	100%
<b>All Applicants</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>1,662</b>
<b>% All</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### V. COOPERATIVE FRAMEWORK

Race-based enrollment guidelines have enabled San Francisco city schools to achieve racial desegregation and to comply with the Brown Supreme Court decision. Compared to other racial groups, the overall mobility of Chinese students and

access to school choice are high.

As victims themselves, Asian Americans cannot be held responsible for historic discrimination in public education against racial minority groups. Yet, Asian Americans can assume a positive role in public education policy by eschewing the



trap set by the false, fruitless debate between "merit" and "race-based remedies." Asian Americans can and should acknowledge internal class differences that impede low-income Asian Americans from achieving academic success. To the extent that low-income Asian students are bused or assigned to other low-income racial minority schools, the educational needs of all low-income racial minorities deserve the highest public priority and a diverse set of remedies.

As middle-class Asian Americans identify successful strategies to access school choice, such strategies need to be shared with low-income racial minority families and their students. And as low-income racial minority families become more vocal and successful in demanding access to school choice and academic excellence, school choice and the number of academically-oriented schools will have to increase, benefiting both low-income and middle-class students and families. ■











### Endnotes

1. Takagi, Dana (1993). *Retreat from Race: Asian American Admissions and Racial Politics*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
2. Wong, Dennis (1994). Interview, January 4. These groups included Chinese for Quality Education Committee, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and Chinese American Citizens Alliance. These groups initially established 7 schools with 3,000 registered students.
3. Heinze, Andrew (1993). "Don't Punish Asians for Good Grades" in *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 13.
4. Leonard, Andrew (1993). "Class action - Chinese American activists come out swinging - but divided - in the battle over the SF school desegregation plan" in *Bay Guardian*, April 7.
5. See *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* (North Carolina) Board of Education, 413 U.S. 1 (1971). In *Swann*, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that racially identifiable schools must cease to exist, approved the use of district-wide busing, and established school racial balance to reflect the district's student population as a measure of effective school desegregation. In general, the Court has granted discretion to federal district court judges to determine the scope and extent of enrollment guidelines to achieve school desegregation.
6. The 1993-1994 annual operating budget of the San Francisco Unified School District is \$445 million.
7. For practical purposes, because of larger school boundaries that include neighborhoods of diverse racial backgrounds, mandatory busing does not exist at the middle or high school levels in San Francisco.
8. Chinese American Democratic Club Education Task Force (1993). "Resolution on San Francisco Unified School District Consent Decree," February.
9. Japanese and Koreans each constitute 1% of the total school population; Filipinos, 8%; other non-whites, 12%.
10. Chang, Amy, and F. Noto, B. Ammann, M. Baysac (1993). "Minority Report: Lowell High Admissions Advisory Committee to the Superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District." December 1. San Francisco, California.
11. The educational centers for newly-arrived immigrants are not included in this analysis because student assignment to these centers is temporary in duration.
12. Chinese American Democratic Club. "Proposed Policy Directions on Student Assignment." San Francisco, California. March 1993.
13. As of this writing, school district officials are reviewing the freshman admission criteria at Lowell High School. Community groups have urged the school district to abolish the use of differential admission cutoff scores by race to admit freshman students.
14. San Francisco Unified School District (1991). "School Site Rankings - 1990-1991." San Francisco, California.



## A Status Report on Asian Americans in Government

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Despite persistent stereotypes and increasing attention to Asian Americans in the United States, there are few studies or government reports that mention Asian Americans, much less focus on them. This paper attempts to fill the gap by analyzing the current employment status of Asian Americans in the public sector. It does so by comparing Asian Americans with other minorities and whites in terms of demographic change, employment status, and bureaucratic representation.

### **I. CURRENT RESEARCH**

Studies of representation in bureaucracy have largely focused on African Americans or women. Most of these have found that African Americans and women are concentrated at the lower levels, and are represented substantially less at the higher levels. In addition, a number of studies on Hispanics indicate that, despite

their increasing presence in the public sector, Hispanics continue to be underrepresented in bureaucracy generally, and in key administrative positions at all levels of government.

But few studies in major publications have focused on Asian Americans. Though government publications now add statistics on Hispanics to traditional reports (based on a white versus African American or non-white breakdown), there still is an insensitivity to inclusion of separate information about Asian Americans. For instance, even *Civil Service 2000*, which was intended to review the challenges of the long-term work force needs of the federal government, failed to address the employment issue of Asian Americans.<sup>1</sup>

### **II. OVERALL EMPLOYMENT**

In 1980, Asian American adults had lower unemployment rates than the total average. Of Asian American adults, 5 per-



cent were unemployed, compared with 7 percent of U.S. adults overall.<sup>2</sup> Due to their dramatic rise in population, Asian Americans saw employment rise 108 percent in the private sector between 1978 and 1990. Other groups showed a modest increase or decrease: whites (minus 5%), African Americans (12%), Hispanics (34%), and American Indians (0%).

In March 1991, Asian Americans comprised 2.6 percent (3.3 million) of the total civilian labor force. Overall, Asians 16 years of age and over (64%) have lower labor participation rates than do whites (66%). Asian males (72%) were slightly less likely to be in the labor force than were white males (76%), but there was little significant difference between the labor force participation rates of Asian females (56%) and white females (57%).<sup>3</sup>

### **Occupational Distribution**

The occupational distribution of employed Asian males differs from that of white males: There is a higher proportion of Asian males (33%) in the managerial and professional specialty occupations than white males (27%). Also, Asian males were better represented than white males in the technical sales and administrative support occupations (26% compared to 21%) and in service occupations (16% compared to 9%). O'Hare and Felt have

argued that the past selective immigration of the better educated from the Asian countries may help explain the high level of occupational achievement among the Asian American population.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Asian males are less likely to be employed than white males in the precision production, craft, and repair occupations (10% compared to 19%); in operator, fabricator, and laborer occupations (13% compared to 19%); and in farming, forestry, and fishing occupations (2% compared to 4%). Smaller differences in occupational distribution between Asian females and white females were found than between male counterparts.<sup>5</sup>

When occupational placement is considered, the average salary level of Asian Americans is higher than that of other minorities in professional, technical, and blue-collar occupations. But the average Asian American salary in administrative or clerical jobs was lower than the average salaries of whites and African Americans, and lowest in other white-collar occupations, including law enforcement officers and student trainees.

