1 Charting a Hidden Terrain: Historical Struggles for Inclusion and Justice Prior to the Era of Civil Rights and Electoral Politics

"We, therefore, appeal for an equal chance in the race of life in this our adopted home—a large number of us have spent almost all our lives in this country and claimed no other but this as ours."

—Chinese Equal Rights League (1892)

ANY ATTEMPT to characterize the evolution of Asian America is similar to the impossible task of painting a Chinese dragon. Each artist may come up with a version, depending on his or her own vantage view, but none will be able to provide a full and authentic account of the mysterious creature. For no one can claim to have seen it all, head to tail. Yet, unlike the fabled dragon, the very real and prolonged existence of the Asian community in America cannot be questioned. It exists in historical research, literature, folklore, artifacts, archaeological sites, trading accounts, personal journals, newspaper articles, government documents, and other writings. To what extent and in what ways have Asians in America been able to participate in politics? The answer depends not the least on where one begins the story and how one defines the concept of political participation. If the concept is defined solely in terms of contemporary electoral politics, Asian Americans as a racialized group have lagged behind all other major socially constructed groups in voting participation and political representation (Lien 1997a). However, if one expands the conception to include all types of political action adopted in the group's pursuit for immigration, citizenship, and social and economic justice throughout its history, scholars in the disciplines of history, law, sociology, and ethnic studies have suggested that Asian Americans were hyperactive and sophisticated in their attempts to influence government decisions as well as those of the labor bosses and the American public prior to the 1960s.

Curiously, mentions of this level of political sophistication and involvement by a nonwhite immigrant population have been sorely

absent from the American political science literature. What follows is an interdisciplinary and preliminary survey of a vast but underdeveloped terrain of American politics. The primary purpose is to unravel stereotypes of passivity and monotony.[1] Rather than perceiving Asian Americans as voiceless or docile recipients of racial oppression, this chapter attempts to portray Asians as pragmatic and calculating people capable of adopting a wide array of political strategies and styles encompassing both the left and the right ends of the political spectrum. Their purpose of action was to maximize both their chances of survival and their interests within the given constraints of the ethnic community structure as well as the social, economic, legal, and political conditions in both the United States and Asia. The chapter begins with a brief introduction of the immigration history of Asian Americans and the racial treatment they received. It then discusses the formation of umbrella organizations as a chief means of response among the immigrant population, followed by a discussion of political organizing among the U.S.-born. To illustrate the multifaceted and, at times, controversial style of participation used by groups of Asian Americans before 1965, the balance of the chapter examines a parade of participation spheres such as labor protests, pursuit of immigration and naturalization, the search for economic and social justice, involvement in homeland politics, and wartime patriotism and dissent.

Coming to America

Although the precise origins of the Asian presence in America cannot be firmly attributed,[2] the Filipino villages found along the coast of today's Louisiana were built by sailors from Manila in 1763 and are considered the oldest continuous Asian settlements in America (Espina 1988). However, significant Asian migration to America began with the arrival of the Chinese during the California Gold Rush in 1849. In 1870, the Chinese were 0.16 percent of the U.S. population, but 8.8 percent of California's population, and 25 percent of the state's workforce (Bonacich 1984; Takaki 1989). Before the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, nearly 300,000 Chinese male laborers had arrived in the continental United States—even though about half of them eventually returned to China (Sandmeyer 1973; Takaki 1989).

Welcomed for their industriousness, dependability, mobility, and

low costs, these sojourners toiled in the gold mines long after others abandoned the field. They helped connect the Pacific and Atlantic ends of the transcontinental railroad at Promontory Point, Utah, and reclaimed thousands of acres of tule swamps in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and turned them into agrarian fields. Chinese men filled in for female service workers on the frontier and established themselves as operators of hand laundries and restaurants in America (Chinn, Lai, and Choy 1969; Lee 1978; Tsai 1986). They contributed at least as much to the development of the American West as their Irish, Italian, German, Greek, Portuguese, and Polish counterparts (Fuchs 1990). Yet, their presence was considered too visible, too sudden, too strange; they had the dubious distinction of being both meek and menacing to the predominantly Anglo society. More importantly, many perceived their inclusion in the developing American workforce as detrimental to the joint interests of the Democratic party politicians and trade union leaders (Saxton 1971). Vilifying Chinese labor provided a cheap panacea to the multiple social and economic problems generated out of the massive industrial upheavals of the 1870s (Gyory 1998). Subsequently, only Chinese of merchant and diplomat classes and their families as well as students, teachers, ministers, and travelers were permitted to enter during the period of Chinese exclusion, 1882–1943 (Tsai 1986).[3]

