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Asian Americans can no longer afford to watch the black-and-white racial struggle from the sidelines. They have their own cause to fight, since they are also victims—with less visible scars—of the white institutionalized racism. A yellow movement has been set into motion by the black power movement. Addressing itself to the unique problems of Asian Americans, this "yellow power" movement is relevant to the black power movement in that both are part of the Third World struggle to liberate all colored people.

### Part I: MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The yellow power movement has been motivated largely by the problem of self-identity in Asian Americans. The psychological focus of this movement is vital, for Asian Americans suffer the critical mental crises of having "integrated" into American society—

No person can be healthy, complete, and mature if he must deny a part of himself; this is what "integration" has required thus far.

—Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton<sup>1</sup>

The Asian Americans' current position in America is not viewed as a social problem. Having achieved middle-class incomes while presenting no real threat in numbers to the white majority, the main body of Asian Americans (namely, the Japanese and the Chinese) have received the token acceptance of white America.

Precisely because Asian Americans have become economically secure, do they face serious identity problems. Fully committed to a system that subordinates them on the basis of non-whiteness, Asian Americans still try to gain complete acceptance by denying their yellowness. They have become white in every respect but color.

### Asian Americans Assume White Identities

However, the subtle but prevailing racial prejudice that "yellows" experience restricts them to the margins of the white world. Asian Americans have assumed white identities, that is, the values and attitudes of the majority of Americans. Now they are beginning to realize that this nation is a "White democracy" and that yellow people have a mistaken identity.

Within the last two years, the "yellow power" movement has developed as a direct outgrowth of the "black power" movement. The "black power" movement caused many Asian Americans to question themselves. "Yellow power" is just now at the stage of "an articulated mood rather than a program—disillusionment and alienation from white America and independence, race pride, and self respect."<sup>2</sup> Yellow consciousness is the immediate goal of concerned Asian Americans.

In the process of Americanization, Asians have tried to transform themselves into white men—both mentally and physically. Mentally, they have adjusted to the white man's culture by giving up their own languages, customs, histories, and cultural values. They have adopted the "American way of life" only to discover that this is not enough.

Next, they have rejected their physical heritages, resulting in extreme self-hatred. Yellow people share with the blacks the desire to look white. Just as blacks wish to be light-complexioned with thin lips and unkinky hair, "yellows" want to be tall with long legs and large eyes. This self-hatred is also evident in the yellow male's obsession with unobtainable white women, and in the yellow female's attempt to gain male approval by aping white beauty standards. Yellow females have their own "conking" techniques—they use "peroxide, foam rubber, and scotch tape" to give them light hair, large breasts, and double-lidded eyes.<sup>3</sup>

### Self-Acceptance First Step

The "Black is Beautiful" cry among black Americans has instilled a new awareness in Asian Americans to be proud of their physical and cultural heritages. Yellow power advocates self-acceptance as the first step toward strengthening personalities of Asian Americans.

Since the yellow power movement is thus far made up of students and young adults, it is working for Asian-American ethnic studies centers on college campuses such as Cal and UCLA. The re-establishment of ethnic identity through education is being pursued in classes like UCLA's "Orientals in America." As one student in the course relates:

"I want to take this course for a 20-20 realization, and not a passive glance in the ill-reflecting mirror; the image I see is WASP, but the yellow skin is not lily white...I want to find out what my voluntarily or subconsciously suppressed Oriental self is like; also what the thousands of other (suppressed?) Oriental selves are like in a much larger mind and body—America...I want to establish my ethnic identity not merely for the sake of such roots, but for the inherent value that such a background merits."<sup>4</sup>

The problem of self-identity in Asian Americans also

# THE EMERGENCE OF YELLOW

requires the removal of stereotypes. The yellow people in America seem to be silent citizens. They are stereotyped as being passive, accommodating, and unemotional. Unfortunately, this description is fairly accurate, for Asian Americans have accepted these stereotypes and are becoming true to them.

The "silent" Asian Americans have rationalized their behavior in terms of cultural values which they have maintained from the old country. For example, the Japanese use the term "enryo" to denote hesitation in action or expression. A young Buddhist minister, Reverend Mas Kodani of the Los Angeles Senshin Buddhist Temple, has illustrated the difference between Japanese "enryo" and Japanese-American "enryo": in Japan, if a teacher or lecturer asks, "Are there any questions?", several members of the class or audience respond; but in the United States, the same question is followed by a deathly silence.