### **Education and Employment**

Among college educated males, a larger proportion of whites (31%) than Asians (23%) were employed in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations.



Likewise, a larger proportion of white females (48%) than Asian females (31%) worked in professional specialty occupations.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Asians with only high school or some college education earn lower salaries than their white and African American counterparts in administrative and clerical positions.<sup>7</sup> These figures suggest that, controlling for education, salary disparities still remain when comparing Asian Americans to other ethnic groups. Similar findings were reported by Taylor and Kim.<sup>8</sup>

### Gender and Employment

According to the Affirmative Employment Statistics, the average salary of Asian females was lower than that of white and African American females in every white-collar occupation series (administrative, technical, clerical, and other white-collar series) except the professional category.<sup>9</sup> High average salary levels of Asian females in the professional occupations can be attributed to their concentration in higher paying jobs such as medical services; about 15 percent of

female medical officers in the federal government are Asian.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1: Employment Participation Rate by Sector and Race**

Sector	Year	Asian	White	Black	Hispanic	Indian	Total
Private Sector <sup>1</sup>	1978	1.8	82.1	11.2	5.0	0.4	100.0
	1990	2.7	77.8	12.5	6.7	0.4	100.0
State/Local Government <sup>2</sup>	1980	1.1	78.9	15.5	4.1	0.4	100.0
	1990	2.0	72.9	18.5	6.1	0.5	100.0
Federal Government <sup>3</sup>	1982	2.4	76.2	15.7	4.4	1.3	100.0
	1990	3.5	73.3	16.5	5.3	1.5	100.0
Postal Service	1987	3.2	9.3	21.3	5.8	0.4	100.0
	1990	4.3	68.0	21.2	6.1	0.4	100.0

1. From the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Indicators of Equal Employment Opportunity-Status and Trends* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1991), pp. 8-12.
2. From U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Annual Report on the Employment of Minorities, Women, and People with Disabilities in the Federal Government* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 115.
3. From the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Central Personnel Data File (CPDF). These figures exclude the Postal Service.

### III. SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

As indicated in Table 1, Asian Americans constituted the second lowest percentage of employees in every job category. However, between 1980 - 1990, Asian Americans had the highest employment participation rate increases in



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every sector of the economy. Although Asian Americans were underrepresented in state and local governments (2.0%) relative to the civilian labor force (2.6%), they nevertheless were overrepresented in the private sector (2.7%), the federal government (3.5%), and the U.S. Postal Service (4.3%).

Asian Americans also had the highest percentage of gains in federal government employment: 46 percent compared to minus four percent for whites, 5 percent for African Americans, 20 percent for Hispanics, and 15 percent for American Indians. Along with Hispanics, Asian Americans were the only other racial/ethnic group to experience employment gains (34%) in the postal service between 1987 and 1990. In addition, between 1980 and 1990, the participation rate of Asians in state and local government increased more than any other racial/ethnic group (82%). These gains, how-

ever, may be attributed to low initial numbers and the recent surge in the Asian American population in the 1980s.

### Federal Government

According to a recent report, the average grades of federal civilian employees in the Executive Branch as of September of 1990 were: whites (9.3), Asian Americans

**Table 2: Government-wide Percentage Distribution Across Grade Ranges in the Federal Government, 1982, 1985, 1990**

Year	Race	GS1-4	GS5-8	GS9-12	13-15 <sup>1</sup>	SES <sup>2</sup>
1982	Asian	14.4	29.3	41.3	13.6	0.14
	White	13.7	28.4	39.1	16.7	0.58
	Black	26.9	43.2	24.2	5.10	0.14
	Hispanic	22.0	35.5	34.4	7.20	0.11
	Indian	26.0	34.9	31.3	7.10	0.27
1985	Asian	13.2	28.1	42.7	13.8	0.17
	White	12.5	28.1	40.1	16.9	0.61
	Black	25.4	42.6	26.0	5.2	0.15
	Hispanic	20.2	35.8	35.6	7.2	0.12
	Indian	22.0	38.9	31.3	7.2	0.16
1990	Asian	9.3	26.5	45.1	15.5	0.15
	White	7.7	26.0	42.3	19.7	0.65
	Blacks	18.1	43.1	29.6	7.0	0.16
	Hispanic	13.3	34.5	40.9	9.0	0.16
	Indian	16.9	39.5	33.7	8.5	0.25

1. GS/GM 13-15.

2. Senior Executive Service (SES).

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Annual Report on the Employment of Minorities, Women, and People with Disabilities in the Federal Government* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989, 1990), pp. 122-23.



(8.9), Hispanics (7.9), African Americans (7.2), and American Indians (7.1) in the General Schedule and its equivalent pay plans.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the distribution of average annual salary in white-collar rankings constitutes a similar picture: whites (\$33,544), Asian Americans (\$32,522), Hispanics (\$27,544), African Americans (\$25,421), and American Indians (\$24,872).

The percentage distribution of Asian Americans across federal grades is comparable to that of whites except in the Senior Executive Service (SES). Other minorities vary in a different pattern, as shown in Table 2. In 1990, about 61 percent of Asian

Americans were concentrated in grade levels 9 or above. In contrast, African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians were concentrated in the lower white-collar grade levels. About 61 percent of African Americans, 48 percent of Hispanics, and 56 percent of American Indians were in grades 1-8. But overall, minority representation in grades 5 and above has improved, as shown in Table 4, whereas it declined in grades 1-4.