The exclusion legislation of 1882 inaugurated a unique part of the Asian American experience that was both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the Americanization experience of all other immigrant groups. Although neither the experience of the Chinese nor that of other peoples of color can be understood without invoking simultaneously such concepts as racism, nativism, sexism, and labor exploitation, the exclusion legislation significantly curtailed the size and future growth of the Chinese immigrant community and helped secure the dominance of the merchant elite in the predominantly male society. To capitalist America, the termination of the inflow of cheap Chinese labor meant it needed to recruit other Asian labor for replacement. Henceforth, Japanese workers began to arrive in Hawaii and on the mainland in substantial numbers after the mid-1880s. They were followed by a small number of Korean and Asian Indian immigrant workers in the beginning of the twentieth century. The first major wave of Filipino labor migration occurred in the 1920s, in the wake of the exclusion of

Japanese laborers in the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement, of Japanese women in the 1924 Immigration Act, and of Asian Indians in the 1917 Asiatic Zone Act (Bonacich 1984).[4]

Together, these Asian immigrants from parts of China, Japan, Korea, India, and the Philippines constituted Asian America prior to the liberalization of the U.S. immigration policy in 1965. Regardless of differences in the country of origin and time of immigration, each of the other early Asian American groups shared a degree of similarity with the Chinese in the conditions of entry and the problems of exclusion and alienation. For the Japanese and Korean men and women, this period fell roughly between 1910 and 1952; for Asian Indians, it spanned from 1917 to 1946; for Filipinos, whose Asian homeland became a U.S. territory in 1898, immigration was reduced to an annual quota of no more than fifty between 1934 and 1946 (Melendy 1977; Hing 1993; Kim 1994; Kitano and Daniels 1995). It was not until 1943, in the midst of the United States' war with Japan, that Congress began to loosen the immigration and naturalization barriers for its wartime allies—first for China, then later for India and the Philippines. However, for Japanese Americans, World War II (WWII) brought about a severe encroachment of their civil liberties and rights. Executive Order 9066 enabled the U.S. army to relocate to internment camps some 112,000 persons of Japanese descent living in Washington, Oregon, California, and the southern half of Arizona (about 90 percent of the Japanese population in the continental United States), without appeal or due process of law (Weglyn 1976).[5] It was not until the Korean War that the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 made Asians of Japanese and Korean ancestry eligible for naturalization and immigration based on a token number of national quotas.

Against a Context of Racial Antagonism

Part of the reason for the mistreatment of early Asian immigrants was that they came to an America that was plagued with racism and nativism. They arrived in a country where dispossession of American Indians, enslavement of Africans, conquest of Mexicans, and opposition to foreign (Irish, Italian, and German) immigration were endorsed by nearly all of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans (Daniels 1988; Fuchs 1990; Saxon 1990; Jacobson 1998). They arrived in an America whose supreme legal documents contained not only liberal, democratic

values, but also inegalitarian, ascriptive ideology (Kim 1994; Smith 1997). Even before their entry into the United States, the Chinese were victims of racist thoughts found in the accounts of traders, diplomats, and missionaries and were often exploited by the popular penny press (Miller 1969). Once they had landed in America, Asian immigrants almost immediately faced violent attacks because of their perceived threat to the nation's racial, cultural, sexual, political, and class structures.

Between 1849 and 1910, fifty-five anti-Chinese incidents were reported in nine Western territories and states (Tsai 1986). The most egregious ones occurred in Los Angeles (1871), San Francisco (1877), Denver (1880), Rock Springs, Wyoming (1885), Tacoma and Seattle (1885–86), and Snake River, Idaho (1887). Other Asian workers who came after the Chinese were also the subjects of assaults. The more notorious incidents included the forceful removal of Asian Indians from Bellingham and Everett, Washington, in 1907 and from Live Oak, California, in 1908 (Jensen 1988). They also include the expulsion of the Japanese between 1921 and 1924 from various California sites and from Toledo, Oregon, in 1925 (Ichioka 1988) as well as the expulsion of Koreans arriving at Hemet, California, in 1913. Major anti-Filipino riots were reported in Stockton and Dinuba, California, in 1926, and in Exeter and Watsonville, California, in 1929–30 (De Witt 1976; Chan 1991a; Lee 1996).

Lesiglative actions politicized and institutionalized the anti-Asian sentiment previously expressed through mob violence. When Chinese first arrived in California, no national immigration policy existed; the legal and administrative jurisdiction over immigration was mostly in the hands of local governments. Prior to 1882, Congress stepped in only when the health and safety of passengers on ships carrying foreigners were in question (Kim 1994). Nevertheless, the first and foremost national policy detrimental to Asians was established before they entered in large numbers. The 1790 Nationality Act forbade the naturalization of nonwhite immigrants and the enslaved.[6] Although the omission by the drafters of this bill to specify Asians as a nonwhite group subject to exclusion had created inconsistent legal interpretations and openings for the naturalization of some Asians, their successors in Congress had little trouble extending its application to the Chinese.[7] A provision in the Chinese Exclusion Act specifically prohibited the naturalization of Chinese immigrants; the U.S. Supreme Court in the cases of *Ozawa* (1922) and *Thind* (1923)[8] decided the ineligibility of other

Asian immigrants for naturalization. Earlier, the immigration of Chinese women was practically banned by the alleged charges of prostitution in the Page Act of 1875.[9] The Cable Act (enacted between 1922 and 1931) could deprive American-born women of citizenship if they married aliens (Chan 1991a).