Reverend Kodani has also commented on the freedom of expression between family members that is absent in Asian Americans. As an American-born student in Japan, he was surprised at the display of open affection in Japanese families. This cultural characteristic is not shown in Japanese-American families, who react with embarrassment and guilt toward open feelings of love and hate.

### Silent, Passive Image

This uneasiness in admitting and expressing natural human feelings has been a factor in the negligible number of Asian Americans in the theater, drama, and literary arts. Not discounting the race prejudice and competition in these fields, yellow Americans cannot express themselves honestly, or in the words of Chinese-American actor James Hong, they cannot "feel from the gut level."

The silent, passive image of Asian Americans is understood not in terms of their cultural backgrounds, but by the fact that they are scared. The earliest Asian in America were Chinese immigrants who began settling in large numbers on the West Coast from 1850 through 1880. They were subjected to extreme white racism, ranging from economic subordination, to the denial of rights of naturalization, to physical violence. During the height of anti-Chinese mob action of the 1880's, whites were "stoning the Chinese in the streets, cutting off their queues, wrecking their shops and laundries."<sup>5</sup> The worst outbreak took place in Rock Springs, Wyoming, in 1885, when twenty-eight Chinese residents were murdered. Perhaps, surviving Asians learned to live in silence, for even if "the victims of such attacks tried to go to court to win protection, they could not hope to get a hearing. The phrase 'not a Chinaman's chance' had a grim and bitter reality."<sup>6</sup>

### Asian Americans Are Still Scared

Racist treatment of "yellows" still existed during World War II, with the unjustifiable internment of 110,000 Japanese into detention camps. When Japanese Americans were ordered to leave their homes and possessions behind within short notice, they co-operated with resignation and not even voiced opposition. According to Frank Chumann, onetime president of the Japanese American Citizens League, they "used the principle of shikata-gamai—realistic resignation"—and evacuated without protest.<sup>7</sup>

Today the Asian Americans are still scared. Their passive behavior serves to keep national attention on the black people. By being as inconspicuous as possible, they keep pressure off of themselves at the expense of the blacks. Asian Americans have formed an uneasy alliance with white Americans to keep the blacks down. They close their eyes to the latent white racism toward them which has never changed.

Frightened "yellows" allow the white public to use the "silent Oriental" stereotype against the black protest. The presence of twenty million blacks in America poses an actual physical threat to the white system. Fearful whites tell militant blacks that the acceptable criterion for behavior is exemplified in the quiet, passive Asian American.

The yellow power movement envisages a new role for Asian Americans:

"It is a rejection of the passive Oriental stereotype and symbolizes the birth of a new Asian—one who will recognize and deal with injustices. The shout of Yellow Power, symbolic of our new direction, is reverberating in the quiet corridors of the Asian community."<sup>8</sup>

### False Pride in Own Economic Progress

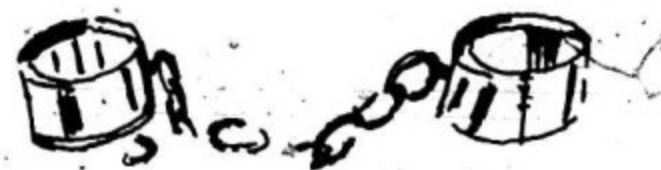
As expressed in the black power writings, yellow power also says that "When we begin to define our own image, the stereotypes—that is, lies—that our oppressor has developed will begin in the white community and end there."

Another obstacle to the creation of yellow consciousness is the well-incorporated white racist attitudes which are present in Asian Americans. They take much false pride in their own economic progress and feel that blacks could succeed similarly if they only followed the





# POWER IN AMERICA



Protestant ethic of hard work and education. Many Asians support S. I. Hayakawa, the so-called spokesman of yellow people, when he advises the black man to imitate the Nisei: "go to school and get high grades, save one dollar out of every ten you earn to capitalize your business."<sup>10</sup> But the fact is that the white power structure allowed Asian Americans to succeed through their own efforts while the same institutions persist in denying these opportunities to black Americans.