### **Higher Levels/Elected Officials**

Less than one percent of Asians in the federal government hold positions in the

**Table 3: Full-Time Public Employment by Type of Government, 1985 and 1990**

	Total	State	County	City	Town	Special District
<b>1985</b>						
Asians	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.6	0.1	1.9
Whites	75.1	77	79.3	70.4	96.6	66.7
Blacks	17.6	17.2	13.1	20.7	2.6	24.9
Hispanics	5.2	3.8	5.4	6.9	0.5	6.1
American Indian	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.5
<b>1990</b>						
Asians	2	1.8	2.1	1.6	0.2	2.5
Whites	72.9	74.9	76.8	70.4	96.2	64.4
Blacks	18.5	18.1	14.2	21.6	2.8	25.8
Hispanics	6.1	4.5	6.5	7.9	0.8	6.9
American Indian	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.5

**Source:** U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Job Patterns for Minorities and Women in State and Local Government* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985, 1990) pp.1-24.



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Senior Executive Service (SES). Of 8,136 SES positions, only 73 (0.9%) were held by Asian Americans in 1990.<sup>12</sup> At the local level as of 1990, only 15 Asian Americans were elected mayor/chairman in municipal governments among a total of 7,065 positions; only eight Asians were chief appointed administrative officer (CAO) [or chief managers] among 5,056 positions; six Asian Americans were assistant manager or assistant CAO among 1,524 positions. Overall, less than one percent of municipal officials are of Asian descent.<sup>13</sup> Asian American participation in American politics and national political attention to Asians lags far behind other minority groups.

For the most part, Japanese and Chinese Americans have dominated Asian American politics. Japanese Americans have the largest proportion of native-born citizens among all Asian American groups, followed by Chinese Americans. As a result, both groups tend to have higher political participation rates. In California, for example,

Japanese and Chinese Americans reap political benefits: about 49 percent of Asian American elected and appointed officials in California were Japanese American, followed by Chinese (32%), Filipino (11%), Korean (4%), and other Asian Americans (4%).<sup>14</sup>

### State and Local Government

Table 3 offers a more detailed breakdown of Asian American employment in the public sector. It shows that within a five-year period, public employment of Asian Americans rose nearly three times as fast as Hispanics and eight times as fast as African Americans for each level of government. Meanwhile, whites experienced

**Table 4. Representation of Asian Americans in Selected States, 1990**

State	Population Share	State Government Employees	Representational Ratio
California	9.6	9.2	0.96
Washington	4.3	4.1	0.95
New York	3.9	2.4	0.62
Alaska	3.6	3.1	0.86
New Jersey	3.5	1.3	0.37
Nevada	3.2	1.8	0.56

**Source:** U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Job Patterns for Minorities and Women in State and Local Government 1990* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990); and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States: March 1981 and 1990* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992).



a net decrease of two percent. Nevertheless, with the exception of special districts, Asian Americans are underrepresented in state, county, and city governments. In town or township governments in particular, representation of Asian Americans is almost negligible. Some 94% of all Asian Americans lived in metropolitan areas in 1991, almost half in the suburbs.<sup>15</sup> The proportion of Asians in central cities was nearly twice that of whites. This could result from the largely urban concentration of Asians.<sup>16</sup>

Table 4 reveals that Asian Americans in California and Washington state governments are reasonably well represented (the representational ratio between the Asian population and state government employees was close to 1 in both states).

Although a substantial number of Asian Americans live in New York, Nevada, and New Jersey, their bureaucratic representation is much lower than in California and Washington. One may speculate that this is due to the relatively recent arrival of Asian Americans in these areas, the general population distribution in the northeast

and south, and possibly job competition among different minority groups.

### **Administrative/Managerial and Professional Employment**

Another indicator of the equal employment opportunity progress among minorities is their entrance into the two top-paying job categories -- managerial

and professional. These positions, represented in Table 5, have traditionally had lower minority participation rates. Theoretically and practically, this is significant for several reasons. First, these categories include the better paying jobs, and these jobs usually have relatively higher advancement opportunity. Second, people in these positions influence many facets of the organization

**the myth of Asian Americans as a "model minority," seems to have contributed to the lack of special effort to recruit and promote Asian Americans into public service.**

because they establish and execute policies, including those which affect employment opportunities for minorities.

As Table 5 indicates, Asian Americans in the private sector have increased their representation in all managerial positions. They now hold five percent of all professional jobs in the private sector.



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Employment rates in state and local governments, and in the federal government also showed gains.

A comparison of figures from Table 5 and Table 1 suggests that Asian Americans are actually overrepresented in the professional category in every sector. Hispanics, on the other hand, are underrepresented in all top paying positions, while African Americans are underrepresented in professional positions in both the private sector and the federal government. The dispro-

portionate number of Asian Americans in professional occupations may be attributed to a number of factors, including higher educational level of Asians in general,<sup>17</sup> cultural heritages such as Confucianism, and a cumulatively high influx of Asian students from abroad who attend college and/or pursue graduate studies in the United States.

Asian Americans, however, are underrepresented in administrative/managerial positions. One possible reason why could

**Table 5: Employment Participation Rate in the Administrative/Managerial and Professional Categories by Sector and Race**

Sector	Job	Year	Asian	White	Black	Hispanic	Indian
Private Sector	Managers	1978	0.8	93.1	3.7	2.0	0.4
		1990	1.9	89.6	5.2	3.0	0.3
	Professionals	1978	3.2	90.8	4.0	1.8	0.2
		1990	5.0	87.0	5.2	2.6	0.3
State/ Local Government	Administrators	1974	0.4	92.5	5.3	1.4	0.2
		1990	1.3	84.8	10.2	3.4	0.4
	Professionals	1974	1.6	87.6	7.9	2.1	0.3
		1990	3.7	78.4	13.2	4.2	0.5
Federal Government	Administrators	1982	1.4	83.4	10.7	3.5	1.0
		1990	2.1	79.4	12.8	4.5	1.2
	Professionals	1982	3.5	87.3	5.9	2.5	0.8
		1990	5.5	82.6	7.5	3.5	0.9

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Indicators of Equal Employment Opportunity-Status and Trends* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1991), pp. 6-12.



be the relatively short immigration history and recent arrival of Asian Americans. More specifically, the lack of communication skills, particularly the lack of English fluency, could be a significant barrier to newcomers at large corporations and in government positions.