At the state level, a reenacted foreign miner's license tax formerly used to drive out Mexicans was levied against the Chinese in 1852.[10] During the same year, a fifty-dollar head tax was imposed on each Chinese passenger who arrived by ship. In 1854, the California Supreme Court ruled that, similar to the case of Blacks, mixed-blood individuals, and American Indians, no Chinese could testify against whites in state courts.[11] The enactment of alien land laws and anti-miscegenation laws in California and many other western and southern states abridged the right of Asians to own property and to form families (Hing 1993). In addition, local statutes such as the laundry ordinances, the cubic air ordinance, and the queue ordinance in San Francisco imposed heavy economic, psychological, and legal burdens on Chinese immigrant workers and businesses (McClain and McClain 1991; Ancheta 1998). The establishment of "Oriental Schools" in San Francisco and the application of segregation laws to Mamie Tape and Martha Lum in Mississippi[12] instituted educational segregation for Chinese and other Asian students (Loewen 1971; Low 1982).

The Nature of Asian American Political Experience and Participation

Victimhood, nevertheless, is hardly the only or the most appropriate term to describe the historical Asian American political experience. For, as shall be revealed in the following sections, Asian Americans were not merely passive recipients of mistreatment. Many wrestled with every possible means to secure their rightful place in America. Their behavior consisted of both activism for accommodation and resistance against oppression and was seen in both blatant and latent forms. Even if the majority reaction appeared to be compliance or nonresistance, this did not mean that Asian Americans were unaware of their deprived political status or that they would abandon the use of protest in the future. Their behavior may simply be approached in a more circumspect or strategic fashion. For instance, a concentration on economic productiv-

ity and financial security among new immigrants may be deemed a necessary step to establishing themselves before they accumulate sufficient resources for political changes (Sowell 1983, 1994). Because of the perceived symbiotic relationship between the native and the adopted homelands, an interest in homeland political affairs could be considered an indirect avenue to raising the political status of overseas Asians (Kwong 1979; Yu 1992). Furthermore, to scholars of immigrant labor such as Lal (1993) and Friday (1994; 1995) or to many who studied Japanese American wartime behavior (e.g., Hosakawa 1982; Daniels 1988; Takezawa 1995; Takahashi 1997), even a response of accommodation might have modified and transformed the nature and impact of oppression. For the first U.S.-born generation of Japanese (Nisei) leaders both on the left and right of the political scale, the strategy of "constructive cooperation" was a temporary measure in exchange for the greater vision of securing their constitutional rights in the long run (Takahashi 1997). Last but not least, Asians were also the beneficiaries of individual friendships and support from other Americans—both white and nonwhite—who chose not to participate in racism and discrimination and helped their fellow Americans obtain justice and equality (Foner and Rosenberg 1993).

Although we may never be able to ascertain the precise amount of political activism within each early Asian American community, what we know shows that an unusually high number of individuals and groups demonstrated their keen interest in and knowledge of the inner workings of the U.S. governmental institutions and the democratic principles—legalism, federalism, separation of power, and checks and balances—from the early days of their immigration (Chan 1991a; McClain 1994; Salyer 1995; Ancheta 1998). Instead of accepting the status quo, they learned to lobby the federal- and state-elected and appointed officials and to challenge within the judicial system the constitutionality of laws made against them. Asian Americans contributed to the establishment of important precedents in civil rights litigation such as the application of the Fourteenth Amendment protection to noncitizens (McClain and McClain 1991) and laid the foundations of modern U.S. immigration law (Salyer 1995). Long before the celebration of nonviolent direct action strategies in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Asians resisted with boycotts, noncompliance, and filling jailhouses to protest discriminatory city ordinances (Daniels 1988; McClain and McClain 1991). Other tactics

of political participation developed before the era of electoral politics included the formation of umbrella organizations in ethnic enclaves, labor organizing and strikes, the waging of diplomatic and public campaigns to sway American public opinion, and the making of political donations for international and domestic causes.

In sum, not unlike other American ethnic groups, Asian immigrants used whatever devices were available to them to participate in the political process. Each group had its own issues, timing, tactics, and rationales for action. Their campaigns for inclusion and protests against injustice cannot be characterized with a single political strategy or style. Instead, the groups adopted a hybridity of actions. Their choice of a participation strategy that ranged somewhere between accommodation and resistance, using either passive or active styles, reflected their own resources, inherited group norms and practices, and faith in the ideals of the American democratic system. Also, it was shaped by the prevailing forms of political expression as well as by the racial, economic, political, and international orders at the time when political action was required. Where resources were available, their participation often began with the conservative approach, by working through the legal and political system. The strategy then escalated to the more diversified and confrontational action plans when accommodation failed or was beyond reach. The working class practiced collective action activities long before the formation of labor union organizations. The spheres of activities highlighted in this chapter include the pursuit of immigration and naturalization rights, economic and social justice, workers' rights, homeland independence, reform, and survival, as well as wartime patriotism and dissent. Generally, ethnic organizations, rather than individuals, led and organized the campaigns; these community organizations provided a vital basis for ethnic political actions (Parrillo 1982; Sayler 1995).

