

ROOTS: AN ASIAN AMERICAN READER

Editors:

Amy Tachiki Eddie Wong Franklin Odo with Buck Wong

Design:
Kathy Fukami Glascock Donna Wong Mary Uyematsu

A project of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center

Photo Coordination:
Robert A. Nakamura
National Visual Communication Committee-JACL

Distribution:
Sherry Valparaiso Peter Lin



**That which is bright rises twice:
The image of FIRE.
Thus the great man, by perpetuating this brightness,
Illumines the four quarters of the world**

LI-THE CLINGING, FIRE
The I CHING

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Los Angeles, California

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Most Chinese-Americans continue to send their youngsters to Chinese schools for one or two hours a day so they can learn Chinese history, culture and--in some cases --language. A businessman said: "I feel my kids are Americans, which is a tremendous asset. But they're also Chinese, which is another great asset. I want them to have and keep the best of both cultures."

Much the same picture is found in mainland America's other big Chinatowns--Los Angeles and New York.

Riots of 1871. Los Angeles has a memory of riots in 1871 when white mobs raged through the Chinese section. Twenty-three Chinese were hanged, beaten, shot or stabbed to death.

Today, 25,000 persons of Chinese ancestry live in Los Angeles County--20,000 in the city itself. About 5,000 alien Chinese from Hong Kong and Formosa are believed to be in southern California.

In Los Angeles, as elsewhere, Chinese-Americans are worrying about their children. Superior Judge Delbert E. Wong said: "Traditionally, the family patriarch ruled the household, and the other members of the family obeyed and followed without questioning his authority.

"As the Chinese become more Westernized, women leave the home to work and the younger generation finds greater mobility in seeking employment, we see greater problems within the family unit--and a corresponding increase in crime and divorce."

A Chinese-American clergyman complained that "the second and third-generation Chinese feel more at home with Caucasians. They don't know how to act around the older Chinese any more because they don't understand them."

The family unit. On the other hand, Victor Wong, president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Los Angeles said:

"Basically, the Chinese are good citizens. The parents always watch out for the children, train them, send them to school and make them stay home after school to study. When they go visiting, it is as a family group. A young Chinese doesn't have much chance to go out on his own and get into trouble."

A high-ranking police official in Los Angeles found little evidence of growing trouble among Chinese. He reported:

"Our problems with the Chinese are at a minimum. This probably is due to strict parental supervision. There is still a tradition of respect for parents."

New York City, in 1960, had a population of 32,831 persons of Chinese ancestry. Estimates today run considerably higher, with immigrants coming in at the rate of 200 or 300 a month.

Many Chinese have moved to various parts of the city and to the suburbs. But newcomers tend to settle in Chinatown, and families of eight and 10 have been found living in two-room apartments.

"The housing shortage here is worse than in Harlem," one Chinese-American said. Altogether, about 20,000 persons are believed living in the eight-block area of New York's Chinatown at present.

The head of the Chinatown Planning Council said recently that, while most Chinese are still reluctant to accept public welfare, somewhat more are applying for it than in the past. "We are trying to let Chinese know that accepting public welfare is not necessarily the worst thing in the world," he said.

However, a Chinese-American banker in New York took this view:

"There are at least 60 associations here whose main purpose is to help our own people. We believe welfare should be used only as a last resort."

A sizable number of Chinese-Americans who could move out if they wanted to are staying in New York's Chinatown--not because of fears of discrimination on the outside, but because they prefer their own people and culture. And Chinatown, despite its proximity to the Bowery, remains a haven of law and order. Dr. Sollenberger said:

"If I had a daughter, I'd rather have her live in Chinatown than any place else in New York City."

A police lieutenant said:

"You don't find any Chinese locked up for robbery, rape or vagrancy."

There has been some rise in Chinese-American delinquency in recent years. In part, this is attributed to the fact that the ratio of children in Chinatown's total population is going up as more women arrive and more families are started.

Even so, the proportion of Chinese-American youngsters getting into difficulty remains low. School buildings used by large numbers of Chinese are described as the cleanest in New York. Public recreational facilities amount to only one small park, but few complaints are heard.

Efforts at progress. Over all, what observers are finding in America's Chinatowns are a thrifty, law-abiding and industrious people--ambitious to make progress on their own.

In Los Angeles, a social worker said: "If you had several hundred thousand Chinese-Americans subjected to the same

economic and social pressures that confront Negroes in major cities, you would have a good deal of unrest among them."

"At the same time, it must be recognized that the Chinese and other Orientals in California were faced with even more prejudice than faces the Negro today. We haven't stuck Negroes in concentration camps, for instance, as we did the Japanese in World War II.

"The Orientals came back, and today they have established themselves as strong contributors to the health of the whole community."

the emergence of yellow power in america

(an excerpt)

AMY UYEMATSU

Asian Americans can no longer afford to watch the black-and-white 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 so far."

--Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton¹

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.

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

Reprinted from GIDRA, October, 1969.

identity.

Within the past 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."² 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-complected with thin lips and un-kinky hair, "yellows" want to be tall with long legs and large eyes. The 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."³

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 U.C.L.A. The re-establishment of ethnic identity through education is being pursued in classes like U.C.L.A.'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 W.A.S.P., 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."⁴

The problem of self-identity in Asian Americans also requires the removal of stereotypes. The yellow people in America seem to be silent citizens. They are stereotyped as being passive, accomodating, and un-emotional. 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.

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 Asians 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."⁵ The worst outbreak took place in Rock Springs, Wyo-

ming, 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."⁶

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 shikataganai--realistic resignation--and evacuated without protest."⁷

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."⁸

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 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."¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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."¹² 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"¹³ 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.¹ 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 percent of the total population.²

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.³ 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 live.⁴ 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.⁵

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."⁶

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 B.S.U. 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.

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 whites⁸

Despite these figures, the median annual income of Japanese and Chinese was considerably lower than the median annual income of whites. Chinese men in California earned \$3,803; Japanese men earned \$4,388; and white men earned \$5,109.⁹

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 capitalistic 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 \$2,925,

PART I

¹ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *BLACK POWER: THE POLITICS OF LIBERATION IN AMERICA* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 55.

² REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS (New York: The New York Times Company, 1968), p. 233.

³ Dinora Gil, "Yellow Prostitution", *GIDRA*, April, 1969, p. 2.

⁴ "UCLA Class on 'Orientals in America,'" *GIDRA*, May, 1969, p. 6.

⁵ Foster Rhea Dulles, *CHINA AND AMERICA* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 89.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "Twenty Years After," *TIME*, LXXVIII (August, 1961), p. 15.

⁸ Larry Kubota, "Yellow Power," *GIDRA*, April, 1969, p. 3.

⁹ Carmichael and Hamilton, p. 37.

¹⁰ "Hayakawa Praises Nisei as Sansei Picket Talk," *KASHU MAINICHI*, April 28, 1969, p. 1.

¹¹ REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS, p. 241.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 278.

¹³ Kazuo Higa, "What Meaning Does the Japanese-American Experience Have for the Black People of America?", Japanese American Seminar, June 5, 1968.

PART II

¹ Chuck Stone, *BLACK POLITICAL POWER IN AMERICA* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968), p. 108.

² State of California, *CALIFORNIANS OF JAPANESE, CHINESE, AND FILIPINO ANCESTRY* (San Francisco: Division of Labor Statistics and Research, June, 1965), p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁵ Interview with Alan Nishio, May 26, 1969.

⁶ Stone, p. 147.

⁷ State of California, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹² *GIDRA*, May, 1969, p. 2.

as compared to \$3,553 for blacks and \$5,109 for whites.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Indeed, Filipinos are a forgotten minority in America. Like blacks, they have many legitimate complaints against American society.

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 rundown 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.¹²

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.



THE INTOLERANCE OF SUCCESS

DANIEL OKIMOTO

Despite the outpouring of praise from the white community, my own reactions to the celebrated success story of the Japanese minority are not quite so effusive or one-sided. While the many achievements of this minority should be acknowledged, it must also be pointed out that much of the praise that is showered upon us springs from a fountainhead of middle-class assumptions, some of questionable value, and that those neglect to mention the reverse side of success: the sacrifices that had to be made, the shortcomings that are all but overlooked in our pilgrimage into the Land of Milk and Honey. Since to dwell exclusively on our accomplishments is to present an incomplete picture, some of the less attractive aspects of the Japanese-American pattern of acculturation need to be discussed. Of greatest importance, perhaps, are the costs at which our social advancement has been won.

In adapting to American society, we have had to face the persistent and perplexing problem of how to look upon our dual heritage. The difficulty in reconciling these twin aspects of our lives is often revealed in that moment of hesitation many experience when asked, "What are you?" In my own life there have been times when I have been frankly at a loss how to reply. Depending on my mood and the circumstances, my answers have vacillated between "American," "Japanese," and "Japanese American." Whatever the response, it usually felt somehow unnatural. I never considered myself 100-percent American because of obvious physical differences. Nor did I think of myself as Japanese. The social opprobrium associated with being a member of a minority also made me slightly uncomfortable about declaring myself a Japanese American.

Perhaps this question would not pose such problems if an atmosphere of greater tolerance existed in America. Certainly if the United States were a harmonious

melting pot in which all races are accepted equally - as myths would have one believe - there would not be any need to feel hesitant about identifying with a minority, particularly one as successful as the Japanese. But in the face of prejudice, it is often hard indeed to resolve the Japanese and American elements.

Like a number of others, I passed through a period when I almost always responded to questions about my nationality with "American." The mere fact of being questioned made me bristle with indignation at the ignorance of those who felt the need to inquire. At the bottom of my eagerness to be recognized as an American, was a deep-seated discomfort about my Asian past. Even at those times when I referred to myself in jest as a "Buddha-head" there was probably some degree of self-derogation.

Unfortunately, as a consequence of this state of mind, we nisei all too frequently attempt to jettison the Asian aspects of our personalities. In our eagerness to scramble to the top of American society, many of us have paid the costly price of abandoning the "baggage" of our cultural heritage, the finest features of which have contributed to the competitive position we now hold. Although Japanese Americans still stick together in closed groups, the substance of our subculture has lost much of its "Japaneseness." Certain old-country stresses, such as that placed on education, survive today, but gradually these have come to be associated less with Japanese-American values than with middle-class American norms.

As any casual conversation will reveal, Japanese Americans are on the whole no better informed about their ancestral homeland than non-Japanese. Few are willing to make an effort to learn anything about it. Although this disinterest may perhaps be inevitable as the struggle to

establish an American identity goes on, it is nevertheless a loss to lament, particularly in view of the richness of Japanese culture. Japanese concepts of aesthetics as expressed in such art forms as ink painting, woodblock prints, folkcrafts, traditional gardens, and architecture stand up well in comparison with the world's greatest artistic achievements. The same can be said of Japanese literature, cinema, martial arts, flower arrangement, tea ceremony, Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku drama, and Zen Buddhism. How unfortunate that so few Japanese Americans consciously seek to keep alive this cultural heritage.

Interestingly, there is a movement taking shape now among the postwar generation to reevaluate the problem of identity and the significance of their ethnicity. No longer apologetic about being members of a minority nor eager to discard their past, many college-age nisei today are rebelling against remnants of racism and old Oriental stereotypes, and are aggressively raising a cry for Yellow Power. Like Afro-American groups, Asian-American organizations are appearing on campuses throughout the country, their members demanding courses that can help them receive a sense of their historical roots. They are redefining their role and place in society and, from a newly delineated perspective, participating in the momentous issues confronting the nation.

The new ethnic consciousness and defiance against racial prejudice owes much to the Black Power movement which, by boldly challenging the status quo, brought vividly to light conditions of injustice that confront all minorities, leading the way for other races to join in the long-delayed fight against discrimination. Borrowing the insights and even some of the rhetoric of the blacks, the Asian-American movement represents a sharp divergence from the old pattern of silence and passivity. While Yellow Power may never become the rallying cry for Orientals in the same way that Black Power has for Negroes, the affirmation of racial ancestry is the kind of major shift in attitude that could have far-reaching implications for Asian subcultures in the United States.

Even though the term "nisei" applies to Japanese in both North and South America, the two groups are quite different in their identification with their Japanese past.

Nisei in Latin America appear on the whole to have come under less compulsion to shed their Asian identity than those in North America. Not only do they tend to speak better Japanese, retain more Oriental customs, and

maintain closer ties with relatives in Japan, but they also hold their ancestral culture in higher esteem than their counterparts in the States. This may be the result of timing; large scale immigration to South America took place more recently than that to the United States. But it is probably more directly related to differences in the area into which Japanese culture was carried. Location helps explain why Japanese Americans on the mainland and in Hawaii are not the same. In the presence of more Japanese and perhaps less anti-Japanese prejudice, Hawaiian nisei seem to retain more of their racial identity, maintain a larger and more cohesive ethnic community, and in general appear less frantic about Americanizing than those on the continent.*

The successes of the Japanese in mainland America have been predicated on a thoroughgoing accommodation to white-class norms. The high degree of conformity is evident in the general behavioral patterns of nisei students: in the classroom they are extremely well-behaved, seldom make noise, never talk back to teachers, faithfully finish their school assignments on time. Neatly dressed, cleanly scrubbed, polite and deferential, nisei on the whole would be among the last to join hippie communes or participate in avant garde movements. Although some postwar youths are beginning to defy traditional modes, the majority of Japanese are still the epitome of the clean-cut all-American prototype in all but physical appearance.

Quiet conformity has no doubt helped to minimize social deviation and outbreaks of crime; in this sense it has functioned positively in gaining Japanese American admission into American society. However, from quite another perspective, the unquestioning, almost mindless acceptance of middle-class standards has given rise to an insen-sate conservatism that has all but deadened impulses toward individualism and creativity. It is rare to find among the Japanese community individualists who not only think heretically but dare to court strong social disapproval by disregarding convention. Accolades from the Caucasian community, inadvertently perhaps, have reinforced this timidity by convincing Japanese Americans that it is better to be safe than conspicuous. As a result, nisei are proud of their upstanding reputation and are reluctant to risk damaging it with unorthodox activity. Told what exemplary citizens we are, we have responded gratefully by continuing to embrace the order and norms of the white mainstream. How dull the United States would be, I have thought at times, if it were populated only by those of Japanese ancestry.

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The term "Nisei" is used in this article to denote all Japanese Americans, and not just the second-generation Japanese Americans.

Given this social orientation it is hardly surprising that artistic creativity, except perhaps in certain fields of the visual arts, is not an attribute for which Japanese Americans are noted. Strict conformity to established norms will probably insure continued prominence in traditional middle-class occupations. Successful nisei dentists, pharmacists, engineers, and businessmen there will always be in great abundance. But the odds are stacked against writers of originality or poets of genius. So long as nisei swallow set standards of social propriety so unquestioningly, so long as they are intent on following the well-known paths to middle-class success, they will probably lack the raw material of experience, the social relevance, individual perception, and artistic vision, to say nothing of the personal daring needed to assume the high risk of failure, that are basic ingredients for genuine creative expression. Though of course the possibility cannot be ruled out, it appears unlikely that literary figures of comparable stature to those of minorities like the Jews and blacks will emerge to articulate the nisei soul. Japanese Americans will be forced to borrow the voices of James Michener, Jerome Charyn, and other sympathetic novelists to distill their own experience. Even if a nisei of Bernard Malamud's or James Baldwin's talents did appear, he would no doubt have little to say that John O'Hara has not already said.

The drive to adapt to white standards of success has recently prompted some postwar nisei to make the charge that behind our conformity and ambition lies a strong desire to become white. Once securely esconced in high social positions, some Japanese Americans have become yellow Uncle Toms, or in the lively jargon of the militant young, "bananas"--yellow on the outside, white inside. Currently ranking as Top Banana is S. I. Hayakawa, who was appointed president of San Francisco State College during its bitter strike. Although Dr. Hayakawa became the darling of the silent majority in California by ripping out wires from student microphones and by following a get-tough policy against recalcitrant blacks, he hardly endeared himself to many postwar nisei who felt he had sold out completely to the white Establishment. To them it was unforgivable that he had callously misused his ethnicity to thwart the aspirations of another minority. They pronounced him guilty of willingly becoming the flunky of reactionary white politicians in need of a Japanese lackey to lead the "holy alliance" against the "lawless" insurrection of the blacks.

Nor is Hayakawa the only banana. Combined with their apolitical bent, the conform-

ity of the Japanese Americans has prevented many from involving themselves in the great social issues facing the nation today. The nisei in southern California seem at times as allergic to liberal causes, such as fair housing and civil rights, as other residents in the area whose reactionary political views are notorious throughout the country. The aversion to participate in just causes is puzzling in light of the historical suffering of the community; but it is yet another aspect of our adaptation that has been largely overlooked.

There are happily some signs of change, at least insofar as self-interests are at stake. The dismissal of Dr. Thomas Noguchi as Los Angeles County Coroner is a case in point. When complaints against the alleged sadism and morbid personality of Dr. Noguchi were made public, many of the good citizens of L. A. screamed for the "Jap's" removal from office. Whether such a hue would have been raised against a white or whether such charges would have been so readily believed is doubtful. Operating on the assumption that a minority suspect is guilty unless proven innocent, the County Board of Supervisors acceded to pressures by dismissing the doctor without investigating carefully the facts of the matter or granting him the right of a public hearing. Although some influential Japanese typically recommended that he accept the dismissal without a fight, thousands of others grouped together in an ad hoc organization called JUST--Japanese United in Search of Truth--which collected over 10,000 signatures of protest, raised large sums of money, took the case to court, proved Noguchi's innocence, and won his reinstatement as County Coroner.

However, the nisei community is in little danger of winning medals for social crusading on the behalf of those outside its own circle. Socio-political apathy continues to be one of our most debilitating defects. Lack of concern for fellow humans is graphically captured in the statement I have heard expressed much too often: "We've made it. We've overcome the barriers of racial prejudice without help from anyone else. Why can't the others?" S. I. Hayakawa embodied this hardhearted outlook in its extreme when he simplistically suggested that Negroes emulate nisei in their struggle to find a place in society.

Such attitudes raise the question of whether an ethnic minority such as ours can really be considered successful. True, Japanese Americans have succeeded in securing a comfortable bourgeois life, an accomplishment for which we have earned the rousing commendation of the white majority. But

this praise, it must be realized, has been based on value judgments that ultimately serve the purposes of the established social order. Professor Harry Kitano, in his informative book, correctly points out that "the judgment of Japanese Americans as the 'model American minority' is made from a strictly majority point of view. Japanese Americans are good because they conform--they don't make waves--they work hard and are quiet and docile."* When this lauded minority sits back indifferently and says, "We've made it, why can't they?" I doubt whether we have succeeded in any but the narrowest materialistic definition of the word. For in a broader spiritual and humanistic sense we have failed abysmally, not only as a minority group but as compassionate human beings.

The spiritual dimension of the nisei success story is obviously as important as the material, yet this aspect is often overlooked by those whose eyes catch only the glitter of our position and possessions. Failure of the human spirit does not register in sociological studies--intangibles of the heart are not amenable to points on a graph or lines on a chart. Ours is not a failure of wrong action; rather it is one of omission, which is no less reprehensible because it involves doing nothing at all. Indeed, passivity in the face of injustice is particularly insidious because it often goes unnoticed or is subject to deceptive rationalization.

Perhaps my reaction to the conservatism and political lethargy of the ethnic community may strike some delicate Japanese Americans, particularly those incorrigible optimists who insist America is indeed the Promised Land, as excessively harsh. But "don't rock the boat," "let them work for it" attitudes strike me as basically immoral. Perhaps this is because my family, having lived in the ghetto after the war, takes the civil rights movement very personally and has become involved in it in one way or another. My brother, Joe, has in effect dedicated his life to working with the poor and oppressed.

After graduating from Harvard Medical School, Joe was moving safely along the established tracks toward the security of a job as a surgeon, a most prestigious and lucrative profession. During his residency, however, he began to feel deeply uneasy about the disconnection between the wonders of modern medicine and the world of human misery inhabited by blacks and other minority groups. Health care seemed to be largely a middle-class luxury, out of the reach of those poverty-stricken people who most needed it. Unhappy with the elitist orientation of the career he was headed for, Joe quit

surgery to devote himself to that area of medicine--public health and social medicine--where he believed he could best help the minority races and the poor.

Joe's decision to throw away assured wealth and status was perplexing for many of his colleagues and friends, who could only conclude that he was hopelessly confused. Within their hierarchy of values, he indeed will never reach the pinnacle of success epitomized by a surgical career; nor will he boast statistics about the nisei success story. For Joe, who lived in the slums of San Diego, it is back to the "ghettos, Indian reservations, and other areas of poverty," as he put it in his letter of resignation. This move may be both foolish and foreign to some nisei, particularly those whose prime ambition is to set up practice on East First Street of Little Tokyo, an area about as remote in spirit from the ghettos, Indian reservations, and other areas of poverty as the Japanese Americans are from the struggles of those minorities. But regardless of what others think of him or his decision, he will have the satisfaction of knowing he acted as his heart and conscience dictated.

It is unfortunate that so many nisei, climbing up the social ladder, have given primacy to material over humanistic values. Gradually, many have assumed some of the less desirable features of their newly acquired status. Preoccupied with materialism as are the majority of Americans, many are deeply committed to the stylish life. Comfortable houses, sleek cars, and fashionable clothes are the accoutrements of the middle-class success they have pursued so single-mindedly. Conversations with some nisei friends have left me wondering at times whether our values supersede material accumulation in their view.

With the passage of time the Japanese in America have also begun to display more of the patterns of delinquency and crime found in other American groups. Acculturation has resulted in the erosion of some of the principle qualities that set Japanese apart as a particularly law-abiding minority. While crime statistics still fall substantially below other groups', violence and other forms of destructive behavior have become increasingly prevalent. Unthinkable in the past, crime rates and juvenile delinquency have risen to such a point that it is no longer rare to witness gangs of Japanese youngsters marauding through the streets of Los Angeles, fighting with knives and guns and aimlessly destroying property.

In taking an overview of the Japanese American road to success it might seem that the pattern of adaptation through passive conformity to the structure and norms of society points beyond the simple abandonment of ethnic legacy and the assumption of certain middle-class values ultimately toward total assimilation. Although there may be a long-term trend in this direction, powerful currents are moving counter to the drift toward assimilation, as shown by the resistance of the subculture to diffusion within the larger framework of society. It is true that the postwar generation of Japanese Americans, unlike the prewar breed, no longer need to band together defensively in the face of such blatant discrimination as existed before the war, yet social barriers continue to exist, and today's generation seems to prefer the company of its kind. Quite apart from the question of whether this is desirable or not, the presently visible evidence indicates that it is premature to forecast dissolution of the Japanese subculture.

The matter of marriage, the key to final assimilation, is a complicated question for which no clear tendencies are discernible. There appears to be a growing open-mindedness about marrying into other racial groups, which is nevertheless offset to a certain extent by definite preferences, even among many of the postwar set, to find spouses within the ethnic community. The whole marriage issue has been, and still is, overladen with all sorts of volatile emotions and stubborn prejudices. Even when young Japanese Americans choose marital partners from the subculture, as many prefer to do, difficult problems can still arise. The issei did not come to America wholly unfettered by social biases; even today issei grandparents occasionally object to marriages involving partners whose ancestry can be traced back to "undesirable" social origins: those from Okinawa or worse, eta (outcast class in Japan), are anathema to many issei, who might try to prohibit marriages despite the freedom of the youngsters from such biases.

The situation becomes even more complex when hakujin (whites) or kokujin (blacks), enter the picture. This is partly because some Japanese Americans continue to harbor a distrustful attitude toward non-Japanese. This defensive suspicion is unlikely to disappear so long as the remnants of anti-Japanese hostility are not erased. The arsenal of arguments against interracial marriage from the standpoint of Japanese Americans is frequently well stocked with racial and social myths, some of which are quite farfetched, concerning the physical incompatibility of races, the alleged ease with which whites divorce, unresolvable differences of background, and

social difficulties for mixed children. It is my impression that many nisei parents will try just as hard as, if not more so than, non-Japanese families, to dissuade their children from marrying out of their race. My parents as ministers have frequently been called upon by desperate parents to discourage nisei-white, nisei-Mexican, nisei-Chinese, and sometimes nisei-Negro couples from intermarrying. The tranquility of a number of households has been shattered by the eruption of emotions over prospective non-Japanese in-laws. If persuasion fails, some parents as a last resort will threaten to disown the children. But the passage of time, particularly if a grandchild has been born, generally restores harmony within the family.

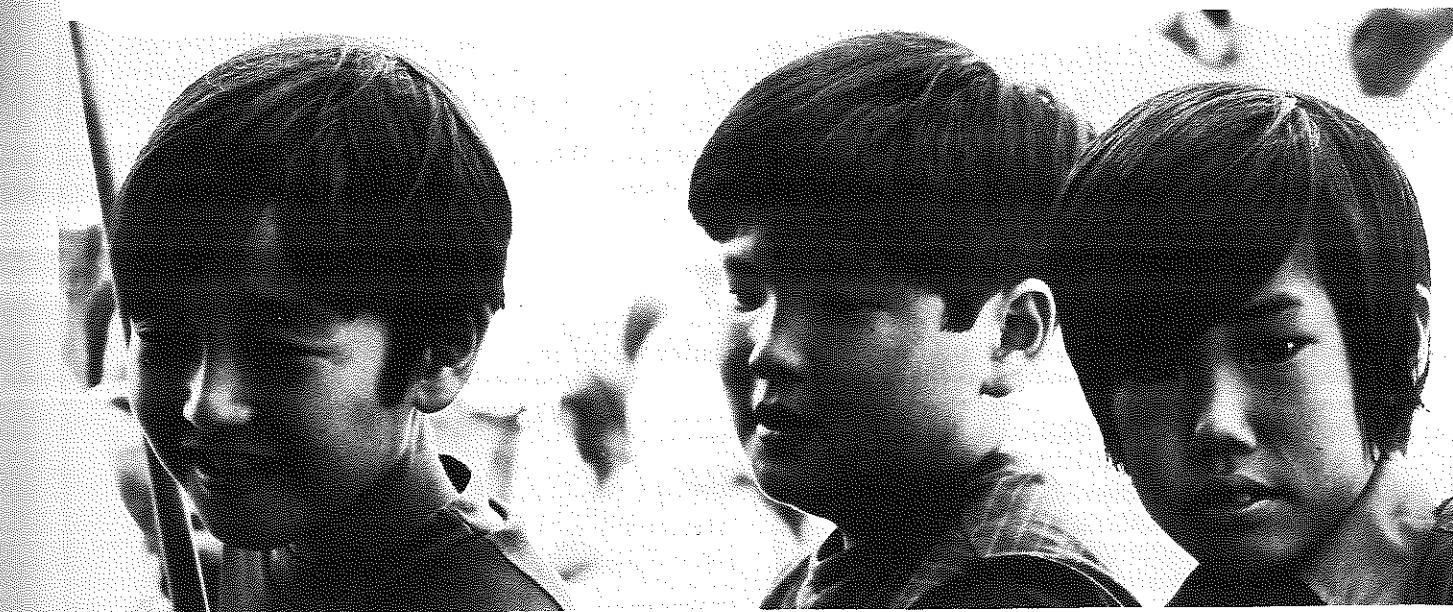
The issues of intermarriage and ultimate assimilation, like a host of other complex questions, await answers from future generations of Japanese Americans, beginning with the postwar group now reaching adulthood. The nisei community has come to a new, and in some ways decisive, turning point in its comparatively short history in the United States. The questions that face my generation will undoubtedly require new answers in determining our future role in American society from those that have brought us to our present position.

