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ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW

Transnationalism



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ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW

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Transnationalism

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FROM THE EDITORS

“Transnationalism”, the theme for the Seventh Volume of the *Asian American Policy Review*, has become a “buzzword” with important implications for the Asian Pacific American community. With the mainstream media’s obsession with the John Huang campaign finance controversy, the Asian Pacific American community is again faced with difficult questions regarding its status and permanence in the United States—is the APA community here to stay or is it a community on the run? At times, the media, and sometimes the government, through its subtly demeaning portrayals of the community, has suggested that the APA community has little, if any, allegiance to the United States. Such impermanence, however, does not accurately describe the community as a whole. Volume Seven explores how this view of the APA community has colored the various public policies affecting the APA community.

The Features section highlights works of emerging and noted scholars. Professor Frank Wu of Howard University examines racial aspects of the media coverage of the John Huang controversy. Professor Peter Kwong of Hunter College argues that self-interest, not cultural and ethnic ties, best explains the economic success of the Overseas Chinese. Using surveys, Professor Pei-te Lien of the University of Utah explains why political participation “does matter” for the APA community. Professors Harry Kitano and Mitchell Maki of the University of California, Los Angeles, propose a new analytical framework, the “Proper Alignment Model”, and apply it to the Japanese American Redress Movement.

The Forum section features commentaries on the recently passed federal welfare reform legislation. Contributors to this section include Professor Andrew Leong of the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Karen Narasaki, Executive Director of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, and Yeh Ling Ling, founder of the Diversity Coalition for an Immigration Moratorium.

For the first time, the *Review*, consistent with its mission “to train future scholars and leaders”, is publishing outstanding works of undergraduate and graduate students. The Student Notes section highlights articles on various topics, ranging from poverty among Southeast Asians to public policy opinions among Indian Americans.

Members of the *Review*’s editorial staff also conducted interviews with prominent policymakers and practitioners, including Governor Benjamin Cayetano, Connie Chung, and Bong Hwan Kim.

Finally, the Book Reviews section looks at a new title by Pyong Gap Min called *Caught in the Middle: Korean Communities in New York and Los Angeles* and a newly revised edition of Peter Kwong’s *The New Chinatown*.

This year the staff has worked hard to refine the editorial process, utilizing past contributors and members of the Executive and Academic Boards to referee the submitted manuscripts. On behalf of the entire editorial staff at the *Review*, we hope that this volume will serve as a useful resource for policy makers and scholars in examining the impact of public policies on the APA community.

—Suzanne Kim and Sue Hahn

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FEATURES

Have You No Decency? An Analysis of Racial Aspects of Media Coverage on the John Huang Matter

Frank H. Wu and May L. Nicholson*

This article examines the controversy over the campaign fundraising efforts of Democratic Party official John Huang, who was assigned to seek political donations primarily from Asian Pacific Americans for the 1996 election cycle. The authors argue that the mainstream media coverage of Huang's work displayed racial themes that have been either ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. The authors present the thesis that the media coverage may encourage racial stereotyping because some of the articles have suggested that Huang's actions are explained by his racial background.

John Huang. He is an Indonesian businessman. . . Mr. John Huang was given a position in the Clinton Administration overseeing international trade and was given a top-secret security clearance. Can you believe that?...Now then, Mr. Huang is still out there hard at work for the Democrats. Wouldn't you like to have someone out there named O'Reilly? Out there hard at work. *You know, so far we haven't found an American name...* [emphasis added]

—Ross Perot, Reform Party Presidential candidate¹

An article yesterday about campaign fundraising for the 1996 elections referred incorrectly to the fundraising efforts by John Huang...The Democratic National Committee has returned more than \$1 million in contributions brought in by Mr. Huang from others...but Mr. Huang's precise role in those transactions has not yet been determined. There is no known evidence that he raised money from an Indonesian conglomerate for which he once worked. Mr. Huang, an American citizen, has also not been accused of making illegal foreign contributions

* Frank H. Wu is an Assistant Professor of Law at Howard University. May L. Nicholson is a third-year law student at the same institution.

himself...The article also misstated the totals of the “soft money” raised by the political parties...The article also misstated the position held by Ronald H. Brown during the Presidential campaign...The article also misidentified the home state of Senator Russell D. Feingold...

— *The New York Times*²

...This is a particularly difficult case because there are legitimate issues to be debated here and a lot of questions no one has answered. And still, you’d be deaf if you didn’t also hear the tone of racism that’s running through a lot of this.

—**Robert Matsui, US Representative**³

INTRODUCTION

As the 1996 Presidential campaigns came to their conclusion, the fundraising efforts of Democratic Party official John Huang, who had been assigned to seek campaign contributions from Asian Pacific Americans, became controversial. The racial aspects of the so-called “Asian connection” scandal appeared almost as obvious to many Asian Americans as they seemed dubious to other observers. Whatever the result of the ongoing investigations into the work of Huang or legislative proposals for campaign finance reform, the racial aspects of media coverage of Huang deserve consideration. Since the claims about Huang originated in press reports before they were repeated by political figures, the media has played a leading role in shaping the public perception of Asian Pacific Americans as political participants.⁴ This article is a preliminary effort to understand the complex racial issues raised by the Huang case.

This article has a limited scope. It surveys media coverage of the Huang matter in a half-dozen major print outlets between the date the story broke and the inauguration of President Bill Clinton. This article neither addresses the truth of any allegations involving Huang nor offers any argument concerning campaign finance reform. It also is not based on any assumptions about racial motivations or an analysis that proceeds solely along racial lines.

The premise is merely that racial stereotyping of Asian Pacific Americans or any other group is wrong; whether Huang violated the law says nothing about whether other Asian Americans have done so. The press coverage of the Huang affair, however, displayed several racial themes. For reasons that are unclear, moreover, these themes for the most part went without notice.

We studied five daily newspapers and one weekly news magazine for this article: (1) *The Wall Street Journal*; (2) *The New York Times*; (3) *The Boston Globe*; (4) *The Washington Post*; (5) *The Los Angeles Times*; and (6) *Newsweek*. Using the Westlaw Dialog and Lexis/Nexis database services, we reviewed each of these media outlets; every news story, editorial, op-ed, or letter to the editor published between October 7, 1996, and January 20, 1997, that mentioned Huang

was reviewed. A selected sampling of articles from other sources, including notable discussions of Huang and race, were also considered.

While the articles included in this survey discuss many facets of the controversy and offer diverse perspectives, taken as a whole, they also display a number of troubling themes implicating race. Many articles imply that Huang represents all Asian Pacific Americans, that race is directly relevant, that Asians and Asian Americans are indistinguishable, that Asian culture can explain the conduct of Asian American individuals, and that all Asian Americans who participate in politics are somehow linked to the scandal. Some of the articles also use inconsistent standards to judge Asian Pacific Americans, include selective overreactions against Asian Americans, indicate a fear of Asian immigration, exclude Asian Pacific American opinions, and suggest that any discussion of race is use of "the race card."

The overview offers background on Asian Pacific American political participation and also sketches some of the basic facts of the Huang matter. The first section of the article summarizes important and representative examples of press coverage of the Huang matter. The second section discusses themes in the press coverage. As explained below, the Huang matter presents a dilemma for Asian Pacific Americans in the trend toward transnationalism. On the one hand, Asian Pacific Americans and other Americans may chose to embrace a complex understanding of national identity, in which companies, communities, and individuals are able to move physically and figuratively across fixed geographical boundaries. On the other hand, Asian Pacific Americans and other Americans may prefer a simpler comprehension of citizenship, in which entities and persons are assigned a clear legal category. The risk remains that race will be an important factor in determining identity, either self-identity or ascribed identity. One possible resolution, however, is an approach acknowledging that individuals function within communities but avoids attributing individual conduct to every member of a community.

OVERVIEW

Prior to the Huang matter, Asian Pacific American political participation had been much anticipated but not yet realized.⁵ Over the past several years, politicians have advocated involving Asian Americans in the electoral process.⁶ At the same time, Asian Pacific American activists sought to increase political interest within Asian Pacific American communities.⁷ Contrary to popular perceptions of Asian American political apathy, well before Huang began his activities, Asian Americans were giving more money to political parties per capita than other constituency group except Jewish Americans.⁸ In 1996, Asian Pacific American groups across the country organized to naturalize citizens and register voters.⁹ Few of these aspects of Asian Pacific American political activity were covered by mainstream newspapers before the Huang case.¹⁰ The Huang controversy encompasses many claims. Only an overview of these allegations are presented here. Facts continue to develop.¹¹

Huang himself is an immigrant who arrived in the United States as a student. He became a United States citizen through naturalization. As an employee of the Lippo Group, he eventually became its chief operating officer in the United States. Huang oversaw Lippo Group banking operations in Los Angeles. During his tenure, the bank was under federal scrutiny concerning a variety of allegations ranging from mismanagement to racial discrimination in lending practices.

The Lippo Group, an Indonesian-based multinational conglomerate, is controlled by the Riady family, who is ethnically Chinese. The Chinese are a racial minority group within Indonesia, but they are heavily represented in the financial sector of the society. One of the younger members of the Riady family, James Riady, began his business career in Little Rock, Arkansas, when then-Governor Bill Clinton was beginning his political career.

Following his active involvement in partisan politics in Los Angeles, Huang became a mid-level political appointee in the Commerce Department during the first Clinton administration. He left that position to assume the post of finance vice-chair at the Democratic National Committee, the Washington headquarters of the party, for the 1996 campaign season. The "finance vice-chair" title was created for Huang in order to enhance his standing among Asian Pacific Americans.¹²

Huang's work focused on obtaining campaign contributions from Asian Pacific Americans. His work was part of an attempt by the Democratic Party to court Asian Pacific American voters. Aside from Huang, the Democratic Party employed two paid staff members to work on Asian Pacific American outreach during the campaign, as it did for other racial groups, including ethnic whites as well as African Americans and Latinos. Asian Pacific Americans were engaged in a corresponding effort to "bundle" their campaign contributions with coordinated accounting to better demonstrate their support after Clinton's anticipated re-election. (The Republican Party had created a group called "Asian Americans for Dole-Kemp," with an honorary co-chair and staff member, but it was not as active or visible.)

The initial assertions in the scandal centered on possible problems with "soft money" donations to the Democratic Party that had been credited to Huang. The term "soft money" describes funds donated to a political party rather than a particular candidate.¹³ The contributions may have violated the law for several separate reasons: the donors were foreign nationals (not lawful permanent residents) and accordingly prohibited from giving money; intermediaries were used and the actual source of moneys not disclosed; the solicitation was made by an official who was forbidden from participating in fundraising activities. The allegations extended to *quid pro quo* favors from the White House, such as "flip flops" on foreign policy and domestic policy. Some suggestions were made about commercial espionage or compromise of military security.

EXAMPLES

The various periodicals covered the story from different angles. The *Wall Street Journal* and William Safire of the *New York Times* focused on foreign

influence and possible breaches of national security. The *Boston Globe* broke stories on possible Asian American influence on immigration policy. The *Washington Post* developed a sustained critique of the importance of money in the political process more generally. The *Los Angeles Times* provided detailed reporting on Asian American political empowerment leading up to the scandal. *Newsweek*, like the *Journal* and *Safire*, wrote about the relationship among Huang and the Riadys, the Clinton Administration, and the Lippo Group. The article highlights, but not instances of duplicative coverage. We arranged the summaries arranged in a roughly chronological order.

A. The *Wall Street Journal*

The *Wall Street Journal* was among the publications leading the reporting on the Huang affair.¹⁴ In a set of five articles published every weekday in the span of a single week in early October 1996, the *Journal* stated that “Asian interests [were]...gaining political clout” through “legal loopholes.”¹⁵

The *Journal* introduced Huang as one of “a new breed of political money men who based their fundraising on ethnic ties” with “people whose connections to this country are tenuous.”¹⁶ It described the Lippo Group as “run by a prominent ethnic Chinese family.”¹⁷ In other articles, the *Journal* characterized Huang as “the fellow the President has out soliciting all Asia for political contributions”¹⁸ and “in charge of collecting Asian contributions for the Democratic campaign.”¹⁹

Alongside its allusions to Asians in Asia, the *Journal* made precise references to Asian Americans. It reported that Huang was “raking in soft money from the Asian American community” and stated that he “specializ[ed] in raising money from the Asian-American business community.”²⁰ According to the *Journal*, “much of the money Mr. Huang raised was entirely legitimate” and was intended to “benefit...Asian-Americans by giving them a greater voice” in the political process.²¹

The *Journal* juxtaposed these descriptions of Asian Americans with its discussions of foreign influence. For example, the *Journal* indicated that Huang raised funds “mainly from the Asian-American business community,” but in the same article quoted House Speaker Newt Gingrich as stating the matter “makes Watergate look trivial” because “we have never in American history had an American president selling pieces of this country to foreigners.”²²

Similarly, the *Journal* explained that Huang was the Democratic Party’s “top fund-raiser in the Asian American community” and that “he built an aggressive \$5 million fundraising machine aimed at the Asian American community.” Between the two references to Asian Americans, the newspaper quoted then-Presidential candidate Bob Dole as joking, “foreign aid has finally reached America. ...But it’s all going to the Democratic National Committee.”²³

Addressing Huang’s identity, the *Journal* printed an op-ed column labeling him “the mysterious Chinese fund-raiser.”²⁴ Elsewhere, it indicated that he remained “a local hero” in Taiwan,²⁵ his country of origin, as the *Journal* had repeatedly reminded readers.²⁶

Eventually, the *Journal* editorial page entered the discussion with a piece entitled “in defense of Asians.” In its opinion, “[t]he controversy swirling around

Democratic contributions impresario John Huang is not really about Asians, or even foreign political contributions, or about the financing of election campaigns, which after all have to be financed somehow. What it's about is Arkansas."²⁷

B. The *New York Times*

William Safire, a former Nixon administration speechwriter and language expert whose syndicated column is distributed by the *New York Times*, introduced the Huang story to the mainstream media. A precursor to the Safire stories had appeared a year earlier in the conservative monthly magazine, *The American Spectator*.²⁸

Safire, who had held up Asian Pacific Americans as the model minority after publication of the inflammatory book, *The Bell Curve*,²⁹ gave the story its most common title, "The Asian Connection."³⁰ He later explained that the title was an allusion to the movie "The French Connection," a critically acclaimed William Freidkin thriller that was released during the Watergate era.³¹

In breaking the story with a cryptic column mentioning many details without much background, Safire reported that the Riady family, the owners of the Lippo Group, had "gained much face in Indonesia" because they "were. . . able to boast of placing their man in a position of influence in the Clinton administration." Safire speculated that "if foreigners want to slip US politicians 'soft money,' the best conduit is a US citizen or resident alien." He suggested that the Riady family had done so through "an Indonesian gardener named Arief Wirindinata." Although he referred to the money as being "slipped" to politicians, he also characterized the Wirindinata donation as "overt" rather than "covert."

In a total of 18 stories about Huang and Asians or Asian Pacific Americans out of 47 stories carrying his byline during the time period studied,³² Safire described the "sale of access to Clinton by favor-hungry foreigners" in a process he outlined as follows: "many of the 'donors' may be front men with green cards, resident aliens of modest means passing along huge gifts of soft money supplied them by the Asian connection."

Possibly echoing the thesis that the world would soon see a "clash of civilizations" between East and West, Safire depicted the Huang matter as an incident in a global "ideo-economic struggle" between "free enterprise..." which "reward[s] the work ethic with the merit system" and the "drug-free but freedom-free. . . rigid oligarchies of [Singapore], China and Indonesia."³³ With that reversal of the dictum that "war is a continuation of politics by other means," Safire took up the implications of the Huang case with another column suggesting that "we'll find more to the Asian connection than fund-raising," namely commercial espionage on behalf of the Riady family, its Lippo Group companies, and Chinese partners.³⁴ Explaining at length his hypothesis that Huang had access to secrets "of great interest to his former employer and its new partner in China," Safire inexplicably concluded, "I have seen no evidence at all to suggest that John Huang is anything other than a loyal American citizen eager to advance himself and his friends. . ."

After protests of racial scapegoating in the coverage of the matter, Safire remarked in passing and without directly responding that the issue was "no 'yellow

peril,' but Clinton's long green peril."³⁵

Following the re-election of President Clinton, Safire wrote a stream-of-consciousness comic column that represented Clinton's thinking about Cabinet members. He concluded his fictional vignette with Clinton thinking to himself: "What I'd really like in my new Cabinet is a fresh face with universal appeal. Maybe a single Asian-American Republican moderate woman."³⁶

Meanwhile, the *Times* national news desk stated that "What has made so many different Republican-controlled committees interested in Mr. Huang is the unusual path his career has taken. Mr. Huang, 51, was born in China and educated in Taiwan and the United States. He has been an executive of Riady family banks in Asia, Arkansas, New York, and California."³⁷

The *Times* described the dilemma of the Huang case as determining how to distinguish between Huang's two roles, "to increase the political influence of Asian Americans" and "to aid his patrons, the Riady family of Indonesia, which controls the Lippo Group."³⁸ Following the election, it reported that the Democratic Party documents "illustrate how deeply Mr. Huang had tapped into the Asian American business community" by "receiv[ing] some of his largest donations from a small group of Arkansans and Asians who shared his longstanding ties to an Indonesian billionaire."³⁹

The *Times* editorial board, the most influential such institution in journalism, began by blaming both major political parties for the importance of fundraising. Over time, it became increasingly interested in the appointment of independent counsel to investigate the matter.

The editorial board initially suggested that the Democratic Party had "tapped...a new category" of "special interests—the Asian and Asian American communities."⁴⁰ The editorial board later observed that, "The Reagan administration brought some real masters of this game" of "play[ing] the revolving door. . . to enrich their political bosses, their business associates and themselves." It stated "we mention the bipartisan nature of this nasty traffic in influence not to excuse Mr. Clinton but to prod him."⁴¹

The editorial page soon advised the appointment of independent counsel, following disclosures that lawyers who had worked on the Whitewater defense had been overruled by White House advisors regarding the response to the crisis.⁴²

The editorial board again urged appointment of independent counsel when the paper's news pages reported between Christmas and New Year's Eve that a senior White House official, who was Asian American, was improperly involved in campaign fundraising. The editorial mentioned bribery with the caveat that it was "by no means clear" that anything which "would constitute bribery under the definition of Federal laws" had occurred.⁴³

Setting context, the *Times* published an article describing the "tough campaign task" of "policing foreign money."⁴⁴ The article discussed funds from Asian as well as other sources and efforts to raise such moneys on both sides of the aisle; it mentioned as an example that candidate Dole himself had received a donation from the Riady family in 1988. The article concluded that "the lines have been blurred between what is domestic and what is foreign interest in our global world." The *Times* also reported on the difficulties faced by Huang's supervisor at the

DNC, lawyer Marvin Rosen, who faced investigation for “push[ing] ethical limits in his law practice and business dealings,”⁴⁵ and other problems in campaign financing.⁴⁶ The *Times* published one story about the impact of the scandal on Asian Americans.⁴⁷

C. The *Boston Globe*

The *Boston Globe* editorial page began offering opinions on the Huang matter before its news department had developed its major stories.⁴⁸ On October 17, 1996, the *Globe* took the position that “money is corrupting enough on the American political system without involving foreign cash.”⁴⁹ In that editorial, the *Globe* anticipated potential problems with such attacks on Huang. The *Globe* noted that “No evidence of. . . foreign influence has yet come to light” as measured by a standard of “influence. . . of the nation’s policy toward Indonesia or South Korea. . . in return for contributions received.” The *Globe* attempted to preempt arguments that the allegations themselves were somehow improper, stating that “this is a legitimate issue for [then-candidate] Dole to raise.” Following this line of argument, the *Globe* later addressed Asian Pacific American concerns as “playing the race card.”⁵⁰

More importantly, however, the *Globe* was the media outlet that promoted the story of Asian American influence over immigration policy.⁵¹ The vague initial claims that multinational companies or Asian governments were influencing United States foreign policy gave way to the concrete concern that Asian Pacific Americans were lobbying the Clinton administration over immigration restrictions.⁵² The *Globe* was inaccurate factually, as we explain in detail in the themes section below.

The *Globe* mentioned non-Asian Americans in coverage of the scandal.⁵³ It described the single largest donation to the Democratic Party as coming close to the line between “politics and policy.” The problem was that Arnold Hiatt, the chairman of the Stride Rite Foundation, called White House deputy chief of staff Harold Ickes to talk with him about giving half a million dollars before doing so.

D. The *Washington Post*

The *Washington Post* began its coverage on October 10, 1996, in the back of the main section.⁵⁴ It started with lengthy pieces explaining the ostensible reasons that the Wirindinata couple donated money to the Democratic Party: because Huang had visited Hashim Ning, Soraya Wirindinata’s father, when he was ill in the hospital, and arranged for a get-well card (signed by auto-pen and not personally) to be sent from the White House.⁵⁵ Its early articles relied on explanations offered by Democratic Party officials to a greater extent than stories in the other publications.

The following day, the *Post* printed a profile of Huang that depicted him as someone who used contacts and fundraising to bring together “[t]he insider culture of Washington and the emerging culture of affluent, upwardly-mobile Asian Americans.”⁵⁶ Shortly after the time period covered in this survey, the *Post* began to report that Huang was incompetent and inconsequential with respect to policy development.⁵⁷

More than other papers, the *Post* devoted substantial coverage to a civil suit filed by Judicial Watch, a conservative group that had not been well-known prior to the Huang matter. The Judicial Watch suit initially involved allegations of corruption related to the late Ron Brown's work at the Commerce Department.⁵⁸ Judicial Watch sought a subpoena to compel Huang to testify at a deposition; however, Huang had gone into hiding by that time. Its counsel suggested that Huang was present at Democratic Party headquarters when marshals arrived to serve him, because "an Oriental man" was seen "fleeing" the building.⁵⁹ In coverage of the Judicial Watch case, the *Post* quoted from his deposition testimony transcript: "[t]he last weeks...[have] really been a confusing period of time for me."⁶⁰

On Election Day, the *Post* presented a parody of media coverage.⁶¹ In its Style section, the *Post* portrayed Bob Dole as "[trying] to exploit the scandal by pointing out that many of these foreigners have foreign-sounding names." The fictional remarks attributed to Dole—"do these people sound like Americans? I don't think so!" and "remember Pearl Harbor? I sure do!"—were remarkably similar to the actual statements about the Huang matter made by Ross Perot.⁶²

After the election, the *Post* was the only paper to report that University of California, Berkeley, Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien had received correspondence from Mochtar Riady, the elder member of the family who owned the Lippo Group, the former employer of Huang.⁶³ The *Post* article appeared as Tien was under consideration for the Cabinet post of Energy Secretary; the *Post* itself had designated Tien as one of the individuals whose name appeared on the apocryphal "short list"⁶⁴ for the position.

The *Post* story focused on letters sent to Tien by Riady. Tien, who earlier in the year had announced his retirement from office, exchanged letters with Riady, the head of the Lippo Group in 1994 and 1995. Riady—who had donated \$100,000 to the flagship of the UC system in 1994—had written to Tien to recommend prospective students applying to the school. Tien sent form replies indicating he would refer the matter to the admissions office.⁶⁵ Shortly after the *Post* article, President Clinton announced his Cabinet choices. Tien was not among them.

By the end of the year, the *Post* had explicitly shifted the focus of its reporting. In a front-page article on December 29, it recognized that the story had changed. The lead read, "Three months ago, it looked like the Democratic Party's fund-raising problems centered on one man, John Huang... Now, the picture is much more complicated and bizarre. A network of Democratic fund-raisers and donors with foreign connections appears it have traded on their access to President Clinton to boost their business dealings..."⁶⁶ The *Post* reported that the dormant Asian Pacific Advisory Council (APAC), either an official Democratic Party entity or an unofficial interest group (the *Post* quoted sources stating that APAC had an ambiguous identity), had played a questionable role when it was active in the 1992 elections.⁶⁷

In its heavy coverage, the *Post* occasionally quoted individuals who pointed out concerns about racialization of the controversy. From its earliest stories until Election Day, the *Post* published 43 articles on Huang, of which three discussed possible racism or racial insensitivity.⁶⁸ The *Post* was one of only a few major

media outlets to cover the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Institute (CAPACI) press conference, supported by Asian Pacific Americans in both major political parties, that was called to denounce "Asian bashing."⁶⁹ The *Post* occasionally referred to Asians who were not Asian Americans as "Asians with permanent resident status in the United States" rather than as "aliens" or "foreigners."⁷⁰

The day after the election, the *Post* gave extensive coverage to President Clinton's press conference, especially his statements that some of the media coverage of the Huang matter included "[a] lot of rather disparaging comments made about Asian Americans."⁷¹ President Clinton later indicated that he felt "used" by Huang and Trie.⁷²

Shortly after the election, the *Post* published an article discussing Asian Pacific American concerns that the controversy would discourage Asian Pacific American political participation.⁷³ After that point, none of its news stories addressed Asian Pacific American perspectives or racial aspects of the scandal.

In one odd article, though, the *Post* quoted a Republican Party official comparing Huang to O.J. Simpson, stating that Huang investigating "corrupt money," as the Democratic Party had suggested he might do, would be like Simpson "dedicating his life to finding the killer." The same article stated that a donor who confirmed that the money he gave was his own money spoke in "heavily accented Mandarin"—presumably the reporters meant "heavily accented English."⁷⁴

At the conclusion of the time period surveyed, the *Post* began to expand its coverage significantly beyond Asian American political contributions.⁷⁵ It began to investigate coffee meetings between the Clinton administration and senior officials with Democratic Party fundraisers and lobbyists.

E. The *Los Angeles Times*

Following its competitors by a few days, the *Los Angeles Times* was among the first newspapers to break the Huang story.⁷⁶ Its lengthiest early article, published on October 14, 1996, framed the question as whether the Wirindinata couple, whom the subhead noted could legally donate money, were a "front" for "rich foreigners."⁷⁷ The *Los Angeles Times* had earlier reported about donations to the Democratic Party from a Korean company, which were returned due to concerns about their source.⁷⁸

Like the other newspapers surveyed, the *Los Angeles Times* used documents released by the Democratic Party in the course of the scandal to generate additional stories on the Huang matter. Major articles concerning White House aide Doris Matsui appeared simultaneously on the East Coast and the West Coast.⁷⁹

Significantly, on the involvement of Matsui, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that the method by which "big donors [would] be rewarded. . . corresponds closely to the kinds of special access accorded to large donors both before and after the memo [mentioning Matsui] was written."⁸⁰ The newspapers, however, differed on other key points. At the end of the time period surveyed, the *Los Angeles Times* reported—in contrast to the *Post*—that Huang was important to policy development.⁸¹ Elsewhere, it described Huang as "a former Commerce Department

official and big-time DNC fund-raiser who, accompanied by various foreign friends, has been a frequent visitor to the White House.”⁸²

The *Los Angeles Times* offered several lengthy stories with explanations of possible causes of the controversy. It also published several articles discussing Asian Pacific American reactions to the controversy and racial stereotyping.⁸³

On December 23, 1996, the *Los Angeles Times* published an analysis of the scandal. It suggested that as Asian Pacific Americans emerged as a politically aware group and increased their power, “the elements of the eventual scandal were there too, wanting only more time to reach critical mass and explode.”⁸⁴ It traced an Asian Pacific American network of connections to former Senator Alan Cranston, a California Democrat. The article described the rise of Huang in the context of other aspiring Asian American politicians. Johnny Chung, for example, was described as a “Taiwanese American businessman” who was trying to develop a struggling company by “running photo tours of the White House” for “camera-toting Asian businessmen.”

On Christmas Day, the *Los Angeles Times* published another lengthy article explaining that the Asian business persons who were involved in the scandal were behaving appropriately within Eastern cultural standards. It quoted President Clinton as explaining he was not more critical of his “Taiwanese American friends at the center of the...scandal,” because “the culture out of which they come doesn’t draw the same bright lines between politics, government and business that we do.”⁸⁵

The *Los Angeles Times* contained a few examples of ambiguous references. A Brookings Institute scholar, for example, was quoted as stating, “I’ve been around this town for 30 years and I’ve never seen a group raise stonewalling to such an art form,” but the reference to “group” may have been directed at either Asian Pacific Americans or Democrats.

On its editorial page, the *Los Angeles Times* was precise in its description of allegations. When the scandal began, the paper characterized the Wirindinata couple as a landscape architect and a homemaker—in contrast to Safire who had described the husband as a “gardener”—and the paper indicated that their contributions were legal if they “are legal US residents [who]. . . maintain their status here,” even if they “send contributions from abroad.”⁸⁶ The *Los Angeles Times* called for consideration of “[t]he larger issue [of] how money raising has become the obsessive imperative” because “hearings that focus on the bigger picture would perform a true public service.”⁸⁷ Unlike any of its peers, the *Los Angeles Times* editorial page also observed that “lost in the controversy. . . was the fact that 1996 was a defining moment in the politicization of Asian Americans.” In that article, the *Los Angeles Times* explained that Asian Americans also had achieved many positive gains in 1996, ranging from greater political participation to the election of Washington Governor, Gary Locke.⁸⁸

F. *Newsweek*

Newsweek published seven stories during the time period studied. The *Newsweek* articles included an early piece that was described elsewhere inaccurately as the first story on the subject of foreign influence over the Clinton

administration.⁸⁹ The *Newsweek* articles included the most dramatic graphic portrayal of the scandal, a cover article that featured an unshaven James Riady in close-up and chiaroscuro.⁹⁰ Otherwise, the *Newsweek* coverage was substantially similar to that of the daily newspapers.

G. Miscellaneous

The only major editorial comment condemning racism in reactions to the Huang matter came from the *Hartford Courant*, not one of the surveyed newspapers.⁹¹ The *Courant* wrote, "Behind the accusations aimed at Democratic Party fund-raiser John Huang lies subtle, perhaps unrecognized, racism. The allegations of possibly illegal fund-raising may have merit, and Mr. Huang and the Democrats will have to pay the price if they have broken the law. But the notion that Mr. Huang is an outsider because he is an Asian—a notion that is both implicit and explicit in some of the criticism of him—is beyond the pale."

On the op-ed page of surveyed newspapers, a number of writers raised concerns about racial aspects of the Huang affair, among the best-known, Russell Baker and Frank Rich.⁹² An exchange between Robert Wright, a political journalist writing for the Microsoft on-line magazine *Slate*, and Michael Kelly, editor of the Washington magazine the *New Republic*, was the only sustained discussion of race in the matter. This episode is discussed below.

Fred Wertheimer, former president of the reform group Common Cause, argued in an op-ed for the *Times* that "soft money" should be simply banned.⁹³ He listed numerous examples of abuse in what he called "the whole rotten system," including the domestic tobacco lobby alongside "huge contributions from foreign interests." He argued that both the Republican and Democratic Parties are as guilty of accepting their money. He wrote another op-ed for the *Post* characterizing the 1996 election as "The dirtiest election ever." Wertheimer detailed problems on both sides of the aisle, only a few of which concerned Huang or foreign funds.⁹⁴

THEMES

Functionally, racial stereotyping involves generalizations based on racial references. Regardless of whether Huang is ultimately determined to have violated the law, it would require racial stereotyping to infer that other individuals of the same racial backgrounds are likely to commit similar acts. While no individual or institution assigned blame in such a direct racial manner, examples abound of media coverage that display racial reasoning that were troubling when coupled with denials of the potential for racial stereotyping.

A. Assuming Huang Represents all Asian Pacific Americans

The most obvious form of racial stereotyping is the assumption that Huang represents all Asian Pacific Americans. The assumption can be effective even if unstated. On October 27, 1996, for example, the *Post* wrote about stonewalling by the Democratic Party on "their fundraising efforts in the Asian American community."⁹⁵ Implicit in its suggestion that the Democratic Party should answer questions about its outreach to Asian Pacific Americans generally was the notion

that Huang caused problems which affected all fundraising within the Asian Pacific American community but not fundraising elsewhere. As a consequence, Huang's involvement with an issue assumes greater importance than Asian Pacific American community activism that pre-dated him and that was much more extensive than his own work. This problem was exemplified by the *Boston Globe* reporting on immigration issues. Any wrongdoing by Huang overshadowed legitimate lobbying by community organizations.

Racial stereotyping can be created by details. Huang never acquired an identity as an individual. Likewise, one or another of the Riadys, James and Mochtar, was frequently identified as "the Indonesian." After the scandal had been in the headlines for months, stories continued to refer to the people involved as "Asians" or "foreigners" rather than by name or role. As the *Los Angeles Times* declared in a headline: "Indonesian fulfills aim for firm, nation."⁹⁶ The *Wall Street Journal* was a notable exception. It often referred to Huang by name, following its practice of using names for figures familiar to its readership.

B. Making Race Relevant

Race remained relevant throughout the scandal. In a representative example from the *Los Angeles Times*, the lead stated that "[a]n Asian American business consultant, who was a major Democratic Party donor, visited the White House at least 26 times and arranged for Thai executives to attend a party coffee at the Executive Mansion. . . ." The conclusion of the article also stated that the consultant "was one of several Asian Americans who made large contributions to the DNC a few days after telephoning Huang when he was senior Commerce Department official. . . ." The business consultant was not identified by name until the sixth paragraph. Nowhere in the story was the relevance of her Asian American racial identity made apparent.⁹⁷

Race was used to lend credibility to sources. In another article, the *Los Angeles Times* referred to a Korean American woman as someone who "shuns publicity, according to several Korean American sources who know her."⁹⁸ No other sources were identified by a racial label.

Even if in covering the scandal, it were legitimate to concentrate attention on Asian foreign nationals and Asian-based multinational corporations while ignoring other comparable people and companies, it remains wrong to categorize people together merely on the basis of racial background. In other words, even if it were appropriate to investigate primarily Asians and not others, that does not justify suspicion of all Asian Pacific Americans as a group. Some commentators committed the logical fallacy of assuming that the former and latter were the same proposition.⁹⁹

Confusing the cause of the problem, the *Boston Globe* reported that "many in the Asian American community" were "chagrined" that "much of the fund-raising controversy has involved two Asian Americans."¹⁰⁰ Responsibility for racial stereotyping is shifted to Asian Pacific Americans themselves. That reasoning is akin to the famous line in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision upholding "separate but equal." If there were racial prejudice ("a badge of inferiority") then it was "not by any reason of anything in the act, but solely because the colored

race chooses to put that construction upon it.”¹⁰¹ In this instance, Asian Pacific Americans supposedly identify themselves as represented by Huang, and they take it upon themselves to feel shame over Huang’s actions. Asian Pacific Americans, the subject of the stereotype, bear the onus for it.

Huang in particular, and Asian Pacific Americans generally, may have encouraged the understanding that an individual’s actions reflected an entire racial minority group’s behavior. In another *Boston Globe* article, Huang was described as “an Asian American who declined to speak with reporters yesterday,” but was quoted as stating, ‘the media has been looking after me’ in a way that ‘tainted the reputation and credibility of our Asian-Pacific community.’”¹⁰²

One of the humorous moments that relieved the melodrama of the scandal was the discovery that there was literally another “John Huang,” an official with Vice-President Al Gore’s Reinventing Government Task Force. This other Huang, who also visited the White House occasionally, had been mistaken for his more notorious counterpart in the tallies of visits to administration officials.¹⁰³

C. Applying Double Standards and Changing Standards

The most common complaint about the portrayal of Asian Pacific Americans is susceptible to a basically persuasive factual response. The complaint is that Asian Pacific Americans were being held to a different standard than other racial groups, either a double standard or a standard that was changing only as Asian Pacific Americans became actively involved. In concrete terms, Asian Americans were being criticized for behaving as other constituency groups had done in the past, making political contributions in exchange for anticipated influence. With respect to illegal conduct, Asian American transgressions were treated with much more drama, even before any conclusions had been reached.

As examples, Asian Pacific American activists pointed to the lack of interest in a Greek American foreign national whose funds were donated by his law firm improperly, and neglect of the story of a Dole campaign official who agreed to pay a multi-million dollar fine for admitted money-laundering.¹⁰⁴ The response is that the Asian Pacific American money problems were much more extensive than other incidents of contributions that were refunded to donors. To the extent that the assertion is true, it justifies considerably greater emphasis on the “Asian connection.” But the explanation hardly creates *carte blanche* for every form of hyperbole used in discussing the “Asian connection.”

D. Overreacting Against Asian Pacific Americans

At another level, the concern may be described as a selective focus or overreaction. The historical and contemporary basis for the concern includes the perception of Asian Pacific Americans as perpetual foreigners likely to be disloyal or the rise of the East and the decline of the West with Asians invading or “taking over” the country. The sentiment against Asians as alien enemies has been expressed throughout the past and even recently. Among the examples are the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, the Japanese American internment, recent episodes of Japan-bashing, and hate crimes in which Asian individuals of various ethnicities were confused with one another and collectively blamed for the Vietnam war or

economic recession. The ease with which the press believed that Asian Pacific American political participation might involve foreign influence and the failure to distinguish between Asians and Asian Pacific Americans recalled for many Asian Pacific Americans the perpetual foreigner stereotype that has plagued them.

Furthermore, the *Times* reported that Republicans believed Huang's life and career had been "unusual" because he was born in China, raised in Taiwan, and had lived in various places throughout the United States. However, many immigrants have a personal history similar to this sequence of events; for them it is normal, not unusual.

The fear of foreigners is reflected in the fear of foreign money. It is expressed in the details of the press coverage. Describing legal permanent residents as foreigners and aliens rather than as immigrants or green card-holders and referring to the use of loopholes in the fundraising law are means of casting doubt on the rights of the individuals and the propriety of the conduct involved.

The discussion of the Wirindinatas returning to Indonesia recalls the sojourner myth of Asian immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—that they all returned to their roots overseas, a perception that has persisted despite evidence that repatriation rates were comparable among European and Asian immigrants.¹⁰⁵

The discussion of the loophole in the law ignores language and the legislative history. The statutory section defines a "foreign national" as someone who is "not a citizen of the United States and who is not lawfully admitted for permanent residence, as defined by section 101(a)(20) of the *Immigration and Nationality Act* (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(20))."¹⁰⁶ The provision was purposefully amended to permit legal permanent residents to contribute funds, and it was passed in the Senate with 89 "yea" votes and no "nay" votes.¹⁰⁷ It was no accident that legal permanent residents were allowed to give money.

Likewise, a reaction against transnationalism is reflected in the fear of foreign money. The sense of international competition was evident when *Newsweek* asked how domestic money could compete with foreign money.¹⁰⁸ Yet as Robert Wright explained and as was discussed occasionally, it is increasingly difficult in a global economy to distinguish meaningfully between foreign and domestic, whether with respect to money, corporations, or communities.¹⁰⁹ Prior to his appointment, former Clinton administration Labor secretary Robert Reich wrote an influential article asking, "Who is Us?"¹¹⁰ Communities and individuals might ask the same question.

The *Times* suggested that "[t]he new world of commercial diplomacy may be complex, but the rules for governing American behavior can be simple."¹¹¹ Indeed, an understanding of transnationalism as a phenomena need not degenerate into an assumption that every Asian Pacific American, any more than any member of another racial group, has overseas connections. In the "complex new world" of individuals who are transnational, the "simple rule" can be that nobody is representative, at least not on the basis of race.

It is fair to ask whether some of the coverage was somewhat sensationalistic. On many occasions, newspapers published stories based on speculation, which included disclaimers that most Asian Americans who had given money had a legal right to do so and that very little had yet been proven.

Notwithstanding the statements about corrupting effects of “foreign money,” the total amounts of such funds out of overall “soft money” contributions was rarely mentioned—under \$5 million out of an estimated \$800 million raised by the major political parties.¹¹² Still, banning “foreign money” appears to be the only part of campaign finance proposals that has acquired consensus support. President Bill Clinton expressed his view that legal permanent residents should wait until they have naturalized to give money.¹¹³ Republican candidate Bob Dole stated that eliminating foreign money was “number one on the agenda.”

E. Failing to Distinguish Between Asians and Asian Pacific Americans

The “Asian connection” title itself reveals the racialization of the scandal. Likewise, the *Times* headline about raising money from “Asians in the US,” made even Asian Pacific Americans appear foreign. As Robert Wright noted, anti-Semitism would be apparent if a Jewish fundraiser were implicated in scandal and it were dubbed “the Jewish connection.” Even if the scandal involved donations from other American Jews, and even if some of them had views about the Middle East, it would at least raise concerns if reporters attributed the behavior to Jewish cultural identity.¹¹⁴

Other than the title, the clearest example of both the confusion of Asians and Asian Pacific Americans, as well as the apathy toward the problem, was Ross Perot’s speeches about Huang and the failure of the press to report the remarks. The *Times* printed excerpts from Perot’s speech at University of Pennsylvania the week before Election Day. Perot said, among other things about the Huang matter, “You know, so far we haven’t found an American name.”¹¹⁵ With additional revelations about the scandal, Perot commented that White House aides Mark E. Middleton and James C. Wood had “surnames to which Americans can relate,” the *Times* reported.¹¹⁶ Perot asked rhetorically, “I wonder if anybody in this country’s giving money?”¹¹⁷

The *Times* neither condemned nor condoned these statements; no other newspaper in this survey commented on them.¹¹⁸ Newspapers were aware of the comments,¹¹⁹ though, because several observed that the Perot campaign improved its standing in the polls as a result of his remarks. The Republican Party approved of his suggestion that the scandal would be another “Watergate.”¹²⁰

Often, the terms “Asians” and “Asian Americans” would be introduced together, but then any distinction between them abandoned. The *Wall Street Journal* coverage frequently shifted back and forth between Asians and Asian Americans. Columnist Safire employed the same tactic, albeit with the explanation that the Asians were hiding behind the front of Asian Americans. A *Newsweek* article, for example, began by describing “Indogate” as involving “millions of dollars of suspicious-looking campaign contributions from Asians and Asian Americans” and in the next sentence segued into “a clubby network. . . hustling vague business deals with Asian fat cats trying to gain access to the president.”¹²¹

Arguably, Huang failed to distinguish among Asians and Asian Pacific Americans. Thus, the media was doing no differently. That explanation for media coverage exposes the practical difficulty of organizing through a category that has been used as the basis for discrimination, as well as for the post-modern

problem of how the social reality of race is reproduced by efforts to overcome its influence. The classic chicken and the egg debate ensues—racial prejudice against Asian Pacific Americans led Asian Pacific Americans to identify themselves more self-consciously as a racial group to gain political empowerment, but then they have difficulties explaining that despite becoming much more of a community, individual members cannot be held to blame for transgressions of others with whom they are associated. The cycle is completed (and started again) when investigations of the wrong-doing reinforce racial prejudice. But the tension between the realities of race and the recognition of race justifies neither the negligent nor the purposeful confusion of citizens and foreigners. The media sharpened the line between Asians and other foreign nationals while it blurred the line between Asians and Asian Pacific Americans.

F. Assuming Guilt by Association

Many reporters based their articles on investigations into individuals who had contact with Huang in business, politics, or both. While there is merit to thorough research, the approach taken by the media verged on guilt by association. In contrast, after White House consultant Dick Morris and House Speaker Newt Gingrich had admitted ethical lapses, little was done to inquire into their acquaintances. Likewise, the Democratic National Committee itself hired auditors who focused on Asian Pacific American donors, often asking offensive questions about citizenship and threatening to leak names to the media for lack of cooperation.

Several articles offered surveys of allegations of Asian American wrongdoing that was unrelated, other than with respect to the racial background of the individuals involved. The *Wall Street Journal*, for example, discussed the difficulties of Republican Representative Jay Kim, the first Korean American elected to the Congress, who faced similar allegations of improper fundraising by a “rival” to Huang who was suspected of obtaining offshore contributions.¹²² Similarly, Charlie Trie was “the latest in a series of businessmen of Asian origin whose fund-raising practices for Mr. Clinton and the Democratic National Committee have come under scrutiny.”¹²³ Some compared donations raised by Huang to donations given by Michael Kojima, a Japanese American who gave \$500,000 to the Republican Party in 1992 but turned out to lack the funds and owed child support.¹²⁴

Nothing in the articles even implied that Huang was connected to Kim or Kojima; the articles also left unclear what, if any, link Huang had to the individual described as his rival or to Trie. An appropriate analogy for this type of reporting would be an article containing allegations of different crimes committed by members of a racial group, where neither the activities nor the persons involved were in any manner related to one another.

Whether appropriate, the guilt by association may have affected the political prospects of other Asian Pacific Americans, in particular Chancellor Tien and former Congressman Norman Mineta. Cabinet appointments are subject to many different considerations, but many believed that the Huang scandal meant that President Clinton would pass up the opportunity to name the first ever Cabinet member of Asian descent. The *New Republic*, in criticizing efforts to increase

diversity, quoted anonymous officials to the effect that "they were thinking it might be important to hire an Asian American, until Huang, or whatever his name is, came along."¹²⁵ Like objections to the "race card," this particular disapproval of diversity is ironic. It concludes with an example not of diversity but of racial discrimination. In any event, the absence of Asian Pacific Americans did not preclude the Cabinet choices being described as "diverse."

Apparently seeking to avoid being implicated, other politicians peremptorily gave back money despite the legality of the donation and in the absence of any appearance of impropriety.¹²⁶

G. Using Racial Explanations for Wrongful Behavior

Virtually every article that offered a chronological or detailed description of the controversy mentioned Huang's racial background and immigration history. Given his fundraising among Asian Pacific Americans, a general reference to race might be regarded as merely descriptive. But early allegations of misconduct, even in articles that explicitly note that there was yet no evidence for the claims, also mentioned that the Riady family, like Huang, is "ethnic Chinese" in Indonesia.¹²⁷

Many of the newspapers offered racial explanations for Huang's behavior. The explanations assumed that race determined culture and that Huang was conforming to the racially appropriate cultural standards. Accordingly, if Huang's actions violated United States laws, they were representative of cultural conflict. This approach was demonstrated by several lengthy articles that used Asian and Asian Pacific American sources as well as Asia experts to describe Asian business as heavily dependent on personal relationships, especially proximity to government. The Chinese term for this system is *guan xi*.¹²⁸ Significantly, *guan xi* was invoked both to excuse and to censure.

In a positive vein, on Christmas Day, the *Los Angeles Times* published a lengthy article about *guan xi*. The piece opened by quoting President Clinton as stating that the persons involved in the scandal came from a "culture [which] doesn't draw the same bright lines between politics, government and business that we do."¹²⁹

In a negative vein, columnist Safire translated *guan xi* as "cozy cronyism between officialdom and capitalists,"¹³⁰ or "the network of personal, familial and commercial relationships used by East Asian men to advance their interests."¹³¹ He condemned the practice as "importing an infection into the American political system," insisting that "our way is better."¹³² He also explained the reversal of meanings between cultures: "Although the term *guan xi* as used by Asians has a benign connotation as the interplay of favors, jobs and status among the upwardly mobile, its use by Westerners carries the clear connotation of bribery, political fixing and general corruption."¹³³

H. Fearing Asian Immigration

The reports from the *Boston Globe* about Asian Pacific Americans seeking to preserve family-based immigration merit special consideration. They suggest that Asian Pacific Americans trying to reunite their families or to allow immigration

are advancing racial self-interest at the expense of the national interest. According to articles in the *Globe*, President Bill Clinton was persuaded to support family-based immigration because Asian Americans would give money to his campaign if he did so. He reversed his previous position in favor of restricting immigration as a consequence. The *Globe* insinuated that the Asian American money in fact was Asian money. The *Globe* was wrong about the facts and wrong in its conclusions.

In this past election cycle, Huang organized a series of fundraising events aimed at Asian Pacific Americans. The single most lucrative event, at \$25,000 per couple, was a dinner at the Hay-Adams Hotel in Washington DC, and attended by President Clinton himself. The Lunar New Year's event occurred on February 19, 1996.¹³⁴ At the time, the Clinton Administration was trying to achieve a compromise position in the immigration debate. Its strategy, like that of moderates in Congress, was to distinguish between legal and illegal immigration: save the legal immigrants by sacrificing the illegal immigrants. In practical terms, that meant "splitting the bills" then pending in the Senate and House into different measures addressing legal and illegal immigration.¹³⁵

As it happens, a majority of Asian Pacific Americans—two-thirds of whom are immigrants¹³⁶—support continuation of family-based legal immigration. At the time, Asian Pacific American communities were struggling to persuade legislators that brothers and sisters of citizens should continue to be allowed into the country under a provision known as the "fourth preference."¹³⁷ Fundraiser Huang wrote President Clinton a briefing memo stating the obvious—that immigration would be a key issue for Asian Pacific American voters. In his memo, Huang wrote about a variety of issues. He included, for example, a breakdown of the Asian Pacific American population by ethnic group and geographic region, an analysis of past voting patterns, and lists of APA politicians and appointees.¹³⁸ On the immigration issue, Huang wrote: "State Department reports indicate a backlog of 1.6 million brothers and sisters waiting for family preference visas in 1994. Nearly 1.1 million or 69 percent of the backlog are from Asian countries..." He gave Clinton a "heads up" that "brothers and sisters" who are adults are considered "immediate family" within Asian culture. He listed the "White House position" as "the White House has been silent as to its support of the Fourth Preference."¹³⁹

President Clinton stated he never read the memo,¹⁴⁰ but in any event, he offered moderate support for family reunification immigration. Given developments on Capitol Hill, this approach would have been strategically sensible anyway. But President Clinton at no time expressed as much support for the fourth preference as many Asian Pacific Americans might have liked, and his position appears to have changed slightly, if at all, in the time period studied. In a series of letters from its Justice Department to Congressional leadership, the Clinton Administration set forth its views on family immigration. The *Globe* relied primarily on one of these letters, dated March 13, 1996.¹⁴¹

In July 1995, the Justice Department wrote, "it is premature to advance legislative proposals on legal immigration reform" because the Jordan Commission had not yet issued its report.¹⁴² In September 1995, the Jordan Commission, chaired

by the late Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, proposed a roughly twenty-five percent reduction in all levels of legal immigration, including elimination of the fourth preference.¹⁴³

At one point, President Clinton—who in 1992 had supported family-based immigration—endorsed the Jordan Commission report in general terms. Published news reports do not indicate that President Clinton argued against the fourth preference in particular.¹⁴⁴ Regardless, from then forward, Asian Pacific American groups worked in coalition with Hispanic, Jewish and pro-family groups to persuade Clinton and Congress to re-consider.¹⁴⁵ The advocates who were successful in persuading Clinton were helped by Huang. But the Democratic Party's February 19th Hay-Adams fundraiser was by no means the turning point.

In a February 14, 1996, letter to Senator Orrin Hatch, the Justice Department made clear that it supported use of the fourth preference because "US citizens who have applied on behalf of their family members, have 'played by the rules' and have chosen to wait, in some cases nearly two decades, in order to be legally reunited with their family." The letter further indicated, though, that the Clinton Administration was willing "to examine in greater detail this category [of immigrants] and the nature of the existing backlog to better evaluate its role in national immigration policy."¹⁴⁶

In a March 13, 1996, letter to Speaker Gingrich, the Justice Department again used the "played by the rules" argument. It stated that the suspension of new applications for use of the fourth preference was appropriate, coupled with "an appropriate and equitable process to address the backlog." As importantly, the letter used the same language to indicate that the Clinton Administration was willing "to examine in greater detail this policy and the nature of the existing backlog to better evaluate its role in national immigration policy."¹⁴⁷

In other words, both before and after the Hay-Adams fundraiser, contrary to allegations by the *Globe*, Clinton supported the following three changes to the fourth preference: (1) temporary suspension of its use; (2) clearing out the backlog of individuals waiting to actually enter the country using this provision; and (3) consideration of its continued use in a bill separate from the illegal immigration issue. While Clinton may have earlier expressed some support for curtailing legal immigration, he had shifted his views for legitimate reasons having to do with the importance of family reunification.

Even if the *Globe* were correct, nothing in its reports demonstrated illegal conduct or even an appearance of impropriety. The scandal is not that Asian Pacific Americans were able to voice their views on immigration, but that they had to look like they were potential donors of large sums of money before receiving a hearing. Assuming that Asian Americans helped save the national tradition of immigration, there is nothing shocking about people trying to bring together their families or actively participating in politics in an effort to do so.