### **Education Sector**

Within the education sector, Asian Americans are both underrepresented and overrepresented. In elementary and secondary school districts, the average full-time employment rates of minorities vary significantly by ethnic background: Asians (0.7%), whites (81.8%), African Americans (12.9%), Hispanics (4.3%), and American Indians (0.3%). In other words, whites and African Americans are well represented as elementary and secondary school teachers and principals/assistant principals, while Asian Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians are underrepresented.

At the tertiary level (college/university faculty), a different pattern emerges: Asian Americans are well represented, whereas non-Asian minorities are underrepresented. Asian Americans are reasonably well represented in middle and high levels, but are underrepresented in the middle and lower levels of educational bureaucracy. This could be because better

educated Asian Americans pursue their careers in professional jobs in the public sector, while Asian Americans with limited education in American educational institutions seek jobs other than administrative or clerical positions in government.

By and large, though, foreign-born Asian Americans are initially employed in family-affiliated businesses or small-scale labor-intensive businesses. The Asian proportion (76%) of private wage/salary workers is slightly greater than that of whites (74%).<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, highly educated Asian Americans, or those who have studied in the United States as foreign students, have flocked into professional positions since World War II. Thus, the fair number of Asian Americans in the professional category is not surprising.

### **IV. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE**

The future of Asian Americans in public service could be significantly affected by today's students, particularly those with more education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of minority students enrolled in college climbed 9.1 percent from 1990 to 1991.<sup>19</sup> Also during this time, the number of Asians rose 11.2 percent, while the enrollment of white, non-Hispanic students increased just 2.4 percent. Hispanic enrollment grew 10.7 percent and the number of



African American and non-Hispanic students increased 7.1 percent.

The overall distribution of college enrollment in the fall of 1991 was as follows: white (76.5%), African American (9.3%), Hispanic (6.0%), Asian American (4.4%), American Indian (0.8%), and foreign students (2.9%). More significantly, the distribution of college students in NASPAA (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration)

accredited institutions indicate that both undergraduate and graduate Asian and African American students are well distributed, although Hispanics and American Indians are not.<sup>20</sup> Given the relatively high level of education of Asian American youths, their future in the public job market would appear promising.

### ***"Model Minority"***

Nevertheless, to simply associate educational attainment with increased opportunities in government distorts the true picture of Asian American employment in the public sector. This "model minority" stereotype might lead policy makers to ignore Asian Americans who are truly in

need. Indeed, the myth of Asian Americans as a "model minority," seems to have contributed to the lack of special effort to recruit and promote Asian Americans into public service.

The myth of a "model minority" leads to the perception that without any help, without any assistance of culturally-relevant support programs, Asian Americans will excel. This perception is flawed because it tends to lump Asian Americans

into one group, despite their diversity. Chinese and Japanese Americans have been in America for several generations, but many Laotians and Cambodians came to this land only one or two decades ago.

Among recent immigrants, some groups come

primarily from urban centers that are already highly Westernized, and thus these immigrants are better prepared for American life. However, other recent arrivals from rural areas are likely to be unfamiliar with Western technology and the predominant U.S. culture. For this diverse group of Asian Americans, long-term recruitment and placement strategies, commitment to higher education funding, and transcultural programs including job-

**Increasing the representation of Asian Americans in more highly graded positions will be a slow process.**



related social services should be developed to attract them to public service.

### **Federal Role in Promoting Asian American Public Employment**

The most important factor in the human resource development is making public employment more attractive.<sup>21</sup> Due to a variety of reasons such as lack of outreach, lack of information about public employment, and, most importantly, lack of cultural understanding, today's Asian students may more likely find their future jobs in the non-public sector.

In order to attract young candidates from Asian American and other minorities, government should develop a long-range strategic plan to determine how to better incorporate the many workforce entrants who come from a much broader range of backgrounds than before.<sup>22</sup> Sisneros proposed a number of recommendations for Hispanic Americans, such as the utilization of memoranda for understanding how to improve recruitment and employment opportunities. Other actions include withholding federal funds from agencies demonstrating underrepresentation, reinstating recruitment coordinators, reviewing employment trends, monitoring of all SES employment actions, and placing greater emphasis on higher education.<sup>23</sup> These recommendations will

prove to be equally beneficial for Asian Americans and other minorities as well.

Generally speaking, though, the government's record in equal employment is better than the private sector's when gross workforce statistics are compared. However, if statistics for only the top positions are examined, the federal government record is not always good: only 7.8 percent of top positions were filled by minorities and just 12 percent were filled by women, as of September 1991.<sup>24</sup>

The slow pace at which the numbers of minorities and women in executive positions have increased is due in-large measure to their limited representation in the supergrade "feeder group."<sup>25</sup> In 1990, only 10.8 percent of GS-15s were minorities and 13.2 percent were women.<sup>26</sup>

Increasing the representation of Asian Americans in more highly graded positions will be a slow process. The U.S. government is committed to promoting a diverse workforce and providing equal employment and advancement opportunity. But subtle, almost invisible obstacles remain. Barriers that make it more difficult for minorities and women to advance will continue unless efforts are made to reexamine criteria for employment and advancement and to reduce the effects and sources of stereotypes and biases.

Federal efforts to remove all barriers to



Asian American participation in the work-force must be expedited. For one, the U.S. government should reexamine the formal and informal criteria it uses to evaluate employees, especially when these criteria are used to make selections for career advancement training, work enhancements, and promotions.<sup>27</sup> In addition, government agencies should periodically collect, analyze, and disseminate data on the number of Asian Americans in the public work force. Although Asian American national contingents still lack the numbers to mount a strong political influence by themselves, pan-Asian efforts and pan-Asian organizations nevertheless can promote opportunities for the maintenance and expansion of Asian political and economic interests. ■



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## "No Filipinos Allowed:" From Stockton 1930 to Washington 1993

Gloria Megino Ochoa

*Gloria Megino Ochoa was the Democratic nominee for California's 22nd Congressional District, encompassing Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. A chemist and a former Supervisor of Santa Barbara County, Ms. Ochoa currently practices law in Los Angeles, and heads a non-profit organization called the Filipino Committee on Political Education (FILCOPE).*

**O**n the wall in my study hangs a poster. It is a photograph of double glass doors, the entrance to a rooming house in Stockton, California. Painted on the left door are the words, "NO DOGS ALLOWED." Painted on the right door, at eye level for someone who is 5 feet, 3 inches tall, are the words, "POSITIVELY NO FILIPINOS ALLOWED." The caption at the bottom of the photograph reads: "Welcome to America. Stockton, 1930."