Certain basic changes in American society made it possible for many Asian Americans to improve their economic condition after the war. In the first place, black people became the target group of West Coast discrimination. During and after World War II, a huge influx of blacks migrated into the West, taking racist agitation away from the yellows and onto the blacks. From 1940 to 1950, there was a gain of 85.2 percent in the black population of the West and North; from 1950 to 1960, a gain of 71.6 percent; and from 1960 to 1966 a gain of 80.4 percent.<sup>11</sup>

## Asian Americans Perpetuate White Racism

The other basic change in society was the shifting economic picture. In a largely agricultural and rural West, Asian Americans were able to find employment. First- and second-generation Japanese and Filipinos were hired as farm laborers and gardeners, while Chinese were employed in laundries and restaurants. In marked contrast is the highly technological and urban society which today faces unemployed black people. "The Negro migrant, unlike the immigrant, found little opportunity in the city; he had arrived too late, and the unskilled labor he had to offer was no longer needed."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, blacks today are kept out of a shrinking labor market, which is also closing opportunities for white job-seekers.

Asian Americans are perpetuating white racism in the United States as they allow white America to hold up the "successful" Oriental image before other minority groups as the model to emulate. White America justifies the blacks' position by showing that other non-whites—yellow people—have been able to "adapt" to the system. The truth underlying both the yellows' history and that of the blacks has been distorted. In addition, the claim that black citizens must "prove their rights to equality"<sup>13</sup> is fundamentally racist.

Unfortunately, the yellow power movement is fighting a well-developed racism in Asian Americans who project their own frustrated attempts to gain white acceptance onto the black people. They nurse their own feelings of inferiority and insecurity by holding themselves as superior to the blacks.

Since they feel they are in a relatively secure economic and social position, most Asian Americans overlook the subtle but damaging racism that confronts them. They do not want to upset their present ego systems by honest self-appraisal. They would rather fool themselves than admit that they have prostituted themselves to white society.

## Part 2: THE RELEVANCE OF POWER FOR ASIANS IN AMERICA

The emerging movement among Asian Americans can be described as "yellow power" because it is seeking freedom from racial oppression through the power of a consolidated yellow people. As derived from the black power ideology, yellow power implies that Asian Americans must control the decision-making processes affecting their lives.

One basic premise of both black power and yellow power is that ethnic political power must be used to improve the economic and social conditions of blacks and yellows. In considering the relevance of power for Asian Americans, two common assumptions will be challenged: first, that the Asian Americans are completely powerless in the United States; and second, the assumption that Asian Americans have already obtained "economic" equality.

While the black power movement can conceivably bargain from a position of strength, yellow power has no such potential to draw from. A united black people would comprise over ten percent of the total American electorate; this is a significant enough proportion of the voting population to make it possible for blacks to be a controlling force in the power structure.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the political power of yellows would have little effect on state and national contests. The combined populations of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos in the United States in 1960 was only 887,834—not even one-half of the total population.<sup>2</sup>

## Potential Political Power on West Coast

However, Asian Americans are not completely weaponless in the local political arena. For instance, in California, the combined strength of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos in 1960 was two percent of the state population.<sup>3</sup> Their possible political significance lies in the fact that there are heavy concentrations of these groups in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In the San Francisco-Oakland metropolitan area, 55% of the Chinese, 16% of the Japanese, and 33% of the Filipinos of the state live;

in the Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area, 21% of the Chinese, 52% of the Japanese, and 20% of the Filipinos live.<sup>4</sup> On an even more local level, Japanese and Chinese in the Crenshaw area of Los Angeles form about one-third of the total residents; and Japanese in the city of Gardena own forty percent of that city's property.<sup>5</sup>

In city and county government, a solid yellow voting bloc could make a difference. As has been demonstrated by the Irish, Italians, Jews, and Poles, the remarkable fact of ethnic political power is its ability to "control a higher proportion of political control and influence than their actual percentage in the population warrants."<sup>6</sup>

## "More of the Money Pie"

Even under the assumption that yellow political power could be significant, how will it improve the present economic situation of Asian Americans? Most yellow people have attained middle-class incomes and feel that they have no legitimate complaint against the existing capitalist structure.