Of course, immigration connects our nation to the rest of the world. As much as immigration rules affect citizens along with their immigrant relatives, they also blend domestic politics with foreign affairs. If Asian Americans and others who care about allowing immigrants to come to this country are motivated by

some sort of racial self-interest, then the same might be said of whites and others who wish to close the borders.

I. The Invisibility of Asian Pacific Americans

Curiously, while Asian Pacific Americans were at the center of the controversy, they also were missing from the scene. They became the silent subjects of the debate.

A few early news articles included Asian Pacific American perspectives, but by and large, Asian Americans were not much quoted except on issues of Asian American political empowerment.¹⁴⁸ The handful of individuals who were most often included were California academics and community leaders, among them: Yvonne Lee, a United States Civil Rights Commissioner; Dale Minami, a San Francisco lawyer long active with Asian Pacific American causes; Don Nakanishi, a UCLA professor who had prevailed in a racial discrimination case involving his tenure; Angela Oh, a Los Angeles attorney who had become prominent following the post-Rodney King verdict riots; Stewart Kwoh, the director of the Southern California Asian Pacific American Legal Center; and Karen Narasaki, the executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium. Overall, the *Los Angeles Times* was much more sympathetic to Asian Pacific American concerns than its East Coast rivals,¹⁴⁹ perhaps because of the larger presence and greater influence of Asian Pacific Americans among its readership.

On the op-ed page, only one piece by Asian Pacific Americans appeared in any of the surveyed periodicals, an October 24, 1996, piece co-authored by Stewart Kwoh and Frank Wu.¹⁵⁰ An op-ed by Ling-chi Wang, a University of California, Berkeley professor, arguing that Huang was a victim of racism but that Asian Americans in turn were a victim of money politics, was syndicated by the Pacifica News Service and appeared in *Newsday*.¹⁵¹ Wang argued, "I know John Huang is a victim of racism. But, given his involvement in the corrupt system of moneyed politics, I have no sympathy for him. Nor do I feel obligated as an Asian American to defend him in the name of my community. Rather, I want to defend my community from being ripped off by a system of moneyed politics promoted by, for and through the likes of the Riadys and John Huang."

Former Clinton administration speechwriter Eric Liu, a commentator for MS-NBC and Microsoft's on-line political magazine *Slate*, also wrote a piece on the "myth of dual identity."¹⁵² The first letter to the editor that the *Washington Post* printed on the Huang matter was from an Asian Pacific American fundraiser for the Republican Party.¹⁵³ The author, Susan Au Allen, argued that "Asian descent clearly is marginal to the central issue, possibly illegal campaign contributions and any associated quid pro quo. Had the individuals' names been Smith or Jones, the coverage would have been no different."

The press coverage created a "catch-22" dilemma. Much as the Japan-bashing of the 1980s had done, the Huang matter left an impression of Asian Pacific Americans acting out of racial group self-interest in responding to the Huang matter. Because the press reduces scandal to simple terms, Asian Pacific Americans look like they are defending Huang if they respond to the controversy. Without a defense of Huang, an Asian Pacific American reaction is regarded as irrelevant.

The vicious circle proceeds as follows. Press coverage includes racial themes, but only implicitly or, if explicitly, in a manner which can be easily denied. Asian Pacific American responses in turn point out the insensitivity if not stereotyping. But because the original race-consciousness on the part of the press is ignored, it appears as if Asian Pacific Americans are invoking race initially, rather than responding to racism. Hence, the press easily dismisses the "race card."

An example of the phenomenon is the press conference called by the nonpartisan Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Institute (CAPACI). Created as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) foundation by the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, itself a counterpart to the Congressional Black Caucus and Hispanic Caucus, among others, CAPACI coordinated events in late October in Washington, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Scrupulously bipartisan in the list of speakers and supporters, the CAPACI coalition called for further investigation of Huang but warned that racial stereotyping transcended partisan politics.

Although the CAPACI event was the only coordinated Asian Pacific American statement on Huang and despite its moderate message, it received minimal coverage. Both the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* ran stories inside their main sections.¹⁵⁴ The other newspapers ignored the story.

Coalitions among communities of color also were ignored. By failing to give attention to other racial minorities who agree with Asian Pacific Americans, an appearance is created of Asian Pacific Americans sticking together but standing alone. An example again comes from the CAPACI events. The day before CAPACI held its event, the Rev. Jesse Jackson similarly called a press conference in New York City. The Rainbow Coalition leader who appeared together with Asian Pacific American leaders was as supportive of Asian Pacific American political empowerment as he was critical of Indonesian government labor policies.

Even though the Rev. Jackson remains a major public figure whose statements in the same time period on subjects such as the Oakland, California, school board decision on Ebonics and the Texaco discrimination lawsuit attracted national attention,¹⁵⁵ his support for Asian Pacific Americans did not. His statements received less national press coverage than did CAPACI's. None of the newspapers covered his statements.

Asian Pacific American protest about race seemed futile. After the CAPACI press conferences, the major newspapers continued their coverage as before with no discernible changes—if anything, they included fewer Asian American perspectives. But when Asian American opinions were accorded attention, they were sometimes dismissed as "playing the race card."

J. Playing the Race Card

"Playing the race card" is a misnomer. Popularized during the criminal prosecution of O.J. Simpson in 1995-96, "the race card" has come to refer to an accusation of racism, typically implying that the accusation is false and only a deceptive tactic. In this case, a few writers suggested that the media or the Republican Party was using race to attack the Clinton campaign or the Democratic Party.¹⁵⁶ In response, other writers quickly denounced the use of "the race card," resulting in no apparent change in media coverage.

The debate that attracted the greatest attention was an exchange between Robert Wright and Michael Kelly. Wright, a contributor to *Slate*, argued that the media had “turned a legitimately medium-sized scandal into a journalistic blockbuster” out of “subtle, probably subconscious racial prejudice.” He also asserted that it was increasingly difficult to distinguish between foreign and domestic money in a global economy.¹⁵⁷ Kelly, who had recently taken over editorship of the *New Republic*, wrote its traditional “TRB” column, which was reprinted by the *Washington Post*.¹⁵⁸ He characterized Wright’s argument as “the race card...married to the religion of free trade.” He believed, “The law recognizes the manifest distinction between an American donor to a political campaign and a non-American one.”

As sympathetic as Wright was toward Asian Americans, he too regarded Asian Pacific Americans as a racial group. If an individual Asian American had overseas connections, then all Asian Americans had overseas connections. Kelly misses the other “manifest distinction” that may be drawn in the Huang matter between Huang and other Asian Pacific Americans.

Even Safire stated his belief in equality and opposition to racial stereotyping.¹⁵⁹ What is bizarre about Safire’s statement that “corruption and repression of dissent, which go hand in hand, afflict every race” is that he has become worked up about only an Asian example. It was he who first introduced the notion that “the Asian connection” explained the Huang matter. It is as if to reply that individuals of all racial backgrounds commit crimes, when asked why attention has been focused almost exclusively on members of a particular racial minority group. His agreement that racism is wrong was rhetorical rather than real; it served as a means of denying the possibility of racism.

Following publication of its immigration stories, the *Boston Globe* characterized discussions of racial aspects of the Huang affair as a political playing of the “race card.” In its major editorial denouncing the Democratic Party for using the “race card,” the *Boston Globe* stated, “It may be painful for Asian-American contributors, the vast majority of whom are innocent of any wrongdoing, to get inquiring telephone calls from reporters because their names are Asian. The irony is that now it is the Democratic National Committee that is making these telephone calls—to find out how much money they must return and to whom,” the *Globe* wrote. “Most Asian Americans will see through this shabby maneuver to avoid scrutiny,” referring to “DNC memos [which] recommended letter-writing campaigns, telephone calls, and submissions of op-ed articles to raise the bigotry issue,” the *Globe* continued.

The *Globe* editorial thus simultaneously concedes that “the vast majority” of Asian Americans who gave money did so legally, but somehow it concludes that investigations of all Asian Americans are nonetheless necessary “to find out how much money [the Democratic Party] must return and to whom.” The *Globe* suggests that Asian Americans ought to welcome inquiries about their right to participate in the political process because the suggestion of racial stereotyping is only a “shabby maneuver to avoid scrutiny.” By the *Globe*’s reasoning, Asian American concerns are complaints that need not be given further consideration. Excluded from consideration is the possibility that race could have been an issue

in the Huang matter. The "race card" becomes only a political ploy; there is no possibility that raising race could be both a Democratic Party strategy as well as reflecting legitimate concerns.

On its editorial page, the *Post* responded to the charge of "Asian bashing" and comparisons to Richard Jewell, the individual wrongly accused of the Atlanta Olympics bombing. The *Post* replied, "what a disingenuous defense that is."¹⁶⁰ The *Post* argued that "normally, when people give such large sums as these, they expect something in return" and "it isn't clear what some of these donors, who are not US citizens, expected, or what if anything they might have received." Like other newspapers, the *Post* implicitly assumed that the complaint was only meant to suggest that Huang was innocent. The *Post* did not address the concern of racial stereotyping, that Huang's potential guilt was being taken as racial guilt. In other words, the comparison to Jewell might not be apt for Huang, but it was certainly appropriate for other Asian Pacific Americans.

The failure to cover Perot's remarks exacerbated their racializing effect. If his remarks reveal a racial bias, but remain generally unknown, then Asian Pacific American objections about racialization of the scandal make no sense. Unless the original problem is noticed, even if the response is given some attention, it looks as if Asian Pacific Americans are complaining without cause.

The oversight may be understood as another demonstration of Professor Neil Gotanda's thesis that Asian Pacific Americans are treated within a citizen-foreigner paradigm rather than a black-white paradigm.¹⁶¹ Because the line between citizens and foreigners is accepted and indeed, was emphasized in this controversy, while the line dividing black and white is invidious, placing Asian Pacific Americans in citizen-foreigner model makes it easier to treat Asian Americans differently. Thus, any difference is not discrimination.

CONCLUSION

Transnationalism may be defined many ways, but chief among them is the belief that a global economy and increasingly interlinked cultures render traditional notions of nationality and identity obsolete. Whatever becomes of this trend toward transnationalism, it ought not also be a trend toward racial stereotyping. As this article went to press, Congress was beginning its hearings related to the Huang matter. As the hearings were planned, they were described as concerning Asian campaign contributions.¹⁶²

This description of the hearings is ambiguous as to whether they will involve foreign nationals or United States citizens, but it is problematic under either interpretation. If the hearings are about specific individuals about whom credible allegations of wrongdoing have been made, then investigation would be appropriate. But if hearings expand in scope and are about only Asian foreign nationals who have donated money illegally without considering non-Asian foreign nationals, then an invidious distinction is, at least, being drawn between Asian foreign nationals and other foreign nationals. If the hearings are about both Asian foreign nationals and United States citizens, then the problem is compounded not only because Asian Pacific Americans can legitimately give money but also because

they are being identified on racial terms as outsiders rather than bona fide members of the political community. The suggestion that some Asian foreign nationals may have given through Asian Pacific Americans is hardly persuasive, unless the syllogism is completed: if some Asian Pacific Americans violated the law, then all Asian Pacific Americans must be called in for questioning. The racial assumption lies in that syllogism.

Incidents of racial stereotyping of Asian Pacific Americans, especially if accompanied by the suggestion that are perpetual foreigners, can be compared to the most egregious example: the Japanese American internment. At the outset, the Japanese American internment and the Huang case are similar. They both pose the problem of what to assume, and what to believe, or which way to err in the absence of knowledge and face of uncertainty. But the Japanese American internment and the John Huang case are different. As all three branches of the federal government acknowledged a half century later, there had been no basis whatsoever for the imprisonment of more than 100,000 United States citizens during World War II. In contrast, there is probable cause to believe that one or more of the individuals involved in the controversy over campaign finance may have violated the law.

In the end, then, the Japanese American internment ought to have been an easy case. A falsehood as to individuals cannot justify an assumption as to a racial or cultural group. The Huang case may present the more challenging moral issue:¹⁶³ can the truth as to one or more individuals justify an assumption as to a racial or cultural group?

As Huang and other Asian faces began to appear on the front page on a daily basis and in the process becoming influential if infamous political figures, Asian Pacific Americans are experiencing a rite of passage in our civic culture. Whatever comes of the case, Asian Pacific Americans can contribute positively to our democratic experiment.

Endnotes

1. Ross Perot, Remarks, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 30 October 1996. Transcript available in LEXIS/NEXIS, News library, 1996 Presidential Campaign Press Materials file, 31 October 1996. An excerpt from the speech appeared as "In His Own Words," *New York Times*, 1 November 1996, B8 (the sentence beginning, "Now then" was omitted from the *Times* account).
2. "Corrections," *New York Times*, 27 December 1996, A2.
3. David E. Sanger, "Paper Tiger; 'Asian Money,' American Fears," *New York Times*, 5 January 1997, D1.
4. The Republican Party attributed the "expos[ure]" of the scandal to William Safire. Barbour, Haley (Republican National Committee Chairperson). Statement available in LEXIS/NEXIS, News library, US Newswire file, 24 October 1996. For the early history of press coverage, see Howard Kurtz, "ADNC Funds: The Latest Story Ever

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 8. Lena H. Sun, "Some Asian Americans Fear Reduced Political Involvement After DNC Flap," *Washington Post*, 20 November 1996, A6; James Sterngold, "For Asian Americans, Political Power Can Lead to Harsh Scrutiny," *New York Times*, 3 November 1996, A36.
 9. See Frank Wu, "Push for Citizenship," *AsianWeek*, 21 June 1996, 11; Frank Wu, "Campaign of Our Own," *AsianWeek*, 22 March 1996, 11.
 10. On the news page, see K. Connie Kang, "Asian Americans Rally for Unity," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 September 1996, B1. A singular exception on the editorial page after the Huang scandal started was Editorial, "Asian Americans' Political Mark," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 November 1996, B4.
 11. The account provided here is a composite based on the more credible allegations contained in the mainstream press coverage, with some additional facts based on original reporting. One of the authors has written about the Huang matter extensively in *AsianWeek* and elsewhere. See Stewart Kwoh and Frank Wu, "Don't Build Reform on a Scapegoat," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1996, A9; Frank H. Wu, "The Asian-American Connection," *Legal Times*, 10 February 1996, 24.
 12. Alison Mitchell, "The Fund Machine," *New York Times*, 27 December 1996, A1; Ruth Marcus, "Oval Office Meeting Set DNC Asian Funds Network in Motion," *Washington Post*, 29 December 1996, A1.

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104. Fox Butterfield, "Ex-Aide to Dole Campaign Admits Illegal Contribution," *New York Times*, 11 July 1996, B10. Republican Party fund-raising overseas also were not widely discussed. Alan C. Miller, "GOP Chief Spoke at Asian Fund-Raisers," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 November 1996, A6. The GOP events targeted United States citizens, but also were attended by foreign nationals. The Democratic Party's fundraising events were aimed at Asian Americans, but may have included legal permanent residents, who are allowed to contribute.
105. See Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little Brown, 1989), 11.
106. 2 U.S.C. sec. 441e.
107. See *Congressional Record* Senate, 94th Cong. 1st sees., 28 March 1974: 8782-86.
108. See, e.g., Howard Fineman and Mark Hosenball, "The Asian Connection," *Newsweek*, 28 October 1996, 24 ("How do we prevent wealthy foreigners and corporations from elbowing aside our own fat cats?")
109. Robert Wright, "Slanted," *Slate*, 1 January 1997 (internet).
110. Robert B. Reich, "Who Is Us?," *Harvard Business Review*, (January-February 1990): 53.
111. Editorial, "Not So Innocent Abroad," *New York Times*, 22 December 1996, D8.
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129. See Rone Tempest, "Contribution Dispute That is Front Page News in US Doesn't Faze Asians Overseas," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 December 1996, A15. See also Rone Tempest, "Furor Over Donations to Democrats Bewilders Asian Contributors," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 October 1996, A6.
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132. William Safire, "Get Riady, Get Set...", *New York Times*, 21 October 1996, A17.
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148. For news articles, see Evelyn Iritani, "Foreign Donation Furor Dampens Fund-Raising," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 October 1996, A1; K. Connie Kang, "Asian Gifts Coverage Called Stereotyping," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 October 1996, A11; Annie Nakao, "Asians' Political Image Marred," *San Francisco Examiner*, 17 November 1996, A1; Annie Nakao, "Foreign Donors: Asians Feel Heat," *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 December 1996, C1. For editorials, see Editorial, "Asian Americans' Political Mark," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 November 1996, B4.
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162. See, e.g., David E. Rosenbaum, "In Political Money Game, The Year of the Big Loophole," *New York Times*, 26 December 1996, A1 ("The matter will be in the headlines again next year. Republicans have promised a full-scale investigation of Asian donations to Democrats.")
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Does Under-Participation Matter? An Examination of Policy Opinions Among Asian Americans

Pei-te Lien*

Recent research using multi-racial group surveys has consistently shown that Asian Americans do not participate in election-related activities as much as their socioeconomic status would predict. Does this lack of political participation in electoral politics undermine the democratic representation of public policies? Using a 1993 Los Angeles Times survey, this study examines the different ways Asian Americans engage in the political process and the policy ramifications of such participation. This study also compares the Asian American experience to that of non-Hispanic whites, Latinos, and blacks. This study focuses on several policy items, including the following: the criteria used to determine college admission, the ban on legal immigration, the asylum hearings for refugees, and the reparations to Japanese Americans. Results suggest that depending on whether one participates in the political process through voting or through other types of activities, Asian American participation in the political process does matter.

INTRODUCTION

An important concern in democratic politics is the meaning of participation. Scholars generally agree that there are three normative values of participation: legitimacy, instrumentalism, and self-development (Bennett and Resnick 1990). Participation, first of all, is assumed to enable the system's legitimacy and stability by establishing a link between public opinion and public policy. Second, participation can promote representation by giving citizens a say in the public policy-making process. Third, participation may facilitate the development of deliberative and moral character which is intrinsic to democratic citizenship.

Because of the decline in participation in American electoral politics, the empirical effects of nonparticipation have been pushed to center stage in recent decades. Ironically, except for the studies which have found that nonvoters tend to have lower socioeconomic status and be slightly more liberal on domestic

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economic policies, many studies have shown that there is little difference between voters and nonvoters with regard to public policy issues (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Shaffer 1982; Bennett and Resnick 1990; Petrocik and Shaw 1991; Gant and Lyons 1992; Teixeira 1992; Verba, Lehman, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie 1993). It may be premature to conclude, however, that nonparticipation does not matter.

In their seminal work on political participation and social equality, Verba and Nie (1972) note that, although leaders might adopt the same agenda for community action as that of the citizenry, their level of responsiveness is much higher in communities with greater rates of participation, which is also where there is also a wide gap between the policy agendas and preferences of active and inactive citizens. In a study conducted two decades later, Verba *et al.* (1993) again found that participation, especially in activities other than voting, matters. They observed that those whose preferences and needs become visible to policymakers through participatory activities tend to differ from their more quiescent counterparts in their demographic attributes, their economic needs, and the government benefits they receive.

Does under-participation matter for those of Asian origin? After all, the low level of Asian American electoral participation—as observed by some (e.g., Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989; Lien 1994)—may not be as severe a concern if participants differ little from nonparticipants in terms of sociodemographic characteristics and political orientations. Furthermore, under-participation may not matter if voters of Asian origin differ little from non-Asian voters along the same aspects.

For Asian Americans or any other racial or ethnic groups which have a significant number of those who are non-citizens, however, the issue of nonvoting is complicated by at least one additional involuntary factor—the law prohibits non-citizens from registering to vote, even though they may perform the same economic and political activities outside of the voting booth as those of their citizen counterparts. Participation in activities other than voting, however, may not necessarily signify a higher level of political activism. Even though participation in activities such as contacting officials, making campaign contributions, and attending meetings may demand more time, money, and skills and thus be more "difficult" than voting, these kinds of participatory activities are actually more accessible than voting to noncitizens in groups in which a large segment is comprised of foreign-born members. This demonstrates that the nature of low or no participation and its implications may be different for Asian Americans than for the American electorate as a whole (such as those presented by the National Election Studies Series).

Furthermore, particularly for groups with a significant proportion of recent immigrants, the value of active participation in American politics is not without controversy. A case in point is the recent accusation of John Huang. An Asian American who held a historic appointment as the Democratic Party Finance Committee Vice Chairman, Huang boasted raising over five million dollars for the National Democratic Committee in 1996. And yet he was charged by the media with the "overambitious" and possibly illegal solicitation of foreign money.

One author points out that the "allegiant and nonparticipatory disposition of the first generation insulates the United States from the ideological dissonance that immigrants portend" and helps promote democratic stability (Harles 1993, 206). This resonates with the view of Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) that "the apathetic segment of America probably has helped to hold the system together and cushioned the shock of disagreement, adjustment and change" (322). The assumption underlying these statements may be that recent foreign-born immigrants hold different and anti-democratic political orientations than native-born Americans.

This study examines the different ways in which Asian Americans participate in the political process and the policy ramifications using selected items from the 1993 *Los Angeles Times* survey of Southern Californians. (details of survey methodology appear in Appendix A). First, the analysis compares the sociodemographic characteristics, immigrant experiences, information access levels, and political orientations between participants and nonparticipants within the Asian American sample. Second, the opinions of Asian American voters are compared to those of voters in other ethnic groups. Third, the study compares the degree of discrepancy in policy opinions and other political orientations between voters and nonvoters across the four racial groups in the survey. The four policy items examined are the following: the college admissions of Asians, the ban on legal immigration for three years, the hearing of asylum cases for Chinese boat people, and the awarding of reparations to Japanese Americans interned during WWII (exact question wording appears in Appendix B). These are important immigration and domestic issues which generate heated debates both within and between Asian and other ethnic communities in Southern California as well as in many other regions across the nation.

THE MEANING OF PARTICIPATION AMONG ASIAN AMERICANS

Among Asian Americans, how much do voters differ from nonvoters in sociodemographic attributes? In the micro-level analysis reported in Lien (1994), Asian Americans who are older and have higher family incomes are more likely to register and to vote when other variables are controlled. The aggregate-level results comparing the percentage distributions for those who voted and those who did not in the 1992 Presidential election (columns 1 and 2 of Table 1) convey a similar, if not a sharper, sociodemographic disparity. Like American voters in general, voters of Asian origin tend to be more highly educated, financially secure, native-born, older, and to have lived for a longer time in the Southern California community than their nonvoting counterparts. A parallel observation can be made between voting and nonvoting Asian American citizens (columns 1 and 3), except that education and income now appear to have stronger relationships to voting than do other indicators of sociodemographic background. This differs from the case when non-citizens are involved in the comparison, where length of stay and age have higher Kendall's tau-c values.

The sociodemographic distinctions among those who do and do not participate in activities other than voting are much less conspicuous (columns 4 and 5). In fact, the various tests of association indicate that differences in education, income, nativity, length of stay, and age do not seem to matter much in terms of participation. The high percentages of the well-off and the unemployed among participants, however, seem to indicate that those having more money or more time may be more likely to participate in activities such as contacting officials, donating money, attending meetings, or volunteering for a political cause. These results both resemble and depart from findings surveying Americans as a whole. Like other Americans, the participation of Asian Americans may be a function of socioeconomic status. Unlike the American participants studied by Verba and his associates (1993), Asian American participants have a closer socioeconomic profile to non-participants than Asian American voters do to nonvoters.

Some suspect that nonparticipation in electoral politics may be an indication of political discontent. Although nonvoters have been found to be more dissatisfied than uninformed or indifferent (Ragsdale and Rusk 1993) and political discontent may motivate participation in unconventional activities such as sit-ins, boycotts, and protests (Citrin 1977), there has been little empirical evidence that nonvoters are less supportive of democratic ideals or feel more alienated than voters do (Kinder and Sears 1985; Bennett and Resnick 1990). When feelings of alienation and discontent are measured in terms of experiences of discrimination and perceptions of group deprivation, the results (Table 2) indicate that Asian American voters are more likely to experience some form of discrimination than nonvoters in the Asian American sample. Among citizens, they also more frequently hear racial slurs made against the panethnic group and perceive Asians as the most deprived minority group.

A slightly different pattern emerges in comparisons involving participation in activities other than voting. Although participants are slightly more likely to hear racial slurs frequently and to perceive their group condition as worse relative to that of nonparticipants in the entire sample, they are far more likely to experience discrimination and to be victimized by hate crimes. These results seem to suggest that Asian American nonparticipants, particularly with regard to activities other than voting, do not feel more alienated; rather, they have a weaker sense of group consciousness in the aggregate.

The above observation, however, is not equivalent to saying that Asian American nonvoters or nonparticipants are more content with the current political or social situation. In fact, when discontent is measured in terms of dissatisfaction with life in the Southern Californian community, the message is to the contrary. Nonvoters, especially those who are citizens, express a much higher dissatisfaction with life, compared to voters. Although those who participate in other activities tend to be more dissatisfied than the less active, the between-group difference does not reach statistical significance. This suggests that most Asian American respondents do not seem to link grievances in their personal life with group position in the socio-political system nor, when eligible, seek redress through voting. Information level may be another factor separating participants from nonparticipants. Many studies find that nonvoters across the board are more

politically ignorant than voters (Bennett and Resnick 1990). This seems to be true with this sample of Asian Americans. A significantly higher percentage of Asian American voters can name at least one more prominent group political leader than their nonvoting counterparts. The gap between voters and nonvoters shrinks sharply, though, in terms of knowing the length of group history and the incidence of the Japanese American internment during WWII. Nonparticipants do not seem to possess a much lower level of information than the participants in activities other than voting.

Do differences in sociodemographic background, minority group experience, and information level have any bearing on policy preferences? The answer seems to be negative when the opinions of voters are compared to those of nonvoters on three of the four issues examined (Table 3). Within the Asian sample, voters appear to be more supportive of admissions based on racial makeup than of merits. Their opinion seems to be more polarized on the issue of banning legal immigration for three years. But the differences are small and do not reach any statistical significance. On the question of awarding reparation payments to the Japanese Americans confined to internment camps during WWII, however, a much higher percentage of voters is more strongly supportive of the policy. Since this issue deals mostly with the interests of a subgroup, the pattern discussed above seems to suggest that voters may be more likely to link sub-group interests with pan-group interests. Yet, the size of the difference also indicates that policy representation may become an issue when controversies are perceived to benefit only one segment of the panethnic community arise.

Conversely, few of the policy preferences of activists beyond voting mirror those of nonparticipants. On the issue of college admissions, participants tend to be more supportive of admissions based on merit than on racial makeup. With regard to the three year legal immigration ban, participants are more likely to oppose the idea. A similar pattern exists regarding the issue of not granting asylum hearings to Chinese boat people, where a much higher percentage of participants strongly oppose the refusal. Yet, the difference in the support for reparations between participants and nonparticipants is smaller than that between voter and nonvoters and is statistically insignificant.

Why is there such a disparity in the representation of issue concerns between voters and participants? Besides what has been discussed earlier—that the nature and requirements for voting are different from those of participation in activities other than voting for many members of this immigrant group—part of the answer may be provided by comparing voters and participants in a number of categories (last column of Tables 1 to 3). In terms of percentage distributions, participants are generally less educated, less well-off, younger, and more likely to be unemployed, foreign-born, and have a shorter length of stay than voters. They often experience greater amounts of abuse and discrimination and perceive the group condition as wanting. They are also less able to name group political leaders.

The source of the divergence between the efficacy of issue representation for the two types of activists may also be attributed to the differences in political ideology. Compared to nonvoters, voters tend to be more conservative. Those

who participate in activities other than voting, in contrast, tend to be more liberal when compared to either nonparticipants or voters.

THE MEANING OF PARTICIPATION IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The meaning of Asian American political participation can also be indicated by the uniqueness of policy preferences and political orientations expressed by Asian American voters. As shown in Table 4, as far as the four issues are concerned, Asian American voters hold a very different policy outlook than voters of other groups. Compared to non-Asian groups, more Asian American voters support the policy of admission into college based on qualifications and the awarding of reparations to Japanese Americans. Fewer Asian American voters support the proposal to ban legal immigration and to send back Chinese boat people without asylum hearings. The greatest differences in opinion occur between Asian American and black voters, particularly on the issue of reparations where 40 percent more Asian American voters support the policy. Smaller differences are found between Asian and Latino voters on the two immigration issues—banning immigration and denying asylum hearings—where t-tests for differences in group mean fail to reject the null hypothesis of no difference. Although the mean of opinions between Anglo and Asian voters differ much across all four issues, Anglo voters most resemble Asian voters in their attitude toward the college admission criteria. These patterns are indicative of the prospects and obstacles for the forming of intergroup coalitions.

When the extent of discrepancy in policy opinions between Asian voters and nonvoters is compared to that for each of the three other racial groups, there is a striking degree of similarity on the surface. Although Asian American voters hold a very different policy outlook from non-Asian voters, both Asian and non-Asian voters differ little from their nonvoting counterparts in three out of four policy items. This seems to support the idea that there is no immediate grounds for concern over the issue of representation of voters. Yet, there is no common issue cleavage across all racial groups when concerns of voters from diverse racial backgrounds do depart from nonvoters.

The issue that divides Asian voters and nonvoters, as discussed earlier, is the dissemination of reparations to Japanese Americans internees. For Latinos, a significant source of division comes from the criterion of college admission. While more voters support admission on merits, more than half of the nonvoters support the affirmative action option—an opinion apparently influenced by their lower socioeconomic status. An equal proportion of both black and white voters and nonvoters strongly support the denial of asylum hearings to the illegal Chinese immigrants. Yet, more black voters are opposed strongly to the denial of legal procedures than black nonvoters—reflecting perhaps a stronger sense of economic competition and threat felt by the former group. This again differs from the more disparate pattern for whites. The greatest extent of divergence in issue opinions between Asian American voters and nonvoters lies, nevertheless, in the opinions

towards the reparations issue. This implies that Asian American voters or voters from relatively new immigrant groups, who are more likely to hold a different agenda on certain contentious issues than the nonvoting segment of the panethnic community, may have a greater opportunity to shape the political discourse in their favor than voters in other more established groups.

The role Asian American voters play in shaping racial and ethnic politics in Southern California can be further clarified by examining the distribution of political ideology. Compared to voters of other racial backgrounds, Asian Americans are most similar to Anglos in terms of the distribution of political ideology, though the percentage of the very conservative is higher among Anglos and the percentage of those paying no attention to ideology is highest among Asians. Although about the same percentage of voters in both Asian and Latino groups express a conservative orientation, Latino voters as a group are generally more liberal than Asian Americans. In terms of between-group means, Asian American voters, however, do not differ significantly in ideology from their non-Asian counterparts. The ideological difference between voters and nonvoters is also negligible within each group except for the Latinos where nonvoters are either decidedly more extreme or ignorant.

CONCLUSION: DOES PARTICIPATION MATTER FOR ASIANS?

The answer here can only be a tentative one because of the limited number of respondents and policy items available. Yet, findings in this article suggest that Asian American political participation does matter—though there are important differences between participation in voting and in other election-related activities. In terms of voting, Asian American participants, very much like American voters as a whole, are overrepresented in the higher socioeconomic class and share more of a conservative political ideology. Compared to Asian nonvoters, they have a stronger sense of group consciousness arising from their Asian American ethnicity, but they also express fewer grievances about personal life in Southern California and are more informed about group political leaders. Asian American participants in activities other than voting are more similar in sociodemographic outlook to the nonparticipants. They also share many of the characteristics of nonvoters. Compared to nonparticipants, they have more experiences of discrimination and are more dissatisfied with life. They are not more informed but do hold a very different policy agenda from that of the less active members. They are the more liberal segment of the Asian American sample.

Although Asian voters do not differ much from nonvoters in terms of policy preferences, they are much more supportive of awarding reparations to Japanese Americans. Compared to other ethnic groups, the policy preferences of Asian American voters are distinctive—this cannot be readily explained by political ideology. The combination of distinctive policy orientations with the wider divergence between voters and nonvoters, however, indicate that through their participation in the American electoral system, Asian Americans may have a greater opportunity to shape racial/ethnic politics in their favor.

Nonetheless, comparisons between participants and nonparticipants in terms of their policy attitudes address partly and indirectly the issue of representation. The selection of issues examined may also introduce bias. Several authors suggest that one may want to examine the policy-relevant context that shapes the needs and benefits of activists such as the circumstances of economic deprivation and dependence upon government programs (Verba et al. 1993). The meaning of representation in minority politics also needs to be evaluated by the different policy outcomes for each of the minority communities (Button 1989). Finally, investigations comparing the level of concurrence between views expressed by community leaders and participants ought to be carried out (Verba and Nie 1972). These are all issues future research may wish to consider.

Besides the concern over democratic representation, the value of Asian American participation in American politics can also be argued in terms of the meaning of the acts themselves. To the extent that political participation is an act in support of government and politics, more integration into the US political system for those with recent immigration backgrounds through citizenship and voting may help to reduce discrimination against immigrants. To the extent that political participation can influence the selection and/or the actions of government officials, more participation means more chances of gaining access and clout. Compared to national elections, the effect of more Asian American participation in local elections where turnout is usually very low may also loom larger than the size of the pool of voters would indicate (Cavanagh 1991). No matter how one chooses to look, it makes every sense to promote more Asian American political participation.

Appendix A—Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* Poll in August 1993 among adults residing in the six counties in Southern California: Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Bernadino, Riverside, and Ventura. Random-digit dialing techniques were used to produce the base sample. Asians and African Americans were oversampled by selecting telephone numbers of respondents who had previously identified themselves as Asians or blacks in *Los Angeles Times* Polls conducted within the last two years. The margin of sampling error for the total sample is plus or minus 3%. The margin of error for Asians is plus or minus 8%. Telephone interviews using English or Spanish language were completed with 221 Asians, 199 Latinos, 144 blacks, and 646 (Anglo) whites. About half (55%) of the entire sample and three-fourths (72%) of the Asian sample were from the Los Angeles city and county area.

Compared to the 1990 Census, the proportion of LA residents in the 6-county area is about the same as in the sample (52%), but the proportion of Asians in the sample is 10% higher than that in the census (62%). As is expected with any

survey data, respondents' levels of education, income, and the extent of political participation (citizenship, registration, and voting) are higher and the share of foreign-borns is lower than in the census. However, the share of high income families in the Southern California sample is about the same as that in the census of Los Angeles County; and the rate of voting among citizens is only slightly higher in the Southern California sample than that in the national sample reported by census.

Appendix B—Selected Survey Questions

I. Political Participation

Voting (asked of those who are registered to vote): "Sometimes it happens that people don't get to vote in every single election. Did you vote for President this past November, or did something prevent you from voting, or did you choose not to vote? (IF VOTED) Who did you vote for: Bill Clinton, the Democrat, or George Bush, the Republican, or Ross Perot, the independent, or did you vote for someone else?"

Participation Other than Voting (asked of everyone): "Some people participate in politics and some people do not. During the past four years, have you participated in any type of political activity in your community? For example, have you written or phoned a government official, or donated money to a political campaign, or attended a political function or volunteered for a political cause or have you done something else or don't you participate in politics?"

II. Policy Preferences

College Admission: "As you may know, Asians make up about 10 percent of California's population but they comprise about 28 percent of the students in the University of California system. Which of these statements comes closer to your view about that: 'If Asians are better qualified, more of them should be admitted to college than others.' or 'Despite qualifications, the racial makeup in colleges should generally mirror the population as a whole.'"

Ban Immigration: "Some people have proposed that all LEGAL foreign immigration to the U.S. be stopped for a period of 3 years. Do you favor or oppose that proposal? (IF FAVOR OR OPPOSE) Do you (favor/oppose) that strongly or (favor/oppose) that somewhat?"

Asylum Hearings: "As you may know, several hundred Chinese nationals recently attempted to land their boats in California in order to seek asylum in this country. The U.S. Coast Guard and Mexico intercepted the boats before they entered American waters and the Chinese were returned to their homeland without their cases being heard by the U.S. government. Do you approve of the decision to send the Chinese boat people back to their homeland without hearings or do

you think the U.S. should have agreed to hear each person's case for asylum? (IF APPROVE OR FEEL EACH SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN HEARING) Do you feel strongly or not strongly about that?"

Support Reparations: "The United States government has recently awarded reparation payments to the Japanese-Americans whom it did confine in internment camps during World War II. Do you favor or oppose the idea of awarding reparations to those people? (IF FAVOR OR OPPOSE) Do you (favor/oppose) that strongly or (favor/oppose) that somewhat?"

III. Information Level/Minority Group Experience

Know Asian American Leaders: "Right now, who do you think is the most prominent American of Asian background?"

Know Asian American History: "To the best of your knowledge, when did the first Asians settle in California: about 25 years ago or about 50 years ago or about 100 years ago?"

Know Internment of Japanese Americans: "To the best of your knowledge, during World War II, did the U.S. government gather up American citizens of Japanese descent and place them in internment camps because of fear they were security risks, or not?"

Group Most Deprived: "Which group, if any, do you think suffers the most discrimination in your community these days?" (Asians mentioned the Asian group)

Group Condition Bad: "How about Asians in Southern California and their ability to get adequate housing, and education, and job opportunities and things like that? Generally speaking, do you think conditions for Asians in Southern California are very good, or good, or bad, or very bad?"

Victim of Hate Crime: "Have you ever been the victim of a 'hate crime' in Southern California, that is, have you had someone verbally or physically abuse you, or damage your property, specifically because you belong to a certain race or ethnic group?"

Personal Experience of Discrimination: "During the time you've lived in Southern California, have you personally been discriminated against a great deal, a fair amount, some but not much, or not at all?"

Hear Racial Slurs about Asians: "How often would you say you hear racial slurs about Asians made by the people you come in contact with? Do you hear them very often, fairly often, fairly infrequently or very infrequently?"

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Table 1. Percentage Differences between Asian American Participants and Nonparticipants in terms of Sociodemographic Background

	Voting			Other Participation		Difference (1)-(4)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Base N	81	140	(73)*	54	167	
SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND						
Education						
≤ High School	7%	20%	(17%)	13%	16%	-6%
≥ College Degree	64	45	(38)	52	52	12
	X ² =11.40 (12.98*)			X ² =1.09		df=6
	t _c =.19** (0.32**)			t _c =0.02		
Family Income						
≤ \$20K	5	23	(16)	17	15	-12
≥ \$60K	43	23	(24)	40	27	3
	X ² =22.24** (14.89*)			X ² =6.95		df=6
	t _c =.25** (0.28**)			t _c =0.05		
Unemployment						
	10	11	(6)	15	9	-5
	n.s. (n.s.)			n.s.		
Foreign-born						
	37	61	(47)	50	53	-13
	X ² =11.53** (1.44)			n.s.		df=1
Length of Stay						
≤ 5 years	10	27	(12)	15	22	-5
≥ 20 years	53	22	(37)	35	33	18
	X ² =31.14** (6.35)			X ² =3.75		df=6
	t _c =.38** (0.19*)			t _c =0.04		
Male						
	51	53	(41)	48	53	3
	n.s. (n.s.)			n.s.		
Age						
(18-24)	22	31	(28)	23	29	-6
(25-39)	30	45	(41)	42	38	-12
(65+)	11	5	(7)	6	8	5
	X ² =16.99** (8.44)			X ² =2.33		df=5
	t _c =.24** (0.19*)			t _c =0.05		

Source: The *Los Angeles Times* Poll #318, August 7-10, 1993, released through the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research

*Entries in parentheses are those among nonvoting citizens.

*p ≤ 0.05 **p ≤ 0.005

Table 2. Percentage Differences between Asian American Participants and Nonparticipants in terms of Minority Group Experience and Information Level

	Voting			Other Participation		Difference (1)-(4)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Base N	81	140	(73)*	54	167	
MINORITY GROUP EXPERIENCE						
Personal Experience of Discrimination						
Great Deal	5%	2%	(4%)	7%	7%	-2%
Fair Amount	10	9	(12)	7	10	3
Some Amount	57	47	(45)	63	47	-6
None	28	41	(38)	22	41	6
	$X^2=4.61$ (2.42)			$X^2=10.57^*$		df=3
	$t_c=0.13^*$ (0.08)			$t_c=0.15^*$		
Victim of Hate Crime	18	18	(17)	32	13	-14
	n.s. (n.s.)			$X^2=9.46^{**}$		df=1
Hear Racial Slurs About Asians						
Very Often	13	11	(8)	13	11	0
Fairly Often	14	15	(13)	19	13	-5
Fairly Infrequent	33	22	(22)	32	24	1
Very Infrequent	41	53	(57)	37	52	4
	$X^2=4.00$ (4.38)			$X^2=3.69$		df=3
	$t_c=0.09$ (0.16)			$t_c=0.11$		
Group Most Deprived	19	18	(11)	17	19	2
	n.s. (n.s.)			n.s.		
Group Condition Bad	10	11	(10)	19	8	-9
	n.s. (n.s.)			$X^2=5.38$		df=3
Dissatisfaction	10	19	(25)	19	15	9
	$X^2=3.01$ (6.16*)			n.s.		df=1
INFORMATION LEVEL						
Know Group Leaders	52	30	(30)	39	38	13
	$X^2=10.40^{**}$ (7.45)**)			n.s.		df=1
Know Group History	62	48	(55)	57	52	5
	$X^2=3.96^*$ (0.76)			n.s.		df=1
Know of Internment	92	87	(87)	92	89	0
	n.s. (n.s.)			n.s.		

Note: (see Table 1)

Table 3. Percentage Differences between Asian American Participants and Nonparticipants in terms of Policy Preferences and Political Ideology

	Voting			Other Participation		Difference (1)-(4)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Base N	81	140	(73)*	54	167	
College Admission						
Admit if qualified	75%	79%	(79%)	85%	75%	-10%
Mirror Makeup	24	18	(20)	15	22	9
	$X^2=.87(.39)$			$X^2=1.34$		
	$t_c=.05(.04)$			$t_c=-.08$		
Ban Legal Immigration						
Favor Strongly	25	19	(26)	14	24	11
Favor Somewhat	20	23	(25)	25	21	-5
Oppose Somewhat	25	31	(28)	21	31	4
Oppose Strongly	30	27	(22)	40	24	-10
	$X^2=1.73(1.51)$			$X^2=7.58^*$		df=3
	$t_c=.01(-.08)$			$t_c=-.14$		
No Asylum Hearings						
Approve Strongly	40	43	(42)	37	44	3
Approve Somewhat	21	19	(20)	16	21	5
Oppose Somewhat	13	16	(19)	8	17	5
Oppose Strongly	25	22	(20)	39	18	-14
	$X^2=.64(1.06)$			$X^2=9.40$		df=3
	$t_c=-.03(-.03)$			$t_c=-.12$		
Award Reparations						
Approve Strongly	73	50	(52)	67	56	6
Approve Somewhat	16	34	(33)	23	29	-7
Oppose Somewhat	3	8	(6)	0	8	3
Oppose Strongly	8	8	(9)	10	8	-2
	$X^2=11.37^{**}(7.33)$			$X^2=5.11$		df=3
	$t_c=.20^{**}(.19^*)$			$t_c=.08$		
Political Ideology						
Very Liberal	6	7	(4)	8	6	-2
Somewhat Liberal	20	25	(26)	32	21	-12
Middle	29	28	(36)	21	31	8
Somewhat Conserv.	34	25	(24)	26	29	8
Very Conservative	6	8	(7)	9	7	-3
No Attention	4	6	(3)	4	6	0
	$X^2=2.61(2.54)$			$X^2=4.59$		df=5
	$t_c=.08(.07)$			$t_c=-.05$		

Note: (see Table 1)

Table 4. Percentage Difference Between Voters and Nonvoters in terms of Policy and Other Orientations Across Four Racial Groups

	Asian	Latino	Black	Anglo
College Admission				
Admit by Merits	75% (79%) ^a	52% (35%)	44% (33%)	64% (59%)
Mirror Makeup	24 (18)	38 (56)	53 (58)	30 (35)
Neither	1 (2)	10 (9)	3 (10)	7 (6)
<i>N</i> =	79 (125)	71 (106)	89 (40)	438 (175)
	$X^2=.87^b$ $t_c=.05$	$X^2=5.74^*$ $t_c=-.15^*$	$X^2=.61^b$ $t_c=-.07$	$X^2=2.05$ $t_c=-.03$
<i>T-test for Group Means</i>		$t_{AL}=3.84$	$t_{AB}=4.10$	$t_{AW}=2.36$
Ban Immigration				
Favor Strongly	25 (19)	32 (29)	54 (50)	47 (45)
Favor Somewhat	20 (23)	22 (21)	24 (21)	15 (19)
Oppose Somewhat	25 (31)	19 (21)	9 (7)	20 (16)
Oppose Strongly	30 (27)	28 (29)	14 (21)	19 (20)
<i>N</i> =	6 (124)	69 (117)	93 (42)	439 (173)
	$X^2=1.73$ $t_c=.01$	$X^2=.32$ $t_c=.04$	$X^2=1.20$ $t_c=.06$	$X^2=2.54$ $t_c=.0$
<i>T-test for Group Means</i>		$t_{AL}=.94$	$t_{AB}=4.49$	$t_{AW}=3.42$
No Asylum Hearings				
Approve Strongly	40 (43)	51 (39)	60 (60)	60 (60)
Approve Somewhat	21 (19)	9 (12)	11 (17)	18 (9)
Oppose Somewhat	13 (16)	13 (21)	6 (17)	8 (12)
Oppose Strongly	25 (22)	28 (29)	23 (7)	15 (19)
<i>N</i> =	75 (122)	69 (111)	91 (42)	441 (176)
	$X^2=.64$ $t_c=-.03$	$X^2=3.21$ $t_c=.09$	$X^2=8.75^*$ $t_c=-.04$	$X^2=10.73^*$ $t_c=.02$
<i>T-test for Group Means</i>		$t_{AL}=.76$	$t_{AB}=1.69$	$t_{AW}=3.29$

(continued on next page)

Table 4. Continued

	Asian	Latino	Black	Anglo
Award Reparations				
Favor Strongly	73%(50%)	44% (39%)	33% (30%)	44% (36%)
Favor Somewhat	16 (34)	28 (30)	18 (15)	24 (32)
Oppose Somewhat	3 (8)	13 (15)	14 (15)	12 (14)
Oppose Strongly	8 (8)	16 (16)	35 (40)	20 (18)
<i>N</i> =	74 (120)	69 (107)	87 (40)	442 (170)
	$X^2=11.37^{**}$ $t_c=.20^{**}$	$X^2=.37$ $t_c=.04$	$X^2=.53$ $t_c=.06$	$X^2=5.71$ $t_c=.04$
<i>T-test for Group Means</i>		$t_{AL}=-3.31$	$t_{AB}=-5.86$	$t_{AW}=-4.36$
Political Ideology				
Very Liberal	6 (7)	9 (16)	12 (16)	6 (10)
Somewhat Lib.	20 (25)	29 (10)	26 (23)	21 (19)
Middle	29 (28)	29 (24)	32 (26)	30 (32)
Somewhat Cons.	34 (25)	29 (28)	19 (26)	30 (28)
Very Conserv.	6 (8)	4 (14)	10 (5)	13 (9)
No Attention	4 (6)	1 (9)	2 (5)	1 (2)
<i>N</i> =	79 (134)	70 (118)	95 (43)	453 (183)
	$X^2=2.61$ $t_c=.08$	$X^2=18.49^{**}$ $t_c=-.04$	$X^2=3.11$ $t_c=.05$	$X^2=6.76$ $t_c=.06$
<i>T-test for Group Means</i>		$t_{AL}=-.82$	$t_{AB}=-1.12$	$t_{AW}=1.24$

Source: (see Table 1)

^aEntries in parentheses are those of nonvoting respondents including noncitizens.

The Passage of Redress: The Proper Alignment Model

Harry H.L. Kitano*

Mitchell T. Maki*

The authors utilized the Kitano-Maki Proper Alignment Model to analyze the Japanese American redress movement. The following six streams of influence make up the model: (1) History—General American Public; (2) History—Community; (3) Legislative Branch—the Senate; (4) Legislative Branch—the House; (5) Judicial Branch; and (6) Executive Branch. A rating is applied to each stream—when each of the streams has a “positive” or “neutral/positive” rating, a new public policy develops.

INTRODUCTION

On August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which granted an apology and authorized monetary payments to Americans of Japanese ancestry for their incarceration during World War II. In October 1990, survivors of the concentration camps began receiving \$20,000 and the following letter of apology from President George Bush:

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation's resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

In 1988, there were a number of critical issues such the balanced budget, soaring welfare costs, care of the elderly, medical and health coverage, and crime,

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which were at the forefront of the federal government's policy agenda. In this context, a small minority group was able to obtain a presidential apology and monetary redress payments. The passage of federal legislation authorizing redress and the subsequent securing of appropriations are the hallmarks of the Japanese American redress movement. This movement was initiated within the ethnic minority community, fought in both the legislative and judicial arenas, ultimately supported by a President whose administration initially opposed it, and financed as an entitlement program. The legacy of the Japanese American redress movement, however, goes beyond the unprecedented apology and monetary payments. The redress movement involves the lessons and experiences of a small ethnic minority community engaging in the process of federal public policy-making.

Several books have focused on specific aspects of the redress movement (Daniels, Taylor, & Kitano (eds.), 1986; Hohri, 1988; Irons, 1989; Hatamiya, 1993; Takezawa, 1995). The purpose of this paper is to present the KITANO-MAKI PROPER ALIGNMENT MODEL as a framework for understanding how the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was passed. Additionally, this paper addresses the strategies and key elements that were instrumental in aligning the various public policy streams of influence.

THE KITANO-MAKI PROPER ALIGNMENT MODEL

The initial idea of a "proper alignment" came from an interview with Congressman Norman Y. Mineta. When asked about the passage of redress, he humorously responded that it might have occurred because the alignment of the stars, moon, and sun was just right. Such an alignment would be extremely rare, and nature would be the primary force, with humans playing an insignificant role. The possibility of a less celestial alignment of more human elements, however, gave birth to the Kitano-Maki model. The important issue was to identify the streams of influence which needed to be properly aligned, the importance of the human factor, and the interaction among them. The following six streams make up the proper alignment model:

1. History: General American Public
2. History: Community
3. Legislative Branch: the Senate
4. Legislative Branch: the House
5. Judicial Branch
6. Executive Branch

"History" involves the events, experiences, and mood during different time periods that create a context which serves to either prevent or facilitate the creation of a specific policy. The "General American Public" refers to the mood, attitude, and organization of the mainstream toward a proposed policy. The "Community" refers to a particular group's mood, attitude, and organization toward a proposed policy. These two streams are interdependent. The general public's perspective

of the particular group and, in turn, the group's reaction to that perspective influence the ratings in both streams.

The "Legislative Branch" is divided into the Senate and the House. These streams reflect the mood and general disposition of the U.S. Congress toward a policy issue. Since a great deal of public policy is affected by the Congress, this stream is essential. The "Judicial Branch" reflects the judicial decisions which define the legal parameters of policy development. For federal policy, this stream involves the federal courts' and the U.S. Supreme Court's determinations of whether a particular policy is lawful and the degree to which it can be implemented. Finally, the "Executive Branch" reflects the power of the President of the United States in terms of the ability either to initiate and sustain new policy or to block the new policy through a veto.

For each time period in the different streams, a rating reflects the amount of support and advocacy which a particular policy has garnered. These ratings are based upon the historical data (e.g., archival documents reflecting the mood of the mainstream or particular community, congressional actions, judicial decisions, executive orders or statements) for any given time period. A "positive" (+) rating reflects a high degree of support and advocacy for the proposed policy issue. A "neutral/positive" (N+) reflects more support than opposition, or the absence of any significant resistance. A "neutral" (N) reflects either an equal amount of support and opposition, or a general ambivalence. "Neutral/negative" (N-) reflects greater opposition than support. Finally, "negative" (-) reflects a high degree of opposition or general apathy.

The proper alignment of the development of a new public policy occurs when each of the variables has a "positive" or "neutral/positive" rating. When this occurs, a window of opportunity is created which can facilitate new public policy. When all the variables are "negative" or "neutral/negative", not only is the passage of a particular policy highly unlikely, but there is also a likelihood that a converse policy can be enacted. No one stream is inherently more important than the other. Any stream out of alignment reduces the opportunity for policy to be enacted.