The imminent danger that confronts us now is not so much the obstacle of social oppression or the threat of another bitter internment experience or the looming specter of potential failure. Unlike our prewar predecessors we face comfort not hardship, security not uncertainty, and general tolerance not discrimination. Our challenge stems, paradoxically, from an excess of success. The question that will concern us is not whether we can make it in American society, but whether the price of achieving social success is too high. Concretely, this means: Can we adjust to middle-class living without necessarily accepting wholesale the inbuilt prejudices and undesirable characteristics? Can we relish our newly won social status and material affluence without forgetting the misfortunes of those who are still seeking them? Can we enjoy our freedom without forgetting the oppression other minorities suffer?

These challenges demand no less determination or courage, because they arise from the very successes that have been passed on to us, than did the imposing barriers that pushed the issei and older-generation nisei to the limits of their abilities. Indeed they are perhaps in the long run even more demanding and difficult, because they represent internal challenges, not external obstructions,

involving the human spirit and heart. Whether we possess that extra measure of inner strength and spiritual greatness to rise up to these subtle but stern tests is a matter

only the future will tell. Our present response to them, however, will determine whether the much publicized Japanese American experience is really a success story.



AN INTERVIEW WITH

S. I. HAYAKAWA

PRESIDENT OF SAN FRANCISCO STATE COLLEGE

EDITORIAL BOARD
JUNE, 1971

HAYAKAWA: I was born in Vancouver. At that time my father was a worker on a Japanese-American newspaper. He also was a labor contractor. He was just a kid, you know, about 22 or so and he was the only English-speaking Japanese around so he acted as a semi-lawyer for Japanese who got in trouble with the laws. And he was a community leader in that small Japanese colony in Vancouver in 1904, 1905, 1906.

QUESTION: How did this role as a leader in the community show itself in your family?

HAYAKAWA: In no way at all, because we left that community. And I was brought up in Cranbrook, B. C., only Japanese family there; Calgary, only Japanese family there, Winnipeg, only Japanese family there. And I stayed in Winnipeg through the end of grade school, through high school, through college, so I was never a member of the Japanese-Canadian community. And one important thing about being a one-man minor-

ity, is that there is no such thing. You're just part of the gang. There are no generalizations about what Japs are like or what Chinese are like you see in a community like Winnipeg, they just accept you or they don't. Hell, you can go to school with the kids and you're part of the community. I was brought up according to Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, National Guard, everything, loyal Canadian, taking great pride in being a Canadian, that's all.

QUESTION: Did your family speak Japanese in the house?

HAYAKAWA: We spoke Japanese at home but not to Father, because Father was a student of English history before I was born. He used to translate Ruskin and Carlyle into Japanese, and publish essays in Japanese-language papers.

QUESTION: What about your mother? Did she speak English?

HAYAKAWA: Not very well, she never did learn.

AN INTERVIEW WITH HARRY KITANO

Acting Director of the Asian American Studies Center, Professor of Social Welfare at the University of California, Los Angeles

agencies and schools), and the community members must be made aware of these needs. Third, proposals for special programs can be offered. Such programs may involve the use of community personnel briefly trained in counseling to offer their services to Chinese.

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JUNE, 1971

QUESTION: How valid a description do you think the success image of the Japanese-Americans and other Asian Americans is?

KITANO:

When you define success, you have to define it along different parameters. If you use education as one criterion, they come out (the Asians) reasonably well. For occupations and income and jobs, there is some evidence that they don't get paid as much for the same amount of work as the average white person, so on that level, they are less successful. If you come to behavior such as crime, delinquency, mental illness--in those the Japanese and Chinese come out relatively good, at least in terms of official hospitalized rates. But if you analyze areas like creativity or personality development, I think that you can start seeing how racism can affect a "very successful" minority group. It means that, generally for the Asians, they don't have the full range of possibilities offered to the white person, given a similar status and background or whatever else. The greatest disservice is to take just one or two of those dimensions like occupation and income and then indicate that this is an overall successful group, because success is made up not only of different criteria, but also what you value as successful. For some people being conforming and quiet and being accepted gets to be a very high value; if you equate that with success, you come out differently than if you value something else.

The fundamental problem of a small, powerless minority group (and I think we can use the Asians in this whole context) really does raise a whole series of questions that very few of us are even aware of. One of the problems of a small group such as ours, especially if there are two other dominant groups, the whites and the blacks, is that probably the most difficult position, sociologically anyway, would be that of a permanent middleman minority. Just by that description, I think you can get a pretty clear implication that if you are in the middle between two opposing forces, in one way you can first never achieve what you want because you are being determined by two other large groups, or the middleman obviously sometimes becomes the scapegoat of all the ills of that kind of social system and that kind of society. I think we have some evidence that the whites use us and the blacks may use us; the question that people in the middle should think about is "Where does the middleman minority go? Does it try to become a majority; does it try to join the subordinated minorities; does it try to remain somewhat aloof?" It might be very wise to stop and think because even in terms of color, we are in the middle, and that until we first come to some sort of agreement among ourselves of "What is the best way?", then we end up in a sense fighting each other, which we do. Right now we are fighting between the Hayakawas and the non-Hayakawas, but I don't think that we have really addressed ourselves to the major questions yet. As far as I know, historically no middleman minority has ever handled this position quite well, because the final power may lie outside the group, but still, if we think that we have some choice, we may be able to decide some of the consequences of the ways that we might be going.



QUESTION: Do you see any division between the class aspect or caste aspect of being yellow? Would that be a factor in deciding which way the Asians might go?

KITANO: One of the solutions for the middleman minority is to try to emphasize other modes of stratification such as class, which means that instead of color being the most dominant criterion--occupation, income, and position are, and that's certainly been the answer of many Asians. Historically, many have tried to deny and hide the fact that yellow was an important variable and it was hard work and achievement that lead to economic success. At least that's the way that a large number of the middleman group have tried to answer the question--maybe not consciously but this is the way they have behaved. Now the problem with that approach is that it will serve those who have, if you want to call it, the mobility and drive, but it certainly doesn't answer the question of what happens to those yellow people of less motivation or capabilities. Again, I think this is why we are seeing certain problems within our own ethnic community. Those who have become successful on the social class level almost deny the importance of color and yet when you see large proportions of our group now not making it (at least in the traditional sense) then it raises another spectra of an unresolved issue. I think that's essentially where the problem lies.

QUESTION: Is there a tendency among Japanese-Americans to believe in the success story about themselves too much? Is there a danger in that?

KITANO: The danger with the Japanese-Americans is that there is enough empirical evidence to indicate that they have become relatively successful in this narrow fashion; and they forget that they may have paid an extremely high price for it. I think that we have some evidence that the most successful Japanese, at least according to the stereotype, are those who really paid for it psychologically; if you look at things like stomach cancer, ulcers, and other internalized modes of adaptation, that is one price. But I think the other price that comes out so clearly is that we have developed either a servant or a second-class mentality. Our drive for acceptance has really been to follow the cues of the dominant white society, and they have told us that to be successful you have to be quiet and humble and those other characteristics. If we really believe that that's the way we can become successful, then one can become rather pessimistic about the future of our group because that means that we have been "conned" or that we have "conned" ourselves almost completely into taking a second-class role.

QUESTION: It's always been an interesting point in your book that it's not so much that Japanese cultural values are the same as American middle-class cultural values, but that Japanese have one value of adapting or accommodating to a situation. There is a functional compatibility when American cultural values dictate that minorities should be quiet and work hard, even though for Americans, being quiet is not highly emphasized. How does that carry out with the younger generation when that cultural value is no longer followed to the same degree?

KITANO: The validity of one set of prescriptions for one generation may not hold for another because of the changes in not only time and place but situation. I still think the adaptation syndrome that was a part of not only the first but also the second generation has been instilled to a large degree in the third, current generation. And like all role prescriptions that are put forth, it does have validity if it works--it's like any other kind of tool; if you do certain things and it works out for you, then you continue in this fashion. Part of it may be simple generational reaction. So even if it does work, a lot of the Sansei may very well take an opposite tact, which is not too unusual in all groups and is labelled adolescent rebellion. At this stage one would almost predict two levels: they will try newer ways of adapting and they will hold and maintain that kind of adaptation that they feel gets them closer to what they want.

QUESTION: You have done a lot of research on mental illness of Japanese-Americans. Why is there relatively low incidence of mental illness among Japanese-Americans?

KITANO: It's both intriguing and very tricky to interpret this question because in all of these areas there is what we call official rate: in crime and delinquency--that's what appears on the police records and the FBI records; in mental illness --the number in mental hospitals, and things like that. But I think the true incidence is generally hidden, and a lot depends on how the culture defines it. If Japanese-Americans thought that exposing mental illness to the larger culture was the source of either embarrassment or shame or at least a negative characteristic, then I think that in many ways they would try to hide this; I think there is some evidence that this is what they do. The shame on the family and the shame on the ethnic group would mean that even if you had a "mentally ill" person, and that again is a debatable term, the average Japanese might deny that he has a mentally ill person and not send the person in for treatment. He would most likely try to handle the mentally ill person within his own ethnic group, community or family. Therefore, this person never shows up in a mental hospital. There are other factors that go with that too. Economic independence often leads to taking care of one's own. Japanese sometimes have a pride in that. Another one which is a sheer functional kind of thing is that if the average Japanese, especially of another generation, went into a mental hospital and all he spoke was Japanese, the chances are very good that he will never get well, because who is going to know that he is getting better? You can probably come out with a reasonable generalization that the Japanese are not superior or inferior, if you want to use those terms, to other groups in terms of mental illness; the rates are probably very similar. But the second part of that generalization is that they don't show up in mental hospitals or those facilities at the same rate as most of the other groups.

QUESTION: Can we pursue alienation as a source of the identity crisis? Let's take the family as a contributor to the Asian identity crisis. How does the Japanese-American family contribute to that problem?

KITANO: From my point of view, you have to answer it from a relative sense. If you compare it with different families, then I see the alienation of the Japanese much less than the average white families, the average black families, and perhaps most similar to the Jewish families. Although it is changing, the Japanese family still retains sort of a unit and a function that is still qualitatively different from the average American family. You can even use simple statistics such as separation and divorce as one example. Another one might be mobility. Chances are good for many white families that they might have moved five or six times within a lifetime, and the moves may have been from New York to Miami. So when you follow that kind of pattern and think that the family can contribute to alienation by not providing either a consistent background or in some degree of stability through an intact family and all the amenities that go with that, then I think the Japanese and Chinese families are much more cohesive. For all of us who live in Asian families, that cohesion as told to us by the white man is really a myth--the white man really thinks that the families think together, do things together, and everyone obeys, etc. But I think there is still enough truth in a relative sense in that compared to the average white family, we do come up as a less alienated group. Now the other question which is interesting is alienation in the Jewish family. In some ways it may almost be a reaction to the over-closeness and over-dependency that sometimes appears to be a stereotype of a Jewish family; you look for ways of breaking away from that kind of interdependency.

QUESTION: The Portnoy syndrome.

KITANO: Look at the Asian family--there are enough parallels. I think that some of the chuckles and insights when we discuss Portnoy point up the similarities.

QUESTION: Do you feel that if the family stays together as a unit, it leads to conservatism among its members?

KITANO: That may very well be. Family units generally are much more conservative, especially if you get input from different generations. The grandmothers and grandfathers have lived or experienced a more conservative era, so the risk that you pay obviously is much more conservatism.

QUESTION: Has the family prompted the "quiet American" stereotype?

KITANO: I think the average Japanese-American family usually has his own home, has a late model car, is given all the material things, and thinks that the one way he achieved this is through his quiet demeanor. Many feel the maintenance of this kind of posture may be very important in getting even a greater proportion of the goods of the society.

QUESTION: A lot of parents will encourage quiet behavior and say it's because they brought it over from Japan. Isn't it more of a response to succeeding in this society?

KITANO: I would say that generally, if you are from lower classes or less powerful groups of any immigrant population, the chances are high that you had to adapt to the system in Asia, and that if you didn't adapt, then you paid some kind of price. It's this kind of psychological orientation that many Asians might have brought over here. It was a translation of one group in power to another; it was not that difficult. That's what I mean by the congruence. But to mistake that as part of the Japanese culture. . . I think this is the error that many Americans make. White Americans start saying, "That's the culture." But they forget that depending upon your class and your position in Japan, you will behave appropriately; if you came from the upper class or the upper middle class, then you can be arrogant or loud, depending on the time, place, and situation. The mistranslation of the characteristics of a small social class group over here and saying that it's part of Japanese culture is a misperception.

QUESTION: How does the relocation experience fit into this model of quiet Americans?

KITANO: I think that the evacuation has now become the Japanese-American Rorschach test, which I think is quite appropriate. It means that now we can go back to a concrete event, but interpret it in a way that we think appropriate. The facts themselves are not really as important as the interpretation and its symbolic meaning. Again, as in any event like this, you can line up the positive and the negative and then remake your analysis from there. I think that if I had to interpret the event, it becomes the symbol of a racist, oppressive society that does this thing to one ethnic group. The problem with getting too hung up with that approach is that one may forget what it did to an essentially conservative community. I am for family interaction, but not for that oppressive kind of family interaction that was characteristic of many Japanese families right up and through that World War II era. Your father almost determined your occupation, who you were going to marry, where you were going to live, and because most Japanese were poor and dependent, you had to follow through on what your parents told you to do because there were no alternatives. A cohesive family really is good if it's somewhat voluntarily entered into. But if a cohesive family was forced upon you because there was no other choice, then I suspect that it could become very restrictive. It would deny opportuni-

ties. I can give you a rigid way of looking at the world. But you still can't over-react to the racism and that's the one thing. The other thing about the evacuation was that it forced young Japanese, especially, to go to live in Chicago and New York and other places where they experienced different kinds of input--we saw how white families lived, we saw upper classes, middle classes, lower classes--and that kind of exposure is quite necessary so that you can get some newer perspectives. Now whether it should be forced on one through something like the evacuation obviously is unfair.

QUESTION: Looking back at recent history, how do you re-evaluate the assimilation process in America?

KITANO: I think inevitably, in the long run, when you have different racial groups, especially so visible as in our culture, there are two main choices: One is to go completely pluralistic so that each visible ethnic group develops its own culture, language, styles, institutions, and organizations. So you have within that one system a whole series of different cultures living side by side with almost minimal interaction with each other. The ultimate would be perhaps several states set aside. I don't think that that will ever come about, because I guess it's so impractical. The other way would be complete integration, some sort of assimilation so that out of this melange comes a new kind of American--maybe some part Asian blood, some part black blood, and Indian, and whatever else. That too, I suspect would be an almost impossible reality at the recurrent time. I think where we're at now--is where the white man is still on top and all the other groups are fighting for the scraps and trying to become something. The direction towards pluralism may be one feasible direction for the ethnic groups. As ethnic groups develop their own identities and skills, they will develop a social class system within their own ethnic group. The minute you develop a social class or other kind of stratification within your own ethnic group, the probabilities are very, very high that if you are say, upper-class, middle-class, or lower-class Japanese, that you will be much more similar to the white and the black Chicano across that line rather than within your own ethnic group. As they develop their own stratification systems, then that stratification would no doubt lead to cross-ethnic kinds of interaction. I think the obvious example (it's almost becoming a cliche) is that one may then ask "Is he a doctor?" rather than "Is he Japanese?" And if your beloved daughter brings home a Jewish doctor or a black doctor, eventually that may be more salient in terms of what you want than, "Is he Japanese?" I see the stage of ethnic pluralism as almost a pre-stage for some kind of integration on a different level.

QUESTION: In your position as a researcher, what do you feel should be your relationship to the Asian American Community?

KITANO: I don't know. That's a question most researchers never face. I think there is a dimension of ethnic responsibility and that you try very hard to do research on several levels, and what comes out is a value choice. Anything that I think will be extremely damaging to the Asian Community, I would probably not research; and if I did find something at a period that in my judgment might be misused grossly, I would probably not publish. One tries to report back to the ethnic community in those areas where one thinks, at least from my point of view, they could stand some sort of improvement. But with sound empirical data. If I think that there's a high degree of discrimination going on by Asian groups, then at least among Asian groups I try to point this out as gently as I can. But if I had to make a blatant remark saying, "The Asians are as racist as anybody else," I probably would not say that because obviously that could not only be used, but misused. And the empirical evidence will be mixed on that score.

This is why if it comes out that Japanese are less criminal, less delinquent or whatever, I find that it's something I will publish without any difficulty, at least in the scholarly journals. But always in the interpretations, I try to indicate that there are other features of the culture that should also be assessed; and the second thing is not to compare the Japanese with any other groups with the implication that we're good and the others are bad.

QUESTION: Hayakawa said during the San Francisco State Strike that there is no such thing as an innocent bystander. You're either there or not. His warning was to go watch the demonstrations on T. V. So that's what really concerns me about being a middleman minority, it's not your choice to be a middleman minority. It's decided for you. How is that going to work when Sanseis say that they have a Third World perspective because they see the future not with white people and that their values lie with the struggles of Third World peoples?

KITANO: Except that the Third World concept is a nebulous one too. And so I don't know what any of these systems has to offer to people in the middle. Previous generations tried to join the White World and, depending on your definition, were successful in certain areas and not successful in others. I think a lot of the younger generation feel that joining the Third World is a possible solution. And I don't doubt at all that many Asians have joined the White World, others the Third World, and if they've achieved a degree of identity and comfort, I say, "Good, join those." But that still leaves a large group of people in the middle who aren't too sure which to join, and I think that's why the middleman thing is of such a personal interest to me. I don't want to join the White World wholeheartedly; I don't think the Third World makes more than a certain degree of sense. If the Blacks took complete power of the United States and the Whites were at the bottom, we would still be in the middle. The middleman by definition will fare no better or worse at the top or the bottom--you're the middle of that sandwich whether the wheat bread goes on top or the white bread goes on top. So in some ways a permanent middleman position is maybe what the Asian in the United States has to look forward to. Then you start thinking, "What does that mean?"

QUESTION: I don't see much optimism in your conclusion that we're going to be a middleman minority no matter who's on top in America. Do you feel you have a responsibility to find alternate models?

KITANO: Yes and no. I think for me, the best solution is to achieve a sense of reality. Whether what I see is a good world or a bad world, that's the next question; but as long as I know what the realities are, then I think I can make my own choices. But if I don't know what the realities are, if people give me myths and dreams and illusions and lies and falsehoods, then I would be in bad shape. So I don't use the term pessimism or optimism although eventually I'll have to, but the first stage is that once any human being knows the realities of the world and the realities of his choices, then hopefully he can make whatever choices he thinks are appropriate. This is why I think I'm wiser now knowing that I live in a racist state as a member of a middleman minority group than when I was younger, when I felt that I lived in an open democracy and I could do exactly what I wanted; I was really living in a dream world.

It's really a cliche, "Know yourself"--know yourself, your world, your enemy, and your friends.

I think that once you are reasonably clear as to where the problem lies, then a search for newer and perhaps more creative models will be in order. But if you are not clear and have an illusory grasp of the world, then there may never be a creative next step.

Response and Change for the Asian in America: A Survey of Asian American Literature

BRUCE IWASAKI

The experience of Asians in America has been such a neglected area of study, there is no wonder that the literary output of Asian Americans is virtually unknown. True, there have been no Japanese-American Saul Bellows; no Chinese-American Ralph Ellisons; no Filipino-American N. Scott Momadays. But there have been--and are--noteworthy authors of Asian descent in the United States. The literature of Asian Americans has themes running through it which in turn reflect how this literature has been received. That is, just as the historical study of Asians (indeed, all minority groups) in the United States is actually a critical study of the majority culture, so an examination of Asian American literature sheds light upon the exclusionary literary tradition of white America. There is then, a self-reflexivity in this writing; the social experience of Asians is closely tied to the subject, and, as we shall see, the form of the literature.

The problems of Asians in America--the dynamics of change and the response to this change--are unique. By studying how a wide variety of Asian American writers have responded to this country, we hope to discern some pattern to the literature. Then we may examine some of the contemporary writing of Asian Americans and analyze its limitations and speculate on its possibilities.

American literature in the last century has dealt at length with the spiritual nature of man and the changing values of his society and institutions. Henry Adams, Twain, Faulkner and Fitzgerald, for example, have written of man's sense of displacement and fragmentation, and the society's decline. In a more compact, but more intense form, this sense of individual "self-lessness" has been a major influence upon the Asian American experience.

The first Asian immigrants encountered fierce racism in the legal system, physical violence, and economic exploitation. Beyond the struggle for physical survival, differences in culture and language were additional sources of alienation. More recently, an ambivalent, even ambiguous, ethnic and social identity has been manifested. Conflicts caused by a culturally reinforced stratification of generations have further added to the peculiar situation of Asians in America.

The response to this situation by Asian writers has been so diverse it may be fallacious to speak of an Asian American literature at all. But the variety is what is so interesting. Asian American literature cannot be easily categorized as, for example, simply non-existent; or linked with the Old Country; or a quaint blending of East and West. Majority culture critics will have to disabuse themselves of their stereotypes toward Asian people, and the type of literature produced by them. Perhaps some Asian Americans will too.

Yone Noguchi exemplifies the search for new forms of artistic expression. He was the first Japanese-American poet to publish in the United States. Born in Japan in 1875, he came to America at eighteen and became a protege of California poet Joaquin Miller. His collection, *FROM THE EASTERN SHORE* (1905) reflects the traditional forms and images of Japanese verse:

Lines

When I am lost in the deep body of the mist
on a hill,
The universe seems built with me as its pillar
Am I the god upon the face of the deep, nay
deepless deepness in the beginning?

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The daring tone and metaphors of a later poem show quite another influence:

To Robert Browning

You are a smoking-room story-teller of the pageant of life seen by senses,
Your gusto in speech turns your art into obscurity,
Again from the obscurity into a valedictory:
You are a provincialism endorsed by eccentric pride.
You are sometimes riotous to escape from anarchism,
Your great thirst for expression makes you a soul-wounding romancer,
You often play the mystagogue, and appear cruel.
You are a glutton by colorful adventures,
You are a troubadour serenading between the stars and Life,
Your love song on a guitar torments us even physically;
You are a realist who under the darkness purifies himself into the light
of optimism;
You are a griffin wildly dancing on human laughter.²

A friend of Noguchi's, Jun Fujita, also wrote in English, and also published in noteworthy magazines like POETRY. In his book TANKA: POEMS IN EXILE (1923), more traditional Oriental forms express the loneliness of living in Chicago.

To Elizabeth

Against the door dead leaves are falling;
On your window the cobwebs are black.
Today, I linger alone.

The foot-step?
A passer-by.³

The most radical artist/writer of new forms--in any literature--is Sadakichi Hartmann. Kenneth Rexroth has called this Bohemian the "court magician to two generations of American intellectuals."⁴ Carl Sadakichi Hartmann was born in Japan in 1867, the son of a German trader and a Japanese mother. Because of rebellion from his father's strict discipline, he was sent off to America at the age of thirteen. There he studied art and literature, and was soon championing American art and pioneering the recognition of Oriental art. Sadakichi gained great notoriety by his off-beat behavior, but his undisciplined eccentricities also put him far ahead of his time.

After all, he was writing haiku and tanka as early as 1898, long before the Imagists. In 1895, he drafted the script for the first psychedelic light show, noting that its presentation would have to await the invention...means of projection. In 1902, he held the first perfume concert in New York City.⁵

He fought against the rigidly conforming mass consciousness; "the average mind accepts wisdom, beauty, or any gift of the Muses as sluggishly as magnesium absorbs moisture,"⁶ he wrote. His was certainly an atypical Asian response to America. Sadakichi was an atypical man. But our wonder may partly reflect our expectancies of sedately acceptable Oriental writing.

Another writer who sometimes experimented with new forms was José Garcia Villa. Born in the Philippines, he came to the United States in 1930. He wrote short stories, but is most noted for his poetry; Dame Edith Sitwell, Mark Van Doren, David Daiches, Richard Eberhart and others have lauded his work. Villa's poems do not dwell on his Filipino heritage, rather his mystical Blakean quality transcends all experience.

Inviting a tiger for a weekend.
The gesture is not heroic but discipline.
The memoirs will be splendid.

Proceed to dazzlement, Augustine.
Banish little birds, graduate to tiger.
Proceed to dazzlement, Augustine.

Any tiger of whatever colour
The same as jewels any stone
Flames always essential morn.

The guest is luminous, peer of Blake.
The host is gallant, eye of Death.
If you will do this you will break

The little religions for my sake.
Invite a tiger for a weekend.
Proceed to dazzlement, Augustine.⁷

Villa made two innovations in verse form: the peculiar use of the comma to regulate the lines' "verbal density and time movement,"⁸ and the exploratory use of "reverse consonance." Reverse consonance is a new method of rhyming,

The last sounded consonants of the last syllable, or the last principal consonants of a word, are reversed for the corresponding rhyme. Thus a rhyme for near would be run, rain, green, reign.⁹

An excerpt:

It's a hurricane of spirit--
That's genius! Not God can tear
It from itself, though He is the rose
In this skull that's seer.¹⁰

All of these diverse writers share a collective individuality--they all seek innovative forms to express their experiences in a new culture. They were among the earliest Asians to publish in America. Their search for new patterns of communication surely reflect--however unconsciously--the search for a new self definition, amidst numerous hardships, of the Asian pioneers to this country.

The search for an Asian American identity is a central problem in much of the literature. One response to this dilemma is to look back to Asia. Several authors have done this, in different ways, for different reasons. Lin Yutang, born in China in 1895, was educated there, and then earned an M.A. at Harvard and a Ph.D. at Leipzig. He has written over thirty books in English over a wide spectrum of subjects: history, philosophy, art, and novels. CONFUCIUS SAW NANCY AND OTHER ESSAYS ABOUT NOTHING (1936) contains a witty tragic-comic play, as well as essays on topics ranging from Chinese calligraphy, to feminist thought in ancient China. Most of his novels are set in Asia; THE FLIGHT OF THE INNOCENTS (1964) for example, about refugees fleeing to Hong Kong, is a tendentious criticism of the People's Republic of China. In CHINATOWN FAMILY (1948), Tom, a young man brought to America and trained in its scientific attitudes, comes to accept the traditional Eastern philosophies of his ancestors.

Lee Yu-Hwa was also born and educated in China. She moved to America in 1947, took an M.A. at Pennsylvania, and has published short stories in several American literary magazines. Her narratives, though set in China, parallel the cultural conflicts between generations in Asian American families. In "The Last Rite," originally published in THE LITERARY REVIEW and included in the 1965 collection of THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES, the progressive thinking Chou Nan-An acquiesces to the matrimonial demands of his staunchly traditional family. But the ending is not so much a triumph of old ways over new as one of spontaneous emotion over both traditional and modern mechanization.

A third writer who sets his fiction in Asia is the Korean-born Richard Kim. His three novels, THE MARTYRED (1964), THE INNOCENT (1968), and LOST NAMES (1970), explore human identity and belief against the background of the Korean War. His stark style imitates--some critics feel unsuccessfully--Albert Camus, by whom he is deeply influenced.

These three authors, who have experienced America after growing up in Asia respond to cultural and generational conflict by setting their fiction in the Orient. Perhaps this more familiar scene frees them from otherwise artificial modes, and permits a wider expression of human experience.

Still another group of writers has chosen to relate the simple daily occurrences of the Asian communities. Otherwise sharing little in common, these writers usually dwell on the private and public isolation of this experience.