The 1990 census figures indicate approximately 2.3 million persons living in the United States identify themselves as Filipinos. About 1.2 million of them live in California. The need to feel secure so far away from their native land has prompted Filipinos to form hundreds of social organizations. In greater Los Angeles alone, there are about 400 Filipino organizations and social clubs. An additional 125 are located in the San Diego area, another 150

to 200 in northern California, and some 200 to 300 more across the country, some of them with membership nationwide.<sup>1</sup>

These organizations perpetuate in the United States the mores, traditions, and culture of particular Philippine region. And yet, it is said that immigrant Filipino Americans have become so successful in weaving themselves into the social and economic fabric of their communities that, for the most part, they have disappeared into the mosaic of American society.

This apparent contradiction can only be explained by looking at Filipinos in America -- how they have rearranged priorities to suit their new life, what Filipino attributes and characteristics they have chosen to keep and to discard.

### **History**

Even with the current restrictions on immigration from the Philippines, Filipinos comprise the fastest growing



group of Asian-Americans in the country, and are second only in number to the Chinese. They come from all over the Philippines -- all 7,000 plus islands of the archipelago, speaking 3 languages and over 100 different dialects. Filipinos identify themselves based first on dialect: Ilocanos, Bicolanos, Visayans, Tagalos, and others. They then divide themselves further into Albays, Batanguenos, Cebuanos, Davaoenos, Negros, Pampanguenos, Zambalenos, and so on. Still further, Filipinos draw together along city, barrio, and clan lines.

Unlike the Chinese and Japanese, the depth of Filipino roots in the this country is not widely known. Philippine-American relations have normally been defined in terms of contemporary history: ties between the U.S. and the colony, then the independent state. Not much is said about those Filipinos who came to this country in waves to seek new opportunities, to contribute what they could, and to reap the promised rewards of hard work. Except for a couple of autobiographical books, most notably Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*, that history has not been

recorded.

But the immigration waves were very real indeed -- they were inextricably linked to significant events or conditions in America. The first small wave was in the 1800's. The second wave began in the early 1900's due to demand for workers in the sugar cane fields of Hawaii and the vegetable and fruit farms of California. The third wave, of great future consequence to the Philippine nation itself, consisted of trained profes-

sionals, skilled workers, and students of promise. This "brain drain" resulted from a demand for skilled professionals in the United States.

My own family immigrated to the United States during these times. My grandfather and uncle came in the 1920's to work on farms in California.

Although my grandfather returned to the Philippines, my uncle stayed and later finished college at the University of California, Berkeley. He then brought my aunt and other uncle over. My father stayed in the Philippines to serve in the U.S.-allied guerrilla forces during World War II, and later practice law in Manila. I came to the United States as a college stu-

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dent. The rest of my family immigrated afterwards.

### ***Political Reluctance***

As Filipinos have adopted the lifestyle of middle-class and affluent Americans, their desire to maintain such lifestyles inhibit them from overcoming attitudes, ingrained by hundreds of years of colonial rule, that bar them from more successes. This is so because many immigrant Filipino families established in the workforce have socialized only within their club settings. And while these Filipinos may have pride fully passed on Philippine culture and tradition to their children, they have largely ignored their responsibilities as citizens of their adopted country. While they have quietly benefited from the opportunities and material rewards available in this country, they have shied away from advocating for their own and others' rights, or from demanding that which was justly earned.

Thus, it has become a common experience of Filipinos to suffer maltreatment and injustice in silence, lest their "superiors" turn on them. They have taken crumbs for fear a demand for an adequate piece of the pie becomes reason for recrimination. And, what is worse, they have failed to see that in a truly working democracy, what betters the whole com-

munity should take precedence over satisfying individual needs.

Filipino Americans are mostly side-stepped when it comes to top jobs they are competent at and experienced to perform. They are largely ignored because they do not know how to draw their own image for others to see, and they don't insist that they be seen as what they are -- Americans of Filipino descent. In no arena is this problem more pronounced than in politics -- in America, that is.

It is a truism in the Filipino American community that it is more heavily involved in the politics of the Philippines than of the United States. The stream of Philippine political figures visiting the United States, from town mayors to national elected officials, keeps the various clubs spending to accommodate the celebrities with aplomb. But turn out for local events featuring American political figures is usually poor, unless the guests are truly celebrity figures.

Further, the short-lived American experiment in colonizing the Philippines not only perpetuated the subservient culture imprinted by Spain, but also resulted in a people dependent on a "special relationship" with the United States. Particularly among older Filipinos, the thought of being on their own, of interacting and coalescing with people other than



"Americans," meaning the Caucasian community in America, provokes fears of destroying that "special relationship."

Success in American politics today requires reaching out to communities of people, coalition-building, and joining political and economic forces to solve problems. A meritorious record of substance, more than patronizing promises or political favors, is what the electorate supports and expects.

But while other groups have successfully penetrated the American political arena to elect public officials in significant numbers, Asians, especially Filipinos, have been slow to take positions of leadership in their communities.<sup>2</sup> Hopefully, as the Filipino community learns how individuals and communities can participate effectively, and as American-born Filipino children come of age, more Filipino Americans will take on the challenge of running for public office. But for their efforts to succeed, the politics of divisiveness within the community must be buried, and resources pooled lest credible campaigns die for lack of support.

### ***Campaigning for Congress***

My own experience running for the U.S. Congress in 1992 provides a trail for future candidates from the Filipino community. I had been serving as Supervisor

in a conservative district in California when reapportionment after the 1990 census provided an opportunity for me to seek a congressional seat.