The Basis of Community Response: Immigrant Political Organizations

An unintended consequence of the early anti-Chinese movement was the strengthening of the ethnic community through the forced concentration of population in urban centers. Here, immigrant workers found not only the means of survival in laundry shops, restaurants, grocery

stores, and other urban service businesses but also a complex network of community organizations (Lyman 1974). Based on their ties to the homeland, the Chinese relied on *huiguans* (district associations) and clans (family associations) for mutual support and protection. Out of the need to present a united front to the host society, and at the encouragement of the Chinese consul general in San Francisco, a powerful confederation was formed at the peak of the anti-Chinese movement called the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) or the Chinese Six Companies, for it began with six district associations. In addition to providing critical aid including language, housing, employment, and medical assistance to the bachelor society, the CCBA also helped settle disputes, finance litigation, and advocate community concerns over the exclusion of immigrants from white America. Unfortunately, it also exerted tight social control through its semi-government status by being able to demand payment of fees and deny "exit permits" to those sojourners desiring to return to China who had not paid off their debts. *Tongs,* or secret societies, developed in opposition to the establishment class, the most infamous being the Zhigongtang. While it often operated in the gray area between political opposition and crimes involving drug trafficking, gambling, and prostitution, Zhigontang contributed significantly to the homeland liberation movement by providing critical financial support to Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's revolutionary party (Chan 1991a; Kitano and Daniels 1995).

The closest analogy to the CCBA in other early Asian American communities was the Japanese Association of America (JAA), a loosely coordinated organization composed of four central bodies in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Oregon and dozens of local affiliates. Formed at the height of the anti-Japanese movement in 1908, JAA not only fought the exclusion movement but, as part of the process for implementing the Gentlemen's Agreement, it also enjoyed a semi-government status by being able to issue certificates of registration and entry and reentry permits and control the immigration and travel of Japanese to America. Between 1917 and 1923, it was also involved in a number of lawsuits testing naturalization and alien land laws. The central bodies coordinated policies and the hiring of attorneys, whereas local associations were assigned to raise the designated amount of money for the court expenses. Theoretically all Japanese in America had to belong to the association, but in reality JAA never enrolled more than

a third of the Japanese adult male population. This was in part because many had already spent their limited resources on dues to ethnic trade associations (Chan 1991a).

The Korean and Asian Indian communities were much smaller in size and showed much more concern about the political development in the colonized homeland in Asia than the status of the ethnic community in America. Because of their relative lack of community resources, they were more open to the use of militant actions to achieve their goals. Unlike the ruling elite in the Chinese and Japanese communities (such as successful merchants or farmers who not only maintained close ties with the homeland government but possessed significant economic resources in the new world), spokespersons for Koreans and Asian Indians were often expatriate intellectuals and political activists (Chan 1991b). Nevertheless, many in the communities also understood the interconnectedness of experiences in the Asian homeland and the adopted land and made efforts to promote the welfare of immigrants in America.

The Korean National Association (KNA) was launched in 1909 in San Francisco by the merger of the Korean Consolidated Association in Hawaii, the Korean Mutual Assistance Society in California, and other mainland organizations in a collective effort to protect the lives of two Korean immigrants accused of assassinating an American foreign affairs advisor who openly defended the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula in 1905 (Lyu 1977; Melendy 1977; Choy 1979). The KNA organized mass rallies, directed diplomatic and propaganda campaigns, and raised funds for attorneys and other expenses related to Korean independence. Besides playing a leading role in the political movement, KNA set up language schools for the children, prepared textbooks, and published a newsletter. Homeland politics were also a major concern among Korean religious institutions, particularly Protestant churches, which were the most important community institutions and provided not only religious services, social support, and cultural maintenance but also significant aid to the homeland independence movement.