Bienvenido Santos, born in the Philippines in 1911, came to this country as a lecturer before World War II. Later he returned to the islands where he was the president of Legazpi College. Since coming back to study writing at the State University of Iowa in 1957, Santos has written several books of poetry and fiction as well as publishing widely in literary journals. His stories are set both in the Philippines and the States, but their common theme is loneliness, pathos, and quiet desperation. His characters self-consciously search for love or friendship or sometimes just ordinary human contact. In "Footnote to a Laundry List," he describes a college professor in the Philippines.

At forty, he didn't feel too old; still, there were the bleak years ahead he kept seeing before him. Dr. Carlos was not unattractive, but he was shy. In class, his voice barely reached the back row.... After a while, they stopped trying to understand whatever it was he was saying. He didn't make sense.¹¹

Dr. Carlos remembers his trip back from America,

It was a lonesome, miserable trip back home. He was sick every day of the first week, but he mailed her a letter. Each letter was a passionate avowal of love, no mention of seasickness. And he meant every word he wrote her then and since. Paula was quick to answer in the beginning. She owed him a couple of letters now.¹²

One of Santo's achievements is that though his content invites a merely sentimental rendering, his consciously simple style undercuts any response in excess of the situation. One very brief tale, "My Most Memorable Christmas in America," deals with self-pity, is a story about a sentimental experience. But the story itself is remarkably free of maudlin bathos.

Toshio Mori is not always in control of this feeling. But the short stories in his only book, *YOKOHAMA, CALIFORNIA* (1949), though often stylistically crude, are just as often charming and poignant portraits of the Japanese community just prior to World War II. Each story is an eagerly hacked off slice of life--what Mori's ear misses, his curious, penetrating eye picks up. Each tale seems to end with an optimistic look to tomorrow; it is ironic that the book's publication was postponed eight years partly spent by Mori in the wartime concentration camps. Sadly, he never published again.

One of the more talented Japanese-American authors is Hisaye Yamamoto, who was born in Redondo Beach in 1921. Immediately after the war, when jobs for Japanese were not forthcoming, she was hired by a black newspaper in Los Angeles. Since then, she has published in the ethnic press, as well as such prestigious journals as the *PARTISAN REVIEW*, *KENYON REVIEW*, and *FURIOSO*. In "Yoneko's Earthquake" she conveys with great subtlety the close interpersonal dynamics of a Japanese family in rural California. This tale was chosen for the 1952 collection of Martha Foley's *BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES*. All of her stories are about Japanese-Americans, but she skillfully generalizes this experience by a fascinating preoccupation with social deviance--sexual, psychological, and artistic. Treating such atypical themes with cool understatement, she exposes tensions of a socially oppressed, and emotionally repressed, minority group.

The last of these writers who focus specifically upon the Asian experience in America is not a fiction writer. In *ISSEI AND NISEI: THE INTERNMENT YEARS* (1967), Daisuke Kitagawa describes the tense conflict between generations in the Japanese community,

The division was remarkably clear-cut: Issei--Japanese in culture and nationality, Buddhist in religion; Nisei--American and Christian. The Issei were already past middle age, and the Nisei were barely past adolescence. The former were separated from Japan by the Pacific Ocean and the ever-increasing distance of time, and the latter were segregated from American society by barriers of social discrimination and race prejudice.¹³

Kitagawa is overly biased toward Christianity, somewhat irritatingly accommodationist, and rather simplistically glib. He feels that,

... the war, with the wholesale evacuation, changed the entire situation so completely that it can almost be said to have served as shock therapy for the collective neurosis of the Nisei community.¹⁴

If racist stereotypes have always plagued the Asian American community, today there is a stereotype promoted in part by that community. That is the success story. Asians have no problems; Asians have made it. Ingratiatingly cheerful autobiographies such as Monica Sone's *NISEI DAUGHTER* (1953) and Pardee Lowe's *FATHER AND THE GLORIOUS DESCENDANT* (1943) are examples. But this position, as shown in the following narratives by "successful" Japanese and Chinese may tell us something about the current situation of Asian Americans they did not intend to convey.

Daniel Inouye's *JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON* (1967) and Jade Snow Wong's *FIFTH CHINESE DAUGHTER* (1945) read like Horatio Alger novels. In both, the Protestant virtue of hard work--very hard work, is stressed. One must not detract from the achievement: Inouye, through heavy self-sacrifice became a war hero and finally a United States senator; Miss Wong, by scrupulous saving and fierce ambition, overcame finances and tradition to graduate with honors from Mills College, and eventually established her own ceramics shop. Both stories are true, yet both are myths. They are myths when they are taken as lessons: few people have the spartan self-discipline of an Inouye, few the thorough intelligence of a Wong. They are also myths when taken as a realistic response to a racist society. No mistake: both writers are fully conscious of the discrimination they've encountered. However, the implicit message in both books is that by succeeding in terms of the majority culture's norms, a sort of victory over racism can be won. Neither person perceives how accepting those standards actually reinforces this racist society. Neither one, however well intentioned, quite get to the root of things; they react more to white middle class values of success than to the problems common to the entire Asian community. Inouye and Wong are individuals of good will, but their books quite miss the mark. Unintentionally they tell us how America likes its minorities to behave; and deeper, how America behaves. Change without any.

A more realistic autobiography is Daniel Okimoto's *AMERICAN IN DISGUISE* (1971). Born in a relocation center, Okimoto at least has no illusions about the depth of American racism. Also, despite both his parents being ministers, he does not heave Christianity at us the way Inouye and Wong do, nor does he preach about the "success" of Asians compared to other minority groups in the U.S. Still, we're unsure about Okimoto. For example, he puts forward a potentially dangerous half-truth about the Japanese community being an interdependent extended family. But this leads to the stereotype that Asians can take care of their own problems, and finally, that Asians have no problems. In addition, this generally enlightened book has left unexplored the paradox of Nisei social clannishness and the drive to assimilate white middle class values that wrenches the identity of so many post-war Japanese Americans.

Finally, there is a contradiction--no fault of Okimoto's--not in the book, but of the book. *AMERICAN IN DISGUISE* is not written as a success story; nevertheless its author has moved from the San Diego ghetto to an education at Princeton, Harvard, and the even more prestigious Tokyo University. What publisher would have it otherwise?

But step back: Once again the central concerns of Asian American literature--conflicts of adjustment, isolation, alienation due to racism, i.e., Asian identity--encapsulate, and even determine the form (sometimes even the presence) of the work itself. That is, the different responses to the Asian experience are not only reflected in the subject of this literature, but also in the manner this literary response is undertaken and explored. So far, in seeking a definition of the "self," most of the Asian literature has found expression within limited bounds. The self is always defined in relation to the conceptions of the majority culture, whether it is in opposition to, or in agreement with it. Perhaps this initial overview of past Asian American writing indicates that acceptable, graduate-school American literature is not exclusionary--but like the one-dimensional society, is all inclusionary. Asian American literature, whose theme is "identity" has as yet no identity by itself; Asian American literature, a response to racism, has its form greatly dictated by the racism in the society. No exit.

Is this ironic situation also true in the modern writing of younger Asians? It's hard to show, since in contemporary literature perspective is difficult to attain. And especially in poetry, where the range of expression is wider, the form is as important as the content, and where crude didacticism will both sink a poem and obstruct subtle criticism.

Diana Chang published in *POETRY* magazine when she was twenty-two (1946), and is an accomplished poet by any standard. Born in New York, her family moved to China before she was a year old. She returned to the United States after the war. Though her first novel, *THE FRONTIERS OF LOVE* (1956) examines ethnic identity in the romantic encounters of Eurasians in wartime Shanghai, her poetry is more concerned with mortality and the inner consciousness.

Mood

I watch one by one
Strands from my cigarette
Float to the ceiling
Water-marked with sun.

One by one
Late fall's leoparded leaves
Float down like stray
Discarded thoughts.

The clock nudges noon up on me
With each of twelve fingers
While I float among the little things--
 Warm window-sill
 Three cornered cactus

That make a mood,
And pin me there
The way a moth is held
Between glass-panes.¹⁵

It is probably straining to assert that "Filiae" deals with a response to traditional Chinese filial piety. The element is certainly there, but the poem is far richer and more subtle than that line of criticism allows:

Daughters may have sons at twenty.
Innocence nursing nature.
We cease to be young
Quite early, sweet with sobriety,

Harmonious as wives. But mothers
Of daughters do not know,
Gargoyles at our backs
Spew in all weathers

Affection, rivalry,
Hurt feelings, delusioned,
Debts and fire

These familial persuasions
Rain down old sluices
Kept open by birthdays,
Christmas, duty,
S snapshots and baby spoons¹⁶

• • • • •

Wing Tek Lum, winner of the 1969 Poetry Center award, says of being Chinese-American, "The hyphen is like the tightrope I walk... I draw from both cultures, and yet I am part of neither."¹⁷ "Scar" is his prize winning poem:

Living together
usually you cooked
and I washed.
Once though
Helping you slice onions
I was blurred by my own tears
knicking my wrist.

Scrambling an egg
this morning
I found the whitish scar
remembering
when we had to call
the doctor, explaining then
that I was no suicide.¹⁸

Certainly the work of both Miss Chang and Wing Tek Lum is very well crafted indeed, but one does not explode from the study upon reading it. This is fine. Our purpose is not to classify any writers by their level of gusto. However, these particular talents have chosen a different response to the Asian experience. It is not "no" response. But it does not confront change--either in new verse forms or in new definitions of the self--and to that extent it is "safe." It is within bounds. Beautiful art, but if we seek a more vigorous confrontation between Asian American writers and their oppressive social-literary experience, we must move on.

Here we are on rather slippery ground. Several reasons: first, we will move away from historical analysis, through criticism, to literary speculation. And on the topic of Asian American literature--in primary material a past of barely eighty years, in commentary no past at all--future projection seems quite rash. Also with the two writers we will discuss, a level of objectivity is lost; both writers are known to this critic though not personally beyond their published record. So.

Lawson Fusao Inada is a third generation Japanese-American poet from Fresno, California. In his early thirties, he has been writing for about ten years. His first collection, *BEFORE THE WAR* was published in early 1971. He has also appeared in *THE CARLTON MISCELLANY*, *CHICAGO REVIEW*, *KAYAK*, *NORTHWEST REVIEW* and others. In addition, his poems have been anthologized in *3 NORTHWEST POETS* (1970), *DOWN AT THE SANTA FE DEPOT* (1970), and *NEW DIRECTIONS 23* (1971).

Frank Chin is a thirty-one year old Chinese-American from San Francisco. His short story "Food For All His Dead" was published in *CONTACT* magazine in 1962; it has since been included in the anthology *THE YOUNG AMERICAN WRITERS* edited by Richard Kostelanetz. An excerpt from this yet unpublished novel, *A CHINESE LADY DIES* appeared in Ishmael Reed's collection *19 NECROMANCERS FROM NOW*. He is also the editor of a forthcoming anthology entitled *ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE*.

Both writers attended U.C. Berkeley and the Creative Writing Program at the State University of Iowa. They also know each other (Chin wrote a highly laudatory review of Inada's book). Both are concerned with the Asian experience--Inada primarily from his life in the concentration camps, Chin from growing up in Chinatown. Both are very talented writers--of considerable accomplishment and greater potential. But for both, it is their literary criticism; specifically their outlook on Asian writing as Asian writers that we will analyze.

Exerpts; Lawson's poems:

from "From Our Album"

• • • • •
When the threat lessened,
when we became tame,
my father and friends
took a train to Chicago

for factory work,
for packaging bolts.
One grew a mustache
and called himself Carlos.

5

And they all made a home
with those of their own--
rats, bed bugs, blacks.¹⁹

from "The Great Bassist":

And when I walk the streets
wind
flattens my beard
and I look tired, tattered.

That doesn't matter.

5

But I need your love.
We need
each other.

So when I come down your street
with my Great Bass--

10

toss us your love--

we'll play you
love petals.

Love us back

If you don't, we'll kill you.

15

All of you.

We will.²⁰

No Bashō, he. Inada's poetry has a forcefully insistent--but very deft--sense of rhythm. Crafted but powerful. But when Inada read at UCLA May 28, 1971, I (no scholarly detachment here), though enjoying the poetry, was peculiarly uncomfortable with his opening remarks. He said that as a writer he was little concerned with his Oriental heritage since his experience was solely an American one. Of the few Asian American writers he knew those he had read he considered inferior for trying to sound acceptably "Oriental." Lawson commented that some of his relatives might have expected him to write haiku. In a letter to the PACIFIC CITIZEN after they had published an idiotic review of his book, Lawson suggested, "No doubt a quaint collection of cricket haikus would have been cause to praise my Oriental sensitivity."²¹ Lawson is correct: moving away from an affected stereotyped style is progress. But his critical outlook holds implications I suspect he is unaware of. Let us turn to Frank Chin.

In "Food For All His Dead," Johnny, an educated young Chinese-American maintains a strained relationship with his tradition-minded parents and with Chinatown in general. The story, by its intelligent manipulation of dialogue and accents, is secondarily about language and the limits of language. It opens with an announcement in Chinatown dialect:

"Jus' forty-fie year 'go, Doctah Sun Yat-sen free China from da Manchus. Dat's why all us Chinee, alla ovah da woil are celebrate Octob' tan or da Doubloo Tan...!"

The shouted voice came through the open bathroom window. The shouting and music was till loud after rising through the night's dry air; white moths jumped on the air, danced through the window over the voice, and lighted quickly on the wet sink, newly reddened from

his father's attack. Johnny's arms were around his father's belly, holding the man upright against the edge of the sink to keep the man's mouth high enough to spit lung blood into the drain.²²

Later Johnny accompanies his father to the square where the man will give a speech. Here Johnny most hurts his father, and in his mother's opinion, kills him, when he points out the problem of language as it relates to his Chinese identity.

"Maybe I'm not Chinese, pa! Maybe I'm just a Chinese accident. You're the only one that seems to care that I'm Chinese." The man glared at the boy and did not listen. "Pa, most of the people I don't like are Chinese. They even laugh with accents, Christ!" He turned his head from the man, sorry for what he said. It was too late to apologise.

"You dare talk to your father like that?" the man shouted in Chinese. He stood back from the boy, raised himself and slapped him, whinnying through his teeth as his arm swung heavily toward the boy's cheek. "You're no son of mine! No son! I'm ashamed of you!".²³

Frank Chin's preoccupation with diction is central to his critical theory as well. "America has taught us to lie about ourselves, to avoid facing our American history and experience. Maintaining Oriental culture translated reads, 'keep your place.'"²⁴

Blacks, Chicanos, Jews all write what could be called bad English. Their particular badmouth is recognized as being their own legitimate mother tongue. Only Asian-Americans are driven out of their tongue and expected to be home in a language they never use and a culture they encounter only in books written in English.²⁵

In a letter to Peter ___ dated January 14, 1970, Chin criticizes a Chinese-American journalist,

Generally speaking, Ben Fong-Torres' attempts at colloquial English come off as effeminate. He writes a mutant language that sometimes is great. If it were Chinese-American, it would be great. By the standards of English, it's awful.

If the language of Chinese-America has to be called English, it is the English of Ralph Williams and Chick Lamber . . .²⁶

The problem of language that so bothers Inada and Chin is the key to understand both the value and limits of their art. Inada rejects the cute safe diction expected of an Oriental poet by writing in earthy, jazzy rhythms and muscular metaphors. In his fiction, Chin brings it even closer; he uses shifts in language to examine the implications of language and speech. It is easy to see why they reject such stereotypes about the degree centuries of Eastern culture influence third generation Asian Americans. But they seem to reject the culture too. Furthermore, it is understandable to expect recognition as a writer without condescending labels of being a fine Asian American writer. Chin is right, Pearl Buck-talk never was part of the Asian American vocabulary. But the problem is not analogous to say, the blacks. Whites considered the blacks' tongue unacceptable bad; the Asian stereotype--equally pernicious for being a stereotype--was quaint, and ultimately acceptable. The problem isn't diction--or tone, style, accents, speech, or even language. They're off the mark and, finally, (again) trapped if they assert that the problem of Asian Americans is that they mimic--either the classic Orient, black rhetoric, or white colloquialisms. Here Inada and Chin are responding to the majority culture's stereotypes instead of confronting the actual root problems of the Asian American community.

Again, we have the limitation, the absorption, of both content and form. No matter how "universal" the language and style, a piece of literature will not convey a universal human experience as long as the community is used merely as source material. Employed in this way, the community becomes little more than "local color"--in writing, not at all less deplorable than an affected style. We are at the point where art touches society, for here artistic decisions are tied with moral, and finally, political decisions. And by ignoring this crucial interrelationship, Chin and Inada remain within the bounds that makes so much liter-

ature "safe."

What's the escape? Well, to choose not to confront the problems of change in the Asian community (at least not on its terms), like Diana Chang and Wing Tek Lum. Or to extend the first (and really praiseworthy) efforts of Chin and Inada. One must escape the closed system where Asian literature is written and judged in terms of Anglo literary conceptions. A closer involvement with the very roots of the Asian experience (both subject and mode of the literature) is required. Thus, the final extension of this rather extravagant literary theory is the merging of political action and literature.

We have dealt with the various literary responses to the Asian experience: experimental forms, return to Asia, focusing on the everyday events of people in the community, success story, withdrawal, and (partial) involvement. Upon inspection, each of these can easily be translated into political responses. Perhaps then, the means for breaking the closed circle that structures much of the literary imagination are the same means necessary for removing the bonds of political oppression. Literature and literary criticism then, instead of numbing the reader of his capacity to struggle realistically with social problems, can unleash the creative force and human potential that make qualitative social change possible. Thus, revolutionary political action and the expression of universal experience in, say, poetry, become as one. Literature and change no longer describe each other--they become the same thing.

Well, we said we'd be on slick ground. Of course there are no examples of the ultimate product yet. But perhaps we can point toward this final merging.

Joann Miyamoto is a radical activist in New York, working in the Latin and Asian communities. With Chris Iijima, they write and sing original revolutionary songs. The following is an example. We do not think it is merely a "political poem." It represents an entire community's experience. This may not be the poetry of the burning brush, but is a worthy piece of Asian American writing. Hopefully, the direction of Asian American writing too.

(meant to be read aloud)

when I was young
kids used to ask me
what are you?
I'd tell them what my mom told me
I'm an American
chin chin Chinaman
you're a Jap!
flashing hot inside
I'd go home
my mom would say
don't worry
he who walks alone
walks faster

people kept asking me
what are you?
and I would always answer
I'm an American
they'd say
no, what nationality?
I'm an American
that's where I was born
flashing hot inside
and when I'd tell them what they wanted to know
Japanese . . .
Oh I've been to Japan

I'd get it over with
so they could catalogue and file me
pigeon-hole me
so they'd know just how

to think of me
priding themselves
they could guess the difference
between Japanese and Chinese
they had me wishing I was what I'd
been seeing in movies and on T.V.
on billboards and in magazines

and I tried
while they were making laws in California
against us owning land
we were trying to be American
and laws against us intermarrying with white people
we were trying to be American
when they put us in concentration camps
we were trying to be American
our people volunteered to fight against their own country
trying to be American
when they dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
we were still trying.

finally we made it
most of our parents
fiercely dedicated to give us
a good education
to give us everything they never had
we made it
now they use us as an example
to the blacks and browns
how we made it
how we overcame.

but there was always
someone asking me
what are you?

now I answer
I'm an Asian
and they say
why do you want to separate yourselves
now I say
I'm Japanese
and they say
don't you know this is the greatest country in the world
now I say in America
I'm part of the third world people
and they say
if you don't like it here
why don't you go back.

12-70 JM

finis.

Notes

- ¹Yone Noguchi, *FROM THE EASTERN SEA*, fourth ed., (Tokyo: Fuzabo & Co., 1905), p. 16.
²Yone Noguchi, *DOUBLE DEALER*, November, 1923, v. 5, no. 30., p. 200.
³Jun Fujita, *TANKA: POEMS IN EXILE*, (Chicago: Covici-McGee Co., 1923), p. 52.
⁴Sadakichi Hartmann, *WHITE CHRYSANTHEMUMS*, George Knowland and Harry W. Lawton, eds., (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. xi.

- 5 Hartmann, p. xxv.
 6 Hartmann, p. 41.
 7 Jose Garcia Villa, POEMS 55, (Manila: Alberto S. Florentino, 1962), p. 16.
 8 Villa, p. 59.
 9 Villa, p. 58.
 10 Villa, p. 9.
 11 Bienvenido Santos, THE DAY THE DANCERS CAME, (Manila: Bookmark, 1967), p. 24.
 12 Santos, p. 29.
 13 Daisuke Kitagawa, ISSEI AND NISEI: THE INTERNMENT YEARS, (New York: Seabury, 1967),
 p. 39.
 14 Kitagawa, p. 31.
 15 Diana Chang, POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE, November, 1946, p. 74.
 16 Diana Chang, NEW YORK QUARTERLY, Fall 1970, p. 111.
 17 Lucille Medwick, "The Chinese Poet in New York," NEW YORK QUARTERLY, Fall 1970,
 p. 108.
 18 Wing Tek Lum, NYQ, p. 110.
 19 Lawson Fusao Inada, BEFORE THE WAR, (New York: Morrow, 1971), p. 20.
 20 Inada, p. 124.
 21 Lawson Fusao Inada, "Letter to PACIFIC CITIZEN," 31 March 1971.
 22 Frank Chin, "Food For All His Dead," CONTACT, vol. 3., no. 3., August 1962, p. 82.
 23 Chin, p. 84.
 24 Frank Chin, rev., LOS ANGELES FREE PRESS, vol. 8, no. 15, April 9-15, 1971, p. 31.
 25 Ibid.
 26 Frank Chin, "Letter to Peter," A READER OF ASIANS IN AMERICA, vol. 1, (Los Angeles:
 U.C.L.A. Asian American Studies Center, 1970), p. 66.



100

ROOTS

I

it was my last
 weekend in the states and
 I didn't know
 whether I'd ever be able to come back so
 there was no doubt where I had to go, man
 south
 from San Francisco to
 LA
 back to the ghetto
 and maybe even back to Poston -
 Poston, Arizona
 where I was born, man
 June 2nd, 1944
 Camp 2, shit
 but it
 was too fucking hot, being August
 to drive all the way to
 Poston, Arizona since
 my new Alfa Romeo 1750 GTV
 didn't have
 air-conditioning or
 sleeping accomodations for two, so
 I just went to LA (besides
 Poston?
 where's that?
 just another ride in the
 coney island of my mind)

II

the final remarks of the preceding section (in fact the
 whole fucking section) were the presentation of
 my credentials, designed
 to let you know

I'm literarily inclined and
 have an Alfa and
 the need for sleeping accomodations for two
 (which should have filled your dirty little
 minds with wild visions of sexy naked girls
 with flowing blond hair and mouseybrown cunts)
 to let you know
 I'm therefore better than
 the average Japanese
 which means therefore
 I'm very typical
 very average
 Japanese
 hence the
 presentation of my credentials

Reprinted from GIDRA, December, 1969.

III

I was
going back to East LA, to
Brooklyn Avenue and Soto Street
and the Evergreen cemetery,
going back to the roots
going back to the ghetto

(only we didn't call it a ghetto then, ten years ago
shit we didn't even know what a ghetto was, just like
we didn't know camp was a place for concentration
instead of relocation, ten years ago)

but it felt good

going back
down home
and, baby

everything I was gonna do was gonna be so funky
(right on)

IV

of course, I had to see Jii-chan and Baa-chan
I knew I'd never see Jii-chan again
alive

I cried for him but had a fight with Baa-chan
about the war in Vietnam which was stupid so

I split

knowing I'd miss her too
even though she talks too much
feeling bad

but then

my cousin Johnny in
Monterey Park

(where all the good people
seem to be moving)

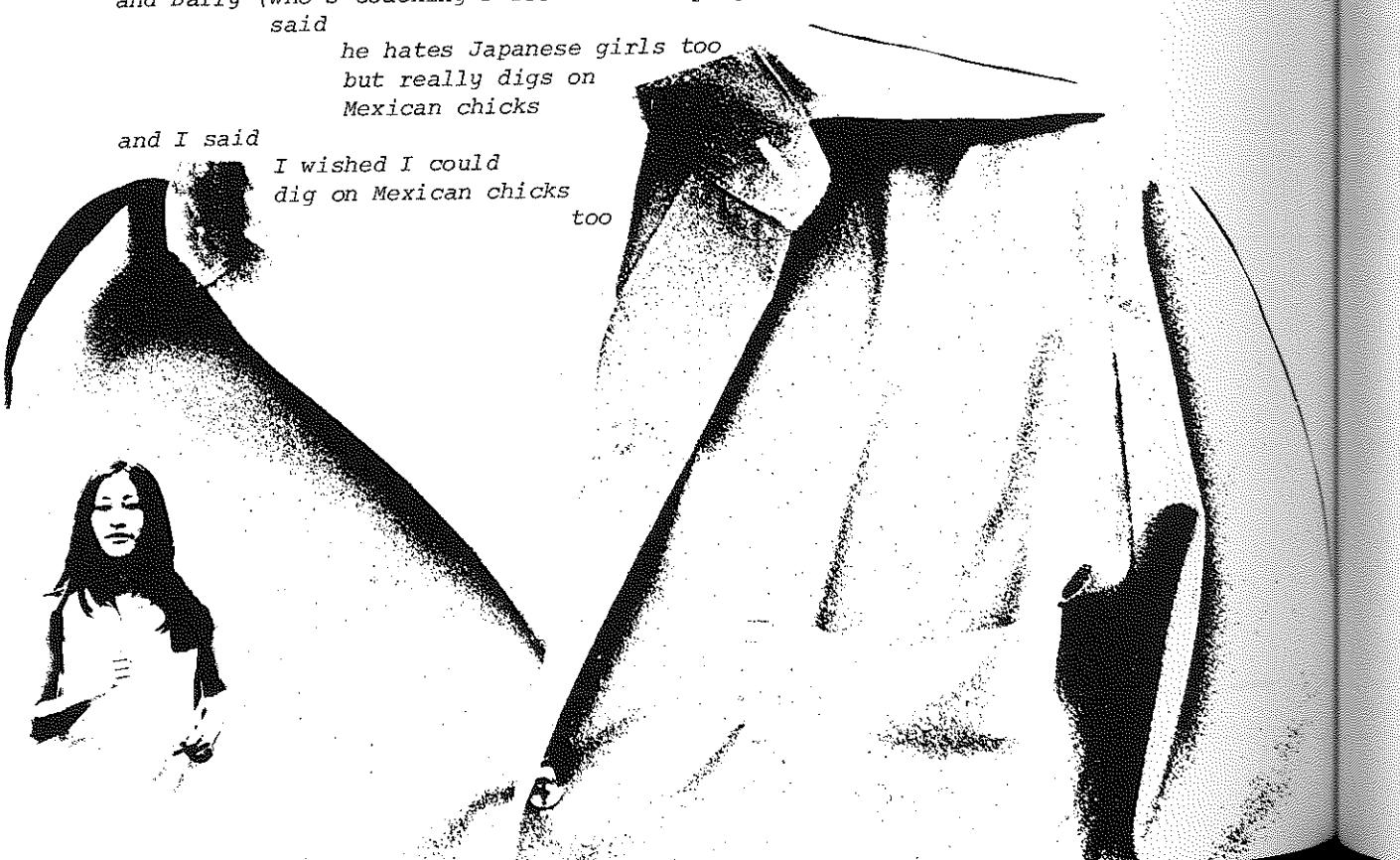
told me there was a gang somewhere with
"two thousand dudes"

and Barry (who's coaching B football and playing in a rock band)
said

he hates Japanese girls too
but really digs on
Mexican chicks

and I said

I wished I could
dig on Mexican chicks
too



V

saturday night

driving, cruising around
checking out the broads
none of them digging my new
silver fuel-injected Alfa at
all (shit)

but

there were places I had to go

then to Acapulco

(for the hottest burritos in LA)
and, round midnight, past

the old drugstore
on the corner of Soto and St Louis (is it
still there? I was too drunk to notice.)
a long time ago
when I had friends
we would go to that drugstore and
have a suicide for 5¢

Ronnie Minami
Richard Kami
Sam Iwaoa
and
Ron Tanaka
from Madera

VI

but
I had to leave that place
it

wasn't really my place

Tommy's
Monterey Park
or even

the hottest burritos in LA, I
had to get on that freeway and drive
out of there
and out of California
and away from ghettos and
suburban housing developments
and shit like that

to the place
where I would find
that ideal woman and

have her
without guilt or fear
where

I could find myself at peace with myself
and
I could look at that face in the mirror

again

I
didn't really want those roots
those shitty little streets in East LA
but I needed them and wanted them to

speak to me
like a child
this is how far you've come
this is how far you'll have to go
this is what you're leaving and
this is the happiness you'll find
two-thousand miles

from Tommy's

Vancouver, B.C.