In my first bid for elected office in 1988, I defeated a 12-year Republican incumbent in a conservative district, 57 percent to 43 percent. It was the first time a woman was elected to a Supervisor's seat in Santa Barbara County, where the number of Filipinos and other Asians was less than 2 percent. My support came from a coalition of Filipinos and other Asians, Latinos, women, environmentalists, senior citizens, students and parents, and human services advocates. The office is non-partisan with a term of four years.

My decision to run for Congress was difficult, considering the relative certainty of being re-elected as Supervisor, and the tremendous challenge of beating an incumbent. There was also the question of campaign funds -- where would money come from and how would we raise it? It became clear that I would need more funds than I could raise from the district. With the presidential campaign a crucial and winnable one for the Democrats, all resources, even at the district level, would certainly go to those coffers. I would have to go to the Asian and Filipino communities for help.

Given the Filipino community was



scattered all over the country, divided into hundreds of competing organizations, coupled with the cultural and attitudinal barriers to cohesiveness, I knew it would take enormous effort to unite Filipinos behind my candidacy.

But the stakes were high. The kind of visibility such an election would bring the Filipino community could spur the "political empowerment" that its leaders had been talking about for years. Harnessing the economic resources of 2.3 million Filipinos behind one candidate could catapult the candidacy to victory. A victory would surely be a credit to all Asians and other people of color.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, a loss would reflect the inability of Filipinos to put their internecine differences

aside and put their money where their mouths were. But it would also send a strong signal to the leaders of the community that much work needed to be done, and that no victory would be possible without a united effort, no matter how strong a local base a candidate may have or how credible the candidate is. It was an opportunity that had to be taken. Should I fail, the community could be rallied to rise

in unity, and to gather its forces together for the next round, for the next candidate, for the next issue.

And so we went about the country drumming up support for the campaign. Fund-raiser after fund-raiser, from Los Angeles to San Diego to San Francisco to Sacramento to Chicago, New York, New Jersey, Florida, and Washington, was held. Some were successful, some not. Invariably, someone would ask, "Why

should I support you -- what will you do for me?" The question could have expressed a genuine interest in the issues and how my candidacy would affect them. But instead, it was an expression of a political history of patronage, a state of mind brought over from the islands to this country.

There was no doubt, in the minds of politically astute guests, that this inquirer was standing on an island across the Pacific.

In retrospect, our not-very-successful fundraising efforts in the Filipino and Asian communities had much to do with the lack of a unified method of disseminating information in these communities, aggravated by the short notice on which the funds had to be raised. I've discovered

**Asians have a place  
in American politics  
if they see beyond  
their communities  
and work at building  
bridges with others  
and each other.**



that cultivation of broad support within Asian communities is done over a prolonged period of time. Personal friendships, familiarity and a network of relationships count far more than handshakes at political fundraising events.

In total, I spent approximately \$650,000 on the campaign. The bulk of the campaign funds was raised by mail solicitations, small fund-raisers, and political action committee contributions. We raised \$100,000 from the Filipino and Asian communities, but a large portion of that was spent by the communities raising the money.

Outside the community, substantial contributions came from incumbent congressional leaders, some of African American, Latino, and Jewish extraction. I also received generous help from the women's political action groups whose leaders hardly knew me personally. The Democratic National Committee, however, was focused on the presidential campaign, the campaigns of incumbent legislators, and those candidates in clearly Democratic districts. My campaign for California's 22nd congressional seat was on its own.

I ran against an 18-year incumbent on the issues of choice, jobs and the budget deficit. But the incumbent, former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino, was defeated in the Republican primary by

Michael Huffington, a political novice who spent a total of about \$5.4 million, mostly of his own money, on both the primary and general elections. I lost.

I tried to compensate by taking advantage of the multi-layered grassroots organization we had built up from my previous campaign, and the grassroots efforts staged by the state and national campaigns for the presidential and senatorial offices. Working with a diverse campaign staff and volunteer workers was in itself an experience to remember. We had more Filipinos than have ever worked on a local campaign before (some came from as far as San Francisco). Also, there were Latinos, people with disabilities, gays and lesbians, African Americans, elementary, high school and college students, senior citizens, labor activists, environmentalists, and just plain folks who helped. As the campaign moved into full swing after the primary, our campaign headquarters became more like the mythical global marketplace, buzzing with activity around the clock.

Some campaign problems I shared with all candidates: the grueling demands of the 3-hour drive from one end of the coastal district to the other; the sometimes imaginary conflicts between interests like labor and environmentalists; and the struggle to bait the opponent to debate



issues of substance. But others were special: how to fashion poll questions to determine whether my ethnicity and the recent backlash against immigrants would somehow devalue my qualifications as a candidate. Sometime in the middle of the summer, my opponent started to point out the fact that he had spent his youth in a middle-class neighborhood in Texas while I was growing up in the Philippines. The innuendo was quite obvious. The opposition had taken the battle beyond issues, money, and party lines. The issue of race was still something I had to confront and deal with regardless of the educated, liberal character of the Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo voter, and the apparent insignificance of my immigrant-ethnic background according to the polls. In other election campaigns like this one, the ethnicity of a candidate will be raised with reasonable certainty. Such is the reality of political campaigns in America today.

On the surface, my campaign reflected some important general lessons: One, campaigning and fundraising are difficult, even more so if you are a woman of color. Two, campaigns of the 90's require diverse teams, not just ethnically, but in terms of interests. Three, Asians have a place in American politics if they see beyond their communities and work at building bridges with others and each other. Four, grass-

roots efforts and political party leadership are essential to nurture and provide financial help to potential candidates, especially those from underrepresented groups.

But the most significant lesson learned from my campaign has less to do with acquiring campaigning and fundraising skills and more to do with raising awareness and expectations within the Filipino community. Many Filipino Americans were surprised to find that a Filipina was actually the Democratic congressional candidate. This in itself was a new high for the community. A spark was lit in the hearts of Filipinos across the country when they discovered that a Filipina candidate's credibility and qualifications had been validated by non-Filipinos. Over 95,000 voters, 98 percent of whom were neither Filipino nor Asian, chose me in the general election.<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Next Step***

However, until the Filipino community's leadership takes this interest to its logical next step, the spark may flicker and not fire. This next step I refer to is the continuing education of individuals: We need to teach our community about the rights and privileges of citizenship, the advantages of living in a true democracy, the need for volunteerism, and the political issues that affect their daily lives. This education



begins with a well-planned strategy to harness the political influence of Filipinos both through the ballot box and through the active practice of democratic politics in between elections and campaigns.