To promote Indian independence, Taraknath Das and Har Dayal, two individuals with different class and ideological backgrounds, formed the Ghadar Party in Seattle in 1913 under the auspices of two organizations serving Bengali Hindus and Punjabi Sikhs, respectively (Lee 1996). The formation of this political organization represented the

possibility of a coalescence among Asian Indians despite profound differences within the population. The party generally advocated a strategy of direct action and spontaneous mass uprising in India. Its call for revolution became more appealing to the Indian community after the *Komagata Maru* standoff in May–July 1914: Canadian officials refused the landing attempt of a ship carrying almost 400 Punjabis and a crew of 40 Japanese and 165 Sikhs from Hong Kong to Vancouver, and the refusal mobilized virtually the entire Asian Indian population on the West Coast (Jensen 1988). However, plagued by the arrest, persecution, and deportation of its leaders by both the American and the British governments, as well as personal feuds, the party lost its appeal to the community in 1918 after the assassination of its remaining founder (Hess 1974). In addition to the Ghadar Party, a number of political and social groups in California, Oregon, and Washington and on the East Coast also rallied around the issue of Indian homeland liberation despite their separate religious and political affiliations. An organization perhaps more representative of the opinion of the majority of Indian nationalists at home and in America was the India Home Rule League of America, which advocated a more moderate approach to educate the American public about India's status (Hess 1974). To compensate for the Ghadar Party's obliviousness to the economic and social problems of the Indian American workers, a number of organizations such as the Indian League of America and the India Welfare League also fought discriminatory immigration and naturalization laws in the United States (Helweg and Helweg 1990). The divisiveness in religion, race, class, and ideology among the small and dispersed population probably impeded the emergence of a lasting umbrella organization for Asian Indians.

The organizational life of Filipinos was equally diverse and aligned itself along fraternal, homeland political, geographical, kinship, linguistic, religious, and community interests (Chan 1991a; Parrillo 1982). In virtually every area of the American West where Filipinos labored in large numbers, the predominantly male workers established strong and lasting organizations. However, few seemed able to extend their reach beyond regional boundaries. Being U.S. nationals who entered Hawaii and the mainland in large numbers between 1907 and late 1920s to fill the labor shortage created by the exclusion of other Asians, Filipino Americans were less concerned about issues of immigration and naturalization than about labor rights and, to a lesser extent, homeland inde-

pendence. In Hawaii, they faced a segregated system where workers were stratified by race and paid different wages for the same work. Their colonial status guaranteed little representation either in the Philippines or in Washington, D.C., and little protection from exploitation. On the West Coast, their belated arrival to a region already infested with various anti-Asian and anti-alien regulations also precluded their chances of owning land and climbing the agricultural ladder of success. Instead, the majority toiled in the fields as migrant workers and sought to better their lives through labor activism (Chan 1991a; Espiritu 1995).

In general, umbrella organizations in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrant communities were formed in reaction to the escalation of anti-Asian sentiment. Their major functions were to protest mistreatment and advocate the interests of the immigrant community by working within the American political system. A much less structured organizational network consisting primarily of fraternal and self-help societies could be found among Asian Indians and Filipinos. However, because of differences in immigration history and restriction, community size and makeup, settlement patterns, and homeland political and economic conditions, no other communities developed an umbrella organization for the foreign-born that equalled the clout and control enjoyed by the Chinese. Each ethnic community developed its own type of leadership and style as well as sphere of participation based on the community's structure and primary concerns. For the Chinese, the merchant class acquired political leadership because of its early arrival, economic resources, communication skills, and a privileged exemption status during the era of exclusion. Leadership in the Japanese immigrant community also belonged to those who either had close ties with the homeland government or possessed significant economic resources, such as successful farmers. Elites in the early Korean and Asian Indian communities were expatriate intellectuals and political activists. Although intellectuals also spoke for the Filipinos, labor contractors controlled the lives of the majority members of the farmworker community (Chan 1991b).

Political Organizations Among the U.S.-Born and Naturalized Citizens

Although the Chinese American population during the major part of the exclusion era was predominantly foreign-born, that percentage declined

in each subsequent census taken after 1900 and fell below the 50th percentile mark for the first time in 1940 (see table 1.1).[13] This transformation of the demographic makeup is another effect of immigration exclusion when the source of population growth depended more on births in the United States than on international migration. However, given the scarcity of women at the turn of the twentieth century, the Americanization of the Chinese community took much longer than that of the Japanese community. Because of the Gentlemen's Agreement, which cut off the immigration of Japanese men in 1908, but not of Japanese women until 1924, the Japanese population had a much more balanced gender ratio than the Chinese. As a result, the Japanese community in the continental United States shifted from a majority foreign-born to a majority native-born population on the eve of the WWII. In addition, although the Chinese female population was always more native- than foreign-born in the first half of the century, the Japanese female population in the contiguous United States quickly turned from majority foreign-born in 1920 to majority native-born within the next decade.

Growth in the size and importance of the native-born population in the Chinese community was accompanied by increased awareness of its marginal political status. Chinese American citizens realized that their fate was intricately linked to the alien status of their foreign-born counterparts in both the United States and China. They formed political organizations to seek equality and justice for themselves and for fellow Chinese living elsewhere. One such organization was the Chinese Equal Rights League (CERL) of New York, which was perhaps the first Asian American civil rights organization in the United States. It was founded in the wake of the 1892 Geary Act, which not only renewed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 but also made it far more stringent by requiring Chinese in the United States to register for certificates of residence and imposing heavy penalties on violators. The League was to obtain representation and recognition in American politics, but its constituency was a very small group of Chinese naturalized before 1882 whose rights were not recognized by the U.S. government. These naturalized U.S. citizens found that they were not only ineligible for U.S. passports, diplomatic protection from U.S. consulates in foreign countries, and employment in professions requiring citizenship (such as attorneys and legal counselors), but also were not exempt from the restrictions set by Chinese exclusion laws (Zhang 1998).