I went to an opening last night
 having received an engraved invitation from the director
 of the gallery where I had just purchased something (very pricey).
 I stepped out of my silver Alfa, flicked that imaginary speck of dust off my new H. Freeman, and, holding a cigarette (in one hand) sipping champagne (with the other) I was placed just to be there looking at her wondering if she was part of the exhibit and whether she fucks and (supposing that her very elegant boy friend had taken her away because she might have been looking too interestingly) I wondered whether I ought to feel flattered, until (after two hours) the director stumbled to that corner where I had been and asked (in his elevated danish accent) if, though not remembering for not ever having known my name, I might not be so kind as to step outside and show him and (what I understood to be) his new mistress a few judo chops (well!)

RON TANAKA



values, but I was comfortable and proud. The Blacks were saying, "Man! Ron is cool, he talks like a Black Brother, dresses like one, dances like one and even makes love like one!"

In high school I was still messing around. College was the farthest thing from my mind. I know that I was able to get into a college after I graduated even if it was Lancy or Merritt. I was accepted by both the Asians and the Blacks and was able to drift back and forth, but I primarily stuck with the Blacks. Being a member of the football team I became even more close to the Black group. By the eleventh grade the beginnings of the Black Identity and Black Power came to the high school campuses. Now I was faced with the problem I had managed to avoid for four years. "What would happen to me now?" I gradually began to drop off from the group and was spending more and more time with the Asians. I started to feel uncomfortable among them as I sensed they felt uncomfortable around me. Everyone began wearing naturals, their identities changed from being tough guys to together power people. What I realized then was that I wasn't together with myself or my people. Later on in the year the Chicanos and Asians were beginning to get together. An Asian Caucus formed at Oakland High and called itself Asian Bloc. I quickly jumped on the bandwagon. Actually I really didn't care, but I wanted and needed a group to relate with. Everyone else was doing it, so why couldn't I.

Asian Bloc continued to operate my senior year at Oakland High. I was still a bandwagonist and apathetic towards the Asian Crisis. Then I had a date with one of the very heavy chicks on the Asian Caucus. Not only was she very heavy but a very fine chick. On the date we started talking. I started showing her my usual jive that the other chicks really dug. I felt uncomfortable, then she really laid it on me. "What's wrong with you? You're not Black, you're yellow, quit talking and acting like one! Start thinking about your brothers and sisters. About how you can help them and yourself." She saw right through me. I didn't get over that experience for almost half a year. When I saw her at school or came across her, I felt very down and shitty. Although I felt this way I respected her for what she had done.

No one up to that point had ever put me down for being or acting like I was. She proved to me that you can act and play all the parts of something or someone else, but you'll never truly be that something or someone else. You are what you are, so be proud of it.

My feelings started changing. I stopped trying to play it cool. I was myself at last. At the same time, my sister got married to a White. I had naturally expected her to turn White and abandon the Chinese ways. What happened instead was that her husband took on the Chinese ways. I thought to myself, "If a White can be proud of being Chinese, why can't I?"

During the latter part of my senior year I was selected to go to Washington, D.C. to attend a Presidential Scholars program. At the conference I was the only Asian, there were also only four Blacks. One night we were allowed to rap all night. During our rap session I sat and listened. There were many southern whites at the conference. One of them started coming down on the Black movement. He said that the Blacks wanted too much too soon. I just sat there at first because I couldn't relate. Then the whitey pointed at me and said, "Look at him, he's not complaining and demanding, look how well off the Orientals are!" This blew my mind completely. I got up quickly and started rapping on his ass real good. This was the first time I had ever got up and defended my race instead of cutting it down. I will never forget that incident for as long as I live. I believe that was the catalyst for my search and involvement in Asian awareness and identity.

To me the movement of today's minority youth toward THIRD WORLD identities is a vital part of growing up. I have gone through my identity changes and at my age I know that I as a human being will go through many more changes. But my awareness of my lack of an Asian's Spirit will always have an effect on my development as Ron Low, that will influence me for the rest of my life. As I see my Asian peers now, too many are robbing themselves of their Asianess and I cannot do anything but talk and discuss how I feel about Asian awareness. With those who feel the same way as I do, we must participate and work together to develop an Asian awareness through community projects and gatherings.

from a lotus blossom cunt

so you come to me for a spiritual piece
my eyes have the ol' epicanthic fold
my skin is the ideologically correct color
a legit lay for the revolutionary
well, let me tell you, brother
revolution must be total
and you're in its way
yeah, yeah, I'm all sympathy
your soul and your sexuality has
been fucked over by Amerika
well, so has mine
so has ours
we chronic smilers
asian women
we of the downcast almond eyes
are seeing each other
sisters now, people now
asian women
I'm still with you, brothers
Always
But I'm so damned tired
of being body first, head last
wanting to love you when all
you want is a solution to glandular discomfort
that I thought I'd better say my say
Think about it, brothers
We are women, we are Asian
We are freeing ourselves
Join us
Try to use us,
and you'll lose us
Join us.

Tomi Tanaka

Reprinted from GIDRA, July, 1971.

I AM CURIOUS (YELLOW?)

VIOLET RABAYA

It is very difficult to describe my plight. Being raised in a white society and having acquired white "habits" is difficult enough to cope with when attempting to find pride in one's ancestry, but even more difficult is the alienation I find among my own people (if I may be so liberal as to include myself in the oriental race).

I have found that the Filipino oriental has three basic differences when comparing him with other "typical orientals," that is, the Japanese and Chinese. First of all, as the term oriental has been interpreted by most to mean peoples of yellow skin, the Filipino is not yellow, but brown. Secondly, the heritage of the Filipino has definite and pronounced Spanish colonial influences, which have nearly obliterated most Asian customs associated with orientals. And thirdly, the sense of unity among Filipinos, where it is most needed, precisely within the people themselves, is not strong.

Filipinos, also, like most other orientals, have basic racist tendencies. This phenomena is admittedly not uncommon among other races, but there exists a looming discrepancy in the racial attitude of the Filipino. Unlike most other groups of people where racism stems from the belief in one's superiority, or at least, in one's equality, the Filipino has accepted, though reluctantly, his place on the "white social ladder." Caucasians are number one, orientals are number two, Mexicans number three, then Negroes. Asking my parents or any other Filipinos I have known from the old country¹ to evaluate their status on this ladder, I was, at first, naturally greeted with the "We are the greatest orientals" line, mostly because no one took me seriously. But, upon pressing the point, I was shocked (not really, because I expected as much) to find that Filipinos, even though their hatred for the Japanese is still great because of the war and their dislike of the Chinese apparent, believe that they are inferior to whites and other orientals (Japanese and Chinese), but superior to Mexicans and blacks. Of course, this opinion is not true for all Filipinos, but it generally serves to

illustrate the fact that the Filipino, himself, does not "see" his place among other orientals.

Possibly, because of the rift culturally, religiously and politically between the Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino, the Filipino like the Japanese and Chinese did not care to be assimilated in earlier times. But the Filipino in America today has realized that, because of the racial climate of the times, it is more beneficial to be considered oriental than any other minority group. The white middle class has, at least, verbally "accepted" the oriental. Thus, it becomes mandatory for the Filipino to assert his oriental origin.

Japanese and Chinese are at once categorized as oriental, but no so the Filipino. Whenever anyone in this society thinks "what is an oriental?" the answer immediately comes back Chinese or Japanese, maybe Korean, that is, unless one is a Filipino. This failure of inclusion of the Filipino is, of course, unconscious to the non-oriental and probably at least partially understandable, since most non-orientals care little to make distinctions when referring to orientals, or have a profound stupidity and general lack of knowledge concerning the oriental. "They all look the same to me!" is the cry. The fact is that they don't all look the same. But, alas, for the observant non-oriental, the problem of identifying the Filipino as different is not so great. The real problem lies in the classification of the Filipino. I have always been met with this dilemma. I have been called Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and even Polynesian just to be safe. Only once or twice in my memory can I recall being said to be Filipino, and one of these times was an absolute absurdity. To illustrate the height of obscurity in Filipino identification, I was once told that I didn't look Mexican and I couldn't be oriental, so I must be Filipino. To put it lightly, I, like other Filipinos, have become "disoriented."

All of this is not to say that I believe my cultural identity has the ultimate importance in my life, or that I wish to be classified. Certainly, I find that a classification as an individual is to be more greatly desired,

but the question of recognition as both a Filipino and an oriental is of great significance to me. And, because this is not the case, I find myself, and I daresay, many other American born Filipino orientals, torn not only between my white-Filipino identity, but my oriental-Filipino identity as well. It seems illogical that a Filipino, being an oriental, should be faced with such a crisis. But, it is only too real.

"One of the peculiar situations in which the Filipino has found himself is that relating to his racial status. Laws prohibiting the marriage of Caucasians and Orientals do not specifically mention Filipinos. There was

¹ My father operated a labor camp in Delano for 15 years under the Di Giorgio Fruit Corporation where most of the laborers were Filipino and Mexican. The Japanese-Chinese labor camp was adjacent to ours. My observations were partly due to my relationships with them.

² Ritter, Dr. Ed; Ritter, Helen; and Spector, Dr. Stanley: OUR ORIENTAL AMERICANS, p. 96.



Reprinted from Gidra, January, 1971.

nothing Oriental in the Filipino's tradition, and his language was Spanish. He felt no bonds with Orientals in the United States--nor they with him. For a time the legality of Filipino-Caucasian intermarriage became the province of each county clerk in California. Whether it was permitted or not depended on their individual viewpoints and the extent of their knowledge of racial groups."²

To be an outcast in a white society and an outcast among other orientals leaves the Filipino in that never-never land of social obscurity. It is almost no wonder that the Filipino might not mind being stereotyped as a "typical oriental."

understanding aapa

We Asian Americans believe that we must develop an American Society which is just, humane, equal, and gives the people the right to control their own lives before we can begin to end the oppression and inequality that exists in this nation.

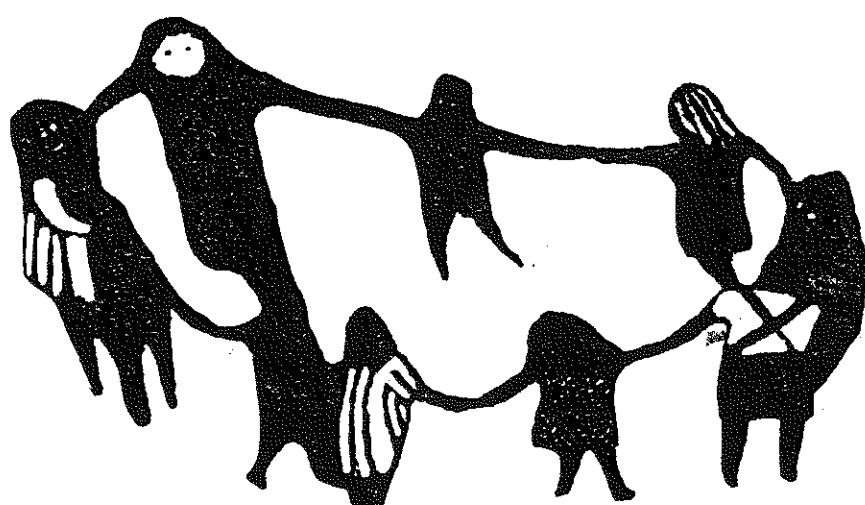
We Asian Americans realize that America was always and still is a White Racist Society. Asian Americans have been continuously exploited and oppressed by the racist majority and have survived only through hard work and resourcefulness, but their souls have not survived.

We Asian Americans refuse to cooperate with the White Racism in this society which exploits us as well as other Third World people, and affirm the right of Self-Determination.

We Asian Americans support all oppressed peoples and their struggles for Liberation and believe that Third World People must have complete control over the political, economic, and educational institutions within their communities.

We Asian Americans oppose the imperialistic policies being pursued by the American Government.

Reprinted from the ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE NEWSPAPER, Summer Issue, Volume I, Number 5, Berkeley, California.



EDITORIAL BOARD
JULY, 1971

AN INTERVIEW WITH

PAT SUMI



QUESTION: Could you elaborate a little bit on your personal background, and how you evolved into becoming a radical?

SUMI: It seems to me that becoming a radical is only a logical conclusion to the resolution of contradictions not only in your own life but between you and society; if you keep pushing yourself to find answers to problems you see, you wind up having a radical perspective.

In high school, I was the model Asian. I got good grades and ran for student body offices and had good citizenship marks. I couldn't understand the "rowdies", you know, the Pachucos and the Chicanos and the low-riders and all. I was kind of intimidated by them and I didn't have any idea what they were about. I grew up in a mostly white, upper middle class neighborhood. There were some Chinese families around but it wasn't like the Westside or the most nitty-grit of I-flats.

Mao has a story about a frog sitting at the bottom of the well and he thinks the sky's no bigger than the well, while, in fact, the sky is much bigger than that. Coming from the background that I came from, I was the perfect frog in the well. I knew exactly what the well defined for me and nothing more. I had a very narrow conception of life; I was into getting good grades at school. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do with it afterwards. But then I went to Occidental College, a predominantly Christian, Caucasian college, and most of the people came from South Pasadena. And just because it was that kind of thing, it raised those contradictions in my life.

I had to ask myself, was I white? Was I middle class? Was I Japanese, was I not Japanese? What was I? For the four years I was in college, I went through a series of experiences that really sharpened those questions.

I went to Japan between my freshman and sophomore years and visited and traveled around not only to see the sights, but also to see relatives--farmers--the kind of middle peasant types in Japan. It was kind of a mind-blower because I felt as if I had gone home. I was surprised. I hadn't any idea that I was really Japanese in that sense. I'm more so, I think, than most Sansei, because I lived with my grandparents all my life. But still, it was a very surprising experience. I came back and re-entered this white world and I began to resent things like people saying, "Wow, do Japanese really eat raw fish?" But at the same time I was going through these contradictory changes about my mother

An excellent interview with Pat Sumi appears in ASIAN WOMEN, Dwinelle Hall, U.C. Berkeley, Copyright 1971, in the section on the "Politics of Womanhood."

*Editor's note: An extensive interview with Pat Sumi on the Anti-Imperialist Peoples delegation to Asia appears in RODAN, November, 1970.

being old-fashioned--why didn't my grandparents ever become citizens--not ever understanding about the history of what they had been through; but more of just thinking, "Wow, if we're in America, and by God, the majority is white and middle class, well, why don't we assimilate? Why do we have to stand out so much? Why do we have to be so obviously Japanese?"--at the same time resenting white people asking racist questions and that "How quaint to eat with chopsticks" type of attitude.

Another thing about racism towards Black people. At that time, I considered it a separate thing from racism toward Asian people. I didn't even know if it was racism toward Asian people, because certainly what was happening to Black people seemed to be different.

That crystallized when I went to Africa in 1965; I went with a kind of missionary attitude toward primitive Black people, but I discovered that they had many things in common with my relatives in Japan. They were not very wealthy farmers. They had a rich, traditional family structure--a lot of traditional folk material. They came from what I consider a very rich cultural heritage.

Immediately, that meant that you could not explain the conditions of Black people in America by saying that they came from a more primitive type of society than Japanese. That's one of the arguments used about how we're assimilated and supposedly Black people aren't--because we come from such a rich tradition and a high civilization and Black people don't. I discovered that it just wasn't true.

So I came back and the next summer, after I graduated from college--I got a B.A. in history, which doesn't really mean much--I went to the South. I decided that if Black people were separate, it must be because of segregation. Of course, the "answer" was to integrate. And I found for the first time in my life that someone wanted to kill me because of my beliefs. We walked around in this demonstration with almost two hundred crazy rednecks; a lot of them very young people in their twenties who literally wouldn't mind--as they were throwing bricks and things at us--if they accidentally bashed your head in. It's kind of a scary thing, to say the least. It was my first experience of the police being on the other side, not protecting the interest of poor people, but interested in protecting the privileged people.

I couldn't understand it. Those white people weren't privileged either; they were privileged because they were white, but they certainly weren't privileged economically--they lived in shacks just like Black people. The plantation owners didn't even bother to come to those demonstrations; they just sat up in their air-conditioned plantation houses. It was very confusing.

I worked there at that time in an O.E.O. (Office of Economic Opportunity) program called Child Development Group of Mississippi in the Health Department. We came up with some pretty astonishing figures--80 percent of one county's Head Start Children were anemic; anywhere from 10-40 percent so anemic, that if they were white middle class children, they would be hospitalized. We also had the experience of having a two and one-half year old child in the program die from complications from malnutrition. He died from diarrhea and just didn't have strength to deal with it.

There was at that time, a great reform movement about food for starving people in the United States--one of those publicity campaigns that the pigs are so good at, making people think things are changing. So me, two older Black people from Humphrey County and two little kids from Belzoni, Mississippi went to Washington to lobby for the passage of an emergency food bill. We met with various politicians and press people and were uniformly turned back by all of them.

I was just amazed at the so-called democratic system that could not respond to the needs of starving people. Now I know that there are other people in the Northern cities who starve, including our own Asian people. To be told that it wasn't politically expedient to raise the issue of starvation really blew my mind.

It didn't seem to me that democracy had anything left to offer. I now know that this is bourgeois democracy, where the rich people really have the control. I just said, "Later for the congressional system." Whether it's the people in it or the system that turns the people into those kinds of monsters, I have no interest anymore in appealing to them to help people, because it's obvious they don't care. They're more interested in the internal machination of Congress and the power plays. The real needs of people outside have no meaning to them. After this I went back to graduate school. That was my second year of graduate school (Cornell), and I was determined to find some answers. It was fruitless to pursue it. The other students and professors weren't even interested in that field. They were interested in their degrees and dissertations, classes, and full-time teaching status. It was a drag. I just packed up my books, my two cats, and all my belongings and came West. I just said, "Later, I just can't deal with this at all."

I wound up in a hippie commune--now that I look back on it, a comical commune--of people in Palo Alto, which had been one of the founding forces of the draft resistance movement in early '67. It had all the problems of a hippie commune: it was male chauvinist, elitist, racist...but again, in that context, it was a step forward for me. By then I had decided that the war in Vietnam was wrong. Again, I didn't know exactly why. Sometimes adults will put down young people by saying "Well, you don't really understand what you're getting into, so what are you doing it for? You're just a bunch of wild-eyed half-baked, unclear radicals." That's partly true; that's a criticism on all of us who have something more clear in mind on what we're doing and don't make sure that newer people have that perspective. But still, there's something very great to be said about courage that the young have today. We may not know exactly where this is going to lead us. It may lead us to six feet under the ground or to jail, but insofar as we have a life that has to be dedicated to something, we will and should dedicate that life to making this wrong right, however we can do it. It seemed to me at that time that the best way to stop the war was to keep people from joining the army. I did not realize at the time that white middle class people could afford to go to jail, could afford the psychological burden of resisting the draft in an individualistic moral stand--whereas lower class and third world people could not afford that, and that a lot of minorities had been to jail and didn't want to go again.

I thought everyone was just like me--educated and middle class.

I lived in that commune a little more than a year. In that time, significant things happened to me. I worked in a minority education program at a junior college, the College of San Mateo--that's where I met Warren Furutani.

Warren wanted to front me off as an Asian counselor because I had a college degree and a Japanese name. I didn't want to ask him then, but I couldn't understand "why an Asian counselor?" Asians don't need counselors, I thought--we've all got it made. The cat was so earnest and enthusiastic about an Asian counselor and minority program--so I kind of just said "Yeah, sure", not at all realizing what I got myself into.

Also, at the same time, I got into my first attempt to organize G.I.'s. My job was to organize the leafleting team to go out and leaflet all the bases and bus stations and airports about a G.I. peace march in San Francisco. We found that G.I.'s were very willing and receptive--well, not all of them; some were very hostile, mostly career and officer types. You cannot go on government reservations; it's not for people. You cannot hand out literature unless it's been approved by the commanding officer. I was detained on two bases; Hamilton Air Force Base and finally arrested at Treasure Island Naval Base, San Francisco Bay.

Also, at that point, I suddenly found myself being one of the eleven demands being put forth by the minority students at San Mateo and being hired as a counselor. So I went to work there for little less than two months, and was finally ushered out the door by the administration.

I found out that it doesn't really matter if you're quiet and non-violent, and petitioned peacefully and discussed things in a reasonable way with people, because as long as they had the power, you could be as reasonable as you wanted to, but they weren't going to give you control over anything that really affected your life--especially not minority students.

By then, I began to realize why Asians had to be included--because there were a whole lot of poor Asians I had never known about who were trying to struggle through this crazy program and who were getting arrested and so on. I found out what institutional racism looked like, just glaring us in the face. Unless you have the power to control that institution, you just have no way to change that institution.

I just decided that I was tired of the hippie commune. I just couldn't relate to that racism, the bullshit, anymore. So we decided to start a G.I. coffeehouse at Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California. That's where I consider I really began to become a radical organizer, as opposed to a sympathizer or "misguided youth,"--because at that point, I came into direct conflict with the powers that control this country.

When you organize in the military, you organize directly counter to American foreign policy because American troops are the rifle point of that policy. When you start messing with the troops, you're messing with the power that the man has to control most of the so-called "free world."

Again, I think that if I really knew what I was getting into, I don't think I would have had the nerve to do it. But it's precisely because you felt not only you had to do it, but that--like the American Indians have a saying, "It's a good day to die"--you just think that this is something that's worth dying for, whether you fully understand all the political reasoning or not. You go with that faith, that the world can be made better by human effort and it has to be...even if it means human sacrifice.

It was a phenomenal response from the G.I.'s. We sort of forced the military to go through everything from liberalism to absolute fascism in about six months! The brass were just terrified...about the organization, Movement for Democratic Military.

We just began out of the faith that the G.I.'s should be self-determined people too--that they were oppressed, that they could educate themselves, politically educate others, write newspapers, and organize themselves to deal with their oppression. The problem was the issues weren't clearly defined at all. Often, we just confused the issues and a lot of people's minds down there. But we did a whole lot of things right. We succeeded in having a couple of really great demonstrations--one in which a thousand G.I.'s turned out.

QUESTION: What happened to them?

SUMI: Well, M.D.M. still exists in the minds of people--but that's not an organization, we discovered. We discovered what the Black Panthers have since discovered--that mass sympathy does not at all mean mass organization. Mass sympathy does not give you the power to change anything. We didn't understand what an organization was.

We really messed up some G.I.'s. A lot of them went to jail. Some had to go A.W.O.L. A few went to Canada. We had no way really to organize power to protect G.I.'s when they were arrested or harassed. Finally, the thing that really broke us was in April of 1970, last year. Someone fired 12 rounds into the M.D.M. house and nearly killed a G.I. That was when we discovered we had no organizational way to respond. That was it. That was the crisis. That was when the pigs decided to confront us. That was when we discovered we had no real power. After that, it was downhill for the organization.

I didn't understand all this. Last summer, I was running around in Asia telling everyone about M.D.M. when, in fact, it was really falling to pieces. I came home and there was no M.D.M. left. But it was for the really impressive G.I.

work that we did do that I was chosen to go as a representative of the G.I. movement in the delegation to Asia. And again, naively, I went trotting off to see Asia, not knowing what I was getting into.

QUESTION: You talked about the people's delegation before.* Do you have any further thoughts on it?

SUMI: I discovered that in relating to international revolutionary movements, you have to represent something. For most of us, except for the Panthers--and even now for the Panthers, it is a question of who do they really represent--you shouldn't get a bunch of individuals to go. It's not useful. I suppose what it did do was to heighten my consciousness of the real critical need in the American movement for a party; some kind of guiding force that can take leadership in struggle. We don't have it yet. Everyone is floundering around, trying to find direction on their own. I suspect this period of pre-party struggle will last a great deal longer; in fact, too long. I think we're going to find that we'll have to have a party, because a whole lot of us are going to wind up in jail. There's a good possibility in the next two, three, four years that there's going to be a massive repression. I don't think it'll kill a whole lot of us--but it will put a whole lot of us away. People are going to understand what we understood when the pigs decide to confront us, that if you don't have the organizational power to meet that crisis, then comes the question--"Can you make it, can you make an organization? Will you have that power?"

QUESTION: Is that when you started getting involved in the Asian Movement? A lot of people see you in different roles--as an organizer, as a movement, as a P.R. person. How do you see yourself?

SUMI: At this point, right now, it's not clear to me what I have to do. I think the political development in Los Angeles has come to a certain point which is an important construction point. The question is of my role in that. I don't know if I have a role here or elsewhere, geographically speaking, in the Asian movement.

QUESTION: In terms of the need for organization, how do you see that happening in the Asian community? Is that organization to be on an ethnic basis?

SUMI: Leadership is the critical question in a revolution. Leadership that the masses of people can relate to and trust. If you don't have that leadership then the masses of people are just not going to automatically rise up. There is a kind of belief among one whole line in the Asian movement, which I call the Social Services line--that if you merely present the people with contradictions, e.g., welfare not being given to aliens, that people will rise up and become very radical. In fact, practice has shown that's not necessarily true. In the same sense that I thought draft resistance was the answer to the war, social services is not the answer to the critical needs to the community. Ultimately, what can make it (the Asian community) a healthy positive environment for people to grow up and live in, is a question of the larger environment of this society--the interplay between the two.

What we need is Asian leadership--political leadership. Not the old style community leaders, but political leaders. A whole new breed of people who are dedicated to the notion that it's only a revolution, and at that, a Marxist, Leninist, Maoist type of revolution that's going to free our people. This is really a hard point. I don't know how to explain it very clearly right now except that people will become leaders when they fully understand the context in which we operate. I think that a lot of Asian young people now operate on the assumption that capitalism, racism, imperialism are all part of the same package of oppressors, and that socialism is the way out. But as to how to fight one to get the other is the question. That's where you need leadership.



Leadership comes from several things. It comes from study, practice, and self-conscious practice...going out and seeing if your theories work. If you develop a political line--let's say that Japanese people need to organize a strong Japanese leadership movement, which can ally itself with other strong groups in other communities--well, what you need are people who not only see that as a necessity but are also willing to take the risks, to expend the energy to go out and try to build that organization.

One of the things I'm trying to understand is that revolution is really a science...of how people interact, how society moves and changes. And if it's a science, then we have to apply a revolutionary scientific method. What we need are people with the wisdom to be able to abstract revolutionary hypotheses and then the courage to test them.

We have a lot of leaders in the old style sense...like me, who are looked up to because we've been big talkers and have a certain knowledge. But that's not leadership in the sense I mean leadership.

