

civil rights digest

FALL 1976

CHINESE AMERICAN
JAPANESE AMERICAN
PACIFIC AMERICAN
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PACIFIC AMERICAN

IN THIS ISSUE . . . we focus on Asian and Pacific Americans. Like many other groups, Asian Americans have become more active in the last few years in organizing to combat discrimination, stereotyping, and neglect of their needs by various government agencies. Conflicting images about them held by the rest of Americans—that of a model minority, of “tong wars,” of disloyalty, of inscrutability, and of being exotic—have combined to make this struggle difficult. This special issue is designed to make the general reader more aware of and sensitive to the problems faced by Asian Americans, as they are described by Asian American authors.

In the first article, Don and Nadine Hata describe the long history of legal discrimination against Asian Americans, particularly in immigration, education, and employment. This discrimination culminated in the presidential order relocating Japanese Americans to concentration camps during World War II, apparently based on the belief that, unlike other immigrant groups, nonwhite Orientals could not be trusted to be loyal to the U.S. even if they were born here.

Employment problems are taken up in our second article by Kim Lem, who describes a set of difficulties ranging from the inability of Asian American actors to find work to the myriad obstacles new immigrants must overcome. The special problems of elderly Asian Americans are described by Sharon Fujii.

A section of community profiles serves to introduce the reader to five Asian and Pacific American groups by outlining current concerns of each demography as well as identifying current concerns of each group.

Connie Young Yu focuses on education—curriculum, career counseling, textbook stereotyping, and bilingual-bicultural education—and Gard Kealoha outlines the history of native Hawaiians, with particular emphasis on how they lost control of their ancestral lands.

Finally, Tran Tuong Nhu relates the psychological as well as other barriers that confront Vietnamese refugees.

We hope this collection of articles will serve to introduce the history and current concerns of Asian and Pacific Americans, who early on suffered greatly from vicious discrimination and racism that has abated significantly only in the last 25 years. At the end of this issue is a special reading and viewing section devoted to books on Asian and Pacific Americans which can form a foundation for further exploration of the concerns of this rapidly growing population.

This issue was prepared with the help of Asian American staff at the Commission, and our special thanks go to Laura Chin who served as assistant editor.

For more copies of the *Digest* or inclusion on our free mailing list, please write to the Editor, *Civil Rights Digest*, U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20425.

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The articles in the *Digest* do not necessarily represent Commission policy but are offered to stimulate ideas and interest on various issues concerning civil rights.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is a temporary, independent, bipartisan agency established by Congress in 1957 to:

Investigate complaints alleging denial of the right to vote by reason of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices;

Study and collect information concerning legal developments constituting a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;

Appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to the denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;

Serve as a national clearinghouse for information concerning denials of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; and

Submit reports, findings, and recommendations to the President and Congress.



RUN OUT AND RIPPED OFF

A LEGACY OF DISCRIMINATION

By Donald Teruo Hata, Jr. and Nadine Ishitani Hata

In recent years, due in large measure to the momentum created by the 1950s civil rights movement, professional historians and scholars have produced a growing body of perceptive and thoroughly researched studies on the Asian and Pacific minorities in America. Works such as the recent well-balanced collection of essays in *The Asian American, The Historical Experience* (edited by Norris Hundley, 1976) contain a clear commitment to the need for all Americans to appreciate the significance and relevance of the Asian and Pacific American experience to the mainstream of America's culturally pluralistic past and present.

The political history of Asian and Pacific peoples in America has much in common with that of other nonwhite minorities. The earliest immigrants from across the Pacific were no less despised than other nonwhites by the nationwide forces of racism and nativism in America. Alexander Saxton's *The Indispensable Enemy, Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (1971) tracks the anti-Chinese movement in the late 19th century California back to the East Coast and the Jacksonian period, when the so-called "era of the common man" excluded Indians and other nonwhites and women. Saxton's work documents the direct link between the fledgling West Coast labor movement's organizing efforts and their exploitation of the Chinese as a common threat against whom all white workingmen should unite.

Stuart Creighton Miller's *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (1969) rejected the long held assumption that Americans admired Chinese "civilization" on the one hand, and despised only the lower class coolies who allegedly brought disease and decadent habits to America. Miller's exhaustive analysis provides many

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examples which tie anti-Chinese attitudes directly to the racist underpinnings of "traditional" American ideals and institutions. Indeed, in his *The Politics of Prejudice, The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (1969), the eminent historian Roger Daniels, after relentlessly researching the topic, concluded that:

The generators of much of California's anti-democratic energy were those very groups supposedly dedicated to democracy: the labor unions, the progressives, and other left groups. Conversely, conservative forces—businessmen, educators and clergymen—were often on the democratic side, or to be more precise, generally less antidemocratic.

The legislative and legal record reveals that, as in the case of other nonwhite minorities, laws were either specifically enacted to oppress Asian and Pacific peoples in America or interpreted and implemented by the courts and enforcement officials to deny them equal protection. Discrimination through denial of equal application and implementation of the law was demonstrated, for example, in the definition of Federal immigration and naturalization statutes as applying only to white or black aliens, thereby making Asian and Pacific immigrants forever "aliens ineligible for citizenship." This definition provided the foundation for overtly discriminatory laws at the State level prohibiting the leasing or ownership of land by "aliens ineligible for citizenship." Moreover, during the 19th century—even after the celebrated ending of black slavery—the only immigrants singled out specifically by name and prohibited by law from freely entering the United States were the Chinese. The Japanese would find themselves similarly isolated and excluded when Congress adopted the immigration bill of 1924. That law would prove offensive to Eastern and Southern Europeans because of quotas imposed on their annual arrivals, but the Japanese were totally and specifically excluded.

A final theme that characterizes the recorded past

experience of Asian and Pacific peoples in America is their treatment by authors as the "objects" rather than the "subjects" of history. Without basic civil rights to protect themselves from the policies of villainous officials and denied the opportunity to participate in the political process in any meaningful way, they have been cast in the role of inconsequential "losers" in the pages of American history with only whites having major roles. American historians have thus compounded the injuries inflicted by racist legislators and judges by perpetrating the myth of American history and institutions as the ultimate example of freedom, democracy, and all other egalitarian ideals.

The truth lies in another direction. It lurks underneath the cosmetic surface of political platitudes and polite euphemisms and reminds Asian and Pacific peoples, and all other victims of America's historically racist institutions and monoculturally-exclusive ideals, that nonwhites are strangers in their own land. As recently as August 1973, the superficial acceptance of Asians as a "model minority" was exposed when the attorney for John Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, former White House aides, publicly slurred U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye as "that 'little Jap'" during the Senate Watergate hearings. Again, in our bicentennial year, the resignation of Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz for racial slurs against blacks reminds all nonwhites of the strong persistence of racist attitudes and behavior behind the fragile and false facade of egalitarian democracy in America.

Numerically, Asian and Pacific peoples have never constituted a significant minority in the United States. A more accurate description might be that they comprise but a minuscule minority among other non-white minorities in America. According to the 1970 census, Asian and Pacific Americans total less than 1 percent of the entire population of the United States. Their immigrant predecessors were no less negligible in number: a mere 2.5 percent of all legal immigrants came from Asia and the Pacific during the period 1820-1971. It is a historical fact, however, that Asian and Pacific immigrants and their descendants have been the objects of legislative and legal discrimination to a degree dramatically out of proportion to their insignificant numbers. So why all the fuss over so few?

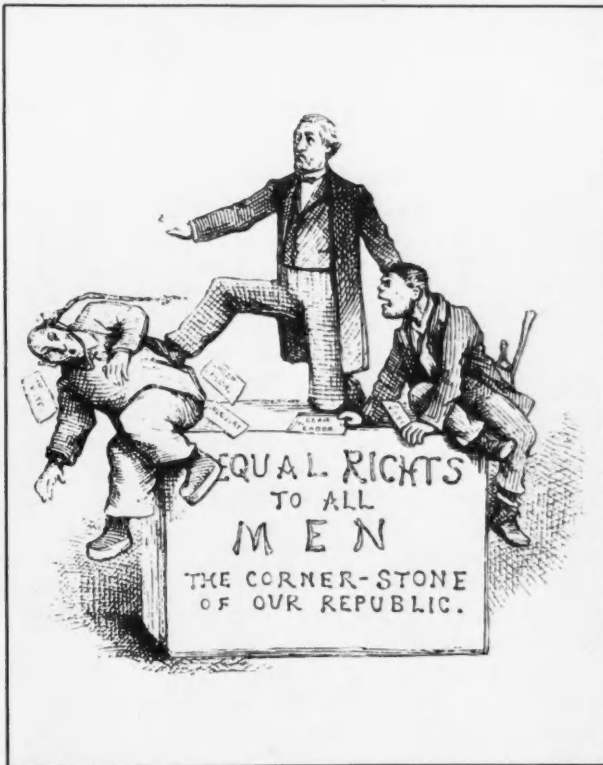
"The Chinese Must Go"

California, where most Asian and Pacific immigrants would eventually settle, had experienced its first wave of nativist sentiment as early as 1849, just before the influx of large numbers of Chinese. Soon



after the discovery of gold, hordes of Forty Niners streamed into the Golden State. By 1850 the mining population in California included 20,000 foreigners alongside some 80,000 Americans, a situation which soon led to a shift in local political priorities from the "Negro Question" to the "Immigrant Question." A Foreign Miners Tax was levied by the State legislature in 1850, and white "Yankee" vigilantes began to attack all "foreigners" in the diggings—including native Hawaiian immigrants.

In 1852 Chinese began to replace Hispanos as the largest minority in California. In that year the first significant shift in the population of California's colored minorities began with the arrival of 10,000 Chinese. When the 1852 legislature convened, the estimated 25,000 Chinese comprised the largest single body of unnaturalized residents in the State. White officialdom's response was swift: in 1854 the California Supreme Court decided that Chinese could not testify against whites in court. The next year an attempt was made to discourage sailing vessels from embarking Chinese by levying a \$50 tax on a ship's master, owner, or consignee who had on board any person "ineligible to become a citizen." Three years later, an 1858 law prohibited Chinese from landing "upon the Pacific Coast except when driven by stress of weather." The law warned that "any captain



landing such a person was liable to a fine of \$400 to \$600 or to imprisonment not to exceed one year."

Having moved against their departure from China and arrival on the West Coast, the racist-nativist alliance next focused on stopping the Chinese from acculturating. They would accomplish this neatly with the first of many California school segregation laws which was adopted in 1860 and excluded Chinese, Indian, and Negro children from the public schools. In 1885 the first school for "Chinese only" was established in San Francisco. This debunks the myth that the West Coast had no connection with the inherently unequal white racist institution of "separate but equal" schools in the South.

By 1869 the completion of the transcontinental railroad and a depressed labor market found Chinese in direct competition with whites for jobs—or so it was described by union organizers. And organized labor was ready to act. On July 8, 1870, the first large-scale "anti-Oriental" mass meeting in America took place in San Francisco. While Easterners blamed Wall Street financiers for their economic problems, organized labor in California made cheap coolie labor their scapegoat and unifying theme.