After World War II and the release of Japanese Americans from the camps, conditions gradually changed so that by 1988, all six of the variables had changed from an alignment of negative ratings to one of positive ratings (see Table 1). The important question of why it took so long—from the closing of the camps in 1945 to the passage of redress in 1988—can be understood by following the slow but positive changes that occurred in each of the variables in the intervening years. The "proper alignment" for redress legislation was not in place until 1988. The model is presented in Table 1. The model divides the history into (a) the pre-World War II years, leading up to the wartime period; (b) the wartime years, 1942-46; (c) the post-war years by decade; (d) 1988, the passage of redress.

In applying the Kitano-Maki Proper Alignment Model, it is crucial to understand the elements, natural forces, and strategies that affect the changes in the ratings of each variable. Movement within each of the streams of influence is determined by a number of elements. Kingdon (1984) indicates that a policy item's emergence onto the political agenda is "due to the joint effect of several factors coming together at a given point in time, not to the effect of one or another

Japanese the number one enemy. The West Coast media, especially the Hearst Press, was virulently anti-Japanese. C.W. Reynolds (1927) surveyed the files of California newspapers in 1927 and found 20,453 inches of newspaper space written about the Japanese Americans. The general attitude reflected in these items was irritation and hostility. Reynolds also found an increased presence of newspaper attacks on Japanese Americans in election years and during economic depressions. The barriers of legalized racism, cultural differences, and social inaccessibility prohibited the Japanese in America from participating fully in the mainstream society. All Japanese in the United States, whether citizens by birth or aliens, were the targets of hostility and disregard.

The one positive element during this time was the ability of the ethnic community to develop their own resources and social structures. The Issei had their own organizations that reflected their own experiences in Japan, while the Nisei developed their own mini-society based on American models. The Japanese American community during this period had their own hospitals, employment agencies, and small businesses, while social and recreational opportunities were also created primarily within their community. Generational tensions, a common occurrence among immigrant groups, were a part of the Japanese American experience. For example, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), one of the first organizations developed by the Nisei, excluded the Issei. Therefore, while there was an Issei and Nisei community, living and interacting together on many issues, it was structurally pluralistic. The basic weakness of the ethnic community, however, was its lack of access to the mainstream society, which meant that the people were powerless to influence critical issues such as discrimination and denial of citizenship for the Issei. In terms of our model (see Table 1), all of the variables show a "negative," except for the ethnic community which rates a "neutral/negative" because of the lack of power and access to the political system which was slightly offset by the cohesiveness of the community.

1942-45: The War Years

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, for most Americans, all Japanese—whether citizens or aliens—were regarded as the enemy. There are a large number of publications covering the war years and the ensuing exclusion and incarceration period (Thomas and Nishimoto, 1946; Thomas, 1952; Hosokawa, 1969; Kitano, 1969; Daniels, 1971; Weglyn, 1976; Harrington, 1979; Irons, 1983; Daniels, 1993; Hirabayashi, 1995). The momentum provided by a negative history, the hostility in the mainstream community, and the three branches of the government created a "proper alignment" of negative ratings. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, the process leading to the subsequent incarceration of Japanese in the United States was well under way. The Japanese community was no longer a cohesive unit; there were divisions by generation and by pro-America and pro-Japanese sentiments. The JACL, the largest Japanese American organization, advocated cooperation; thus, a divided community was unable to mount an organized protest. There was a "proper alignment" of negative ratings on the national front which enabled the decision for incarceration into the wartime concentration camps to be a popular

one. In summary, the historical context was clearly against Japanese in America; the ethnic community was divided and powerless, and both the House and the Senate supported President Roosevelt. Additionally, during this time period, the Supreme Court upheld the convictions of three Japanese Americans, Hirabayashi, Korematsu, and Yasui, who had challenged the race-based curfew and exclusion orders.

The Post War Period, 1945-50s

Ironically, while anti-Japanese feelings were reaching their zenith during World War II, there was positive movement in attitudes toward other Asians. There was the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act by the Congress in 1943, which established an immigration quota for China and allowed Chinese aliens (but not other Asians) to become naturalized citizens. Within the next decade, all absolute racial and ethnic barriers to immigration and naturalization were eliminated. Discriminatory legislation was slowly replaced by more inclusive policies. Among the positive signs were the following actions:

- The passage of the Japanese Evacuation Claims Act of 1948, which provided limited compensation for property losses incurred during the evacuation.
- The California Supreme Court ruling that held that the Alien Land Laws violated the equal protection clauses of both the US and California Constitutions.
- The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, which established a token immigration quota to Japan, and upheld the right of the Issei to apply for naturalization and citizenship.
- The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954) that struck down the doctrine of "separate but equal," which had served to underpin legal segregation.

An event that was to play an important role in the redress movement was the admission of the territory of Hawaii as the 50th state of the Union in 1959. This event opened the door for the subsequent election of Japanese Americans to the United States Congress. Beginning in 1959, the community began to develop ethnic representation in the Congress. During the 1950s, however, redress was not a major concern in the Japanese American community⁴; recovering from the concentration camps and making a living were the major priorities. The period was characterized by inertia, both in the ethnic community and in Congress, with regard to redress. Nevertheless, the streams were becoming less antagonistic toward Japanese in America (N-).

both the American people and the members of Congress. Based on this meeting and a subsequent vote by the JACL National Committee for Redress, the JACL opted to pursue the creation of a Presidential Commission to explore and gather the facts about the exclusion and incarceration. Legislation was introduced in the 96th Congress to create such a commission. The bill was passed by the Congress and signed by President Jimmy Carter on July 31, 1980.

The process of passing the Commission bill helped to sensitize the Legislative and Executive Branches to the need for redress legislation. Not everyone in the Japanese American community, however, was pleased with this strategy. Some felt that the JACL had once again given in to the mainstream society by not directly advocating for monetary redress. Members of the Seattle JACL disagreed with the National JACL and encouraged their freshman representative, Rep. Mike Lowry (D-Wash), to introduce direct redress monetary legislation. While the Commission bill passed, Rep. Lowry's bill died in committee. The alignment was not yet right for the passage of monetary redress.

Among the leadership of the Japanese American community, there was name calling, challenges to personal dignity, personality clashes, and ideological differences. Even though some of these differences and conflicts were deeply seated, they did not derail the movement toward the ultimate goal of gaining some form of redress. Mass community support to remember and commemorate the camp experience continued throughout the 1970s. The first "Day of Remembrance" was held on Thanksgiving weekend, 1978 at the Puyallup Fairgrounds in Washington. The event was attended by thousands of Japanese Americans, and it was the first of many Days of Remembrance in the coming years in numerous cities.

The active role of the ethnic community, combined with its access to the Japanese American congressmen, was critical during the initial stages of redress. Without the energy provided by the ethnic community, the chance for any policy change would have been negligible. The energy provided by members of the ethnic group moved their legislators to take a much more active role in redress. Congressmen Mineta and Matsui, who represented districts with extremely small Japanese American populations, ran the risk of possible backlash. Without the support of the Nikkei legislators, the chances for redress would have been greatly decreased.

The end of the 1970s saw the ethnic community taking a much more active role in working toward redress and applying pressure on its ethnic congressmen (N+). The legislative (N), executive (N+), and judicial (N) branches were becoming more sensitized to the redress issue. The American mainstream, as a whole, was becoming more cognizant of racism and inequality, so that although there was still a neutral stance toward redress, there was a growing awareness that civil rights of minorities had to be addressed (N).

1980 to 1986

While the JACL initially took the lead in the redress effort, there were individuals and groups in the Japanese American community who questioned the role of the JACL. Many individuals remembered that the JACL advocated

cooperation with the government during the wartime incarceration and questioned how effectively it could lead a redress movement. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a number of individuals, some with JACL ties, formed other groups which developed different strategies in the redress effort. William Hohri, based in Chicago, and individuals from the Seattle, Washington area formed the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR). The NCJAR eventually adopted a judicial strategy through the vehicle of a class action lawsuit. In Seattle, the Washington Coalition on Redress was organized. In Los Angeles, the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRP) was formed in 1980 in response to concerns about the JACL's commitment to monetary redress. The diversity of organizations was a double-edged sword. While on the one hand, it offered new opportunities to join in the movement, it also created the potential for disruptive competition and rivalry between the groups.

In terms of the redress movement, the 1980s began with the establishment and implementation of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC). Between July and December 1981, this nine member commission, which was appointed by the President, the Senate, and the House, held ten public hearings in nine cities and involved 20 days of testimony and more than 750 witnesses. The Commission hearings were important for two reasons. The first reason was that it served as a fact finding body which eventually produced a written report of findings and recommendations that were very supportive of redress. The second important aspect was that the Commission provided a forum through which the members of the Japanese American community could articulate their pain, anger, and demands for justice. The Commission hearings served as a vehicle through which discussions of the incarceration and redress issues were brought into the living rooms and dining rooms of many Japanese American families. The Commission hearings provided a cathartic experience which produced greater cross-generational understanding of the exclusion and incarceration experience. Such unity in the community was essential to maintaining the support for redress.

Simultaneous to and following the Commission hearings, redress efforts diversified. On the judicial front, the NCJAR pursued a class action lawsuit to address the constitutional violations of the exclusion and incarceration. Concurrently, a group of volunteer attorneys headed by Dale Minami, Peter Irons, Peggy Nagae, and Kathryn Bannai filed three separate *writ of coram nobis* suits to overturn the trial court convictions of Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu, and Min Yasui.

During the 98th and 99th Congresses, redress legislation was introduced and killed in the assigned subcommittees. Redress, however, was gaining more Congressional support (as reflected by the increasing number of co-sponsorships). A particularly effective strategy in garnering this support was the manner in which the issue was framed. The issue of redress was framed not as a special interest bill designed solely to address the injustices suffered by a particular group of people. Rather, redress legislation was presented as addressing the much larger issue of Constitutional rights and the Constitution's promise of equal opportunity for all. Such a strategy appealed to both liberals and conservatives. The redress

Reagan Administration. The Reagan Administration's technical concerns included extending the payment period from five to ten years, limiting the amount appropriated to no more than \$500 million annually, and implementing an extinguishment clause. These concerns were addressed in the House-Senate conference committee, and upon their resolution, President Reagan signaled his support for the redress legislation through a letter to Rep. Jim Wright (D-Texas), the Speaker of the House. The strategy of appealing to the President on a personal and anecdotal level coupled with the demonstration of growing political power facilitated the changing of the variable rating in 1988 from a negative (-) to a positive (+).

Entitlement

The story of redress is incomplete without an appreciation for the process which secured the entitlement status for the redress payments. The major element involved in this process was the presence of influential inside political power. This political power was found with Senator Inouye. He was the one redress supporter who had the necessary Congressional seniority, held a position on the Appropriations Committee, and had enough political chits to "call in". Sen. Inouye was responsible for introducing the idea, shepherding the amendment through the committee structure, securing the necessary floor vote, and for procuring the agreement by the House-Senate conference committee. The process involved internal maneuvering and negotiations which were greatly insulated from the influence of the general American constituency. The obtaining of the entitlement status is a good example of how the "rightness" of an idea is not sufficient for its adoption. In the House, Representative Sidney Yates (D-Ill) introduced a similar amendment to make redress an entitlement program. Rep. Yates' amendment was rejected.

Two final elements

Along with all the aforementioned elements that affected the streams of influence on policy-making, two final elements, which are often overlooked, greatly facilitated the passage of redress. The first is perseverance. The modern redress movement spanned nearly 20 years from the time of the initial JACL resolution in 1970 until the passage of the entitlement status in 1989.¹⁴ Prior to the 1970 resolution, a great deal of community organizing work was involved to prepare the Japanese American community for the redress movement. The dedication and perseverance of all the players involved in the redress movement was an intangible element that made the movement possible.

The second element is good fortune. The Japanese American redress story is full of moments of good timing, good fortune, and plain good luck. An example would be Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass) assuming the chair of the Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Governmental Relations of the House Judiciary Committee. The previous chairs had also been Democrats but had failed to move the bill out of committee. Rep. Frank's appointment as chair was not planned but was fortuitous for the redress movement as he was an ardent supporter. Other examples of good fortune involved chance meetings between individuals, the

locating of key documents, and the assigning of certain judges. The element of good fortune interacts with the element of perseverance and hard work. Many of the "lucky" events in the redress movement would have been useless were it not for the hard work and preparation that allowed redress supporters to capitalize on them. In regards to the redress effort, luck is best understood vis-a-vis the athletic analogy, "the harder we work, the luckier we get."

CONCLUSION

The Kitano-Maki Proper Alignment Model was developed in order to explain the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. What was once viewed as impossible became a reality because of the positive alignment of the mainstream society, the ethnic community, and the three branches of government. The Japanese American community began to mobilize for redress in the 1970s and developed increased access to Congressional legislators who sponsored and pushed for legislation. The Japanese American community was fortunate to have Senators Inouye and Matsunaga and Representatives Mineta and Matsui in office during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Additionally, opportune changes in Congressional committees, the support of a broad coalition of groups, changes in the mass media, favorable judicial decisions, and the ability to reach President Reagan led to the "proper alignment" in 1988. This movement occurred in the context of historical changes in America's view of Japan (from World War II enemy to America's most important ally in Asia) and treatment of Japanese Americans (from exclusion toward inclusion).

As opposed to the proper alignment of the stars, the moon, and the sun, the model emphasizes the human factors—hard work, framing of the issue, conflict management, community cohesion, development of political access, perseverance, and timing. In addition, there was good fortune which was related to hard work, and the ability to act when opportunities became available. It was the alignment of all the streams—the ethnic community, the larger community, and the three branches of government—which facilitated the passage of Japanese American redress.

The wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans and subsequent redress legislation were unique events. For other groups seeking to promote public policy change, however, the Kitano-Maki model highlights important lessons of how to align the various streams of influence. The historical context is highly influential and is manifested in the mood of the mainstream society as well as that of the particular community. The cohesion of a community and its ability to have access to those in the power structure who can provide key support and sponsorship is crucial. Judicial rulings, congressional actions, and executive decisions indicate whether momentum is moving in a positive or negative direction. These variables and the factors which facilitated their alignment were critical in the passage of Japanese American redress. The application of these lessons to other policy efforts will play an important role in the securing of public policy that addresses the concerns and issues of other groups who have suffered from discriminatory treatment.

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The Overseas Chinese Miracle

Peter Kwong*

According to the author, the economic success of the so-called Overseas Chinese is the result of shrewd business practice and not of being Chinese. The author dismisses cultural explanation for the success of Chinese emigres. He also discounts ethnic solidarity as a reason for the current willingness of Overseas Chinese to do business in China. Such behavior stems more from self-interest than nationalism or patriotism.

There is a great deal of hype currently about the tremendous economic power of the Overseas Chinese, as evidenced in their dominant presence in the economies of China and Southeast Asian countries. Much of their success is explained in cultural terms—the overseas Chinese’s strong Confucian heritage, their strong sense of ethnic solidarity, and particularly their nationalistic loyalty to China. This article tries to dispel these cultural analyses and turn to more material explanations of the phenomenon of the overseas Chinese.

The behavior of the Overseas Chinese has been shaped by their long history of existence in hostile environments, worrying about intervention and suppression by host governments and European colonial authorities. Their sense of ethnic solidarity is actually a result of their pragmatic need for mutual dependency. For most of the last one and half centuries, they could not rely on the support of the weak governments in China, nor were they respected by the Chinese for their ancestors’ humble economic origins in coming from lesser civilized parts of China.

The act of becoming more “Chinese” on the part of the Overseas Chinese has much more to do with the opportunities presented by China’s current “open door” policy and the profitability of investment in China’s rapid economic growth. As for Confucianism, an ideology long despised by modern Chinese, it is now being excavated in order to present a “common shared culture” that encourages the continued cooperation of the Overseas Chinese with China’s investment needs.

THE OVERSEAS CHINESE MIRACLE

The Overseas Chinese capitalists have long been present in the Asian economic theater, contrary to the impression that they sprang out of nowhere to claim the title of the latest business wizards of Asia. They were, in fact, responsible for the

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In China, every deal-making entails official permission of some sort: a commercial permit; a license to buy, own, sell or lease; a land-use permit; construction permit; raw materials import license; export license; currency exchange, etc. Each step is an obstacle. "Doing business in China is a constant problem," complains an electronic toy manufacturer from Taiwan. "First you spend a lot of money to obtain licenses, you entertain local officials, you pay high rents, you bribe around housing regulations. It cost us a mint just to wine and dine the officials in charge; it took 6 months to get the operating license, then another 3 months to get the land permit to build the factory. Doing business in China is not just about the business operation: you are really dealing with people. Without a legal system, you have to satisfy all the people in charge."⁷ And although they won't let you do business unless their palms are greased, the officials in charge find it difficult to tell you exactly what they want with people they don't know.

Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs from Asia are well-attuned to this practice, which is prevalent throughout the region, and are more than willing to accommodate. It is different when it comes to American companies, whose regulations make business pay-offs illegal. A Chinese-American acquaintance was hired by a major US telecommunication company for a bid in China but could not offer any "sweet-deals." He did not get the contract. Most of the contracts go to Overseas Chinese companies from Hong Kong and Taiwan, although the Japanese and the Germans were quick to catch on. In a legendary deal-making case with a Japanese company, the Chinese contract negotiators were given plane tickets to Japan. The Japanese firm covered all their costs during the prolonged negotiations, and even paid for their Western-style suits and dress-shoes. The only reason the Japanese fail to get more business deals in China is that many Chinese still hate them for the Japanese occupation of China more than fifty years ago. The truth is that most American and German companies should be very competitive in China because the Chinese still think that German and American goods are the best. Some American companies establish their *guanxi* indirectly: they invite the children of big-time officials on "exchange scholarships." Ultimately, you don't have to be Chinese to have a *guanxi*.

"It's really no big deal for most businesses," states an ex-Maoist college friend as he sums up his business experience in China. "You are only asked to do double accounting. If the cost of a product is \$1,000, your invoice should say \$1,000. Once the bill paid, you and the official split the \$100. It's no skin of your back. The poor Chinese people are paying for it anyway." Then, as an afterthought, "I wish that capitalism would eliminate this corrupt feudal Chinese system." Realizing the irony of his statement, the ex-Maoist adds, "though I feel funny saying this."

Perhaps what anyone planning to do business in China should keep in mind is the Corruption Index published by Transparency International, which places China second (out of the 64 countries surveyed) only to Indonesia in the level of corrupt business practices sanctioned by the government. Some of the other "dragons," large and small, follow closely on the infamous list: Taiwan is #17, Japan is #22, Hong Kong is #25.⁸

BORN TO TAKE THE RISK

So corruption in China is not a closely-guarded secret and *guanxi* can be had for a price. Why, then, has the majority of investors in China been the Overseas Chinese? K.C. Fong, founder of Archer Associates, a multi-million dollar New York company with operations in China, comments: "When Asian countries sought foreign investment to develop, Western capital was not there. When China decided to open, the only capital came from the Overseas Chinese. China would have preferred infusion from high-tech American and European corporations, but the West was reluctant to venture in without legal guarantees—property rights, tax laws, price deregulation, international arbitration... Overseas Chinese capital took the risk."⁹

The Overseas Chinese businessmen are, one might argue, born to take the risk. Whether more recent émigrés from Hong Kong, Taiwan or Communist China, or long-time residents of Southeast Asia—they stem from a long line of enterprising, risk-taking spirits who chose to escape China's strict government controls in order to practice their trade. Southern Chinese traders have been doing business in Southeast Asia for almost a thousand years. Most of them came from the two southeastern provinces of Kwangtung and Fujian—from the cultural periphery of the Chinese empire. Operating without the protection of Mandarin officials, they adapted to different trading systems and governing styles of foreign elites and managed to establish the dominant import and export enterprises of the region through their commercial networks.

Well before the arrival of Europeans, they controlled strategic trades in Southeast Asia such as the rice mills, light manufacturing, and money-lending. They were indispensable to the indigenous population; they owned rice, sugar and coconut plantations, oil mills, timber industries, and the bulk of retail shops selling eggs and poultry and daily necessities.¹⁰ Their dominance of local commerce prompted Europeans to observe: "the Chinese are the most enterprising, the most opulent, the most industrious and the most determined in pursuit of wealth."¹¹ They were also the principal artisans and manufacturers in the area.

European colonial rulers recognized them as an asset and often accorded them special status as middlemen—a distinct and special group not unlike Jews elsewhere. "They seem to have very accurate information and receive it very quickly too. I do not think that they are exceeded by the natives of any country as a commercial people, including European countries," observed John Davis in 1834. These "industrious and business-like people" acted as "fillers of economic potholes on the road to development" in the whole region and were often used as buffers between the colonial powers and local people. Their businesses also provided the most reliable and readily available tax revenues for colonial governments. To better fulfill that role, they were frequently prohibited from departing from their traditional trading occupations.

Understandably, non-Chinese have-nots often resented the Chinese haves, accusing them of dominating the economy by dubious means and unfair practices. As a result, the post-war, post-colonial nationalist governments in the region

become long gone. Since many of the sub-contracting opportunities do not involve large up-front investment, a relatively small, owner-managed firm with far-flung diversified interests, managed through a lateral business network and relying on a high-tech communication system, can now easily enter the truly global arena which was once the exclusive preserve of large multinational enterprises.

Western observers have noted, with a dose of ridicule, the Far Eastern obsession with the cellular telephone. They carry them around, not so that they can call home or order dinner. The standard greeting on Hong Kong streets these days is not the traditional Chinese, "Have you eaten?" but the post-modern "What's your game these days?" reflecting the constant, obsessive search for the latest business opportunity. It is the small entrepreneur who pries the streets of East Asian capitals with cellular phones pressed to his/her ears who has the advantage of flexible responses to the rapidly changing labor and consumer markets.

In the 1970s and 1980s, while the West focused its attention on Japanese competition, other parts of Asia presented a lot of business opportunities—first with the Vietnam War, then with the relative peace and stability in the region. Though many Southeast Asian national economies enjoyed an even faster economic growth than Japan's, Western firms were reluctant to venture into what they considered to be highly unstable market conditions with weak legal practices and protections. The Overseas Chinese were already there, detecting the opportunities and seizing them. The Japanese were well aware of the growing dominance of Overseas Chinese business networks in the peripheral markets of Southeast Asia. Although they seriously studied the phenomenon, they were not able to compete with the more flexible enterprises. In the last 15 to 20 years the area has been experiencing real economic growth, extending profits from export-oriented industries to domestic markets and sustaining flexible accumulation and reinvestment across national borders.

Riding on the high-tide of this trend, Overseas Chinese businesses grew into transnational enterprises in a way that challenges the classic linear growth from one-man centralized family management to the hierarchical, impersonal corporate structure. It is understood that modern productivity and efficiency can only be ensured by relying on professionally trained individuals who are chosen based on merit, not old kinship and ethnic networks. Yet it is precisely the archaic structure of Overseas Chinese businesses that has ensured their flexibility and success at that particular time and place.

As they expand, they are outgrowing the age-old allegiances to family, clan and home province, and they are making the same rational business decisions that businessmen of any ethnic group in the same position would make. They no longer do business only within their own dialect group, as they might have fifty years ago—Shanghainese with Shanghainese, Hakka with Hakka—although even during the 1930s there were Sino-Japanese joint ventures established in Southeast Asia. These days, they are linking up with US household names like Wal-Mart, which has teamed up with Thailand's Overseas Chinese-owned Charoen Pokphand to open discount stores in China. Many British entrepreneurs in Hong Kong indeed owe their success to such partnerships with the Overseas Chinese firms.

Today, these modernized family-owned companies have listings on the stock exchange.

TRAITORS OR PATRIOTS?

Overseas Chinese traders could never count on the Chinese government for help. Historically, they were looked down upon as culturally inferior (they came from the fringes of Chinese empire, spoke dialects, and maintained curious old habits), morally inferior (merchants lived by profit, while the Mandarins singularly valued learning), and genetically inferior (most of them are shorter and darker than northern Chinese). The Ming dynasty (1368-1662), perceiving the prosperity of its coastal traders as potential political threat, barred the trade and either punished or ignored those who disobeyed by settling permanently overseas.¹⁴ It was only at the close of the 19th century, as the imperial government grew weaker under foreign pressure, that this Overseas Chinese trading community was remembered as a potential source of revenue from remittances and investment.

As China struggled to emerge as a modern nation into the 20th century, overseas Chinese communities were lobbied by various reformers and revolutionaries for material support. Attributing their mistreatment in foreign lands at least partly to China's backwardness and degraded international status, the Overseas Chinese wanted to help transform it into a strong and modern nation. A few became very nationalistic and patriotic. The father of Chinese nationalism and the founder of the Republic of China, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, was himself a scion of an Overseas Chinese family. In the 1940s, the Overseas Chinese became heavily embroiled in the civil war when both the Communists and the Nationalists competed for their loyalty. Their involvement culminated in 1949, after the Communist victory, when many returned to China to help in the "socialist construction" with hundreds of Chinese Americans and some 250,000 Indonesian Chinese among them. Unfortunately, many encountered a miserable fate on account of their "Western bourgeois" background. They were branded traitors and capitalists because of their relatives abroad. Their family property was confiscated during the Cultural Revolution. They were imprisoned; some died or tried to escape. Those who survived joked bitterly about their predicament by calling themselves the "dead *huaqiao* [expatriates]," in contrast to the "living *huaqiao*"—their compatriots who remained abroad and prospered.¹⁵

Yet, despite their realization that they have been used by the Chinese government, the identity of most Overseas Chinese throughout the 20th century has remained tied to China due to the suspicion, discrimination and exclusion they have been suffering under most post-colonial Southeast Asian governments. It will remain tied to China so long as the Chinese government continues to court them with special consideration with an eye on manipulating and mobilizing them for its needs.

BASIC CONTRADICTION: TRANSNATIONAL VS. NATIONAL STATE

Some people may have been surprised when the Chinese Communist Party recently started promoting “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” What the leaders have in mind is to maintain power which, now that they have abandoned socialism, has to be legitimized by their ability to improve Chinese people’s economic well-being the capitalist way. China’s leaders have always talked about “welcoming the outsider’s investment and technical knowledge,” with the view that this will only serve to strengthen the nation-state and Communist party rule.

In order to get the help of Overseas Chinese toward this goal, the party has even been willing to admit that some excesses were made during the Cultural Revolution. As a gesture of goodwill, the Chinese government has been returning confiscated property to Overseas Chinese families, granting them special privileges in China, and praising them copiously for their patriotism and their contributions to the Chinese revolution and national construction. Summer camps have been set up, where the Overseas children can immerse themselves in Chinese language and culture, while their parents get lobbied to support the campaign to “reunite Taiwan with the motherland.”

Although they may be enjoying some of the proffered privileges, the Overseas Chinese have learned to keep their distance from China. Their attitude is different this time as they respond to the call from the motherland. “So long as there is money to be made, I will be there,” expresses the common interest of the Overseas Chinese to make profit in China—not loyalty to the Chinese nation-state. China has so far allowed them to make money without restrictions by setting up international free-enterprise zones, where their investment is protected, and they are free to move their capital. But the socialist government is open to capitalism only in order to develop the economy sufficiently to satisfy the disgruntled population—a must if it wants to remain in power.

The government’s ultimate objective is control, so Beijing is already planning to scrap some of the preferential tax policies for foreign companies under pressure from poorer inland provinces which have not benefited from the recent economic boom. The rift between foreign and state companies, coastal and inland regions is growing. State company workers demonstrate against unpaid salaries and the falling standard of living while the coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian fight to keep their privileges.

The “special zones” coastal policy initiated by Zhao Ziyang in the early 1980s called for the decentralization of government controls over the economy. That policy attracted foreign investment and resulted in rapid economic growth, but it also ushered in unchecked competition for raw materials that led to hyper-inflation. That in turn gave rise to popular protests over the issues of run-off inflation and official corruption in 1989 under the banner of a “pro-democracy movement.” Since the crackdown in 1989, the party has sought higher governmental control of all economic activity and a higher hand in the management of trade. The latest indication of the extent to which the Chinese government wants to control its so-called “free market” is the recent announcement barring all free flow of financial

information into China, so that Chinese investors cannot react to information that has not been screened by the government through its official arm, the China News Agency.

Chinese Communist leadership's political priorities have been repeatedly revealed in their handling of the Taiwan issue. When it comes to Taiwan, it is willing to risk vital investment opportunities for the sake of the political objective. Attacking Taiwan is bound to have major economic consequences, but Deng Xiaoping dispelled all doubt about the rationality of his intentions by pronouncing that "a long-simmering agony is worse than a sharp but short pain." He wants to get it over with, no matter what the cost. The latest naval maneuvers off Taiwan have stirred up so much alarm that Overseas Chinese-owned banks in Los Angeles have reported asset transfers from Taiwan totaling US \$10 billion in the last six months.

China's dealing with Taiwan and Hong Kong has been sobering for many Overseas Chinese who might have been sold on the "we are all Chinese" idea. A significant number of Hong Kong and Taiwan residents hold foreign passports, obtained either through investment in Canada, the US or Australia, or through their children's citizenship abroad. This has been the trend with all Overseas Chinese businessmen who have lived through political uncertainty; Although they claim that all they need is freedom to make money, they like to send their children to Western universities and establish a foothold in an English-speaking country. They regard their assets in the English-speaking countries as an insurance policy against the uncertain future.

THE TRANSNATIONALS—THE "ASTRONAUTS"

San Francisco was once the favorite destination; today, Hong Kong's moneyed elite owns ten percent of the city's downtown area while residing in large Mediterranean-style mansions on the exclusive Peninsula Peak. In the late 1980s, however, Hong Kong's attention shifted to Canada, with the promise of automatic citizenship for anyone who invested US \$1 million in the country. From 1985 to 1991, close to nine percent of all Canadian immigrants were Hong Kong businessmen, who injected a total of US \$14.3 billion into Canada. Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal all benefited from this exodus of Hong Kong capital, but Vancouver has been particularly targeted by Hong Kong and East Asian investors, who now control 25 percent of the city's West End.¹⁷

These Overseas Chinese businessmen, whose professional and private interests span across the globe, are called "astronauts" by their less fortunate countrymen because although they are not stateless—living in California and doing business in Asia—they are truly transnational.

The example of Hong Kong shows that no special ties—ethnic, cultural, emotional, or otherwise—bind Overseas Chinese businessmen to their cultural motherland. They will invest in China if that is where the money is to be made, but as the labor costs increase and productivity levels off, they are just as likely to turn to Vietnam to set up fertilizer plants, to India to set up joint ventures in electronics, or to Bangladesh, Fiji, Maruitius and Costa Rica to set up garment

FORUM: WELFARE REFORM

The Asian Exclusion Act of 1996: Welfare Reform and Asian Pacific America

Andrew Leong*

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that Asians, as a group, were systematically excluded from entry to the United States due to the institutionalized racism of the US government's immigration policies during the 19th and 20th centuries.¹ Though in the late 1990s we can tout ourselves as one of the fastest growing minority populations in the United States,² we still have not progressed beyond the same immigration exclusion issue. In the 104th Session of the US Congress, the question relating to our entry was once again a heated topic. Although Congress will no longer blatantly exclude one particular group as it was so bold to do in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the potential impact of the denial of entry remains the same.³ Even though the legislative attempts to reduce legal immigration failed, we must bear in mind the success of the anti-immigrant forces in a more subtle form of exclusion—that of denying public benefits to immigrants.

For the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community, the welfare reform that occurred in 1996 mirrors the exclusions and restrictions which Asians faced in our not so distant past. Although we are allowed to enter the US, the issue remains, in common with other communities of color—how we are treated upon entry. The *Welfare Reform Act* represents another legacy of that exclusion. This article can easily be entitled “The Asian and Latino Exclusion Act of 1996” due to the disparate impact on both the Asian and Latino immigrant communities. Given the focus of our forum, however, I will limit my concentration to the API community. This commentary will first examine the law reform that occurred, then the potential policy impacts of the welfare bill.

THE *PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK OPPORTUNITY RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996*⁴

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed a bill that drastically reduced the federal government's provision of public benefits to the poor. The *Personal*

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Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (hereinafter the *Welfare Reform Act*) makes massive changes to various social programs, changing the relationship between the federal government and its most vulnerable Americans. This relationship has existed since the 1960s and, in some cases, since the New Deal in 1935. This bill has tremendous impact upon poor Americans in general⁵; however, unfortunately the group most heavily impacted by these radical changes is immigrants. Specifically, the impact will be on “legal” immigrants, not the undocumented.⁶ The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has determined that out of \$53.4 billion saved over a six year period, an estimated 44 percent, or \$23.7 billion, will come from the elimination of benefits to legal immigrants.⁷ The majority of the overall savings from the *Welfare Reform Act* will be made on the backs of immigrants—even though legal immigrants represent only approximately five percent of the total welfare recipients in the United States.⁸

1. Overview of *Welfare Reform Act's* Restrictions on Immigrants

The *Welfare Reform Act's* harshest restrictions against immigrants absolutely bar them from two critical programs—Food Stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).⁹ This bar applies to both future¹⁰ and current immigrants, including those who are already receiving these benefits. The *Act* does exempt a limited number of immigrants from this absolute bar, including refugees and asylees for their first five years,¹¹ veterans and military personnel, and immigrants who have worked in the US for at least a total of ten years or 40 quarters.

The *Welfare Reform Act* also permits states to decide whether they wish to bar immigrants from other social service programs that are joint federal-state ventures, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (“AFDC,” or as it is currently termed, “TANF” — Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), Medicaid, and Title XX programs.¹² The *Act* also permits states to bar immigrants from programs that are entirely state funded. Previously, the United States Supreme Court had ruled that states could not bar legal immigrants from these programs.¹³ With the passage of the *Welfare Reform Act*, the federal government has given states the legal authority to implement these types of bans, with the exception of those exempt from the Food Stamps/SSI bar.

In addition to the restrictions described above, the *Welfare Reform Act* imposes a separate prohibition against future immigrants. These immigrants may not participate in any federal means-tested program for their first five years in the US. The *Act* does not list the specific programs that are considered federal means-tested, but after the US Attorney General defines the phrase¹⁴, it will probably include all programs that determine eligibility based upon income or assets. The most important of these is Medicaid. The *Welfare Reform Act* does contain a number of programs which are exempt from this five year ban, specifically emergency Medicaid, immunizations, student loans, Head Start, WIC, and job training programs.

The *Act* also imposes a permanent “deeming” restriction that may actually have the greatest long-term impact for future immigrants. Under “deeming,” an immigrant’s eligibility for public benefits is determined by adding the immigrant’s income and assets to the income and assets of the immigrant’s sponsor, regardless

of its actual availability.¹⁵ This effectively disqualifies most immigrants for public benefits because once the sponsor's income is artificially imposed on the immigrant, the immigrant is often likely to be ineligible. Previously, immigrants were only subjected to deeming for their first three or five years in the US for various programs.¹⁶ Under the *Act*, deeming is permanent for future immigrants until naturalization or ten years of US work history. Furthermore, if an immigrant does somehow receive public benefits, the *Act* allows the federal or state government to recover the money directly from the sponsor.

2. Impact

The estimated impact thus far is that, upon implementation of the bill, around one million legal immigrants will lose their food stamps and 500,000 will lose their SSI benefits. According to unpublished data from the Social Security Administration, about half of those losing SSI will have been in the US for more than ten years. In addition to Food Stamps and SSI, the other major federal programs that could be affected are Medicaid and TANF. The imposition of the five-year ban on newly arrived alien eligibility for Medicaid will have an impact on about 636,000 recent immigrants.¹⁸ If the states also decide to ban current immigrants who are already on Medicaid, however, that figure could grow to 1.3 million people losing medical coverage.¹⁹ Unpublished data from the CBO indicates that if states decide to bar current alien eligibility, an estimated 320,000 would lose those TANF benefits as well.

Data relating to the use of various public assistance programs by Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs) are scant at best and usually nonexistent. There are no official national tabulations on the numbers of APIs who receive various welfare benefits. This lack of data certainly impedes policy-makers from understanding and gauging the true impact of welfare reform on the API community. Indeed, in many ways it is quite "convenient" that there are no official tabulations of APIs on welfare since this group can then remain invisible to policy-makers. Since immigrants are the ones having their benefits eliminated, our data will focus on this particular group. The stark reality in looking at any figures is that they represent real individual immigrants who will be cut off from assistance.

a. Adverse Impact on Southeast Asians in US

Mr. Huynh is 55 years old. He came to the US in 1992 with his two younger children and his wife under the Humanitarian Operation program for former Vietnamese political detainees. His two other older children escaped from Vietnam in the early 1980s. Mr. Huynh was recruited to join the South Vietnam Army soon after graduating from high school and served for 12 years until he was captured in 1975. At the time, he was a captain. After his capture, he was thrown into a re-education camp for eight years, chopping lumber and farming the land. When he was finally released in 1982, he had lost part of his hearing and sustained serious back injuries. When Mr. Huynh finally reunited with his family in 1992, he was plagued by flashbacks of the horrors of the war and his life in the re-education camp. Throughout his adult

life, all he was trained to do was to be a soldier and farmer; as a result, he has no vocational skills for this society. Mr. Huynh and his wife survive on SSI based on mental and physical disabilities. Neither he nor his wife knows enough English to take the naturalization examination, and their SSI will be cut off by spring of 1997 due to welfare reform.²⁰

The immediate impact of this *Welfare Reform Act* will dramatically affect the Southeast Asian refugee population disproportionately more than the rest of the API population. The table below demonstrates the greater usage of public assistance by this group, as well as their higher poverty rate.

Table 1. Non-Citizen APIs in "Poverty," "Receiving Public Assistance," and Poor Receiving Public Assistance"

Ethnicity	% of population	% receiving public assistance	% of poor receiving public assistance
Chinese	16%	5%	9%
Filipino	6%	4%	8%
Japanese	12%	1%	2%
Asian Indian	10%	2%	6%
Korean	14%	4%	7%
Vietnamese	25%	11%	23%
Cambodian	40%	27%	40%
Hmong	63%	36%	40%
Laotian	33%	19%	32%
Thai	12%	2%	2%
Pacific Islander	22%	5%	11%

Source: Excerpted from Robert M. Jiobu²¹—US Bureau of the Census, 1990 5% PUMS

The above sample analysis prepared by Robert Jiobu takes its data from the 1990 Census. Though the numbers may have increased slightly in the years since, the figures still provide us with some insight of welfare usage within the API community. One word of caution involves the definition of "public assistance," which co-mingles SSI, AFDC, and state general assistance. Since current non-citizens are only eligible for SSI, the above figures must be read with that proviso in mind. In addition, the definition of "public assistance" does not include food stamps. In the long term, the sponsor "deeming" provision will effectively make most non-citizens ineligible for many programs—with the exception of refugees, who entered the country without a sponsor.

Table I reveals a concentrated level of public assistance usage for Southeast Asian groups (Vietnamese 11 percent; Cambodian 27 percent; Hmong 36 percent; and Laotian 19 percent). The major explanation for this level of disparity is that most Southeast Asians came to the US as refugees and not as immigrants.

“Refugee” refers to a person who arrived in the US to flee persecution. The *1980 Refugee Act* established a refugee resettlement program which provides cash, medical support, and other social services for refugees upon their entry in the US. This support recognizes that refugees flee and arrive in a new country without money or family. Beyond fulfilling its humanitarian duties as a first world country, one could argue the US has a special obligation to the above Southeast Asian groups, since the upheaval in their native countries was caused in part by the US involvement in the Vietnam War. Moreover, refugees escaping a war-torn country often arrive with physical and/or mental impairments. The California Department of Social Services (as of January 1995) reports that for SSI, the numbers in the “disabled” category for Southeast Asians are much higher (Vietnam 15,903; Cambodia 11,558; Laos 12,743) than the numbers for immigrants from other Asian countries (China 2,690; Philippines 3,220; South Korea 2,506). Within the “blind” category for SSI, a similar picture emerges. Figures for non-citizens of Southeast Asian origin (Vietnam 586; Cambodia 316; Laos 363) are significantly higher than for non-citizen APIs from other Asian countries (China 199; Philippines 111; South Korea 83).²²

As for other APIs in Table 1, with the exception of the various refugee-dominated Southeast Asian groups, no other group in the “Receiving Public Assistance Payment” category had their level of usage above five percent. Overall, these figures indicate that the immigrant population of most Asian groups has a lower rate of public assistance than that of the refugee population. This is significant because the law requires a sponsor in the US for the immigrant. The sponsor must show his or her capability to support the newcomer during the initial years of entry. Immigrants and refugees are, therefore, distinctively different. The refugee usually has no choice but to escape only with the proverbial clothes on his or her back. The immigrant is prepared to depart his or her home and relocate to a new country with family members. Under the *Welfare Reform Act*, however, the refugee is given a mere five year period in order to learn English, to gain adequate skills for a new job, and to put his or her life back together. The denial of public assistance for refugees amounts to an abandonment of a US obligation.²³

Those API groups with the highest percentages of members with legal immigrant or “legal permanent resident” status would be the most affected. Not surprisingly, refugee groups have the highest percentage of legal permanent residents. A San Francisco sampling from the 1990 US Census by the Asian & Pacific Islander Center for Census Information and Services²⁴ indicates that three refugee-dominated groups have populations that are over 60 percent of legal permanent residents (Laotian 66.1 percent; Cambodian 65.0 percent; Hmong 60.4 percent). API groups that are predominately not refugee, such as Asian Indian and Thai, have populations that are 51.5 percent and 50.6 percent non-citizen. The Vietnamese surprisingly came in at a lower figure—46.5 percent are legal residents. Although there is a provision for a five year exception for refugees, much of the API refugee population has been in the US for well over this period of time. Therefore, this exception does not apply, and they will face termination of SSI and food stamp benefits along with other immigrants. Assuming that some

refugees are covered by the five year exception, such a time period is too short to allow adequate adjustment and resettlement to occur.

Another major difference between refugees and immigrants is that refugees will not face the “deeming” provisions discussed above. Since refugees have no sponsors, they will not have an additional artificial income “deemed” upon them, which would make them ineligible for public assistance programs. Therefore, refugees disqualified from SSI and Food Stamps might apply for other public benefits for which they would be eligible. There will be an increase in former refugees on state general assistance programs — assuming states do not disqualify them as well for being non-citizens.

b. Impacts on Elderly APIs

Wing Ling Wong immigrated to the US to join his daughter. At age 63 he started a job as a dishwasher, until a year later when he suffered a massive stroke which left him incapacitated. Now at 74 he is facing the cut off of his SSI benefits. As to his present condition he replies, “There’s really nothing I can do. I know my family will want to support me, but I know they have their children to support. Sometimes I feel I’m just waiting for death.”²⁵

For immigrants and refugees, an extended family to rely upon might exist in hard times. The family may not be able to provide such assistance for extended periods, however, without causing stress among its members. For an elderly immigrant or refugee who has been receiving SSI and food stamps and is declared ineligible, he or she may have to vacate the nursing home or subsidized rental housing where he or she currently resides due to the drastic reduction in available income. Even in the best case scenario of a family member or friend taking in this person, overcrowding and an overall reduction in household income would eventually result. In the long term, the elderly person may develop a sense of reduced self-worth. He or she will not only see themselves as incapable of being independent and self-reliant, but as a burden on others—thus leading to greater levels of mental stress and other health problems stemming from depression. The number of Asians, especially the elderly and those of Southeast Asian origin in homeless shelters and soup kitchens, will increase.

The same word of caution regarding the definition of “public assistance” is applicable to Larry Shinagawa’s sampling. Although the sampling above is taken from the 1990 Census, a review of more recent urban cities with available API data indicates that the above figures for APIs have increased slightly.²⁷ From Table II, the percentages of public assistance use by the Southeast Asian groups are also high for the same reasons as mentioned above (Vietnamese, 51.1 percent; Cambodian, 53.2 percent; Hmong, 66.6 percent; and Laotian, 57.8 percent). For other APIs that are presumably not refugees, however, there is a dramatic increase in public assistance usage for this older population. For instance, Korean and Thai ranked at 42.1 percent and 37.5 percent usage, respectively, with Filipino at

Table 2. Asian Pacific Islander Immigrants Over 65 in US: Percent Using Public Assistance, Social Security, and Percent in Poverty by Nativity for Selected Groups

Ethnicity	Count Total Over 65 for Overall APIs	% Foreign Born Over Age 65	% Public Assistance	% Social Security	% Below Poverty
Total	439,224	70.8% (310,970)	29.9	40.5	15.8
Chinese	130,269	84.8% (110,468)	25.9	46.3	17.8
Filipino	101,923	95.0% (96,826)	29.3	41.9	9.6
Japanese	104,526	17.3% (18,082)	8.0	72.6	16.9
Asian Indian	20,862	94.6% (19,735)	28.4	24.4	9.0
Korean	33,469	92.1% (30,824)	42.1	22.6	23.5
Vietnamese	15,325	98.3% (15,064)	51.1	21.6	19.7
Cambodian	3,426	98.8% (3,384)	53.2	21.4	30.3
Hmong	2,697	95.4% (2,572)	66.6	11.9	41.1
Laotian	3,365	99.2% (3,338)	57.8	21.8	31.3
Thai	1,410	97.1% (1,369)	37.5	14.4	16.6
Other Asians	6,911	74.7% (5,162)	25.2	40.2	17.0
Hawaiian	10,027	1.6% (160)	31.7	20.1	18.9
Samoaian	1,550	77.9% (1,207)	23.9	53.3	36.5
Tongan	753	98.3% (740)	7.7	41.4	24.5
Guamanian	2,226	79.8% (1,776)	21.4	60.3	13.6
Other Pacific Islander	485	90.7% (439)	28.4	49.5	26.8

Source: Excerpted from Larry Shinagawa²⁶—US Bureau of the Census, 1990; 5% PUMS

29.3 percent, and Asian Indian at 28.4 percent. In sum, even though immigrants as a whole account for nine percent of the overall elderly population, they represent 28 percent of the SSI recipients over 65 years of age.²⁸ This rise in usage indicates a different phenomenon at work. As Fix and Passel alluded to in their study²⁹, this disparity reflects the fact that older Asian immigrants arrive in the US at a time in their lives when they are too old to work enough quarters to fulfill eligibility requirements for Social Security retirement benefits. Table II demonstrates this phenomenon in two categories showing that the "Percent Foreign Born Over 65" is overwhelmingly above 70 percent, and the "Social Security" category is consistently lower. As such, SSI becomes the substitute for Social Security retirement benefits, and since SSI eligibility qualifies a recipient to Medicaid, many elderly Asians may receive SSI to ensure that they have health insurance coverage. As Professor Bill Ong Hing has argued, this disparity is simply a result of the legacy of Asian exclusion laws.³⁰ That is, if there were no exclusionary laws prohibiting the entry of Asians into the US then we would not presently have a situation where great numbers of elderly Asians immigrate to the US after their peak working age. Instead, with Asian immigrants of working age coming to the

U.S., elderly parents of the initial immigrant join them a few years later via family reunification. On yet another level, therefore, the API community is still feeling the impacts of the years of immigration exclusion policies.

c. Health Care Impacts

The health care front also presents a dismal picture. A 1989 National Health Interview Survey found that 36 percent of APIs are without health care coverage. Estimates from the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) show that the "deeming" provision will disqualify many API non-citizens from Medicaid and alone will be responsible for increasing the uninsured API population by an additional five to ten percent³¹, raising the percentage to nearly 50 percent. This same APIAHF report also highlights various medical issues for different API populations. For instance, within the area of chronic diseases, Filipinos and Samoans have relatively higher rates of hypertension. Samoans and Native Hawaiians have a greater tendency to develop non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus. The Southeast Asian population has a higher incidence of thalassemia (a genetic blood disorder). In the infectious diseases category, the API population has exhibited a higher prevalence of hepatitis B. Tuberculosis rates in the API community, especially new immigrants, are four times that of the general population. In the mental health category, Southeast Asian refugees experience much higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from war conditions. A particularly shocking example is the number of healthy young men within the Hmong community dying in their sleep from Sudden Death Syndrome. No other area displays the differences in the API community greater than reproductive health, in which 89 percent of Japanese American women receive prenatal care in their first trimester, compared to only 56 percent Laotian American women. Moreover, at least in California, Cambodian and Laotian women had high rates of births unattended by either a doctor, nurse, or midwife.³²

Such distinctions in the area of health care warn that with the termination of Medicaid, we can expect varying levels of impact on this vastly divergent community. As health insurance becomes unavailable for most of this community, API patients will delay medical services until their conditions deteriorate intolerably. As with most uninsured populations, APIs will forego preventive care and resort to emergency room treatment when the illness reaches a point when medical services are unavoidable. Unfortunately, the cost of emergency room treatment will be far greater than that of any preventive treatment or screening that could have been available if health insurance existed. Without health insurance, API women may not seek prenatal care, resulting in an overall increase in infant mortality rates and developmental impairments for various API groups. The National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine estimated that for every \$1 spent on prenatal care, \$3 are saved by preventing the need for expensive treatment of low birth weight infants. The California Department of Health Services concluded that Medi-Cal hospital costs averaged \$2,560 for non-low birth weight babies, as compared with \$32,800 for low birth weight babies.³³

Not only will US taxpayers (citizens and non-citizens alike) spend more for increased emergency medical costs, the denial of Medicaid to immigrants puts

the general health condition of the nation at risk. Infectious diseases do not stop at the US border and cannot discern between a US citizen, a legal immigrant, or an undocumented person. The California Department of Health Services estimated that the cost of providing preventive therapy to a tuberculosis patient is \$150, one one-hundredth of the cost to hospitalize the same patient. The cost is 600 times greater if the same patient develops a drug-resistant variety of TB.³⁴ The *Welfare Reform Act's* appearance of short term savings for deficit reduction may end up costing much more in the long term.

As Medicaid coverage for future immigrants is eliminated, not only will individual API patients suffer, local health care centers with an immigrant patient base may eventually face demise. This is a real possibility since health care centers and hospitals will still have the legal duty to provide medical treatment regardless of reimbursement from the government. Since immigrant communities tend to make greater use of local health care centers due to language access and proximity in the community, it will be the same health care centers that will bear the brunt of the lack of fee reimbursements. This, in turn, will mean that the overall community may be losing a vital and necessary service. Again, short-term savings mean huge costs in the long term. Under the present scenario, not only will legal immigrants be hurt, but also the Asian Pacific Islanders who utilize the medical services at the same health care centers will suffer.

3. Creation of the Welfare Magnet

Because the *Welfare Reform Act* gives each state the power to reformulate its eligibility criteria for various programs, there is no longer a uniform method of determining public benefits. Different states are already beginning to enact separate laws with varying impact. In California, an eager Governor Pete Wilson is ready to terminate benefits for various immigrants.³⁵ In New Jersey, Governor Christine Todd Whitman submitted a welfare plan that would include some immigrants facing the federal bars.³⁶ Governor William Weld of Massachusetts and Governor Parris Glendening of Maryland have indicated that they want to provide state benefits to replace federal benefits which immigrants will be losing.³⁷ The most pro-immigrant stance comes from Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York City, who took the lead in suing the federal government, claiming that the ban on immigrant aid is unconstitutional.³⁸

As the states determine immigrant eligibility for public benefits in fifty different ways, one possibility is the creation of "welfare magnets," i.e., states which will attract non-citizens because of more favorable rules that include them in state-funded public benefit programs. Traditionally, the opportunity for employment is the magnet. It remains to be seen whether this new state "welfare magnet" will actually occur and be more or less powerful than the "job magnet." The welfare magnet may not be as significant a phenomenon for several reasons. Any magnet assumes mobility. Yet, the predominant categories of APIs on public assistance are the elderly over 65 years of age and people under 65 years of age from a Southeast Asian refugee background. Unlike the working age population, the likelihood of these two groups moving elsewhere may be low considering the limiting factors which had made them eligible for public assistance in the first

place. Since they might have already established a community base, elderly Asian immigrants and refugees may not be able to move, despite being cut off from SSI and other programs. Their mobility may be determined by whomever currently provides emotional or living assistance, such as nearby family or support network.

The Asian immigrant and refugee under 65 years of age who qualified for SSI due to a disability may be restricted from movement because of the same disability. Given the option of having a greater level of subsistence income, as compared with minimal or no income, the result will be difficult to gauge. Additionally, many immigrants and refugees might not realize that most states have residency requirements for public benefits. These states will require immigrant and refugee applicants to reside in that state for a time period before application. In the interim, the applicant will have no means of support.