I think there have been two things accomplished in the Asian movement that are important. One is that there are thousands of young people all over the United States who believe in socialism as an answer to capitalism, imperialism, and racism. That's one whole huge accomplishment. We've broken the brain-washing by immigrant parents from China and the anti-communism from Nisei parents. The other thing we've learned is serving people's needs--the little that has been done--is not the most direct route to the revolution. The question is now what is the most direct route? Who are the most important people in our community to be organizing--the most advanced people? We don't even know who are going to be our bravest people.

There are very good examples, though. I just found out yesterday that Doug Yamamoto (U.C. Santa Cruz student, charged with fire bombing the Santa Cruz Armed Services Recruiting Center, following the February '71 invasion of Laos) was sentenced for three years. The judge told him that we can't have people like you running around loose and "I was lenient in letting you plead guilty to the lesser charge"--that kind of attitude. They didn't even have the courage to tell Doug's people where they were taking him. As soon as the gavel came down they handcuffed him and took him out of the court and that was it. Apparently as he left, he said "Keep the spirit up," which we should take as an admonition from a very courageous brother who decided that things had come to a certain point in his own life. He may not have known the exact reasons, but he decided that he had to do something besides being peaceful, calm about things. That's a very courageous thing for him to have done. In my own view of Doug's trial, he didn't deserve to be in jail.

QUESTION: What does being a people mean? What does being a community mean?

SUMI: First of all, we have to understand that we're all Third World people inside the United States--and it's not really clear at this point, what that actually means in terms of organizing for the revolution. What it does mean is that we have a certain common basis of oppression; our enemy is the same. We have to get together as Third World people to fight the same enemy. Ultimately, our goal in organizing is to be able to build that Third World solidarity within the United States. But in terms of what it means to be an Asian people. I think there are two things to that. One is how are we oppressed? The second is how have we fought in the past, how shall we fight in the present and into the future? That then means that we're not just Asians. We are Filipinos, Koreans, Samoans, Chinese, Japanese, and so on. It means that the ways we are oppressed concretely are different. It means that most Filipinos are rural proletariats who are farm workers while most Japanese are urban worker-types: gardeners, seamstresses...While there are Chinese who live in ghettos, there are not many Japanese ghettos left.

On the other hand, the largest slogans, the ones that try and move people forward quickly, are the ones that do bind us together--that we are all oppressed as Asian people, that racism toward Asian people looks a certain way at this point in history, as opposed to the way it looks towards Blacks. I suspect the more militant we get, the more it'll look like the stuff that comes down on Black people. When you organize--when you talk to your mother, you talk to her about specific things that have happened to her because she's Chinese. And you also try and mention the things that are similar to Chinese people as to Japanese people as to Filipino people. Ultimately, you'll have to mention why it's similar to Black, Brown, Red, Vietnamese, South African, Palestinian, everybody else. That's what it means to me to be an Asian people, for myself. Organizing on a mass level, it means being Japanese; on the revolutionary level, it means being Third World. They're all one and the same. We are oppressed people. Third World people have always been oppressed people in this country. To fight means we must fight together. One million Asians combined with thirty million Blacks, combined with fifteen million Browns is a whole lot of people.

QUESTION: You mentioned that there's some common issues like the anti-war movement that can unite all segments of the Asian community because they all have an interest in this anti-Asian racism that's being disseminated. How has the organization gone on that one issue?

SUMI: I think that if you take a more militant stand it seems to go better than a liberal stand. I marched in the April 24 demonstration in San Francisco with the Asian contingent. That was everybody: Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese. We marched together, waving red books and carried the People's Chinese flag, a Pathet Lao flag, some North Korean flags, Vietnamese flags, a Chinese flag--and it was good! There was more unity under that kind of militant feeling of politics than I felt at Peace Sunday (Anti-War Teach-in, Los Angeles, May, 1971) even though Peace Sunday was an important event.

QUESTION: You've always stressed the fact that Asian people have expressed a solidarity with the American people. They also stress how important the American movement is, and many times, it seems that the movement fails the Indo-Chinese, because of all the internal bickering. What kinds of concrete expression can Asian Americans give to the Indo-Chinese?

SUMI: First of all, they should be concrete ones. We have to confront anti-Asian racism coming home and over in Asia. Steps are being taken to recognize that racism against Asians comes in special forms as against black or brown people. The People's Coalition for Peace and Justice just held its national convention and decided to call national actions on Hiroshima-Nagasaki weekend to protest Asian genocide. And that's a great step forward for the white movement to be thinking on those terms. I think Asian people need to take a greater leadership position in opposing the war. We are in fact the visible reminder in this country of what is going on over there. And that has to be brought up to the American people over and over again.

Our own brothers continue to go into the military, willingly, without questions asked. Draft counseling has to be stepped up. Parents have to be educated to keep their sons out of the military by any means necessary. There already are surprising numbers of Japanese and Chinese draft resisters and A.W.O.L.'s in Canada. And that's a big step.

Another simple thing we can do is letter writing campaigns to Washington instead of Hanoi saying that if you want the P.O.W.'s released, set a date to withdraw. The Indo-Chinese that I've met do have a special feeling for us as blood relatives and it's a shame we don't have the same feeling for them.

I want to say a couple of things about what S.I. Hayakawa said. One, about the bomb and Hiroshima. And the other is about the radicals copying the Panthers.

I think they're tied together. We can't look at the history of Asians like a series of slides, a series of incidents. The history of our people in this country is tied together with a couple of threads. One is that we've been oppressed by racism and economic oppression. And the second thing is that we've had to fight back to survive. Those two things run from the first time the Chinese came over in a large group in the 1840's all the way to the present.

It's true to an extent that suddenly the Sanseis have discovered who they are. But that's really because we've been forced to. You can't integrate into white society. A few individuals can and they always allow those few to do it and then hold those individuals up as examples. But the mass of Japanese people cannot become white. Anyways, who wants to become white? Who wants to become part of the society that started the Indo-Chinese War and Korean War and invented the bomb and pollution?

The question is how do we solve our problem of white racism and economic oppression amongst our people? If Hayakawa thinks that we're just aping the Panthers just to imitate the Panthers, he's really mistaken because he really doesn't understand the objective conditions in the community--those things that make people upset: dope; people dying in the street; people going to jail, and not having money for lawyers; old people falling apart in the streets because they don't have enough money for medical care; and just having to live forty, fifty years of humiliation. Those are real problems but he may not see them because he's living with his white friends up in Mill Valley, thinking that he's white. That's the whole point of being accepted in that kind of society in the first place so you don't see the problems of your own people because you don't even recognize that you're part of your own people. Once you do make that connection that you are in fact Japanese, and you look around, you find all kinds of problems. If you really try to confront the contradiction: why is there dope; why are there people starving; why is there people dying in the street; why is there no medical care? Then you ultimately get yourself to the understanding that it's the system that we live in. We can't even blame it on Nixon; you can't just blame a few individuals. How do all the military men come back calling people "gook"? They didn't learn that individually; they learned that because of a racist institution, the military.

How are we going to fight this? First of all, we have to understand we're not by ourselves. Our people have fought back as long as we've been here. That's one of the whole things about institutional racism in the first place. They never tell you that we ever fought back. You just begin to read the history of some of the things our people have done and it blows your mind. A Japanese helped found the American Communist Party; Japanese were deported for being members of the Communist Party in the U.S.; Japanese were almost deported in the 50's because of the McCarthy thing. People organized and became parts of unions and other radical organizations. They tried to organize Japanese into Gardeners' Federations, housemaid-houseboy organizations. That unity once existed amongst our people. Right now, we're trying to give our people their courage just for them to tell us what their life was like.

I consider people like Hayakawa traitors--that they sold out to becoming white racists themselves. The stand he took at San Francisco State was obviously the same stand any white racist would have taken; it's not even with an understanding that he himself is oppressed to the point where he hates himself and his own people.

Hiroshima was a racist experiment on Third World people to see what the bomb would do. There's no other possible justification for it. The Emperor already sued for peace but was ignored because the bomb wasn't quite ready for use. Then immediately after the bombing, he again sued for peace; and of course, isn't that a real military victory? Six hundred thousand Asians to save a few thousand whites...that's exactly the logic behind Vietnamization--as long as Asian people are dying, that's O.K., but not white people.

QUESTION: Hayakawa has the habit of always looking for the positive aspects of the most negative things and saying that as the main point. He said the relocation camps were the best thing for the Japanese--evacuation moved the Japanese to Chicago and gave them mobility.

SUMI:

Well, you have to do that. The camps were so awful that you had to fight it or try to look at the good side of things. That's one of the things human beings do to survive. People had to say, "Well, at least we're not getting beat up by white people anymore because we're in the camps." If you really looked at the reality of the camps, you either would have had mass revolts and massacres, or people would have gone crazy. In a situation like that, perversely, you get grateful for people not massacring you.

I suppose that's why identity is such an important question for Asians. Who are we as an Asian people? If you identify with your people, then you become part of their suffering and also part of their fighting power. But if you don't, you become like Hayakawa--very isolated and cynical, or you become very insular like the frog at the bottom of the well--because that's a measure of self-protection. I know a lot of Japanese kids, especially middle class kids from all Asian communities that are much into looking at things from the bottom of the well. They want to be assimilated and accepted. They don't want to fight. Well, after all, no one wants to fight. You only do it after you come to the conclusion that you have to.

For the time being, at least now for the Japanese, there seem to be other choices: Dodge Dusters, Toyotas, a bike, a good-looking girl friend or a boyfriend, or some alternative which seems to be meaningful. Everybody seems to know what they want. As long as you can bury your head in Montebello and you don't have to confront the rest of the sky, everybody thinks that's cool. The problem is that you never get to or are allowed to because racism reaches you wherever you try and hide. You either recognize that racism and struggle against it or let it destroy your life and the life of your children--watch them go into dope because they have no strength, no identity. Or let them run in gangs, because they have no strength on their own. Then people will finally understand that material comforts are not going to make it. It's a frightening thing for a lot of Niseis--that's why they so much oppose radical young people. They know that Sanseis are saying that it didn't work, that you may be making money but then you're making less money than a white man at the same job. You may be comfortable with your wall-to-wall carpeting, but your kids are on dope. You may think things are O.K., but they aren't. Racism didn't end in 1945. You can't run away from it. That's what's making a lot of parents upset. They see us as raising questions, challenging them about their entire life for the last twenty years. We're asking them, do you find it that meaningful? Because we find our life as young radicals more meaningful than having wall-to-wall carpeting. That really puts people uptight.

QUESTION: But how does the movement respond to that alienation? For one thing, the Nisei are alienated. They get ulcers all the time. Sansei are very alienated too, to the extent that the young generations identify less with Asians. How can a movement deal with that?

SUMI:

First of all, I think we have to understand the power of the people. Power to the people means figuring out who the people are. The people are not abstract. They are human beings--all of them, each one of them. That means our parents, our friends who are bikers, low riders, friends who are into having two kids and living out in Monterey Park. Those are the people. Of course, some are going to be more willing to fight on their own behalf. Poor people and oppressed people are going to be more willing to fight than people in Monterey Park. But at the same time, when you talk about struggle against racism, racism has affected all of us. Economic exploitation has affected all of us in some degree



or other. It means that we have to approach those people with respect instead of "You bourgeois reactionary so-and-so's. I come to tell you the word." You just can't approach people with that attitude. The revolution is a mission in the sense of making things better. But not in the sense that you have to proselytize people because they're in the dark. People are not "saved by the revolutionary word"--because people are wise. Not wise in the sense that you just point out a contradiction and they'll say give me the gun. But they're wise in the sense that they know the implications of a society-wide revolution and that it includes them. They are wise because they've lived in this country. One of the things they're afraid of is that it's only them. The Nisei, the middle-aged ones, and the Chinese who live in Chinatown are really isolated from each other. They lived through a terrible period of history and they became very afraid; afraid of informers; afraid of each other because twenty Asians together was a mob. Carmen Chow (from I Wor Kuen) tells a story of a man who came from Chinatown to a meeting called by people to hear the Young Lords and the Panther Party to talk about their programs. The old man turned to comment afterwards--"Well, I'm so glad. I knew the Chinese wouldn't be able to do something by themselves, but I'm so glad that the Blacks and Browns are with us. Then maybe we'll have a chance to win." Basically, I think if we investigate where our parents and grandparents are at, what they're afraid of is that they lost once. The camps were a real defeat for our people. Further, the end of the radical movement in the late 40's and early 50's in which many of our parents and grandparents participated was a real defeat. You just don't get over a defeat like that. You learn a lot of distrust because, most of all, people didn't know why they were defeated. They learned to distrust organized Communists and radicals. They learned to distrust ideology. They felt betrayed and they were. They didn't know just exactly what had gone wrong. For us to approach people who have battle scars from many previous battles with condescension instead of respect isn't in any sense building a movement. It alienates people. We should give them a sense that they had interesting lives, that they have lived battles, that they are good and brave people, and that we have a lot of respect for them. I know whenever people are defensive, Nisei in particular, they always come up with "We tried too. We tried to make a better world when we were young." They'll even bring up examples of "We resisted." Everyone has examples of that. You just don't live in this country for so many years without somewhere in their memory having some event where they fought back. The question is to awaken that feeling in people again and get them all to fight back in one direction; then there's real power. If you begin to really listen to your parents and grandparents and all their friends, you begin to understand what the power of people really means, because they really do have power. They really are courageous, only they need something to fight for. They need a sense of strength in our organization and leadership and some reason to fight.

QUESTION: The Filipinos in Delano have always asked for Asian support, but there has never been any organized effort to help them.

SUMI: I think the Filipinos are very much organized behind the strike. The Japanese thing I don't understand because many are ex-farm workers. I don't know as we've really tried. There have been a lot of real issues we've let go--Vietnam is one, Delano is another. They're real issues raised for Asian people in this country and we've kind of let them slide.

QUESTION: What other issues do you see coming up?

SUMI: The rise of Japanese militarism is something that we've got to confront. And Japanese have to do that. Otherwise, it's going to be purely a nationalist thing

with Chinese and Filipinos. Japanese have to begin to educate their people about what is really happening in Japan. I think Korea is just going to explode soon. There's going to be war in Korea with the U.S. involved and the guerrilla movement in the South. And we've got to be prepared for that. We've never been really able to deal with the issue of drugs. One thing we haven't really done for people who have gotten off drugs is to provide a movement alternative for them that meets them from where they're at. They are street people, and they want confrontation. They want something much more militant, and we've failed to provide that. Many have come into the J.A.C.S. office or a similar project for two months and they go right back out and back on dope. Movement people bad mouth them, call them failures. But people don't fail themselves. They fail because there is a failure of leadership to explain and make viable something to do.

I've been rereading Edgar Snow's RED STAR OVER CHINA. It's very interesting how Chairman Mao became a radical. He went through more changes than I've been through--more kinds of liberalism and political philosophies. At every critical point, there was some leadership to guide him to something more correct and because he was a student and from the middle class background, it was alright for him to go through changes like that. But street people are not like that, especially poor street people. They're not willing to skate around and live an interesting life. They really want action to confront the pigs. They know that the pigs have been oppressing them. It may be for a while that we'll continue to lose them. A lot of those people did not become part of the movement until there was a viable Red Army in China. Then they came in droves. Whole gangs of bandits and city lumpen joined the Red Army. But even then, some drifted back into banditry and were eventually killed by the people who had then been armed.

I'm trying to absorb what this means. I have a sense that things are a lot more urgent than we think they are in Los Angeles. I think Nixon's got something planned after '72 or even before in order to win the election. Millions die each year in this country and around the world because of this country's economic system and government. We have to stand up sometime. And I think that time is now. If the Chinese get sent to the camps, it's too late to start talking about them then. We have to fight racism and our racist government right now.

QUESTION: What future plans do you have?

SUMI: I feel that it's very necessary to find out what leadership means in a revolutionary sense, not only for myself but community wise--finding and developing new forms of leadership. It's necessary to find other parts of our community, the working people, the poorer people--and get them to understanding that self-determination means that they must become organized and powerful. I really want to write some more.

QUESTION: What about working with Asian women's groups?

SUMI: I think I'd be interested in working with war brides, but I don't know where to begin...I don't think it's useful politically to mobilize women except to help them become stronger themselves, at this point, until a leadership organization and the most militant segments of our community are mobilized. I could see having women's groups among the most militant...then you have something to talk about and organize around. You'll have some really committed and dedicated people.

For a lot of people still--for most people in L.A.--I get the feeling that it's still a game. I'm bothered by that because I can remember what it was like when you had to live with the day-to-day fear of getting killed. I remember what it's like to be an Indo-Chinese wondering when the bombs are coming next. That sense of real purpose, of real dedication to confronting the enemy still is lacking. As

long as it's lacking, the most militant people will not be mobilized. All of this is a lot of words just to say what I summed up in the beginning--that as Asian people, if we seek to explain the problems of ourselves, our community and all poor and oppressed peoples in the United States, we come to the conclusion that revolution is the only answer. We must cease being Japanese frogs at the bottom of the white American well seeing only what that defines for us. We must make our own definitions by seeing the totality of who we are and where that puts us.

All Power to the People!

ASIAN STUDIES: THE CONCEPT OF ASIAN STUDIES



EDITORIAL STAFF OF ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE

Introduction

The creation of the Asian Studies Division stemmed directly from the political action of the Third World Strike, in the Winter Quarter, 1969. The original demand of a Third World College was partially met with an interim Ethnic Studies Department, to be implemented in the Fall of 1969. The Strike met with very little understanding or flexibility from the Berkeley Administration, which used police terror and bureaucratic hang-ups to discourage creative thinking, and threatened ideas. It is the goal of the Asian students in the Third World Liberation Front Berkeley to continue and strengthen the goals of the Strike: self-determination for Third World (and all) people, and an end to the current system dominant in the United States and the world--based on property individualism and professional bureaucracy. The hope of the Asian students is that these goals will be embodied both in the goals, as well as the running of, the Asian Studies Division and the future Department.

We hope that Asian students at other campuses and institutions will cooperate with us in this venture, and share their ideas and feelings with us. It is only with brotherhood and trust in one another that we will build a society where we can be ourselves.

For the Asian students who have developed the Asian Studies aspect of Third World Studies, self-determination includes meeting our own needs in education. Under the traditional mechanisms of the University, the Regents and the Administration decide what

the students' educational needs are and direct those decisions downward, through the bureaucracy, for the students to respond to. The Regents and the Administration are clearly neither Third World nor students. They do not know what our needs are. They know their own needs--what is best for big business, and what is best for remaining secure in an administrative position. Their common need to maintain the status quo is obviously not in the interests of Third World people. Yet, the Regents and the Administration continue to make decisions which affect our lives. The students of the Asian Studies Committee believe that the educational hierarchy must be inverted. We are best suited to assess and deal with our own needs; the Regents and the Administration must respond to us.

The University establishment has told us that we lack background and training, yet Asian Studies has existed since the Winter quarter of the past academic year. Asian Studies began with one course under the Board of Educational Development. Since then, six classes have been offered, with a total enrollment of at least six hundred students. Each class has been designed, run, and taught by students. In addition, the Asian Studies Division, unlike the other Third World divisions, does not have a coordinator. A committee of six graduate and six undergraduate students make policy and decisions. This is innovative--the Administration has been pressured into recognizing students rather than a coordinator whose only qualification may be a Ph.D..

Innovation is not accomplished without

Reprinted from ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE, Volume I, Number 6 (October, 1969), Berkeley.

struggle. But struggle has produced four Asian Studies courses and a Third World Colloquium for the Fall quarter.

Direction of Asian Studies

Asian Studies at this stage will emphasize Asians in America. The program in Asian Studies is a strongly community-oriented program of study. The system of high education in America today is effectively siphoning much needed talent from the Third World communities, and specifically the Asian-American communities have and are continuing to evolve into economic, political, cultural, and psychological ghettos. Talented individuals who could otherwise function effectively as integral and constructive elements in the community are now being channeled out of this environment, thus leaving detrimental evolution to continue.

The study program is designed with the intention of reversing this trend. In order to accomplish this goal, community-oriented subjects and actual community work is stressed in order to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the community and its network of internal and external relations. Community work is also essential in estab-

lishing the necessary dialogue between ourselves and the community in order that the department itself has the necessary understanding to relate the subject to the students. To prevent the Asian-American community from being a cultural and psychological ghetto, the program concentrates on two aspects of scholarship: Asia and Asian culture, the roots of Asian-Americans; and racism, the primary cause of oppression and exploitation of Third World people in the United States.

Too often, the plight of the Asian-American is one of forced rejection of his own culture in favor of the dominant one in order to survive. This process of accommodation, which often appears under the guise of acculturation, has produced considerable psychological damage. An awareness of this predicament is essential, not only in understanding the self, but also in evolving a new value system so that the Asian-American can carve out a cultural existence as well as an economic existence in this country.

Therefore, the study program of Asian Studies is to include the following areas of scholarship: community commitment, awareness of the Asian-American identity, Asian and Asian-American culture, and the dynamics of racism.

NEED FOR AWARENESS: an essay on chinatown, san francisco

BUCK WONG

Introduction

Writing for *Holiday* in August of 1954, Sidney Small said of San Francisco's Chinatown, "An authority takes you behind the paper lanterns and shows you a wondrous city as tourists rarely see it--its traditions, its festivals, its intimate family life."¹ In reality, behind the neon signs and paper lanterns lies not Small's wondrous city, but a swarming, sweatshop world of long hours, low pay, hard work, and fear. It is rather unjust that one of America's most wretched slums should have its deplorable social condition masked by an image as a tourist haven. Chinatown is a sector which in the mid-1960's had forty thousand people crowded into the forty-two blocks

between the streets of Bush, Broadway, Kearny and Powell.² In addition, thirty thousand Chinese spilled into the North and the West as well as ten thousand others throughout the Bay Area. Upon viewing Chinatown, there is no mistaking the fact that it is a ghetto.

To understand the situation of Chinatown comprehensively, it becomes necessary to understand the major aspects of Chinese life in America. In so many ways, Chinatown is a microcosm of the larger context--acquiring the detrimental characteristics of a segregated urban slum as the Chinese, in general, found themselves relegated to a second class status. In recent years, the slum conditions of Chinatown have intensified, but it is crucial to realize that its economic and social ills have a

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long historical background.

History of a Chinese Slum

There is a shaky account that the first Chinese in California was a seaman in 1793. A cook named Ah Nam is said to have come in 1815, a Chinese cabin boy in 1838, and two men and a woman in 1848⁴, but only with the advent of the Gold Rush did the immigration of the Chinese really start. Since San Francisco was a port city, it naturally became a place of congregation for these new foreigners.

Though many of the Chinese were in California to look for gold or were merchants, mental white labor was scarce so they often took any necessary work that was offered. Many Chinese began to stay in San Francisco, and Chinatown began when they took over the old buildings around Portsmouth Square, upon which the city had originally started. By the mid-1850's, a definite community had developed. Among other distinctive features, it had thirty-three general stores, five restaurants, five butchers, three tailors, and two bakers.⁵

The Chinese population in San Francisco was soon to become the major concentration of Chinese in America. In the 1850's and 60's however, a large majority of the Chinese immigrants were in the mining areas. After the mining activity subsided, the Central Pacific Railroad employed between ten and twelve thousand Chinese for cheap labor until its completion in 1869.⁶ Railroad and mining work grew scarce by the 1870's, leading to an increase in the Chinese population--both in overall size and as a percentage of the total population. The Chinese came to San Francisco to find work in the factories or in the domestic field, and while a substantial number resorted to agricultural work, many of them might have resided in San Francisco in the off-season. Another factor was that as the anti-Chinese agitation mounted, many Chinese felt compelled to draw into a more segregated environment. (To be discussed further in Section III) As a result, from a population of 2719, the third largest Chinese settlement in the state in 1860, it grew to 12,022 in 1870, thus becoming the largest in the state and the country.⁷

As Chinatown was increasing in size, the pattern of Chinese occupational status in the city began to emerge. The Chinese found numerous types of domestic work in San Francisco; they became servants, vegetable men, broom sellers, and flower vendors. In

these domestic fields, the Chinese earned more than the white person because they attained a reputation for efficiency, but on the other hand, they found work in the factories because they would underbid the whites. As a result, in 1870, 191 out of 211 workers in the slipper industry of the city were Chinese. Also, nineteen per cent of the workers in shoe factories in 1870 were Chinese.⁸ The state wool industry started in San Francisco about this time, and Chinese labor monopolized it. Workers in cigar factories were almost exclusively Chinese. In 1876, 907 out of 3479 people in the sewing trade--many of these in San Francisco--were Chinese.⁹ In addition, the Chinese owned a vast percentage of the factories. Eleven out of twelve slipper factories in 1870 belonged to Chinese, and they owned fifty per cent of the city's cigar factories in 1866.¹⁰ Also, by the 1870's the trend of the Chinese laundries and restaurants was beginning to be set. Chinese restaurants and teahouses were in existence in the city as early as July, 1849, and by 1870, most of the laundries in California were Chinese-owned.

The Chinatown population continued to increase until the national policy of Chinese exclusion took effect. From 1870 to 1890, its population increased from 12,022 to 25,833 as immigrants streamed into the country,¹¹ and even after the Exclusion Act of 1882 excluded laborers, over sixty thousand came over after changing their status to that of merchants and students. The Geary Act of 1892 extended the exclusion of the 1882 act and served to terrify and drive out many Chinese.¹² The prohibition of Chinese immigration was extended indefinitely in 1902, and the 1924 Alien Act tightened the loopholes for immigration by such acts as defining students as only those aspiring for graduate degrees. The consequences of those acts were substantial. From 1890 to 1940, Chinese immigration generally averaged about twenty thousand per decade, and the overall Chinese population in America stabilized itself at between sixty and eighty thousand.¹³ Chinatown's population dropped to 13,954 in 1900 and remained about the same for forty years. In 1930, it was 16,303 and only increased to 17,782 in 1940.¹⁴

Meanwhile, Chinatown had acquired the characteristics of a closely-knit community--a city within a city. As the concentration intensified, the Chinese constructed a society of their own which was symbolic of the Far East in which the pattern of behavior was predominantly that of a village culture rather than that of an urban sector. The shops were Chinese-

owned; there were Chinese newspapers; oriental attire was common; and soon Chinatown existed outside the mainstream of society. Also, by the end of the nineteenth century, the laundry and restaurant occupations began to dominate the economic framework of the Chinese in America. In 1870, there were only 3653 laundry workers and sixty-six restaurant workers in America, but by 1900, laundry workers numbered 25,483. In 1920, out of 45,614 Chinese workers, 12,559 were laundry workers and 11,438 were restaurant workers.¹⁵

Naturally, San Francisco reflected such a restrictive occupational development, and it served to accentuate the close-knit characteristics of the Chinese sector.

The large role of the Six Companies was another trenchant illustration of the detachment of Chinatown from the larger society. As the major clan and district associations joined together into the Chinese Six Companies in the 1850's it quickly established itself as the major organization of the California Chinese. It assumed a vital role for the Chinese community in San Francisco by providing educational, recreational, medical and even legal services. Some, however, have said that the Chinese "institutions (Six Companies) contributed in various degrees to the maintenance of an invisible Chinese world which controlled the indentured emigrants."¹⁶ Nonetheless, as the Six Companies became the principal spokesman for the Chinese to white America, the distinctiveness of the Chinatown section became more and more apparent until most of its social and economic functions were of an esoteric nature.