TABLE 1.1 Chinese and Japanese Population by Sex and Nativity, 1900–1950

	Chinese				Japanese			
	Total	Male	Female	% Female	Total	Male	Female	% Female
1900	89,863	85,341	4,522	5.0	24,326	23,341	985	4.0
U.S.-born	9,010	6,657	2,353	26.1	269	156	113	42.0
Foreign-born	80,853	78,684	2,169	2.7	24,057	23,185	872	3.6
Percent Foreign-born	90.0	92.2	48.0		98.9	99.3	88.5	
1910	71,531	66,858	4,675	6.5	72,157	63,070	9,087	14.4
U.S.-born	14,935	11,921	3,014	20.2	4,502	2,340	2,162	48.0
Foreign-born	56,596	54,935	1,661	2.9	67,655	60,730	6,925	10.2
Percent Foreign-born	79.1	82.2	35.5		93.8	96.3	76.2	
1920	61,639	59,891	7,748	12.6	111,010	72,707	38,303	34.5
U.S.-born	18,532	13,318	5,214	28.1	29,672	15,494	14,178	47.8
Foreign-born	43,107	40,573	2,534	5.9	81,338	57,213	24,125	29.7
Percent Foreign-born	69.9	75.3	32.7		73.3	78.7	63.0	
1930	74,954	59,802	15,152	20.2	138,834	81,771	57,063	41.1
U.S.-born	30,868	20,693	10,175	33.0	68,357	35,874	32,483	47.5
Foreign-born	44,086	39,109	4,977	11.3	70,477	45,897	24,580	34.9
Percent Foreign-born	58.8	65.4	32.8		50.8	56.1	43.1	
1940	77,504	57,389	20,115	25.9	126,947	71,967	54,980	43.3
U.S.-born	40,262	25,702	14,560	36.2	79,642	42,316	37,326	46.9
Foreign-born	37,242	31,687	5,555	14.9	47,305	29,651	17,654	37.3
Percent Foreign-born	48.1	55.2	27.6		37.3	41.2	32.1	
1950	117,140	76,725	40,415	34.5	141,365	76,447	64,918	45.9
U.S.-born	62,090	36,256	25,834	41.6	102,926	53,473	49,453	48.0
Foreign-born	55,050	40,469	14,581	26.5	38,439	22,974	15,465	40.2
Percent Foreign-born	47.0	52.7	36.1		27.2	30.1	23.8	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1943, Table 4; 1953, Tables 4, 5).
Note: Figures are for contiguous United States only.

Prior to its founding, the chief CERL organizer, Wong Chin Foo, toured eastern cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia as well as Midwestern cities such as Chicago to correct American public misunderstanding about the Chinese culture and people (Tchen 1999). He also published several articles in mainstream magazines to acquaint Americans with Chinese traditions and culture. In order to promote mutual understanding between Chinese Americans and the American public, he published the first Chinese bilingual newspaper on the East Coast, entitled *Chinese American (Hua Mei Xin Bao)*, in 1883. This may have been the first attempt by Chinese to identify themselves as Americans of Chinese descent. At its founding, CERL published the pamphlet *Appeal of the Chinese Equal Rights League to the People of the United States for Equality of Manhood*. CERL organized a mass meeting some three weeks after its founding in which 1,000 supporters who were not Chinese joined 200 Chinese merchants to protest against the Geary Act. In its pursuit for franchise, the League was able to persuade a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois, George W. Smith, to introduce a bill to permit Chinese naturalization. CERL also sponsored a test case, spearheaded by the CCBA, questioning the constitutionality of the Geary Act. The League's plea for the franchise was rejected by the Supreme Court in *Fong Yue Ting v. United States* (1893), which stated that Chinese persons not born in the country were not recognized as citizens of the United States, nor authorized to become such under the naturalization laws.

Initially named the Native Sons of the Golden State, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was established in 1895. It was formed to protest the ineffectiveness of the CCBA's handling of the 1892 Geary Act, whose renewal and expansion was considered a violation of their birthrights as American citizens (Chung 1998). The group was also inspired by the activities of the CERL in New York. The stated goals of the Alliance were to elevate their position within the Chinese community, to end racial discrimination, and to accelerate the process of assimilation into American society. The early leaders were usually professionals or white-collar workers whose proficiency with the Chinese language decreased with each passing decade. After overcoming internal strife over participation strategies, the organization was revived by the adverse developments in perpetuating Chinese exclusion following the Chinese government's refusal to renew the 1894

Gresham-Yang Treaty in 1904. They participated in the transpacific anti-American boycott in 1905 and gained respect from the immigrant community for speaking out against the exclusion acts.