In October 1871, a white mob invaded the Los Angeles Chinese quarter after two police officers were wounded there and killed at least 18 Chinese, burning homes and looting as well. This massacre demonstrated that the anti-Chinese movement would not limit its activities to racist rhetoric and noisy demonstrations. By 1871 the "Chinese Question" was quickly absorbed as basic platform plans of both major parties in California. Insults were added to injury: in May 1873 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors decreed that every Chinese prisoner in jail would have his queue cut off and his hair clipped to a uniform length of an inch from the scalp. In another ordinance the same board stipulated that "those laundries employing one vehicle with a horse pay a license of one dollar per quarter, those who employ two vehicles pay four dollars per quarter and those who employ more than two, fifteen dollars per quarter; those who employed no vehicle, fifteen dollars per quarter." Interestingly, the Chinese did not employ horse-drawn vehicles. These and other examples of legislative humiliation, harassment, and discrimination abound in Elmer Sandmeyer's *The Anti-Chinese Movement In California* (1939), Mary Roberts Coolidge's *Chinese Immigration* (1909), and the Chinese Historical Society's *A History of The Chinese In California, A Syllabus* (edited by Thomas Chinn, 1969).

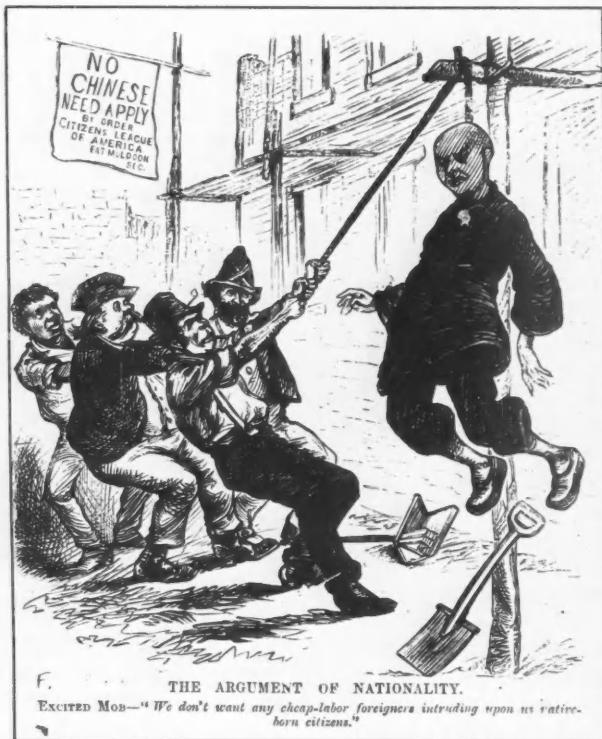
But the final goal in the nativist-racist movement against the Chinese was yet to be attained. The 1870s saw the rise of the Workingmen's Party under the leadership of Denis Kearney who demanded that "the Chinese must go." As the U.S. Supreme Court struck down California State statutes against the Chinese as unconstitutional, the West Coast anti-Chinese movement took their fight to the floor of Congress. In 1876 Congress responded with an investigation into the Chinese problem on the West Coast. In 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act which suspended free immigration for 10 years. The law was renewed in 1892 for another 10 years and made permanent in 1904. With these Federal laws, Chinese immigration virtually ceased until after World War II.

By the turn of the century the success of the nativist-racist alliance against the Chinese was complete. With the permanent enactment of the Federal Chinese Exclusion Law in 1904, the popular cliché "you don't have a Chinaman's chance" was at once tragic but all too accurate. In the following decade, the earlier anti-Chinese arguments of unfair competition from "cheap coolie labor" would be overshadowed by charges that all "Orientals" were the vanguard of a "Yellow Peril," unsuitable for either future acculturation or racial assimilation into the white majority society of the West Coast and the Nation. The Japanese, who were the next significant group to arrive, would enter upon a stage filled with bitterness and suspicion against all immigrants from Asia and the Pacific.

The "Yellow Peril" and Japanese Exclusion

Japanese immigration would loom most large between the turn of the century and the end of World War I, but other Asian and Pacific peoples began to trickle in by 1900. Small numbers of Koreans, for example, arrived in search of refuge from the impending annexation of their homeland by Imperial Japan (which occurred in 1910). Earlier, by the end of the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Philippines, part of Samoa, Guam, and Hawaii came under American control. A few years later the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution and citizenship do not necessarily follow the flag and thereby demonstrated that Americans were no less immune to overseas colonial ambitions than the European imperial powers. Instead of calling it "imperialism," however, Yankees preferred the euphemism "Manifest Destiny."

The cheap labor vacuum created on the West Coast by the Chinese exclusion laws was a major factor in the large influx of Japanese immigrants by 1900. Even during the peak period of arrival and settlement



(1901-1910), the total Japanese population in America comprised no more than 2 percent of the population of California and barely one-tenth of 1 percent of the total U.S. population. One would think that such a numerically negligible minority would have gone unnoticed. But the Japanese were soon perceived by the nativist-racist movement as a more dangerous version of the "Yellow Peril" than the Chinese who had preceded them. White labor unions and employee associations regarded them as "scabs" who posed the same threat to their livelihood as the Chinese. Organized labor was especially enraged by the entry of Japanese workers into areas such as logging, mining, fishing, canneries, and railroad work.

By 1905 delegates from more than 67 labor organizations met in San Francisco to form the Asiatic Exclusion League. They moved quickly. In 1906 the San Francisco School Board bowed to the league's pressure and banned all Japanese and Korean students from the city's public schools. By 1913 the growing coalition of racists and nativists had engineered the

enactment of laws in California and other West Coast States prohibiting the sale or lease of land to "aliens ineligible for citizenship"—a "Catch-22" phenomenon created by the peculiar wording of Federal naturalization laws combined with the 14th amendment. These laws specifically restricted naturalization privileges to only "white persons" and those of African descent.

Finally, in 1924, as part of an intensive anti-immigration movement across the Nation, Congress passed an immigration bill that established permanent quotas on immigrants from nations outside of north-western Europe. But they also added a specific provision for the total exclusion of Japanese. From that year until the relaxation of national quotas in 1952, Japanese immigration ceased.

Pilipinos Fill the Vacuum

Prior to 1920 most Pilipinos who migrated to the United States were students, domestic servants, and unskilled workers—many of whom had moved to the West Coast after being first recruited to work on



Hawaiian sugar plantations. Their legal status was defined in the 1917 Federal immigration law which stated that Pilipinos were neither U.S. citizens nor aliens, but "nationals." The exclusion of Japanese in the 1924 immigration law created a cheap labor vacuum on the West Coast, and large farming interests saw Pilipinos as an easy replacement. As a result, economic realities saw to it that Pilipinos were exempt from the 1924 law by confirming them as "nationals"—a designation sufficiently vague to permit them to migrate freely to the United States. By 1928 race riots flared against Pilipino laborers throughout the West Coast, and the nativist-racist coalition regarded the Pilipino influx as a "third wave of Oriental immigration" that had to be halted. But the Philippines were American territory, and as a final compromise, it was decided that future Philippine independence would settle the issue. After all, Pilipinos would be citizens of a sovereign foreign nation, and therefore subject to laws against the immigration and settlement of aliens in America. Thus it was, observed Carey McWilliams in *Brothers Under the Skin* (rev. ed., 1964), that "those who sought to bar Filipino immigration suddenly became partisans of Philippine independence."

As tension heightened between the United States and Imperial Japan in the 1930s over divergent interests in the Western Pacific and Asia, Japanese Americans were caught in the middle of a growing question concerning their identity and loyalty as Japanese or Americans. Throughout the 1930s their enemies increasingly called attention to the so-called "un-American" behavior of Japanese Americans—most of whom were U.S. citizens by birthright. The existence of Japanese language schools, dual citizenship, and the persistence of Buddhism (an "un-American" religion according to the Exclusion League) were "proof" that the Japanese in America were consciously resisting acculturation into the mainstream of American society. By the eve of the Imperial Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the nativists and racists had created a pervasive fear that all Japanese in America—irrespective of U.S. citizenship—could not be trusted.

American Concentration Camps

Soon after the Imperial Japanese attack on the American base at Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 9066 (February 19, 1942). It authorized the Army to evacuate all "persons of Japanese ancestry"—both citizen and alien alike. By the end of June 1942, after American intelligence knew that the Battle of Midway had

removed any possible enemy threat to Hawaii or the West Coast, at least 110,000 Japanese Americans were exiled to 10 tarpaper concentration camps for the remainder of the war. They were finally officially released on January 2, 1945. In 1948 Congress passed the Japanese American Excavation Claims Act, but this was only token compensation for evacuees' losses, which the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco conservatively estimated at \$400 million. The mere \$38 million appropriated by Congress amounted to less than 10 cents for every dollar lost. Moreover, all claims were settled on the basis of 1942 prices without interest.

A few weeks before President Roosevelt signed the evacuation order. Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy responded to the question of evacuating Japanese who held U.S. citizenship by saying that "the Constitution is just a scrap of paper." As subsequent events revealed, American citizenship counted for nothing. There was no habeas corpus, no concern for due process. It was simply a case of "guilty by reason of race."

The question of constitutionality arose in three



landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions prior to the end of the war. Gordon Hirabayashi was convicted in July 1942 for refusing to obey the Army's curfew order (which applied only to Japanese Americans) and for failing to report for evacuation. On July 21, 1943, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the constitutionality of the curfew and refused to deal with the constitutionality of the evacuation. Two other decisions which did touch on the evacuation were handed down on December 18, 1944: the first concerned Fred Korematsu who had been arrested for failing to report for evacuation. The Supreme Court majority sustained the constitutionality of his conviction; but one of the three dissenting Justices, Frank Murphy, declared: "I dissent . . . from this legalization of racism. . . ." Justice Owen Roberts dissented on the grounds that "it is a case of convicting a citizen . . . for not submitting to imprisonment in a concentration camp solely because of his ancestry."

The last key decision dealt with Mitsuye Endo. She had obeyed the evacuation order, but when she reached the concentration camp at Topaz, Utah, she filed a

petition for habeas corpus. Two years and four months later, the Supreme Court unanimously decreed that loyal citizens could not be detained indefinitely and ordered the release of Ms. Endo. Justice Murphy stressed that the detention of citizens was "another example of the unconstitutional resort to racism inherent in the entire evacuation program." Although Mitsuye Endo eventually won her case, an appropriate epitaph to this episode might be "justice delayed is justice denied."

The most disappointing and dangerous element in the Supreme Court's approach to these cases was the refusal to confirm civilian supremacy and fundamental civil rights in the absence of an official declaration of martial law. As the military began its evacuation of Japanese Americans during the winter and summer of 1942, martial law had not been declared on the West Coast, and civil statutes were therefore still in force. Regardless of minority opinions among the Justices, however, the three Japanese American evacuation cases stand as legal precedents to support the denial of all rights of citizens whenever a President and his military advisors decide that, *in their judgment*, "a



national emergency exists." This is one legacy of the Japanese American evacuation and incarceration which has continuing relevance for all Americans, even today, for it provides a frightening weapon in the hands of a potential tyrant in the White House.