One example of migration occurring as a result of welfare reform is the movement of the Hmong. The Hmong people live in the mountains of Laos, and by many measures, they remain a relatively simple agrarian society. They did not have a written language until several decades ago, depending instead upon an oral tradition and stitchery ("pa ndau") to document their history. During the 1960s, they were recruited by the C.I.A. to fight in the guerrilla warfare against the communist Viet Cong. They suffered among the highest casualty rates in the Vietnam War.³⁹ Their adjustment to US culture has been difficult and is one reason why they have one of the highest rates of welfare dependency (70 percent) among any group.⁴⁰ The largest Hmong settlement in the US exists in the San Joaquin Valley in California, with an estimated population of 60,000. In reaction to a number of factors, including Proposition 187, the anti-immigrant sentiment in Congress and in the nation as a whole, and the lack of employment, many Hmong are moving out of this farm area and into other states with greater employment opportunities. Hmong leaders estimate that around 6,000 people have moved to other states. A Fresno County Social Services official mentioned that, in comparison to two years ago, 4,000 fewer Hmong now receive welfare.⁴¹ This group of refugees seems to have a great level of mobility. Yet how many are actually moving off welfare and getting decent paying jobs as a result of their relocation? This example demonstrates the diversity and complexity within Asian Pacific America which we have barely begun to study.

CONCLUSION: INCREASED STRATIFICATION IN US SOCIETY

The *Welfare Reform Act* is an example of (1) one of the worst types of public policy reform possible. It is a combination of a Democratic incumbent President operating under election year politics and succumbing to a bill with which he had already found fault and wished to remedy even before signing and (2) the Republican agenda which seeks to balance the federal budget at any human cost. This reform plays into the politics of division by segregating people, perpetuating the legacy of past discrimination, and continuing the practice for the foreseeable

future. Immigrants have the duty to pay taxes and to serve in the military but cannot partake in this country's benefits—even though their tax dollars go to support them. Another absurd and outrageous example resulting from this act is that an immigrant whose wages are taken out by his or her employer cannot benefit from unemployment insurance if he or she is laid off. Although historically this type of reform has been found constitutional because it comes under the plenary power which Congress has over matters of immigration, the law is unjust. The reform is a continuation of the tradition of institutional racism against the weakest voices in our society—children, the elderly, immigrants, and refugees.

Although the above sections described various examples of the consequences of the *Welfare Reform Act*, the greatest impact results from the act's influence on the manner in which the US approaches and deals with its communities of color, including its immigrants. The current treatment of immigrants indicates a retreat from the gains made in the 1960s. The *Act* makes it legitimate for Americans to categorize others by class and race and to treat them differently. It creates a separation along the lines of "first-class citizens" and "second-class immigrants." "First-class citizens" are eligible for most rights and privileges, while "second-class immigrants" and the "untouchable undocumented" are forced to scramble for citizenship status. And because most Americans assume citizenship status on the stereotypical basis of skin color, non-whites ("foreign-looking") and non-English speakers ("foreign-sounding") are the alien suspect class. This congressional reform indicates that the US has and will become even more stratified by class and race.⁴²

Ironically, given that Asians have been historically disqualified from naturalizing because we are not "Caucasian" or "white", this stratification will return us to the same position we inhabited 100 years ago. Even if Asians are native-born citizens of the US, we are still perceived as "foreign" and forever seen as "second-class immigrants" or the "untouchable undocumented." Even though the US would like to claim that, as a society that went through a civil rights struggle in the 1960s, we have progressed to the point of being able to treat people equally regardless of their skin color or background—one of the many exceptions is with Asians. Sadly in 1997, with the "Asian Exclusion Act of 1996," Asian Pacific Islanders have come full circle—still grappling with the fundamental issues of a century ago.

Endnotes

1. See generally Chan, Sucheng, editor, *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991; and Hing, Bill Ong, *Making and Remaking Asian American Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

2. Growing from 3.7 million in 1980 to 7.3 million in 1990 (3 percent of the overall US population), the Asian Pacific American population is projected to top more than 40 million by the year 2050, making up about 8 percent of the US population. See Alethea Yip, "The Asian American Mosaic," *AsianWeek*, 9 August 1996, 14-16.
3. During the recent debate on the reduction of legal immigration, Congress contemplated the elimination of whole categories of family reunification, which would have meant that 1.6 million Asians on various visa waiting lists would have been denied their right to enter the United States.
4. Pub. L. No. 104-193, 110 Stat. 2105.
5. The Act retreats from 60 years of social welfare policy. It will affect 12.8 million people now on welfare and 25.6 million on food stamps. It will change the rate of benefits for more than one-fifth of US families with children. The bill replaces over 40 federal public benefits programs with state block grants. The Act creates a five year lifetime limit per family for welfare payments, along with a work requirement for able-bodied adults after two years of receiving benefits. See Robert Pear, "The Welfare Bill: The Overview," *New York Times*, 1 August 1996, A1.
6. Although the term "immigrant" has been widely used, it has a specific legal definition within immigration law. Unless where noted, the term "immigrant" will be used in this chapter to denote a "legal permanent resident." In addition, although "illegal aliens" is the pejorative term used to refer to people without legal status, the author prefers to use the term "undocumented."
7. Correspondence from Congressional Budget Office to Sen. Pete Domenici, Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, 1 August 1996.
8. See National Immigration Law Center, "Immigrant Provisions of the Welfare Bill (H.R. 3734)," 27 July 1996, 1.
9. SSI provides benefits to low income people who are either 65 years or older, blind, or disabled.
10. "Future" is defined as those legal immigrants entering the US after August 22, 1996, the date on which the President signed the *Welfare Reform Act*.
11. The five year period is calculated from the time that an immigrant/refugee first enters the US. For many immigrants and refugees, five years may have already elapsed since their date of entry.
12. Title XX of the Social Security Act provides block grant money to states, which they may use for a variety of purposes, including child care, care for disabled persons, domestic violence prevention programs, and child abuse prevention programs.
13. See *Graham v. Richardson*, 403 U.S. 365 (1971).
14. Under the Act, there is an exception which allows immigrants to be eligible for "community programs for protection of life and safety," a term which the Attorney General has the discretion to define. Some current examples of such programs include: crisis counseling and intervention, short-term shelter or assistance for the homeless or abuse victims, and soup kitchens. See *Federal Register*, 30 August 1996, 45985-45986.
15. An immigrant's sponsor is the person who signs an affidavit promising that he or she will support the immigrant in the US. Previously, there were no restrictions as to who could be an immigrant's sponsor. Under the Act, only the immigrant's petitioner, i.e., the person who legally can and does apply for the immigrant's entry, may be the

- sponsor. If the petitioner's income does not meet the minimum required, he or she can bring in someone else as an additional sponsor.
16. See Leong, Andrew, "Welfare Reform: Effects on the Legal Permanent Immigrant." *Asian American Policy Review* V (1995): 65.
 17. Congressional Budget Office, "Federal Budgetary Implications of H.R. 3734, *The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, 9 August 1996, 14-15.
 18. Congressional Budget Office, "Medicaid Impact of H.R. 4 Bill," 22 May 1996.
 19. Congressional Budget Office, "Medicaid Impact Ban All Immigrants from Medicaid," Preliminary Estimates. July 18, 1996.
 20. Lai, Zenobia, Harry H. Dow Memorial Legal Assistance Fund, Eleventh Year Annual Report, 1995-96, Boston, p. ii. [Hereinafter as "Dow Fund Report"].
 21. Jiobu, Robert, "Recent Asian Pacific Immigrants: The Demographic Background," in *Reframing the Immigration Debate*, eds. Bill Ong Hing & Ronald Lee (LEAP Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1999), 52.
 23. A fitting anecdote here are the responses which I have received from the Vietnamese community during the last two years while conducting community education about welfare reform. After informing community members that they, too, will have their assistance terminated, the common response was a dismissal of my statement followed by these usual words: "The US will not do that to us, we fought for them in the Vietnam War."
 24. San Francisco, California, from 1990 US Census data, 5 percent PUMS. See Asian & Pacific Islander Center for Census Information and Services (ACCIS) at the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, "Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum Fact Sheet," 28 July 1996, 2.
 25. See Chacon, Wong, "For Many Immigrants, Fear Returns," *Boston Sunday Globe*, 24 November 1996, B1.
 26. Shinagawa, Larry, "The Impact of Immigration on the Demography of Asian Pacific Americans," in *Reframing the Immigration Debate*, eds. Bill Ong Hing & Ronald Lee (LEAP Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1996), 121.
 27. Figures provided by the California Department of Social Services (as of January 1995) indicate SSI usage for total non-citizen Asians were at 56 percent or around 173,254 people. Unfortunately, California welfare statistics include the "Former USSR" and the "Middle East" within the "Asian" category. When we exclude the two above mentioned groups from the "Asian" category, the figure drops down to 45 percent or around 140,395. See Hong, A1.
 28. See Fix, Zimmermann, "When Should Immigrants Receive Public Benefits?" Urban Institute, 1995, 21.
 29. Fix, Passell, Enchautegui, and Wendy Zimmermann, *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight*. Urban Institute, 1994, 64.

30. "Personal notes of author from LEAP Roundtable Discussion on Immigration and Welfare Reform," Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Massachusetts, 29 March 1996 (on file with author).
31. Suh, Dong, "The End of Health Care for Immigrants?" (San Francisco: Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 1996), 7.
32. Ibid., p. 5-6.
33. See Brown, E. Richard, "The Health Effects of S. 1664 and H.R. 2202," (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 23 April 1996), 3.
34. Ibid., 4.
35. See McDonnell, Patrick, "State Delays Cutbacks in Prenatal Care," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 October 1996, A3.
36. See Preston, Jennifer, "Welfare Plan Would Aid Some Immigrants," *New York Times*, 16 October 1996, B5.
37. See Grunwald, Michael, "Cuts Imperil 30,000 Legal Immigrants," *Boston Globe*, 21 November 21, 1996, A1; and Jeter, Jon, "Md. to Continue Some Welfare for Legal Immigrants," *Washington Post*, 17 September 1996, D1.
38. See Firestone, David, "Giuliani to Sue Over Provision on Welfare," *New York Times*, 12 September 1996, B1.
38. See Chan, Sucheng, ed. *Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
40. See Arax, Mark, "Hmong Seek Better Life in Exodus From State," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 November 1996, A1.
41. Ibid.
42. One example is a Hmong youth in Wisconsin who was the highest scorer on an exam and should have won the first prize associated with the contest. The organizers of the contest took the award away from her because they said she was not a citizen. See Johnson, Dirk, "Scholarship Restrictions Make Refugee Feel Scorned," *New York Times*, 12 May 1996, 12.

Human Rights, Civil Rights and the New Welfare Law

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INTRODUCTION

The immigrant provisions of the recently passed welfare reform bill, entitled the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996* (Pub. L. No. 104-193, August 22, 1996) (*The Act*), will have a devastating impact on the human and civil rights of the Asian Pacific American (APA) community, a majority of whom are foreign-born and not yet citizens. Although immigrants are only about five percent of the population receiving welfare benefits, almost half of the \$54.2 billion cuts in welfare benefits comes from eliminating federal benefits for legal immigrants. According to the Urban Institute, an estimated 1.2 million legal immigrants and their families, many of whom are citizen children, will be pushed below the poverty level by the welfare cuts. These harsh immigrant provisions will be responsible for almost half of the over one million children being forced into poverty.

OVERVIEW OF NEW BENEFIT RESTRICTIONS & THE IMPACT ON APA COMMUNITY

The *Act* bars almost all blind, elderly, and disabled non-citizens from receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and from receiving Food Stamps. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a half million blind, elderly, and/or disabled immigrants will lose SSI by August 1997 and over a million legal immigrants will also lose access to Food Stamps. These losses in assistance could double if states exercise the authority reserved in the *Act* for them to deny such additional benefits as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and Title XX benefits such as foster care and senior programs.

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The general premise for welfare reform is that people who are able to work should be encouraged to find employment so that they will not have to remain dependent on government assistance. This premise fails, however, when applied to SSI recipients who are blind, elderly, or disabled for they are the least likely to find sufficient employment to sustain themselves. US citizenship should not be a requisite to human and civil rights. The English and civics requirements in the naturalization process pose an insurmountable barrier to many elderly and disabled immigrants. In addition, children are not able to become citizens on their own.

The elderly, disabled, and children are the very immigrants most vulnerable to these cuts. Consider the following examples:

Mr. N came to the United States in 1992 as a refugee. A former officer for the South Vietnamese army, he was imprisoned in a re-education camp by the North Vietnamese government, where he was tortured and beaten for over five years. As a result, he is almost blind and has only partial hearing in one ear. He also suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Because of these disabilities, he will never be able to pass the citizenship test or find employment. He cannot return to Vietnam. His wife takes care of him during the day and works part-time at night. Without SSI and Medicaid benefits, they will not be able to survive.

Mrs. L immigrated to the United States in March of 1987 at the age of 60. Three days after her arrival, she began working as a seamstress in a garment factory. She worked for five years until she was laid off. No one would hire her because she was 65 years old. She has tried to become a citizen but has been unable to pass the test because of her inability to become fluent in English. She constantly has headaches because she is so worried about what will happen to her SSI and Medicaid now that the new welfare law has passed. She cannot eat or sleep well, and her high blood pressure has become worse.

The primary rationale offered for the denial of benefits to immigrants is that they allegedly have sponsors who have promised to make sure they do not become a public charge and that those sponsors who are not meeting their obligations should be made to do so. This rationale is ungrounded. Many legal immigrants never had sponsors, such as those who came as refugees and asylees. Others have sponsors who have since died or themselves fallen on hard times. Yet all immigrants alike are being cut off, regardless of whether anyone is able to care for them.

In addition to the outright bans on SSI and food stamps that cover both current and future immigrants, there are other restrictions found in the welfare bill. New family-sponsored immigrants will be barred for five years from federal means-tested programs such as Medicaid. After five years, their eligibility will further be limited until citizenship or until they have established a ten year work history.

For those immigrants who become severely disabled after their entry into the US, the *Act* denies them assistance until they either become citizens or can establish

a ten year work history. It is inconsistent with the principles upon which our nation was founded to say that we welcome immigrants' hard work and service in our armed forces, but we will abandon them and their family if they become disabled in an accident or as a result of a hate crime or other crimes. Yet, that is exactly what the welfare law does.

The law deals even more harshly with undocumented immigrants, driving them deeper into an underground economy. Whatever one believes is morally required in dealing with any human being, regardless of his or her immigrant status, the impact of these new policies on their legal children are unjust. Undocumented family members may fail to seek food, shelter, or emergency care for other members who are here legally for fear of deportation. In 1996, because of the passage of Proposition 187 in California, an elderly Chinese immigrant woman died from burns because the family hesitated in seeking medical care until it was too late.

Although certain categories of immigrants are exempt from the law's drastic cuts, the determination for eligibility is made sufficiently complex so as to increase the likelihood that even eligible Asian immigrants will lose benefits. Determining whether an immigrant meets a particular exemption is much more difficult than determining simply whether someone is a legal or an undocumented immigrant. For instance, legal permanent residents who can establish that they have worked 40 quarters or ten years in the US are exempt from being denied SSI and Food Stamps. Some immigrants such as restaurant workers, garment workers, or migrant workers, however, may have difficulty proving they have worked 40 quarters through the verification system or the Social Security Administration.

In addition to complicating the eligibility determination process for benefits, the exemptions are problematic in other important ways. For instance, the 40 quarter work exemption has a disparate impact on women. It appropriately recognizes families as an economic unit by allowing a spouse to count his or her spouse's work towards his or her 40 quarters, but only if they do not divorce. If a husband leaves his immigrant wife, who has worked in the home and raised the children, she will not be eligible for the exemption and will lose her benefits. An unintended consequence of this new welfare policy is that a woman suffering abuse must remain in the marriage or lose her eligibility for benefits.

A US military service exemption exists for those who serve in the military and their dependents. This exemption may or may not be interpreted to cover those who served under military command such as the Hmong, who were recruited by the CIA during the Vietnam war. Moreover, if the immigrant serving in the military is killed, then his or her spouse loses this exemption.

The impact of the new welfare law on the APA community is severe, particularly for children and those who are elderly, disabled, or undocumented. The potential for a reversal of any of these major provisions is very low, in the short-term, given the current political climate. The challenges facing the APA community are overwhelming.

THE DISCRIMINATORY IMPACT OF THE NEW WELFARE LAW

The immigrant provisions of the new welfare law raise serious equal protection issues by conditioning eligibility for government benefits on citizenship status. In addition to this direct discrimination based on alienage, there is a disparate impact on racial and ethnic minorities, particularly on Asians and Latinos, who comprise the majority of the newest immigrants to the US over the past two decades. Not only is there a direct disparate impact, but there is an extremely high probability that the law will be discriminatingly applied to Americans of Latin American and Asian descent, as some will assume that anyone who is Latino or Asian is an immigrant and, therefore, not eligible for benefits. Immigrants are likely to lose benefits for which they are eligible if they do not understand the process nor the exemptions to which they are entitled. The drastic cuts in legal services at a time when welfare recipients in general and immigrants in particular are facing radical changes in the law will only exacerbate the problem.

Unfortunately, the fear that the new law will be applied in a discriminatory manner is not mere conjecture. The employer sanction provisions of the immigration law, which penalizes employers for hiring undocumented immigrants, have been proven to engender discrimination against APAs and Latinos. Additionally, some shelters and soup kitchens have already indicated their intention to discriminate against non-citizens. Since their volunteers and staff are unlikely to be experts on immigration and the new benefit laws, the likely outcome will be the denial of assistance to anyone with an accent or to anyone who looks "foreign."

The new government-sanctioned distinctions embodied in the welfare law legitimize anti-immigrant discrimination and also hurt citizens. Other Americans could take the government's message as evidence that immigrants need not be treated as fellow human beings. After all, if our government says that these individuals are less deserving of basic food and shelter than citizens, then it is not a far stretch.

CONCLUSION: FUTURE CHALLENGES FACING THE APA COMMUNITY

The upcoming year will be filled with many challenges as the APA community braces to defend itself against the devastating impact of the new welfare law. Individual volunteers, community-based groups, students, academicians, lawyers, churches, and private enterprises can all make significant contributions towards helping those within the APA community who will be hardest hit by the new law. By pooling together resources and skills, the community can work together to ensure both that the most vulnerable immigrants are protected and that discriminatory policies and laws are challenged.

Extensive work is needed at the community level. First, community education through workshops and articles in the ethnic press is critical for ensuring that immigrants understand how the new laws will affect their right to continue receiving benefits. Second, with a safety net no longer available to non-citizens,

there will be a great demand for volunteers to assist immigrants with the naturalization application process. Third, churches and private institutions will need to commit resources and funds to ensure the existence of a minimal safety net for those whose benefits are being terminated.

Attention must also be focused on changing discriminatory policies and laws. First, advocacy and community organizers should discourage state and local governments from enacting further restrictions. Additionally, communities must voice their concerns and share stories with their elected representatives in Congress on how these laws impact individual lives and encourage them to support measures that will restore benefits for immigrants. Second, government and private researchers must be pressed to conduct research which will document and analyze the impact of welfare reform on the APA community. Third, the community must organize to monitor private and government agencies to ensure that discrimination does not take place as the new laws are implemented. Finally, attorneys and community service providers must support current litigation efforts by working together to identify and represent potential plaintiffs harmed by the new law. Litigation is presently being planned to raise constitutional challenges to the new welfare law.

These are just a few of the many recommendations for ways in which individuals and the community must work to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community are protected in the face of drastic cuts in their benefits. Teaching an English class to elderly immigrants, meeting with the elected officials in your district to voice your concerns, or encouraging someone you know who will be impacted by the new law to talk to news reporters about their story—these are all small actions which, when taken together, can provide the necessary momentum for change and empowerment.

Facing the Facts: Welfare and Immigration Policy

Yeh Ling-Ling*

In his State of Union speech, President Clinton made education his number one priority. He also urged new initiatives to create jobs for welfare recipients, expand health insurance coverage to millions more children, protect America's environment, and balance the federal budget. Yet, how can those goals possibly be achieved if this country continues to allow nearly one million legal immigrants to enter the United States every year? These newcomers need jobs, housing, education, welfare, health care, and many other services that we cannot provide even to millions of native-born Americans.

The new welfare reform legislation would help curb some of the fiscal impact of mass immigration, but many of America's problems cannot be effectively addressed unless Washington, DC, also adopts an immigration policy that reflects America's economic realities and resource availability. Many immigrants have contributed tremendously to this country, but current rates of immigration have seriously impacted Americans and earlier immigrants, including Asian Americans.

Chinese American professor Paul Ong of UCLA, a strong advocate of a liberal immigration policy, said in 1994 at the UC Davis' "Forum on Immigration" that "...In terms of adverse impact [of immigration] on wages and employment, the adverse impact will be most pronounced on minorities and established immigrants..."

Po Wong, former director of the Chinese Newcomers Service Center in San Francisco, indicated to Spencer Michels of KQED in 1993 that, of the new 11,000 Chinese immigrants who were looking for work through his agency, only two percent were successfully placed. He has also said, "I don't think our community is equipped to welcome this large a number...It's very depressing to see so many people come here looking for work."

In *Chinatown No More*, sociologist Hsiang-Shui Chen indicated how immigration, legal and illegal, reduces job opportunities for US-born

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and earlier-immigrant Chinese in New York's Chinese American community. In *Chinatown*, UCLA sociologist Min Zhou also found that "the large pool of surplus immigrant labor" depresses wages in New York's Chinatown. Professor Peter Kwong of Hunter College wrote in *The New Chinatown* that "In the 1980s, business in Chinatown reached the point of saturation: too many immigrants, too many new businesses, and exorbitant rents. Suicidal competition developed throughout the community."

Sung Koo Kim, president of the Korean American Small Business Service Center, in the April 10, 1995, edition of *New York* magazine said, "We're in the middle of a tragedy. Last year, we had 700 stores open but 900 close. Growth has completely stopped."

Chinese American Stanford law professor Bill Ong Hing, a strident immigrant rights advocate, was quoted as saying in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, "...there's a certain legitimacy to the view that parts of the country are being overcrowded with immigrants...They affect growth, air pollution, water availability. It's not bogus for people to raise that issue."

Antonia Hernandez, President of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, acknowledged at UC Davis' "Forum on Immigration" that "...migration, legal and undocumented, does have an impact on our economy...Most of the competition is to the Latino community. We compete with each other for those low-paying jobs. There is an issue of wage depression, as in the garment industry, which is predominantly immigrant..."

Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union, testified before the California Select Committee on Immigration that: "With 1.5 million legalized immigrants living in California, and only approximately 250,000 agricultural jobs in the state, there is no need for additional farm workers."

A 1988 study of the Los Angeles hotel industry by the General Accounting Office found that low-end jobs in the hotel industry in Los Angeles that were formerly held mostly by African Americans are now taken over by immigrants. Jack Miles of the *Los Angeles Times* also wrote that black social workers are displaced by Latinos.

Is it therefore "racist" or "immigrant-bashing" to advocate immigration reduction? Many proponents of mass immigration made those charges in an effort to end reasoned discussion of the issue.

The fact is that today's high-tech economy requires fewer and fewer workers due to automation, advances in technology, and corporate downsizing. Also, many jobs have been lost to foreign countries. If the federal government continues to allow hundreds of thousands of low-skilled legal immigrants of working age to

enter the US every year, how can we expect our unemployed low-skilled workers and welfare recipients to find work? Rosy unemployment rates released by the Labor Department do not include the millions of workers who are underemployed or who have never found work. They also exclude millions of those whose unemployment benefits have expired.

Our immigration laws also have a devastating impact on American professionals. Aside from annually providing 130,000 employment-based immigrant visas for foreign-born professionals, we also allow virtually unlimited numbers of various types of "temporary workers" to enter the US every year, to work in professional occupations for several years. "H1B temporary workers" alone are estimated to be around 400,000 in this country at any time.

Today's global economy requires highly skilled workers to prosper. If the US does not even have the resources to prepare American children and existing legal immigrants to be tomorrow's productive workers, should we invite hundreds of thousands of foreign-born children to our already overcrowded schools every year?

In 1996, the US Department of Education projected that 2.9 million new students would enter American schools, K-12, during the next decade at the additional cost of \$15 billion. Records on US births tabulated by the US Department of Health and Human Services can lead us to conclude that immigration-driven growth is mostly responsible for those increases, not American baby-boomers. Indeed, the California Department of Education indicates that since 1989, 73 percent of new students in the state's public schools, K-12 spoke limited English. Teachers in schools with diverse and explosive student populations are preoccupied by children speaking limited English and cannot devote enough time to teaching the "3 Rs". Mass immigration, therefore, is a major contributing factor in the steady decline of California's public education. Policy-makers should also bear in mind that the cost of educating a child in the US is \$5000 a year, on average. The annual cost exceed \$6000 per child per year if the child is placed in so-called "bilingual education" programs. Therefore, if an immigrant child needs an average of eight years of education, his or her cost to taxpayers will be \$40,000 just for education.

Many senior immigrants also are a net burden. In fiscal year 1992 alone, over 90,000 legal immigrants age 55 and over were admitted to the US. The federal government reported that in 1994, 740,000 elderly legal immigrants were on welfare (Supplemental Security Income), a 580 percent increase over the 1982 figure—this number did not include the seniors who became naturalized citizens. Bekki Mar, an immigration advocate then working for Self-Help for the Elderly in San Francisco, said in 1994 that 85 percent of the center's immigrant clients were on welfare. Therefore, if a senior immigrant applies for SSI, Medicaid, food stamps, and government subsidized low-income housing for only five years, he or she will cost taxpayers a minimum of \$100,000 on average. The 1990 California Census indicated that among all immigrants, both sponsored and refugees, 45 percent of elderly immigrants were on welfare in 1990. Seniors from Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, China/Taiwan/Hong Kong, Korea, and the Philippines were the highest users of Supplemental Security Income (SSI),

using 74 percent, 66 percent, 55 percent, 50 percent, and 39 percent respectively. The use rate for US-born seniors on SSI was nine percent.

Furthermore, 75 percent of elderly legal immigrant welfare recipients came from households with incomes above the California median—of which 11 percent had incomes exceeding \$100,000 a year. In fact, through their foreign-born relatives in the US, many prospective immigrants already knew about America's generous welfare system even before they immigrated. "What You Need to Know About Life In America," a book widely sold in Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and Chinese bookstores in America, provides a 36 page guide to SSI and other benefits.

On a Chinese language talk show aired in January 1994, on KEST, based in San Francisco, 14 out of 16 Chinese immigrant callers expressed outrage against welfare abuses within the Chinese immigrant community. Many complained that Chinese SSI recipients use food stamps to "buy expensive food" and frequently travel abroad for vacations. An article in the February 7, 1997, *Los Angeles Times*, reported that, using the 1990 Census, three percent of the total population in Orange County, California, was Vietnamese. Yet, the Vietnamese accounted for 32 percent of the non-citizens receiving Supplemental Social Income. "The anticipated [welfare] benefits cutoffs have created a ripple effect in Little Saigon...One of the most heavily hit businesses is the travel industry, with the number of trips to Vietnam plummeting as much as 40 percent, several travel agents said," according to the article. In addition, a Vietnamese travel agent openly admitted that "A large portion of our clients are people who receive SSI or welfare..."

Pro-immigration activists argue that legal immigrants pay taxes, thus "pay their own way" and, therefore, should not be barred from receiving welfare benefits, cash nor non-cash. The truth is that more than half of the post-1980 legal immigrants are low-skilled and, therefore, are unlikely to pay enough taxes to even cover the cost of educating their children. (Incidentally, Annie Chung, an outspoken immigrant-rights advocate working for the Self-Help for the Elderly in San Francisco admitted on KTSF-TV that "...a lot of immigrants...work 'off the books'..."). While many immigrants own businesses, they very rarely hire US-born workers and the jobs they create are usually low-paying. Assuming that they all pay taxes, those low-paying jobs usually do not generate sufficient dollars to cover the cost of all services rendered to the families of the immigrant employees and employers. The fiscal burden of mass immigration can be seen in Miami which has been often cited by proponents of mass immigration as a case in point showing how "immigrants revitalize our neighborhoods." It now faces bankruptcy.

Advocates of high levels of immigration argue that immigrants help stimulate the economy and create jobs by their consumerism. Undoubtedly, immigrant students and immigrant welfare recipients are consumers. They require more teachers, classrooms, welfare, and health care, among other services. But who is paying the bills if not US taxpayers? The above-mentioned *Los Angeles Times* article also mentioned that "...businesses in Little Saigon have also been affected [by anticipated welfare cuts] to some extent, from supermarkets to furniture stores." George Borjas, a Cuban immigrant and an economics professor at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, estimated that in California, 39.5

percent of welfare benefits, cash and non-cash, go to immigrant-headed households. The net costs of legal immigration to US taxpayers in the next ten years will exceed \$500 billion unless the numbers are drastically reduced, according to the updated study on national cost of immigration conducted Dr. Donald Huddle of Rice University in Houston, Texas. Significantly, none of the studies claiming mass immigration as an economic asset has computed the cost of *all* services rendered to immigrants. Also, children of immigrants born in the US are left out in their fiscal analyses.

Can the United States ever balance its budgets at the various levels of government without also addressing legal immigration? What price tag should we give to the daily frustration of dealing with traffic congestion? How can one compute the loss to the United States of having a growing semi-illiterate work force? Has anyone ever tabulated the real cost of environmental degradation caused in large part by exponential population growth?

Immigration advocates often claim that the nation's computer industry depends on immigration for its technological edge. Reports on *60 Minutes*, *48 Hours*, and *CNN Presents*, however, showed that American computer professionals have been replaced with foreign-born workers out of the desire for a cheaper work force. Sun Microsystems, a prominent company in Silicon Valley lobbying heavily for large-scale immigration, has boasted publicly that it has hired 50 Russian programmers at "bargain prices". Hewlett-Packard has also admitted under oath in court that their engineers from India are of lower quality. Indeed, out of the 56 awards given for advances in hardware and software by the Association for Computing Machinery, the nation's main computer science professional society, only one recipient has been an immigrant, as pointed out by Professor Norman Matloff, who teaches Computer Science at UC Davis and whose Chinese immigrant wife works as a software engineer in Silicon Valley. Also, out of 115 awards given by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, only nine recipients have been immigrants.

Dr. Matloff noted the following:

Many Asian American university students study computer science and work as programmers after graduation. While job opportunities are excellent for new graduates in this field, employers tend to shun the mid-career people, claiming their skills are outdated. The employers will not take them even if they retrain because of their high salaries. So they hire new graduates, including foreign students, who will work for even less money in exchange for being sponsored for a green card. Asian American professor Paul Ong of UCLA found that foreign-born engineers in the US are paid up to one-third less than their native counterparts.

Stanford professor Bill Ong Hing has also criticized the computer industry for hiring too many foreign nationals. Many employers are "overdefining job requirements" by requiring specific skills because studies show that programmers can become productive in a new software technology in a month or so, according

to Professor Matloff, former Chair of Affirmative Action Committee at UC Davis. Bill Gates himself has said, "We're not looking for any specific knowledge because things change so fast and it's easy to learn stuff. You've got to have an excitement about software, a certain intelligence...It's not the specific knowledge that counts."

The large numbers of immigrants in our graduate schools are often cited by immigration advocates to support their claim that immigration continues to be vital to the US economy. The sad truth is that this country also has an oversupply of Ph.Ds. This fact has been reported in many publications, such as the December 5, 1994, *Newsweek* and a joint study by William F. Massy of Stanford University and Charles A. Goldman of the RAND Corporation. Even assuming that all immigrants were more talented and productive than US born Americans, should this country write off its own citizens and invest in those of other nations? If we allow mass immigration to displace our native workers, are we suggesting that unemployed Americans, Asians and others, should join our welfare rolls, or resort to crime to support their families? Do pro-family policy-makers realize that extended unemployment can lead to family breakdown, if not crime?

A token reduction in employment-based visas or requiring employers to pay aliens prevailing wages would only be cosmetic changes. Policy-makers truly concerned about protecting American workers at all levels must recognize that expansive family-based immigration, approaching half a million a year, adds hundreds of thousands of mostly low-skilled immediate and future workers to the US labor markets every year. With regard to skill-based immigration, adjudicators at the US Department of Labor simply do not have the technical knowledge to determine the actual prevailing wages of professional jobs. Furthermore, this country does not have a system to verify that employers will actually pay aliens the wages they claim in their petitions. A recent audit by the Labor Department's Inspector General concludes that "the foreign labor programs ... do not protect US workers' jobs or wages from foreign labor..." The report found that tests imposed on US employers to prove a lack of qualified American workers were "perfunctory at best and a sham at worst." In fact, Professor George Borjas has estimated that immigration costs American workers \$133 billion a year in wage depression. Addressing corporate downsizing, which mercilessly sheds US workers, without reducing immigration, which undoubtedly displaces Americans, is clearly a half-measure, at best.

The new welfare and immigration laws will do little to curb the fiscal and environmental impact of the continued high level of legal immigration. The welfare legislation passed in 1986 will continue to give naturalized citizens access to all assistance programs. Also, it did not address the costs of many social services, including public education, the biggest item of expenditure. Those costs will only continue their rapid rise as our population increases.

According to the US Census Bureau's medium projections, if current demographic trends continue, by 2050—during the lifetime of today's teen-agers—America's population will reach almost 400 million. Over 90 percent of this increase will result from the post-1990 immigration. The Census' high-end projections, which are reasonable according to my ten years of experience working on immigration cases, indicate that the US could grow from today's 266 million

to 519 million by the middle of next century. In 1965, India had 495 million people.

Many Americans of Asian ancestry may feel injured by the "Chinese Exclusion Act" and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. However, should we right the past wrong by promoting mass immigration at the expense of American workers and our children? Do we want to leave our grandchildren an America which will resemble the overpopulated China, India, and the Philippines, countries from which many Asian immigrants have left? The Census Bureau's 1994 Current Population Survey shows that the poverty rate of immigrants arriving since 1989 approached 40 percent, more than double that of the US-born population. A 1996 study by a consortium of 50 Asian American advocacy groups also shows a sharp rise in Asian child poverty in San Francisco during the 1980s. Will impoverishing America increase this country's ability to assist developing nations? Our immigration policy also will not provide incentives for overpopulated Third World nations to stop their exponential population growth, a primary cause of widespread poverty in poor nations, if they view the US as a safety valve. Granting political asylum to Chinese on the basis of China's one-child policy, for instance, not only undermines China's desperate need to stop its population growth, it creates an unending chain migration, the main fuel of US population increase.

Modern transportation and telecommunications can now be used to link immigrants with their relatives separated by oceans within hours or minutes. Many countries in the Pacific Rim are experiencing tremendous economic growth. Yet, hundreds of thousands of nationals of those "emerging economies" have been admitted every year to an America which is still struggling with skyrocketing budget deficits. Many recent Chinese immigrants have also "Hui Liu" (returned to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China), saying that the US has fewer opportunities than the Far East. They often leave their children behind for American taxpayers to educate.

In 1995, the United Nations recommended that all countries take a combined total of less than 32,000 refugees. The US alone admitted over 110,000 immigrants that year as "refugees". In 1994, 112,573 refugees" were welcome to the US, while only one-sixth of them were recognized by the international relief community as "special needs refugees" requiring resettlement in a third country (Many Vietnamese "refugees" on SSI do travel home to visit their families as reported above. They obviously have no fear of persecution). Roger Winter, a refugee rights advocate working for the US Committee for Refugees, has estimated that the cost of settling a refugee in the US would cover the expenses of helping 500 refugees abroad.

Yes, we are a nation of immigrants. However, circumstances in this country have drastically changed. The United States now is the greatest debtor nation on earth. Although millions of prospective immigrants are awaiting opportunities, America has 39 million poor Americans, including many existing legal immigrants, who are not yet living the American Dream. To those who wish to help foreign nationals, mass immigration is by no means cost-effective. The cost of providing social services in developing nations, such as education and health care, is only a small fraction of what it costs in the US.

Clearly, current US immigration policy needs to be overhauled. It will do very little to alleviate the condition of billions of foreign poor, but it is bound to change rapidly the US from a first-world nation to that of a third world one.

Many people love children, but very few want unlimited numbers of children. Wise and responsible parents want to limit their family sizes so that they can better provide for their existing children. Similarly, the United States should pass immigration laws that help stabilize the population in this country. We must save our limited resources and job opportunities for Americans of all racial backgrounds as well as existing legal immigrants.

In 1986, Congress passed the mislabelled *Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)* which has legalized close to three million illegal immigrants. Many of them have been recently naturalized and will be petitioning for their immediate and extended families. The *Immigration Act of 1990* raised the ceiling of legal immigration by over 30 percent. Because the current rate of immigration is putting a tremendous burden on our environment, labor markets, public education, social services and infrastructure, we urgently need new legislation capping all legal immigration at 100,000 a year for five years.

The United States needs a "time out" from mass immigration to address existing problems which are not solely caused by immigration but are exacerbated by the continued mass immigration. Such a moratorium would allow us time to develop a long-term immigration policy that is good for existing legal residents and future immigrants. Illegal immigration can be significantly curbed by taking away all the job and benefit magnets in the United States through employer sanctions and tamper-proof documents to verify immigration status. The US also needs to deport illegal persons to send a strong message to prospective illegal immigrants.

Numerous national polls also show strong support among minorities for drastic immigration reductions. The *Wall Street Journal/NBC* poll published in March 1996 showed that the majority of Americans favor freezing all immigration for five years. A July 1995 *CNN/USA Today* poll also indicated that 25 percent of immigrants themselves support such a moratorium. According to the Roper Poll of February, 1996, 52 percent of Hispanics and 73 percent of blacks believe that annual immigration should be less than 300,000 (current rate is about 1.2 million). According to a *San Francisco Examiner* poll taken early February, 1997, 69 percent of Asian voters in California favor limiting welfare benefits in California to two years.

The impact of our current immigration policy is factual and devastating. It is a time bomb that must be addressed. In his State of Union speech, President Clinton said, "the enemy of our time is inaction." If we don't act now, we will find that the enemy is ourselves.

STUDENT NOTES

1996 Survey on the Public Policy Concerns of the Indian-American Community

Aneesh Chopra, Ajay Kuntamukkala, and Keith Reeves*

The authors analyze the results from the 1996 Survey on Public Policy Concerns of the Indian-American Community. They examine Indian-American (IA) opinions on policy issues, political participation among IAs, partisanship, and ideology among IAs. They argue that "the most effective way to mobilize the Indian-American community is to naturalize Indian immigrants."

INTRODUCTION

Indian-Americans (IAs) have achieved, in large part, the "American Dream." The community boasts the highest median household income and the highest proportion of college graduates of any immigrant group in the United States.¹ The "American Dream," however, involves more than economic and educational success. Political participation is a critical element of an ethnic community's success in American society. In the political arena, IAs have had limited success.² To maximize political participation, IAs must effectively mobilize their community.

The *1996 Survey on Public Policy Concerns of the Indian-American Community* (the Survey) is the first step in identifying the community's current policy interests, partisan preferences, and participatory patterns for the purposes of mobilization. Our results are a snapshot of the IA community and offer critical insight to those seeking to mobilize and influence IAs. In particular, this article

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will benefit existing political organizations and leaders seeking to represent the IA community by illuminating its needs, interests, and demands.

Based on our data, we find the most effective way to mobilize the IA community is to naturalize Indian immigrants. The data from the 1992 presidential election show that the majority of age-eligible IAs with US citizenship registered to vote and, once registered, actually voted. The barrier to IA political participation has not been a general apathy or failure to register, but rather, the large numbers of IAs who do not possess US citizenship.

For the political parties, the IA community represents an opportunity to gain support. Although more IAs are Democrats than Republicans, few IAs are strong supporters of either party. The issues of most importance to IAs are crime and education, issues which both political parties struggle to claim as their strength. Ideologically, a majority of IAs are moderate, offering a level playing field upon which both parties can bargain.

This survey analysis is not meant to be the final word on this subject, but rather, just the beginning. We expect this analysis to leave a reader with more questions than answers, though we are confident there is enough material for one to challenge our assertions and posit a few more. Through discourse based on quantitative data, we can all work towards a better understanding of the IA community and its political interests.

METHODOLOGY & DEMOGRAPHICS

A. Methodology

The Survey was conducted by telephone within the United States from September 23 to 28, 1996, among a nationwide cross section of 402 IAs. We defined IAs as residents of the United States who identified themselves as "Asian Indian" on the US Census form.

The Telephone Centre (based in New Rochelle, NY) conducted the phone interviews and the Genesys Corporation generated the sample using the surname methodology. Genesys crossed a list of Asian Indian surnames with a national directory of published telephone numbers.

In theory, with a sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the results are statistically significant plus or minus six percent of what they would be if the entire IA community had been polled with complete accuracy.³ There are, however, several potential sources of sampling errors, including the following: the exclusion of households with unlisted phone numbers or without a phone; the responses of those who refused to be interviewed; the wording of questions; and inaccurate demographic profiling. We addressed every possible source of error given our budget constraints to minimize statistical bias.

B. Demographics

For the purpose of categorizing our results, we reviewed a number of critical demographic factors. Most respondents were college graduates (69%), which includes those who had completed post-graduate degrees (31%). A majority of respondents identified themselves as professionals (56%). Though we found a

broad range of household incomes, a plurality earned between \$30,000 and \$74,000 (25%).

The majority of respondents were between the ages of 30 to 49 (54%), followed by younger respondents between 18 and 29 years (29%), older respondents between 50 and 64 years (15%), and seniors (2%).

Most respondents were male (62%), American citizens (61%), and born outside of the United States (88%). Of those born outside the United States, most respondents were born in India (79%), followed by Pakistan (9%). Most of the respondents born outside of the United States immigrated between 1980 and 1990 (40%), followed by the years 1970 to 1980 (29%), the years after 1990 (23%), and the years before 1970 (8%). The majority of the respondents were Hindu (67%), followed by Muslims (15%), Jains (5%), and Christians (5%).

PUBLIC OPINION ON POLICY ISSUES

A. Crime and Education are the Most Important Issues of Concern for Indian-Americans (IAs)

Although there is no clear consensus within the IA community on public policy issues, crime and education appeared most frequently when respondents were asked to select the most important issue facing the United States. Respondents chose among a list of five issues to conform with several national surveys conducted at roughly the same time. IAs stated that crime (32%) was the most important issue, followed by education (26%). Of lesser concern were the economy (13%), moral crisis (10%), healthcare reform (9%), and a balanced budget (7%).

We observed some variation by age group. Professional-aged IAs (30-49) were evenly divided between education (29%) and crime (29%). Middle-aged IAs (50-64) favored the economy (19%) over education (11%) as the second major issue. One explanation for this variation is that younger professionals are more likely to have children enrolled in the educational system and, thus, will care more for their children's interests than their own.

We found no empirical explanation for why IAs selected crime as the most important issue. According to a *Wall Street Journal* poll conducted the week of December 6th, 1996, crime and education tied as the most important issues facing the American people, so one may argue the data reflected broader social trends.⁴ There is, however, anecdotal evidence for two alternative explanations. First, the concern for crime may be based primarily on the perception of the scope of hate crimes against IAs; and second, crime may have been a prominent issue at the time the respondents were sampled, implying a temporary interest in the matter.⁵

The implications are quite profound for institutions interested in using public policy issues to mobilize IAs. On the one hand, if IA community concerns are different from those of the American public, a political organization would need to invest resources in order to identify and respond to those differences. On the other hand, if these concerns are related to those of the American public, then political groups would be better served by directing resources to alternative mobilization efforts, such as developing a sense of community, targeting IA leaders for individual honors, and reaching the voters first through effective outreach.

Alternatively, IAs' concern for crime may provide an opening for community political organizations to grow stronger by publicizing their efforts to address hate crimes.

Another highly cited issue in the survey was education. It was no surprise that education was among the most important concerns because IAs, as a group, are very well-educated. Nearly 69 percent of the respondents were college graduates or had post-graduate degrees. Given these demographics, education is more likely a long-term than temporary concern. Community leaders may not agree on the direction of educational reform, but their recognition of the issue's importance is essentially a requirement for engaging the IA community.

B. Several Issues are Critically Important for a Congressional Candidate to Address

Congressional campaigns often tailor specific messages to ethnic constituencies. We measured the relative importance of certain issues for candidates to address when seeking IA support. During a congressional campaign, IAs rated knowing a candidate's stance on affirmative action in higher education (66%), immigration (54%), and American relations with India (50%) as "very important". They considered welfare reform (48%) and affirmative action in federal contracting (26%) as "less important". The generation gap appeared once again, as middle-aged IAs were less interested in knowing a candidate's position on affirmative action in higher education (53%), while the younger and older generations were quite interested (66%).⁶

Although the survey did not test support for a specific policy, we find it particularly interesting that affirmative action when applied to federal contracting is less of a concern to IAs than affirmative action in higher education. Financially, IAs benefit more from affirmative action in federal contracting, where IAs are given minority status for preferential treatment, than in education, where Asians are usually a non-preferred minority.

The best explanation for this discrepancy is ignorance of the financial benefits associated with minority preferences in federal contracts. While the issue of affirmative action in college admissions affects more IA families than the targeted benefits of minority contracts to IA businessmen, respondents were free to rank both as very important. The ignorance gap appears to close with younger IAs (18-29), who were more interested than older IAs (50+) in affirmative action in federal contracting (31% vs. 18%).

Among the additional opportunities for mobilization we found, the common concern for immigration and American relations with India actually cut across all IAs, including citizens and younger, US-born populations, who may not have a direct interest in further immigration. We attribute these perception-based concerns as evidence that there exists a newly-developing IA identity, which recognizes the importance of India and her people.

C. IAs Overwhelmingly Support English as the Official Language

Respondents generally supported legislation to make English the official language of the United States (85%). Support for the legislation cut through every demographic characteristic, including non-citizens. Although we have no empirical evidence, we believe there may be several explanations for this support. First, many Indian immigrants knew English before their arrival in the United States and may not be threatened by legislation making it the official language. Second, the experience of Indian immigrants with a chaotic system of multiple languages in their homeland may predispose them to support one official language in their new home.

From a public policy perspective, IAs do not appear to understand the implications of designating English as the official language. If such a policy developed into law, non-English speaking immigrants would lose access to many services that would require it. Traditional supporters for such legislation are generally regarded as anti-immigrant, a group with which the IA community would not form a coalition. We believe organizers should not rely on IA support for this initiative to mobilize the community, given the negative policy impact and political affiliation with anti-immigrant groups.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

A. Registered Voters Participated in the 1992 Presidential Election

We critically analyzed the 1992 presidential election to examine the behavior of registered voters in the IA community. The majority of age-eligible IAs with US citizenship were registered to vote in the 1992 presidential election (56%). Once registered, IAs overwhelmingly voted in the 1992 presidential election (86%). Age-eligible IAs with US citizenship, however, were a small fraction of the respondents (34%).

Since resources for political activities are limited in the IA community, it is necessary to focus spending on programs that will generate the most impact on IA political participation. The data suggest that citizenship and voter eligibility are more important than registration. The vast majority of non-participating IAs cannot vote because they are not citizens. Once naturalized, a majority register to vote. Once registered, IAs have voted at high rates (86%). We believe that focusing efforts on naturalizing non-citizens will have a larger impact on voter registration rates than spending resources on voter registration drives.

B. Few IAs Personally Connect with Political Officials

Although much of the community does not participate in politics, a small group of IAs are active. Few IAs have contacted public officials about an issue in the last two years (11%), and similarly, few IAs have been contacted by a public official (12%). Even fewer have worked for a political party or candidate (4%).

There are always barriers to political involvement, including: apathy, process ignorance, a lack of motivation to speak out on any particular issue, a lack of time, and of course, a lack of faith in accomplishing anything through the system.

These barriers are difficult to overcome. One option for leaders in the IA community is to aggressively educate IAs about the potential benefits of political involvement and to provide them with the tools necessary to participate effectively. Another approach is to target existing participants and provide them with the necessary training to assist the development of the IA community's political profile. As organizations develop mobilization plans, these political participation variables will serve as strong reference points to mark progress over time.

C. IAs Lack a Profiled National Political Organization

We asked whether the respondents could identify a national political organization that addressed the political concerns of their ethnic community. The vast majority did not believe that there were any such national organizations (73%). The remaining respondents (27%) did not name the same group, although the Federation of Indian Americans (FIA) was named most often (10%), followed by the Association of American Physicians from India (AAPI) (4%), the Indian-American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE) (2%), and the Asian Association of Hospitality Operators of America (AAHOA) (2%). Respondents were split on whether the organization they identified fairly represented their views (42%) or not (38%).

There are significant opportunities to mobilize the IA community because of an apparent leadership vacuum. The data show that currently active IA political organizations have had little success in becoming visible and effective representatives of IA interests. For instance, of those who identified a national political organization that works for the IA community (27%), the vast majority named one which nobody else had identified (82%).

What are the implications for IA mobilization? Political parties and business societies have an opportunity to fill the void as the IA community develops its political identity. Another possibility is for a strong, nationally-recognized IA cultural organization to move into the political arena by educating members as to the benefits of political involvement. Alternatively, established IA political organizations can view the lack of any mandate as an opportunity to redefine their strategy and build a stronger identity.

D. The Monied Interests are Important, But Not Much Different From IAs Generally

Since it is small in size, the IA community is not a powerful voting bloc, like the African American or Hispanic communities. Instead, IAs increasingly use their financial resources, as well as their professional status, to voice their concerns and influence public policy outcomes. We assessed the extent, the amount, and the recipients of IA financial contributors.

Few IAs have contributed money to a political candidate or party in the last two years (10%), though U.S. citizens gave slightly more (15%). Non-U.S. citizens are currently allowed to financially contribute to political parties or candidates only if they are legal residents, though recent fundraising controversies have compelled Congress to reevaluate this law. Of those who contributed, most gave under \$100 (51%), followed by contributions between \$100 and \$499 (19%),

\$500 and \$999 (16%), and \$1000 or over (7%). Of the citizens who gave money, the economy (21%) was cited as the most important issue facing the nation.

The majority of those who contributed are ideologically moderate (51%), which is similar to the ideological distribution of the broader sample. The majority of those who contributed money identified themselves as Democrats (60%), while the remainder split between Republicans (22%) and independents (16%). The fund-raisers were disproportionately men (78%), were professionals by occupation (73%), earned over \$50,000 a year (84%), and graduated college (78%).

On issues of national importance, donors are concerned about crime and education and disagreed with the efforts of the 1994 Republican Congress (60%). They can be a political force within the Democratic Party, as fund-raisers favored Clinton (63%) over Dole (16%).