The middle-class attainment of Asian Americans has also made certain blacks unsympathetic to the yellow power movement. In the words of one BSU member, it looks like Asian Americans "just want more of the money pie." It is difficult for some blacks to relate to the yellow man's problems next to his own total victimization.

Although it is true that some Asian minorities lead all other colored groups in America in terms of economic progress, it is a fallacy that Asian Americans enjoy full economic opportunity. If the Protestant ethic is truly a formula for economic success, then why don't Japanese and Chinese who work harder and have more education than whites earn just as much? Statistics on unemployment, educational attainment, and median annual income reveal an inconsistency in this "success" formula when it applies to non-whites.

## Statistical Discrepancies

In 1960, unemployment rates for Japanese and Chinese males were lower than those for white males in California:

2.6 percent for Japanese  
4.9 percent for Chinese  
5.5 percent for whites

In the same year, percentage rates for Japanese and Chinese males who had completed high school or college were higher than those for white males:

## High School

\*34.3 percent for Japanese  
24.4 percent for Chinese

## College (4 years or more)

13.3 percent for Chinese  
11.9 percent for Japanese  
10.7 percent for whites.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these figures, the median annual income of Japanese and Chinese were considerably lower than the median annual income of whites. Chinese men in California earned \$3803; Japanese men earned \$4388; and white men earned \$5109.<sup>9</sup>

The explanation for this discrepancy lies in the continuing racial discrimination toward yellows in upper-wage level and high-status positions. White America praises the success of Japanese and Chinese for being highest among all other colored groups. Japanese and Chinese should feel fortunate that they are accepted more than any other non-white ethnic group, but they should not step out of place and compare themselves with whites. In essence, the American capitalist dream was never meant to include non-whites.

The myth of Asian American success is most obvious in the economic and social position of Filipino Americans. In 1960 the 65,459 Filipino residents of California earned a median annual income of \$2925, as compared to \$3553 for blacks and \$5109 for whites.<sup>10</sup> Over half of the total Filipino male working force was employed in farm labor and service work; over half of all Filipino males received less than 8.7 years of school education.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Filipinos are a forgotten minority in America. Like blacks, they have many legitimate complaints against American society.

## Myth of Asian American Success

A further example of the false economic and social picture of Asian Americans exists in the ghetto communities of Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and Chinatown in San Francisco. In the former, elderly Japanese live in run-down hotels in social and cultural isolation. And in the latter, Chinese families suffer the poor living conditions of a community that has the second highest tuberculosis rate in the nation.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the use of yellow political power is valid, for Asian Americans do have definite economic and social problems which must be improved. By organizing around these needs, Asian Americans can make the yellow power movement a viable political force in their lives.

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# YELLOW POWER . . .

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## Part 3: A "UNITED" ASIAN MOVEMENT

Yellow power is a call for ALL yellow people in America to unite as yellow brothers. Recognizing that the needs of yellow people can only be met through group solidarity, yellow power depends on the following principles of black power:

**Before a group can enter open society, it must first close ranks. By this we mean that group solidarity is necessary before a group can bargain effectively from a position of strength in a pluralistic society.<sup>1</sup>**

In its still early stage of development, the yellow power movement is not strong because Asian Americans have not been able to "get themselves together."

### Oriental Divided

In the first place, Asian Americans are divided by their different national origins. There is little communication or empathy between Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans. Thus far, the yellow power movement has been a movement for Japanese and Chinese.

The Asian experience in America has been dispersed into the separate experiences of each nationality of yellows. Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans have immigrated to the United States at different times and have settled in communities which are physically and culturally isolated from each other. Their histories in America have been different, and their present community problems are not identical.

In addition, the white racism in Asian Americans has extended not only to blacks but also to other yellows, social stratification by ethnic groups which does not occur among blacks and browns. Filipinos have been relegated to the lowest position, while Japanese and Chinese are rivals for the top.

Continued antagonism between tiny nations of yellows challenges the yellow power movement as a "united" Asian concern. However, the separate experiences of each of these nationalities are wholly a part of the total Asian American experience. The extreme factionalism within yellow people in America has developed in response to a white racist society's demand to have superior and inferior groups. The fact that all Asian Americans are suffering from white racism because of their common yellow skins is the basis for overcoming their national differences.