Post-War Immigration

While the total population of Asian and Pacific Americans is less than 1 percent of the total 1970 census tabulations, their diversity and numbers are increasing dramatically: Asian immigrants went from 20,683 in 1965 to 130,662 in 1974—an impressive increase of 532 percent. When one considers that the total volume of immigrants from all countries increased only 23 percent between 1965 and 1974, the increase in Asian immigration takes on an even greater meaning for the composition of American society by the tricentennial. With a steady decline in birthrate, no less than one out of every five new Americans is a first-generation immigrant. And, in 1974, one-third of all immigrants came from Asia.

A number of factors have influenced this new phenomenon. In 1952 the Walter-McCarran Act, otherwise known as the Immigration and Nationality Act, relaxed the rigid restrictions of the 1924 immigration law. The 1952 law provide that all races were eligible for naturalization and citizenship, thereby permitting any Asian immigrant pioneers who were still alive to finally leave their nonperson status as "aliens ineligible for citizenship." The new immigration law still maintained a quota, however, and remained significantly discriminatory toward immigrants from Asia and the Pacific. But 1952 saw major progress when the California Supreme Court declared the State alien land laws unconstitutional and in violation of the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th amendment (*Fujii v. State*, 1952).

In 1965 Congress removed all immigration quotas. Irrespective of race or national origin, immigration has now been placed on a first-come, first-served basis. Two other factors influencing the demise of American fears of Asians are the presence of large numbers of Americans in Asia and the Pacific since World War II (occupation of Japan, Korean War, and Vietnam) with Asians immigrating as wives or refugees, and a shift in the American public's image of Asian



ANOTHER FIELD OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY INVADED BY THE CHINESE. 1952.
"No more Washee! Playee Base-ballee! Sellee out Game, allee same Melican man!"

Americans from the pre-World War II "Yellow Peril" to that of a "model minority."

As a result of these changing immigration patterns in the past decade, contemporary America includes a wide range of Asian and Pacific peoples whose immigrant origins can be traced to almost every significant ethnic and national grouping in those lands which British and European imperialists once referred to as "east of Suez." They include Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans from East Asia; Indians, Pakistanis, and other groups from South Asia; Vietnamese, Indonesians, Thais, Malaysians, Pilipinos, and others from Southeast Asia; and a wide representation of Pacific peoples such as Samoans, Guamanians, native Hawaiians, and Tongans. Thus the old definition of Asian American as referring simply to Chinese, Japanese, and Pilipinos is no longer accurate.

Still Strangers In Their Own Land?

More often than not since World War II, Asian Americans are hailed as Asian versions of Horatio Alger who are "outwhiting the whites" as members of a highly acculturated, if not racially assimilated, "model minority," whose docile and accommodationist public posture should be emulated by more aggressive blacks and browns. While so-called positive attributes such as "hardworking, quiet, patient, and not-rocking-the-boat" were perhaps appropriate to survival in the overtly racist environment in the past, they are now becoming the cause of increasing frustration for Asian Americans. For example, the "model minority" stereotype predictably gives rise to the widely held but mistaken belief that Asians have no problems and require no public social services because they suffer silently and take care of their own. The stereotype of Asian Americans as a successful "model minority" who have "made it" in America is inaccurate and in need of careful reevaluation.

Few Americans realize that today many Asian and Pacific Americans—in particular the new arrivals and old people without families to help them—remain isolated and remote from the affluent and acculturated Asian American community as well as from the majority society and public social service agencies at all levels of government. Recent public hearings held by the California Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (June and December 1973) revealed numerous civil rights-related problems among the various Asian and Pacific communities, including inadequate and overcrowded housing, the need for bilingual-bicultural education for groups other than just the Spanish-speaking, and the almost total inaccessibility of public social services.

The first of two reports submitted to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights by the California Advisory Committee (*Asian Americans and Pacific Peoples, A Case of Mistaken Identity*) concluded that:

Clearly, many Asian Americans and Pacific peoples are invisible to the governmental agencies which are responsible for providing public services. Discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific peoples is as much the result of omission as well as commission. Until recently, many Asian Americans and Pacific peoples were identified by some Federal agencies as members of the majority (white) population. . . . Guamanian and Samoan Americans face additional problems. First, their national origins are incorrectly identified, and second, they must convince government agencies of their minority status. . . . It is apparent that *when people are not counted, they are not served.* . . . [italics ours]

While the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974 and the enactment of the 1975 Voting Rights Act provide the foundation for equal opportunities and political participation for non-English-speaking Americans, their implementation in the proper spirit by governmental officials at all levels is an entirely different matter.

"I Wonder Where the Yellow Went?"

As Americans celebrate the Bicentennial of the revolution which founded this Nation, there is now, as never before in our history, an awareness that we are a culturally pluralistic society. Although emphasis has been on blacks and the Spanish speaking, what do we really know about Americans from Asia and the Pacific—aside from distorted stereotypes put forth by both racists and the well-intentioned? Indeed, unless there is a strong commitment to an objective and realistic recognition of the separate identities and specific problems of all the peoples of the United States, Asian and Pacific Americans may find that they are again—as in the not too distant past—strangers in their own land . . . an indispensable enemy . . . by reason of race.

At a time when minorities are demanding that our society and its public institutions must reflect and serve more honestly and fairly the diversity of subcultures that comprise contemporary America, blacks, Chicanos, and women may claim "tokenism." But Asian and Pacific Americans are reminded of the old toothpaste commercial: "I wonder where the yellow went?" And this time they will not, without a struggle, submit to being run out and ripped off.

ASIAN AMERICAN EMPLOYMENT

FROM OUTRIGHT EXCLUSION TO MODERN DISCRIMINATION

By Kim Lem

Five years ago, Jack Wong was a supervisor in a large corporation in New York City. He had worked for years to get where he was and believed that through hard work anything was possible. He had faith in the American dream.

Mr. Wong, who is 50 years old, was good at what he did. So good, in fact, that he was told by his superiors that he was "indispensable" in his position and this, he said, precluded his being promoted. Then, when the Nation's economy fell on hard times and staff reductions were being made, Mr. Wong found that he was no longer "indispensable." He was laid off, but because of his length of service, he was subsequently rehired—but at a lower level and at \$100 a week less in salary.

"There have been other comparable openings since then but I was not rehired for them," Mr. Wong said bitterly, "I had seniority but they eliminated my job, and after I left, they created other jobs with new titles doing the same work."

Mr. Wong (not his real name) has filed charges of discrimination against the company and his case is now pending.

An isolated case? Hardly. After scores of interviews with Asian

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Americans, young and old, professionals and otherwise, discrimination pops up again and again.

But for Asian Americans—a group that includes those of Chinese, Japanese, Pilipino, Hawaiian, and Korean descent, as well as peoples of the Pacific Islands—discrimination is not new.

The Chinese, early Asian immigrants on the West coast, flocked to San Francisco during the gold rush and contributed as much as any other group of immigrants to the development of this country. They worked the mines and the fields and in the 1860s laid the tracks for the Central Pacific Railroad, which opened the West to the rest of the Nation. But when that was done, they were ashamed and outraged, for all that was available to them was "women's work"—namely, cooking and washing clothes.

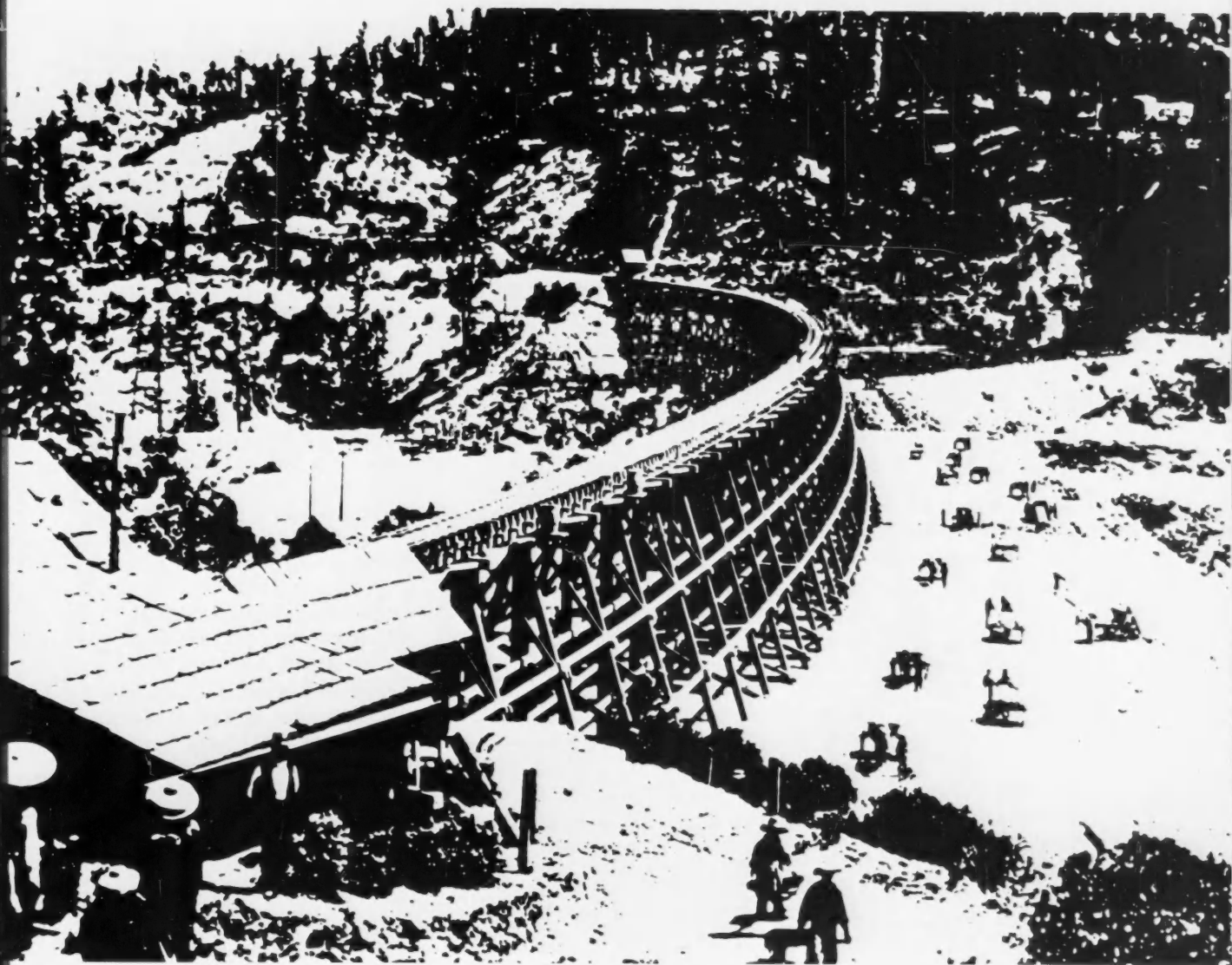
The white Californians' hatred of the Chinese was expressed in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other restrictions that were perpetrated by racist stereotypes portrayed in the popular arts of the day. Asians could not become citizens, intermarry, own land, or join labor unions. They were exploited as cheap labor in all areas of employment by virtue of their endurance, skills, and availability.

The history of the Japanese in this country is equally disgraceful.

As a result of Pearl Harbor, the entire Japanese population of the West Coast was declared by the United States Government to be potentially dangerous, and 110,000 people were subsequently driven out of their homes and businesses and into internment camps by an Executive order in 1942.