The situation of Chinatown remained basically static until World War II. The war brought some changes to Chinatown, as it did to Chinese Americans in general, by creating a personnel shortage, and thus, allowing Chinese college men and women to secure proper employment. The Chinese had always placed a premium upon education, but they had previously had to be content with inferior jobs. Now, professional employment jumped from 2.8 per cent in 1940 to 7.1 per cent in 1950.¹⁷ Overall, the changes that affected Chinatown were anything but substantial as the ghetto problems of housing and health still existed.

After the war, immigration restriction eased up, beginning with the repeal of the 1924 Alien Act. Though only a quota of 105 a year was set up, non-quota immigration through acts like the War Brides Act of 1947 and the Immigration Act of 1952 (allowing students) pushed immigration from a low point of about

five thousand in the 1930's to 16,709 in the 1940's and to 9,657 in the 1950's. There was one change concurrent with the immigration that was to have vast consequences for Chinatown. In 1949, the Communists took control of China, and the United States imposed a quarantine on China. Now the Chinese had to become citizens or permanent residents of this country, and a new generation began to emerge in Chinatown as well as in all Chinese communities which was oriented toward assimilation.

With the 1960's came the most significant loosening up of the immigration regulations for the Chinese, and San Francisco reflected those changes as it continued to be a docking point for so many of the new immigrants. In 1963, President Kennedy issued a directive to ease the refugee situation in Hong Kong. Then, President Johnson signed into law a new immigrant act in 1965, to become fully effective in July, 1968, which repealed the quota system based on national origins and substituted in its place an entry procedures based on skills and a means for the reuniting of families.¹⁸ In 1966, 8482 immigrants came to America, and the number increased to 14,045 in 1967.¹⁹ The result was to place a greater burden upon the Chinatown situation, as many of those immigrants moved into San Francisco. District Immigration Director C. W. Fullilove estimated that since 1968, approximately 1200 per year enter San Francisco with the intention of remaining.²⁰ While the economic situation of many Chinese has improved and a professional and white collar class has emerged, the poverty in Chinatown remains today as the middle class leave the ghetto and make it a place inhabited by immigrants, the poor, and the elderly.

A Social and Economic Look at Chinatown

Like all immigrant groups in America, the Chinese attempted to retain a strong hold on their culture by sustaining ethnic enclaves, promoting immigrant associations, and preserving native customs. However, the idea that Chinatown grew as a self-imposed ghetto is far from correct. There was a definite tone of subtle coercion and often a policy of blatant discrimination throughout the history of the Chinese in America which forced them to accept the status of living in a blighted urban sector.²¹

It was very possible that people in early San Francisco regarded the Chinese with interest and curiosity rather than hostility, but it was not long before racial and social prejudice,

arising out of a disdain for anything different, took its toll on the Chinese. On February 16, 1854, the Alta California stated, "If the city continues to fill up with these people, it will ere long become necessary to make them the subjects of special legislation."²² Only two years before, this same newspaper had spoken of the Chinese as "excellent citizens." The increasing antipathy reflected the general tone of anti-Chinese agitation embodied in political actions like the Foreign Miner's Tax and the Exclusion Acts beginning in 1882 which gave official sanction to the prevalent hostility toward the Chinese. California's second constitution in 1879 also prohibited employment of Chinese in state, county, and municipal government work. The violence directed at the Chinese surfaced on various occasions throughout the nineteenth century. In the Los Angeles Riot of 1871, a white mob killed at least nineteen Chinese; in the Rock Springs massacre of 1885 in Wyoming, twenty-eight Chinese were killed; at Truckee, California, in 1878, 1000 Chinese were driven out of town.²³

The general prejudice was also to be found on a local scale in San Francisco. The first significant urban uprising occurred in the city in 1869.²⁴ In 1870, an ordinance directed at the Chinese to forbid the firing of rooms with less than five hundred cubic feet of air per person met defeat in the county court, but in the same year, an ordinance preventing the use of poles to carry objects was upheld. Another city ordinance provided that every Chinese in jail must have his hair cut to one inch from his scalp, thus imposing queue cutting. San Francisco was also the center of the Workingmen's Party, led by the demagogic Denis Kearney, which adopted the slogan "the Chinese must go" and was instrumental in arousing public sentiment for Chinese exclusion. In July of 1877, Kearney incited the Sand Lot Riots, lasting for several days, in which white gangs terrorized the Chinatown section. When faced by that kind of treatment, the Chinese acquired a tendency to look for security and satisfaction within a segregated community.

In addition, Chinatown attracted many Chinese because it fulfilled important social functions as well as providing for economic needs and offering insulation from anti-Chinese agitation. The Chinatown community filled the void caused by the lack of an adequate family structure in America. "Ideally, Chinese custom held that a wife should remain in the household of her husband's parents,

even in the event that her husband went abroad."²⁵ So as late as 1890, though there were 26,720 married Chinese men in America, there were only 1,951 married Chinese women.²⁶ The situation worsened in 1884 when a U.S. Federal Court ruled that the Exclusion Act of 1882 excluded not only a Chinese laborer, but his wife as well. Under such conditions, the male-female ratio for the Chinese has remained abnormally high; it was 18.58 in 1860, 12.84 in 1870, 21.06 in 1880, 26.79 in 1890, and even in 1960 was still 1.33.²⁷ As a result, the Chinese men who remained abroad were left to form a homeless men's community and sought the friendlier and more secure confines of a larger Chinese community.

With the advent of the exclusion policy, Chinatown entered a static period in which contact and association with the greater society became minimal as an impenetrable social, political, and economic wall divided the Chinese and the larger culture. The withdrawal into a tight social structure had gigantic consequences because, while the United States went through some truly profound changes from 1880 to 1940, San Francisco's Chinese ghetto remained essentially the same. It could not really become independent economically, but its closed social system prevented it from joining the mainstream of social change. It was a period when the Chinese found themselves limited to occupations in domestic work, laundries, restaurants, sewing, and grocery stores. In the twentieth century, the Chinese gained a reputation for being very well educated, but they usually found that society refused to employ their talents. As one author stated, except for a few professional workers "within the limits of Chinatown..." and some in civil service work, the educated Chinese found no adequate future.²⁸

The Chinese in the Chinatown community also remained politically indifferent during the period from 1880 to 1940; the cause for such an attitude can be expressed as a combination of a ghetto and sojourner mentality. Especially in the early years of immigration, many of the Chinese in this country were sojourners, wishing only to work for a few years until they could save enough money to go home.²⁹ Many Chinese were consequently reluctant to assimilate with the greater society and to protest the injustices done to them. Nonetheless, more and more Chinese began to make America their permanent home, --in fact if not in declaration--but still the Chinese in San Francisco acquiesced in the inequalities of the society. A ghetto mentality among the Chinese had

developed, resulting in the prevalence of low expectations and the willingness to accept a subservient status in American society.

By the twentieth century, Chinatown had acquired all the characteristics that today make it a slum section. Perhaps the major consequence of the creation of the Chinese slum was the physical handicaps incurred through the existence of inferior living conditions. If not for the 1906 earthquake, it is conceivable that buildings constructed before 1900 could still be around. As it was, the Chinese took over one of the older parts of the city, and they only acquired more old buildings when they moved out into the blocks surrounding Portsmouth Square. In 1941, fifteen thousand Chinese lived in a twenty block area where 3000 out of 3830 dwelling units were without heat.³⁰ The deplorable situation becomes more apparent when one considers that the twenty block area had been primarily dedicated to the operation of shops and restaurants. Though the male-female ratio evened up with the passage of time, the lack of women in early Chinatown led to an indulgence in prostitution, gambling, and opium smoking during the late 1800's which resulted in the association of Chinatown with an atmosphere of vice. Even more dominant, however, was the growing image of Chinatown as a tourist center. Its appearance was a result of the economic depravity that affected the sector, but tourists saw it as a quaint and amusing example of Far Eastern culture. Of course, the shop-keepers and merchants found it economically expedient to capitalize upon this aspect of Chinatown, so the image of tourist town became further enhanced.

Chinese Americans benefited from some social and economic changes in the years since World War II, but there has really been no fundamental change in Chinatown. As mentioned, the professional and white collar employment of Chinese has increased since the 1940's. There are many Chinese engineers and professors now; some are even city councilmen or judges. While the social integration is welcomed, it creates a dilemma for Chinatown as the more well-to-do Chinese move out of the ghetto and leave the less fortunate to remain. In addition, the quarantine on Red China stung the Chinese with the realization that they could no longer return to their homeland.

In fact, as more people populated Chinatown through natural birthrates and immigration of the 1960's, the conditions only got worse. In 1960, education in Chinatown averaged 1.7

years while it was twelve years for the rest of the city. Unemployment was 12.8 per cent compared to the overall rate of 6.7 per cent, density of population was 885.1 per acre while it was 81.9 per acre in the rest of the city, and substandard housing in Chinatown was sixty-seven per cent compared to a city-wide rate of nineteen per cent.³¹ Most of the architecture in Chinatown was inferior. The tourist retail business was poor with many shops selling only about thirty dollars worth of goods a day while having to pay monthly rents of three to five hundred dollars. Tuberculosis rates, which serve as indicators of the detrimental effects of ghettos, ranged from 2.9 to 4.7 cases per one thousand persons in Chinatown while the city average was .8 per one thousand persons.³² Still common were cases where fifty to one hundred people used one kitchen and where separate bathrooms were lacking. So one wonders if Chinatown has changed much in recent years.

The conditions in Chinatown have become increasingly critical due to the influx caused by the recent immigration. Chinatown now has a density in population second only to Harlem. In addition, the younger element of San Francisco Chinatown has increased greatly in the last few years, due to the offspring from more Chinese marriages and the large number of young Chinese in the recent immigration. The youth and young adults of Chinatown have been the ones who are leading the protest against deplorable slum conditions that become worse instead of better. However, the crucial factor to remember is that the recent immigration and population influx into Chinatown accentuates already critical ghetto problems that have persisted throughout the existence of this Chinese slum. The Chinatown crisis is not a new phenomenon!

IV. The Struggle for Awareness

Even the broad picture of Chinatown clearly reveals that the urgency to correct the social situation of this sector should be as great as in any urban area in the nation. Concern for these problems, however, will never develop if the mainstream of American society persists in a trend of thinking which promulgates the idea of Grant Avenue as having become "an asset to the commercial life of the city as one of its main tourist attractions."³³ Chinatown still suffers from this image and the stereo-typing which says that the Chinese like to live with their own, that they can take care of their own, and that they are law-abiding.

This pattern of projecting the Chinese as a successful minority is extremely dangerous because it hides the problems of the Chinatown community and facilitates deterioration. Efforts are being made to overcome the ignorance of the outside society and also to combat the social ills from within. However, the problems are immense and require aggressive and tenacious action.

All Americans should realize that no one really wants to live in a ghetto. There is evidence that if not for the anti-Chinese agitation of the early years after the start of immigration, there would certainly be more social integration today. People should not mistake the resignation and apathy derived from a ghetto mentality for a personal desire to remain in Chinatown. It seems to be easy for whites to look at people who were scholars in China and are now waiters and to praise them for a willingness to do something. Outsiders of Chinatown can also easily absolve themselves of any concern for constructive change when they operate from the misguided idea that the Chinese can take care of themselves. Well, the days of the association like the Six Companies, of the Far Eastern social structure, and of the unique patriarchal family system are gone; such a system can not adequately cope with the present problems--and they never really could. If the Chinese could subsist adequately as a separate entity, they would not suffer from the living conditions that they do. I submit that the mainstream of America has willingly grabbed these ideas and perpetuated the image of the happy-go-lucky, law-abiding, and self-sustaining Chinese, thus, maintaining a social distance between greater San Francisco and Chinatown which is immensely farther than the actual walk across a street.

What is being done though? If the people outside of Chinatown remain callous, has Chinatown itself taken any action? For a number of reasons, Chinatown has responded very little until recently to its adverse conditions. In a broad sense, one might say that it suffers from a ghetto mentality, but the problem can not be confined within such a narrow boundary. Much of the answer is to be found in the history of Chinatown because as the Chinese withdrew into the safety of a homogeneous group, survival and endurance became a virtue. The survival philosophy led to an inclination toward non-involvement and distrust of government.³⁴ As the ratio of American born to foreign born went from twenty-one to seventy-nine in 1910 to a ratio of fifty-three to forty-seven in 1950, involvement in American

society increased, but apolitical feelings still persisted.³⁵ Another factor that contributed to the lack of drive in the Chinese community, of course, was the establishment of poverty as a way of life. Many of the residents of Chinatown have lived there most of their lives, and there is also a large number of immigrants from China who have known a way of life that has been just as harsh as an American ghetto.

However, the dissatisfaction is there, and it is beginning to show itself as various segments of the Chinatown community have responded indignantly and vociferously to the existing problems. The uproar has led to the initiation of major Chinatown studies by groups such as the City Planning Commission and the Bay Area Social Planning Council. The Chinatown-North Beach Economic Development Agency functions as the local federal target agency, but unfortunately, "it has failed to involve the community, and has failed to find leadership from the indigenous poor."³⁶ Prior to 1956, there was only one politically active organization, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, but some felt that it had turned conservative and, thus, formed the Chinese American Democratic Club which takes a stand on almost every social issue and is the strongest political voice in Chinatown.

The newer element of the Chinatown community, the youth, has suffered greatly as a result of the intensification of the ghetto problems and has responded in a belligerent and sometimes spontaneous manner. Native born youths have found that the price of success is often abandonment of language, culture, and much of their ethnic identity. The immigrant youth find that the Americanization inherent in the school system compounds their cultural shock and causes many to drop out.

A hint that something was wrong appeared in early 1963 when a threatened inter-racial gang fight resulted in the arrest of four young Chinese Americans and the confiscation of several weapons. In 1964, the Bugs, a young Chinese burglary ring, was uncovered. Then, in the 1969 New Year parade, a confrontation between young people and the S.F. Police Tactical Squad led to a small scale riot in which cherry bombs dipped in glue and BBs were thrown. These incidents seem to reflect more than just trouble due to a small knot of delinquent young people.

The youth have also responded in an organized manner. In 1968, the Wah Ching formed and is credited as the first group to publicize Chinatown's youth problems. This loose group of 200-300 Hong Kong youth was

unable to attain funds for activities such as building a recreation clubhouse, and by 1969, the Wah Ching had split into three camps. One group returned to the streets, gambling, and burglaries, while the other two groups have been hired by two Chinatown tongs as bodyguards.

In April, 1967, about seventeen native born Chinese youths created Le Way (Legitimate Ways) as a self-help group to eliminate loitering and street fighting. The group grew to about 400 and obtained enough funds to maintain a pool hall and soda fountain. In early 1969, a small group split from Le Way and formed the Red Guard Party. Meanwhile, Le Way found increasing difficulty in functioning as the police continually raided the pool hall in search of criminal suspects and as good jobs eluded the reach of the Le Way youths.

Another group, the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action is an organization of young people working out of San Francisco State whose activities have centered on creating a school of ethnic studies and providing tutoring and summer activities for Chinese youngsters. Now, the Chinatown-North Beach Area Youth Council, an offshoot of the Economic Development Agency, serves as an umbrella group for fifteen youth groups that range from church groups to Le Way and ICSA. It hopes to build good relations between the native and foreign born youth and bridge the gap between Chinatown and city hall.

The leadership of Chinatown is shifting to organizations like ICSA, the CCAC, and the CADC, but to the outside world, the Six Companies has kept its reputation as the official representative organization of the Chinese in America. People still listened when Dr. Dennis Wong of the Six Companies said that Chinatown should respond to its problems by resorting to the "old ways of love, understanding, compassion, perseverance, fidelity, instead of wanting everything now."³⁸ The following specious and fallacious response made by Dr. Kalfred Lum of the Six Companies to the SF EXAMINER's articles (during August of 1968) on Chinatown's social and economic ills indicates the water-treading philosophy of the older establishment.

On the whole, the fascinating and virtuous charm of San Francisco Chinatown must not be hurt by slanderous and erroneous statements. San Francisco Chinatown will continue to meet its problems which can be solved with proper understanding and guidance from public officials. This, in our opinion, is the proper solution.³⁹

As a result, the Six Companies has become a

major stumbling block to reform.

As efforts are made to rectify the Chinatown ills, tremendous obstacles exist. The garment-making sweat shops of Chinatown best reveal the dilemma in combating Chinatown's seemingly insurmountable problems. Many of the 3000 workers in the community's 150 garment factories were immigrant workers who worked ten to twelve hours a day for less than a dollar an hour.⁴⁰ In August, 1967, pickets from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union demonstrated to obtain legal minimum wages, but by May, 1968, the first strike in Chinatown history collapsed--it got little support from the workers. Any effort to alleviate the conditions of Chinatown runs into similar obstacles because many of the people living in the core of Chinatown are immigrants, most of whom are isolated individuals or families too busy surviving to worry about political maneuvers like group leadership and community representation. This is a crucial factor because most of the future leadership of Chinatown must eventually come from this group.

It is also important to remember that the crisis in San Francisco is part of a larger problem which has enveloped other Chinese communities in cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Oakland. Until very recently New York was the only other good sized Chinese community in America, and it went through many of the experiences of an isolated ethnic enclave that San Francisco did. Since it serves as the second major docking point for the recent immigration, it has also seen its Chinatown problems intensify in the last few years.⁴¹ Communities such as Los Angeles and Oakland Chinatown have not had quite as intense historical problems as those existing in New York and San Francisco, but they are beginning to acquire more serious urban difficulties. Similar changes have occurred in Oakland due to the overflow of Chinese from San Francisco. While each of these communities have their distinct characteristics, their increasing problems accent the intensification of San Francisco Chinatown's ills.

What lies in the future? It is impossible to propose a schematic plan that would serve as a panacea for Chinatown's complex problems, but there is clearly a need to attain and maintain a sharp state of awareness within the Chinese community. In order to affect any strong community effort, a powerful sense of unity must prevail in Chinatown. The organizations that exist now must work diligently to create viable changes and ease tensions within Chinatown. Efforts should



continue to be made to involve the poor, but these community workers (whether they be students or middle class adults) must work with the people in Chinatown instead of condescending toward them. A delicate balance between the hard sell and soft sell approach must be taken to stimulate an oppressed community, bent upon survival, into action.

At the same time, the outside community must realize that the changes to be made in Chinatown are long overdue. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the power structure in the society, Chinatown needs the funding and other material benefits available from a sympathetic public. So the question is, will the larger society react favorably to the increasing self-

awareness of Chinatown? But on the other hand, will the changes within Chinatown kindle a deep-seated belief of the Chinese as both inferior and threatening, a belief perhaps made "benign by a minority group's tacit agreement to live behind the invisible wall of an urban ghetto?"⁴² Yet, in many ways, the answers to these questions are peripheral to the whole issue of initiating change because any campaign to find cures for the Chinatown ills must begin first from within the community. Hopefully, the larger society will join in creating a solution with an equal sense of urgency, but it is crucial that those who are oppressed commence the fight for liberation and change.

¹Sidney Small, "San Francisco's Chinatown," *HOLIDAY*, Vol. 16, (August, 1954), p. 98.
²"Chinaman's Chance," *TIME*, Vol. 90, (September 8, 1967), p. 18.

⁴Thomas W. Chinn, ed., *A HISTORY OF THE CHINESE IN CALIFORNIA* (San Francisco, 1969), p. 8.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶Charles Caldwell Dobie, *SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINATOWN* (New York: Appleton and Century Co., 1936), p. 72.

⁷Chinn, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹²Carey McWilliams, *BROTHERS UNDER THE SKIN* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1964), p. 95.

¹³Shien-woo Kung, *CHINESE IN AMERICAN LIFE* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p. 43.

¹⁴Stanford M. Lyman, *THE ASIAN IN THE WEST* (Reno and Las Vegas: Western Studies Center, 1970), p. 69.

¹⁵Kung, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁶Gunther Barth, *BITTER STRENGTH* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 78.

¹⁷Kung, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁸Lyman, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹⁹Chinn, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²⁰Lyman, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

²¹Continual investigation needs to be done to ascertain better the forces that led to the crowded, segregated Chinese community, but up-to-date research indicates that the nature of racial prejudice played a major role in creating the detrimental conditions that have existed in Chinatown.

²²Dobie, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

²³Lyman, *op. cit.*, pps. 22-3; Alexander Saxton, *THE INDISPENSABLE ENEMY* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 202.

²⁴Lyman, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²⁵Lyman, *op. cit.*, p. 18.--One must ask the question of how such a custom would have survived if the Chinese had been allowed to participate more in American society, and thereupon, create an incentive to bring over families and settle.

²⁶Kung, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

²⁷Lyman, *op. cit.*, pp. 79 and 101.

²⁸Elizabeth Colman, *CHINATOWN, USA* (New York: John Day Co., 1946), p. 14.

²⁹Paul Siu, "The Sojourner," *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY*, Vol. 8, (July, 1952), pp. 32-44.

³⁰McWilliams, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

³¹L. Ling-chi Wang, "Chinatown in Transition," *THE ASTAN EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA* (University of California, Davis: 1969).

³²Gerald J. Chan, "The Other Side of San Francisco's Chinatown," *CHINATOWN-NORTH BEACH STUDY PACKET* (San Francisco: 1965-66).

³³Colman, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³⁴The tendency toward non-involvement may have been also reinforced by what Mary Coolidge, in her book, *CHINESE IMMIGRATION*, called the lack of a public spirit in China. She said that the development of a national feeling had been retarded by the large number of dialects and the difficulty in travel and communication.

³⁵Kung, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³⁶George Chu, "Chinatown," *SAN FRANCISCO*, (June, 1969).--The article provides a good brief overview of the current situation in Chinatown and a rundown of the major organizations that are attempting to affect change.

³⁷The youth scene is a turbulent, fluid situation which seems to defy understanding and analysis, but several fine articles on the Chinatown youth include: Ben Fong-Torres, "Chinatown Youth," *SAN FRANCISCO*, (June, 1969); Stanford Lyman, "Red Guard on Grant Avenue," *THE ASIAN IN THE WEST* (Reno and Las Vegas: Western Studies Center, 1970); Tom Wolfe, "The New Yellow Peril," *ESQUIRE*, Vol. 73, (December, 1969).

³⁸Tom Wolfe, "The New Yellow Peril," *ESQUIRE*, Vol. 73, (December, 1969), p. 197.

³⁹Dr. Kalfred Dip Lum, "The Misunderstanding in Chinatown," *GIDRA*, (July, 1969).

⁴⁰Chu, *op. cit.*

⁴¹Rocky Chin, "New York Chinatown Today: Community in Crisis," *AMERASIA JOURNAL*, Vol. 1 (March, 1971).--The article gives the reader an excellent picture of the contemporary situation in New York Chinatown.

⁴²Lyman, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

ASIAN COMMUNITY CENTER

EDITORIAL STAFF OF RODAN



Asian people in America are living in a contradictory society. The present United States government and the racist society which perpetuates it claims this country stands for freedom, liberty, and happiness. From the injustices, Third World (non-white) people have experienced in this country, there are no such conceptions as freedom, liberty, or happiness. We don't even have any rights to protect us from exploitation and brutality. Third World people are suffering from hunger, disease, unemployment, poor housing, miseducation, and Racism and Death. Asian and other Third World communities are actually internal colonies which this racist society uses to exploit our manpower and labor for low wages. Our people are caught in these colonies and are forced to suffer. The big businessmen and the rich landlord drain us of our resources, the military drags our young men to fight in imperialist wars to kill other Third World people, the school system operates jails which brainwash our younger brothers and sisters to be ashamed of their cultural and racial heritage, and the universities rob us of the people we need to return to rebuild and to serve the community. To keep us weak and unable to resist effectively, the Man permits disease, corruption, narcotics, sub-human housing, and hunger to flourish throughout the Third World colonies. Every Asian community, whether it is Chinatown, Manila-

town, or Japanesetown, are internal colonies of the United States--exploited to the hilt, insulted constantly, and brutalized by the forces of law and order.

In December of 1969, a group of young people from the Chinese community in San Francisco made a move into the old, dark and shoddy basement of the United States Filipino Association Hall. They maintained an informal office and showed movies to the people of Chinatown and Manilatown during the weekends. The basement was cleaned up and posters from China were put up. We leafleted the community to inform the people of the free movies at the basement. We set up reading tables with magazines from Asia, particularly from China. People began to come down and talk to us. Within a short period of two months, after analyzing the objective conditions in Chinatown, it was clear that the United Filipino Association Hall at 832 Kearny Street would have to become an Asian Community Center. Its purchase was to provide a base where the youth of the community could serve people of Chinatown to solve its problems and attempt to find cures to the ailments plaguing it; to encourage the people of the community to work collectively for their physical and mental well-being and to educate them to the real enemy who is shamelessly exploiting our community and our culture.

Reprinted from RODAN, Northern California Asian American Community News, Volume I, Number 5 (November 1970).

The Asian Community Center emerged not because we thought it would be a nice missionary trip to do, but that we realized that the Chinatown community was indeed an internal colony of the United States--kept down solely to be exploited. There are over 47,500 people living on the small area which Chinatown is situated upon. There are about 600 to 800 people per acreage in Chinatown, making it an area with the highest density next to Manhattan. The tuberculosis problem is the worst of any area within the United States and the suicide rate is no better. There used to be a TB clinic in Chinatown but due to lack of Federal funds needed for it to operate, it was terminated. Now there are no clinics in Chinatown to treat people with TB. Many parents find it hard to find good jobs because of their language difficulties and many times both parents are forced into accepting menial jobs in order to make enough to keep their family alive. Since there are no real recreational facilities, many young people are forced into the streets to spend their time. The community is extremely over-crowded and more new immigrants from Hong Kong are coming in every year and the housing situation in Chinatown is rapidly deteriorating--the Ping Yuen housing projects are already overcrowded and families of six are forced much of the time, to move into small apartments or flop houses, paying high rents, forced to find work. Many mothers are forced to work in the numerous garment factory sweatshops in Chinatown for the lowest of wages--as low as fifty cents an hour. The Chinese mothers have become a source of cheap labor.

The situation and the rotten conditions that the people of Chinatown were subjected to demanded that there be an organization such as the Asian Community Center to be established.

We knew that we had to inform the people of the community of our motives and objectives so they can understand and relate to what we were trying to do. We drew up a platform which reflected the needs of the people and relayed our ideas:

PLATFORM OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY CENTER

What We See

We see the breakdown of our community and families.
We see our people suffering from mal-nutrition, tuberculosis, and high suicide rates.
We see destruction of our cultural pride.
We see our elderly forgotten and alone.
We see our youth subjected to racism in the classroom and in the streets.
We see our Mothers and Fathers forced

into meaningless jobs to make a living.
We see American Society preventing us from fulfilling our needs.

What We Want

We want adequate housing, medical care, employment, and education.

What We Believe

To solve our community problems, all Asian people must work together. Our people must be educated to move collectively for direct action. We will employ any effective means that our people see necessary.

The programs of the Asian Community Center include the Chinatown COOP Food Program, the Free Film Program, during the summer, the Youth Summer Workshop. The Food Program was created to provide the community with a proper diet so that its children grow up healthy. We were providing surplus government food to cover 300 families once every month. The food was U.S. surplus which the Community Center obtained by paying for it, unloading it off the trucks, and packing it in bags ourselves to distribute it to the families. Every weekend we show movies about China and Mao Tse Tung and other political films about the Liberation struggles all over the world and in the United States. The Film Program was very popular because Chinese people like to see movies about their motherland and how it has progressed after the Revolution. During the showings, we provided hot tea and cookies. During the summer, the Youth Summer Workshop took young people on field trips, taught them Asian American history, and introduced them to photography, carpentry, and kung-fu workshops.