### Pro-Establishment

The second source of division among yellow Americans is ideological. Most Asian Americans are solidly committed to the capitalist system and react negatively to the "basically revolutionary mentality"<sup>2</sup> of yellow power organizations as being anti-capitalistic and pro-communistic.

For example, Asian Americans in the Third World Liberation Front at Berkeley and San Francisco State believe that "basic changes in the socio-economic structure of this country will have to take place if racism is to be totally eliminated."<sup>3</sup> They reject the American system because it perpetuates individual and institutional racism and not for the sole purpose of replacing it by communism.

Alan Nishio, a member of the Asian American Political Alliance of Los Angeles, feels that yellow power does not mean anti-capitalism but that it recognizes the need for mechanisms which will redistribute the resources of this country so that no colored people will be subject to inferior status.<sup>4</sup>

Yellow power is against capitalism as it exists in America, but it does not align itself with Communist powers. Yellow power supports revolution against traditional values and institutions of the United States, but this is too often misunderstood as an expression of Communist aims.

### The Middleman

Caught between the oppressors and the worst victims of American society, Asian Americans are less willing to actively pursue a change in the existing system. Understandably, the black man carries a "whole different set of views of what is legitimate for change,"<sup>5</sup> since he is the worst victim of white racism. The black man "is more willing—much more willing—to risk the future, because he has very little to lose and a lot to gain."<sup>6</sup>

Unless Asian Americans are willing to confront and challenge the traditional American system, they will always be racially oppressed. But what yellow power leaders must bear in mind is that the majority of Asian Americans are not yet ready for revolutionary ideology. They have just begun to realize the problems confronting them as yellow people—they cannot be expected to change into revolutionaries overnight!

Some of the current leaders in the yellow power movement are themselves racists toward fellow yellows who are not yet totally committed; these leaders are racists because they belittle and feel superior to their yellow brothers. They consider themselves as sort of a revolutionary elite, holding themselves apart from the people instead of approaching them on a level that yellow people can relate to now.

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The yellow power movement cannot begin to move forward until the yellow people in America have reached the primary stage of yellow consciousness. Once they do get themselves together, then they are ready to decide on how to achieve social change. Clearly, the yellow power ideology will have to be revolutionary if it is to meet the needs of Asian Americans. But more important, the yellow power movement is nothing without the wholehearted support of all yellow people.

The future relationship of yellow power to black power is not continuing dependency. Although the concept of yellow power owes its origins to the black power movement, the significance of yellow power is not within the black revolution for yellow power speaks for Asian Americans and not blacks. Yellow power and black power must be two independently-powerful, joint forces within the Third World revolution to free all exploited and oppressed people of color.

## Part 4: IN THE THIRD WORLD REVOLUTION

The term Third World was originally used by Frantz Fanon to describe the victims of white colonialism in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Fanon, whose writings have been a source of ideas for many of the black and yellow power advocates, urged people of the Third World to revolt against existing capitalist regimes so as to exercise self-determination:

It might have been generally thought that the time had come for the world, and particularly the Third World, to choose between the capitalist and socialist systems....The Third World ought not to be content to define itself in terms of values which preceded it. On the contrary, underdeveloped countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and style which shall be peculiar to them.<sup>1</sup>

Blacks and yellows in the United States identify with their relatives in the Third World. And although the race situation in America is not strictly analogous to white colonialism and imperialism, the blacks and yellows have suffered similar consequences as Third World people at the hands of the American capitalist power.

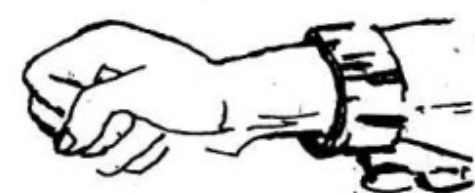
As much as non-white Americans feel a brotherhood with the Third World, they cannot conduct massive revolutions against the established regime as do Third World people. Colonial struggles in the Third World have involved mass uprisings of the native, majority population against small, colonialist ruling classes. But in the United States, the combined populations of blacks, browns, yellows, and reds is less than fifteen percent of the total American populace.



A violent revolution of colored people in America does not apply as a necessary step toward improving their unique situations in America. It is quite apparent that the complete success of the black power and yellow power movements will not be possible without the co-operation of white America.