New Progress, New Struggles

Today, with the Civil Rights Act of 1964—which bars employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, and sex—and the relaxation of immigration laws, strides have been made in minority employment. And among Asian Americans themselves (at 2 million, they make up only 1 percent of the total population of the United States and are concentrated in the States of California, Hawaii, and New York), an effort to meet the exigencies of a changing society has led to the emergence of various organizations throughout the country to fight for equality in all areas of human rights. These organizations include Asian-Americans for Fair Employment (AAFFE), Asian Americans for a Fair Media, and Asian-Americans for Action—all in New York City; Chinese for Affirmative Action, in San Francisco; Union of Pacific Asian Communities (UPAC), in San Diego; Concerned Asian



Americans and Pacific Peoples, in Los Angeles; Japanese American Service Committee, in Chicago; and the Hawaii Association of Asian and Pacific Peoples. They joined earlier organizations such as the Japanese American Citizens League.

Still, Asian Americans, with a status described as "minority, yes; oppressed, no," remain for the most part ineligible for inclusion in special affirmative recruitment programs.

In a letter last June to Representative Patricia Schroeder, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Census and Population, Franklin H. Williams, chair of the New York State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and Setsuko M. Nishi, chair of the Asian American Subcommittee, wrote:

Here in New York State, the unemployment level of a minority group determines whether the group is eligible for inclusion in special affirmative recruiting activities which otherwise may be a violation of the State's Human Rights law. While more recent unemployment rates for other racial minorities are obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (which works with the Census Bureau in the data collection), the State of New

York is compelled to fall back on 1970 census figures for Asian Americans. According to those figures, Asian Americans do not qualify for inclusion under the special affirmative action measures.

While the example cited comes from New York, the situation applies to Asian Americans beyond the State. To overcome some of the inadequacies of the 1970 census, Mr. Williams and Dr. Nishi recommended that future data collection include many more subgroups in order "to calculate the actual magnitude of the Asian American community" and that questionnaires in native languages be provided to allow more participation.

Although it would be impossible to discuss in detail the employment problems faced by each subgroup, a look at the three largest subgroups—the Japanese, Chinese, and Pilipinos—will shed some light on how Asian Americans are faring in the job market. The information that follows comes from "A Study of Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of Ethnic Minorities Based on the 1970 Census, Volume II: Asian Americans," prepared by Urban Associates, Inc. of Arlington, Va.

The Largest Subgroup

The Japanese, the largest

subgroup, had a population in 1970 of 591,000, of which 72 percent lived in Hawaii and California. Four out of five were native-born.

Of the three major Asian subgroups, the Japanese had an occupational distribution most like that of whites. Seventy-nine percent of the Japanese men were employed, which was 2 percent above that for males in the total population.

Differences existed in occupational distribution between foreign-born and native-born Japanese. Forty-five percent of all employed foreign-born Japanese men were in white-collar professional jobs and managerial positions, but fewer than 33 percent of U.S.-born Japanese men were in these positions. On the other hand, 33 percent of all U.S.-born Japanese men were in skilled and semiskilled blue-collar jobs, while only 13 percent of the foreign-born Japanese males were so employed.

About 5 percent of Japanese males worked on farms, the same percentage as that for men in the general population. Among the employed elderly, however, 15 percent worked on farms, while 22 percent worked as nonfarm laborers.

Most of the foreign-born Japanese males immigrated as professionals or students, but



substantial numbers of foreign-born females were elderly or war brides. Hence, the distribution of jobs of foreign-born males and foreign-born females differs sharply.

Over the decade 1960-1970 the proportion of Japanese women in the labor force increased to about 50 percent from 44 percent, with the biggest change occurring among married women. In 1970, 51 percent of all Japanese wives were working, compared to 12 percent in 1960.

Sixty-eight percent of all U.S.-born Japanese women were in white-collar jobs in 1970, mostly as clerical workers. On the other hand, 68 percent of the foreign-born Japanese women were in blue-collar jobs.

Chinese Americans

The Chinese, the second largest subgroup, had a population of 435,000 in 1970. More than half of them lived in Western States—with 39 percent in California and 12 percent in Hawaii. In addition, 27 percent lived in the Northeast, with 20 percent living in New York State alone. Between 1960 and 1970, the Chinese population in the U.S. increased by 84 percent. At least two-thirds of these were new immigrants. In the beginning of the century, the Chinese population had been predominately male. During the 1960s, the differential



between males and females decreased from 14 to 6 percent.

The Chinese had a disparate picture of exceptionally high educational attainment on one hand, with the largest number of college graduates for any group in the U.S., and a large population of uneducated on the other.

Seventy-three percent of Chinese males 16 years and over were employed in 1970, or 4 percent below the rate for men in the total population and almost 7 percent below the rate for men in other Asian groups. This reflected the higher school enrollment rate of young Chinese men.

Professional occupations, at 29 percent, were the largest category of employment for Chinese men.

Eleven percent of employed Chinese males were in managerial positions, the same as in the total U.S. population. Those who were managers, however, were largely self-employed owners of small retail stores and restaurants.

Twenty-four percent or nearly one-quarter of all Chinese men were employed as service workers, many of them in restaurants and laundries, which was three times the proportion in the total U.S. male population.

Between 1960 and 1970, the labor force participation rate of Chinese women increased to 50 percent from 44 percent, with the

greatest increase occurring among married women. Forty-eight percent of all Chinese wives worked in 1970, but only 13 percent did in 1960.

More than 50 percent of all employed U.S.-born Chinese women were employed in clerical and other low-level white-collar jobs, but fewer than 25 percent of employed foreign-born Chinese women were employed in these jobs. Thirty-seven percent of foreign-born Chinese women worked in factory-related blue-collar jobs, most of them in semi-skilled positions, while only 9 percent of the U.S.-born Chinese women were in such jobs.

The Filipinos

The Filipinos, the third largest subgroup, had a population in 1970 of 343,000 persons. Between 1960 and 1970, the Filipino population of the U.S. nearly doubled, with two-thirds of the population made up of immigrants. Filipinos are now the largest Asian group to immigrate to the U.S. and since the 1970 figure, an additional 90,000 have arrived. More than two-thirds of all Filipinos lived on the West Coast—40 percent in California and 28 percent in Hawaii. In 1960 the ratio of Filipino males to females was 2 to 1. By 1970 the ratio was about equal. A large

proportion of the recent immigrants are professionals.

Seventy-nine percent of all Pilipino males 16 years old and over were in the labor force in 1970. This was 2 percent higher than that of the total U.S. population.

About 40 percent of all the employed Pilipino men in the U.S. were working in low-paying jobs such as laborers (including farm labor) and service workers. This was twice the proportion for men in the total U.S. population.

Twelve percent of employed Pilipino men were farm workers, compared to only 5 percent of all men employed in the U.S.

The proportion of professional Pilipino males has tripled since 1960, but the percentage in service jobs has not changed appreciably.

The proportion of Pilipino women with college degrees, at 27 percent, was the highest for any population group, male or female, and the labor force participation rate of Pilipino women was higher than for any other female population group.

The labor force participation rate of Pilipino women jumped to 55 percent in 1970 from 36 percent in 1960. In 1970, 46 percent of all married Pilipino women were in the labor force, compared to only 9 percent in 1960.

Jobs held by Pilipino women varied by region. In Hawaii, 55

percent were employed as semi-skilled operatives, laborers, or service workers. In California, 42 percent were employed as clerical and sales workers and 21 percent were professionals. Elsewhere in the country, 55 percent were professionals.

A Mixed Bag

Indeed, the picture portrayed above would lead one to believe that Asian Americans have been relatively successful in employment. According to the 1970 figures, Asian Americans are found mostly in the urban areas, are well-educated as a whole, and have a higher rate of employment than their white counterparts. On the other hand, the pattern that surfaced also shows grave underemployment, a lack of visibility at decisionmaking levels and in upward mobility in general, and lower salaries than their white counterparts who had equal or less education and were doing the same jobs. For the most part, the high level of employment among Asian Americans can be attributed to the fact that both husbands and wives tend to work because of economic need and to a general refusal to accept public assistance, rather than to the so-called "hard work" ethic ascribed to the group.

One reason for their problem in the job market, Asian Americans

say, is the stereotyped image that has been given them by a white society. Though frequently "positive," such images as hard-working, quiet, mind their own business, etc. have done more harm than good. Employers sometimes think that they can get away with paying lower wages if they hire Asians. Also, when openings come up, Asians are often overlooked because employers think they are less apt to raise a fuss.

One woman, a secretary, said that she was hired when the company for which she works had a quota to fill.

"Since they were forced to hire minorities," she said, "they wanted people who wouldn't give them any trouble. This is some way to get a job!"

Someone else had this to say:

Asians came to this country with aspirations and skills and are treated like service people. I was born here and I'm treated like a foreigner. No matter what our skills are, they [employers] inevitably talk about food.

Another problem faced by Asian Americans is the seeming inability to break through less traditional fields such as theater arts.

In a recent interview with *The New York Times*, Alvin Lum, chairman of the Ethnic Minorities Committee of Actors Equity, talked

about the lack of roles for Asian American actors:

You can only hang on for so long. Then you do something else to pay the bills. And unless you work at it, you don't get better. You learn by doing. Do you know that Charlie Chan was never played by an Asian actor? . . . There isn't blackface any more. Why should there be yellowface?

The actors complained that few roles were available except for stereotypes, and that when a choice role did come up, it went to a white.

Chiang Ching, the accomplished dancer and actress from Peking, has also found that employment in the United States "is not easy." Ms. Chiang specializes in Chinese dance but she is also highly skilled in ballet and modern dance. Frequently, she said, she is asked to teach, lecture, or perform only on an "ethnic" level.

"I'm Asian but I want to be considered as an artist first. I want to compete with other artists on the same level, to present originality and universality—not be singled out for being ethnic," Ms. Chiang said.

Even bleaker is the employment situation of recent immigrants with language problems.

May Chin, for example, is a 28-year-old accountant who recently



arrived from Hong Kong. She works a 50-hour week as a seamstress in a garment factory in New York's Chinatown and has a take-home pay of about \$70. Like others in her position, Ms. Chin has professional skills but must settle for a low-paying job because she doesn't speak English.

"Before I came to the United States, I thought that I would have no trouble finding a job," she said sadly, "but I see that even college graduates here are out of work, so I give up. I don't like the factory. It's so dirty and people are always shouting, and I get so tired working because I have to use my hands and feet and eyes all at once. I wanted so much to come here, but now I often think about going back to Hong Kong."

In the meantime, Ms. Chin said, she was trying to save money by living with relatives and taking English classes in the evenings.

Native-born "Foreigners"

But if good jobs are hard to come by for those with language difficulties and hopeless for those without skills, employment for the native-born, even those with college degrees, has not been easy.

Sam Chu is a psychologist in his early thirties with a master's degree. He now works as a guidance counselor for young people, an area in which he is

interested, but for years, Mr. Chu said, he worked only as a teacher in a classroom because he could not find a position in his area of specialty.

People who interned with me got jobs before me, and all of those who made it were white. We're still living in a racist society and anyone who says there's no discrimination is just fooling himself or refuses to see.