The Asian Community Center has for the last nine months been serving the San Francisco Chinatown community. The Center has become a place where young and old can come together to discuss politics, play chess and ping pong, listen to music from China, and read about struggles in Southeast Asian and other Third World nations against the imperialist policies of the United States and its lackeys. As of November 15, 1970, the Asian Community Center will be moving from its location at 832 Kearny Street. The lease has been terminated. We are getting kicked out. Upon investigation, we have discovered that pressures by the reactionary Chinatown Establishment (the Chinese Six Companies and the Kuomintang--the Chinese Nationalist party) has led to much of our troubles. This only goes to show that the Chinatown Establishment is not necessarily interested in

their control in Chinatown. Power for its own sake, not for the people of Chinatown. But we, and the other progressive forces of Chinatown, will grow powerful because the people can distinguish between the lackeys of the United States and the other reactionaries and those who serve the people.

The Asian Community Center will continue to serve the people from our new location at 846 Kearny Street. The Center is more than helping the people of Chinatown. The Establishment is only interested in maintaining

just a physical place, but an idea, an idea that will unite the people of Chinatown to change the poverty conditions of the Chinatown colony. It is an idea that will get people to help each other as in the rest of American Society. In the final analysis, regardless of what difficulties we have to face, we must keep the welfare of the people foremost in our minds and hearts.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

AN INTERVIEW WITH

L. LING-CHI WANG

EDITORIAL BOARD
JUNE, 1971

WANG:

In the Chinese community for many years there have been a lot of claims that the Chinese community is free from juvenile delinquency and that if there are a few, that the family and community together will take care of those juvenile problems. Because of this traditional attitude a lot of the juvenile delinquency problems are really not taken care of. In fact, I guess you can trace the problem all the way back to around the 1940's, and it was reaching the point where the delinquency problem was so bad that there was no choice except for the community to admit that it is a serious problem and that something must be done, and indeed we started this place (Youth Services Center) a year ago. The rate of delinquency increase is tremendously high. Between 1964 and 1969 for Chinese juveniles, the rate of increase was around 600%. And I dare say that's probably the highest increase among any of the ethnic groups in San Francisco and maybe in the rest of the U.S. So what we try to do here is to try to bring the traditional Youth Services agencies and services, the probation department, California Youth Authority, San Francisco Board of Education, lawyers, and social workers, together and to work with the juvenile that gets into trouble.

QUESTION: What kind of program do you carry on here?

WANG: We don't have any program. We only offer direct service to an individual and his family.

QUESTION: What are the usual charges... drug abuse, petty theft?

WANG: No, drug abuse is primarily limited to the American born-youth, who are more, in many ways, assimilated into the American youth culture, whereas the foreign-born because of language barriers and cultural differences, they are not quite in with the drug scene. But there are other things common to both American-born and immigrant youth, especially at younger age brackets: truancy, staying away from home, petty theft, shoplifting. These are very common among both boys and girls at the younger age. But as they get older they go into heavier things such as burglary and auto theft, very common for both American and foreign-born. I guess there are two reasons. Partly because they are not tied to the family for all kinds

I WOR KUEN

12 Point Platform and Program

Asian people in Amerika have been continually oppressed by the greedy, traitorous gangsters of our own communities and by the wider racist exploitative Amerikan society. We have been bombarded by the media (newspapers, T.V., radio and schools) with false ideas about how we should accept our position in this society. They have tried to brainwash us and have even coerced us into going overseas and fighting against our own people in S.E. Asia.

But, Asian Amerikans have been fighting back against the oppression of this country ever since we first tasted the bitterness of Amerika's racism and exploitation. The long and heroic history of the Asian Amerikan struggle inspired and strengthened us in our purpose. No longer can we endure these oppressive conditions. We cannot let our ancestors' struggles go down in vain. We know who are our real enemies and friends and we have found new strength for we are joining our sisters and brothers within this country and around the world to fight for freedom and justice against the rulers of this country.

We have tried the peaceful means of petition, courts, voting and even demonstrations. But our situation remained the same. We are not free.

We want to improve the living conditions of our people and are preparing to defend our communities against repression and for revolutionary armed war against the gangsters, businessmen, politicians and police. When a government oppresses the people and no longer serves the needs of the people, we have the right to abolish it and create a new one.

We are working for a world of peace, where the needs of the people come first, which is without class distinctions and is based upon the love and unity of all peoples.

The following 12 points are what we are fighting for:

1. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ASIAN AMERICANS.

The masses of Asian people in Amerika live in ghettos which are like small colonies. The Amerikan capitalists continually attempt to make profit off us by trying to alter our entire way of life for their own benefit. We want liberation from this enslavement so we can determine our own destinies.

2. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL ASIANS.

Western imperialists have been invading and colonizing countries in Asia for the past 500 years. Amerikan imperialism, concentrating in Asia is now engaged in the most seditic and genocidal war of aggression the world has ever seen. We want an immediate end to Amerikan imperialism.

3. WE WANT LIBERATION OF ALL THIRD WORLD PEOPLES AND OTHER OPPRESSED PEOPLES.

People of color, Asian, Black, Brown, Red are all fighting for liberation from Amerika's racist oppression. Millions and millions of white people are also rising up to fight our common oppressor. We recognize that only when the oppression of all people is ended can we all really be free.

4. WE WANT AN END TO MALE CHAUVINISM AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

The thousands of years of oppression under feudalism and capitalism have created institutions and myths of male supremacy over women. Men must fight along with sisters in the struggle for economic and social equality and must recognize that sisters make up over half of the revolutionary army. Sisters and brothers are equals fighting for our people.

5. WE WANT COMMUNITY CONTROL OF OUR INSTITUTIONS AND LAND.

Those institutions in our communities such as the police, schools, health, housing, transportation, sanitation, anti pollution, and welfare must be controlled by and serve the needs of our people and not be geared to the making of money. We want an end to our community being used to make profit for outsiders, such as slumlords and tourist agencies.

6. WE WANT AN EDUCATION WHICH EXPOSES THE TRUE HISTORY OF WESTERN IMPERIALISM IN ASIA AND AROUND THE WORLD; WHICH TEACHES US THE HARDSHIPS AND STRUGGLES OF OUR ANCESTORS IN THIS LAND AND WHICH REVEALS THE TRULY DECADENT EXPLOITATIVE NATURE OF AMERIKAN SOCIETY.

The Amerikan imperialists have tried to justify their world empire by covering up the inhuman deeds they perpetrated in Asia and to the rest of the Third World. They also try to brainwash us in school with racist history which does not tell of the degradation, oppression and humiliation Asians and other Third World People have been forced to suffer in Amerika. We want to learn of the heroic and inspiring struggles Asian people have conducted throughout the world as well as in Amerika.

7. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING AND HEALTH AND CHILD CARE.

The institutions of housing, health and child care are set up only to make money for landlords, doctors, hospitals and drug companies. We want housing, health and child care that gives us life and not slow death.

8. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND ALL ASIANS.

Our Asian brothers and sisters in Amerika's racist jails should be set free for they were not tried by their peers (other Asian brothers and sisters). Political prisoners are jailed because they fought for their freedom and basic rights as human beings. They all must be set free.

9. WE WANT AN END TO THE AMERIKAN MILITARY.

The Amerikan military machine is butchering people throughout the world, especially in Asia. The end of the Amerikan military will be one of the greatest events in the history of the liberation of mankind. We want all Asian Amerikans exempt from military servitude.

10. WE WANT AN END TO RACISM.

White racism has been oppressing Third World People for the past 500 years. Although we recognize and firmly support the progressive white people in the anti-imperialist struggle, we should continue to struggle against white racism on all levels. The racism among Third World People toward each other is being broken down and a new unity is being created in our struggle against our common enemy.

11. WE WANT AN END TO THE GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES OF AMERIKA.

From its beginning, Amerika has been a robber country. It stole land by the use of armed force from native Americans, Chicanos and Latinos, and other peoples. Amerika can now only maintain its present boundaries both internally and externally by the threat and use of violence. We want free passage of all people to and from Amerika. The people of the world have built Amerika, and they must now determine its destiny. Amerika has also tried to blind those who live here as to the realities of socialism by restricting information from and travel to the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Albania, North Korea, and North Vietnam. We want open boundaries and an end to immigration and emigration harassment.

12. WE WANT A SOCIALIST SOCIETY.

What exists in Amerika today is a society where one man in order to survive must exploit his fellow man. We want a society that works for the fulfillment of human needs. We want decent housing, health, child care, employment, sanitation and old age care. We want a society where no man or woman will die due to lack of food, medical care or housing, where each gives according to his ability and takes according to his need.



ASIAN WOMEN AS LEADERS

EDITORIAL STAFF of RODAN

American society is broken up into different levels based on economic income, education, politics, color and sex. Each level has a prescribed set of rules for action and interplay--roles that are enforced by the levels above. At the bottom of these varying gradations are women of color. Third World women face domination by both racism and sexism (discrimination based on sex). Both racism and sexism are means by which American society controls and oppresses everyone. Everyone is forced to conform to the values and roles established by the dominant group in order to "succeed." For the Asian movement to progress, it must have a clear understanding of sexism, racism, and imperialism; and deal with them simultaneously.

For Asian women in general, the stereotypes or roles have been of two major kinds: either docile, submissive Oriental dolls who will cater to the whims of any man; or the Suzie Wong, sex-pot, exotic bitch-body. Between these two are the efficient secretary, sexy stewardess, the good housekeeper and domestic, the girl any guy would like to marry.

Women in the Asian movement find that these stereotypes are still hovering over their heads. Not only these but new stereotypes, too: i.e., Asian men have tried to define for "their women" what it means to be "heavy." Men in the Asian movement also find themselves tied down to stereotypes. Perhaps they may feel that to be a MAN one must have authority and responsibility. In the same light, they will frown on women who take on a lot of responsibility (and the authority that goes along with it), labelling them as

"unfeminine." Women then tend to fear this loss of "femininity" and so they do the clerical work and the cleaning up, activities for which intellect is not essential or expected. Women may also fulfill these jobs because they do them best. And why do they do them the best? Because women are never encouraged to do anything else; women's potential abilities as a leader are left untapped and undeveloped. She loses her confidence in being able to handle such responsibility.

The sisters who have achieved a position of authority in the movement are a minority and are still trapped by the stereotypes that society has created. It is a struggle for women to attain the top leadership positions. Women who "make it" into such positions have had to reject the stereotypes already imposed upon them. But because the new definition of "the Asian woman" has not yet evolved, women find themselves in a "limbo." Some find themselves being labelled as Bitches--women who speak out loudly and strongly; who are authoritarian, who boss people around, and command some form of respect. Some must resort to being overly diligent and efficient to prove themselves as worthy of the same leadership positions as the men. Others gain respect by appearing to accomplish work in a multitude of projects but actually only completing a few tasks. And still others attain their leadership positions as token gestures. Some women can gain respect only by putting up with put-downs on other women, i.e., "you're not one of those bird-brained little girls," or "You're as strong as a man!"

Once women do get into leadership posi-

Reprinted from RODAN, Northern California Asian American Community News, Vol. I, No. 9 (April, 1971).

tions, they find that their ideas are usurped by the men, who then take credit for the idea as being their own. Women are often heard but not listened to. Many times, the woman must play her old role in order to get things done: "Oh, please, can you help me carry this. It's much too heavy for little old me..."

How can these problems be solved? People must recognize that women are half of the working force in the movement against oppression, exploitation, and imperialism. They are half of the working force in creating the new revolutionary lifestyle. Men and women in the movement must therefore begin to live the ideals and goals they are working for. To do this, they must not let chauvinist acts slide by. People cannot work together effectively if there are hidden ten-

sions or if people let little annoyances build up inside themselves. They must deal with racism or imperialism. They must be able to develop as human beings, not subject to categorizations and stereotypes. Developing as people confident in themselves, in their ideas, they will not be afraid of criticism; they will see the need for criticism, self-criticism in order to move forward. The struggle is not men against women nor women against men, but it is a united front striving for a new society, a new way of life.

If I go forward,
Follow me.
Push me if I fall behind.
If I betray you,
If they take me,
Avenge me then in kind.

lives within the limits of Courtland. The rest, like my family, live on farms a few miles outside of town.)

Courtland High School (which unified with Clarksburg High School to become Delta High three years ago) was comprised of about 40% Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, and Black students. However, all the teachers and school board members were white. Money was lacking and facilities were poor. It was finally condemned during my senior year and we had to move to another school. Even today, at Delta High, money, facilities and qualified teachers are scarce.

Since Courtland is predominantly white and the people are conservative, getting information was extremely difficult. The minority members of Courtland are perhaps aware of the racial forces working on them but they do not want to "make waves" for fear of censorship (which is quite real in a town of 600). Sadly enough, my parents

built practically overnight and today the same buildings still stand. Like Courtland, Locke's heyday is long gone. Once a busy town filled with wine, women, and song, today it is little more than a quaint, sleepy town that is slowly dying. Old men sit in their chairs and stare blankly out into narrow, gravel streets. Locke has had publicity brought to it in the form of newspaper and magazine write-ups that capitalized on its "quaintness". The papers did not show the living conditions of those who inhabit Locke. Houses that were cheaply built fifty years ago and which are ready to collapse are still being occupied by families. Rusting, wrecked autos and stagnant ponds lie within the backyards of many of these houses. Two of my friends whose families have played prominent roles in Locke's history live in quite comfortable homes. The housing is, however, inadequate and outdated.

I know many of the kids that live there

THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN THE SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA

KEN SUYAMA

About thirty miles south of Sacramento lies a unique region--the Delta. Much like the better known Mississippi Delta, it consists of numerous waterways, rich farmlands, assorted wildlife, and sleepy river towns. The similarities between the two regions are surprisingly numerous also with respect to a more relevant issue: racism. In Mississippi, the Blacks are persecuted--while in the Sacramento Delta Asians and Chicanos are the objects of racial prejudice.

I have lived in the Delta region for all of my nineteen years in a small river town named Courtland. When I was small, we lived in a house owned by the rancher for whom my father worked. I was too young then to even think about my racial background. Of course I realized that I was Oriental, but my friends were of all races and at the age of seven, no one care less about the color of his skin. When I was twelve, the people my parents worked for were divorced and we had to move out. Unable to find housing, I remember my mother telling my father when he was considering one house that the people who owned it probably would not sell to a Japanese family. Later, when my father got a job as a school gardener, he expressed surprise that the state school system would hire him. These incidents did not make an

impression on me at the time, but as I got older, I began to wonder why comments like that were necessary here in America.

The following are reports on three small towns in the Delta, each with an Asian population. The data gathered are mostly first-hand from interviews and personal experiences. The dates are from the "River News-Herald", a newspaper published in Rio Vista, California.

Courtland

Courtland is a small town of about 600 which was founded in 1870. It quickly became a booming rivertown due to the rich surrounding farmlands. Chinese farm labor was introduced and a Chinatown was born. One Chinatown which stood along the riverbank burned down completely in 1885 and a Chinatown was built in town. Today the same buildings stand along a gutted, narrow road and old men pass the time away while chickens and dogs scamper about. Although some Mexicans and one Chinese family live outside of "old Chinatown" today, it was originally planned to keep the minorities in Chinatown. (During World War II, anti-Japanese sentiment was extremely intense and no Japanese at all were tolerated. Even today, only one Japanese family actually



belong in this category for they felt that it is wisest to remain quiet and stay out of trouble. The same general feeling prevails among the rest of the older generation Courtland minorities.

The youth of Courtland are of two categories: (1) Those who get an education and leave town and (2) Those who drop out of school and become farm laborers. The future of Courtland is not very bright--for without any industries besides farming to attract the young, there is no population growth. It is safe to assume that Courtland's booming era ended when the last steamboat stopped running on the river.

Locke

Locke, an all Chinese rural ghetto, was established in 1915 by "Charley" Lee Bing (the grandfather of a friend of mine) after a fire in the Chinatown of Walnut Grove left the Chinese there homeless. Locke was

and most of them plan on leaving as soon as they can. Of course they will come to visit, but not to live. Those who do stay, are destined to become laborers or welfare recipients, like the old men who live there now.

It is interesting to compare Locke, a rural ghetto, to Chinatown, San Francisco, an urban ghetto. In both communities, housing is poor and the youth are faced with many problems. Like Chinatown, Locke has had trouble with juvenile delinquency. Parents prefer to iron out their own problems rather than call in outside officials. Both are in a sense removed and in a world of their own, for once inside Locke, you are in an all Chinese community, a smaller version of Chinatown. Both towns capitalize on the tourist trade. Although Locke does not have the numerous shops that Chinatown has, the main businesses in Locke are restaurants and stores.

The main difference between the two

communities is their location--one is in the heart of a great city while the other is hidden along a river. Both share common problems: youth, housing, etc. but since Chinatown's location makes it hard to ignore, its problems are gradually being brought out and examined while Locke has been easy to forget.

The future of Locke is uncertain, for the youth are drawn away to the cities and all who remain are the uneducated, the old, and the people tied to Locke by property which range from a restaurant or store to a shanty behind a rusting junkpile. It is difficult for me to project into Locke's future, but I can say with reasonable certainty that it will exist on the roadmap as long as a handful of its citizens remain and operate the small businesses there. However, its significance and relevance to the rest of the world is handicapped by its location and its existence will be a limited and perhaps a digressive one.

Walnut Grove

Less than half a mile south from Locke lies Walnut Grove, a larger town of about 1,000 Caucasians, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans. It was founded in 1850 and like the other rivertowns, the steamboats and farming kept it alive during its early years. The Chinese, Japanese, and the Mexicans moved into the area as farm laborers during the early 1900's. The Chinese remained as laborers or opened small businesses, stores, restaurants, etc. The Japanese, who also started out as laborers gradually acquired land and became farmers. My grandfather, who was one of these men, owned a farm a few miles outside of town. Most of the Japanese, in fact, before World War II lived on nearby farms rather than in the town itself. The Chinese lived in a section of the main town until a fire forced them to move and establish Locke. The Mexicans arrived later and remained as farm laborers.

Like many rivertowns along the Sacramento and the Mississippi Rivers, Walnut Grove was and still is segregated. It lies on two sides of the river and the story of how the minorities came to live on one side is interesting. During its early days, the town was centered on the east side. At the time, Walnut Grove, except for a Chinatown, was predominately white. Gradually, as more Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Mexicans came and settled on the east side, the whites moved out to the west side. Thus the whites came to live on the west side (called Clampett Tract by the local residents) while the poor whites and the minorities lived on the east side and it has remained this way.

The story of how the Japanese came

to live in one section of east side is one which reflects the forces which were at work after the war. Many of the Japanese farmers (including my grandfather) lost their land during internment, and after returning from camp, they settled to one side of the railroad track that ran behind the east side. Anti-Japanese sentiment was strong and thus they had to lease instead of buy the land upon which they built their homes. These homes were built from war surplus materials and as housing, were poor. Asphalt shingles, used lumber, and corrugated steel were the common building materials. Jobs for the Japanese were scarce, many of them (like my uncles) turned to farmwork.

As the years went by, the Japanese once more became assimilated into the community and better jobs were found. Today, many of them live in quite comfortable homes but they still do not own the land. This peculiar situation of owning the house but not the land it stands on became very awkward to say the least. The land owners who live in the bay area refused to sell the land for anything less than a ridiculously high sum. The owners did nothing to improve the land and yet they continued to charge rent at an increasing rate. This state of affairs led to the recent rent strike by the Japanese, the results of which are still to be evaluated. The problem of land ownership hindered many attempts at home improvement. For example, only recently did this section of town acquire an efficient sewer system due to the problems of land ownership. (Editor's note: The East side of Walnut Grove involves three different areas owned by three different landowners. Only families of one area--the area Ken Suyama refers to in the preceding paragraph--participated in the rent strike. The strike was finally settled in February, 1970 after two years of negotiations. The forty households--some households consist of one Issei man or lady--formed the Delta Estates Cooperative Society and purchased the land for \$57,500.)

I must also point out that while many of the Japanese live in comfortable homes, many others live in the shoddy, old houses built after the war. My aunt and uncle, for example, still live in a house built practically overnight. These homes, for the most part, are overcrowded and unsafe. My aunt, for instance, has a television set but not hot water. The housing is inadequate and outdated but the residents seem to make the most of what they have.

The schools of Walnut Grove hold a history of their own with regard to racism. Up until the second World War, the schools were segregated: the white kids went to one school while the minority students went to another school, poorer in facilities and faculty. Both of these schoolhouses stand

today and by looking and comparing the two, one can tell which housed the white kids. The idea of segregated schools seems to suggest the deep south and how strange it seems to find it so close to home.

The conditions of the present day east and west side reflects the racism involved in their development. Today, the west side boasts paved, lighted streets, nice homes, a new telephone building (completed just last year), a recent housing tract development and many other attributes common to white upper and middle class areas. The atmosphere that one gets when visiting the west side is one of exclusiveness with regard to race. In fact when my father was considering renting a house on the west side, (buying was out of the question) the owner had to first check with the rest of the community to see if they would accept a Japanese neighbor. They all approved, but having to ask in the first place reflects the racist attitudes of the community.

The east side in contrast has narrow, gravel streets, crowded old houses, no drainage system, and relatively few street lights. In the winter the streets become mud holes and during the summer are an endless source of dust. There are several small stores owned mostly by Chinese or Japanese, a run-down pool hall, and a few eating places. The entire east side looks old and tired.

The people of Walnut Grove, like the people of Courtland and Locke, are very conservative and uptight. At this point, I must give credit to those who participated in the rent strike but on the whole, many of them feel that they are comfortable, that things are all right and want to avoid trouble. When talking to them, I could not help getting the feeling that deep inside, some of them realize that certain things are not right but they feel unable to effect any changes. Tradition and fear of censurehip also contribute to their feelings of helplessness.

Most of the Japanese men have jobs connected with agriculture while women who work are employed as housemaids or in canneries. My aunt works in a cannery and picks grapes while the mother of a friend of mine works as a housemaid. The Chinese either own small businesses or work in agriculture. Almost all the Filipinos and the Mexicans work as farm laborers. The Caucasians own farms or businesses and control most of the land.

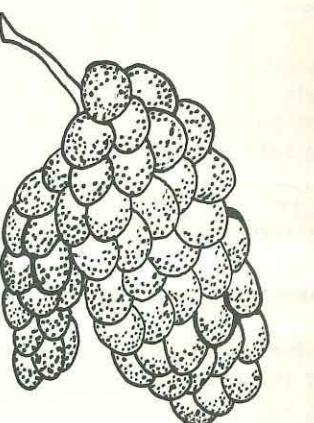
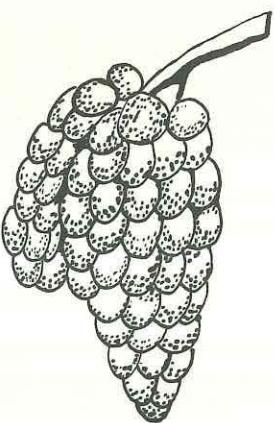
Most of the youth of Walnut Grove finish at least high school and many graduate from college. The white kids usually finish college and return to take over their father's property which in most cases is a business or a farm. Some of them, of course, do not return, but the fact that family property is located in town assures the return of someone. In contrast, the minority kids whose

parents own little besides their house, have little incentive to return and build up the community. Those who drop out of high school or college get drafted and usually return to some job in farming. The Orientals who finish school rarely return to Walnut Grove except for visits. Several of the Chinese kids whose parents own a business have returned to take over, but since business in Walnut Grove is slow, the number returning is diminishing. For the youth in general, there is no future in Walnut Grove. only a past. Most of them leave for Sacramento or the Bay area.

The future of Walnut Grove, though not as bleak as Locke's, is not very bright. The rich white class living there will assure its survival, however, and perhaps even hold hope for its eventual improvement.

The three towns described above are similar and yet different, but the environment is generally uniform and the people think in much the same way. The old generation remembers the heyday of these rivertowns as they slowly pass the time away. For them, these towns hold cherished memories and most of them choose to live in the Delta because of friends, home, and relatives. The generation to which my parents belong are for the most part, destined to stay in the Delta. They realize the shortcomings of living in small towns, but they have learned to live with it and are relatively content for they have more or less found what they wanted out of life in the Delta. The feeling I got from talking with most parents is that although they are content to remain in the Delta, they want something better for their children. They feel that there is not much of a future in the Delta besides farming and accordingly, their children would be better off in Sacramento or somewhere else. Even some of the parents who owned businesses or farms expressed feelings that perhaps a brighter future for their children can be found elsewhere. When asked to comment on the racism found in the Delta, most of them acknowledged its existence but hardly anybody had any solutions or even strong opinions on the matter.

The youth of the Delta in general are not very race conscious, for growing up with friends of all races makes color of skin irrelevant. However, much like youth everywhere, the kids in the Delta are awakening to contemporary racial and social problems. As more and more kids go to college and get an education, they begin to realize the problems of our society in terms of their own environment. The youth of the Delta face many frustrations and problems parallel to the ones faced by youth everywhere and yet unique due to the environmental factors involved. Nevertheless, the insulating isolation of the Delta is gradually eroding.



PHILIP VERA CRUZ

SOUR GRAPES: SYMBOL OF OPPRESSION

From the slum district in the near North-side across the river in Chicago, I came and lived in the shantytowns in California. Being used to city life, I thought I would go back and be with my friends again. Instead I started working in the grape vineyards in the early Spring of 1943 and stayed on until the Delano Grape Strike in September 1965.

For the first few years in California, I considered Delano as my hometown. Though I went to work in the Arvin-Lamont area for thinning plums, picking and packing grapes for different growers, cut raising grapes in Selma, cut asparagus in Byron and worked in the salmon cannery in Alaska, I always returned to Delano. There was nothing especially interesting for me about the old town. But, as I was a stranger in the state, it was the only place where I met most of my new friends.

While in town on Saturdays, I would walk across the railroad tracks to the business district comprising about two and a half blocks between the 9th and 12th avenues in Main Street. Country people coming to town once a week lined up the sidewalks and flocked into those few stores. Parents brought their children with them for new experiences in life.

There was a bank, a post office and a theater. All were small but quaint. Employees like those in the stores were lily-white, arrogant and sarcastic. You could always feel their sense of racial superiority.

Reprinted from GIDRA, November, 1970.

The Delano Theater practiced racial segregation. Seats in the northside and in the center were reserved for whites only. A small part of the theater in the southside was for the minority grape-pickers--Orientals, Mexicans, Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Arabs, etc. People didn't like or care for each other but themselves.

Even the attitude of Filipinos towards their own people was cold with indifference. An unpleasant thrill runs through my spine by just looking at acquaintances as they pass me by without the slightest sign of a friendly greeting. I had talked to them before and even ate with them at the same tables, but they moved around me as if we never met. This prevalent attitude has been hurting people. Communication among them was very slight because of strained personal relations. But, this damaging attitude is just a faint reflection of a racist community.

Filipinos in Delano have worked in the grape vineyards for a long time. Some of them told me the common practice of hiring during the depression years. They said that "in the pruning season, a grower required new employees to get to the labor camp two of three days, or more, for training without pay. In the training and practice period, those new helps were charged 75 cents for board a day. At least the black slaves in the South had their meals free. But, those Filipino trainees paid theirs while working in an agribusiness ranch for gratis. Then, after those recruits learned the

job, they were paid ten to fifteen cents an hour.

In those depression years, Filipinos were blamed for taking the Anglos' jobs. Racist growers and politicians picked on the Filipino minority as an easy target for discrimination and attack. Filipinos were harassed and driven from their camps. But, the sad thing was they didn't have anywhere else to go. They were pushed to the wall and the whole town was against them. The police made false arrests and threw them in jail. In certain cases the courts imposed excessive fines. Those poor unwanted people risked their lives even just to go and buy their groceries. In those race riots staged in their camps, some were hurt and one was shot dead in bed.