Members of the Alliance used their rights as citizens to try to redress many of the discriminatory policies and acts by lobbying Congress and appealing to government officials and agencies on behalf of Chinese Americans and their families. One of the early but failed efforts was the attempt to repeal the Act of March 2, 1907, which required any American woman married to a foreigner to take on the nationality of her husband. The Alliance gained prestige in 1913 by successfully blocking a proposal by California Senator Anthony Caminetti to disenfranchise Chinese Americans. Alliance members wrote to and testified before Congress against the 1924 Immigration Act and succeeded in amending the Act to permit alien wives married before the Act's passage to enter the United States. They also assisted individuals in their cases regarding immigration exclusion by hiring an attorney for each applicant and contributing money to defray the legal fees. According to its official historian, members were involved formally or informally in practically every piece of national legislation affecting the Chinese American and other minority communities. The Alliance encouraged its members to vote and to persuade others in the Chinese American community to vote (Chung 1998). However, the majority of the adult Chinese population were denied franchise until 1943, and despite the efforts of the Alliance the concept and concerns of a citizen-only association remained remote and effectively inconsequential.

A different situation befell the leading native-born organization of the Japanese population. Compared to its Chinese counterpart, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) had grown to become a powerful political organization because of its organizational ideology and strategy as well as the demographic composition and wartime treatment of the population. However, it did not secure its leadership position until the incarceration of Issei (foreign-born) leaders in WWII. Formed by a group of Nisei (first U.S.-born generation) professionals in 1930, the San Francisco-based organization was the outgrowth of several regional organizations, the most significant being the American Loyalty League. Similar to many American-born or naturalized Chinese, these Nisei were incensed by the social, economic, and legal discrimination against the Japanese in America. They were "rebels"

motivated to improve the lot for themselves and other Japanese Americans (Hosakawa 1982). Many in the organization believed that the only way to gain acceptance in the United States was to become 100 percent American and to discourage anything that might cast doubt upon their loyalty. Their preference for accommodation over confrontation was influenced by their social skills, knowledge of and faith in the American democratic system, and the tenor of nonconfrontational political expression of the time (Hosakawa 1982). Although it helped finance the repeal of the Cable Act and the acquisition of citizenship for Issei World War I (WWI) veterans, the League's emphasis on loyalty, patriotism, and Americanization amidst Japanese exclusion was in direct conflict with the primary concerns of the immigrant community. Conceivably, the JACL was far from a major part of Japanese America when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941 (Daniels 1988). Nevertheless, JACL membership nearly tripled after the war broke out (Hosakawa 1982).

When the internment order came, the League not only urged compliance but tried to stifle all dissent within the community.[14] Members in general "sincerely believed that enthusiastic cooperation with their own oppressing government was the best way to ensure decent treatment during the relocation. Even more important, they believed it was the way to get better treatment after the war. To this end they not only obeyed orders and helped to execute those orders, but also . . . went so far as to send gifts of fruit and vegetables throughout the war to high government officials . . . " (Daniels 1988, 239). Many JACL leaders were among the first to volunteer for military service, when that privilege was restored to Japanese Americans in 1943 through voluntary induction. Chosen by the federal government to be the liaison between the Japanese community and the military, the collaboration of JACL members had earned contempt and even physical violence from other Japanese Americans at relocation centers. However, it can be argued that those Japanese Americans who collaborated with the Wartime Relocation Authority and helped supervise the camps were in a process that eventually led to freedom for most of their people and that through accommodation they might have changed the course of oppression in a positive way (Daniels 1988).

In the postwar era, the JACL triumphed with the passage of the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 and the naturalization (but not Title II of the Internal Security) provisions of the McCarran-Walter

Immigration Act of 1952. It achieved these partial successes by building a civil rights coalition with African Americans and white liberals—through actively participating in the National Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, providing support for the passages of fair housing, anti-lynching, and antipoll tax bills, and by filing amicus curiae briefs in a chain of civil rights cases leading up to *Brown v. Board of Education* (Daniels 1988). In return, it gained support for the Reparations Act, which was "a partial vindication of the accommondationist strategy and tactics of the JACL" (Daniels 1988, 298), even though in reality the Act delivered little of the promised payment for property loss due to the internment. Also in 1948, an anti-Asian ballot measure in California that would have made land ownership less accessible for Japanese Americans was defeated in the general election. This victory was a historic first and represented a dramatic change in public opinion from four years prior when a study showed that three out of four respondents had favored a constitutional amendment to deport all Japanese and ban all further immigration from Japan (Daniels 1988).