Undeniably, much of this commentary restates common knowledge in the Filipino and Asian communities, and probably mirrors the growing pains of the political movement in the African American and Hispanic communities. But the questions raised have not been openly debated in a constructive way by the leaders of the Filipino and broader Asian American community, and until this is done, no progress will be made.

We need to establish, support, and help fund a non-profit, non-partisan, organization whose sole mission is to provide politically educate the entire Filipino community: from children to adolescents and young adults hungry for role models, to working professionals and skilled laborers, as well as senior citizens. All can benefit from education in the rules of citizenship: how to be one, how to exercise one's rights, how to make the system respond to one's needs, how to give back to the country as well as obtain what we have worked for. These educational programs would make use of the different cultures that we bring into this country. It is time to get beyond our selfish dreams of yesterday,

and work towards a brighter tomorrow that everyone can share.

Of course, this is easier said than done. But if we don't begin today, we should be ready to take the blame when our children complain about their under representation in government, the inaccessibility of services to them and their families, their limited opportunities in employment, business and education, and their difficulties in achieving their dreams in their land of birth -- all of which we immigrants came to these shores to overcome.

From the Stockton rooming houses for farm workers in 1930, Filipinos have come a long way indeed. They have become a powerful group, without realizing it. They are now the backbone of America's health care system;<sup>5</sup> they teach America's children; they are scientists and researchers in the universities; they are artists and musicians of note; they are protectors of civil rights; they are historians and writers. But they are the last to be their own advocate.

I had hoped to hang that black-and-white Stockton rooming house photograph in an office in the U.S. Congress to remind myself that, not long ago, walking those hallowed halls was unimaginable to a Filipino American. The hope is still there, whether I or another Filipino will take up the challenge next. But there is a lot of work yet to be done. And it cannot be



done without the community and its leaders tilling the soil, sowing seeds, nurturing and investing time, money and effort in the same spirit and enthusiasm that the traditional Filipino *bayanihan*<sup>6</sup> effort is expended. For all of us, the time to act is not next time; it is now. ■



**Endnotes**

1. Information obtained from the Los Angeles office of the Philippine Consulate General.
2. E.g., the first U.S. Representative of Asian descent was Dalip Singh Saund, an East Indian. Currently, there are six members of the House of Representatives who are of Asian Pacific descent: Congresswoman Patsy Mink, and Congressmen Eni F. M. Faleomavaega, Jay Kim, Robert Matsui, Norman Mineta, and Robert Underwood. There are two US Senators, both from Hawaii, of Asian descent: Senators Daniel Akaka and Daniel Inouye. No American of Filipino extraction has ever been elected to Congress.
3. In the words of Representative Patsy Mink at a reception in New York during the Democratic Convention in 1992, it would also "increase the number of Asian women in the House by 100 percent." Representative Mink is the only Asian woman in the U.S. Congress.
4. The November 1992 election, and others that followed this year, resulted in some Filipinos being elected for the first time: Velma Veloria of Seattle, Washington was elected to the state Assembly; Lorelie Olaes was elected to the City Council of Carson, California, joining Pete Fajardo who is Mayor Pro Tem; Mike Guingona was elected to the Daly City Council (certainly historic, because Filipinos comprise 30% of the population in Daly City, and this is the first time that a Filipino was elected to the council). They join other Filipino elected officials like Lt. Governor Ben Cayetano of Hawaii; Assemblyman David Valderrama of Maryland; ABC Unified School District of Southern California Board Member Dr. Cecy Groom of Los Angeles; Councilman Ed Manuel of Hercules, California; Councilman Manny Fernandez of Union City, California; California Superior Court Judge Cesar Sarmiento and Municipal Court Judges Ronald Quidachay and Mel Red Recana; School Board members Cris Raimundo, Jose Bernardo, Pat D. Gacoscos; San Francisco Community College Board member Rodol Rodis.
5. The Association of Philippine Physicians in America estimates there are more than 18,000 Filipino physicians in the United States. The largest single ethnic group of licensed nurses in the United States is Filipino. Throughout the health care services system, Filipinos can be found in very significant numbers. This is so because most of the immigrants allowed in the United States are professionals in the health care field, and the Philippine universities have been producing these professionals for decades.
6. *Bayanihan* is the Tagalog word for the collective effort of a community to accomplish a specific task, whether it is to benefit an individual by building a neighbor's house, or to benefit the whole community by paving a road or planting and harvesting rice. The idea is that with everyone working together at the same time, tasks get done much easier and faster, and the pride of accomplishment belongs to all.



## Reflections on A Different Mirror

[428 p. Little, Brown and Company]

James Toma

*James Toma graduated in 1992 from Yale University with a B.A. in Ethics, Politics & Economics. Currently, he is a first year student at the Graduate School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley. James has attended eleven schools, including Buso High in Yokohama, Japan, where he taught English. He is somewhere between a second and fourth generation Okinawan Japanese American, and is presently working on a family history.*

Ronald Takaki has already established himself as one of the pre-eminent scholars invested in a multi-cultural approach to American history. His last book, *Strangers From a Different Shore*, presented the history of Asian Americans through a fascinating synthesis of traditional narrative, oral history and statistical analysis. In his new book, Takaki takes on the ambitious task of examining "what it means to be an American," using a creative, non-traditional approach that surpasses *Strangers* in many ways. In *A Different Mirror*, he expands his vision by including the histories of seven racial/ethnic groups -- Native, African, Irish, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, and Jewish American.