While working in different labor camps in the Delano area, I observed that on Saturdays and Sundays during the harvest grape seasons, Filipinos concentrated in Chinatown west of the railroad tracks. (The habit still continued to the present.) They were not welcome in other places in town, so they didn't have any other place to go. Though their job was strenuous, it was also monotonous. After the day's work was done, a quick shower and hurried dinner, they would walk slowly by a small restaurant, or bar, and go close to those windows, screen their eyes and peep through to see who was there. They seemed to be always looking for someone, or some acquaintances or friends, but really there were no particular people in their minds.

There were many standing in groups talking about grapes--names of growers, location of ranches, acreage, wages and bonuses, hours of work, cooks, board per day, etc. Most important was how the growers were. Were they reasonable to work for? To go through that noisy crowd, one had to take a detour or get off from the sidewalk to the middle of Glenwood Street.

The whole sidewalk in Chinatown was the busiest Employment Service in all Delano. It was an open HIRING HALL for the Filipino grape pickers. A foreman or anyone ordered to get an additional worker by a grower was a dispatcher. One could be hired in Chinatown but rejected when reporting on the job, or one could be accepted and later fired without reasons. That was why even a small owner acted like a dictator. Right or wrong, or wise or foolish, his word was law. He was the supreme court whose decision was absolute.

Other Filipino brothers were quite shy. Some of them were just standing and watching the passers-by, or looking at the north end of that buzzing sidewalk then turning to the

south to see what was happening. There were some squatting or sitting on copies of the DELANO RECORD on the edge of the sidewalk. Like brown owls, they turned their head from one side to the other to check if the entire flock along the block was still in peace.

Moving into the restaurants, bars, card-rooms and pool halls, I sometimes found them packed with Filipino grapepickers. For a change of environment on weekends, they didn't mind paying the high prices on the menu or for beer at the bar. Some were hungry and eating, others were just lingering around and flirting with the waitresses or girls behind the bar. Cardrooms and pool halls were usually together. Women were all over the place participating in all those activities. The whole business looked like a mixed-up affair.

One might prefer to go to the pool hall. To feel and look important, he would walk erectly, seemingly with dignity, stop at the counter and survey those Havana cigars, and would fill his shirt pocket with those long fat cigars. Lighting and smoking a big cigar in the corner of his mouth gave him the feeling and semblance of a prosperous grower, or maybe a banker. But, he could be easing his nervousness or could just be addicted to that habit-forming stimulant.

In that pool hall, sputum of tobacco juice spotted the floor along the walls, especially in the corners. Reflected against the bright light, the gamblers in the adjoining room played cards or dominos in the cloud of smoke. After inhaling that foul air for several years, each made his saddest and loneliest first, and maybe his last trip--to the tuberculosis sanitarium. Loss of precious health and lives were the unnecessary but inevitably cruel effects of forced racial segregation.

Sometimes a squabble would start in a cardroom. A guy got caught cheating in a "paralasi game" and another stood up and pulled a knife on him. The others grabbed the former to calm him down, while the latter ran quickly out through the door knocking down a few men sitting and talking on the sidewalk.

Another fight ensued, worse than the first one. At this time, more men were involved. Thinking that those fights and the confusion were giving the business a bad reputation, the proprietor called the Delano Police Department. He believed that the good relations he had with the city police would always help him with his headaches with those roughnecks.

Within a few minutes, the police arrived and mixed with the crowd. Not knowing who were fighting, they arrested people on the side-

walk at random. But, before the police left, the chief gave a stern, curt statement, "You are supposed to be in the labor camps to pick grapes when the growers need you. If you don't do that, then go back where you belong, or I'll throw you all in jail. I don't want to see you here in town again."

An elderly man, reflecting on what had happened that evening remarked, "All these people have been moving from one place to the other. Wherever I went, there was a place for Filipinos to gather together and just be among themselves. Like any other rendezvous of our people (a slum district), Chinatown in Delano is a hobos' paradise. Unfortunately, most Filipino community leaders have taken advantage of this situation. They choose to live on the rackets--bars for the disgusted and despondent, gambling for the unjust and greedy, and dance halls for the lonely and unhappy. These businesses are the sources of easy but questionable money. But, since they are at the mercy of the city council, police and sheriff department, the proprietors align themselves with them and exploit the minorities. They must make money to stay in the rackets. They would sell a guy for a few dollars because they themselves have no guiding principles." As the growers control the town, so do these leaders take the employers' side in a labor dispute with management.

The next morning, the people in Chinatown went to work for the first picking of the seedless Thompson grapes. With many years of experience, they know grapes. They complained that the bunches were too green. But the growers gave the orders, through their ranch managers and foremen, to pick and pack more for the "high prices in the market." The workers were bothered with their conscience but could not use their own judgment. So, they worked as ordered.

In the afternoon, an inspector went to

a packing house and tested the packed grapes. He found the content deficient and told the owners to stop the picking.

The whole crew was ordered to repack the green grapes, without pay. While all the workers were busy repacking, the inspector was closely watching them. But when he went away, the big grower himself was there and told them to load those sour grapes, first into the boxcar with the repacked boxes on top. This is one of the magic tricks of the growers in the table-grape industry.

With brands from other ranches, the Delano Sour Grapes were sent as delicacies to the metropolis of the United States. The uniform bunches and solid berries, packed beautifully, could have been the choice grapes of the world if the growers had waited just a few more days for Nature to sweeten the fruit.

Premature harvest in the grape industry has been the common practice of the family farm and agri-business. It is caused by cut-throat competition tainted with deceit and unsatisfied personal greed. Customers spend their money for sour grapes not fit to eat. The orders from the growers overpower the conscience and decency of workers to do what is right in their work.

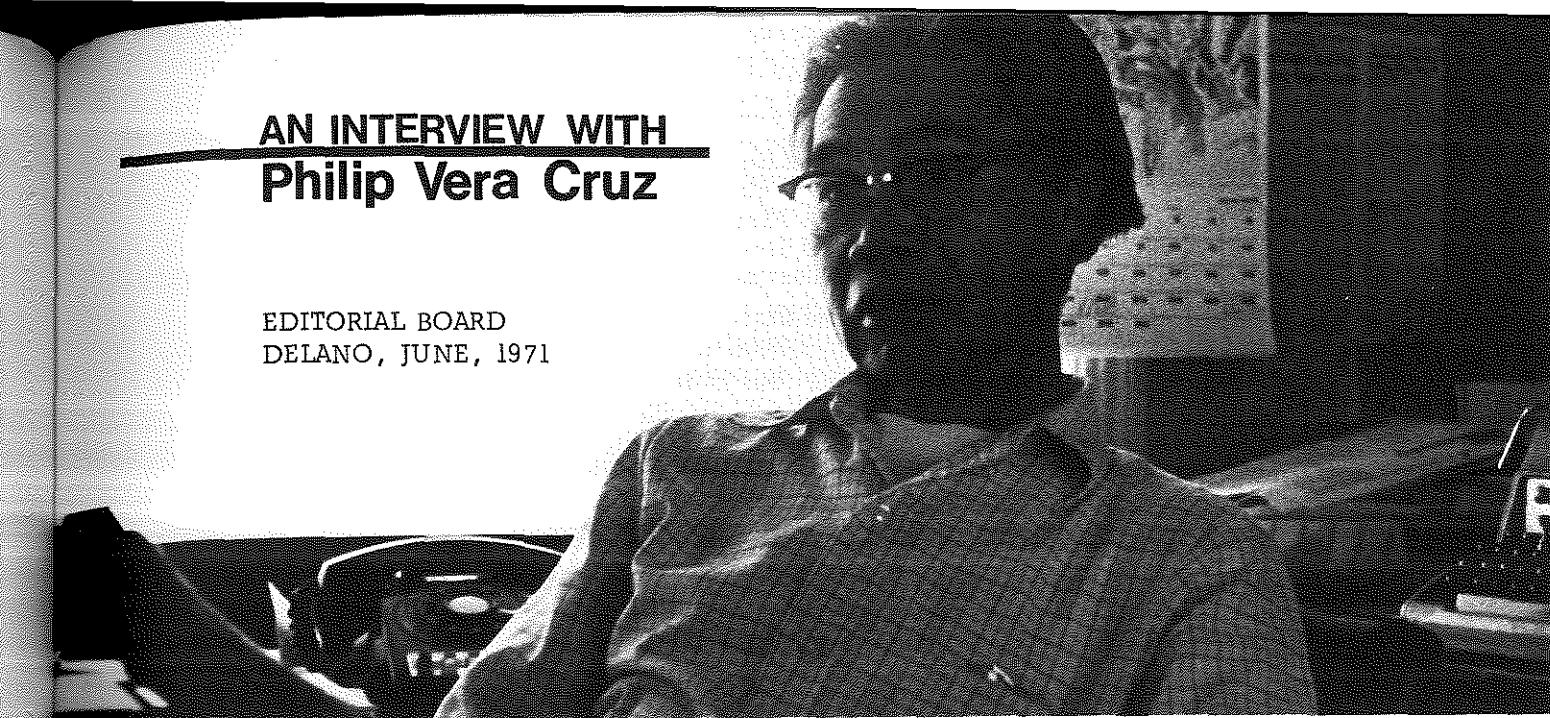
Those accumulated profits of agri-business are generating economic power for the oppression and enslavement of farm workers. They are used to influence legislation to enhance agri-business interests in an ever expanding growth. They perpetuate poverty and shantytowns located in the richest states of the nation. For the children, living in those filthy shacks is a disaster to their welfare and future. Conscience and justice are foreign to the ruthless nature of agri-business. Equipped with the right to property, agri-business is turning the United States into a fascist state. Excessive expansion and oppressive power of agri-business must be checked as a protection for the people's rights.



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AN INTERVIEW WITH Philip Vera Cruz

EDITORIAL BOARD
DELANO, JUNE, 1971



BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND VICE-PRESIDENT, UNITED FARM WORKERS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, A.F.L.-C.I.O.

VERA CRUZ: The farm workers today: I think the way the publicity runs, it looks that people who are now in the Movement have started and accomplished everything. But I don't think that's the truth. It started from the beginning and every little principle has been fought. It was really the Filipinos and the Mexicans who started to build it in Coachella Valley. But the fact was that most of the foremen were Filipinos, and then the crews were mixed workers, Filipinos and Mexicans. Then they staged a strike there, because Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz put up the criteria of \$1.04 an hour to be met by the growers who applied for braceros in Mexico. And so the local workers, including the Filipinos themselves, thought that it was unfair for them to receive \$1.20 an hour while the new guys from across the border would be paid \$1.04 an hour. That triggered the strike. Well, in Coachella they paid \$1.04 an hour because the location was such that there was no, even now there is no, stable work force. But when that one was finished, and they moved to the Arvin-Lamont area and came to the Delano area, where you have a stable force of workers, because they live here. And so the advantage is to get the first price in the market which is high. So they paid the 10¢ more in wages, but the union didn't get the contract. So when they came over here the growers refused to give them 10¢ more because they thought that the people would work anyway--because it had been done during the past. On September 8, the Filipinos met in the Filipino hall and they wanted \$1.04 an hour. The growers rejected it so they went on strike. Officially it was the Filipinos who declared the strike. After 8 days Cesar Chavez and his union joined the strike, but while we were striking together, we were still in separate organizations. The National Farm Workers Organization--that was Cesar's organization.

The Agricultural Workers of the National Committee, A.F.L.-C.I.O. (A.W.O.C.), was the one that really declared the strike and to which the Filipinos belonged. Some unforeseen events came in; the Teamsters Union came into A.W.O.C. and they said that they would like to help the farm workers organize their own union. But when the farm workers became organized, they were in competition with us. That happened during the Di Gorgio campaign. But the Teamsters Union was trying to sign contracts that were really not getting much benefit. And that's why the growers liked the Teamsters Union because they spend less. But then we did not want to give it up. We claimed that it was our right to organize the farm workers, and we claimed that it was out of their jurisdiction. And so the fight went on and we beat

them here. Now it reoccurred in the Salinas Valley. Because while we were still trying to boycott and sign the grape growers, they already had been organizing in the Salinas and Santa Maria Valley. So because of the threat of the Teamsters Union, we merged into one--and that's the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. That's why we are in one union now.

Now I would like to give you the differences that I see between the A.W.O.C. and the N.F.W.O.A., Cesar's organization. Now in the A.W.O.C., it is a straight labor organization. But in the N.F.W.O.A., it's a mixture of many things--like the students and the churches are involved; C.O.R.E.; the people who are going to the South and participated there in civil rights; the Peace Corps; and all those things. So we have all kinds of people. To tell you frankly, I believe that the other side has even more motivation, has given even more inspiration. There were certain other goals beyond money. They were fighting really for the rights of people and the dignity of human beings. And so that's why those eight years that they had are being expanded as we get more contacts because a lot of people are talking to us. So education is a two-way street. While we try to give information about our struggle and how we live on farms to others, why they come over here also, and educated us in their own way. So now the union has gone beyond the dollars and cents, prices as the standards of progress. I think the dollars and cents are only incidents that have come into a struggle for livelihood. Because of the involvement of many people, the goals of the union have also expanded--the union is trying to build one big co-operative. Then under the big co-operative, it will have multiple services, like cleaning, and then there could be a bank. We have to get a plan for health and welfare and even the legal services, and many others that could be done.

QUESTION: How long have you had the idea of a co-op...since the beginning of the union?

VERA CRUZ: I think they (N.F.W.A.) even had it before the merger, and after the merger we adopted the project of the union. Really that one there (the union headquarters known as 40 acres) is not really a co-op. It's only used by the gasoline station. We have not sold any shares yet.

QUESTION: Are you going to sell only to the workers?

VERA CRUZ: Yeah, the workers. 'Course we have our credit union. And the workers are encouraged to save their money, like putting in \$5 a share. Then we charge them 25¢ more in the beginning for stamps and office things. When he puts his money there, it grows at 1% interest, and then when he borrows, it also charges 1%. So the idea is to get the people's money and loan it to people who need the money.

QUESTION: What areas in the state are you going to have these services available?

VERA CRUZ: Well, we've got to start in Delano. And then, we've got to build them around, where other farm workers are, because it would be impossible for them to come in. Those are the hopes of the plan that the union is trying to achieve. The most important thing is that the farm workers will be organized. That's the only way where you could make changes. Again, Cesar had been mentioning that the union should have land. If the union would acquire land, and then the workers would work on it, the ownership will be collective. So when you put up a co-op, it is not limited to retirement villages alone. The retirement village is housing, but it will have some assets, but the difference is that the ownership will be collective. I think that the seed of socialism is being planted--and that's why I'm interested.

QUESTION: Do you expect any sort of repression against implementing your socialist model of the co-op? Do you expect the government and the growers to really come down on you?

VERA CRUZ: Oh yes, they will fight us. But in the beginning we have to fight them. Everything that you gain, you've got to fight for it. That was one big mistake that we made in the beginning. These are different categories of conflict. Of course the capitalists are your enemies. Capitalism cannot exist without exploitation, and you know exploitation is not fair; it's unjust. So if you are an honest man, then you don't like it. The conflicts are inside...are personal things. In an organization, you have honest people and opportunists. Right here in my experience in organizing you've got to fight within and without. There are conflicts of personalities, and ambitions, and ideas that you've got to start fighting in the beginning. Of course there are a lot of considerations that you've got to make. For instance if you fight within the organization in the beginning and try to start this other (the boycott), then you don't have a union. I mentioned this because we will be attempting to organize the young people, and we got to keep it in the right direction.

QUESTION: How is the union organized--the relationship of the leadership to the followers? Who initiates the programs? Do the programs start from the people, or do they start from the leadership?

VERA CRUZ: We are kind of fishing. Good leadership listens. And that's why Cesar is smart, because he listens. Then there is the tendency that when you become too popular and you think you are somebody, you are still the same shit, you know. But you feel kind of bigger and bigger. That happens to some guys, and then they lose contact of the people. And then they cannot communicate with them anymore.

QUESTION: How do you decide on what tactics to use?

VERA CRUZ: You've got to vote for it. You've got to tell them that they should not be so offended in being criticized, because if you don't criticize others' ideas, then how could you improve? Now I say what I think is right, but then, I'm not the judge. So if we try to hear from each others' viewpoints, we will arrive to a better conclusion. But you've got to be sure that they understand that within the system you've got no way out. They find out that the strike is going on, and the boycott is effective; now they are trying to legislate the state and federal laws. This government is supposed to be a democratic form of government--a representative form of government, but in fact it's not. Whether you are going to elect a Democrat or a Republican, there is no difference, because he will do the same bullshit.

For example, in the state of Idaho, now they require that the workers are working for 6 days before they are able to be a striker. Then nobody would help us. It would be illegal. Not only that but during the harvest season, to be able to do that, it doesn't take very long to harvest the crops, for grapes, two weeks. Another example is that Cory Bill, State of California, which is trying to restrict boycotting.* They had a hearing in Sacramento and they have some powerful people. It's not far-fetched at all. The reason why they could do that is because the people in the state legislature and in Congress are elected because of the money big companies and corporations give them. Everybody is trying to get his share of the loot that they robbed from the people. So they don't give a shit. They can make a bill and pass it overnight because

*Editor's note: The Cory Bill was defeated, largely because a major campaign and publicity drew widespread support for the U.F.W.O.C. cause.

they are not protecting the people, but they are protecting business. Automation will accelerate the changes. Automation is here right now and there is a sociologist that I have read, Daniel Moynihan, offering a guaranteed wage. It's not a matter of charity, but a matter of right. He offered \$3200 a year for four. Of course that's not enough. Even if the government will appropriate some money as a guaranteed wage, it will always be too little. In the problem of automation--I believe in automation--and then let the people be employed for social services, and further their studies, get educated, so they will know better how to live together. Then the ownership has to be changed. All the system's got to be changed--and it's got to be socialism because if you stick to private enterprise, private enterprise will always claim all the production. And he won't let it go until he gets the profits. Now that way, the production will always be here on the profits instead of what the people need. So there is always misappropriation--others will be wealthy, and too many people will be without. And they will be hungry, and those are the causes of problems.

QUESTION: You talked about youth organizing before. What sort of plans do you have for that area?

VERA CRUZ: I feel that the Asians don't have the number for the pressure like the blacks and the Mexicans. So we got to put the Asians together. It would be easier for us because we are pretty close together. You look like one another, you cannot tell really which one is which. To start with that's a good thing. But we cannot win alone, and so we got to ally ourselves and the other minorities and also with the Anglos who are really in sympathy with our ideas.

I feel that the young people are very revolutionary. The people who are coming are mostly coming from the middle class and these young people I think are disappointed because what they learn in school really does not fit what is around outside. They think that they're not getting the real information about what is going on. It disturbs them. It has a lot to do with their accumulation of property; the middle class... they got their good homes, conveniences, they got money invested, their folks are professionals, and so on. And so they are not worried about the next day. They always got something to eat. They have their pride to sustain them.

QUESTION: What about with Asian people?

VERA CRUZ: Asians...they're just as bad as the others. Take for instance the business people (Asian business people). They're just as conservative as the Anglos. And I guess there is some reason for that. They are in the minority and it scares them to death. If they involve themselves with this kind of struggle, then they might lose all they got. So they will be reduced to working people. And they don't want to lose that advantage.

QUESTION: You said that some of the Anglo young children have rebelled against their parents, against all the materials goods they have. Do you see the same things happening for Asians?

VERA CRUZ: I think so too. They're also rebelling, but you see Mama is not so rich. Maybe in the middle class, but she's not too rich. Some have really got wealth; very few. They (the kids) don't fight them (their parents) but they do what they want. I find that among the Chinese and the Japanese and also some Filipinos. However, the parents of young Filipinos today are not like the Japanese and Chinese. The Japanese and Chinese got some kind of security. They have gone into business and they become professionals. So the young people are not very worried much about being kicked out. But for the Filipino it's going to have bad effects. The parents are poor. And they got a helluva time to

get him through college. And so if he joins the demonstration and is jailed, he will get hell at home. But the Japanese and Chinese young people are more free because if Mama gives hell, they (kids) say, well, they don't want me, I'll go out, and then Mama will call him back anyway. And Mama is not so hard up. That is the difference.

Asians are like any other people. What makes them rebel is that they feel repressed, and they're not getting the rights they hope to have. Another thing is they also have their own ideas--their eyes are open wide, and they understand the idea of this parent/child conflict today, and the fact that China is the real, unquestionable power in Asia. I think they feel stronger also. There's a great difference between belonging to a little country and a big one, because Asia someday, one by one or in groups, the others will follow in line. And it's just a matter of time...

QUESTION: Before all the Asian countries are strong.

VERA CRUZ: Yeah, I mean when they will be on the same system. Even today I think the Filipinos are rebelling because of that knowledge they got. I think that other countries will not really risk a dangerous war when China is ready because they will know better then. The Asiatics have been insulted, since they were here. They also try to place the Asians as dumb-bells, and imitating and cannot figure out anything. But the atomic bomb was created by China. They did not steal any goddamn secrets from the U.S. like Russia. They have their own intellectuals. As long as there are problems, there is somebody to solve them.

QUESTION: How are relations between the Chicanos and Filipinos?

VERA CRUZ: I think the more sensible ones will put the union together; the others are irresponsible; they're not disciplined. The Filipinos and the Mexicans...you got to get the other groups, too! We will not have any power, not enough to effect some kind of changes. That's why I would like to have the Asians work together to begin with.

QUESTION: How do the Filipinos here get along with the Filipinos in the city?

VERA CRUZ: It looks like they know each other exactly. They have been a long time and they have been also moving from the city to the farm, from the farm to the city; so they're pretty well acquainted now. It's not like in the beginning.

QUESTION: Do you think the problems are the same?

VERA CRUZ: They're identical. That's why you can connect the city people and the farm people, because the principles are the same. For instance, in the farms you get injunctions, and that is to prohibit you from picketing. Now you're fighting for your freedom of speech and information (in the cities). In both cases they are fighting for their own rights, which are fundamentally the same. And so the poor...you can connect the two. You isolate one side, then the other one will be powerless. When you put them together, it's a great power, and you apply that pressure to change things. You're working in an alliance with the other groups, like the middle class. You see, there are two revolutions today in the U.S. One is coming from the bottom, the other one is coming from the middle class. The middle class really is the greatest resistance to progress because it has votes that determine the officials in the state to the federal level. You can look back in history that the significant leaders who have made changes in the world have been middle class. There are reasons for that--they are educated and are well-equipped for leadership. They are not afraid of economic



shortcoming, because they've got money. When these guys are educated, they don't care how many billions the other guys got, but they think that their programs are superior to those people; so when they stand up, they are backed up by the people. That's where leadership comes in.

QUESTION: What would you include as part of the middle class revolution--what sort of movements are there?

VERA CRUZ: They're coming to the students and the unions and some political organizations. You've got the socialists, communists, and students. Then you have also some changes in the churches. The movement tends to be split, and the progressive side seems to be gaining more everyday. I think the changes will be faster, because once you start a movement, the momentum, the inertia is always operating, and it's pretty hard to stop it. You cannot even stop it. One individual cannot stop it. You stop now, and somebody picks it up, and it keeps going.



INTERNATIONAL HOTEL

Chinatown and Manilatown occupy seventy square blocks in North San Francisco. To the north are the gaudy nightclubs of North Beach, to the south and east stand the buildings of San Francisco's financial district, and to the west are the plush hotels of Nob Hill. The crowded, shabby streets of Chinatown and Manilatown stand in sharp contrast to the affluent surroundings.

The Chinatown-Manilatown area has the highest population density of elderly persons in the nation. The overcrowding and poverty result in the highest tuberculosis and suicide rate in the nation. Every year 6,000 newly arrived immigrants take up residence in the Chinatown ghetto adding to the problems.

Evicted

In December 1968 residents of the International Hotel, one of the few low-income housing facilities in the area, were told to vacate the hotel immediately so that a parking lot could be built on the site. Protests

and demonstrations were mounted in the community in an effort to save the hotel. Finally the owner of the hotel, Milton Meyer, Inc., agreed to lease the hotel to the United Filipino Association (UFA).

The lease, however, was never signed. The night before the signing of the lease was to take place, a mysterious fire broke out in the hotel. Three tenants were killed in the blaze that completely destroyed the north wing of the building. Lease negotiations were broken off. Evidence pointed to arson as the cause. However, both Milton Meyer, Inc., and city officials claimed the fire was an accident.

Immediately after the fire, the city moved to condemn the building. They offered to tear the building down for Milton Meyer, Inc., at no cost. Hotel tenants and the United Filipino Association decided to fight the condemnation. Picket lines appeared in front of city hall and the offices of Milton Meyer, Inc.. UFA lawyers filed a suit against Milton Meyer, Inc., charging that the company was negligent in its operation of the hotel.

Hassled

Meanwhile, hotel residents were harassed and intimidated. Kitchen facilities were locked up. Tenants often found themselves without electricity. Sanitary facilities were not maintained. The city relocation agency began to displace tenants out of the hotel. Mr. Wing Lew, a resident of the hotel for twenty years, was forcibly moved to another hotel three blocks away. He struggled back despite the fact that he could barely walk. Unfortunately strained from the constant harassment, some tenants sought other housing.

The picketing and the campaign to mount public opinion against Milton Meyer, Inc., began to have its effect. In the face of declining business and mounting public support for the UFA campaign to save the hotel, Milton Meyer, Inc., agreed in July, 1969, to lease the hotel to UFA for two years, with a third year optional.

However, the signing of the lease was not a total victory for the UFA. Under the new lease the United Filipino Association agreed to pay rent of \$40,000 per year. In addition, the UFA would pay property taxes on the building which amount to around \$25,000 per year.

The UFA found itself in possession of a dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe building. In the course of time, tenants of the hotel and Asian students began to rebuild. The volunteers came from as far away as Los Angeles and New York to make the hotel a decent, low-cost dwelling. The first step was to repair the fire ravaged North wing at a cost of \$80,000. The cost would have been considerably higher if much of the work had not been done by student and community volunteers.

Donations of furniture, paint, and building materials together with an abundance of manpower brought about the change. What was once a run-down hotel is now a real home for the elderly Filipino and Chinese residents. Cracks and holes were patched, walls were repainted, and old furniture was

repaired or replaced. Often on Saturdays, the hotel was jammed with volunteer workers. As rooms were renovated, people moved into the storefronts on the ground floor. Most of the spaces were sub-leased to service-oriented programs. They sought to serve the needs of the community. The Asian Community Center provides a supplemental food program for expectant mothers with small children. In addition, they have a free film every weekend for the elderly in the community. Also housed in the building is the Chinatown Youth Council, an organization that attempts to serve the needs of street kids.

The services offered at the International Hotel and the entire block have achieved recognition in the community to help overcome the tremendous problems which plague it.

Recreation programs were created in the hotel. Excursions outside the community, monthly dinners, weekly brunches, and a few other successful programs were instituted by the workers to reach out to the tenants. The tenants themselves have taken the responsibility of running many of the programs.

Unity

The generation gap between young workers and the elderly has been bridged through their interaction at these recreation events. Also, tenant participation in the rebuilding of the hotel has given strength and spirit to the whole hotel community.

All in all, the underlying bond between the tenant and the worker is their common goal: to build a new way of life, and a new home.

The strength behind the hotel is the people who are served. They come not only from the Chinatown-Manilatown community, but from as far away as New York and Hong Kong. In the coming struggle, they along with the tenants of the International Hotel will deal decisively with the owner. Then, hopefully, he will understand that human rights are more important than property rights.