E. IAs Follow National Affairs More Than Local Issues, But Still Value Ethnic Newspapers

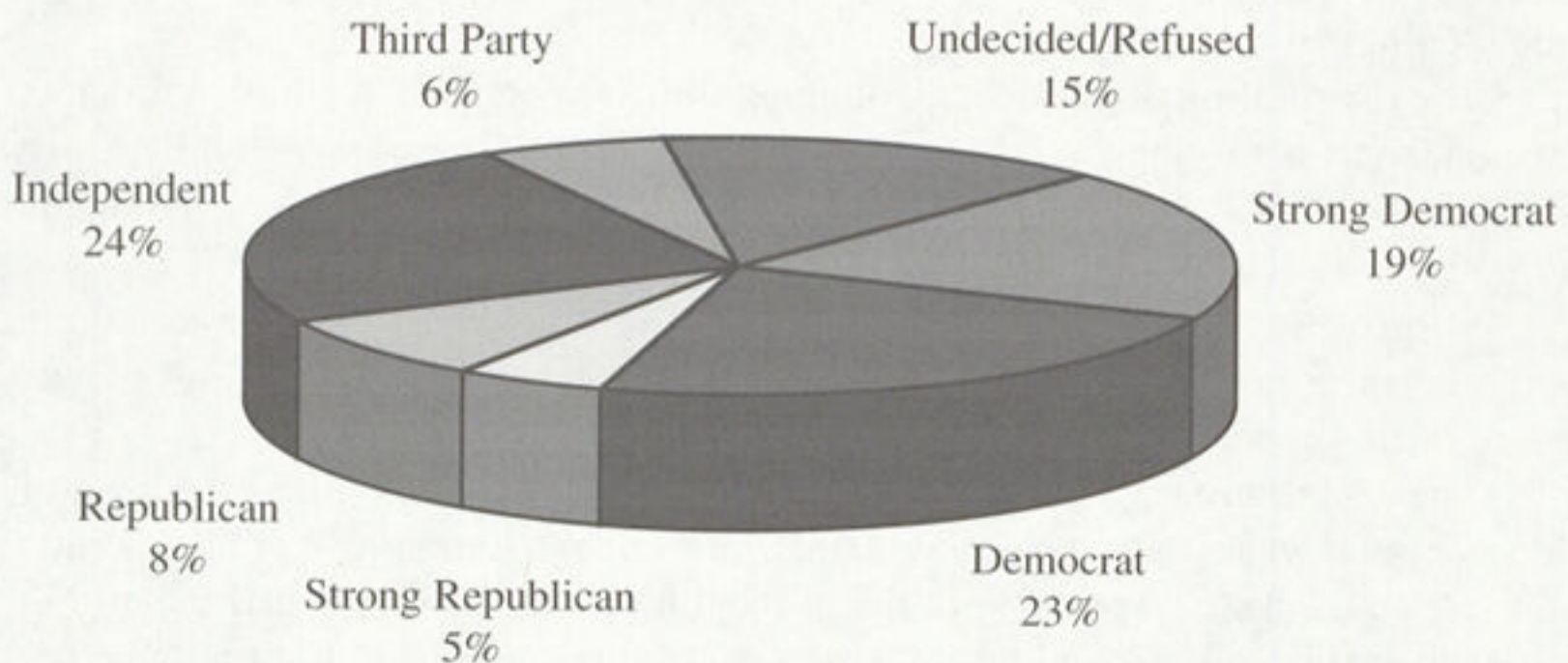
We assessed the respondents' relative interest in the different levels of the political system and the importance of the IA media. In general, IAs tend to follow national affairs most or some of the time (76%) compared to local or community affairs (64%). Respondents get most of their information about national and community affairs from television (67%) compared to newspapers (20%). Ethnic newspapers, however, are very or somewhat important to the IA community (72%) as sources of political news.

IAs are interested in political affairs, but may not act on that interest. They are interested in ethnic newspapers, although they do not require a candidate to discuss his or her position on India in order to win their support. The newspapers fill an important void in developing an IA identity, though that has not translated into a national political mobilization effort.

PARTISANSHIP AND IDEOLOGY

A. More IAs Identify Themselves as Democrats Rather than Republicans

Figure 1. Political Association of Indian-Americans



The IA community does not strongly support any one party, although the plurality of IAs support Democrats. More respondents were Democrats (42%) than Republicans (13%) or independents/other (30%). When asked if respondents were "strong" or "not very strong" partisans, a majority of Democrats (53%) and Republicans (58%) were "not very strong". Overall, there are more "strong" Democrats (19%) than "strong" Republicans (5%). Of those who were neither Democrats nor Republicans, more were "closer" to the Democratic Party (37%) than to the Republican Party (16%). There was a substantial number who were closer to neither party (24%).

More IAs identify themselves as Democrats, but a majority of IAs are not members of the Democratic Party. With the many independents and "no preference" respondents, Republicans can form a coalition to outnumber the Democrats. In addition, Republicans and Democrats can capture the "soft" partisans, as the majority of IAs do not have "strong" partisan preferences.

The 1994 Republican Congress, however, did not win majority support from the IA community. More respondents opposed the initiatives of the 1994 Republican Congress (49%) than those supported (36%). Unless Republicans address these negative perceptions, they cannot expect to convert many IAs.

The most compelling story in the partisan analysis is the demographic make-up of each party's constituency. Anecdotes and conjecture currently depict Republicans as wealthy professionals that are male and older. The data demonstrates, however, that support for the Republican Party is stronger among the younger IAs:

<u>Party Preference</u>	<u>Ages 18-29</u>	<u>30-49</u>	<u>50+</u>
Democrat	40%	44%	47%
Republican	16%	12%	13%

B. IAs are moderate in their political ideology

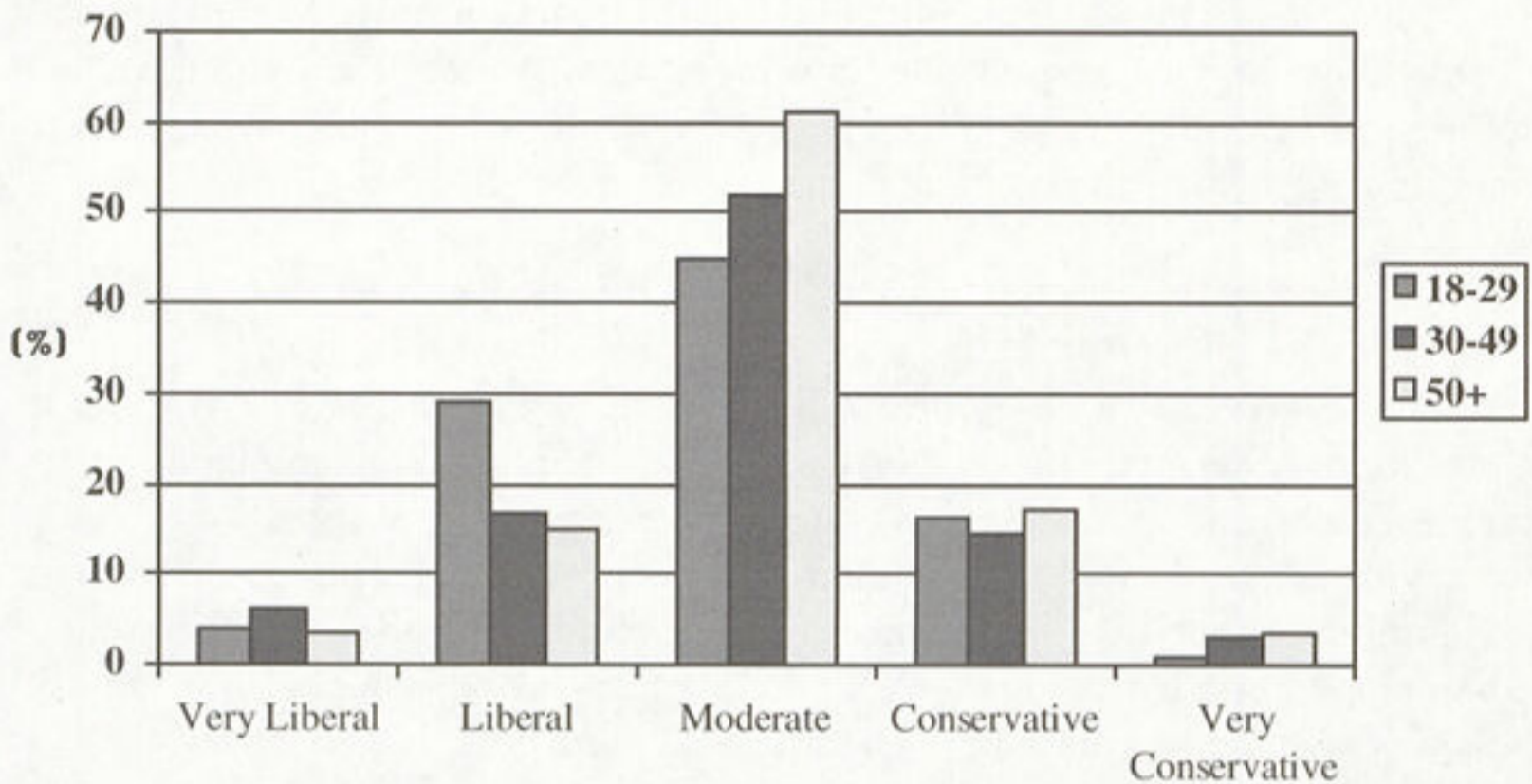
A critical factor in assessing partisan preferences among IAs is to gauge their political ideology. In the survey, ideology was measured on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as very conservative, 3 as moderate, and 5 as very liberal. The labels were not defined, so there is some discrepancy based on each respondent's perceptions of the ideological scale.

The distribution of political ideology is almost a perfect bell curve, with most respondents identifying themselves as moderates (50%). There were slightly fewer conservatives (17%) than liberals (20%), while very conservative respondents (2%) were also slightly fewer than very liberal respondents (5%).

Surprisingly, when viewing the distribution by age, we find younger voters slightly more liberal, even though, as noted above, the Republican Party finds more of its support among younger voters.

The IA community is essentially "up for grabs" for both parties because of ideology and weak partisanship. With this data, either a Republican or Democratic activist could justify spending political capital to capture this constituency. In order to justify any expenditures, however, each party must determine whether

Figure 2. Distribution of Political Ideology Among Indian-Americans



the IA community offers enough benefits in the form of votes, donations, professional volunteers, and the potential for capturing other immigrant groups.

The ideological profile is also a setback for the parties, as both often prefer to work on behalf of core constituency groups. This subject is a matter of debate, but the important point is that as a moderate constituency that has strongly supported President Clinton, both Republican and Democratic IAs have reason to cheer. Democrats can encourage party leaders to fight and keep this key swing vote. Republicans can argue that a strong case can swing this constituency to their camp.

1996 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

We asked the respondents which candidate they would vote for if the presidential election were held today (September 23-28, 1996). Overwhelmingly, IAs chose Bill Clinton (66%), with Bob Dole (9%) and Ross Perot (3%) receiving little support. When those who would not vote, could not vote, or had no opinion/refused were probed further, most of the respondents were leaning towards Bill Clinton (52%), with few leaning towards Bob Dole (6%) and Ross Perot (2%).

For the purposes of comparison, we asked the respondents for whom they voted in the 1992 presidential election. Bill Clinton won the majority of votes among IAs in 1992 (53%), while President Bush (15%) and Ross Perot (7%) received substantially fewer votes. Bill Clinton has retained most of his 1992 supporters (82%) and has captured substantial number of 1992 Bush supporters (40%), as well as Perot supporters (50%).

IAs may have overwhelmingly supported Clinton because his campaign addressed the public policy concerns of the community and he was perceived as ideologically moderate. First, the Clinton campaign addressed issues that IAs

believed were most important: crime and education. Clinton was able to take credit for the Crime Bill, while Bob Dole had little credibility on education. Second, Bill Clinton sought the support of the "vital center" and, hence, was very appealing to the ideologically moderate IA community. He campaigned as the moderate who was responsible for bringing down the deficit, signing welfare reform into law, and creating jobs. He claimed he curbed Republican excesses in the Congress by supporting education and preserving Medicare.

CONCLUSION

The *1996 Survey on Public Policy Concerns of the Indian-American Community* is the first chapter in what will be a continuing examination of IA political mobilization. In compiling quantitative data for the purposes of analysis, we have given a new tool to community leaders or outside parties to test various assumptions about IA policy concerns and political attitudes. By offering a common platform for dialogue, we hope all readers take this opportunity to posit new ways for the IA community to gain political success.

Ultimately, the IA community will be a case study for broader social scientists to understand immigration and assimilation. Can financial and educational success suffice for immigrants, or must they strive for political participation? We believe so, and have prepared this essay for everyone to assist in that process. By this time next year, we hope any subsequent analysis will reflect a positive change in the level of IA political involvement.

Endnotes

1. Based on 1990 census data, the Asian-Indian median household income was \$48,320 and nearly 64.9% of Asian-Indians held bachelor's degrees or higher.
2. By 1996, there were no IA members of Congress, or cabinet-level appointees in the Executive Branch, although President Clinton has appointed several lower-level staff members. At the state level, two IAs serve as elected legislators (Kumar Barve and Satveer Chaudhary are Democrats in the Maryland and Minnesota legislatures) and one serves in a gubernatorial cabinet (Bobby Jindhal in Louisiana).
3. Based on a statistical table in *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, (May 1996): 52-53.
4. *Wall Street Journal*, (13 December 1996, R1).
5. New Jersey State House Speaker Chuck Haytaian, in a private discussion (June 1995), attributed the success of the New Jersey Hate Crimes Bill, which doubles penalties on violent offenders convicted of racial or ethnic bias, to the grassroots efforts of IAs in the aftermath of the "Dotbusters" attacks. "Dotbusters" is the name of a Jersey City gang who preyed on IAs.
6. Middle-aged IAs are between 50-64 years old; younger generations are less than 50; seniors are 65+.

Appendix: The Survey Instrument

SECTION A: PUBLIC OPINION ON PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

1. First, in your opinion, which of the following is the most important issue facing the United States?

Crime	129	32%
Moral Crisis	41	10%
Economy	53	13%
Health Care Reform	37	9%
Balanced Budget	28	7%
Education	103	26%
No opinion	9	2%
Refused	2	1%

2. I am going to read you a list of issues that may be raised in current election campaigns. When deciding whether or not to vote for a candidate, tell me how important the candidate's position on each issue is. Please answer very important, fairly important, or not important.

a. The candidate's position on welfare reform?

Very Important	191	48%
Fairly Important	160	40%
Not Important	41	10%
No opinion	9	2%
Refused	1	0%

b. The candidate's position on immigration?

Very Important	217	54%
Fairly Important	139	35%
Not Important	38	9%
No opinion	6	1%
Refused	2	1%

c. The candidate's position on affirmative action in higher education?

Very Important	270	67%
Fairly Important	88	22%
Not Important	39	10%
No opinion	5	1%

d. The candidate's position on American relations with India?

Very Important	202	50%
Fairly Important	133	33%
Not Important	60	15%
No opinion	7	2%

e. The candidate's position on affirmative action in federal contracting?

Very Important	105	26%
Fairly Important	180	45%
Not Important	77	19%
No opinion	37	9%
Refused	3	1%

3. Are there any national organizations focused on the political concerns of your ethnic community?

Yes	50	12%
No	295	73%
No opinion	55	14%
Refused	2	1%

4. What is the name of that organization?

F.I.A.	5	10%
A.A.P.I.	2	4%
I.A.F.P.E.	1	2%
A.A.H.O.A.	1	2%

4a. Does that organization fairly represent your political views?

Yes	21	42%
No	19	38%
No opinion	10	20%

5. Would you support legislation to make English the official language of the United States?

Yes	343	85%
No	50	13%
No opinion	9	2%

SECTION B: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

6. In talking to people about elections, we have found that when Bill Clinton and George Bush ran for president in 1992, a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have the time. Did you vote in the 1992 presidential election?

Yes	117	29%
No	284	71%
No opinion	1	0%

6. Were you registered to vote for the 1992 presidential election (Of those who did not vote in 1992)?

Yes	19	7%
No	266	93%

6b. Who did you vote for in the 1992 presidential race?

Bill Clinton	62	53%
George Bush	18	15%
Ross Perot	8	7%
No opinion	15	13%
Refused	14	12%

7. Do you generally support the initiatives of the Republican Congress elected in 1994?

Yes	145	36%
No	197	49%
No opinion	55	14%
Refused	5	1%

8. If the 1996 presidential election were being held today, for whom would you vote?

Bill Clinton	266	66%
Bob Dole	35	9%
Ross Perot	13	3%
Wouldn't vote	12	3%
Vote for other	1	0%
Cannot Vote	20	5%
No opinion	45	11%
Refused	10	3%

9. At the moment, which candidate are you leaning more towards (Of those who did not select a candidate)?

Bill Clinton	46	52%
Bob Dole	5	6%
Ross Perot	2	2%
Wouldn't vote	3	4%
Vote for other	1	1%
Cannot Vote	7	8%
No opinion	18	20%
Refused	6	7%

10. Have you worked for a political party or candidate in the last two years?

Yes	18	4%
No	382	95%
No opinion	2	1%

11. Have you contacted a public official about an issue in the last two years?

Yes	45	11%
No	356	89%
No opinion	1	0%

11a. Have you been contacted by a public official in the last two years?

Yes	49	12%
No	352	88%
No opinion	1	0%

12. Have you contributed money to a political candidate or a political party in the last two years?

Yes	43	10%
No	356	89%
No opinion	3	1%

12a. If so, on average, how much did you give to each candidate you supported?

Under \$100	22	51%
\$100 - \$499	8	19%
\$500 - \$999	7	16%
\$1000 or over	3	7%
No opinion	3	7%

13. Some people seem to follow what's going on in *government* and *community affairs* most of the time; others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in your local government and community most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly at all, or never?

Most of the time	108	27%
Some of the time	148	37%
Only now and then	65	16%
Hardly at all	31	8%
Never	40	10%
No opinion	10	2%

14. Would you say you follow what's going on in national affairs or the federal government most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly at all, or never?

Most of the time	173	43%
Some of the time	131	33%
Only now and then	43	11%
Hardly at all	22	5%
Never	25	6%
No opinion	8	2%

15. What one source do you rely on most for political information?

Television	268	67%
Radio	21	5%
Newspapers	79	20%
Magazines	9	2%
Friends and family	3	1%
Internet/on-line	15	4%
Religious organization	2	0%
No opinion	5	1%

16. How important are ethnic newspapers that cater to your community as sources of news for you?

Very important	133	33%
Somewhat important	158	39%
Not important	105	26%
No opinion	6	2%

SECTION C: PARTISANSHIP / IDEOLOGY

17. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as:

A Democrat	170	42%
An Independent	96	24%
A Republican	52	13%
Other	25	6%
No preference	24	6%
No opinion	32	8%
Refused	3	1%

18. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic or Republican Party (Of Independents and Other)?

Democratic Party	67	37%
Republican Party	29	16%
Neither	42	24%
No opinion	38	21%
Refused	4	2%

18a. Would you call yourself a strong [Republican/Democrat] or a not very strong [Republican/Democrat]?

Strong	97	44%
Not very strong	120	54%
No opinion	5	2%

19. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as:

Very conservative	10	2%
Conservative	70	17%
Moderate; middle of the road	200	50%
Liberal	80	20%
Very Liberal	18	5%
No opinion	20	5%
Refused	4	1%

SECTION D: DEMOGRAPHICS

20. What was the last grade of school you completed?

8th grade or less	4	1%
Some high school	30	7%
Graduated high school	58	14%
Some college	32	8%
Graduated college	152	38%
Post-graduate	123	31%
Refused	3	1%

21. What is your occupation and main job?

Professional/Doctor	27	7%
Professional/Engineer	54	13%
Professional/Other	145	36%
Small business person	32	8%
Administrative/Clerical	21	5%
Full-time student	70	18%
Other	44	11%
No opinion	5	1%
Refused	4	1%

21a. In one word, please describe your occupation (Of Other):

Housewife	16	36%
Cab Driver	4	9%
Other	24	55%

22. If you added together the yearly incomes, before taxes, of all the members of your household for the last year, 1996, would the total be:

Under \$20,000	43	11%
\$20,000 to \$29,000	48	12%
\$30,000 to \$49,000	75	19%
\$50,000 to \$74,000	66	16%
\$75,000 to \$100,000	44	11%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	27	7%
\$150,000 or over	20	5%
No opinion	42	10%
Refused	37	9%

23. What is your gender?

Male	250	62%
Female	152	38%

24. What is the year of your birth? (compiled as age)

18-29	103	26%
30-49	191	48%
50-64	53	13%
65+	6	1%
Refused	49	12%

25. Are you an American citizen?

Yes	244	61%
No	156	39%
Refused	2	0%

26. Were you born in the United States?

Yes	47	12%
No	354	88%
Refused	1	0%

27. In which country were you born?

India	278	79%
Pakistan	33	9%
Bangladesh	12	3%
Other	28	8%
No opinion	2	1%
Refused	1	0%

28. In what year did you come to the United States?

Before 1970	28	7%
1970-1980	98	24%
1980-1990	139	35%
After 1990	79	20%
Refused	58	14%

29. Generally speaking, how would you describe your religious background?

Hindu	270	67%
Muslim	62	15%
Jain	17	5%
Christian	18	5%
Sikh	13	3%
Other	22	5%

Poverty Among Southeast Asians in the United States

Cuong Quy Huynh and Deanna L. Pagnini*

There are differences in the overall distribution of poverty among Southeast Asian groups in the United States. When compared to other Southeast Asian groups, the Vietnamese are the least likely to be poor. Because they have had more time to settle and become established in this country, recent Vietnamese immigrants tap into existing resources. For example, Vietnamese immigrants can have access to people who speak both Vietnamese and English and who can facilitate their entry into the labor market. In contrast, there is evidence that the Hmongs and the Cambodians have access to fewer resources. Hence, these groups may need special services or help with their transition to life in the United States. Public policy recommendations include continuing and increasing funding of English as a Second Language (ESL) and job training programs. These programs will help build human capital in all Southeast Asian American groups, notably the Hmongs and the Cambodians.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the Asian population in the United States has overtaken non-white Hispanics as the fastest-growing minority population in terms of percentage growth (Lee and Edmonston, 1994). Although generally treated as a monolithic group, the Asian population consists of a number of different ethnic groups who came to the United States under very dissimilar circumstances. An increasing percentage of this population is made up of immigrants and refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia who arrived after the end of the Vietnam War (Tenhula, 1991; US Office of Refugee Settlement, 1991).

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Previous studies of the Asian population in the United States using aggregate data tended to portray Asians as a "successful" minority (based on mean or median family income and educational attainment). More detailed analyses, however, have shown that significant social inequality exists within this population. This stratification is particularly evident among immigrants and refugees and shows up in disaggregated income and occupational statistics (Gardner et al., 1985; Wong, 1986; Lee, 1994). For example, in 1989, 62 percent of Hmongs, 42 percent of Cambodians, 32 percent of Laotians, and 24 percent of Vietnamese lived in poverty (O'Hare and Felt, 1991; US Bureau of the Census, 1991a; Lee, 1994; Toji, 1995).

In this paper, we used data from the 1990 US Census Public Use Microdata Sample to examine poverty among Southeast Asians in six metropolitan areas in the United States. Since many of the factors that predict poverty among immigrants are related - education, occupation, and the ability to speak English - we used a multivariate framework to separate the most important variables. We also controlled for the metropolitan area of residence to see whether it affects the likelihood that an individual will live in poverty, over and above individual level variables.

As noted above, there is variation in poverty rates based on ethnicity within the Southeast Asian population. Is this variation due simply to compositional differences, or does ethnicity still matter after we control for the differences between the groups? Lee (1994: 543) has noted three reasons why this kind of research is necessary:

First, the U.S. Asian population continues to be absent from most official and scholarly publications on poverty. Census reports on poverty provide detailed tabulations only for the majority non-Hispanic white, black, and Hispanic populations, and poverty researchers have usually ignored the Asian population. Second, little is known about poverty among immigrants. Current high levels of immigration to the United States should be given more attention by researchers on poverty as the foreign-born population grows. Finally, information on poverty among Asian immigrants contains important implications for public assistance and immigration policies. If poverty rates are high among Asian immigrants, areas with large Asian populations obviously face increased pressures on limited resources. In addition, future federal immigration legislation may be influenced by immigrant poverty.

In the next sections we review previous work on Asian immigration and poverty, discuss the data and methods, and present our findings.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Asian immigration to the United States increased dramatically after the *1965 Immigration Act (Act)*. The *Act* abolished the previous national-origin quotas under which the United States admitted only a few thousand Asian immigrants annually. Instead, it extended the annual total admission to 170,000 immigrants

from all Asian countries, with no country permitted to send more than 20,000. There was an important exemption from this quota, however, spouses, minor children, and parents of US citizens would not count as part of the 20,000 person limit (Takaki, 1989; Walker-Moffat, 1995).

The *Act* was not expected to change the total number of immigrants from Asian countries radically. Since those who qualified for the exemption have to be related to present citizens (who are mainly of European ancestry), it was assumed that these relatives would also come from Europe (Takaki, 1989). The outcome, however, was quite different because far more Asian than European family members took advantage of the exemption.

Nonetheless, Asian immigrants are not a homogenous group. Unlike many of their Asian counterparts, Southeast Asians arrived mainly as refugees rather than immigrants. Refugees leave their native countries to avoid political, religious, social, and other types of persecution, whereas immigrants often deliberately choose to leave their homes. This dissimilarity differentiates the experiences of refugees and immigrants in their new countries. Since refugees are less likely to know the political, economic, and the social systems in their host country, they are less adequately prepared for their new environment. The American government recognizes these distinctions and gives refugees a special legal-political status which facilitates access to a wide variety of public assistance programs to which immigrants are not equally entitled (Rumbaut, 1995).

The difference in the reasons for migration reflects the varied characteristics of those who come to the United States. While recent immigrant flows from other Asian countries are characterized by large proportions of highly educated professionals and managers, Southeast Asian flows (with the exception of the "first wave" of 1975 evacuees from South Vietnam) contain far greater proportions of rural and less educated people (Rumbaut, 1995). After comparing the post-1965 immigrants with those who came before, Morrison Wong (1986) concluded that the newer immigrants (made up largely of Southeast Asians) have fewer social and economic resources. They tend to have less education, cannot speak English as well, and have fewer occupational skills. These factors result in a higher probability for poverty in the United States.

Thus, as a group, Southeast Asians differ from their Asian counterparts. Even within the Southeast Asian population, there are many differences between ethnic groups. They have dissimilar backgrounds, languages, religions, cultures, and often adversarial histories (Vietnam and Cambodia were at war during the late 1970s). Some of the Southeast Asians who migrated to the United States were elite members of former American-backed governments. Others were Vietnamese and Chinese "boat people". Some were survivors of the Cambodian "killing fields" in the late 1970s. Others were illiterate farmers from the highlands of northern Laos (Rumbaut, 1995).

According to Luangprasuet (1987), Cambodian and the Laotian are more influenced by Indian (South Asian) civilization, while the Vietnamese and the Hmong culture (to a lesser extent) have been influenced by the Chinese-Confucian tradition (Trueba et al., 1993). These cultural traditions have important implications for family structure and family life. The Chinese model builds upon vertically-

organized, hierarchical, patriarchal, highly disciplined, and extended family systems which instill deeply felt norms of filial piety and ancestral worship. The South Asian model is more nuclear, neolocal, bilateral, and matrifocal—more akin to American kinship patterns (Trueba et al., 1993). Another difference is the language. Vietnamese, Hmong, and Laotian are all tonal languages, while the Cambodian language is not (Bankston, 1995). With regard to religion, between 29 to 40 percent of Vietnamese Americans are Roman Catholics, most Laotians and Cambodians are Buddhist, and the Hmong tend to be believers of spirits and shamanism (Weider 1995; Bankston 1995).

These differences may explain the ethnic variation in poverty as each group may adapt to life in the United States differently. Several studies have focused on the adaptation of Asian immigrants in the United States. Lee (1994) analyzed the likelihood of poverty for Asian Americans and Asian immigrants using data from the 1989 Current Population Survey. She found that poverty was concentrated among immigrants, especially recent ones. She attributed the differences to the lower levels of English comprehension, fewer job networks, larger family sizes, lower educational levels, and lower wages. Wong (1986) also noted the importance of these factors for determining poverty. Gardner et al., (1985) found that Southeast Asians are generally less familiar with Western culture, have less experience at the kinds of jobs found in urban areas, and are disproportionately in lower paying jobs.

In the above studies, however, ethnic differences were noted but not closely examined. Gardner et al. (1985) found that poverty was higher among Vietnamese families than other Asian groups. The Vietnamese were less educated, spoke little or no English, had less experience at holding jobs in urban occupations, were generally less familiar with Western culture, and were more likely to depend on public assistance.

When compared with other Southeast Asian immigrants, however, the Vietnamese are the most successful with regard to poverty. Of the four Southeast Asian ethnic groups in this study, the Vietnamese have had the longest history in the United States. Thus, they have had more time to settle and become established in this country, allowing the more recent Vietnamese immigrants to tap into existing resources. For example, they have access to people who speak both Vietnamese and English and who can facilitate their entry into the labor market. In comparison, Strand (1989) has found that Hmong immigrants have had difficulties in even obtaining information about jobs. While we cannot measure the kinds of skills the immigrants brought with them to the United States, there is evidence that Cambodians and Hmongs have fewer experiences in their home countries that translate well into the American economy (Reder, 1985; Strand, 1989).

This previous work on the adaptation of Asian immigrants yields several important hypotheses on important factors in determining poverty rates. Our study differs from previous work in that we focus on the factors relating poverty specifically to the Southeast Asian population. The next section presents the data and methods we used to analyze poverty.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In 1992, there were approximately 1.2 million Southeast Asians in the United States (Rumbaut, 1995). Given this relatively small number, national surveys do not contain sufficient numbers of Southeast Asians and Asian Americans for meaningful analysis, since they do not usually oversample the Asian population as is done with Hispanics and African Americans. Data from the United States Census often represent the only adequate source of data on the Asian population. Computerized, individual level data is invaluable for research since census publications tend to overlook the Asian population or aggregate all ethnic groups (Lee and Edmonston, 1994).

Therefore, for this study we used the 1990 Public Use Microdata Five Percent Sample A (PUMS). The PUMS data contain sufficient numbers from each ethnic group to allow for statistical analyses. Our data are cross-sectional, however, and thus provide a snapshot view of poverty in 1990. We do not look at the dynamic nature of poverty and socioeconomic status.

For our analyses, we included all native and foreign-born Southeast Asians ages 25 to 64 who lived in one of the following six metropolitan areas: Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Philadelphia, San Jose, and Washington, DC. We are interested in poverty among adults; thus, we have chosen the age range most likely to include those in the labor force and not in school nor retired (above age 65). The 1990 PUMS data are organized by state. To get a reasonable sample and some regional variation, six metropolitan areas which have fairly large numbers of Southeast Asians were selected. Of course, the implication of this selection is that our data are not representative of poverty nationally. The sample contains 7,276 Southeast Asians and Asian Americans, of whom 14 percent are Cambodian, two percent Hmong, four percent Laotian, and 79 percent Vietnamese.

We used the US Census definition of poverty. The poverty threshold is revised annually to allow for changes in the cost of living as reflected in the Consumer Price Index and is also adjusted by family size (US Bureau of the Census, 1992). For example, in 1989, the poverty threshold for a family of four or a household of four unrelated persons was \$12,674 (US Bureau of the Census, 1992). For this study, we chose the cutoff of 125 percent of the poverty line to define whether an individual is in poverty. Though this definition overestimates poverty, we use this cutoff since many federal assistance programs are available at this level.

Table 1 presents the distribution of poverty by ethnicity and sex. Twenty-eight percent of the sample lived in poverty, with clear differences by both ethnicity and sex. One-quarter of Vietnamese and Laotians lived in poverty in 1990, compared with nearly half of Cambodians and two-thirds of the Hmong. While the ordering of the ethnic groups is the same for both men and women, women had much higher likelihoods of living in poverty than men. How do we account for both the levels of poverty and the variations between sexes and ethnic groups?

There are a number of sociodemographic variables which are associated with the likelihood for poverty (Lee, 1994). The independent variables that are available to us in the census data include ethnic origin, marital status, age, year of entry to the United States, English-speaking ability, education, occupation, nativity, and

area of residence. We ran separate models for men and women to assess the consistency in the factors predicting poverty regardless of gender.

Table 2 describes how each variable is defined and coded. Based on previous research, we expected that those who are unmarried to be more likely to live in poverty than those who are currently married (Lee, 1994). Lee and Edmonston (1994) assert that age can be used as a proxy measure for experience in the labor force, i.e., more experience commands higher wages. Younger people tend to have fewer job networks or experience and are thus more likely to be in poverty.

Year of entry is likely to be an important predictor of poverty: we expect that the most recent arrivals will have the highest poverty rates (Wong, 1986; Lee, 1994; Rumbaut, 1989, 1995). There are two reasons to expect this. First, recent immigrants tend to have less education than those in previous waves. They also may be different in ways that we cannot measure with our variables. Second, there is necessarily a period of adjustment to life in another country, a process which those who have recently migrated may still be undergoing. Rumbaut (1995) demonstrated that recent arrivals have low rates of labor force participation and high rates of unemployment. This is especially true during their first year in this country, when many are enrolled in ESL classes or in job training programs while receiving cash and/or medical assistance.

We have included several measures of social capital which are likely to play an important role in determining income. For immigrants, the ability to speak English has a significant relationship to socioeconomic integration (Lee and Edmonston, 1994; Lee, 1994; Rumbaut, 1995). About half of all Southeast Asian households were classified by the 1990 Census as "linguistically isolated." Little or no English speaking ability serves to reduce participation in the mainstream labor market.

Another important variable related to income and poverty is educational attainment. Annual surveys have documented a decline in the educational levels of adult Southeast Asian refugees over time: 1975 arrivals averaged 9.4 years of education; those arriving from 1976 to 1979 averaged 7.4 years; 1980 to 1984 arrivals averaged 6.8 years; and 1985 to 1989 arrivals averaged about 5 years (Rumbaut, 1995; Haines, 1989). Rumbaut (1995) reports that only about a third of the refugees from Laos and Cambodia were high school graduates. Higher proportions had less than a fifth grade education, underscoring the rural origins and social class disadvantages of many refugees from these ethnic groups.

Poverty, however, is related to more than just individual characteristics. It is also determined by the opportunities available in the environment in which one lives. Many researchers have suggested that living in certain metropolitan areas is more beneficial (Wong, 1986; O'Hare and Felt, 1991; Lee, 1994; Lee and Edmonston, 1994). Those who live in areas with well-paying job opportunities, available resources geared towards adaptation, or with a significant number of successful migrants who can facilitate integration are less likely to be in poverty. In this analysis, we tested only for the significance of the metropolitan area itself and not the specific characteristics of the area that may affect poverty.

Table 3 presents the distribution of the sample on the independent variables by sex. Although the percentage of the sample who were married was similar for

men and women, there were gender differences in the other two categories. Women were split evenly between previously married and never married, while a far greater proportion of men were never married. As expected, our sample was young. Only 15 percent were older than 50. The entry period distribution illustrated the large influx of Southeast Asians during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Gender differences were notable in the personal capital variables. Only half of the women could speak English, compared to 65% of the men. Women were also at a clear disadvantage with regard to education. Almost one-third of the women had less than a high school education, while one-third had attended college. Among the men, however, less than 20% had not completed high school, while 45% attended college. Looking at the labor force variables, we saw that women are much less likely to be in the labor force and have very small numbers in the higher-status occupations. Geographically, our Southeast Asian sample was concentrated primarily in the two California metropolitan areas. This variable only measured residence at the time of the census; therefore, we did not know whether people who were already poor were more or less likely to move to certain areas.

All of these variables have been significant predictors of poverty among various groups in previous research. How well do they work in predicting poverty among Southeast Asians? When the variables are all included in a multivariate framework, which are statistically significant? To answer these questions, we turn to the statistical analyses.

RESULTS

Since the dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of whether a respondent lived in poverty, we used the logistic regression to estimate the models (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984; Dunteman, 1984; Namboodiri et al., 1975). Tables 4 and 5 present the results for men and women, respectively. Each table contains results from two models. Model I includes only the individual characteristics. Model II adds dummy variables representing the metropolitan area of residence. These coefficients signify whether differences in poverty were due solely to individual characteristics or whether residence had an independent effect. The model chi-square and degrees of freedom give the overall fit of the model.

The coefficients represented the increase or decrease in the log odds of being in poverty relative to the omitted category. For example, for men in Model I, the coefficient for being Cambodian was 0.56 and statistically significant (as indicated by the asterisks). Thus, after controlling for the other variables in the model, being Cambodian increased the log odds of being in poverty by 0.56 (relative to Laotians). The coefficients indicated that those of Cambodian or Hmong ancestry had higher likelihoods of being poor than either Vietnamese or Laotian ancestry, even after controlling for the other factors such as the ability to speak English or level of educational attainment.

Unfortunately, we had no information on the kinds of jobs or training that the immigrants and refugees had in their home countries. Different levels of urbanization and economic modernization in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia may

constitute important differences in the backgrounds of refugees from each country (Haines 1989; Hein, 1995). Refugees from Vietnam tend to have lived in urban areas and usually had occupations that could be transferable to US society. These characteristics suggest that Vietnamese refugees experience fewer social dislocations when entering the American workplace than other Southeast Asian ethnic groups (Hein, 1995).

Cambodian and Hmong immigrants and refugees, however, tend to have lived in rural areas or small towns and end to have been farmers or military fighters occupations which are not easily transferable to US society. Thus, they may be unprepared for the American workplace. There may be cultural differences as well - some research suggests that many Southeast Asian refugees feel they have little more economic independence in the US than in their homelands and that money is too central to the American way of life (Hein, 1995). The cultural and environmental change in the American workplace is distressing for the refugees, especially for the Hmong and Cambodians.

We expected that marital status would have a significant effect on poverty, but the results indicated that it does not matter for men once the other factors are taken into account. Marital status may not be a significant predictor for men because they are likely to work or want to work regardless of marital status. The coefficients for age produce an anomalous result - while the coefficients are in the expected direction (that is, that the younger groups have higher likelihoods of poverty), only the coefficients for ages 40 to 44 and 45 to 49 are statistically significant.

Previous research has focused on year of entry as an important predictor variable of poverty. Once we controlled for compositional differences between the respondents, however, only those who came in the most recent period (1985-1989) have significantly higher likelihoods of being in poverty. The most recent immigrants have not had as long to adapt to the different culture and occupational structure. Thus, if year of entry is used by itself in a model, it will likely mask compositional differences between the immigrant waves.

In terms of the personal capital variables, we found the expected results. The ability to speak English significantly reduces the log odds of being in poverty by 0.26. Those with higher levels of education are less likely to be in poverty than those with less than a high school education. Similarly, having a higher status occupation decreases the probability of being in poverty. Those not in the labor force had higher likelihoods of being in poverty than those who were unemployed. Those who are unemployed may receive some monetary benefits, such as unemployment compensation from the government or their private employer, while those characterized as not in the labor force are unlikely to receive any benefits.

Model II adds the variables indicating the metropolitan area of residence. Adding these five variables to the model improved the overall model fit. Except for lowering the level of statistical significance for being Cambodian, however, it did not change the effects of other variables. All five of the coefficients were positive and significant, indicating that living in the San Jose, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Los Angeles, Houston, or Philadelphia areas significantly increases the risk of being in poverty, relative to living in the Washington, DC, area. Further research

is needed to examine the social and economic characteristics of these areas to determine what specifically accounts for these higher poverty levels.

The results for men demonstrated that most of the variables behaved as expected (with the exception of age and marital status). Year of entry was only significant for the most recent immigrants once other factors were taken into account. Ethnic differences were present for only two of the groups, Cambodians and the Hmong. Is the story the same for women, or do the variables have different effects? Table 5 presents the results for women.

The patterns of statistical significance were slightly different for women than for men. The only ethnic group which had a higher likelihood for poverty once other variables were taken into account was the Hmong. Unlike our results for men, marital status had a significant impact on whether a woman was in poverty. Those who were currently married are less likely to be in poverty than the never married, while those who were previously married are more likely to be in poverty than the never married.

One factor which may distinguish the previously married and never married women is dependent children. Research suggests that previously married women often have children (Majka and Mullan, 1992). Thus, like single mothers from other races and ethnicities, they have higher poverty rates (Lee and Edmonston, 1994). Women with children may have more of a burden because resources that could have been focused on helping their socioeconomic situation (through working more hours or attending school) are instead focused on child-rearing. We did not include a variable in this model measuring children born for the following two reasons: (1) men were not asked the question; and (2) for this early work, we wanted the models to be identical. Certainly the presence of children and other household compositional variables should be included in future studies.

Age had the expected relationship with poverty: women who were younger were more likely to be in poverty than their elderly counterparts. In Model I, the ability to speak English was not statistically significant, although the sign of the coefficient was in the expected fashion. Year of entry, education, and occupation had the same effects for women as they did for men.

When we added the metropolitan variables to the model, they reduced the significance of the Hmong variable, whereas the ability to speak English became statistically significant. Unlike the findings for men, however, not all of the metropolitan area variables were statistically significant. The likelihood for poverty is no different for women in San Jose than for women in Washington, DC. Only the Houston and Philadelphia variables had large and highly significant values.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In these analyses, we confirmed the importance of several key variables - most notably education and occupation - in analyzing poverty among immigrants and second generation Southeast Asians. One factor which was not as significant as predicted, however, was the period of entry to the United States. After controlling for compositional differences, those immigrants who came within the

past five years had significantly higher poverty rates than those who came before or were born in the United States. This result suggests that poverty among new immigrants may be reduced the longer they stay in the United States, allowing them to make connections and find higher paying jobs.

One variable of great interest to us was ethnicity. Given the information in previous research and Table 1 about the ethnic variation in the likelihood of poverty, we expected that ethnicity would be a strong determinant. Once we controlled for the other variables, however, we found that ethnicity was not always significant. Among women, only the Hmong had consistently higher poverty, but the coefficient was significant only at the 0.05 level. The story was slightly different for men. The coefficient for Hmong ethnicity was large and significant at the 0.01 level, while the coefficient for being Cambodian was smaller and significant at only the 0.05 level. These results suggest that Hmong immigrants and refugees are more likely to be in poverty than predicted by the individual characteristics we used.

This study has several implications. First, it is important to realize that there are differences among Southeast Asian groups in their overall distributions of poverty, but once compositional factors were included in the model this effect disappeared (except for the Hmong). Thus, the Hmong may need special services or help in their transition to life in the United States. The analyses in this paper treated ethnicity as an additive variable. Future work should analyze the factors affecting poverty within each group, either through a series of interactive variables or through separate analyses.

We found that there are important variables related to poverty which can be changed by policy, especially increasing the ability to speak and read English, increasing educational attainment, and increasing representation of Southeast Asians in higher earning occupations. For example, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have provided thousands of Southeast Asians with an opportunity to learn English in order to find jobs to support their families. In light of federal state, and local cutbacks of ESL programs, it is essential for the government agencies to continue to fund and provide more ESL classes to help Southeast Asians adjust to society. Ngoan Le, a national expert on refugee resettlement issues, asserts that "[the] ability to speak English appears to be a major determinant regarding job acquisition and retention. The larger the number of individuals in a family who can speak English, the higher the family employment rate" (Le, 1993). Furthermore, job training projects are needed to help Southeast Asians secure better paying jobs. Job training projects assist Southeast Asians in gaining work experience, grant money to support their families, and provide a job network with other Southeast Asians and non-Southeast Asians. Other variables that are related to poverty cannot be changed by policy (such as age, marital status, or year of immigration), but more work is needed to explain the exact relationship between these variables and poverty.

This study has shown that there is variation in the likelihood of living in poverty based on the area in which one resides. For example, after controlling for other variables, living in the Philadelphia or Houston area increased the risk of poverty for both men and women. Future work should examine possible

explanations: Is it a lack of services targeted at Southeast Asians, differences in occupational opportunities, or the lack of a community of similar immigrants and second-generation ethnicities?

While this study has identified some critical issues to understanding poverty within the Southeast Asian population, the opportunity exists for much more detailed work. The relationship between immigration and poverty is not only an important public policy issue, but one with significant ramifications for the people impacted.

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Chinatown, Jing Fong, and Unfair Labor Practices

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Labor conditions at some of New York City's Chinatown restaurants approach those found in sweatshops. Recently, the New York State Attorney General's office brought unfair labor charges against Jing Fong, one of the largest restaurants in Chinatown. Jing Fong's labor practices reveal the extent to which a powerful business elite uses its informal power to structure relationships between itself and its employees, often to the employers' advantage. This paper examines the origins and the perpetuation of poor working conditions in Chinatown. It then explores how government intervention can improve the plight of laborers in this ethnic enclave.

INTRODUCTION

Jing Fong, a restaurant in New York City's Chinatown, represents an example of how the informal power structure in Chinatown can perpetuate poor labor conditions. This dim sum restaurant, with a seating capacity of over 1,500, is one of the largest Chinese restaurants in North America, if not the largest. Restaurant reviews praise Jing Fong for its atmosphere, food, and prices: "For fresh and tasty fare at prices from \$1.80 to \$3.95, you can't go wrong at this hospitable dim sum parlor" and "Sixty dollars buys more food than all eleven of us can finish," write two reviewers.¹ But Jing Fong's economic success does not expose its labor policies. Among other practices which violate New York State and federal labor laws, Jing Fong pays its waiters wages as low as 75 cents an hour and requires them to work sixty to eighty hour work weeks without over time pay.² In response to these working conditions, Chinatown activists organized a campaign in the fall of 1995 to boycott Jing Fong and to force management to comply with existing labor laws. The Jing Fong case highlights how an informal social, political, and economic power structure in Chinatown encourages a system which allows for violation of labor laws. In such circumstances, a more concerted effort by the government to enforce labor laws can improve the working conditions of immigrant laborers in Chinatown.

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The first section of this article explores how economic and social discrimination led Chinese to opt for self-employed industries and to self-segregate from the general population. In these isolated communities known as Chinatowns, merchant interests created an informal political structure which allowed them to consolidate power over the working class. Second, the article will show how the traditional power base in Chinatown uses appeals to a common culture and ethnicity to control labor unrest. Third, this article details the business elite's monopoly on physical violence, on employment opportunities, and on the ability of undocumented workers to stay in the United States. Within Chinatown, the collusion of business leaders, the press, civic associations (also called tongs), organized crime, and the police has created a power structure that disadvantages workers. Finally, the paper concludes that government enforcement of labor laws in ethnic enclaves such as Chinatown provides an important means for workers to challenge their employers and represents a major step in improving working conditions in Chinatown.

SWEATSHOPS AND CHINATOWN

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) defines a sweatshop as a workplace where "an employer violates more than one federal or state law governing minimum wage and overtime, child labor, safety and health, workers' compensation, or industry regulation."³ The factors which account for the existence of sweatshop labor in the United States are complex. Prominent theories contend that an increase in international corporate competition, the expansion of the service industry, a decline in union membership, and the decrease in government assistance to the poor have made it more difficult for many Americans to earn a living wage. Often, the victims of labor exploitation are recent immigrants. Poor English skills and a lack of familiarity with American law or culture make immigrants particularly vulnerable. Although the garment industry is often the focus of discussions on sweatshops, a powerful restaurant industry characterized by such conditions also booms in Chinatown.⁴

Chinatown fits the definition of what scholars call an "ethnic enclave economy," or a community of immigrants residing in a distinct location in which a range of enterprises serve the needs of the ethnically homogeneous community. A fundamental characteristic of the ethnic enclave is that a significant proportion of the workforce works in establishments owned by immigrants of the same ethnicity.⁵ Law enforcement officials often overlook or do not have labor law violations brought to their attention, particularly when both employer and employee share the same ethnicity. Phrases such as "ethnic entrepreneurship" and "the Asian value of hard work" often mask work conditions at Chinese restaurants. Nothing in Chinese culture makes Chinatown workers inherently more willing than others to accept low wages and poor working conditions. Rather, the isolation of Chinatown as a distinct ethnic community for over one hundred years has consolidated an informal power structure which homogenizes information and eliminates alternative courses of action in the face of exploitation.

Immigrant workers in Chinatown comprise an underground economy in which power structures unique to the community prevent them from identifying or acting upon vehicles of change. John Gaventa's account of the coal miners' struggle in the Appalachian valley, *Power and Powerlessness*, looks at a third dimension of power which prevented coal miners not only from winning conflicts with business leaders, but also from even recognizing the possibility of changing their situation. This third dimension of power involves "locating the power processes behind the social construction of meanings and patterns that serve to get B to act and believe in a manner in which B might otherwise not, to A's benefit and B's detriment." In the context of labor troubles at Jing Fong, the restaurant's management represents "A," while Chinatown workers fit the "B" model of acquiescing to the economic demands of management.⁶

By acquiescing to the elite's demands that they accept sub-minimum wages and poor working conditions, Chinatown workers maximize the profits of the business owners without improving their own welfare. Proclaiming that labor troubles would threaten the community's ethnic solidarity, the management elite in Chinatown strive to control the workers' access to information. While this rhetoric may convince some workers, those who do not believe the rhetoric of ethnic solidarity decline to protest out of fear of unemployment, violence, or deportation.

OVERVIEW OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION AND THE FORMATION OF CHINATOWNS

Many of the early Chinese, prompted by the California Gold Rush, arrived in the continental United States during the mid-1800s. They arrived in America with the intention of staying long enough to become rich and then returning home. Most came under labor contracts, in either mining or railroad construction for American companies. By paying Chinese immigrants lower wages than that of their white counterparts, white employers established a race-based dual-wage system which pitted white workers against foreign labor. As a result of economic divisions in the workforce, Chinese communities in the United States chose isolation from rather than assimilation into American society. Isolation made it easier for Chinatown elites to control the rest of the community through civic organizations, mutual aid associations (tongs), organized violence, and most recently, via connections in high-priced real estate transactions.⁷

Over time, many Americans viewed the Chinese as willing to work for less and began to construct the image of the Chinese "standard" of work as lower than that of white Americans. One journalist in 1871 referred to the Chinese standard of work as that "of rice and rats." As the California economy experienced a slowdown in the 1870s, rising unemployment among white workers was attributed to the presence of Chinese laborers, and "ethnic antagonism" between the two groups grew.⁸ By the late 1870s, the California Workingman's Party rallied around the slogan "The Chinese Must Go!" Class and racial tensions worsened, and Congress finally responded by passing the *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882*. As the first piece of legislation to restrict the entry of persons solely on the basis of

their nationality, the 1882 Act began a series of anti-Asian laws which prohibited the immigration of Chinese until 1943.

By the 1870s, Chinese immigrants had begun to group together in the earliest Chinatowns. Pushed out of the general labor market, they withdrew into occupations where they believed no opposition to them would exist. Many Chinese moved from major industries such as mining and agriculture and opted for self-employment in areas such as grocery stores, restaurants, and laundry operations. By 1920, 58 percent of Chinese worked in service industries as opposed to five percent of native born whites and ten percent of foreign born whites. At the same time, nine percent of Chinese were employed in manufacturing, where 26 percent of native born whites and 47 percent of foreign born whites were employed.⁹ The Chinese laundry represented the beginning of a retreat into a self-employed market. By 1870, 72 percent of all laundry owners in California were Chinese. Due to their sojourner mentality and to economic and social discrimination, the Chinese tended to isolate themselves from American society rather than to assimilate.¹⁰

Following the *1882 Chinese Exclusion Act*, a dramatic increase in abuse and mob violence against the Chinese served as another incentive for them to move into Chinatowns located in large cities. The Chinese began to reside in exclusively Chinese communities which served several positive functions. They offered shelter to Chinese immigrants from a hostile American society, particularly after the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, and allowed for the growth of an economic base that avoided competition with white workers in industries such as laundries and restaurants. With few female Chinese immigrants, Chinatowns also gave the Chinese in America a unique social environment.¹¹

Chinatowns gave birth to numerous organizations which served the needs of its inhabitants. Clans based on loose family associations or Chinese districts offered temporary housing, employment, and credit to new immigrants. Secret societies called tongs provided members with financial and social protection. Certain tongs controlled the opium, gang, and prostitution industries, which catered to the desires of Chinatown's majority male population. Although these establishments violated American drug and prostitution laws, the police tended to overlook them. Thus, the associations' ties to organized crime and illegal industries increased.¹²

The largest tongs in Chinatown eventually claimed different sections of Chinatown as their own. Local businesses paid the tongs for protection, and the tongs also ensured that illegal franchises remained in business. The community has long been a divided one. "Tong wars" and other intense rivalries challenge the idea of Chinatown as a united community. Tongs continue to function as a major political force within Chinatown today. In the 1960s, tongs began to form relationships with youth gangs which enforced tong orders by force, if necessary.¹³

Instead of establishing an elected body to oversee affairs, the Chinatown Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) took on the role of government for many years in New York City's Chinatown. Composed of the leaders of the larger associations in Chinatown, the CCBA is an umbrella organization which claims to represent the community. For about one hundred years, the CCBA was viewed by American government officials as the "voice" of Chinatown. It

functioned as a quasi-government in Chinatown, and residents regarded its decisions as the law. As a result of a hierarchy based on wealth in Chinatown, the CCBA eventually became a tool that reinforced the merchant class' social control in the community. Although organizations that sprang up in the 1970s and 80s challenged the CCBA's centralized power, it still possesses considerable influence in Chinatown, even after nearly a century of power.¹⁴

Although New York's Chinatown began with small businesses, during the 1980s, banks, real estate agencies, and foreign investment poured into Chinatown, changing the economic dynamics of the community. "The image of the small business entrepreneur is fading fast—these are multi-million dollar operations in Chinatown," said Stanley Mark, an attorney from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) who is representing Jing Fong waiters. Socially, Chinatown still provides new immigrants with a family-like network and shelters them from racism in American society. The foundation of the community, however, now lies with economic development and financial investments, not residential life. Foreign real estate speculators interested in land in New York City's Chinatown proliferated throughout the 1980s and 90s, prompted especially by the scheduled transfer of Hong Kong from Britain to China in June 1997. As a result, rents in some parts of Chinatown have increased by 200 to 300 percent.¹⁵

Since its formation in the late 1800s, the power structure in New York City's Chinatown has remained intact. Tongs, illegal industries, business elites, and the CCBA are responsible for much of what happens there. American stereotypes abound, from images of a quaint one-day tourist attraction, to fears of the "Chinese Mafia" rings, to notions of a completely foreign neighborhood where nobody speaks English. But Chinatown might be best known for its food.