However, one woman who has met some success is Diana Lee, a 28-year-old graduate of New York University Law School. Mrs. Lee is a member of a small law firm working with minorities who want to set up their own businesses. She got her job, she said, when lawyers came to the school to interview prospective graduates. What is her key to success?

"I guess it has a lot to do with luck—being in the right place at the right time," she said. "Being a minority woman is a double negative that doesn't add up to a positive. If the job hadn't come along, I think it would have been extremely difficult for me to get into the law mainstream dominated by white males. To get anywhere, you have to be very aggressive, work twice as hard, and prove yourself." She added that Asian Americans usually do not have the

"connections" needed to get into certain professions, and that their stereotyped images do not fit into white standards.

In general, those interviewed conceded that, while it was not easy for them to get good jobs, the situation was probably even harder for blacks. But, they maintained, blacks were more visible than Asians in high-level jobs and they have carved niches in such glittering arenas as sports, music, theater, and films—where few Asians are successful.

Asian American females interviewed said that their male counterparts enjoyed more upward mobility (when it occurs) than they did. Asian American males contended that Asian American females probably had a greater chance of getting hired because they appeared to fit the Anglo stereotype of female passivity.

Adopting New Tactics

Some believed that, although minority hiring programs have been helpful, those hired under such programs were mostly blacks and Hispanics because "there is more pressure from those groups."

For example, the construction industry is an area in which Asian Americans have little visibility. Historically racist and exclusionary in nature, few have gained admission into the powerful trade



unions. But 2 years ago, through the organized efforts of Asian-Americans for Fair Employment (AAFFE), an activist group that, according to its members, "fights for democratic rights for the working class," some progress was made in getting construction jobs. The organization called for hiring Asians to work on Confucius Plaza, a \$40 million, 764-unit cooperative housing development that was being built in New York's Chinatown with aid from the city.

For days, pickets chanting and

bearing signs with such slogans as "The Asians built the railroad; why not Confucius Plaza?" demonstrated against the construction contractor because there were no Asians working on the site. The company defended its record of hiring minorities in compliance with regulations set by the city's Housing and Development Administration. But the protesters charged that the company was fulfilling its minority quota by importing workers from other sites—a practice known as "checkerboarding." AAFFE called for the hiring of 40 Asians on the site.

The demonstrations persisted for days, resulting in confrontations with the police and the arrest of more than 50 people, who were charged with criminal trespass. Then finally, in response to pressure from the Asian community, the city, the press, and various other organizations, more than 40 Asians were hired to work on New York construction jobs.

Clearly, discrimination in employment exists, but a new aggressiveness to combat it has emerged, as seen in the formation of organizations all around the country. The old stereotypes are quickly dying—but there is still a long way to go to bring about parity on all levels for Asian Americans.

OLDER ASIAN AMERICANS

VICTIMS OF MULTIPLE JEOPARDY

By Sharon Fujii

Like other minority elderly, Asian American elderly are victims of multiple jeopardy—ageism, institutional racism, mandatory retirement practices, poverty, declining physical and mental health, and inadequate housing. These are often compounded by language and cultural differences and a fear and distrust of nonethnic agencies and institutions. Perhaps like other minority elderly too, Asian Americans are incorrectly perceived as universally “taking care of their own.” This simply is not the case. It is a misconception that has been perpetuated by society at large. Adherence to this misconception will neither eliminate the injustices perpetrated against Asian American elderly nor will it improve the quality of their lives.

The Asian American Elderly

Elderly Asian Americans refer, in the broadest sense, to the Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Filipinos, East Indians, Thais, Vietnamese, Burmese, Indonesians, Laotians, Malaysians, and Cambodians age 65 and over. (Sixty-five is the arbitrary cutoff commonly used to designate the elderly, although their problems, obviously, may begin at an earlier point.) Frequently, these diverse groups are combined under the rubric of Asian Americans. This is largely a matter of convenience and must not be interpreted as suggesting that all Asian American elderly are homogeneous. Not only are there differences, for example, between elderly Koreans and Chinese in language, traditions, and religious practices, but there are also very real distinctions among the individuals of a particular group.

Because systematically collected information relating to the major sociodemographic characteristics and current circumstances of Asian American elderly in the United States is lacking, it is not possible to accurately describe them. The 1970 census constitutes a primary source of information, albeit grossly incomplete, for several Asian American populations. The census provides limited 1960 and 1970 demographic information for only the Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese elderly in 1960

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TABLE 2
POVERTY STATUS OF ELDERLY CHINESE,
FILIPINO, AND JAPANESE BY URBAN RESIDENCE
IN CALIFORNIA AND NEW YORK, 1969

California-Urban* (Based on 20% Sample)			
Income Less Than Poverty Level**	Chinese	Filipino	Japanese
Total persons	21,351	16,525	14,338
% 65 years and over	15.1	9.6	13.1
New York-Urban* (Based on 20% Sample)			
Income Less Than Poverty Level**	Chinese	Filipino	Japanese
Total persons	13,068	1,695	1,915
% 65 years and over	16.5	15.2	26.7

TABLE 1
ELDERLY CHINESE, FILIPINOS, AND JAPANESE
IN THE UNITED STATES, 1970

	Total	65+ Yrs.	% Total
Chinese	431,583	26,856	6.22
Filipinos	336,731	21,249	6.31
Japanese	588,324	47,159	8.01
TOTAL	1,756,638	95,264	

Source: See Table 2.

*Urban: Comprises all persons living in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 inhabitants or more outside urbanized areas.

**In 1969, \$3,743.00 for a family of four was considered poverty level income.

Sources: U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, U.S. Summary, Subject Reports: Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos in the United States, PC(2)-1G.*

and 1970. (Although summary data are reported for the Koreans as well (1970 only), the data are not presented according to age cohorts.)

On the basis of 1970 census data, 95,264 Asians—26,856 Chinese, 21,249 Filipinos, and 47,159 Japanese—age 65 and over live in the United States. Table 1 shows the number of elderly Chinese, Filipinos, and Japanese, and their percentage of the total population in 1970.

Table 1 clearly reveals that there are proportionately more elderly Japanese Americans than there are elderly Filipino or Chinese Americans. Each of these Asian populations, however, fails to equal or surpass the national average of 10 percent. (That is, approximately 10 percent of the total population in the U.S. is 65 years of age and over.)

Several reasons may account for this. The Japanese and particularly the Filipinos were among the later

immigrants and consequently have not had sufficient time to produce many generations of elderly. And it was not uncommon for immigrant Chinese and Japanese to return to their homeland to retire and eventually die.

The extent of the economic plight of elderly Asians is revealed in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, elderly Japanese have the highest percentage of poor among the Asian groups in urban California and urban New York—15.4 percent and 26.7 percent, respectively. That is, among all Japanese in urban California and New York with incomes below the poverty level, a higher percentage were elderly poor compared to the Chinese and Filipinos.

Based on the total number of elderly 65 and over for each ethnic group, in California the percentage in poverty was the highest for the Chinese (26.6 percent), followed by the Filipinos (20.0 percent), and

TABLE 3
POVERTY STATUS FOR CHINESE, FILIPINO,
AND JAPANESE ELDERLY FOR CALIFORNIA
AND NEW YORK, 1969

California (Based on 20% Sample)			
	Chinese	Filipino	Japanese
Total no. 65+	10,652	9,447	15,081
Total no. 65+ in poverty	2,838	1,907	2,626
% in poverty, 65+	26.6	20.0	17.4

New York (Based on 20 % Sample)			
	Chinese	Filipino	Japanese
Total no. 65+	5,615	904	1,954
Total no. 65+ in poverty	2,163	264	529
% in poverty, 65+	38.5	29.0	27.0

Sources: U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, U.S. Summary, PC(1)-C Series*, and *Subject Reports: Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos in the United States, PC (2)-1G*.

the Japanese (17.4 percent). (See Table 3.) In New York the Chinese again showed the highest percentage (38.5 percent) of poor elderly, followed by the Filipinos (29.0 percent), and the Japanese elderly (27.0 percent).

In general, Asian American scholars maintain that census data are deficient. At the May 1975 National Conference on Social Welfare, Tom Owan reported that a rather large segment of Asian elderly did not or could not respond to census inquiries due to fears and suspicion of the Federal Government resulting from past experiences and the inability to read, write, or speak English. Consequently, scholars say, the decennial census seriously undercounts the size of Asian populations, especially the elderly and rural segments. Census data, moreover, may be biased in the directions of describing the better informed segment of Asian American populations.



CHINATOWN
SENIOR CITIZEN
COALITION CTR.

華埠老人聯合中心

還我們應有的權益來!

WE PAID TAXES BUT

RIGHTS

WHERE ARE OUR



Immigrant Background

Many of today's elderly Asian Americans are immigrants, and as sojourners they have encountered racial discrimination, prejudice, and economic exploitation. They have been victimized by actions such as the Chinese Foreign Miners Tax, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Japanese alien land laws, the Filipino Exclusion Act of 1934, the internment of 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in concentration camps from 1941 to 1946, and the denial of citizenship to first generation Asians.

Without exception, the denial of citizenship, the denial of the right to own property, the threat of deportation, the lengthy incarceration in the camps, and the numerous exclusion acts took a very heavy toll. Such legislation was clearly racist in nature and severely hampered the economic well-being of the elderly Asian Americans. Such legislation has also contributed to feelings of distrust and fear of government, helplessness, and a sense of vulnerability and powerlessness that have alienated elderly Asian Americans from society at large. Many refuse or are reluctant to avail themselves of public social and health services, not because Asian Americans "take care of their own," but because of their negative experiences.

A study of New York City's Chinatown illustrates the reluctance of Asian American elderly to utilize available services. The study found that nearly 33 percent of the older unattached males in the Community Service Society caseload had no prior contact with any agency, either public or voluntary. When one considers the multiple problems of single elderly men, the figure is astonishing. Many of these men are eligible for public welfare support, according to the study, "but refuse to apply or withdraw their applications when they discover the sort of personal information required."





Restrictive immigration laws, as embodied in various exclusion acts, have critically affected the sex distribution among Asian American elderly. Immigration laws often restricted and at times denied the entry of Asian women. Mostly men were recruited for cheap labor in the mines and canneries and on the farms and railroads.

Chinese immigrants, for example, were prohibited from bringing their wives and children with them following the promulgation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Imbalanced sex ratios among the elderly Asian Americans resulted. Nationally, 52 percent of all people age 65 and over are women. But in 1970 there were 15,244 Chinese men (56.8 percent) and 11,612 Chinese women (43.2 percent) age 65 and over. The sex imbalance is much more evident among elderly Filipinos. In 1970 there were only 3,897 elderly Filipino women (18.3 percent) and 17,352 elderly Filipino men (81.7 percent). Because of the extreme sex differential among the Filipino elderly, there is and will continue to be an exceedingly high percentage of men without close relatives to help care for them.

Many of today's Japanese elderly are immigrants, and were adversely affected by Executive Order 9066, which called for the evacuation of 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast in 1941. At the time of their release, the median age of the Issei (first-generation immigrants) was 50 years. For many of them, the lengthy incarceration in the camps interrupted their most productive years. Release from the camps and resettlement necessitated beginning life as new immigrants once again.