Even if the American race struggle always exists, black power and yellow power will still be partially successful, in that black and yellow Americans will restore their own self-pride and dignity in standing up for their rights as equal human beings. In the end, blacks and yellows in America will determine their own destinies, for if they do not choose to act, they prolong their own victimization by white racist society. The words of Frederick Douglas, an early black power advocate, express a belief behind the current black power and yellow power movements:

Power concedes nothing without demand....The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.<sup>2</sup>



The future positions of blacks and yellows in America are not predictable, but the black power and yellow power movements will, hopefully, not allow the historical record of racial suppression in America to repeat itself.

### Political Advances

The black political advances of today are reminiscent of those one hundred years ago. In 1876 blacks viewed the future optimistically with the election of twenty blacks to the House of Representatives and two to the Senate.<sup>3</sup> Yet the following years from 1877 to 1900 marked the re-establishment of Southern home rule and the onset of Jim Crow legislation. Once again blacks have scored significant political gains with the election of twenty-two black Representatives and two Senators in 1967.<sup>4</sup> But with the growing conservatism in the nation, the black power movement must be strong enough to prevent the blacks from being set back again.

In May, 1967, the Report of the House Un-American Activities Committee cited Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950 as appropriate legislation to use for the possible detention of "black nationalists and Communists."<sup>5</sup> Under Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950, the government has the power to repeat the unjustifiable evacuation of 1942, on the grounds of suspected loyalty. During the presidency of humanitarian Franklin D. Roosevelt, "America did it with the Japanese. It can do it again with black people." The next few years could be marked by another period of racial suppression of black people—or even, yellow people.

### Economic Growth

The present position of yellow people in America is very unstable. In his analysis of the United States' policy toward the Far East, Dr. Paul Takagi has shown how recent economic and political developments in Japan could lead to renewed anti-yellow sentiment in America. According to Dr. Takagi, certain economic trends of the 1960's are similar to events of the 1930's "regarding the economic competition between Japan and the United States and the embargo of Japanese goods...which eventually culminated in open hostility."<sup>6</sup>

By the end of 1968, Japan had the third largest economic growth in the world (behind the United States and the Soviet Union). Japan's active interest in the United States as an export market threatens American industries, such as steel, textiles, and shipping, which are unable to hold their own markets. Threatened by the competition of imported products of higher quality and lower cost, these industries are suffering from the military-industrial complex with its "concentration of America's technical talent and fresh capital into military production."<sup>7</sup>

Protectionist measures which are highly foreseeable under the Nixon administration will drive Japan elsewhere for export markets. In 1968 United States Steel urged its more than 20,000 employees to "Buy American"—this slogan was the same war cry heard in the 1930's from American industries.<sup>8</sup> A Japanese economic publication also reports that Japan's steel industry is "worried by the necessity for switching its export market elsewhere now that the drastic reduction of exports to the United States is believed certain in the next fiscal year."<sup>9</sup> Not only has she signed increased trade agreements with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations in East Europe, but Japan is also considering heightened trade with Southeast Asia and Communist China.<sup>10</sup>

### Shifting Ties

The closer the economic ties between Communist powers and Japan become, the more likely American sentiment toward Japan will change. Yellow hostility will become even more certain if Japan does not renew the Japan United States security pact which comes up for renewal in 1970.

The United States has a key political interest in continuing this pact, since Okinawa is vital to her Far East security system. Japan's approaching renewal decision has set off increasing demonstrations against United States militarism by Japanese students. In addition, opinion polls conducted by the publication Asian survey, in 1967 show that only eighteen percent of the Japanese people feel that the presence of American bases is "good for Japan," and forty-five percent feel that the presence of American bases is "bad for Japan."<sup>11</sup>

Communist China is already a fast-rising third power of the world. But the shifting economic and political relationships between the United States and Japan will aid her position in the Far East and intensify America's fear of the Red Chinese. This fear might be transferred onto yellows in America, and as stated by Dr. Takagi: I submit that white racism can very quickly shift from the blacks to the yellows. Presently, America is creating a mythology of good and bad communists, and the worst kind is the intransigent yellow communist....It will not be too difficult for white America to generalize from the fear of yellow communism to include all yellows because they look alike.<sup>12</sup>

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