ORGANIZING RESTAURANT WORKERS IN CHINATOWN

One journalist has stated, "restaurants—ah, restaurants. Chinatown is a kitchen with streets." Although rents and wholesale prices are constantly rising, food in Chinatown is available at cheaper rates because of low labor costs. Intense competition leads businesses to engage in constant price wars. When one establishment lowers its prices, others follow, and nothing stops the pressure to reduce wages in the entire industry. These conditions hold true for Chinatowns in other cities such as San Francisco.¹⁶

The restaurant industry has traditionally served as a base for the rest of the Chinatown economy. Employees in garment factories who do not have time to cook often opt for quick, cheap meals. The availability of inexpensive Chinese food has become a necessity for much of Chinatown's working class. In the 1980s, Chinese food gained popularity with the American public as the professional Taiwanese elite moved out of Chinatown but still wanted tasty Chinese dishes. The rise of upscale Chinese food "palaces" in the eighties catered mostly to middle and upper class Chinese immigrants as well as mainstream American society.

Workers in Chinatown did not unionize until 1980, and for the past fifteen years, labor activism in the restaurant industry has remained weak. In 1978 and

1979, several Chinese restaurants outside of Chinatown were unionized under Local 69 of the Hotel Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Union. Local 69, however, did not act in the interests of the workers, and labor law violations continued after unionization. In 1980, the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA) was formed with the expressed purpose of organizing workers in Chinatown without ceding power to the hierarchy of the AFL-CIO.¹⁷ CSWA has never identified itself as a union. Nevertheless, the organization sought to promote the needs of workers in Chinatown and helped to renew the contracts of unionized workers at Silver Palace in 1993.¹⁸

In 1980, Silver Palace waiters voted to form an independent union, Local 318, and as a result, they received minimum wage, tips, health benefits, and overtime pay. When Local 318's contract expired in August 1993, Silver Palace management fired thirty six waiters who had refused wage cuts. After seven months of struggle against a union-CSWA alliance, the management of Silver Palace finally recognized Local 318 in March 1994. Today, Silver Palace remains the only unionized restaurant in Chinatown. Before the boycott of Jing Fong in the fall of 1995, labor organizing in a majority of Chinatown's 200 restaurants was rare or unsuccessful.

THE BOYCOTT OF JING FONG

John Gaventa's account of the coal miners' struggle in the Appalachian Valley describes how business leaders controlled the culture and manipulated the miners' loyalty to culture and nation. This example displays a striking similarity to the experience of the Chinatown business elites who also try to use the workers' ethnic loyalty for their own benefit. Gaventa notes that the industrial operators were able to make the miners dependent on employers not only as employees but also as "tenant[s], consumer[s], and citizen[s]."¹⁹ In Chinatown, businesses have created the perception that mainstream American society and labor activists are an allied enemy and a threat to the economic and cultural identity of Chinatown. Workers who challenge the restaurant management run the risk of being fired and also of being labelled as "troublemakers" in the community or as disloyal to the Chinese people.

These elements of employer control were evident in the reaction of the business elite to the boycott of Jing Fong in 1995. The campaign against Jing Fong began in February 1995 after the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA) received complaints from former waiter Sheng Gang Deng who claimed he had been fired after protesting the management's policy of dividing the waiters' tips. A coalition of organizations including CSWA, Local 318, and student activist groups called for a boycott of Jing Fong. These groups picketed outside the restaurant and distributed information about labor law violations at Jing Fong.

During the first year of the campaign, it appeared from events reported by mainstream and Chinese-American media sources and from the fact that most Jing Fong waiters stayed in their jobs that workers in Chinatown sided with the labor policies of Jing Fong's owners. The media gave the Chinatown community and the non-Chinese public the impression that the activists did not represent the

true interests of the community. *New York Times* reporter Jane Lii began covering the events at Jing Fong in mid-March, beginning with a piece headlined, "A Union and Waiters Face Off in Chinatown" According to her article, about 40 Jing Fong waiters and relatives began to appear alongside the protesters. Instead of joining the protest, however, they chanted, "Leave us alone" and "Let us live." One waiter, David Chow, reportedly said, "the union won't be happy until all of us are out of a job." Indeed, waiters at Jing Fong had voted not to join Local 318, the union at Silver Palace, reportedly because they believed unionization would lead to unemployment. An anonymous customer told the newspaper that he would not normally cross a picket line but had "no problem with it this time, because the workers are against what the union is doing."²⁰

But the CSWA insisted that its goal in exposing labor practices at Jing Fong was not to unionize the waiters, but rather to enforce standard federal and state labor laws at Jing Fong. Local 318 was only one of several organizations spearheading the effort. The coalition wanted to use Jing Fong as an example in order to gather community support against sweatshops in general and to call for the federal enforcement of labor laws throughout Chinatown. As one of the largest business operations in Chinatown, Jing Fong and its sweatshop policies set the standard for other establishments.²¹ The Chinese press and other public statements implied that any disagreement with the restaurant's management would bring about the economic decline of Chinatown and ultimately the loss of jobs. For workers in Chinatown who rely on the Chinatown economy due to the inability to find work elsewhere, the availability of jobs is key to economic survival.

Stanley Mark of AALDEF stated in 1987 that it was a common practice for businesses that had recognized unions to close down under bankruptcy claims, only to reopen several months later under a new name and shuffled corporate ownership. Silver Palace utilized such a strategy. In January 1995, Silver Palace owners filed for bankruptcy protection, claiming that the cost of paying employee health benefits had driven them near the point of bankruptcy. In the minds of some, Silver Palace's bankruptcy claim raised questions about the economic consequences and legitimacy of organizing workers in Chinatown. After the height of the Jing Fong boycott, a state judge in December 1995 ruled that the management had destroyed a subpoenaed document that would have argued against their claim for bankruptcy. A federal judge upheld the ruling in May 1996 and ordered that Silver Palace's owner, Richard Chan, be replaced by a Henry Foong, a court appointed trustee.²²

Having occurred a month prior to the Jing Fong boycott, the publicity surrounding Silver Palace's file for bankruptcy supported the notion within the community that the goals of CSWA and other activists would lead ultimately to the bankruptcy of Jing Fong as well. Community leaders capitalized on the supposed bankruptcy of Silver Palace to portray the union as a divisive force in the local economy. On April 1, 1995, a community dinner attended by business people, workers, and community leaders from prominent organizations, such as the CCBA and Chinese Restaurant Association, raised money for the management at Jing Fong. The 1,500 strong crowd applauded the restaurants employees in a ten-minute standing ovation that evening, and claimed that they wanted to "send

a message" to CSWA and its executive director, Wing Lam, that the Jing Fong boycott would hurt the entire Chinatown economy by discouraging patronage.²³

THE CONSTRUCT OF "COMMUNITY" IN CHINATOWN

In *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*, Min Zhou makes an argument in favor of the ethnic solidarity between worker and employee in the Chinatown economy. While she cites some compelling data, her attitude towards workers in Chinatown simply "excuses" labor law violations and sweatshop conditions. She claims that cultural understanding and guarantees of employment that bosses give to their workers are reciprocated by employees who work hard and do not expose illegal labor practices. She suggests that workers are satisfied with their situation.²⁴

Zhou's work has problematic implications for future policy. First, Chinatown might have served as an economic safe haven for Chinese workers and employers at the turn of the century, but this does not hold true today. Furthermore, Zhou argues that waiters' wages in Chinatown "seem satisfactory compared to the pay they received in China."²⁵ For policymakers to say that Chinese workers receive higher wages and more satisfaction in the American underground economy than they would have earned in China is a problematic assumption, suggesting that the lower expectations of Chinese workers legitimates treatment inferior to that of non-immigrant workers.

The argument that paternalistic employer-employee relationships justify labor law violations is also flawed. Businesses such as Jing Fong work to maximize profits and productivity, not to look out for the overall interests of their employees. Although employers may be considered "fellow countrymen," the economic realities of such competitive industries as restaurants require them to act as entrepreneurs and capitalists first.²⁶ In this context, it seems unlikely that a united sense of "community" based on reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship could last. The network of support among the Chinatown elite, tracing back to a hundred years of tong and association establishment in the community, makes it easy for Jing Fong management to claim "community" support in opposition to CSWA, when in reality organizations like the CCBA do not represent the interests of the workers affected by labor law violations.

The elite's failure to work for the good of the community, however, is not always apparent to those in Chinatown. Business management in Chinatown possesses an "institutional and ideological hold" over the understanding of "community." The management uses this hold to exploit workers' loyalty to ethnicity and ties to the old world in order to discourage support for labor rights.²⁷ Jing Fong's owners presented a show of unity at its April banquet by appealing to a contrived sense of ethnicity and "community" that overshadowed class issues. By tying the workers' sole source of livelihood to the success of the Chinatown economy, public events like the April 1 dinner reinforced the sentiment that questioning labor conduct in Chinatown will work against everyone's interests. Immigrants with poor English abilities have no other option but to participate in the Chinatown economy as paternalistic bosses appear to take care of the workers'

needs.²⁸ The management provides employment that would otherwise be difficult to obtain in the general labor market thus making workers dependent on the Chinatown power structure. Furthermore, the Chinatown elite monopolizes channels of information, particularly the Chinese language newspapers.

MONOPOLY ON INFORMATION: CHINESE LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS

In a community where many neither speak nor read English, the Chinese American press serves as the sole source of community and international information. Because the papers are privately owned and operated, they need business patronage to exist. The newspapers must acquiesce to the demands of business in order to stay in operation. Most reporters engage in self-censorship, particularly on issues that might cause controversy among Chinatown workers and the leadership.

Chinese language newspapers in Chinatown reinforce the position of business and tong interests in Chinatown, particularly when a labor dispute arises. During labor protests, newspaper editorials often appeal to the same sense of culture and protection from the mainstream American society used by business interests. During a summer 1984 picketing outside of Hong Kong restaurant, one of the papers stated, "in the face of racial discrimination, which we all suffer, and relentless competition from American businesses, it is wrong to fight among us brothers." Editorials in Chinese newspapers made a similar appeal to their readers: "We are all Chinese and we should not fight among ourselves. . . We are all immigrants in this country, trying to make a living. If we fight, we will lose our business to the whites and all of us will suffer."²⁹

Events at Jing Fong indicated this tendency of the Chinese press to support business management. Immediately after the New York State Attorney General's office announced in January 1997 that it would press legal charges against Jing Fong, the leaders of the Chinese Restaurant Association held a news conference for the Chinese press. At the conference, the Association charged that the Attorney General's suit constituted part of a general trend of harassing Chinese immigrants and called for the community to recognize the "discrimination" directed against them. Restaurant Association officials called CSWA "a bunch of Chinese who help outsiders hurt the community."³⁰ The information presented to community residents by the press appears to be biased in favor of the elite.

The business elite can also influence the mainstream American press. Chinese American *New York Times*' reporter Jane Lii contributed to several Chinese language newspapers in Chinatown. An April 1995 article in New York City's *Village Voice* criticized Lii's reporting, particularly her repeated references to the coalition working for labor law enforcement at Jing Fong as "the union." In another article covering the April 1 dinner, Lii referred to the event as a "dramatic and unprecedented display of community solidarity," an assertion that misrepresented the dynamics behind those organizations represented at the dinner.³¹

Perhaps one of the most powerful practices that depends upon the collaboration of the Chinese media is the use of the blacklist. The fear of being publicly branded

as a “troublemaker” in the workplace, usually for complaining against management or for engaging in pro-labor activities, prevents most workers from protesting work conditions. A protesting worker can be forced into unemployment in Chinatown once the Chinese newspapers print his photo or slanderous information. With poor English language skills and a lack of other marketable skills, workers “blackballed” from the underground economy have no exit option or alternative employment. Too often, the choices are limited to unemployment or acquiescence to the given conditions of work.

The newspapers reinforce both elements of powerlessness among workers. By appealing to ethnicity and misrepresenting the facts of the conflict, they convince their community readers that the best option is to remain loyal to the business leaders. Because the newspapers are influential and widely read, they make blacklisting more easy. Workers that do identify alternatives to the given situation remain silent out of fear. During the Jing Fong boycott, the reality of fear and the employers’ power demonstrated the difficulty of protesting sweatshop conditions in the absence of adequate government and police protection. Efforts to organize Chinatown workers in the summer of 1995, however, revealed the general problem that inadequate safety provisions and a lack of options encourage acquiescence.

MONOPOLY ON FORCE AND LIMITED WORKER OPTIONS

In June, 1995, five student activists conducted a seven-day hunger strike to raise community awareness and to win support from workers in Chinatown. Throughout that summer, activists organized a town hall meeting which would take place later that summer. They toured garment factories in Chinatown, gathered signatures for a petition on government intervention and invited Chinatown residents to the meeting. Although at least one garment factory owner threatened to fire any employees who signed the petitions, about half of his workers signed on.³² “It is illegal for an employer to fire a worker for signing a petition, they have a right to organize,” noted Virginia Yu, a recent college graduate who participated in the hunger strike. “But in one factory, the boss got on the microphone and told three floors of garment workers that if they signed this petition, they could pick up their belongings and leave.” She explained that many workers do not display support for labor issues because they want to keep their jobs.³³

The more terrifying possibility of physical retaliation also exists. Given the network of connections between associations, tongs, and organized crime, it is not surprising that Jing Fong owner Chung Ko Cheng is also president of the Fukienese-American Association, a tong accused by law enforcement officials of having ties to the Fuk Ching gangsters. The president of the Chinese Restaurant Association, Wai Chi Chan, also holds a position of leadership in the On Leung Association. The New York Police Department has suspected On Leung of harboring connections with the Ghost Shadows, a gang controlling the area between Mott and Bayard Streets. In November 1995, On Leung’s Wing Yeung Chan

pleaded guilty to murder charges, and in February 1996, On Leung advisor Peter Lee was arrested for conspiring murder.³⁴

While these two men's connections with the Fuk Ching and On Leung gangs are not enough to claim that protesting workers would have been the victim of physical attacks, the mere knowledge of the connections between employers and the tongs discourages some workers from opposing management policies. During the course of the Jing Fong boycott, restaurant association leaders postered Chinatown with photos and condemnations of CSWA executive director Wing Lam, calling Lam "monster" and "blood sucker." At the April 1 dinner, Lam was branded "Public Enemy Number One" and participants of the fundraising evening chanted, "Beat him down." Two 250-foot red banners were hung by Jing Fong management, reading "Oppose the labor tyrant stirring up trouble." Lam and his family members also received personal threats. These events publicly ostracized Wing Lam from the Chinatown "community" and sent a warning to Jing Fong employees intending to protest. In another incident, a fire caused by an unknown source blazed through the apartment above the CSWA office at the end of January 1997. The police believe that the fire was most likely started to intimidate CSWA organizers.³⁵

Not surprisingly, workers do not believe that law enforcement officials will protect them in the case of violence. Part of the reason is the traditional lack of Asian Americans in the police force and the absence of law enforcement in Chinatown after the Chinese Exclusion Act. Also, tongs can bribe American police officers. In 1978, Benny Ong, the leader of the Hip Sing tong who has also been referred to as the "Godfather of Chinatown," bragged to an undercover immigration agent that dozens of non-Asian police officers were loyal to him.³⁶ John Gaw and Michael Lee, two Chinese American police officers, were indicted this year for accepting bribes from Chinatown gangs in exchange for information about police raids on illegal gambling and prostitution houses. According to activists, police favored the management during the Jing Fong campaign. During the boycott, activists expressed frustration with the police for allowing Jing Fong owners to build a "new" entrance to the restaurant and forcing protesters to move almost fifty feet away from the main door. In February 1995 Inspector Thomas Chan, a head police officer for the precinct located across the street from Jing Fong, accepted an award from the Chinese Restaurant Association, the same organization which aggressively defends Jing Fong management's labor policies.³⁷

In addition to the internal politics of Chinatown which intimidate residents, United States immigration law further limits workers' exit options. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimates a total illegal resident population of about four million.³⁸ The number of Chinese arriving in America each year without documentation may run from 30,000 to 100,000. In 1993, the Golden Venture, a steamship, ran aground off the shore of New York with 276 smuggled immigrants from China on board. This event exposed a common practice that takes place in the Fujian region of southern China, that of paying a smuggler about \$30,000 per person for a chance to sneak into the United States. Undocumented immigrants such as these fill the labor shortage in garment factories and restaurants in Chinatown and in other areas. Those who fail to pay the

smuggler's fee are threatened or killed after arrival. In fact, Fuk Ching's reputation among law enforcement officials comes from their leadership in such illegal immigration rings, and related kidnapping/ransom cases. In 1993 Ah Kay, head of the Fuk Ching, was arrested in Hong Kong and indicted on kidnapping and illegal immigrant smuggling.³⁹

Illegal immigrants face possible detention or deportation from the American government, making them almost entirely dependent on their employers and the underground economy. The employer sanctions under the *1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)* prohibit employers from hiring undocumented workers. The Reagan Administration's justification for this provision was that it would "remove the incentive for illegal immigration by eliminating the job opportunities which draw illegal aliens here." A major consequence of the *IRCA* is that employers are better equipped to violate basic labor standards. Workers cannot organize because they fear employers will turn them over to the INS for deportation. Employers can use the threat of deportation to deter employees from complaining about work conditions. This threat pushes workers "underground." The ease with which labor law violations occur sustains an exploitative underground economy.⁴⁰

Because of lackadaisical government enforcement of such policies as the *IRCA*, job opportunities for undocumented laborers in the informal market have proliferated in the last ten years. The absence of government condemnation of work conditions exacerbate workers' vulnerability. Instead, employees believe that law enforcement conspires with the business elite. Exit options are completely shut off for undocumented workers. Because of the possibility of deportation, undocumented workers will not take legal measures against unfair practices by their employers. Workers view the goals of the American government to be at odds with their survival and remain resigned to this dependency on their employers.

RESPONSES FROM GOVERNMENT AND MAINSTREAM SOCIETY

George Hui, president of the CCBA, said at the April dinner at Jing Fong, "If there are labor problems in the restaurant, then let the government handle it."⁴¹ On July 30, 1995, CSWA invited Maria Echaveste, administrator and presidential appointee in the Department of Labor, to attend a testimony by workers who convinced Echaveste and other public officials of the need to investigate labor law violations in garment factories and restaurants. Those who testified had exhausted other alternatives. One of those at the hearing was Sheng Gang Deng, the waiter who initiated CSWA's Jing Fong campaign. About 150 community residents attended the meeting, which also included panelists from the state government. At this time, the Department of Labor deployed only 14 of its 900 investigators to New York City and none spoke Chinese. Shortly after the summer meeting, the Department of Labor established the Apparel/Restaurant Guidance and Enforcement Team (TARGET) to step up investigations of labor law violations, particularly in Manhattan's Chinatown and Brooklyn's Sunset Park.⁴²

The Office of New York State Attorney General Dennis Vacco had subpoenaed payroll records from Jing Fong before the summer of 1995. By August 1995, Vacco's investigation found Jing Fong guilty of payroll violations, payment of sub-minimum wages, the illegal dismissal of at least one waiter, and the taking of tips. The office demanded that Jing Fong pay employees over \$1.1 million in back wages and other compensation. With little response from the restaurant's management, Vacco continued to press charges and announced in January 1997 that he would bring a \$1.5 million lawsuit against Jing Fong.⁴³

In the case of Jing Fong, government intervention proved to be the only means by which workers could find legitimacy and relative safety against the power structure. The government, however, needs to understand how the Chinatown elite's power operates to limit workers' choices. This ignorance of the dynamics in Chinatown was evidenced by Governor Pataki's May 1996 celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, in which he honored Jing Fong president Chung Ko Cheng with an "Outstanding Asian American Award" for displaying a strong "entrepreneurial spirit." While Pataki claimed ignorance of the Attorney General's investigations, his office defended the choice by explaining that a grassroots selection committee in Chinatown had chosen Cheng. This "grassroots" selection process included only the votes of Chinatown elites. Nevertheless, it publicly legitimized Cheng's labor policies in the view of the state and the rest of the Asian American community. Pataki did not revoke the award but vowed to reconsider the selection process next year.⁴⁴ The impression given to workers in Chinatown was that the government supported policies and attitudes that reinforce the community's power structure.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY

The Jing Fong example sets an important precedent for policy makers concerned with halting sweatshop labor. In the campaign against Jing Fong, the tactic of relying on "community" outrage to the labor law violations could not succeed because newspapers and the elite presented the issue as a conflict between all of Chinatown and a few activists. Gaventa observes that "where plausibility of exit and effectiveness of voice are minimal, acceptance of a state of powerlessness may occur as an adaptive response to the exploitative situation."⁴⁵ A more active government effort at regulating violations of labor laws in ethnic enclave economies, together with the work of Asian American activist organizations, can provide increased exit options to workers and maximize their "effectiveness of voice."

First, the government needs to foster closer ties to community residents and become more aware of the power dynamics operating among associations, gangs, and the CCBA. The 1995 meeting with community residents, and the subsequent formation of a TARGET force to monitor labor law violations, provides an illustrative example of how government officials can respond to the complaints of Chinatown workers. Increasing the political involvement of residents and encouraging the proactive engagement of local government can undermine the authority of institutions such as the CCBA and of the arguments that elevate ethnic

solidarity to suppress labor unrest. This does not encourage the cultural and social assimilation of Chinatown or other ethnic enclaves, but calls on government to take steps which will prevent informal organizations from operating as internally coercive governments. At the same time, the government must take care not to threaten the entire cultural identity of Chinatown.

Increasing political involvement from community residents is a slow process which will require activities such as citizenship education, voter registration, and other forms of civic empowerment. The inability of many workers to speak English precludes them from working outside Chinatown and from gaining access to sources of information besides the Chinese newspapers. Government should support English language programs run by Asian American community organizations, while continuing to provide access to bilingual voting ballots and other services. English-only proposals will only prevent many Chinatown residents and other immigrants from participating in the most basic political processes and further marginalize their needs.

Second, the government should make a genuine commitment to labor law enforcement, specifically in establishments that employ immigrants. From 1980 to 1992, the Department of Labor lost 23 percent of its enforcement staff. As of March 1996, only about 320 agents worked on sweatshop inspections and few than had of the 12,700 employer cases reported to the INS resulted in fines for business.⁴⁶ This kind of reduction allows labor disputes to develop into conflicts between management, which often has stronger and more powerful networks, and disenfranchised workers whose advocates have limited resources. Without labor law enforcement, restaurants in Chinatown can continually undercut each others' prices and drive wages down. The government should consider the evaluation and imitation of TARGET forces, while taking into special consideration language needs.

Third, changes in the American labor movement and in Asian communities' receptiveness toward unions can counter the current power of the business elite. Community-based organizations, such as CSWA in New York City, Asian Immigrant Workers Advocates (AIWA) in Oakland, and the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) in Boston, can empower and educate workers effectively because they understand and respond to specific community needs. These organizations differ from traditional unions because they do not belong to the AFL-CIO. Hence they are able to avoid the stereotypes of American unions as racist or coercive, stereotypes which have affected attitudes towards unions in communities of color.

Changes in the structure, focus, and leadership of the AFL-CIO over the past few years have begun to address the labor movement's inability to reflect the racial and gender makeup of the work force over the past few decades, though. The creation of an Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) in 1992 may provide a place for Asians and Pacific Islanders in the labor movement.⁴⁷ In the case of Jing Fong, CSWA worked closely with Local 318, but CSWA activists expressed reservations about the effectiveness of unions in representing workers' interests. Unionization in Asian communities might be a workable and acceptable

option for the future, provided there are changes to both union and community organizations' attitudes.

Fourth, American politicians should rethink their efforts to ban illegal immigration to the United States. Nativists rail against both legal and illegal immigrants as threats to the country's identity as an ethnically homogeneous nation. This interpretation of immigration fails to recognize that the main motivation for immigration to the United States is employment. The *IRCA* performed an important function by offering permanent resident status to undocumented workers in the United States. It has not prevented, however, the growth of an underground economy where workers receive illegally low wages and work in poor conditions. The fear of deportation by workers pushes illegal practices further "underground" and makes it more difficult to regulate violations. Proponents of decreasing immigration rates would do better to direct their efforts toward regulating private businesses that offer sub-minimum wage jobs which other Americans refuse to accept. In the current anti-immigrant atmosphere, the adoption of a more open immigration policy is unlikely. Extra border patrols and other criminalizing measures have proven largely unsuccessful at changing the rates of illegal immigration. Instead, they have contributed to the continuing exploitation of immigrant laborers upon arrival. Policy makers should reconsider the implications of an open border immigration policy.⁴⁸

Finally, Asian American scholars should reintegrate labor issues, particularly questions of intra-Asian labor exploitation, into their research. In *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990's*, the United States Civil Rights Commission reports on problems such as police brutality and employment discrimination but makes little mention about labor law violations in Asian ethnic enclave economies. Sociologist Edna Bonacich noted a general trend in Asian American studies during the 1980s and 90s of focusing on middle class issues like affirmative action and the glass ceiling.⁴⁹ Academics, think tanks, and community organizations must provide more policymakers with more accurate data and innovative ideas so they can craft feasible policies to aid exploited Chinese laborers. The conception among American government officials that Chinatown is simply a quaint, tourist attraction or a mysterious, crime-ridden area, can be slowly dispelled by well-documented research.

The government plays a necessary role in prompting change in Chinatown because of the ingrained social and political dynamics which exist there. The government and community actions can open up small avenues for workers which will free them from unfair labor practices. Such efforts can stop the cyclical patterns of labor violations and exploitation at work in Chinatown. Chinatown's isolation from mainstream political, economic, and social processes has allowed the elites to govern the community with fairly unbridled control and abuses. An overall weakening of the informal power structure will increase workers' autonomy and gradually bring about change in the community.

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Broken Promises and Aging Patriots: An Assessment of US Veteran Benefits Policy for Filipino World War II Veterans

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In 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called Filipino soldiers into the service of the US armed forces. Fighting as US nationals, over 300,000 Filipino regular and guerrillas troops fought for America during World War II. Shortly after the war, however, Congress passed the Recission Acts of 1946, which disqualified these Filipino soldiers from receiving veterans benefits. Today, over 70,000 elderly Filipino veterans still seek the veterans' compensation promised to them by the US government. This paper examines the history of US veterans policy towards Filipinos. It then explores strategies for securing Congressional legislation that would restore benefits to Filipino veterans.

INTRODUCTION

In 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called Filipino soldiers residing in the Philippines into the service of the US Armed Forces of the Far East. Fighting as US nationals and not as foreign or allied soldiers, over 300,000 Filipinos fought in the Pacific theater as members of the US Armed Forces, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. In July of 1996, the US Congress passed a non-binding resolution recognizing the contributions of Filipino veterans to the American WWII war effort.¹ Three months later on October 13, 1996, President Clinton signed Presidential Proclamation 6943 honoring those Filipinos who fought in the US Armed Forces during WWII.² After years of ignoring the significant contributions of Filipino veterans and denying them veterans benefits, the American government has now, at least, begun to acknowledge its forgotten Filipino WWII veterans. Unfortunately, neither of these two recent measures requires the government to allocate funds for its Filipino veterans. Today, many Filipino veterans continue to seek veterans benefits and pensions which they earned during WWII but were precluded from obtaining because shortly after the war, Congress passed the *Rescission Acts of 1946*.

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Aging, graying, and dying, over 70,000 Filipino WWII veterans have still not received any of the compensation, services, and benefits promised to them by the US government and accorded to the American soldiers with whom Filipinos had served side by side. Time is of the essence for the elderly Filipino WWII veterans, many of whom are aged 70 or older. The plight of these aging Filipino veterans, many of whom live in poverty and squalor, has largely escaped public attention and study. In an effort to assess potential public policy development in the area of Filipino veterans benefits, the focus of this paper is three-fold. First, it analyzes whether US veterans benefit policy has been discriminatory towards Filipino WWII veterans. Second, it assesses the contemporary Filipino WWII veterans grassroots movement and the effectiveness of its national legislative efforts to receive veteran benefits. Lastly, it offers various political strategies that are available to Filipino veterans as they pursue recognition and benefits.

US-PHILIPPINE HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

As a result of the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Philippines became an American Commonwealth, and consequently, its inhabitants were declared US nationals, neither citizens nor aliens, "neither 'fish, flesh, nor fowl.'"³ The *Philippine Independence Act* stipulated that "[a]ll citizens of the Philippine Islands owe[d] allegiance to the United States."⁴ At the inception of this colonial relationship between the US and Philippines, paternalism and racism dominated the way in which the United States viewed the Philippines and its people. In October 1898, President McKinley declared the Philippines "unfit for self-government" and that the US had no choice but "to take them all, and educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them."⁵ Although paternalism and racism formed the foundation of US colonialism, what eventually also developed was the historical conditioning of the Filipino people to the American ideals of democracy, freedom, justice, and equality. This paternalistic governance sought to maintain power structures which favored the colonizer and secured the loyalty of Filipino natives. The US trained Filipinos to develop an obdurate sense of loyalty and affinity towards America and its democratic values by controlling public education, the language of governance and education, the military, the legislature, and the Philippine courts.

Testifying at the Hearing on the Naturalization of Filipinos before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization on November 22, 1944, Dr. Diosdado M. Yap, speaking for Filipinos in the United States and Hawaii, described the unmistakable bond between Filipinos and America: "No other people in the world are more closely attached to the people of the United States than the Filipinos. They are following in America's footsteps in establishing...a representative and democratic government based on the principles of liberty, equality, and justice with freedom for all."⁶ America impressed on the Filipinos what McKinley called "the science of self-government." Although America inculcated the Philippines to accept and embrace democracy, American policy towards the island revealed that Filipinos were never really regarded as equals by the US government. The love of democracy which America implanted in the

Philippines served America's WWII war effort well, as over 300,000 Filipino soldiers and recognized guerrillas eventually fought for the US military in the Pacific.

The Philippines' strategic location in the Pacific influenced the predominance of military interests in US-Philippine policy. According to Patrick Ganio, a Filipino WWII veteran and President of the Filipino War Veterans Association, from 1935 to 1946, Philippine defensive forces were strengthened under the direction of General Douglas MacArthur, who programmed the compulsory military training of all twenty year old Filipino men.⁷ Empowered by a provision in the Philippine Independence Act authorizing the US president to enlist the services of the Philippine Commonwealth Army, President Roosevelt issued an executive order on July 26, 1941, calling the Philippine Commonwealth Army into the service of the US Armed Forces of the Far East.

Just one day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japan invaded the Philippines on December 8, 1941. Japanese forces blockaded and isolated Philippine defense forces from any reinforcement by the United States, depriving Filipino troops of sufficient weapons, supplies, food, and medicine to carry on the fight. Approximately 500,000 tons of additional supplies and 20,000 troop reinforcements were earmarked for dispatch to the Philippines, but the Japanese struck before the first shipments could arrive.⁸ While Filipino and American forces tried their best to defend the Philippines from Japan's awesome military presence, they had no choice but to surrender on April 9 and May 6, 1942, after the historic Battles of Bataan and Corregidor, respectively. Japanese occupation of the Philippines continued until September 2, 1945. During this tortuous three year occupation, Filipino guerrilla forces, under the command of General MacArthur, continued to battle their occupiers.⁹ With the historic promise to return to the Philippines still resonating throughout the Islands, MacArthur's liberation forces finally arrived in Leyte on October 20, 1944. By July 4, 1946, the US granted independence to the Philippines.

THE PROMISE

During the war, President Roosevelt and General MacArthur made statements clearly expressing that Filipinos fighting for the United States would be recognized for their service. At the May 28, 1948, Hearing on Benefits Relating to Service in the Philippines During World War II before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, Representative James E. Van Zandt of Pennsylvania testified to the promises which President Roosevelt made to the Filipino people. Representative Van Zandt served in the Philippines and worked with Filipinos during WWII in the Central and Southwest Pacific. Van Zandt remembered that Roosevelt addressed the Philippine people on the radio urging them to hold fast. The President "assured those who were physically able and willing to participate in military action, to do so, and in due time [they] would be recognized as members of our armed forces."¹⁰ Such words of encouragement from President Roosevelt understandably gave Filipino soldiers the impression

that, like other members of the US armed forces, they would also attain the rights, benefits, and privileges associated with recognized service in the US armed forces.

Despite the courageous efforts of Filipino troops during WWII and Roosevelt's words, the US government failed to properly recognize these contributions by denying Filipino veterans benefits such as pensions and medical care. As legislators squabble, then and now, about what they should do about Filipino WWII veterans, many legislators lack knowledge of the great sacrifices Filipinos made for America. Because of the valor and loyalty of Filipino soldiers, thousands of American lives were saved. The war certainly ended sooner. The determination of Filipino troops enabled American and Allied forces to concentrate on other military engagements, consequently saving the US government money during the war. When their American commanders surrendered to the Japanese forces, the Filipino soldiers continued to fight in guerrilla warfare and gather valuable intelligence information for General MacArthur. Their efforts kept the Japanese at bay and made it easier for the US to liberate New Guinea and the Netherlands East Indies. Speaking in favor of the non-binding House resolution honoring Filipino veterans, New York Representative Gilman argued that "without the assistance of Filipino units and guerrilla forces, the liberation of the Philippine Islands would have taken much longer and been far more costly than it actually was."¹¹

For their efforts, thousands of Filipinos died and countless property was destroyed.¹² Even when Japan completely occupied the Philippine Islands and the American military was incapacitated, few Filipinos lost faith that America would return and liberate them as promised. Before and during the Japanese occupation, Roosevelt implored the Filipinos "to stand firm together against the false promises of the Japanese."¹³ Relying on America's assurances, Filipinos endured the brutality of Japan's occupation, and Roosevelt acknowledged that "when the Filipino people resisted the Japanese invaders with their very lives, they gave final proof that here was a nation fit to be respected as the equal to any on earth, not in size and wealth, but in the stout heart and national dignity which are the true measures of a people."¹⁴ With these sacrifices, the Philippine people reaffirmed their belief in America and its ideals of democracy and freedom. Ironically, although Roosevelt spoke of treating the Filipino people with respect, 50 years later, Filipino WWII veterans are still fighting for proper recognition from the American government.

THE RESCISSION ACTS OF 1946

Despite a shared past, the promise of veteran benefits, heroic military struggles, and unparalleled loyalty from the people and soldiers of the Philippines, the US government betrayed its Filipino compatriots. Currently, there are only four groups of Filipino nationals who are entitled to all or some of the veterans benefits granted to US veterans. According to a November 5, 1991, Congressional Research Service report entitled *Veterans' Benefits for Filipino Veterans*, these groups include: "Filipinos who served in the regular components of the US Armed Forces; Regular Philippine Scouts, called 'Old Scouts' who enlisted in Filipino units of the US Army prior to October 6, 1945; Special Philippine Scouts, called 'New Scouts'

who enlisted between October 6, 1945, and June 30, 1947, primarily to perform occupation duty in the Pacific following World War II; Members of the Commonwealth Army who on July 26, 1941, were called into the service of the US Armed Forces. This group includes organized guerrilla resistance units that were recognized by the US Army."¹⁵ The first two groups listed above are regular members of the US Army and "are considered US veterans and are generally entitled to the full range of US veterans' benefits." The last two groups "are eligible for certain benefits, and some of these are paid at lower rates than for US veterans."¹⁶ The majority of Filipino WWII soldiers, however, do not receive veterans' benefits of any kind because on February 18, 1946, the US Congress passed PL 79-301, the *First Supplemental Appropriations Rescission Act of 1946*.¹⁷

An attached rider to the *First Rescission Act* declared that "Service before July 1, 1946...shall not be deemed...active military, naval, or air service for the purposes of conferring rights privileges, or benefits."¹⁸ The Philippines was granted independence from the United States on July 4, 1946. Under the *Rescission Act*, a very limited number of Filipinos falling into two categories were eligible for veteran benefits: first, service-connected death or disability payments; and second, National Service Life Insurance policies entered into before February 18, 1946. In both cases, the *Rescission Act* authorized restricted payments on these already limited benefits. The rate for payment was originally set at one peso for every US dollar. In 1966, the US government changed the "rate to \$0.50 for each dollar" received by an American veteran.¹⁹ The benefit rate resulted from a crude concoction of questionable post-war exchange rates derived when the war-torn Philippine economy was most devastated.²⁰ Mechanisms to reassess or readjust the peso to dollar ratio in the future were absent from US veteran benefit policy for Filipinos. The absence of such a policy locked qualifying Filipino veterans into questionably low exchange rates for decades, and even today, although the Philippine peso is much stronger, the rate of \$0.50 for every US dollar still stands. In contrast, veterans residing in over one hundred different countries receive dollar for dollar US veteran benefits. Moreover, the US government recognized the service of Allied Forces, thereby entitling those Allied vets to US veteran compensation and medical treatment.

Shortly after the passage of the *First Rescission Act* on February 18, 1946, Congress revisited the issue of veterans benefits. The *Second Supplementary Rescission Act*, passed shortly after the *First Rescission Act*, further curtailed veteran payments to Filipino servicemen and service women. Attached as another rider, the *Second Rescission Act of 1946* deemed that the service of the New Philippine Scouts, those soldiers "who enlisted in the US Armed Forces between October 6, 1945 and June 30, 1947," shall not be considered active service either.²¹ According to the 1996 Department of Veterans Affairs' *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents*, the distinction between "active" service and service is significant because "eligibility for most VA benefits is based on the discharge from active military service."²² Full-time service as a member of the US armed forces, not dishonorably discharged, usually fulfills the active service requirement.²³ The twin rescission acts effectively disqualified Filipino veterans

from active service status, thereby excluding them from qualification for US veteran benefits.

In the Hearing on Benefits Relating to Service in the Philippines During World War II before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, future President of the Philippines and then Philippine Congressman Ramon Magsaysay's remarks offer a clear portrait of the status of Filipino veterans "who were unceremoniously kept out of the American Army hospitals soon after [the United States] gave [the Philippines] independence in 1946." Reflecting on the plight of the Filipino veterans after the war, Magsaysay continued, "you will see these war veterans today on crutches, walking in the streets as peddlers; they go from office to office begging for a job with discontent written in their faces and hopelessness in their hearts. The Filipino veteran is a living example of a neglected class. They are a decaying group of human beings, a pitiful sight before the eyes of the world."²⁴ For 70,000 remaining elderly Filipino WWII veterans, often times living in squalor, veterans benefits like disability assistance and pension are greatly needed. While disability compensation covers service-related injury or disability, pensions are available to limited income veterans with at least 90 days active service, of which at least one day must be during a recognized period of war.²⁵ For elderly veterans unable to support themselves, the pension constitutes a substantial source of income. The maximum annual rates posted in 1996 ranged from \$8,246 to \$15,744, with an increase of \$1,404 for each additional dependent.²⁶

THE "MORAL OBLIGATION"

Hesitatingly approving the *First* and *Second Rescission Acts of 1946*, President Truman acknowledged the legislation's failure to meet America's moral obligation to its Filipino veterans. In his February 20, 1946, statement regarding the passage of H.R. 5158, or the *First Supplemental Appropriations Rescission Act*, President Truman specifically noted that, "the passage and approval of the legislation do[es] not release the United States from its moral obligation to provide for the heroic Philippine veterans who sacrificed so much for the common cause during the war."²⁷ Recognizing the significant role of Filipino soldiers during WWII, Truman emphasized that he "consider[ed] it a moral obligation of the United States to look after the welfare of the Philippine Army veterans."²⁸ Even at the time of the passage of the *First Rescission Act*, President Truman had already identified the bill's failing, and he made his expectations for more comprehensive legislation for Filipino veterans clear. Had Truman's advice been heeded in 1946, Filipino veterans today would not be embroiled in a contemporary battle for recognition and veteran benefits.

FILIPINO VETERANS TODAY

Many of the Filipino WWII veterans now living in the United States came to America in search of the benefits and pensions promised to them over fifty years ago. On May 28, 1995, Leslie Berestein of the *Los Angeles Times* reported that more than "20,000 elderly Filipino men" came to America after 1990 "when

Congress finally granted the veterans citizenship rights.”²⁹ Hoping to raise enough money to send for their families, many of these veterans, now in their 70s and older, settled in the Los Angeles area. Their wretched living conditions amplify the misery of their plight. Berestein reports that “poor, alone and too old to find work, they huddle together in cramped, cheap apartments, surviving on meager Social Security checks while they save every penny in the hopes that they can one day be joined by their wives and children.”³⁰ When these Filipino WWII veterans came to America, they certainly did not expect to be living on welfare, but America failed to afford them the benefits promised to Filipino soldiers during WWII.

Often lacking the community support structure or family roots, Berestein reports that “those who have no relatives to turn to often find themselves sharing decrepit apartments with several others, while some with less luck wind up at homeless shelters.”³¹ Filipino WWII veteran, 84 year old Teodoro Laher, lives in a “dingy, two-bedroom apartment with [his wife], three other veterans and [another veteran’s] wife.”³² Laher and his wife, 66 year old Fortunata, live behind a “curtained-off area next to the kitchen.” He complains, “I am disgusted with our situation here.”³³ Although Laher suffers from several disabilities including lung and vision problems, like many other Filipino veterans, he “had no medical benefits as a veteran in the Philippines, so he came to the United States seeking the care he thought he was entitled to.”³⁴ Although Laher receives Medicare, veterans benefits are more comprehensive.

Like Laher, Rosa Nanaling is a Filipino veteran who served in a recognized guerrilla unit running intelligence missions.³⁵ Living alone in an apartment in Arlington, Virginia, Nanaling suffers from heart problems but cannot receive medical treatment at a VA medical facility because the rescission acts of 1946 invalidate her service. Barely getting by, she receives Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income. Although she would like to return to the Philippines to be reunited with her husband and children, she stays in the US waiting to realize her US veteran pension and benefits. In the cases of Laher and Nanaling and the scores of other Filipino veterans affected by the *Rescission Acts of 1946*, receiving veteran benefits will require the American government to repeal the rescission act, but until such time, Laher “has to content himself with life behind a ragged curtain.”³⁶

Pablo Dungo, a 79 year old Filipino veteran, displays a US Army uniform on a wall of the San Francisco studio apartment he shares with three other veterans.³⁷ Even though America did not allow Filipino WWII veterans like Dungo to naturalize until 1992 and despite America’s inability to honor its promise for veteran benefits, Dungo expresses an overwhelming sense of pride in his service: “When I die, I would like to be buried in that uniform. I am proud of fighting under the US flag.”³⁸ Such pride in service like Dungo’s helps to energize the Filipino veterans movement. Still, the road towards recognition of service and the payment of long awaited veteran benefits has been difficult for the weary Filipino WWII veteran. On the January 20, 1994, the Ninth Circuit US Court of Appeals ruled that “Filipino soldiers who fought alongside American troops in World War II when the Philippines was a US territory are not eligible for GI veterans’ benefits.” Cornelio Besinga, a naturalized US citizen and combat veteran of the Philippine Commonwealth Army brought the suit forward in 1987. With a

unanimous rejection, "the three-judge panel [ruled against Besinga's] constitutional challenge" to the *First* and *Second Rescission Acts of 1946* in which Congress denied payment of most veterans' benefits to Filipino soldiers who served under US command during the war. Acting as his own attorney, Besinga, argued that denying GI benefits to Filipino combat veterans was "a grave injustice and a form of discrimination based on race and national origin."³⁹ No other group of US veterans, he claimed, were singled out as the Filipino veterans were singled out.

THE FIGHT FOR VETERANS BENEFITS: NOT A NEW ISSUE

In making its decision in the *Besigna* case, the Ninth Circuit, US Court of Appeals relied heavily upon past US Supreme Court decisions which held that "Congress may treat US territories differently from other states so long as it has a "rational basis." The "rational basis" which Assistant US Attorney Michael Johnson identified and argued was that "payment of full veterans' benefits to Filipino soldiers would have been 'prohibitively expensive,' running as high as \$2 billion a year."⁴⁰ The issue of granting veteran benefits to Filipino soldiers who served in the US Armed Forces is not a new issue; decades ago, an earlier Congress broached the subject. One of the arguments in favor of denying benefits to the Filipino veterans was and is that benefits are too expensive to administer because of the length of time payments may be drawn. If a veteran lives a long life and has qualifying medical and/or financial conditions, the VA will pay for a substantial portion of his or her medical payments. Upon the death of the veteran, the survivor and dependents receive monetary benefits, known as Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, burial payments, and a even a plot in a national cemetery. Dependents under 18 years of age and spouses of veterans may also be buried in a national cemetery along with the veteran. During the course of the veteran's life, he or she may qualify for educational grants and loans, guaranteed housing loans, and if the veteran ever loses his or her job, the VA provides personally designed employment counseling and job placement services.⁴¹

DOUBLE STANDARDS FOR "HALF-PRICED" VETERAN BENEFITS

For the limited proportion of eligible Filipino veterans receiving veteran benefits, their compensation stands at only \$0.50 for every \$1.00, half the amount all other veterans receive. Testifying at an August 24, 1960, hearing before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Robert O. Phillips, Department Commander of the American Legion, Philippine Department, asserted that "all over the world...Greece, France—they receive dollar for dollar [benefits] and the ones in the Philippines receive 50 cents on the dollar."⁴² If US policy towards Filipino veterans was non-discriminatory and based on the prohibitive costs of compensating veterans living in foreign countries, then one would expect to have seen comparable debate and scrutiny over the idea of compensating veterans of other foreign countries. A brouhaha over sending benefit payments to other foreign

countries, however, never arose in Congressional floor debate or in committee hearings.

The only vociferous clashes over sending and providing overseas US veteran benefits to non-US citizens arose over granting benefits to Filipino WWII veterans. During floor debate on September 19, 1966, Representative John Philips Saylor of Pennsylvania decried that:

In 66 countries around the world, men and women who served in the Armed Forces of the United States are sent checks on the first of every month by the Veterans' Administration in dollars. But if you happen to be a poor veteran who served with the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force and you live in the Philippines, the Veterans' Administration's rules and regulations do not apply to you. A different set of half standards applied. If you lost an arm, a leg, or you were wounded in the defense of the flag of the United States and you live in the Philippines, you receive only half of the compensation paid to the servicemen in the United States.⁴³

At the time of Representative Saylor's testimony, veterans payments reached recipients in 66 different countries.⁴⁴ This included payments to veterans, both US citizens and non-US citizens, dependents, and spouses. In 1967, the US government sent veterans checks to US veterans and dependents living in over 100 foreign countries.⁴⁵ Moreover, the United States has maintained VA offices in Rome, Balboa, and the Canal Zone,⁴⁶ At other times during the post WWII era, the VA maintained satellite attaché offices in Mexico City, Paris, London, and Geneva.⁴⁷ Given the Veterans Administration's strong presence in Europe and all around the world, it makes little "rational" sense that veterans payments to Filipino vets were "prohibitively expensive" while payments to all other vets were considered necessary and affordable.

When the *First Supplementary Appropriations Rescission Act* passed, the Philippines was within months of becoming an independent republic. As a purely technical matter, the issue might have arisen that the Philippines was an independent country and the US had no obligation to compensate the military service of non-US citizens. Nevertheless, unlike the Filipino WWII veterans who were US nationals, non-US citizens who fought for and/or with the US Armed Forces, receive full, dollar for dollar, veteran benefits from the US government. The VA created a special category for Allied veterans of WWII. According to the 1996 *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents*, the "VA is authorized to provide reciprocal medical care to veterans of nations allied with the United States during...World War II."⁴⁸ Such a provision by the Veterans Administration demonstrates that dealing with a foreign country and even veterans of a foreign country is once again neither impossible nor administratively prohibitive. The annual reports of the Veterans Administration from 1946-1968 listed the countries and commonwealths where US veteran benefits and pensions were sent.⁴⁹ The VA defined eligible recipients as American members of the US Armed Forces, alien members of the US Armed Forces, and members of Allied Forces. These countries included Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Greece, Great Britain, Guam,

Italy, Marianas Islands, Mexico, and the Netherlands. For over fifty years, the VA has shown that it can administratively and financially manage to send veteran benefits all over the world, at dollar for dollar rates. Thus, the explanation that veteran benefits to Filipino WWII veterans were simply too complicated to administer and prohibitively expensive is extremely suspect.

Adding to this blatant discrepancy, the US government went out of its way to ensure that veterans of foreign countries could still redeem veteran benefits like hospitalization and outpatient medical care upon naturalization to the United States. Consequently, a veteran of an Allied nation could serve during the war as a foreigner, naturalize in the US, and still gain some veteran benefits without having been a US citizen or US national at the time of service. For example, unlike Filipino veterans, Czechoslovakian and Polish veterans who served as non-US citizens and members of Allied Forces receive benefits. The VA provides hospitalization, outpatient and domiciliary care to former members of the armed forces of Czechoslovakia or Poland who participated during World Wars I and II in armed conflict against an enemy of the United States, if they have been citizens of the United States for at least 10 years.⁵⁰ The US government refuses to offer similar provisions and benefits to its Filipino soldiers, most of whom were US nationals, except for the New Scouts who came into service of the US Armed Forces after Philippine independence and were thus no longer US nationals. According to the *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents*, "aliens with honorable service in the US Armed Forces during hostilities may be naturalized without having to comply with the general requirements for naturalization."⁵¹ Although the US government assured Filipino soldiers US citizenship, they were not allowed to naturalize in America through the military service naturalization preferences until the passage of the *Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1990*. Clearly, there is a double standard in the US' official position toward foreign veterans. According to a September 29, 1995, letter to the community, Congressional supporters of the Filipino veterans, Representatives Benjamin Gilman and Bob Filner, and Senators Daniel K. Inouye and Daniel K. Akaka, bemoaned that "[the *Rescission Act of 1946*] is the only instance in this century where Congress drew a distinction between veterans with regard to entitlements on the basis of how, where, or why they served in our armed forces."⁵²

Needing hospitalization and medical treatment, seriously injured Filipino veterans were left to fend for themselves after the war. While many Filipino veterans in desperate need of medical attention for injuries directly attributable to their service in the US Armed Forces were barred from American Army hospitals, the VA made it a policy to "provide reciprocal medical care to veterans of nations allied or associated with the United States during WW I or II. Such treatment is available at any VA medical facility if authorized and reimbursed by the foreign government."⁵³ In the words of Philippine Congressman Ramon Magsaysay, Filipino vets were left to "die like animals without the benefits of medicines and hospitalization."⁵⁴

Before hearings of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, the former Chairman of the American Legion Subcommittee on the Philippines, Harry W. Colmery, identified America's great hypocrisy in its policy toward the Philippines

versus other nations. Three years after the war, H.R. 4073 called for the appropriation of \$22.5 million to build a VA hospital in the Philippines. Previous speakers and legislators argued over the justification for appropriating such a large sum of money to the Philippines which was, by then, an independent country that many considered able to take care of its own veterans. Arguing that "\$22,000,000 isn't a great amount of money," Colmery insisted that Congress allocate more money for the Filipino veterans than H.R. 4073 provided.⁵⁵ Colmery testified that, "It would be beneath the dignity, honor, and integrity, and obligation of my country to adopt this policy. I was looking over Mr. Taber's report last night with its approximate \$4,000,000,000 for foreign relief, and it gives every country, even our enemies, money. Japan, Germany, Trieste, Italy. I want to leave you with a query. What did the Germans do for the United States? What did Japan do for whom we are sending another \$400,000,000 over there?"⁵⁶ While enemy nations like Japan received monetary relief to rebuild their nation's infrastructures, the US government abandoned its loyal Filipino soldiers."