"It was, indeed, both financially and psychologically, a devastating and traumatic experience that convinced them that the land of opportunity was not meant for those of Asian background," according to Tom Owan. Although Japanese American evacuees are now eligible for social security wage credit for the time spent in the camps, "many are not taking advantage of this benefit and probably are still unaware that they are eligible to claim it." (*Nichibei Times*, January 7, 1976)

Obstacles to Full Participation

Pacific Asian elderly encounter other barriers besides racial discrimination and prejudice that obstruct full participation in American society. A research report from the Training Project for Asian

Elderly, funded by HEW's Administration on Aging, concluded "there is strong sentiment that Asian elderly do not receive social services because of language, racial, and cultural barriers." The report also observed that "health and welfare agencies have few bilingual staff, haphazard provision for non-English speaking clients, and very little publicity to the Asian community about their services."

With reference to Chinese Americans, Frederick Li and others identified language and cultural barriers to health care in *Ahe American Journal of Public Health*. They observed that the Chinese are often poorly informed about the availability of services or find existing facilities to be inaccessible because of a language handicap.

Similarly, Bok-Lim Kim has observed that Asian Americans fail to seek and use existing services to which they are entitled because of language and cultural barriers and unfamiliarity with the social service bureaucracies.

Future Generations

The difficulties elderly Asian Americans encounter in seeking to utilize and in utilizing public services and participating in other activities (e.g. employment) will not disappear with the immigrant generation. Succeeding generations of Asian Americans, even though they have adopted American practices and values and are able to communicate in English, have inherited a legacy from their parents and grandparents. That legacy has resulted in restricted if not minimal participation in private and public social programs. Many who are now approaching old age have lived through periods of violent anti-Asian agitation and are acutely aware of racial discrimination and prejudice.

From the preceding discussion, it is quite apparent that today's elderly Asian Americans encounter major obstacles to full participation in American society. These obstacles have been further aggravated by cultural and language differences. Asians have from time to time witnessed corrective measures, such as provision of social security wage credits for some interned Japanese Americans. But while such ex post facto actions are more desirable than continued injustices, conscious efforts must be made to prevent the occurrence of such inequities. Only then will elderly Asian Americans be able to live with the dignity and respect they so richly deserve.

From
colony
to immigrant
to citizen

PILIPINO AMERICANS

By Royal F. Morales

The history of the Pilipino Americans in the United States is a story of struggle that is often unknown and misunderstood. It is a story that must be told, and told correctly, as part of American history. It is a story of the "old timers of the **Sacada**," the first wave of immigrants; of the second wave, the veterans and their families; and a story of the "brain drain," the third wave of immigrants. (The author prefers the use of "P" for Pilipinos because, as many Pilipinos have noted, the "f" sound is not in the Pilipino alphabet or language.)

The first wave of Pilipino immigration to the United States began at the conclusion of the short-lived Philippine-American War (1899-1902). The war, often referred to as the "Philippine Insurrection," came about when Spain sold her Philippine colony to the United States, presumably because of her defeat in the Spanish-American War. However, the final blow resulted from the Pilipinos revolting against Spanish rule.

As a newly acquired territory, the Philippines became the immediate source of manpower supply and served as a strategic

military base in and around the Asian and Pacific countries. However, since the middle of the 18th century, several families of Pilipino ancestry lived in "settlements" in various coastal regions frequented by the famous Philippine-Mexico Spanish galleon trade, such as New Orleans and Baja California. These early settlers were slaves and shipbuilding workers serving on Spanish vessels who managed to "jump ship" and who intermarried with other ethnic groups. Records indicate that in Louisiana the famous Manila Village was founded by a Pilipino, Quintin de la Cruz. Antonio Miranda, one of the 46 founders of the **pueblo**—the city of Los Angeles—was of Pilipino ancestry.

The first wave of immigrants, recruited and imported between 1900-1934 under the Sacada system—a replica of the 18th century indentured servitude applied to Europeans—replaced the Japanese and other farmworkers of Hawaii and California who left the farms for other jobs. At the height of this immigration, strong anti-Japanese sentiments resulted in passage of legislation that halted the coming of Japanese workers.

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More than 100,000 Filipino workers—able-bodied, single young males—provided the "brawn power" needed for the pineapple and sugar cane plantations of Hawaii and the citrus vegetable farms of California. During "off seasons" they provided services for hotels, restaurants, and private homes and worked in the fishing and cannery industries of Washington and Alaska.

In addition, thousands of students and government-supported *pensionados* came to learn the skills of administering political and educational programs for their developing country.

Like their immigrant predecessors during the Depression years, the Filipinos, limited in the English language, "neither alien nor citizen," faced exploitation from the agribusiness people and accepted hard labor for cheap pay. Unwanted by organized labor, they encountered overt personal and institutional racism, became embroiled in racial conflicts, and met ill-will based on negative stereotypic images. Perceived as economic competitors and as personal threats to other groups, Filipinos suffered increasing hostility. Anti-Filipino riots occurred, and finally in 1934, an exclusion act provided for an immigration quota of 50 Filipinos each year. Furthermore, in California, for instance, Filipinos were not allowed to own property and were not allowed to marry "white" women. They were "ghettoized" and restricted to menial jobs. Carlos Bulosan's *America Is In The Heart and Brothers Under the Skin* by Carey McWilliams depict this part of the American story.

Despite all these difficulties, the old timers survived and some "made good," only to return to the Philippines with some bitterness. Their contributions to this country were numerous as farmworkers, service workers, and soldiers during World War II. After initial rejection by the Armed Forces, the military records of the Filipino regiments proved their

patriotism and national pride.

The arrival of the second wave of immigrants began slowly before World War II and continued to increase after the Philippine Independence of July 4, 1946, when the yearly quota changed, allowing 100 immigrants in addition to the families of the Filipino veterans. Several thousand young men were again recruited for agricultural work in the vast plantations of Hawaii, while hundreds of students immigrated to fulfill personal dreams, and many government workers came to study various educational and political programs in preparation for their role in the development of a devastated Philippines.

In response to the Philippine-United States Parity Agreement and to the "cold war" of the 1950s, each year thousands of young Filipinos were also recruited into the United States Navy. Unfortunately, they were restricted to the roles of servant and steward, assigned in the galleys of the ships and at other facilities as cabin boys and domestic helpers for officers and mess hall workers at military academies and the like. However, by 1973 the "steward only" category for Filipinos was stricken from the books, and the career mobility of Filipinos expanded. Timothy Ingram's October 1970 article in *Washington Monthly*, "The Floating Plantations," elaborates on this subject.

During this period, the immigration of single women increased. Families of military personnel were permitted to join their husbands and fathers in the United States and elsewhere, enabling a closer family lifestyle for this generation.

A third, parallel wave of immigrants started in the 1950s and escalated rapidly in the late 1960s as a result of the drive to recruit foreign-trained manpower and the unprecedented relaxation of immigration quotas for non-European nations, especially the Asian and Pacific countries and Latin America. By 1965 the allowable quota was at least 20,000 a year. Those who came were mostly professional people, giving rise to the term "brain drain."

They included medical doctors, nurses, social scientists, teachers, engineers, dentists, accountants, pharmacists, and lawyers.

In addition, over 50 percent of this wave of immigrants were single women in their late twenties and early thirties. This development stems from the high and important status placed on women and their role in Philippine culture, politics, education, and family affairs. It is not, therefore, surprising to discover that, according to the 1970 census, Filipina women in the United States have attained higher median levels of education than the national average attained by other women. At the same time, 9 percent of Filipino women were heads of household compared with the national average of 11 percent.

The population growth of Filipino Americans in the United States is phenomenal. A study by Tom Owan of the Social Security Administration projects that by 1980, the Filipino population will surpass that of Japanese Americans in United States.

In 1940, more than 120,000 Filipinos lived in the United States, with about 95 percent living in the rural areas of the West Coast and Hawaii. The majority were males and farmworkers. In 1960, the census counted 176,310, and in 1970, 343,000. Obviously these figures are now outdated, considering the number of new arrivals since 1970 plus the normal birthrate and the presence of students and writers. The overall 1970 population increase reflects a 95 percent jump over the 1960 census count, compared to the total U.S. growth of 13.3 percent during the same period. During 1971-1975, the total number of immigrants far exceeded the 20,000 per year quota, averaging approximately 28,000 a year. (Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens are not included in the quota.) In 1975 more than 31,000 came to the United States, according to government sources.

With the population growth came the development of Filipino American communities throughout the larger cities of the United States. A large concentration of

Pilipinos now exists in cities outside the West Coast and Hawaii—in Boston, Philadelphia, Norfolk, New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Detroit, Kansas City, Houston, New Jersey, etc. Now 85 percent of Pilipino Americans live in urban areas, compared to 5 percent in 1940.

The new Pilipino communities contain professional associations, fraternal organizations, cultural centers, and regional-provincial groups, as well as new enterprises.

Contrary to what many people think, Pilipino Americans—like other ethnic and minority groups—face many problems, including subtle racism.

Most Pilipinos have Spanish surnames that result in cases of "mistaken identity." In many statistical surveys, they are not counted and thus short-changed in services. For example, the single elderly, with their meager social security income, must rely on various government programs for assistance. If they are undercounted, less money is allocated for their needs.

Recently arrived families face the cold realities of a subtly racist job market and have unrealistic expectations fed by an American-generated myth of economic and equal opportunity. Many professionals are underemployed or unemployed—lawyers work as law clerks, teachers as aides, doctors as lab technicians. Others just find whatever jobs are available in order to survive. When a Pilipino is hired, employers play on the desire to "prove oneself," so that applicants frequently accept lower pay than necessary. Under "last hired, first hired," newly hired Pilipino employees, like other minorities, are the first to be let go—often frustrating the purpose of affirmative action.

Insensitive institutions contribute to the underutilization of trained people by erecting unnecessary barriers to professional certification. Cultural-urban shock is compounded by the trauma of dislocation, the stark reality of the economic nightmare, and the

"anti-alien" attitudes of many Americans.

Other concerns include the increase of youth problems, identity crises, and feelings of low self-worth—all exacerbated by the omission of the history and culture of Pilipino Americans in social studies and history classes and by unaware and insensitive teachers, textbooks writers, and administrators. The repudiation of one's cultural and racial background that seems required in order to "belong" has created in too many Pilipino youths an alienation from school, increasingly manifested in truancy, delinquency, and "push-outs." The family becomes less important, values weaken, and the *hiya* (shame) concept is rendered meaningless. Twelve percent of the Pilipino population falls below the low-income level, nearly the same as the 13 percent figure for all Americans. But given the level of Pilipino education, 12 percent is disproportionately high.

The Pilipino American background combines Asian and Western historical and cultural pluralism. Pilipino ethnicity is blended from and rooted in many races; Pilipino religions are linked with Indo-Malayan-Chinese heritage, Islam, Hispanic and Irish Catholicism, and American Protestantism. The socioeconomic and political experience of Pilipinos includes colonialism, republican democracy, and the current Philippine New Society program as implemented through martial law in September 1972.

Indeed, the story of Pilipinos is far from complete. Their future is unlimited. Yet to be examined are several important aspects of the acculturation process—changes and retention of cultural and historical heritage; family lifestyle and intergenerational relationships; marital patterns and child rearing practices; and political involvement, aspirations, and contributions. The development of these topics by others will not only increase the pool of knowledge regarding Pilipinos, but it will also provide information on which plans for progress can be based.