Takaki balances the historical "big picture" with more narrowly focused chapters

on each of the ethnic groups that he has included in his study. His analysis, which addresses major economic and political movements, is fleshed out with entertaining anecdotes and biographical sketches. Especially remarkable is the incredibly rich variety of sources used in *Mirror*. Takaki's literary references include Shakespeare, Langston Hughes, and Walt Whitman. His documentation includes the personal letters of Thomas Jefferson, Frederick Douglass, and Andrew Jackson. Most impressive of all, however, is the magnificent assortment of quotations, folk songs, poems, interviews, speeches, articles, memos, and books by a variety of ordinary individuals, all of which help unify this large historical survey.

*Mirror* addresses several broad themes, such as the optimism new immi-



grants brought to this country, their passion to "become American," and their expressions of disappointment and frustration in adjusting to a prejudicial society. By viewing each of the new immigrant groups through these lenses, Takaki successfully illustrates the similar experiences they encountered. In addition, Takaki clearly underlines the larger forces, such as US foreign policy and immigration policy, that affected each of these groups.

Takaki's use of narrative, however, has some limitations. The reliance on brief quotations or facts in *Mirror* sometimes makes Takaki's arguments less convincing than they could be. Furthermore, as a broad historical survey packed into 400 odd pages, *Mirror* loses some depth and detail. Consequently, *Mirror* is more an addition to the work Takaki has pioneered than it is a ground-breaking piece in its own right.

What *Mirror* does consciously and effectively, however, is refute the theories and arguments of conservative historians and political pundits such as Thomas Sowell, Nathan Glazer and Charles Murray. In the first chapter, Takaki states his intent to give those who have long been considered "the little people," groups previously deemed undeserving of examination, the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the mirror we call history. He

wants all groups to feel grounded in the historical traditions of this country, and to feel empowered to constantly and consciously redefine our national identity. Takaki uses numerous examples to point out how the dominant class has socially constructed race to justify its prejudice, and used race as the basis for discriminatory policies. In doing so, Takaki shows how Sowell has ignored the deep enmity and resentment felt by ethnic groups in America and has unfairly belittled progressive policies such as affirmative action intended to redress past discrimination.

Takaki further shows that European Americans have invented and reinvented representations of race to justify their mistreatment and discriminatory policies since their first contact with people of color. Both the Irish and the Native Americans represented types of "savagery" to the New England colonists. However, while the colonists attributed the Irish "savagery" to cultural deficiencies, they considered Indian "savagery" to be "inherent." Slave owners in the south viewed African Americans as docile, happy creatures who only "cease to be children when they turn into savages." The railroad industrialists labeled Mexicans and Chinese as being "quiet," "docile," and "industrious," thus justifying their relegation to manual labor and exclusion from



foremen's positions. In World War II, European Americans placed race above reason in questioning the loyalty of American-born Japanese, saying: "A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched." These characterizations continue today through less virulent but no less pervasive and influential stereotypes.

*Mirror* destroys many of the stereotypes and myths created in traditional historical works and the mass media. These myths include the fictional, idealized representations of American icons such as Thomas Jefferson and Henry Ford as heroes and elevated individuals. Takaki also resists the notion of multi-cultural history as a chronological ordering of the systematic victimization of these ethnic groups. Examples of resistance and ethnic affirmation abound in this history. One of the main forms of resistance that these groups were able to successfully employ was economic, in the form of unionization and strikes. Takaki emphasizes the role which labor unions have played in the formation of a strong solidarity among ethnic groups. He rejects the claims made by pundits such as Murray who blame the welfare system on members of minority groups, without taking a critical look at the policies largely responsible for the current system. He also criticizes the misleading characterization of Asian Americans as

the "model minority," dissecting and exposing the data used by commentators who make this claim.

From reading *Mirror*, the reader recognizes that the current characterization of Asian Americans as a "model minority" repeats an old theme in American history: the dominant class pits ethnic groups against each other to achieve its own ends. Takaki describes how capitalists of the industrial revolution lowered the wages and threatened the job security of their workers by replacing them with new immigrants who worked for and demanded less. In doing so, Takaki enables the reader to make the connection between these early capitalists and conservative groups today that compare the relative prosperity achieved by Asian Americans to the conditions within the African American and Hispanic communities. Accordingly, Takaki shows that such conservative commentators fail to recognize the qualitative differences in the historical treatment and experiences of racism among these ethnic groups.

It is ironic, then, that this same criticism should apply to *A Different Mirror*. Takaki, in an effort to relate the shared experiences of hardship and racism felt by ethnic groups, only briefly touches on the differences and conflicts that exist and have always existed between minority



groups. He points to the example of the 1903 Oxnard strike in which Mexican and Japanese American workers joined forces in a movement based on inter-ethnic class unity. While such an example of inter-ethnic cooperation is instructional as a model, such unity is an aberration rather than the norm in American history. Though he refers to what King called the "inseparable twins of economic injustice and racial injustice," Takaki identifies but doesn't begin to explore this interconnection.

Ethnic groups, like America as a whole, are becoming further split along class lines. What will the changing face of America mean for ethnic solidarity and race in our society? The Los Angeles riots, to which Takaki refers in several pages of *Mirror*, proved the enormity of the problems that exist in the inner cities. The riots revealed to the entire nation, among a host of other problems, the incendiary tension that had been simmering between Koreans and African Americans.

Despite the troubled outlook for the future, Takaki remains the eternal optimist. He quotes FDR when he asserted that: "The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of mind and heart. . . Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry." While conservative commenta-

tors see multiculturalism as leading to tribalism and fragmentation detrimental to the nation, Takaki discounts these "grim jeremiads." He believes that the first step to progress is self-recognition and acceptance among ourselves. Part of that process is the telling of a history which conventional historians have long denied. Those readers unfamiliar with the histories of these ethnic groups will find *A Different Mirror* to be a revelation. Those with more exposure to such histories will still find the book to be an enjoyable and entertaining ride over familiar terrain. ■



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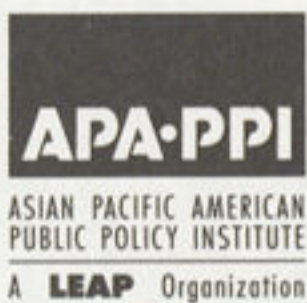
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