Colmery's sentiments were expressed by US State Department some years later in 1977. In that year, the US Department of State implored Congress to meet its obligation and provide veteran assistance and benefits to Filipino soldiers and recognized guerrillas. In a letter dated February 28, 1977, Kempton B. Jenkins, Acting Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations in the US State Department, wrote to Congressman Ray Roberts, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Like a ghostly echo reminiscent of Truman's words in 1946, Jenkins argued that, "Aside from the legal obligations which the United States has to assist these veterans, we have a moral commitment to do so. We cannot forget that these people fought with us at a time when the national fortunes of the United States seemed very low."⁵⁷ Thirty-two years after the war, in the opinion of officials in the State Department, America's moral obligation to the veterans of the Philippines required that benefits begin to flow to deserving Filipino veterans.

LEGISLATIVE AND GRASSROOTS EFFORTS

Recently, Filipino veteran grassroots organizers and supporters have placed great emphasis on developing legislative remedies for the denial of veteran benefits and other privileges to Filipino WWII veterans. Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii led these Congressional efforts with his work on the *1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act* (INA) which granted long awaited naturalization to Filipino WWII veterans. On February 6, 1993, *USA Today* reported that "in Manila [Philippines], more than 200 Filipino World War II veterans—some as old as 92—swore allegiance to the US flag, 50 years after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised to make them citizens for fighting Japanese invaders."⁵⁸ According to Steven Chin of the *San Francisco Examiner*, the INA "allows Filipinos who served in World War II under the US Army Forces in the Far East, in the Philippine Commonwealth Army or in recognized guerrilla units to apply for US citizenship."⁵⁹ Chin notes that for the newly naturalized Filipino veterans, "the [INA] does not provide for special benefits or services after the veterans arrive"

but these elderly Filipino vets do “qualify for SSI like any senior who is a US citizen but not covered by Social Security.”⁶⁰

During the 105th Congress, Senator Inouye submitted a bill to amend the INA to extend the naturalization filing period for Filipino WWII veterans. By and large, Congressional legislation has addressed the issue of naturalization for Filipino veterans. The attention now turns toward attaining veterans benefits for Filipino soldiers. As the primary Senate sponsor of the *Filipino Veterans Equity Act* (hereafter, the *Equity Act*) which was first introduced in the 102nd Congress, Senator Inouye has also worked to achieve veterans benefits for Filipinos. The act sought to “amend Title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of [veteran] benefits.”⁶¹ In essence, the *Equity Act* would reverse the *Rescission Act of 1946* which currently bars Filipino veterans from receiving benefits.

Since its introduction, however, Congress has not passed the *Equity Act*. Marie Blanco, a key legislative aide to Senator Inouye, explained the political realities which Filipino veteran legislation must overcome. From Blanco’s perspective on Capitol Hill, the greatest obstacle to attaining veterans benefits for Filipino veterans is the immense cost of implementation. Should Congress enact legislation to restore benefits to Filipino veterans, the Congressional Budget Office unofficially estimates that it would cost the government \$1.6 billion annually. Given the present mood of cost-cutting and budget-balancing on Capitol Hill, the un-revised *Equity Act* is too expensive to stand any realistic chance of passing.⁶²

The renewed anti-immigrant hysteria also works against the Filipino veterans movement. Increasingly, local and national newspapers teem with articles, essays, and commentaries on immigration. Blanco acknowledges the difficulty in separating Filipino immigration from the issue of Filipino veteran benefits. The *Equity Act* would confer benefits to all veterans denied benefits under the 1946 Rescission Acts, including those veterans who did not naturalize. Just as America’s current welfare legislation reflects an unwillingness to bestow welfare benefits to legal immigrants, granting veteran benefits to non-naturalized individuals is likely to meet similar opposition. Unfortunately for Filipino veterans and their supporters, the current cost-cutting and anti-immigrant sentiment in Congress makes the battle for legislative remedies even more challenging.

Recognizing this unfavorable political climate, Blanco is working on a new version of the *Equity Act* by consulting with Filipino community leaders interested in the issue. One possibility is to restrict benefits exclusively to veterans and not to dependent survivors. In an unpublished document, the Congressional Budget Office unofficially estimated the cost of such a bill at approximately \$700 million a year.⁶³ Another alternative would limit benefits to the 25,000 veterans whom Blanco estimates petitioned for naturalization through the INA. Asserting that “half a loaf is better than no loaf at all,” Blanco believes that the most realistic solution is to develop a bill which would benefit the most veterans while minimizing costs to the government.⁶⁴

Blanco notes that some members of Congress regard the Filipino veteran issue as a low priority, dead in terms of national significance. Through the years,

Blanco has seen apathetic members of the Veterans Affairs Committee dismiss the Filipino veterans benefit issue, going so far as to suggest that the Filipino veterans should just be left to die. Another challenge to success at the legislative level comes in the form of educating Congressional staff. Members of Congress rely heavily on their staff members for direction and support in legislative matters. Since most Congressional staffers are not familiar with the Filipino veterans benefit matter, except for its prohibitive cost, Blanco suggests that educating key Congressional staffers is one step towards enhancing the chances of passing the *Equity Act*.

The legislative atmosphere which Blanco discusses has the potential to attain compromise at the sake of compromising the Filipino WWII veterans' hopes and claims for justice. While half a loaf is better than none at all, it is still too soon to give up on attaining more comprehensive benefits, especially when it is so clear that the US discriminated against Filipinos veterans. The grassroots Filipino veteran movement has to articulate a cogent and convincing case for the Filipino veterans. The plight of these elderly Filipino veterans is only now beginning to catch the attention of many Filipino civic organizations. Some organizations like the Filipino War Veterans Association formed specifically to seek justice for Filipino veterans. Not too long ago, on August 10, 1988, Congress passed the *Civil Liberties Act* which called for a national apology and reparation payments of \$ 20,000 to each Japanese American internment survivor. While Blanco prefers to separate the Japanese American experience from the Filipino experience, there is a great deal to learn from the strategies implemented by the Japanese American movement.

STRATEGIES FOR MOBILIZATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The recent Congressional concurrent resolution and Presidential Proclamation which both recognized the service and contributions of Filipino WWII veterans suggest a space for substantive policy development in this area. While grassroots efforts in support of Filipino veterans have focused their attention on attaining veterans benefits through Congressional reversal of the *First* and *Second Supplementarhy Appropriation Recission Acts*, this battle has been largely unsuccessful given a host of obstacles, namely the cost of such legislation and its low priority on the Congressional agenda. Filipino veterans should not abandon their continued efforts to lobby Congress for action; rather, they should take the fight one step further by trying to garner greater support from a broader community. With such broad-based support, Filipino leaders could then pressure Congress for quicker relief. Grassroots organizers need to highlight the Filipino veterans' plight through an aggressive information and education campaign focused on the media, ethnic and grassroots organizations, Congressional members and staffers, and key Administration officials.

Through a decade long struggle, the Japanese American community successfully achieved internment redress by utilizing strategies such as these. Filipino veterans face similar obstacles to those encountered by Japanese

Americans. These obstacles include the relatively small size of the community compared to the American population as a whole, the lack of a Filipino political presence in Washington, DC, the reality of an aging veterans population, and the general public's "belief that this was mere special interest legislation calling for a large appropriation for a small group."⁶⁵ The redress movement offers a viable example to Filipino veterans and their supporters that even the most daunting battle against injustice can be overcome. Through a collective national campaign, the Japanese American community effectively won redress and reparations for the wrongful internment of over 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans during WWII.

National campaigns, especially grassroots efforts led by ethnic minorities take time. Like the current Filipino veterans movement, a key problem facing the Japanese American movement was ignorance of the issue by the public and by political leaders. Calvin Naito and Esther Scott, in a 1990 study of the Japanese-American redress movement, noted that "most Americans—including most members of Congress—remained ignorant of the internment and the circumstances surrounding it, and more than a few of those who did remember continued to confuse Japanese American citizens with the Japanese aggressors in World War II."⁶⁶ For the Japanese movement, educating the public about the injustices of the internment was instrumental to attaining redress. Realizing the significance of the issue, one of the first steps in the Japanese American effort was the "campaign to educate the American public on the internment and the drafting of redress legislation that would be introduced in Congress."⁶⁷

In addition to conveying the plight of the Filipino veterans to mainstream Americans, the Filipino grassroots movement must reach out to its own community. Emil Guillermo, an independent journalist and columnist for *Filipinas Magazine*, describes a largely ineffectual Filipino veterans movement that has not mobilized or galvanized the Filipino community.⁶⁸ In terms of conveying the US government's discrimination against Filipino WWII veterans, Guillermo explains that the lack of a reliable information source has hurt the veteran movement and the efforts of its veterans.⁶⁹ Blanco agrees with Guillermo that the Filipino veteran community and grassroots organizations must do a better job of providing accurate information to Filipino veterans, especially those still residing in the Philippines. For example, Blanco recounts that shortly after President Clinton signed the proclamation to recognize the service and contributions of the Filipino WWII veterans, Senator Inouye's office received several letters from Filipino veterans in the Philippines asking when their benefits were going to be conferred, since Clinton had signed the proclamation.⁷⁰ Such letters, Blanco concludes, are examples of the great misconception in the Philippines that the Proclamation conferred benefits to veterans. Blanco attributes the misunderstanding to the inability of the leaders of the Filipino veterans movement to disseminate information accurately to their counterparts in the Philippines.⁷¹ More reliable information sources are absolutely necessary for mobilizing the Filipino community here and abroad. The ultimate success of the Filipino veterans movement depends on it.

Guillermo believes that the best way to talk about human experiences is to move debate away from legal issues to a discussion of human suffering.⁷² Complicated legal questions have surrounded the Filipino veterans movement. For Guillermo, the complex web of court cases and Congressional legislation distances and diffuses the real suffering of Filipino veterans. The Filipino veteran effort could benefit from educating the public on how the denial of veteran benefits have affected their lives, thereby procuring the human dimension of such discrimination. The inability of the Filipino veterans to assemble reliable and coherent information about veterans' suffering contributes to the displacement of Filipino WWII veterans on the Filipino community's political agenda. An aggressive information campaign begins with making the dissemination of accurate information a high priority. Not only should the information be accurate, it must also be accessible to the public. The appearance of a website on the Internet dedicated to educating others about the plight of the Filipino veterans movement is one recent indication of an effort by leaders of the veterans movement to reach out to the Filipino community and beyond.⁷³

Another important component of the Japanese American strategy was to reach out to Congress. Key relationships were established on Capitol Hill which gave the Japanese American community greatly needed access in Washington, DC. Redress leaders set up meetings with key members of Congress, including the four Japanese American members of Congress. A lobbyist was also hired to campaign for the redress efforts on a full-time basis in Washington, DC. Naito and Scott note that leaders in the Japanese American redress movement urged the Japanese American community [to] lobby members of Congress through letters and constituent visits," a strategy which the Filipino veterans movement has employed before but not with the kind of force and emphasis needed to gain the attention of legislators on Capitol Hill.⁷⁴ In the *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal*, Terry Ann Walsch observes that the specific section pertaining to Filipino veterans, section 405 of the *1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act*, resulted from "a long letter-writing and lobbying campaign by Filipino veterans."⁷⁵ Filipino leaders, thus, already have some experience in lobbying Congress and achieving results.

The Japanese American redress leaders also sought the support of other organizations with more influence and more established connections in Washington, DC. A similar effort could also help to strengthen the Filipino veterans grassroots efforts. In May 1985, the Japanese American Citizen's League "activate[d] its Legislative Education Committee" to "reorient the organization's focus from education to lobbying."⁷⁶ The vice-chair for legislative strategy, Grant Ujifusa, drafted a plan for lobbying Congress, specifically noting that efforts to lobby Senators and Representatives was important but that limiting the lobbying strategy to this arm would not be most efficient. Ujifusa wrote, "We cannot lobby and pass the redress bill unless we have the support of other civil rights, ethnic, religious, and labor groups. We don't ourselves have the numbers, the big money, and the organized clout."⁷⁷ The similarly situated Filipino community needs the support of a broader community. Gaining the support of other Americans and organizations not explicitly associated with the Filipino community would give

the movement even more credibility and presence. In the case of the Japanese American movement, the support of non-Japanese American citizens organizations reinforced the point that the *Civil Liberties Act* was not just a special interest bill but a broader bill about the whole nation.⁷⁸ Likewise, the Filipino veteran movement should try to extend its message and efforts beyond the Filipino community as they try to make the case that attaining benefits for Filipino veterans is not just a Filipino issue but an issue of injustice which should concern all Americans.

The Filipino veterans movement has made several important gains through the years in their battle for recognition. Had it not been for the Filipino veterans' aggressive letter-writing campaign and successful lobby of Congress for naturalization legislation, thousands of surviving Filipino WWII veterans would not have become US citizens. Today, attaining veterans benefits is the next step. The recent Congressional resolution and Presidential proclamation indicate that Filipino veterans have made some progress in their struggle. By drawing upon new mobilization strategies, however, the Filipino movement may achieve their ultimate goal of recognition and veteran benefits.

CONCLUSION

Veterans benefits signify much more than mere monetary payments or medical care. A nation's treatment of its veterans exposes its true color. In this case, US policies highlight the glaring perpetuation of injustice against Filipino WWII veterans. The story of the Filipino WWII veteran is also important as a mean of identifying other discriminatory US policies toward other veterans, especially those of minority groups. For the Asian American community in particular, a new cycle of discrimination could begin again if careful attention is not paid to veterans policies. As recently as January 1997, Representative Bruce Vento introduced the *Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act* which would grant US citizenship to "Hmong and Lao people who served in special Guerilla Units established by the CIA in Laos during the Vietnam War."⁷⁹ This bill would "waive the English language test for Hmong who served and their spouses or widows and [would] waive the residency requirement for these individuals" and it "would make the naturalization requirements for Hmong veterans commensurate with the requirements for other aliens who served in US regular military forces."⁸⁰ In regard to veterans benefits, however, the act does not grant veterans status or benefits to Hmong who served in the Special Guerrilla Forces.⁸¹ Given the Filipino veterans' long battle against discrimination and injustice, the Asian Pacific American community should be especially wary of US veteran benefit policy. If Filipino veterans who were once US nationals fifty years ago could be denied proper recognition by the government, it can happen again today to other Asian ethnic groups as well as to other minorities.

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Trends in Asian American Political Affiliation and Voting, 1984-1996

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In the aftermath of the 1996 presidential and congressional elections, a subtle yet significant event occurred that largely went ignored by the mainstream media. Preliminary research on the 1996 elections as well as the last four or five national elections show a high degree of flexibility among Asian Pacific Americans (APA) in party affiliation. While APAs have traditionally supported Republican presidential candidates and anti-communist policy, there has been a significant rise in support for Democrats, especially since the 1994 midterm elections. This "elasticity of affiliation," is the product of the unique characteristics of a diverse and growing APA population. Evidence on Asian American voting patterns seems to imply that as the community continues to grow, its political influence will increase even more quickly. An understanding of the mechanism of this "elasticity" will be of crucial importance to the two major political parties in future elections, as APAs stand to become an important swing vote in local, state, and national elections.

INTRODUCTION

During the frenzy surrounding the 1996 elections, political pundits became fixated with the latest polling data on the presidential contest and congressional races. Media scrutiny focused on the supposedly new swing vote—the independent, suburban, white, middle-class working mother. This highly-sought after segment of the electorate was courted by all the political parties in the presidential election. As we now know, President Bill Clinton won re-election over his Republican opponent, Bob Dole, and the Republicans retained power in the Congress. But few academics, political consultants, or journalists took notice of the political behavior of Asian American and Pacific Islander Americans, who currently form the fastest-growing minority group in the United States.

Studies on minority voting behavior have primarily concentrated on the African American population. Only recently have polling numbers incorporated data on groups such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. For the

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most part, exit polling numbers on Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) have been dismissed as an insignificant portion of raw data, probably owing to the small number of APAs relative to the US population. Polls also suffer from the tendency to examine APAs as a monolithic group with uniform backgrounds, opinions, and concerns. As a result, many surveys of voter behavior overlook the numerous factors which contribute to political partisanship among Asian Americans. But because the number of Asians in the United States and on the voter rolls has increased, more data on the voting patterns of Asian Americans have become available.

Preliminary data from the 1996 election indicate surprising results that may give insight into the dynamics of APA voter behavior. In the presidential contest, Dole won a significantly smaller portion of the Asian vote than his Republican predecessors in the last three presidential races. Exit polling data reveal an increase in Democratic registration rates among APAs in urban areas. Trends seem to indicate a decline in Republican support among Asian Americans in the last twelve years for which data on APA voter behavior are available. In addition, other surveys of APA voter attitudes reveal the presence of a large bloc of political centrists which contrasts with the more solid support for Democrats among blacks and Latinos.

In this work, I will argue that the interaction between external and internal forces within the APA community has caused a decline in formerly solid Republican support and an increase in support for the Democrats since 1984. This hypothesis is substantiated by data on major elections between 1984 and 1996, which show that while there was strong support for Republicans among APAs relative to whites, there also was a significant shift in the support after the 1994 midterm elections. Rather than taking a monolithic view of the Asian electorate to interpret this phenomenon, I will take a multi-faceted and community-centered approach. I attribute the shifts in APA political behavior to two characteristics of the Asian American community—a high degree of political independence among Asian voters and the incredible heterogeneity and diversity of the APA population.

The first characteristic is that APA voters form a highly volatile voting bloc with weak partisan identification relative to other minority groups and exhibit a tendency to shift support quickly and decisively to the party they see as best representing their interests. This idea is substantiated by polls of Asian Pacific Americans, which show that a large portion of the population consider themselves political centrists and independents. As a result, any major change in partisanship or voting patterns is a result of a change in voter priorities. The second characteristic is that the APA population is composed of dozens of ethnic groups from different cultures and historical backgrounds, immigrants and native-born Americans, and people from all income groups, educational backgrounds, and occupations. This diversity causes partisan cleavages within the community, with some groups drawn to one political philosophy over another. When issues affect the APA community, particular groups within the APA population become mobilized to vote. This theory of “factional partisan mobilization” predicts that certain segments of the APA electorate will turn out to vote, thereby causing competition or a canceling out of the votes of other groups.

First, I will examine available data on the Asian vote and conduct a comparative analysis showing a relative decline in Republican support among APAs. Second, I will interpret available data on the political preferences of Asian Americans, who appear to have a high degree of partisan flexibility and political independence. Third, I will examine the internal forces which drive partisanship among APAs and show how those changes in the community are contributing to an increase in Democratic support. Fourth, I will examine relevant historical events and the political climate to explain the changes in voter behavior. Finally, I will hypothesize that an interplay of these factors mobilized certain segments of the APA community to vote more often than others, thereby causing a shift toward the Democratic Party.

SHIFTS IN PARTY PREFERENCE SINCE 1994

First, let us examine the phenomena which signal an overall shift in partisan leaning and attempt to formulate a basis for the mobilization theory. While data on the voting patterns of Asian Americans have been lacking or nonexistent for most of American history until the last decade, preliminary statistics seem to indicate that APAs, as a group, are an extremely volatile voting bloc that aligned itself with the GOP through the 1980s and early 1990s but has significantly shifted its allegiance to the Democratic party in the last two years. By contrast, other racial groups, such as African Americans and Latinos, have shown relatively greater stability in their political alignment.

This apparent decrease in Republican affiliation and support over the last three or four elections and increased support for Democratic candidates among APA voters since 1994 becomes even more significant when juxtaposed with the behavior of other ethnic groups which has remained more predictable during those same elections. While Asian votes for the Republican presidential candidate have decreased steadily, especially since 1984 (70% in 1984, 54% in 1988, 55% in 1992, and 48% in 1996) and support for the Democrat has fluctuated (30% in 1984, 44% in 1988, 29% in 1992, and 43% in 1996), the African American vote has remained more or less stable and Democratic—83% in 1976, 85% in 1980, 90% in 1984, 86% in 1988, 82% in 1992, and 83% in 1996. The Latino vote, while less solidly Democratic, has also remained stable over the last two decades, with support for Democrats at 76% in 1976, 59% in 1980, 62% in 1984, 69% in 1988, 62% in 1992, and 75% in 1996 (Table in the *New York Times* 1992: B9; Table in the *Washington Post* 1996: B7).

National polls conducted during the 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996 presidential elections and the 1994 midterm Congressional elections show a gradual erosion of Republican support among APAs after 1994. Exit polls before 1994 showed a clear tendency for APAs to favor Republican candidates more than other minority groups and often more than whites.¹ In 1984, when the incumbent President Ronald Reagan defeated Democratic candidate, Walter Mondale, in an electoral landslide (59% Reagan, 40% Mondale), APAs favored Reagan by a 70 to 30 margin. In 1988, Republican George Bush defeated Democrat Governor Michael Dukakis, 53% to 45%, and captured the APA vote by a lesser margin, 54% to 44% (Miller

1995: 56). But even when Democratic Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas defeated Bush and Texas business tycoon Ross Perot for the presidency in 1992 by a popular vote of 43% to 38% and 19%, respectively, the APA vote heavily favored Bush by 55% versus Clinton's 29% and Perot's 16% (Table in the *New York Times* 1992: B9). Only white evangelical Christians and self-identified Republicans supported Bush more than APAs. Even in California, a state which Bush conceded early in the campaign and where he won less than one-third of the popular vote, APA voters supported Bush by a healthy 40% to Clinton 45%, and Perot 15%, according to the *Los Angeles Times* (Miller 1995: 57).

In other pre-1994 exit polls, such as those during the races for California governor, APAs also appear to have voted more Republican than the population at large. APAs comprise approximately four percent of California's electorate and about ten percent of the entire population of the state (Miller 1995: 56). In 1990, Pete Wilson carried the APA vote, 58% to 42%, and won in a squeaker. In his bid for re-election in 1994, Wilson defeated Democratic challenger Kathleen Brown 56% to 43% among APAs and won the race by a 55% to 40% margin. Similarly, in the California Senate race that year in which Democratic incumbent Dianne Feinstein defeated Republican Michael Huffington 47% to 45%, the Voter News Service reported that APAs cast their ballots for Huffington, 47% to 46% (Miller 1995: 56).

In 1996, Clinton won his re-election for president over Republican Bob Dole, 49% to 41%, but results of national polls on the APA vote are mixed. The *Washington Post* reported that Dole carried the APA vote, but not by the ratios that the GOP did in 1992 (Edsall and Morin 1996: B7). The *Post* attributed this decline in APA support to Dole's campaigning on hot-button issues such as California's anti-affirmative action initiative Proposition 209 and immigration. The Voter News Service also found that APAs supported Dole over Clinton, but also by a lesser margin than they supported Bush over Clinton. A national exit poll of more than 16,000 voters indicated that APAs supported Dole 48% compared to Clinton's 43% and Perot's 8% (AllPolitics 1996). The *New York Times* poll of the races for the House in 1994 and 1996, reported that APAs supported Democrats in the House races of 1994, 54% to 46%, and Republicans in 1996, 57% to 43% (Table in the *New York Times* 1996: B3).²

In addition, other polls conducted by non-governmental publications and public policy groups specifically targeting APA voters in 1996 showed strong support for Clinton relative to the total electorate. Polls conducted by various APA public policy organizations in the urban areas of the San Francisco Bay area, Southern California and New York City seemed to show that APAs overwhelmingly supported Clinton and Democratic candidates, more than the general population in those regions. The Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (APALC), which is based in Los Angeles, reported that of the APAs surveyed in an exit poll in sites throughout Southern California, 53.2% voted for Clinton, 40.8% for Dole, and 3.9% for Perot. (Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California 1996). The Asian Law Caucus (ALC), based in San Francisco, conducted an exit poll on a pool of more than 500 APAs in San Francisco and Oakland and found that 82.8% of the APA voters surveyed voted for Clinton,

8.6% for Dole, and 14.8% voted for someone else or declined to reply. The ALC also found that 74.5% of the APAs polled voted Democratic, 9.5% Republican, and 13.2% other or no response (Asian Law Caucus 1996). In New York City, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), along with three other New York-based Asian groups, conducted a poll of more than 3,200 APAs on Election Day. While 59% of New York residents city-wide voted for Clinton and 31% for Dole and 8% for Perot, the APA vote was disproportionately skewed toward Clinton by 71%, Dole at 21% and Perot at 2% (AALDEF 1996).

Additionally, this shift in allegiance to the Democratic Party does not seem to be limited to the presidential race. According to the AALDEF New York poll, for the first time, a majority of the Asian New Yorkers questioned, 51%, are now registered Democrats, with the remainder evenly divided between Republicans (19%) and those not enrolled in any political party (20%). This reflects a steady increase in Democratic enrollment among APA voters in New York City, which held at 40% in the 1992 Presidential election and 43% in the 1994 Congressional elections. Republican enrollment among APA voters in New York City remained steady at 24% in 1992 and 1994 and dropped to 19% in 1996 (AALDEF).

So it appears that the national polls in 1996, such as those conducted by the Voter News Service, showed a moderate gain among APAs for Clinton. But other polls conducted by public advocacy organizations showed a steep increase in support for Democrats among APA voters in the three major metropolitan areas where most Asian Americans live. Some of the inherent differences between the national polls and those conducted in the urban areas contain a socioeconomic bias, with the city-based polls tending to under-represent middle-class suburban APAs. Many APAs who reside outside these predominantly metropolitan areas in outlying suburbs tend to be affluent and Republican. But the national and locally-based polls, while varying widely in their findings of party alignment and voting patterns among Asian Americans, all point in the same general direction—an accelerating shift among APA voters to the Democratic candidate in the last two years. In the following sections, we will attempt to analyze the various factors which may have contributed to this recent and highly intriguing phenomenon.

POLITICAL CENTRISM AND THE APA SWING VOTE

One explanation for the relative decline in Republican support among Asian Americans is that the APA vote is more volatile or subject to change than other voting blocs. There is some evidence that APA voters exhibit a high degree of political flexibility owing to a large number of political independents and moderates who claim to vote for the two parties about equally. Studies show that as a group, APAs have not aligned themselves strictly or predominantly with either the Republicans or the Democrats. If this characteristic is indeed true, it would mean that APAs are comparatively weak partisans and can shift their allegiances rather quickly.

AsianWeek, in a report on APA voter behavior, stated, "With the exception of issues that were directly tied to ethnicity, this poll found that Asian American opinions were distributed in much the same way as the US population as a whole"

(*AsianWeek* 1996: 15). *AsianWeek* compared data on the responses of 807 APAs surveyed to the results of a nationwide study of voter opinions conducted by the Gallup organization. The *AsianWeek* poll questioned APAs on their political leanings, which did not differ greatly with those of the American public at large. Party loyalty was split as APAs identified with Democrats (28%), Republicans (27%) and a full 41% said they were "switch voters," voting for both parties about equally. Similarly, when asked about their political ideology, 38% identified themselves as liberals, 50% as conservatives, and 12% as moderates. When asked about the proper role of government, 46% said they favored a smaller government, whereas 41% favored a government that does more to solve problems. Opinions on this issue, according to *AsianWeek*, tended to follow predictable party and ideological lines in cross-tabulation (*AsianWeek* 1996: 14). These results are substantiated by studies which show that a higher percentage of APAs, relative to other racial and ethnic groups, claim to be independents or mild partisans. Research on Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Asian Indian registered voters stated that approximately one in five declined to state a party affiliation (Espiritu, 1992).

The *AsianWeek* report said APA attitudes corresponded with those of the general population on propositions which were not directly linked to issues of race and ethnicity. The report compared polling data on responses by APAs to surveys conducted by the Gallup Organization on identical questions. For example, a comparison of opinions on major propositions, such as criminalizing abortion (Gallup: 42% for vs. 56% against, *AsianWeek*: 37% vs. 55%), imposing the death penalty on all convicted murderers (Gallup: 79% for vs. 16% against, *AsianWeek*: 75% vs. 18%), recognizing gay marriages (Gallup: 28% for vs. 67% against, *AsianWeek*: 31% vs. 57%), and raising the minimum wage (Gallup: 83% for vs. 15% against, *AsianWeek*: 78% vs. 18%) revealed similarities between the opinions of the general public and APAs (*AsianWeek* 1996: 16).

But the poll also found that APAs were significantly more liberal or progressive in their views on issues related to race and ethnicity. *AsianWeek* reported that in the Gallup study only 14% supported "granting racial preferences in hiring and education," but the *AsianWeek* survey said 55% of the Californian and 41% of the non-Californian sample of APAs favored employment preferences for minorities and women. On the proposal to limit legal immigration, 50% of the respondents in Gallup's survey were in support, but only 35% of the APAs in *AsianWeek*'s poll expressed. Finally, while a law to establish English as the official language of the United States had strong support in both polls, APAs were significantly less in favor of the idea, 70% vs. Gallup's 82% (*AsianWeek* 1996: 15).

There has been very little research on the reasons why APA voters exhibit weak partisanship. Perhaps this is owing to the fact that neither of the parties has made overt gestures to court the APA vote on a national level. By contrast, the Democrats secured their lock on the black vote during the 1964 race when Lyndon Johnson defeated Republican Barry Goldwater in every region outside the Deep South. Four years later, the Republican party courted the votes of Southern whites and urban white ethnics through Nixon's "Southern strategy." From these elections we began to see an increasing polarization of voting behavior between blacks and conservative whites. But the vast majority of APAs, who arrived after the abolition

of racial immigration quotas in 1965, have little or no memory of living underneath a segregated system as did blacks in the South. Perhaps owing to their later arrival in the post-civil rights movement era, Asian Americans lack a solid attachment to the Democratic Party. As a result of this weak partisanship, APAs have been unable or unwilling to vote en bloc as Jewish, Irish and black Americans have historically done. This lack of cohesion, in turn, has diluted their political effectiveness (Espiritu 1992).

In light of the earlier data showing Asian voters to have a higher degree of partisan flexibility relative to other minority groups, the *AsianWeek* survey of APA voters substantiates the idea that APAs are significantly less likely to identify with one of the two major parties. The high percentage of persons claiming they are "switch voters" shows a great deal of political independence among APA voters. This may help explain the volatility in the APA electorate over the last decade. In addition, if APAs are indeed more liberal than the general public on issues related to race, it stands to follow that they are more likely to support the more liberal party or candidates, especially when those issues come to the forefront of public debate. In the next section, I will examine the second explanation for the shifts in Asian political affiliation in the context of the interaction between external and internal factors.

INTERNAL INFLUENCES ON POLITICAL AFFILIATION

In an effort to ascertain the possible causes of the increase in Democratic affiliation and voting among APAs, I examine the main internal forces believed to influence the degree of partisanship among APAs. The apparent volatility in overall APA partisan affiliation is at least partially caused by the high degree of diversity in national origin and socioeconomic background among APAs, with some groups tending to be aligned with one party over another. It seems that a combination of five central factors—length of residence, ethnicity, age, gender, and class—is the leading determinant of a particular Asian American's political preference. It may, therefore, be more appropriate to examine the APA electorate as a loosely bound coalition of groups who share some common political priorities, rather than as a unified bloc of voters.

A. Length of residence

Research shows that the length of residence in the United States is the most influential factor in both partisanship and voter registration. Internal Republican polling data show that most GOP support among APAs comes from the immigrant generation, with US-born APAs remaining politically independent (Miller 1995: 57). Similarly, in a 1984 study by Bruce Cain, Roderick Kiewiet, and Carole Uhlaner, findings indicate 42% of foreign-born APAs identified with the Republican Party, versus 32% with the Democrats. In contrast, among native-born APAs, 43% leaned to the Democrats and 37% to the GOP. The researchers stated there are three possible central factors affecting the shifts in party affiliation among Asian and Latino immigrants with regard to an increased length of residency—the minority group hypothesis, the economic advancement hypothesis,

and the foreign policy concerns hypothesis (Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991: 400).

According to the minority-group hypothesis, the longer Asian immigrants have been in the US, the more likely they are to become Democrats, possibly owing to increased age and the traditional appeal of the Democrats to the elderly and to exposure to racial discrimination. The economic advancement hypothesis predicts that as APA immigrants make economic gains and increase their standards of living with time, they will increasingly affiliate with the Republican Party. This idea would also indicate a greater affiliation with the GOP than Latinos, who have relatively lower incomes and a higher proportion of union households. Finally, the foreign-policy concerns hypothesis predicts that Chinese, South Korean, and Southeast Asian immigrants will become increasingly supportive of the Republican party as they learn about US politics.

These three influences seem to combine with varying degrees of force to create a relatively stable arrangement of political identification as a function of length of residence among APAs. There are only moderate gains for the Democrats among APAs, in contrast to the dramatic increase in Democratic affiliation and decrease in Republican identification among Latinos as they continue to reside in the US. According to the Cain study, first-generation immigrants are only slightly more likely to become Democrats with increasing age. Second and third-generation APAs are also more likely to self-identify with the Democratic Party with increasing time. Among the foreign-born immigrants and second and third-generation Asian Americans, Republican affiliation decreases slightly as time progresses. The researchers hypothesize that small increases in support for Democrats with time spent in the US is matched by small gains by the Republicans as a result of both the economic-advancement factor as well as a tendency to support staunch Republican anti-communist policy (Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991: 402).

Length of residence in the United States is also the single most important factor in determining registration rates (Hong 1996: 9). Don Nakanishi of the University of California at Los Angeles' Graduate School of Education reports that APA voter registration rates, even among the relatively affluent and largely non-immigrant Japanese American population, are roughly 20 percentage points below those of whites and African Americans. Naturalized APAs and refugees generally have lower rates of voter registration than native-born APA citizens (49% versus 56%). Research shows that APAs, even when accounting for citizenship, income, and education, have lower rates of turnout and political participation. Those who have been in the country for more than 20 years, however, register at rates comparable to those of the native-born. Thus, the actual APA electorate is more likely to be composed of the native-born and APAs who have lived in the US for longer periods of time than the APA population at large. As a result, the Asian American electorate may be disproportionately skewed toward the Democrats, since native-born APAs are more likely to favor the Democratic Party.

B. Ethnicity

Closely related to the Cain's study and the foreign-policy concerns hypothesis is the finding that certain Asian ethnic groups tend to favor one party over another. One main cause for these differences among the ethnic groups is anti-communist policy. Every US president from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan and George Bush made containment of communism the cornerstone of foreign policy. Both Democratic and Republican presidents during the Cold War sought to maintain this policy, from Lyndon Johnson's escalation of the war in Vietnam to Richard Nixon's diplomatic mission to China in an attempt to gain leverage against the Soviet Union. But during the 1980s, Reagan and the Republicans strengthened their image as the standard-bearers of anti-communism by taking a confrontational stance against the Soviets. As a result, many Asian immigrants for whom communism was a top priority came into the Republican fold.

The Cain study concluded that immigrants and their descendants from countries that were once threatened by or have fallen to communist regimes were more likely to be Republican than those who were not. The last hypothesis partially explains the findings of the APALC poll of Southern California APAs, which broken down by specific ethnicity. The poll found that the majority of Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, Japanese Americans, and Filipino Americans supported Clinton, but only 46% of Vietnamese Americans did. Of the Vietnamese Americans surveyed, 51% voted for Dole (APALC). A *Los Angeles Times* poll taken in 1994 found that about two-thirds of Vietnamese Americans registered to vote in Southern California consider themselves Republican. From a historical perspective, it appears that Vietnamese Americans became absorbed into the Reagan-Republican coalition in the 1980s, about five years after the fall of Saigon. Alternatively, Clinton may have improved Democratic standing among this group when he normalized relations with the Vietnamese government.

Other findings also seem to indicate that, traditionally, Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese lean toward the G.O.P., while Japanese Americans, Asian Indians and Filipinos tend to favor the Democrats (Miller 1995: 57). But as the communist threat has subsided since Cain conducted his study, one major factor (foreign policy concerns) in APA party affiliation has diminished, leaving a host of other sociological factors, such as socioeconomic class, gender, and age, to influence partisanship among APAs.

C. Age

As previously mentioned, data seem to indicate that APAs are more likely to vote Democratic with increasing age and residency in the United States. Currently, the fastest-growing age group among APAs is the elderly (aged 65 and over), rising from 450,000 in 1990 to a projected 2.1 million in 2020, a jump of 355%, from 6% to 12% of the total APA population (Ong and Hee 1993: 18). While there may be a tendency for people to become more socially or culturally conservative as they get older, this inclination appears to be outweighed by the traditional appeal of the Democrats as the party of senior citizens.

The Democratic Party has traditionally been associated with government assistance and programs to help the elderly, the poorer classes, and the weak. In the last election, Democrats attempted to portray themselves as guardians of social programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Since older APAs, even the foreign-born, are more likely to register and vote, it follows that they will become a dominant group within the APA voting coalition. This trend toward the "greying" of Asian Pacific America shows no signs of abatement in the near future and bodes well for Democratic candidates who wish to incorporate Asian voters into their coalitions.

D. Gender

The much-discussed "gender gap" in last year's election—that is, the differences in support for the two major parties between men and women—was also evident among APAs, with APA women giving Clinton a 20-point lead over Dole, versus APA men who gave the President a 10-point margin (*AsianWeek* 1996: 14). Nationally, women of all ethnic groups favored Clinton by 17 percentage points. One may presume that many of the factors which contributed to women of all ethnic groups disproportionately supporting Clinton and the Democrats can be applied to Asian women. For example, the *Washington Post* attributed Clinton's solid support among women to his emphasis on issues which women favor more strongly than men, such as the assault weapons ban, the *Violence Against Women Act*, the *Family and Medical Leave Act*, and tough enforcement of child support laws against deadbeat fathers (Edsall and Morin 1996).

In addition, internal demographic shifts in the APA community—specifically, an explosive increase in birth rates—may contribute to increased support for Democrats among APA women. The growth of the APA population has also led to an increase in the number of school-age APA children. Between 1960 and 1990, this population grew about six-fold, or from 212,900 to almost 1.3 million. Nearly half of the increase came from first-generation children, the remaining increase attributable to the number of US-born children of Asian immigrants (Hing 1996). Projections of fertility and survival rates predict the increase in the number of children will continue. APA children and young adults may comprise between 34 and 38 percent of the total APA population by the year 2020 (Ong and Hee 1993).

While increasing acculturation and socioeconomic status may eventually dampen the fertility rates among APA women, the growing number of young children in the APA population will undoubtedly have a profound effect on the lives and voting behavior of Asian women in the future. Women as a whole are much more likely than men to be the caretakers of young children and the elderly. As a result, we may predict they will be more concerned than men about government assistance such as educational opportunities for young children, educational loans for students in college, and Social Security and Medicare for the elderly. As a result of these dramatic demographic changes—the increasing growth of children and the elderly—the gender gap between Asian women and Asian men may continue to widen. These demographic trends bode well for Democratic candidates, who may expect increasing support from APA women.

E. Class and Education

Research shows that APAs, like the rest of the population, lean toward the GOP as their income and educational levels increase. As previously mentioned, registration rates for APAs are largely related to one's length of residence in the United States. In addition, higher registration rates are related to increasing levels of education. Success stories of Asian American "whiz kids" at the nation's top universities, images of fabulously wealthy businessmen and entrepreneurs, and statistics touting the high median household income of Asian Americans mask the growing Asian underclass that is partially a result of changing internal demographics. Diversity within the community has caused a growing gap between the affluent and well-educated and the poor and impoverished. In a sense, this trend mirrors the labor market of the US as a whole, but there is evidence that it has become exacerbated by both immigration policy and changes in the economy.

The *1965 Immigration Act*, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson, created a bimodal structure of opportunity—those with extensive education in their homelands who have filled the high-wage professional ranks and those with less skills who have filled low-wage menial positions. Median household incomes vary across ethnic and native lines, with Filipinos and Asian Indians with about \$43,000 each, versus Southeast Asians who are at the low end with a median income of \$18,300. Southeast Asians are also the group with the highest rate of persons living below poverty (Ong and Hee 1994: 36). In addition, recent immigrants who entered between 1985 and 1990 have the lowest median income and highest percentage of APAs living in poverty, whereas those who entered between 1965 and 1969 are the most likely to be affluent (Ong and Hee 1994: 37). The *Immigration Act* helped to draw persons disproportionately from the highly-skilled professional classes in Asia, as well as impoverished refugees affected by US military ventures in Asia. This factor may cause a split within the APA community between affluent groups such as Japanese Americans, and poorer groups like Southeast Asian refugees.

The gap in economic opportunities is strongly linked to the bimodal structure of educational opportunity. According to the 1990 Census, 37% of all APAs 25 years or older had a bachelor's degree, and 14% had a graduate or other professional degree, which are rates higher than that of the general population. One product of immigration is an increase in the number of those with minimal educational training and lack of command of English. In the four major metropolitan areas, 24% of Asians have low educational levels, compared to 15% of non-Hispanic whites (Ong and Hee 1994: 43).

Therefore, we recognize that class and education—two of the strongest predictors of one's probability of registering and voting—paint a complex picture of the electorate. Since newer immigrants, who tend to favor the Republicans, are less likely to register to vote due to the lack of English proficiency and education, the disproportionate numbers of second-generation and third-generation APAs would tend to favor the Democrats. More recent immigrants tend to be of lower socioeconomic status, which would indicate lower rates of registration among the poorer classes, thereby favoring the Republicans. Nevertheless, it

appears that the current bifurcation of the APA community along class and educational lines will continue to be a factor in APA political affiliation.

EXTERNAL POLITICAL FORCES

The recent shift of APA voters away from the Republican Party can best be explained by the interaction of forces acting externally to the APA population and internal demographic changes within the community. Three external political events appear to have had a great deal of influence in demobilizing Asian support for the GOP—the decline of the world communist threat, the rise of the Republican Congress, and the efforts by activist groups to respond to Republican legislation.

The first event, the decline of communism, was heralded as a great achievement on the part of Republican foreign policy. The symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall, then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's diminishment of the USSR's influence in the Eastern European nations, and the later dissolution of the Soviet Union into a commonwealth of states greatly increased Americans' sense of security. It appeared that the threat of a worldwide nuclear war had finally subsided. While several nations in East Asia were still ostensibly communist in nature, the breakup of the Soviet Union further decreased those states' ability to pose a threat to the US or their neighbors. China had already begun a program of economic liberalization and, except for the Tiananmen Square incident, appeared to make a move in the direction of democratization, albeit at a slow pace. North Korea, having lost Moscow's support, appeared weak relative to a prosperous South Korea. And the Vietnamese government was making overtures to Western businesses. As a result, those APAs in the US, especially recent immigrants, had less of a unified purpose in supporting Republican anti-communist policy.

The second factor which caused a demobilization in support for the Republican Party is the backlash against anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action legislation proposed by the new GOP Congress. After the election of Bill Clinton and a massive no-confidence vote on the Democratic Congress in 1994, Republicans gained control of both chambers of the legislative branch for the first time in 40 years. When they took office in 1995, House Republicans began to consider legislation that would sharply curtail civil-rights advances and public assistance to minorities and immigrants. In addition, the highly-publicized battles between the Clinton Administration and Congress on the federal budget sparked a debate on the proper rate of growth in government entitlements. Some conservative lawmakers even proposed to limit educational loans to foreign-born students, even to those who had already become citizens.

Since the 1994 midterm elections and the Republican takeover of Congress, a series of bills have been passed which appear to affect the APA population and, consequently, have created seismic shifts in the electorate, much of it to the benefit of the Democratic party. First, the Dole-Canady *Equal Opportunity Act of 1996* (H.R. 2128/ S. 1085), introduced in the Senate by Dole shortly before he resigned from the Senate, aimed to prohibit federal affirmative action in the awarding of contracts to minority-owned businesses. Second, the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* (H.R. 2202), which overwhelmingly passed in

the House after a series of negotiations between the Clinton Administration and Congress, was signed into law in September 1996. The law was created to curb illegal immigration. Several provisions that were considered, such as the Gallegley Amendment to allow states to deny public education to undocumented immigrant children, were ultimately dropped. Third, the Congress passed and Clinton signed into law the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996* (H.R. 3734)—sweeping welfare legislation that bars noncitizens, with few exceptions, from receiving public assistance such as Supplemental Security Income and Food Stamps and restricts their access to other federal means-tested public assistance. Fourth, the House of Representatives passed English-only legislation, *The English Language Empowerment Act* (H.R. 123), which declares English to be the “official” language of the United States, and mandates that all government business be conducted in English, with very few exceptions. Title II of the bill eliminates Sections 203 and 4(f) of the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, which provide voting assistance to US citizens of Asian, Hispanic, Alaska Native, and Native American descent who are limited-English proficient (National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium 1996).

In a heated election year, many of these bills (which some say disproportionately target immigrants and minorities) were used as issues in the presidential and Congressional campaigns. For example, political commentators believe Dole supported inclusion of the Gallegley amendment in the immigration legislation as a “poison pill” that would force Clinton to veto the entire bill, thereby giving Dole an issue he could use to gain traction in the campaign against Clinton. Clinton accused Dole of proposing excessive cuts in government student loan-programs. Near the end of the campaign, Dole emphasized his differences with Clinton by supporting Proposition 209, the *California Civil Rights Initiative*. The Proposition, which was endorsed by Governor Wilson, would eliminate most state affirmative-action programs in hiring and college admissions. Thus, this major shift in the agenda of Congress and Dole’s campaign may have affected particular elements within the Asian community, such as the elderly, women with children, and college students, which mobilized those groups to vote in the last election.

The final external factor on APA partisanship was the sharp uprising of public policy groups, community leaders and interest groups in an effort to educate voters about the potential effects of the proposed legislation. The four bills previously mentioned that appeared in Congress the summer of 1996 and other GOP proposals helped to galvanize Asian American public policy and advocacy groups and encourage greater APA political participation. For example, since midsummer of 1995, several months after the Republican Congress first convened, APAs held protests in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, initiated voter registration drives and citizenship drives to court the APA vote, took out full-page advertisements in the *Washington Post* urging the defeat of anti-immigration legislation, and sought to link campaign contributions from APAs to politicians who oppose curbs on legal immigration.

Civil rights and public policy groups also met with top lawmakers and began letter writing campaigns to urge Congress to defeat immigration proposals (Holmes 1996: A11). In December 1995, a Taiwanese American named Marty Shih founded

the non-profit Asian American Association to, among other things, campaign against legislation that would drastically reduce the levels of legal immigration. In the aftermath of the welfare-reform bill, many of those same organizations worked to educate Asian communities and immigrants about the law's potential impact on Asians, especially the elderly and the infirm. These groups campaigned against the new restrictions for legal immigrants on access to public assistance. Since Asians made up 36.6% of immigrants to the US in 1994, and more than 60% of the APA population is foreign-born, these issues have resonated loudly with the community (Holmes 1996: A11).

TURNOUT AS A FUNCTION OF CURRENT ISSUES

APAs, like other voting groups in the US, turn out to vote when issues directly affect their communities. Since particular segments of the APA electorate become mobilized in response to the issues in a campaign, there exists a basis for the recent shift among some APA voters to the Democrats on issues of race and ethnicity and governmental assistance to immigrants. Indeed, it appears that recent state and federal initiatives that affect communities of color and groups with high immigrant populations have spurred APAs to register, vote, and organize politically. It has also influenced immigrant APAs to become naturalized as citizens more quickly.

For example, when Proposition 187 became a hotly-contested issue among California voters in 1994, APA turnout increased. Proposition 187 was a ballot initiative, passed by California voters, which prohibits institutions from using state funds from providing social services to undocumented immigrants. Portions of the proposition are currently being contested in federal courts. A study by Larry Shinagawa and the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium found that, in the San Francisco Bay area, 72.8% of all APAs and over 75% of APA immigrants, respectively, voted against Proposition 187. For each APA ethnic group, the majority voted against the measure. Also, a startling 18.3% of APA voters stated they were first-time voters in the election, three times the typical percentage of first-time voters. Those first-time voters were significantly more likely to vote "no" on 187 than those who were not first-time voters, 78.8% versus 71.7% (Shinagawa 1995: 5).

Additionally, in the 1994 New York state gubernatorial election between incumbent Democrat Mario Cuomo and Republican challenger George Pataki, data seem to indicate that the central issues in that campaign—crime and the death penalty—drove more APAs to vote. It was widely publicized that Cuomo opposed the death penalty, while Pataki supported it. These issues became the key factors affecting the outcome of the election and influenced the votes APAs made for governor. While a plurality of APAs (23.1%) said the economy was their primary concern, 18.9% of APAs surveyed indicated that crime was a key issue, and 20.2% cited the candidates' stances on the death penalty. Of the APA voters who chose crime as the most influential factor in voting for governor, 71.5% voted for Pataki and 27.8% voted for Cuomo.

Of the APA voters who cited the death penalty as the issue that most strongly influenced their vote, 88.4% voted for Pataki and 8.5% voted for Cuomo (Shinagawa 1995: 5). Most of the APAs who cited the economy as a central issue voted for Cuomo, but Pataki carried the Asian vote, 50.7% to 47.6%, and went on to win overall. A slightly higher percentage of APAs said they were first-time voters, 14.2% versus 10.2% generally. In general, as turnout increases, voters increasingly tend to favor Democratic candidates because political participation is related to educational level and income. As a result, one may theorize that in the last election, a greater number of poorer and immigrant Asian Americans were spurred to vote in response to the proposed cutbacks in public assistance to those groups.

Efforts on the part of activist interest groups led to increased APA voter registration and turnout and naturalization in 1996. Clinton, who was probably seen as the best hope to mitigate some of the harsher provisions of the welfare and immigration bills, benefited from these efforts. The APALC poll found that of the APAs surveyed, 33% were first-time voters (APALC). In New York, the AALDEF poll reported that almost 18% of those polled were first-time voters who became naturalized citizens within the last two years. Among that group, a very high percentage, 79%, voted for Clinton. Of the first-time APA voters surveyed, 60% were registered as Democrats, a rate higher than other APA New York residents. Only 11% of first-time APA voters were registered as Republicans, and 19% did not enroll in any party (AALDEF).

CONCLUSION

We are faced with a two-pronged explanation for the overall decline in Asian American support for Republican policies. In response to external factors such as the fall of communism and the empowerment of the Republican Congress and anti-immigration legislation, many APA voters changed their priorities. As a result of internal demographic shifts, notably an increase in birth rates and a growing elderly population, a growing number of second- and third-generation young voters, it appears that family-oriented domestic policy issues are replacing anti-communism as the primary concern among the APA population. This trend may have contributed to the fall in support among APAs for the Republican presidential candidate and some Congressional candidates in the last election.

These trends constitute evidence of two characteristics of APA political partisanship in the last election. First, the greater flexibility of partisanship among APAs allowed APA voters to cast votes for candidates who best represented their interests at the time, regardless of party. The second part of the explanation is that of factional partisan mobilization—more Democratic-leaning constituencies such as the elderly, the poor, and immigrants turned out to vote, while Republican-leaning citizens such as the anti-communists were less inclined to mobilize. Given the evidence that there is a strong correlation between external world and political events and internal demographic changes, it seems that both a shift in priorities as

well as factional partisan mobilization contributed to the decline in Republican support.

While it is much too early to predict the long-term political loyalties of APAs, preliminary scholarship and polling data reveal that the APA community is very much concerned with the issues affecting its members. In addition, political affiliation is the product of an intricate and complex interweaving of external and internal forces. There is evidence, however, that the diversification of APA ethnicity, the increase in second- and third-generation APAs, the exponential growth in birth rates and the elderly population, and the widening gap between the highly skilled and educated and the poor will have long-term impact on overall rates of political participation and APA partisanship.

Thus, APAs are by no means a monolithic group but rather a community composed of groups who vary in their political inclinations and appear flexible with respect to party affiliation, which can shift fluidly, depending on whether there is a single concern preoccupying APAs of all backgrounds. If there is one thing we have learned from the preliminary data, it is that the APA community is a highly diverse coalition of groups whose political preferences are often masked by polls which attempt to combine APAs into one uniform category. Political consultants, public officials, and candidates for office should take care to understand the dynamic forces which shape APA voter behavior. Those who are able to grasp the significance of these trends will succeed in their future efforts to create winning multicultural coalitions.

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INTERVIEWS

Governor of Hawai'i, Benjamin Cayetano*

Andrew Aoki and Diana Lin

The AAPR invited the Governor to talk about the Asia-Pacific region and current issues in American politics and Asian American affairs.

How did you get interested in politics? Were there any specific motivating events that got you interested?