From yellow peril to model minority

THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE

By Legan Wong

The history of the settlement of America can be perceived as a continuous wave of diverse racial and ethnic minorities. Unfortunately, many Americans know little of their own cultural and ethnic roots, let alone those of their neighbors of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Ask most Americans what they know about the Chinese and their community, and the responses will probably conjure up images of "a quiet hard working people," "real good inexpensive Chinese restaurants," and "exotic Chinatowns

with pagoda-shaped roofs and strange sights and smells."

These images are superficial and lead to stereotyped misconceptions of a group's history and contemporary experiences in this country. Worse, they can easily form the basis of suspicion and hatred which continue to divide people along racial lines.

According to the 1970 census, 435,062 Chinese live in America. Of that figure, approximately 62 percent or 155,000 lived in the

northeastern portion of the country, with 82,000 in New York State alone. The Chinese are a highly urban group, with more than 96 percent residing in major cities. For example, 69,324 Chinese live in New York City; 58,696 in San Francisco; 35,639 in Honolulu; and 27,345 in Los Angeles. These statistics are informative, but their significance lies in placing them in historical perspective.

The first sizable number of Chinese arrived on the shores of California in 1848. This immigra-

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tion was made up predominately of young married males from southeastern China. These sojourners did not come to America out of greed for gold, as many historical accounts claim. They were lured and forced out of their homeland by natural disasters, famines, and the results of the social, economic, and political exploitation of China by the West. Arriving at the time of American industrial expansion westward, which required an immense labor force, the Chinese experience became a model of labor exploitation.

Through their work, the Chinese were instrumental in the development of the Western frontiers. They constituted the main work force of the western link of the transcontinental railroad and were the mainstay of the early manufacturing and agricultural industries of the West.

However, recurrent depressions and massive unemployment in the 1870s created social turmoil throughout the country.

The rising industrial capitalists and many trade union leaders pointed an accusing finger at the Chinese—making them scapegoats for the crisis created by the robber baron mentality. Campaigns were developed to exclude and eliminate them from employment. The success of these campaigns was evident by 1910, with the near disappearance of Chinese in the labor market. Those left were found only in the limited service industries. Riots and massacres of Chinese in the 1870s and 1880s forced them eastward and out of rural areas into the urban confines of the "Chinese quarter" or Chinatown.

The settlement of Chinese in Chinatown constituted both involuntary and voluntary segregation. Chinatown offered protection from racist terrorism. But more importantly, Chinatown was the place where cultural and social institutions could be maintained. Organizations transplanted from China banded together under the name of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent

Associations, composed of the commonly known family associations, district associations, and tongs. Within the walls of their ghettos, the Chinese developed a limited economy dominated by merchants who became community leaders.

The power of these merchant elites, who still control the contemporary benevolent associations of Chinatown, stems from the first arrival of the Chinese. Providing jobs and shelter and serving as a link to families in China, the merchant's status was finally legitimized by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act, the first proscription of any ethnic group from America, excluded Chinese workers and their families but allowed merchants to bring in their relatives.

With this privilege, merchants were instrumental in the development of a lucrative practice for bringing Chinese into America during the period of exclusion, 1882–1943. Many Chinese workers in this period wanted to bring their families here and start a new life. In desperation, these workers turned to the merchants and purchased "slots" on the family tree of those who were exempt from exclusion. The "paper" sons, daughters, and wives would enter as the relative of the seller of the "slot."

This practice led to the development of a double family identity for many Chinese in America. Today, descendants of these Chinese still might bear the "paper" name of their forefathers. For example, a young Chinese American might have the surname Wong but the real family name could be Lee. Until recently, owing to fears of deportation, the real name of the family would be kept secret, known only to relatives and close friends.

Even with this practice, the Chinese community was still predominately male. For example, in 1900, there were more than 1,880 males per 100 Chinese females in America. The shortage of Chinese women in America, due both to cultural traditions and to official exclusion, has had a tremendous effect on the develop-

ment of the Chinese community. A significant second generation of Chinese did not appear until the late 1930s—90 years after their arrival. Every other immigrant group coming to America was able to produce a second generation within 30 to 40 years after their arrival.

The population profile and the nature of the confined community slowly began to change in the 1940s. In 1943 the Exclusion Act was repealed and a quota was established permitting 105 Chinese to enter annually. In subsequent decades, the number of Chinese born in America began to increase. With the abolition of national origin quotas in 1965, significant changes in the population and the existing Chinese community began to take place. Families were reunited and the sex ratio began to level off. By 1970 the total Chinese population had jumped 83 percent since the 1960 census.

The nature of the Chinese community has also changed since the development of the first Chinatown. Various types of Chinese communities exist in America, distinct in physical location, population concentration, and socioeconomic status.

In 1943 the Chinese were finally given the right to become naturalized citizens. Naturalization allowed a small number of Chinese the opportunity to enter government and professional occupations. Along with a small group of college-educated, American-born Chinese, this tiny minority formed the beginning of the Chinese American middle class.

As the years progressed, these Chinese began to realize that middle class status did not mean total social or economic acceptance into American society. Many professionals found advancement in their chosen fields blocked by subtle forms of discrimination. Chinese Americans with educational and technical skills still encounter considerable discrimination in both the public and private sectors. Recent studies and hearings conducted in various

cities have underscored this problem. Their socioeconomic status has also given this group the ability to move to the suburbs of major cities. But in many cases overt and covert discrimination in certain residential areas had to be overcome.

Chinese live fairly comfortably today in suburbs such as Hempstead, Long Island, and in the San Gabriel Valley in Southern California. Although they do not constitute a geographic community, they have attempted to preserve a sense of ethnic identity by organizing centers or clubs where they and their children can socialize.

A growing number of immigrant working class Chinese have also spread out from Chinatown into other parts of New York City, for example. In some sections, small pockets of Chinese families reside in close proximity to one another. The concentration of Chinese in a certain section of Queens, New York, has led many people to call it the "Little Chinatown of Queens."

In general, both parents in working class families are employed, usually in restaurants and garment factories located either in Chinatown or in other parts of the city. Often they have their start in Chinatown and save money in order to move into a small house or larger apartment, out of the confines of the ghetto.

The relative economic success of middle and some working class Chinese has led many to believe that all Chinese Americans are "successful" and should be considered a "model minority." This myth developed in the wake of the urban turmoil of the late sixties. America needed a colored minority to prove that its system still worked. Statistics such as the Chinese median family income of \$10,610 were presented to substantiate the myth. But Chinese families are more likely to have at least two full-time workers than the average American family, and the Chinese family is usually larger than most American families. In many cases, grandparents or other relatives live in

one household and supplement its income. The perpetuation of the success myth is dangerous, for it serves to justify lack of attention to important problems.

A contemporary Chinatown is more than a geographical community. It serves as the cultural and ethnic center for Chinese throughout the city and its suburbs. Seen by outsiders as a quaint tourist attraction, Chinatown is actually a "gilded ghetto," populated by immigrant working-class people. Population increases in Chinatown and the current economic crisis have increased the social problems besetting the Chinese community. Problems of the elderly, youth, and immigrants; language; inadequate housing and social services; job discrimination; and the inability to break out of the service industries have all taken their toll, and have also affected the community's structure.

Until recently, the traditional leadership of the benevolent associations has successfully met its challengers—often through suppression of other organizations. Historically, Chinese workers have developed organizations to fight for their rights. Organizations such as the Chinese Mutual Aid Association in California and the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance in New York City were noted for their activism and progressive programs. This brought them into conflict with the interests of the traditional merchant leadership.

During the McCarthy era, the benevolent associations were influenced by agents of Chiang Kai-Shek's party and its official and unofficial allies in an organized suppression of these organizations, accusing their members of being "unloyal to America." Worsening relations between the People's Republic of China and the U.S. and the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II created concern within the Chinese community. Wary of governmental actions against them,

many Chinese were fearful of fighting for their rights and carefully avoided political and community issues.

These years became known as the "silent years" in Chinese American history. The traditional conservative leadership became entrenched. It was not until the late 1960s that progressive forces revived the struggle for the rights of the Chinese.

Today the conservative leadership has been challenged by numerous organizations composed of professionals, students, and working people. Seeing that the merchant elite of Chinatown dealt with community problems cautiously and ineffectively, new organizations have taken the initiative on many issues. One example is the massive demonstrations organized in New York's Chinatown in 1974 and 1975 around the issues of discriminatory employment practices and police brutality.

Although the power of the benevolent associations has been challenged and is declining, they are still perceived as leaders by segments within the community and the majority society. The associations' stance against discrimination, compounded by the myth of the "successful minority," has resulted in the larger society's lack of concern for the problems of Chinatown.

For too long the experiences of the Chinese population in America have been either shrouded in misconception or totally ignored. This country can no longer turn its back on the community and pretend it has no problems. It must recognize and deal effectively with the issues affecting this community. The Chinese experience in America must be understood not only for our own benefit, but also to teach future generations of Americans about the peoples and cultures that make up our country. More importantly, learning about Chinese Americans will allow us to reexamine governmental policies towards racial and ethnic groups and begin to make necessary changes.

By Dwight Chuman

Yet
another chapter
of abuse

LITTLE TOKYO

In detailing the contemporary Japanese American experience, no other continuing saga better captures the multitude of forces at work affecting the collective psyche of the people than the history and current "redevelopment" of this group's longtime Southern California community base—Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district.

The birth of Little Tokyo during the peak of Japanese immigration to the United States and the macabre litany of both legislated and *de facto* oppression and discrimination give a clear picture of Japanese American history from before the turn of the century to World War II.

Immigration of Japanese to the U.S. realized its highwater mark during the period between the presidency of Grover Cleveland and the Depression Era of Herbert Hoover's administration. During this 40-year span, more than a quarter-million Japanese immigrants arrived on these shores.

The descendants of these first-

generation arrivals make up most of what today is the largest Asian American subgroup. Thus, it is not at all rare for a young American of Japanese ancestry to have parents, grandparents, and even great grandparents who have all been citizens of the U.S.

Today, there are an estimated 591,000 Japanese Americans in this country. Approximately 36 percent live in California, while another 36 percent are concentrated in Hawaii. An overwhelming majority of Japanese Americans in California reside in or around the greater Los Angeles area.

From the beginning, the Japanese American faced an agonizing struggle against the racist attitudes of the majority community.

"The Japanese are starting the same tide of immigration we thought we had checked 20 years ago. . . . The Chinese and the Japanese are not *bona fide* citizens. They are not made of the

stuff of which American citizens are made," announced San Francisco mayor James Phenlan in 1900.

With such themes of hate working overtime on the public mind, the pioneering first-generation Japanese American, the Issei, created Little Tokyo during the first decade of this century.

Compounding the blind xenophobia that was rampant when they first arrived, the Issei also faced extreme harassment from members of the white labor force who saw them as a threat to their job market. Politicians labeled the Japanese American unsuited for assimilation into the mainstream of American society.

It was purely a question of survival in an unfriendly environment when Little Tokyo was founded as an enclave for an otherwise unwanted people.