It would be tempting to conclude that the organizational life of Asian Americans prior to 1965 fell into two camps: those that were concerned about immigrants' rights and those that were concerned with citizens' rights. For example, the foreign-born belonged to organizations aiming to address the needs for mutual-aid, self-protection, and preservation of social and political order inherited from the Asian homeland, whereas organizations seeking social justice and equal franchise were more appealing to the native-born. These alignments may appear correct but only to a limited extent; for the most part, the experiences of the foreign-born and the native-born were deeply interrelated. This dynamic was most obvious in, but not limited to, the experiences of the tiny group of naturalized citizens. These Asian American populations were additionally concerned with both the welfare of people back in the Asian homeland and that of the working class on the domestic front. Moreover, the international and class dimensions often intersected with the ethnic, gender, and generational dimensions of the Asian American experience. Because of differences in immigration history, treatment, and demographic makeup, each ethnic group also had a unique sphere of participation. Generally, the Chinese fought against exclusion and for economic justice. The Japanese sought to protect property rights and strove for accommodation. Koreans' and Asian Indians' participation

centered around activities for homeland independence. Filipinos' political experience was dominated by the struggles for labor rights. Based on the resources accessible to work the system, some groups (Chinese and Japanese) adopted a more conservative approach or style of participation than others. Nevertheless, Chinese and Japanese workers also figured prominently in numerous labor protest movements. The remainder of the chapter is an attempt to synthesize the participation experiences of early Asian groups by highlighting certain actions that fall into these spheres of activism.

Labor Protest and Union Organizing

Although leaders in the American Federation of Labor (AFL) understood early on that Asian workers were capable of being organized and demanding better treatment, they chose to exclude Asian immigrant workers from labor unions for not only economic and cultural reasons but political, ideological, and moral reasons (Foner 1947; Saxton 1971). Union leaders believed that Asian American labor would be used to lower wages and break strikes and that they could neither be assimilated nor organized (Wong 1994). The exclusion of Chinese in the latter half of the nineteenth century was perceived by AFL leaders as a necessary step in building a closer cooperation between white labor and capital in the face of technological transformation. Yet, as early as 1867, thousands of Chinese railroad workers in the High Sierras went on strike againt the Central Pacific to demand better pay and treatment (Chinn, Lai, and Choy 1969). Whereas most of the actions failed to achieve their purposes, Asian American workers staged their own strikes and engaged in other forms of resistance and activism such as mass protest, litigation, and, on occasion, violence against exploitative employers and labor contractors, white or Asian, long before their admittance into the American labor union movement (Lee 1996).

For instance, Chinese railroad and plantation workers in several southern states and Japanese railroad workers in the Pacific Northwest stopped work and either filed suit against the company for breach of contract, seized the company property to demand payment, armed themselves with sticks and knives to protest fatal abuse, or negotiated directly with the companies for better wages (Cohen 1984; Murayama 1984). In the 1870s and 1880s, Chinese workers participated in many

strikes against white manufacturers and their Chinese merchant allies. In San Francisco, a brief but violent uprising occurred in 1876 when fifty shoemakers attacked the trading company of Yee Chung and Co. for contracting 750 Chinese workers to white firms that then segregated them in quarters known to be dangerously crowded and poorly ventilated (Franks 1993). Even those who were hired as strikebreakers in North Adams, Massachusetts, and Belleville, New Jersey, engaged in strikes themselves (Lee 1996).

In Hawaii, Japanese immigrant workers participated in numerous spontaneous work stoppages throughout the 1880s and 1890s, usually to protest brutality or substandard living environments (Yoneda 1971; Ariyoshi 1976; Chan 1991a). At the turn of the century, when the contract labor system ended, many workers participated in unorganized strikes to demand higher wages and obtain promised benefits. For example, 7,000 Japanese workers went on strike against a major plantation on Oahu for four months in 1909. They were subsidized by workers on other islands who continued to work so as to send in contributions. Although the small business and professional associations supported their actions, the Japanese consul general and other members of the establishment within the ethnic community opposed the militant approach. The Hawaii Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) was able to exploit the internal divisiveness of the Japanese community and defeat the strike. After the mid-1920s, Filipinos became the main Asian group in Hawaii to engage in labor militancy, and they did so under threats of criminal charges. A most violent incident occurred in 1924 when 16 Filipino workers were killed and 161 arrested (Chan 1991a).

On the mainland, the Japanese section of the Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (AWIU) conducted more than twenty strikes, which involved over 5,000 Japanese and tens of thousands of Filipino, Mexican, Black, and white workers in the early 1930s (Yoneda 1971). Meanwhile, Filipino workers, reacting to the hostile social environment embodied in the anti-Filipino riots in northern California in and around 1930, began to support labor union ideas (DeWitt 1980). The lettuce pickers in Salinas Valley of California formed a Filipino Labor Union (FLU) in 1933, after the AFL refused to organize a union on their behalf. Although leaders of the Filipino Federation of America as well as most of the local Filipino fraternal organizations disapproved of the militant approach, the formation of FLU laid to rest most of the suspicion against