I had never entertained the thought of going into politics, although I had pretty strong views when supporting elected officials. I'm a Democrat and was a strong Kennedy supporter at that time. When I got home from law school in 1971, Jack Burns was the governor of Hawai'i, and he assigned me to a very important housing commission. That assignment got me into the system. I then had the opportunity to watch, not only the government in action, but also the state legislature. That got me interested, and later I decided to run for office.

What particular events shaped your political views?

The society that existed when I grew up had a great deal to do with shaping my political views. I grew up in a working class neighborhood in Kalihi. Of the class of 1958 at Farrington High School, I'm the only graduate who became an attorney. Society at that time was one in which choices were somewhat limited and often indirectly made for members of different ethnic minority groups. Going through that kind of experience, getting an education and a law degree, and being exposed to the mainland did a lot to shape my views. I could never have become a Republican.

What advice would you give to minorities who would like to enter public life?

I would advise them to get involved in the political system—whether or not they run for office—to get involved in campaigns and work for elected officials. Public service is a very noble calling. That would be a good start.

** Benjamin J. Cayetano has served in public office for over two decades. Gov. Cayetano served twelve years in the Hawai'i State Legislature and two four-year terms as Lieutenant Governor. Governor Cayetano was elected governor on November 8, 1994, becoming the State of Hawai'i's fifth governor and the first U.S. Governor of Filipino ancestry.*

The theme of this year's journal is "Transnationalism." We are looking at how US views toward Asia might impact Asian Pacific Americans. What is your vision for the relationship between the US and other Asian countries?

The US will always be a big player in world politics and economics. I think that the relations and interactions between the US and Asia will depend on visionary political leadership. What is happening right now, not only with the Clinton Administration but also with past administrations, is that Europe, the Middle East, and Israel are the primary focus of most American voters—Caucasian Americans tend to be more interested in things that relate to Europe and tend to have greater knowledge of those things. Therefore, elected officials tend to focus on those interests.

Most of our elected officials are pretty smart people. They are able to look at the data and should know that the Pacific Rim is where the economic action is going to be. They should know that is where the huge populations are. Compared to the United Kingdom, which has only 58 million people, Guongdong province in China—just one of many provinces—has 71 million people. We can't ignore that, but the problem is when politicians "lean" and not lead. President Clinton should be leading now since he doesn't have to worry about being elected anymore. He's a smart guy, a Rhodes scholar, and he should begin to develop a vision to improve relationships with Asia and the Pacific Rim.

There's a significant role for Asian Americans to play in all of this because as Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, or whatever our ancestry, we have the advantage of sharing ethnic roots. The President should forge a vision which looks at Asians as being equal partners and attempts to understand Asian values because values in that part of the world are not always like our values. In China, they make prisoners work; and they use prisoners to build things—we don't do that over here. In Sri Lanka, a ten year old can work—we abolished child labor in the United States. But we need to understand that Sri Lanka may be where the United States was in the 1930s when we had child labor. We need to understand how Asians think—what their values are—and we don't do a very good job of it. Americans still tend to go into a place and think that their values are right and should dominate. That's not productive.

What are some of the key cultural or value differences between Asians and Americans or Europeans?

For example, deference to family is very important in Asia but not as important in the United States. I remember listening to a speech from the Prime Minister of Malaysia and he pointed out that the West likes to tell people what to do; Asians do not like to tell people what to do.

You said earlier that building a relationship with Asian nations is mainly the President's business. However, given its own cultural ties, what is Hawai'i's special role in building this transnational bridge with Asia?

In Hawai'i, we're doing all kinds of things to expand our relationships with Asian and Pacific nations. For example, we've done quite a few things in medicine. We want to establish stronger ties with hospitals in Asia because American medicine is really the best in the world. It's very attractive to Asians. I just took part in a telemedicine conference that we had here.

There is also a fostering of cultural and economic ties, increasing trade and business, and seeking investment. I have encouraged Hawai'i-based companies to make investments in the Philippines, China, and Japan. Educationally, the University of Hawai'i is pretty well-situated in Asia, and we have the East-West Center with 40,000 or so graduates all over the world—mostly in the Pacific Rim. Of course, the cultural ties are readily apparent. Quite a few Asian groups come to Hawai'i to take part in cultural events and cultural exchanges. There's a lot going on.

Is the Asian American experience in Hawai'i a lot different than the experience on the mainland. If so, how?

I would think that it is different. I think here in Hawai'i people tend to get along better with each other than people on the mainland. It's interesting that in Los Angeles you had Korean Americans sitting on top of their businesses with rifles to protect their property. We don't have that in Hawai'i, of course. There's much more tolerance. There's also much more intermarriage here and a lot more mixing here than on the mainland.

Was it difficult for you when you were at UCLA as an Asian American from Hawai'i on the mainland?

No, UCLA was always kind of a liberal place with a great deal of tolerance on the university campus—even during the time I was there.

Switching gears to immigration, what are your thoughts on the recent changes to immigration laws and what do you think are some of the causes of the sentiments that led to these changes?

When the economy is bad—and the economy was bad in the US for quite a few years, although it's getting better now—people always look for avenues to vent their frustrations and fears. When the economy is bad, people are competing for jobs, and people are receiving government assistance. And I think what we've seen on the mainland, especially toward Asian Americans, is a backlash, resentment, and frustration. It's interesting that even in the black community there seems to be some backlash against Asian Americans. I think when people are upset, it has to do with economics—you're competing for a job with someone who doesn't look like you—those are the frustrations that generate resentment.

The other thing is the overall reaction to affirmative action programs put in place primarily for African Americans and Hispanics over the years. You see how people respond to these programs manifested in court cases. In some jurisdictions, they've been wiped out. That's the case in California. If you go to

the University of California system you find Asian Americans occupy a far higher proportion of the student population. There's been resentment to this because people think that the more Asians the less seats available for others in the community.

So what do you think Asian Americans can do to address the backlash as their population increases through immigration and as their presence increases at universities?

These things go in cycles, they go up and down, and I think we're at the peak or close to it in terms of the "anti" feeling. There has to be a combination of factors to deal with it. One of them is strong leadership from elected officials. For example, it doesn't help when the Governor of a state like California, or some other states in the country, push for and support legislation and policies that are anti-minority. There has to be leadership from churches—although churches are no longer as powerful as they were before. Business leaders and community leaders have to provide leadership—but it hasn't been there.

The US is becoming like the Balkans; it's been cut up into different little communities now. There needs to be more communication, people need to learn more about each other. There's nothing like inviting people into the fortress when trying to break down barriers. Getting to know people and expanding levels of understanding is what's needed.

On that note, you recently appeared at Harvard University, speaking about multiculturalism and how Hawai'i might shed light on making it a reality in the United States. How has the immigration issue played in Hawai'i?

There's no anti-immigration feeling here in Hawai'i. I think that is so because Hawai'i is a unique society. When I was at Harvard, I mentioned that many of Hawai'i's people still believe in a melting pot philosophy. In his book *Hawaii*, James Michner said that future Hawaiians—not just the Native Hawaiians, but anyone born and raised in Hawai'i—will be called the "golden people," because of the great deal of mixing among races and ethnicities.

Hawai'i is very different from the rest of the country. Right now, compared to the US mainland, there is very little resentment toward immigration. I'm not saying there's no racism here—there certainly is some. We've got a lot of people coming from the outside bringing their attitudes about race and we also have our own local people, who are still smarting from past wrongs, taking it out on some recent newcomers. It is important to maintain cultural programs and increase understanding.

How will the new welfare reform changes and the immigrant status requirements determining welfare eligibility affect Asian Americans?

I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I think that Asian Americans will not be greatly affected by welfare reform. So I don't think it will affect the Asian

American community as a whole the way it will affect the white, black, and Hispanic communities. Some of these laws that were passed, in my view, are probably unconstitutional. The welfare reform law that was passed which would prohibit *legal* aliens from receiving certain kinds of benefits in my view is clearly unconstitutional. That law, in its current form, should be struck down by any court – even a conservative court.

We're interested in your views on some of the current issues facing Asian Americans. In the last election, as you know, Gary Locke was elected as the Governor of Washington state. Do you think this is a signal that Asian Pacific Americans are moving more into the mainstream of American politics?

I don't think it means that the Asian American community has become a major and potent political force. Regarding Governor Locke, first of all, his name is not an Asian American name. Secondly, he spent time in the state legislature and worked hard to develop relationships and to gain the respect of the non-Asian American community. I think that for elected officials of Asian descent, that is the way to go. But I do not think that Governor Locke nor I would ever be seriously considered as presidential candidates.

What do you think an Asian American presidential candidate would be like?

If an Asian American ever were considered, I think he'd probably be a *hapa* (a person of mixed ancestry; usually part-Caucasian)—he'd probably have to look or appear more like a person who is more mainstream. He could be of either party, although chances are he probably would be a Democrat. It would be someone who'd be really universal in his thinking and his dealings with people – someone who could really transcend ethnic lines. Having said all that, he'd probably be someone who'd win the presidency by the thinnest of margins.

Recently Newt Gingrich had talked about Matt Fong, the secretary of the treasury in California, as a possible Vice Presidential candidate for Bob Dole. He's not hapa, and he's also a Republican. Matt Fong actually put out a press release denying that he was interested, but there was some discussion about it.

Newt Gingrich must be kidding. I don't think he would have a prayer – he'd bring absolutely nothing to the ticket and probably hurt in areas like the South. Whoever dreamt this up? Was it Newt Gingrich? He says anything and everything for political purposes and probably it was convenient at the time and place that he said it. I'm sure he would not say this in Georgia.

Recently there's been a controversy over political contributions from Asia involving John Huang. Do you think this is a step back for Asian Americans in politics?

It's just one incident, and I don't think it has as big a political impact as people make of it. I think the press has made a big deal out of this whole thing. I may be wrong, but that's my feeling.

And what do you think the damage has been in the media's blurring of the line between Asian contributions and contributions from Americans of Asian descent?

I think it's pretty clear, and Americans understand they are talking about foreigners and not Americans.

Do you think this controversy had anything to do with President Clinton not appointing an Asian American to his cabinet? And on that note, when do you think an Asian American will be appointed to the cabinet?

I really don't think John Huang had anything to do with no Asian American being appointed. As to when an Asian American will be appointed, I have no idea. It took some time to get Hispanics into the cabinet. But this is why I believe that Asian Americans should get involved in government. I'm not just talking about elected office, but rather about government service as a whole. When we make appointments, most Governors—and I'm sure that Presidents are the same—try to get a feel for that person's qualifications, but it really counts if that person is somehow involved in the political process. And if you look at the cabinet members you'll find that many of them were. Many of them are influential in business, and many have had a long history of supporting President Clinton. That's why Asian Americans should get involved in politics whether they are Republicans or Democrats.

Although you think this controversy with John Huang will pass, do you think that this event has somehow hampered community efforts to increase Asian Pacific American involvement in political activities?

It shouldn't—you're talking about apples and oranges. Frankly, I don't think it will be a big deal or a road block to whatever Asian Americans might do. We had many kinds of people involved in controversies, and this one here is kind of minor if you ask me. The federal law says that you can't accept money from foreign corporations and foreign nationals and that's what the issue is.

INTERVIEWS

Connie Chung*

Amandeep Kaur Matharu and Myong Leigh

The AAPR invited Connie Chung to provide an insiders' perspective on Asian American issues in the news media.

We'd like to welcome you to the Kennedy School. We're glad to have the opportunity to have some time with you. First, we wanted to discuss what you're trying to accomplish at the Kennedy School and your research project. Then, we want to explore a few of your perspectives on Asian American issues. Finally, we want to ask you a few questions about your future plans. Let's start with your opportunities at the Kennedy School and why you wanted to come here.

I used to work with Marvin Kalb at CBS News when he was the State Department correspondent and I also worked with him at NBC News when he was the chief diplomatic correspondent and anchor on Meet the Press. He called me one day—we are old friends—and asked me if I'd like to come and be a Shorenstein Fellow. I, without hesitation, said "Yes". I had always envied people who did fellowships in my business. So when this opportunity came, I jumped at it. I've always wanted to have the opportunity to sit and think and write and read and absorb and enjoy the intellectual community. In addition to taking care of what I'm responsible for here, I'm going to try to audit a course to take advantage of the fact that I'm here at Harvard.

Can you describe your research project here at the Shorenstein Center?

I think I'm going to write my paper on what I would call the business of getting 'gets'—exclusive interviews—which is very different from when I first started in the news business 27 years ago. Exclusive interviews have always been coveted. If you're the one who can get the person that no one else can get, it's an obvious scoop. But the whole nature of so-called 'gets' changed because of primetime magazines, Sunday programs, morning programs, the proliferation of all news outlets, cable outlets, etc. Everyone's trying to get that person and that person is suddenly in the catbird's seat. It could be a well-known person or an unknown person who suddenly has 15 minutes of fame. That person suddenly has Ted Koppel calling him or her, Barbara Walters calling him or her... I remember

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calling someone and this person saying, "I've got Barbara Walters on call waiting and I just talked to Ted Koppel." This is a person whose name wasn't known and still isn't. But because that person got in the news, he or she was able to call the shots and audition all of us. It's a peculiar phenomenon. Also the underlying question for this paper is: are these exclusive interviews news? Twenty-seven years ago it was obvious what was news. Today it could be a celebrity or it could be someone that—if I could put it *in the old days*—we didn't think was news.

Thirty years ago, celebrities were not considered news. They were not a part of our regular news diet. So the topic I want to investigate is the business of going after exclusive interviews and what lengths we go to get them. I went to great lengths to get an interview with Michael Durant who is the American soldier who was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. I flew all the way to Germany when he was released—he went to Germany to the military hospital. But he was so healthy they were able to let him come back to the United States more quickly so he wasn't going to have time. I missed out. I flew back to New York as he flew to a stateside hospital for the remainder of his recuperation. I flew there to try and convince him that I was the one he should do the interview with. So we go to great lengths to get these interviews. I think Mike Wallace was trying to get it too and a few thousand other people.

ON BEING ASIAN IN AMERICA

Would you identify yourself as a Chinese American?

No. I'm Chinese... I'm very very proud of being Chinese. I don't have an identity struggle that some people experience. I grew up in a very Chinese home, speaking Chinese. My parents kept me in touch with the family; they would always tell me about my grandparents, these wonderful stories. I have four older sisters who were born in China. My parents were born in China. I used to tell people that I was born in China, too. Because I didn't want to be different from the rest of the family. There was this Chinese name for people who were born in the United States and it was slightly derogatory. My parents and my sisters would say, "Oh, well, she's a Wa Chao" and I hated that. As far I'm concerned, I consider myself to be Chinese, and I happen to be an American citizen. I was just on a plane with a woman who's Chinese and she was saying she was trying to find out all about her heritage. She was going through an identity crisis. I can't relate to that.

And do you speak Cantonese or Mandarin?

Mandarin. Actually it's what my parents speak. My father is from Soo Chow and my mother's from Nanking. It's really a combination of what they speak. When I was a kid people used to always say "Are you half Chinese and half American?" you see, so I personally rejected hyphenated identities. So when someone says, "Are you Chinese-American?" I say, "No, I'm not a hyphenated person."

So, by extension, you consider yourself Asian and not Asian American.

Yes.

How does your perspective as an Asian woman who has reached such a level of success and prominence within your field inform your work when, during your career, there hasn't been as much diversity as far as Asian Americans are concerned? Is that a perspective that you're regularly conscious of?

I think it's a lens I'm conscious of. Every reporter who works in news on a daily basis tries to be objective and tries to be fair and usually is fair, but the reality is we are a product of our own experience. We will bend over backwards to be objective, but since we are a product of our own experience, we are subjective. I am what my parents brought up, and that is a very respectful, Chinese person. I think my perspective is very Chinese. It's hard to describe what that means.

Have you had experiences where it has been apparent that you have that perspective?

Well I think just getting into the news business in the beginning. I was only 25 years old. I had to push myself to be aggressive. I wasn't aggressive by nature. I was the fifth of five daughters and they talked so much I couldn't get a word in edgewise. They didn't know that I could even speak. So it was a shock to the entire family that I got into television news—a verbal career and so public. It wasn't even a teaching job in which I would have to speak before a group of people. It was speaking before millions of people. Not only that, it involved going after stories competitively against some pretty rough and tumble people. Some tough, hard-nosed reporters. It required not only mental aggressiveness but physical aggressiveness—burrowing through a crowd and getting to the head of the pack to try and stick a microphone in someone's face. Just sort of physically making it to wherever the scene of the news was. So I really needed to get these very demure legs and feet to move and get going and be just plain aggressive. At the same time, I think that there is a certain demeanor that Asians have that doesn't appear very aggressive, so the combination of being myself—which is not loud and pushy—coupling that with what I forced myself to be, and that's what I developed as my approach towards news stories. A combination of pushing myself to get it but at the same time being gracious enough so that people didn't think I was being pushy.

ASIAN AMERICANS AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

There seem to be concerns among members of the Asian American community that the media has been xenophobic in their representation of the involvement of Asian Americans in the campaign finance issue, specifically in reference to John Huang. What comments do you have about the accuracy of those portrayals or how legitimate those concerns are?

You know I've been out of the news business for the last year and a half. I think if I had been in it I would have a better perspective on some of the questions that you're asking me because I would have been in the newsroom, in the mix, and I would have known what the buzz was...obviously you've looked into it more than I have. I've been a reader and a viewer just like anyone else in the past year and a half. I haven't been working.

[In a follow-up telephone interview on March 7, 1997, AAPR further discussed the controversy surrounding the portrayal of Asian Americans in the campaign finance issue with Ms. Chung.]

From your perspective as a prominent newswoman, what do you think of recent portrayal in the media of Asian Americans with particular respect to the campaign finance issue? We know you are familiar with the work of Frank Wu, the Howard University law professor, who has written an article for us specifically on the campaign finance issue and the characterization of John Huang.

I think the news media has been insensitive to the distinction between American citizens and foreigners. There's also a tendency on the part of the media to associate legal contributions with illegal contributions. Thus, guilt by association.

Do you think that there is a tendency for Asian Americans to be labeled more often?

Yes. I don't think it happens to other ethnic groups as often as it does with Asians.

Do you think the Asian American community should be concerned about being portrayed as a foreign community?

Absolutely.

Having talked to Professor Wu and having done some research on the issue yourself, is there a specific example that you can elaborate on, or is it just the general news media coverage of the recent campaign finance issue that you're referring to?

Frank Wu had so many good examples of guilt by association. The most egregious offenders were headline writers. Many times the stories themselves were accurate or explained in detail who was accused of making contributions illegally and which contributors were questionable. In other words, it wasn't clear whether or not they were guilty of some offense. The headline writers seemed to take a leap. I felt that the most egregious assumptions were made by headlines.

As far as the severity of these types of portrayals, do you think there needs to be an effort by these journalists to prevent such unclear characterizations in the

future, and if you do, what kinds of steps do you think it would be appropriate to take?

Included in the material I received from Frank Wu was a statement that was released by several Asian American groups to news media and politicians noting specific mistakes that were made by either media or politicians and suggesting changes. It was done very well. It was straightforward and to the point, asking for a distinction between foreigners and American citizens.

Do you know who produced the statement?

A coalition. The title is "Asian Pacific American Organizations' Statement on the Fundraising Controversy." It includes groups like Filipino Civil Rights Advocates, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, Organization of Chinese Americans, National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, Filipino American Foundation, National Committee on Working Women, Japanese American Citizens League, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus...

Would you say that you endorse or support these specific requests?

I do. I think this group thought it out carefully and came up with reasonable requests.

From your perspective as a newswoman, would news organizations be amenable to these changes?

According to Frank Wu, they already were. When brought to the attention of some, there was a recognition of a lack of sensitivity.

ASIAN AMERICANS IN POLITICS

If you look at politics today with particular respect to Asian American representation, what would be your prognosis on how the Asian American community might mobilize in the future, given that the community has been a little bit weak or silent in the past?

It's hard, because it's not the nature of Asians to gather forces and to mobilize, is it? Maybe younger Asians do. The difficulty with mobilizing is that when my parents were here as first generation Chinese, the struggle is so great to survive and to make a living and to send your children to school, that the bigger picture is the last thing to think about. That's one problem. The other problem is the diversity. It's so hard for Chinese people to join with Japanese people and Korean people and people from India, because—just like Swedes are different from Norwegians—you can group them together, but it's hard to get people from different countries to join together. It's probably easier for people your age. But I can tell you that for my generation, my parents' generation, it's harder because there just isn't that feeling of camaraderie and community, to join together and mobilize for the greater good.

Did you feel a sense of community when you were growing up in Washington, DC?

We had a circle of Chinese friends, and up until the time I went to college, it was mostly just Chinese friends, except at school. And there was a certain group that we associated with. They all spoke the same dialect we did. That's another problem with Chinese people, because there was a whole other community that spoke Cantonese. There was a whole other community that spoke the Beijing dialect, which is sort of pure Mandarin. There was a Shanghai group. My parents wouldn't even be mixing with people who spoke Cantonese, let alone Japanese people or Korean people. It was a very tight and closed situation in the earlier years, when I was growing up. Now I think there might be changes with the next generation. I think so and I hope so, but it's funny what happens with early generations. Aren't your parents busy taking care of family business, putting you through college? So they didn't have time to think about these other things. That's the way it was for us. Everybody was contributing to the family. Everybody was at part-time jobs or full-time jobs and contributing to pay the bills. There wasn't enough to go around.

Did you have Asian American political affiliations on your college campus?

There was an Asian group, and I was part of that. The gatherings that they would have weren't political. They were social.

As our immigrant experience becomes more extended, do you see more Asian Americans running for public positions, running for elected office or holding high level appointed positions? And given the success of at least two politicians at the state level, Gary Locke and Matt Fong, do you think that will bode well for more elected officials?

Sure. In more visible jobs like mine or public office, that is going to happen. It always takes time because people have to work their way into the political process. But I hope so. It's hard though. Isn't it the history with most of us that we go into sciences and behind-the-scenes jobs, not very public jobs...I don't know. It may be an aptitude for it. I majored in biology in the beginning of college. I made good grades in biology, so that's what I thought I was interested in. It came easily to me. But it wasn't really what I enjoyed. So I got out of that quickly. It may be that we just think that because we do well in certain subjects, but that's just generalizing. I have no idea. I don't know why. It could just be in our nature to be less public.

As immigrant communities, Asians are a little younger—our roots are not as deeply entrenched. What kind of barrier do you think it has been that there aren't as many Asian Americans in public life or in journalism, for example? You're probably the most prominent.

I think you're probably right. That's probably the root of it. Because you will find more Asians on the West Coast. And that's where more Asians settled in

years ago. I think that if you look at local news in, for instance, Los Angeles or San Francisco, the Asians have been on the air longer there. I think it has to do with the deeper roots, the longer time span in America.

Regarding the Clinton Administration, appointments and Cabinet and high level positions, discussions about making the Cabinet look more like America seem to include issues regarding race, with particular respect to African Americans and Latinos, and gender. We don't hear a lot about representation of Asian Americans. What does that imply and do you see that trend changing as the Asian community makes up a larger and larger proportion of America's population?

We're always left out. There's always an effort to include a black and Latino but we're never included. I think it just has to do with voting power. We are so diverse that you can't really identify us as a voting bloc, and that's what politics is all about. If you're coveted, then politicians will bend over backwards to accommodate you, whether it's appointments or issues or whatever. But as long as the numbers are low and the others are higher then we'll be relatively ignored. And then you couple that with what is probably a systemic problem of not being vocal enough, our own problems of dealing with raising our own families, and the immigrant status of just trying to survive—it's hard to gather the forces and have a voice.

I tell you it's difficult for me as a journalist to look at these issues because as journalists we're supposed to be completely uninvolved. That's our job, to remain separate and apart from any political issues. Some journalists feel they can, but I think that it's very touchy. For instance, we as journalists can't become involved in the most worthy of causes. We can't because if we do a story on it we're seen as pushing our pet cause. It's impossible for me as a journalist to engage in political issues. There's such a necessity to be objective. Viewers already think we're biased. They think that we are not telling the whole story or we're pushing our own agenda, no matter how objective we try to be. So the line that we have to walk is so narrow that we need to be careful about issues. I always get a little uncomfortable talking about issues. I have the heart and compassion but I think it's so hard for us as journalists to jump into the fray. We can't. We shouldn't.

Even though there may exist a tension between being outspoken about issues affecting the Asian American community and your obligation to be an objective journalist, do you feel you still serve as a role model to the Asian community by your accomplishments?

I hope so. The whole question of being a role model is such a peculiar thing because I think of myself as just an ordinary person who's just doing a job. And if someone comes up to me and says, "You're a role model" I think, "Oh no, not me." I think of Barbara Walters as a role model; she carries that moniker very well. I think of Walter Cronkite as a role model. I think it's important for me to be supportive but there also needs to be an understanding among those in the Asian American community that a journalist has to be very careful.

In terms of voter participation and Asian Americans getting more involved in public careers- journalism and politics, for example, do you think it's important for the newsroom to be more diverse?

Without question. If you look at newsrooms across America, you will find an incredible lack of diversity in terms of race and gender. It's a crime, particularly at the networks. I think local stations are a little better only because they just respond better and they have a younger staff. But at the network level where I've been for the last umpteen years, it is very much dominated by white males.

Do you feel that colors what the news becomes because it is a lens and it mirrors how one was brought up?

Sure. Anyone will influence the course of the news because of who they are. And so when you have criticism from special interest groups who say the news media is biased, there is some truth to that in the sense that each individual who is making important decisions regarding the news is seeing it through his lens. And, it's usually a "his" as opposed to "her" lens. So invariably there will be subjectivity. The reality is that most journalist's intentions are honorable. And they don't have an agenda because they're doing it with every intention of being objective. But by virtue of the fact that they don't have a particular ethnic background or are male instead of female, you are going to end up with a certain way of thinking that isn't as broad as it should be.

Do you feel that that's more so in the newsroom? Is the newsroom in any way different than corporations or academia?

No. It's rampant. It's a problem that exists everywhere. You look on Wall Street, you'll find very few minorities, very few women. A smattering, just like any industry you look at. It's distressing, but you know we make our progress slowly and gradually. I would love to see better diversity and some parity in news departments at the network level. It's taking a long time. I think at CBS there is a woman vice-president. At ABC and at NBC there are as well, but they're all contemporaries of mine, and they're more recent rather than long-standing. That just addresses the woman question. That doesn't even come close to addressing the race question. I can think of one Asian woman who is a high-level person at Gannett, who just went to a local station to be a general manager. I was so excited to meet her. But it's rare, extremely rare. I can't think of Asians, men or women, in management positions in the news except for that one.

LOOKING AHEAD AND LOOKING BACK

We want to ask you about the project that you're working on with your husband—the new TV show.

It's a half-hour syndicated program. It will be produced in partnership with DreamWorks, which is the Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, David Geffen

group. Our hope is that it will be on from 7 to 7:30 in the evening or 7:30 to 8. Our aim is to make it a news program which will take the top two or three stories of the day and treat them with a little more depth. I was on an airplane today sitting next to a man who says that he doesn't watch the news any more because you get just a tiny little bit of it. He'll watch to get the headlines, but he'll get most of his news from the paper because you can't get behind the story. So we really felt that there was a need for more depth and if you can't stay up for Nightline, we thought that we could provide that. So I think our hearts are in the right place, to do a worthy program. Currently the time slot between 7 and 8 p.m. has game shows, tabloid shows, and entertainment news programs. Nothing is really very serious. We're going to launch in the fall of 1998. We have a year and a half to hire an executive producer, hire a staff, start working on the programming.

Do you see it being similar to 60 Minutes or Dateline?

It would be sort of Nightline-ish, sort of 60 Minutes, sort of magazine. Sometimes there will be live interviews, live breaking news, and sometimes magazine-type stories. Depending on what you're talking about that day, we'll try to give you more information. Whatever headlines you've got, we're going to try and give more depth.

My husband is going to be on it with me. We'll be sitting next to each other, working together. We're both going to be managing editors which means we're going to have heavy input into the program and what stories we're going to do. But we'll be the anchors. So we're actually going to work together. We'll hope that it doesn't ruin our marriage.

If you look back on what you've accomplished up to now, what are you proudest of or what do you feel has been your most significant accomplishment?

Actually I think the five years that I spent as a reporter in Washington for CBS News, the same time that I knew Marvin Kalb. I was a general assignment reporter covering mostly politics but I ended up with three big assignments. One was covering George McGovern when he ran for president in 1972 and, back in those days, you really covered the campaign. So you were on the campaign trail from New Hampshire all the way through the convention. In those days the networks really spent the money to track a candidate. I felt I did a good job because when you have a beat you can really develop your sources and become an expert on that particular person or subject. And you could break stories—it's very gratifying.

The next big story I had was Watergate—again very satisfying because it was the story of the decade and all of us were clamoring for information. And when we got it, it was again so gratifying. It was such an important story. We needed to be so careful. The government was in jeopardy and the press could have easily brought down a president. And, in fact, that happened. I learned the rules of journalism during Watergate. I learned them earlier on, but with Watergate we had to be extra careful. We had to have two first-person sources and/or three

second-person sources. It was very clear to us how careful we needed to be in terms of accuracy.

The third big assignment was covering Nelson Rockefeller when he was Vice President under Gerald Ford. He was so much fun to cover. He was a very wealthy man who couldn't control his desire to say anything he wanted, even if it was going to cost him politically. Every once in a while he'd try to tow the political line but then he'd make a big mistake and say something that would irk the conservatives. You could never tell when he was going to make that big mistake again. Again it's having a beat, working that beat, getting sources, and then getting inside information and breaking a story. That was my best time, I felt. But looking back it was a great time because I think beat reporting is the most gratifying. When you are able to develop sources and break stories, that's sort of the biggest high that a reporter can get...

INTERVIEWS

Bong Hwan Kim*

Melissa Chen

The AAPR invited Bong Hwan Kim to reflect on the 1992 LA riots and its impact on the Korean American community in California and race relations nationwide.

Take us back to the LA riots five years ago. How did it affect the immediate Korean American community?

The shooting death of Latasha Harlins, an African American teen, by a Korean American store owner significantly heightened inter-ethnic tensions. The store owner was ultimately released after a highly controversial court decision that sentenced her to 500 hours of community service and no jail time. Tensions mounted during those two years between the shooting and the court sentence. The height of the conflict was marked by several boycotts, firebombings, and deaths of Korean American store owners. The majority of media coverage sensationalized the conflict and contributed significantly to acts of violence directed against Korean American store owners. During this time, I was deeply enmeshed in the mediation/relations building efforts with African American activists/leaders through the Black-Korean Alliance—a model established by the Los Angeles County Human Relations office.

After the court decision on the Rodney King trial was handed down, acquitting all four white police officers in King's beating, riots broke out and continued for three days. For most Korean Americans, the civil unrest came as a complete shock. And, though I anticipated some targeted damage, I did not anticipate the poor preparation of the LAPD and the National Guard. I was surprised to learn

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Founded in 1975, KYCC addresses juvenile delinquency problems within the Korean American community. Since its inception, the organization has expanded into a multi-services center. Its activities include human services, community economic development programs, and community education and advocacy. KYCC is dedicated to meet the unique needs of Korean Americans and Koreatown residents.

that the National Guard deployed their forces, equipping them with the wrong type of bullets.

The three days it took to deploy the National Guard was a period of complete anarchy and chaos. It was a nightmare for the 2,400 victims—an experience which will remain burned in their subconscious for the rest of their lives. I remember, in particular, one scene on April 30, 1992 of Koreatown's "main street", Olympic Boulevard. News coverage had just revealed that a significant number of Korean American owned stores were targeted while I was driving to a press conference held by Asian American community leaders. The experience was surreal. People were carrying TV's, appliances, and anything else they could carry out of burning buildings.

I believe that if LAPD Chief Daryl Gates and Mayor Tom Bradley had directed the police force in a more responsible, accountable manner—instead of focusing their efforts on their own ego gratification needs—the losses sustained by Korean and other Asian Americans, who sustained roughly 50 percent of total damages, could have been minimized. I'm still angry that Governor Wilson wasn't held more accountable for his lack of leadership before and after the riots.

Some say it was a wake-up call to the larger realities of living as a minority in a country with little political access. In the short term, it educated store owners to appear more friendly and less hard edged, especially to African American customers. I remember classes being offered in Korean which taught people about interpersonal communication skills such as smiling more. It may seem funny to those who are not familiar with Korean culture but Koreans are not known to be warm nor friendly, whether to strangers or peers.

A week or so after the riots, some 50,000 people organized a demonstration through Koreatown. It was a deeply moving experience to see thousands of people respond so spontaneously. Unfortunately, it was a historical event that was quickly forgotten. Like the history of most minorities in this country, it was not publicized enough to register on the radar screen of the American public.

In particular, can you describe how the incident has changed attitudes within the Korean American community.

Within the community, many of the older generation grew to accept the changing roles and contributions that younger, bilingual individuals could make in the interests of community development. I've been seeing more 1.5 and second generation Korean Americans who are interested in working for community-based non-profits as well as other, more diverse occupations such as journalism, government service, etc. There seems to be more interest in community involvement, overall. The difference is not huge but it's noticeable. I understand that Korean Americans make up the largest ethnic group at the Kennedy School. And though I'm sure that an increased interest in community and civic involvement would have happened anyway, I believe the civil unrest accelerated the process.

In other ways, the civil unrest has not significantly changed the attitudes of many immigrant Korean Americans. Like most people in Los Angeles, they just want to feel safe, earn a living, and raise a family. The civil unrest was such a horrible, painful tragedy that most people either consciously or subconsciously

have chosen to put behind them. Most people still don't know what to call it. Some people on the left call it an "uprising". Other people on the right call it a "riot". While I understand why some view what happened as justified given the long, painful history of institutionalized racism in this country, I cannot sympathize. It was the Korean Americans who paid the price. The scapegoating and finger pointing directed at us were unjust. What's even sadder is that many people on both sides, black and Korean, saw the insanity in the whole situation, but were powerless to change the course of events.

Today, the powerful social forces that brought about the unrest press on. Red-lining and the mass exodus of companies from the inner city continue. Although Chief Daryl Gates was replaced by an African American, Willie Williams, and some police reforms were carried out, these changes have had little impact. Try asking the residents of South Los Angeles if they feel any safer or feel that law enforcement is more accountable to their concerns. Without a better balance between law enforcement and economic development and job creation, I believe there will be more riots. And, we as a society seem to be willing to accept that as a reality.

What are some of the initiatives and programs that emerged within the Korean American community from the incident and its aftermath. Can you describe some of them that you were closely involved with? What was your role?

One of the more innovative, though controversial, initiatives developed around the liquor store rebuilding issue. After the incident, there was a strong push by African American leaders to prevent or delay rebuilding the approximately 300 liquor stores that burned down during the rioting. This caused an angry reaction from Korean Americans who were the primary business owners to be adversely affected. They saw this as another move to get Korean Americans out of South Los Angeles.

So, Asian American leaders came together to see what could be done to provide constructive alternatives. What emerged was a compromise position which supported the rights of communities, particularly low-income ones, to determine the types of businesses they deemed desirable. African American leaders agreed to provide assistance to victims who wished to give up their liquor license and go into another business. Ultimately, this position brought a lot of angry reactions from merchant victims. They accused me of selling them short. They didn't know how to do any other businesses and what else can you do in poor, crime ridden neighborhoods? There should have been other approaches and alternatives, but because the Korean American community was so politically disorganized, the agreement that was reached was the only position to arise from the re-building controversy.

This issue of retail development in South Los Angeles has been taken up by the successor organization to Rebuild Los Angeles known as LA Prospers. A broad-based coalition of community, government, and educational institutions are continuing to develop and implement urban renewal strategies in the riot impacted areas. KYCC has been actively participating in finding innovative economic development approaches based on assets currently in place, which

includes small retail merchants. In the beginning, Rebuild LA, while under the direction of Peter Uberroth, completely missed the mark. It tried to convince the same corporations that abandoned LA in the first place to come back. Since then, the organization's subsequent director, Linda Griego, has developed a new strategy focused on building upon existing small and medium size businesses.

Also, a handful of Korean American elected officials—Martha Cho of Seattle; John Lim, State Senator from Oregon; and Jackie Young, then Assembly Vice Speaker of Hawaii—founded the National Coalition of Korean American Leaders (NCKAL) in response to the civil unrest. NCKAL has organized three conferences thus far and is planning its fourth in Washington, DC, this May in order to promote political leadership and unity to build greater political influence.

Finally, the Multi-Cultural Collaborative (MCC) is another coalition/advocacy/race relations building coalition founded in the aftermath. Made up of diverse leaders of civil rights and community based organizations, the group critically assesses the human relations building capacity of Los Angeles and its various institutions. It then tries to help policy makers understand and deal more proactively with issues of diversity before it escalates into conflict.

It's been five years now. Has there been evidence of improvement in Korean and African American relations in Southern California? Which initiatives and programs seemed to have had the best impact? What major issues still stand in the way?

That's very difficult to assess—I'll have to rely on my own perceptions and some anecdotal indicators. My own impression is that April 29, 1992, was a catharsis, a sudden and violent outpouring of anger directed at the perceived "enemy". There are so many unresolved issues on both sides about the event itself as well as the smaller conflicts and controversies preceding it. The death of Latasha Harlins is still referred to by many African Americans as a reminder of what "they" have done to "us". While some initiatives offer some hope that issues of mutual interest can be pursued, they lie largely on the margins. As I said before, the central and very firmly rooted forces which caused the unrest—poverty, institutional racism, and neglect—are still around and growing. Public policy-makers at all levels of government continue to fall far short of addressing the growing divide between rich and poor. Empowerment zones are being touted as "the" solution to inner city economic development, but these will not be enough by themselves.

As controversial as it was, the compromise position developed around the liquor store issue demonstrated to people that there are alternatives to conflict. People reached out, stuck their necks out, and created space for the beginnings of alliance-building. I think many African Americans were surprised and welcomed the fact that Korean and Asian American activists came together to try to work something out. So much of this work depends on relationships. Often times, with so few resources, trying to swim against the tide of status quo forces, relationships are all one can count on. Although the Black-Korean Alliance folded after the unrest, many still refer to the model today as cause for hope—that fighting among ourselves for the crumbs falling off the table is inevitable. Despite the

overwhelming tide of animosity and alienation driving people further and further apart, people came together. That's important for people to know and remember.

On the Korean American side, the future of Black-Korean relations are largely in the hands of 1.5 and second generation leaders and future activists. They have the skills and knowledge to navigate within American culture. What impact the younger generation will make is largely unanswered, since the community is still very young. But, I see so much potential.

What is your impression of Korean and African American relations nationally?

It varies by degrees in different urban areas across the country, but my sense is that very little progress has been made. And in some places, tensions continue to rise. I recently heard that friction is increasing among some African American residents and Korean American merchants in Washington, DC. The leadership and public policies of this country have not been there for urban areas. As long as economic decline and middle class flight continue, we'll see inter-ethnic conflicts and urban riots.

As a prominent leader in the Korean American community in California, what has been your approach to improve race relations? Can you describe what impact it has had? What have you encountered the greatest difficulties?

Race relations is an enormously complex issue. Many social critics point to it as the greatest unresolved issue in this country. The best that I can hope to do in making a difference is to maintain balance in my own life, to know that solutions are illusive and long term, and to remain committed to the larger issue of social justice and equality. I will continually seek out and work with others sharing similar interests—people of all races. We have much further to go as individuals, communities, and as a society to realize the real "American Dream". One of the most difficult things is to sustain oneself over the long run when you are constantly besieged by short term crises. The last seven years have been a roller coaster of community crises and political divisiveness. Getting some distance from that environment has been extremely helpful in re-focusing one's personal sense of commitment and spirituality as well as get new ideas, information, and knowledge.

Growing up as a child of immigrant parents in an all white neighborhood, I wanted to be just like everyone else and convinced myself that I belonged. It was a very painful learning experience to realize that I was being accepted on someone else's terms of what it is to be American. I could never have predicted that I would be so enmeshed in community and public work. But, I feel blessed to have found this work which was spurred by my search for identity and belonging. I have met some amazing and inspiring individuals of all races and backgrounds. They are the ones who give me a strong sense of hope and enable me to dedicate myself to this work. If I can steer others to join my efforts, I will be satisfied.

Drawing upon your observations and experiences, how have recent reforms in immigration and welfare affected the Korean Am community at large?

Welfare reform will hit Korean American immigrants very hard, especially the elderly and their families. What we are seeing now is the impact of legislation born out of anti-immigrant sentiments. This has been building up over many years among the voting public. The Southeast Asian refugee population is even more vulnerable, given their high welfare dependence. Their community-based infrastructure—so critical to their continued development—is much weaker than the more established Asian American communities. My hope is that this will spur more interest among Korean and Asian Americans to understand that participation in the public dialogue is a central aspect of living in American society, particularly as a minority. It's not something to be avoided because it is seen as being dirty nor because one is overwhelmed with personal concerns for family security. There must remain room in one's life for reaching out and helping to shape the public spaces of American life. Such endeavors will enrich our children's lives and their children's lives.

BOOK REVIEWS

Caught in the Middle

Pyong Gap Min, *Caught in the Middle: Korean Communities in New York and Los Angeles* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996, xi+261 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), \$17.00 (paper)).

Although Koreans have immigrated to the United States since the early 1900s, the scholarship on the Korean American experience is still quite thin and the quality is rather uneven. To date, most of the published work have been either oral histories or sociological studies of Korean American merchants and small businesses. While this book does not open up many new avenues of inquiry in Korean American studies, it is, nonetheless, one of the best works in the field as it offers valuable insights into the world of Korean American merchants in New York and Los Angeles. By comparing the two Korean American communities in these cities, Min reveals patterns of collective action and responses to conflicts that are not as apparent in single-city studies.

Min portrays Korean merchants as "middle minorities" in an economic structure that situates them between predominately white suppliers and distributors and black and Latino customers. He argues that the intergroup conflicts which arise from these relationships have fostered an ethnic solidarity among Korean merchants in America that is perhaps stronger than among other Asian groups in the United States. Whereas other scholars have assumed that Korean cultural homogeneity has been the primary source of their solidarity, Min maintains that "it is their economic segregation and business-related intergroup conflicts that have galvanized their collective actions; without intergroup conflicts their commercial activities might have been much more individualistic" (pg. 210).

Since Min believes that these intergroup conflicts are the basis for Korean solidarity, he pays particular attention to the well-publicized conflicts between Korean storekeepers and their African American customers. In New York, his primary examples are the incidents that led to the boycotting of certain Korean-owned store by black customers. Accused of rude behavior or of assaulting black customers, black community activists have frequently targeted Korean merchants. Min, however, is careful to point out that the friction between Korean and African Americans is not simply a case of racial antagonisms, although they certainly contribute to the tensions; but, as middleman minorities, Korean merchants act as a buffer between white, black, and other people of color. Therefore, these conflicts are "rooted in the racial inequality between White and Blacks in general and in the poverty of inner-city Black neighborhoods in particular" (p. 223). In this sense, Min attempts to place Korean-African American conflicts within larger structural and ideological contexts rather than within simplistic binary racial and class paradigms.

The collective responses of the Korean community to intergroup conflicts have not been well-documented in the existing literature. Therefore, Min's accounts of how Korean merchants have fought against boycotts staged by African Americans, their response to Ice Cube's controversial song, "Black Korea", or exploitation by white suppliers are valuable contributions to the field—not only in representing what will be new information for many readers, but more importantly, in possibly expanding our understanding of how middleman minorities negotiate and strategize their economic and social survival. For example, when Korean stores faced boycotts, other Korean merchants often donated money to their fellow merchants to help them keep their stores open or even helped organize other Koreans to shop in the boycotted stores. When Koreans were unsuccessful in stopping the distribution of Ice Cube's record, a group of Korean merchants boycotted the St. Ide's Beer Company, for whom Ice Cube made commercials. After losing approximately \$7 million in seven days, the beer company persuaded Ice Cube to apologize for his inflammatory lyrics (p. 148). At another boycott, Korean fish retailers in New York were able to gain better treatment from fish wholesalers who cheated Koreans and who treated Korean fish retailers rudely. Thus, Korean merchants had learned to retaliate against discrimination using tactics that were often used against themselves.

The most important intergroup conflict involving Korean Americans and other minorities was the rioting that took place in sections of Los Angeles in the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict in 1992. Korean Americans lost approximately 2,300 stores in South Central Los Angeles and Koreatown, resulting in \$350 million in damages or 45 percent of the total riot damages (p. 1.). In the sections dealing with the Los Angeles riots, Min provides a wealth of information detailing the history of Korean-Black tensions and how various Korean-owned businesses were affected by the violence. Although Min acknowledges that relations between Koreans and black are rooted in fundamental racial inequities in American society, he misses an opportunity to probe deeper into race relations in America by choosing not to examine more fully how Koreans and black are part of the process of racial formation in America. He quotes an African American who said, "This is not to deny that some Korean merchants exhibit anti-Black behavior and attitudes because they are immigrants in a society where 'becoming and American' means learning to put down Black people"; however, he never pushes this analysis further in order to see if and how Koreans do indeed participate in this process of becoming American" (p. 101). He also slides over the shooting of Latasha Harlins by failing to mention that she was shot in the back of her head by Soo Da Je. Instead, he reports that black gang members had terrorized the store in the past; however, he makes no real connection between Harlins and gangs, except that she was black.

Despite these areas in which Min could have offered a more sustaining analysis, this volume is by far the best and most readable book on Korean merchants in American society. It will be extremely useful both as a resource text and a book for classroom use.

— *K. Scott Wong, Associate Professor of History at Williams College*

BOOK REVIEWS

The New Chinatown

Kwong, Peter. *The New Chinatown* (Revised). New York: Hill and Wang, 1996.

Peter Kwong, in *The New Chinatown*, presents the historical development of New York's Chinatown and examines its informal political structures, focusing on how these political structures affect the economic well-being of Chinatown's residents. The thrust of the book is to challenge the idea of ethnic solidarity by exploring class differences among Chinatown's residents. Specifically, Kwong argues against the idea that "enclaves offer immigrants a new path to middle class without the usual struggle through low-wage, dead-end jobs" (p. 203). On the contrary, the choice of immigrants to live in Chinatown is a function of employment opportunities rather than their unwillingness to assimilate into American society. The unintended consequence, however, is that immigrants are trapped within the structure of Chinatown, which "limit[s] their chances to interact with American society and to learn English "outside" agencies (e.g., American labor authorities) reluctant to interfere in what is perceived as "Chinatown's affairs".

A major strength of the book is its comprehensive coverage of the informal political structure of New York's Chinatown and its location in both national and global contexts. Kwong discusses the import, transformation, and maintenance of an informal political system from China to New York's Chinatown. He argues that Chinatown's alliance with foreign (Chinese and Taiwanese) interests and ideology, along with the reluctance of US organizations to interfere, supports the independent political structure of Chinatown, which is based on class hierarchy.

Another important aspect of the book is Kwong's discussion of the activism of Chinese women workers. While the garment industry helped revive the economy of New York City, it came at the price of the exploitation of Chinese women workers. As Kwong aptly phrases it, "Chinese women workers hold up more than half the sky" (p. 29). Kwong documents Chinese women's involvement in the 1982 demonstration against Chinese contractors in favor of the unions, refuting the notion that women workers were "passive and tied to Chinatown's political and social structure" (p. 151).

Kwong has given much needed attention to an important division within Chinatown—class—questioning the limits of ethnic solidarity. Kwong argues that the Chinese community must develop grassroots organizations based on class solidarity, as opposed to ethnic affiliation, in order to fight class oppression and pressure labor and government authorities to respond to their needs. According to him, "The community's struggles have begun to spill over into the larger society, as opposing sides recruit support from outside...Through these cross-ethnic alliances Chinatown is becoming tied in with the interests of American society at

large” (p. 205). Class alliances across ethnic boundaries may develop in relation to specific issues. Given the context of racialized American, however, one questions whether these alliances can be maintained.

In writing this book, Kwong has drawn his experience as a long-time resident and activist, upon discussions with other residents, and upon secondary sources. The book provides a critical look at the politics of Chinatown, strengthened by Kwong’s personal insight. Given the relevance of this book to social policy, however, it would benefit from at least a brief note on its methodology. Unclear handling of information at times undermines scholarly evaluation of his assertions and conclusions. Nonetheless, the broad, transnational perspective employed by Kwong provides a comprehensive treatment of class and politics in Chinatown and makes it a highly readable and engaging study.

—*Voonchin Phua, Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at Brown University.*

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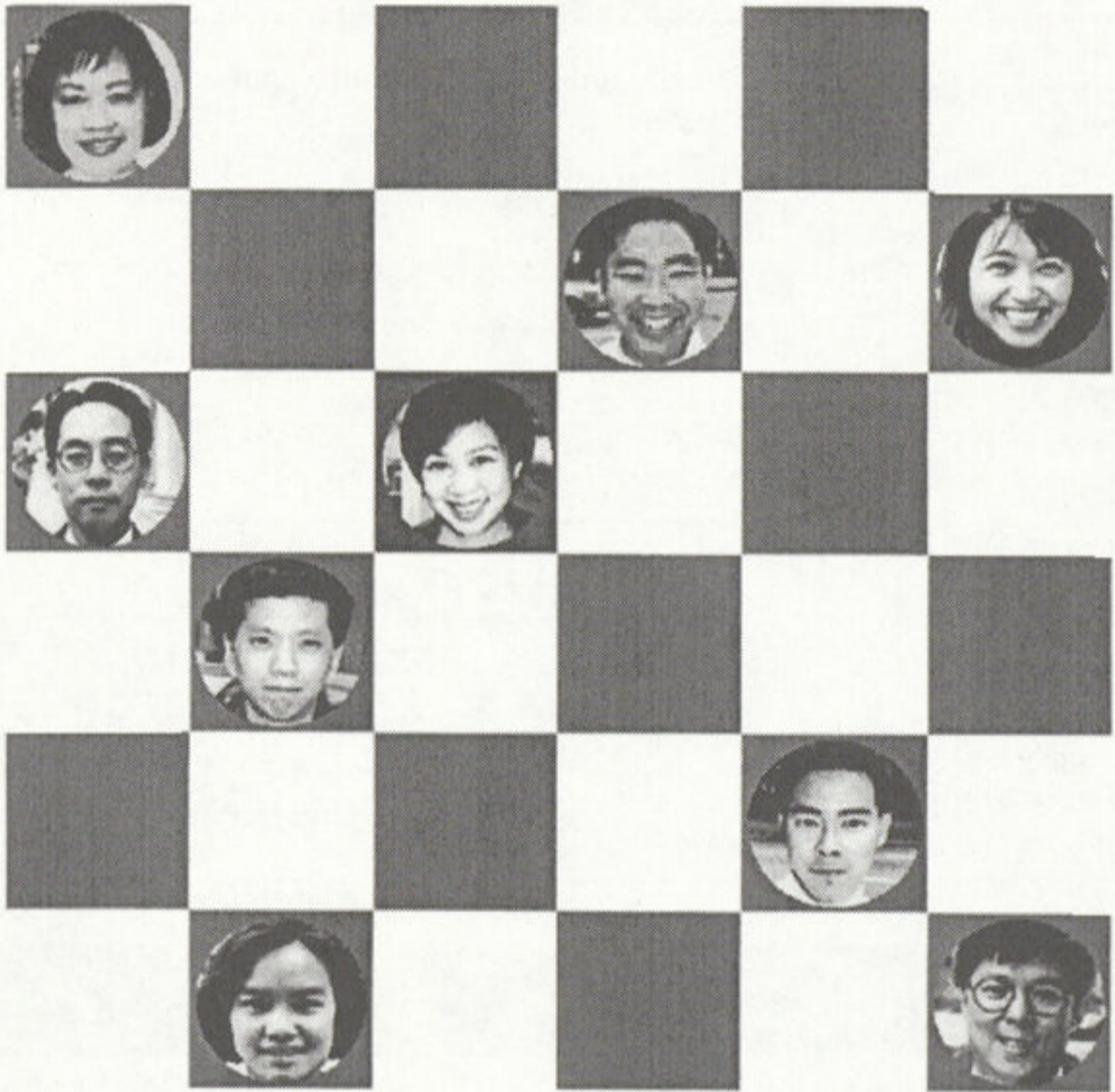
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