Issei gravitated together and supplied for themselves restaurants where they did not have to contend with discrimination, secure housing, and employment—all in Little Tokyo, shelter from the storm.

Today, Little Tokyo is primarily a commercial district with only a

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smattering of residential units, but prior to World War II, it was, according to some estimates, four times the size it is today and a major residential neighborhood with homes and schools extending all the way to the L.A. River some miles to the east.

In the years prior to World War II, Little Tokyo dominated the social, cultural, and economic lives of Japanese Americans from Santa Barbara to San Diego.

To make a long and very painful story short, the Issei and their U.S.-born children, the second generation Japanese American (Nisei), faced anti-Japanese riots, job discrimination, the Alien Land Laws, and discriminatory immigration statutes for the first four decades they were in the U.S. Then came Executive Order 9066.

This Nation is still haunted by what it inflicted upon the Japanese American during World War II. By order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1942, 110,000 West Coast Japanese Americans were "relocated" from their homes and placed in internment centers deep within the bowels of the U.S. heartland. Most of those subjected to this treatment were U.S. citizens.

Overnight, Little Tokyo business and residents were uprooted and closed down "for the duration."

After the war camp experience, Little Tokyo clawed its way back from the government-forced detention, not to the scale it had once been during its heyday in the '30s and '40s, but within a decade, the area adjacent to the L.A. civic center was once again a focal point of the Japanese American community.

After the war, the Japanese American was forced to maintain a low profile. Wartime hatreds spilled over into the postwar years even though the Issei and Nisei had more than proven themselves good citizens through home-front loyalty and battlefield suffering.

Little Tokyo today stands mute testimony to this long history of oppression and suffering in the hearts and minds of many Japanese Americans. Now nearing the century mark since its founding, Little Tokyo is not unlike the old, time-worn Issei it first provided shelter for at the turn of the century.

A majority of the original buildings still standing are built of unreinforced masonry and have been deemed unfit for human occupancy. The residential units are dingy and unhealthy for the elderly men and women who live in them.

Not even 5 years after the first Japanese Americans returned to Little Tokyo after World War II, the City of Los Angeles annexed a sizable portion of the area in order to build a new police headquarters. Eroded and abused by history, the death knell had sounded for this Japanese American symbol of endurance.

In the early '60s, Little Tokyo citizens learned that the L.A. city fathers now threatened to wipe their community off the central city map, once and for all, by replacing it with an expanding civic center.

In reaction to this threat, a local redevelopment effort for Little Tokyo was spawned. Renovations and improvements on existing buildings were encouraged by local businessmen under the leadership of the clergy. But, soon these Little Tokyo businessmen and community leaders realized that they were only temporizing the eventual fate of the area with their low-level efforts.

L.A.'s urban renewal agency, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), was called in during the late '60s to assist the locals in hastening a rebirth in Little Tokyo. During the planning stages, the CRA assured Little Tokyoites that the "redevelopment" of the area would reflect the needs of the people in the community. The project was to be phased in such a way that no businesses or residents would have to be displaced from the area even temporarily.

The main attractions of the CRA's plan were embodied in promises for a modern shopping mall for the businesses in the area; a cultural community center to ensure that the area maintained its cultural roots and community services; 1,000 residential units to maintain Little Tokyo's feeling of community; and a pledge that Asian American and minority workers would be allowed opportunities for training and employment in connection with the redevelopment project.

But one decade after the CRA drew up its master-plan for Little Tokyo with the advice and approval of local people, there is still no modern shopping mall to accommodate the area's mom-and-pop businesses. Instead, only vacant, weeded-over parcels of dusty CRA-owned land are visible. The long-awaited cultural community center has yet to break ground for construction, but local social service groups and cultural organizations like tea ceremony, flower arranging, and dance instructors have been served with CRA eviction notices. Less than one-third of the promised residential units have been erected. Businessmen and longtime residential tenants are being urged to make what the CRA calls "interim moves" out of the Little Tokyo area because there are no new buildings to move into while their homes, shops, and studios face the CRA wrecker's ball. Asian workers have been all but shut out of major participation in local redevelopment by bare bones affirmative action policies.

The rebirth of Little Tokyo has been transformed into a slow and painful death. In a replay of an oft-repeated story, the interests of the Japanese American community in Little Tokyo, and symbolically everywhere, have once again taken a backseat to a new set of priorities and interests thrust suddenly upon the scene.

It seems that for many years Japan-based corporations had been looking for a staging area on the West Coast. Japan Inc., a new and unsuspected foe of the

Japanese American, quickly capitalized on Little Tokyo's blight for its own gain.

Today, instead of the community-oriented developments once promised, a highrise, \$40-a-night luxury hotel now dominates the Little Tokyo skyline. When it is completed next summer, the Hotel New Otani, built by a consortium of all of Japan's major financial institutions, will stress the theme of "Commodore Perry opening Japan to Western influence in 1854."

The value of Little Tokyo as a symbolic center of Japanese American life in the U.S. proved to be the same as that of a wooden nickel in the eyes of the urban renewal specialists. Instead of a tribute to more than eight decades of Japanese American sweat and toil, somewhere along the line city planners foresook Japanese American dreams in favor of the economically expedient—an ersatz tribute to Japan Inc.

The planners couldn't perceive any great sin in deemphasizing community requested projects in favor of tourist frills and Japanese big business, because after all, the hotel was being developed by their own people, wasn't it?

Just as the Japanese Americans were herded into camps during World War II because there was doubt that they could withstand the beckonings of their Emperor across the Pacific, now that the U.S. and Japan enjoy friendly relations, the official thinking is: "What is good for the Japanese corporation must be good for the Japanese Americans."

It is this erroneous notion of the majority population, this identity blur between Japanese Americans and the Japanese from Japan, that has been this American subgroup's most insurmountable stumbling block throughout their history in the U.S.

It nearly always has negative results for the Japanese Americans when acted upon. On a somewhat innocent level, it causes comments like, "Where are you from?" to be asked of even fourth-generation Japanese Americans caught up in this blur.

More significantly, when relations with Japan sour, people (unionists, politicians, zealots) vent their wrath on Japanese Americans. Case in point: When a well-intended antiwhaling group marches into Little Tokyo to grab some media attention, they picket any store or the entire area, because the people here don't look American, they look Japanese.

This incessant tide of misunderstanding has driven a large portion of the Japanese American subgroup to seek refuge in the anonymity of assimilation.

HEW statistics confirm a Japanese American tendency toward assimilation. An astounding 40 to 50 percent of Japanese American women have married outside their ethnic group since the 1950s. A once closely-knit community is now exhibiting stronger tendencies to leave the Japanesetowns like Little Tokyo and the postwar Japanese American ghettos in L.A. suburbs like Monterey Park and Gardena for dispersion into predominately white neighborhoods. Japanese American birthrates are lower than the norm and are on the decline.

Regardless of where Japanese Americans choose to live or what attitude they take on issues like Little Tokyo redevelopment or wartime incarceration, they still share unique problems that undercut any efforts on their part to deny their ethnicity.

To coin a phrase: You can run, but if you're Japanese American, you cannot hide.

The Japanese American has, to this point in U.S. history, been the helpless victim of the majority population's attitude toward its ethnic minorities. Some inroads in minority rights may have been won of late by blacks and Chicanos, but without their large numbers, it appears that save for a few fleeting concessions Japanese Americans will simply have to wait for another day. With even their traditional community core—Little Tokyo—under seige on two fronts, crises

of identity for the entire subgroup can only escalate dramatically.

Only a few alternative directions are realistic in light of present day perceptions of the group by the majority population: To assimilate and disappear into the nonidentity of white America; to attach themselves to the tenuous fortunes of Japan, hoping to benefit where they can from this "permanent visitor" status; or, to work toward establishing a clear identity as Japanese Americans—a culturally and racially distinct group, but still active participants and contributors to the overall American experience.

Realistically, the latter option, which presupposes the feasibility of a pluralistic society in this country, would today be the least viable when the hard lessons of the not too distant past are taken into account.

Contemporary problems that beset the Japanese American community fall for the most part in the category of basic human rights denied.

The symptoms of today's more subtle form of racism against the Japanese American manifest themselves in a serious under-employment problem in the community and gross nondelivery of public social services to the elderly and those whose English is inadequate. An ongoing struggle concerned with the apparent inequity of the educational system toward the Japanese American in terms of minority programs and bilingual-bicultural education is necessary.

"Yellow Peril" ostensibly led to the first anti-Japanese laws; "national security" called for the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II; urban renewal and tax increment income have been used as a justification for the destruction of Little Tokyo; and an innocent excuse of misidentification has been to justify bureaucratic-level insensitivity toward the needs and rights of the Japanese American in employment, health care, and education.

What will be the justification for the next injustice?

An emerging
immigrant community

KOREAN AMERICANS

The Korean American community in the United States is emerging as a significant Asian American group, a large proportion of whom are recent immigrants (85.7 percent). The 1970 census reported 70,000 Korean Americans in the United States, 54 percent of whom were foreign born. Since then, 121,807 more Koreans have emigrated to the United States and an additional 23,524 have adjusted their status from that of temporary to permanent residents, according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Thus, as of June 1975, official records indicated there are 215,431 Korean Americans in the United States, discounting natural growth and the substantial undercounting (estimated at 7.7 percent) of minority groups in the 1970 census. This total represents an increase of 307.7 percent in 7 years. Should the present rate of immigration continue, there will be about 370,000 Korean Americans in the United States by 1980.

Korean Americans are subject to the same marginal status and

special problems as other Asian and racial minority groups in the United States. However, their immigration history and demographic characteristics are uniquely their own. Unlike Chinese and Japanese immigration, Korean immigration prior to 1965 was both limited in scope and of brief duration.

American immigration authorities indicate that only two Korean immigrants were admitted to Hawaii in 1900, while a major influx of Koreans occurred between 1903 and 1905. Spurred by political and socioeconomic instability and encouraged by their government, some 7,226 Koreans (6,048 men, 637 women, and 541 children) emigrated to work on Hawaiian plantations during those 2 years alone. The immigrants were mostly poor farmers, and, interestingly, nearly half were converted Christians. In 1905 the Korean Government prohibited all further

emigration upon learning of the harsh working conditions of Korean workers in Hawaii.

Consequently, only a limited number of "picture brides" were allowed to emigrate until the late '20s. A few Korean students and visitors who considered themselves political exiles were admitted to the United States. They worked to free Korea from foreign domination and to regain its national independence. Upon liberation of Korea by the allied forces after World War II, a sizable number of the earlier political exiles returned to Korea. Notable among the returnees was Sung Man Rhee, the first elected president of the Republic of Korea.

Korean Americans are more widely dispersed among all regions of the United States than other Asian American groups. For instance, 44 percent of the Koreans living in the U.S. in 1970 were located in Western States,

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including Hawaii. Of the remainder, 20 percent were found in Northeastern States, 19 percent in North Central, and 17 percent in Southern regions. This demographic pattern contrasts with the Japanese and Filipino groups, of whom 81 percent and 74 percent are concentrated in Western States, respectively. The trend toward widespread distribution of incoming Korean immigrants has continued since 1970. Less than one-third have settled in Western States, while the Southern and Northeastern States have each received about 24 percent of the incoming Korean groups, with the North Central States maintaining about the same representation as before.

In terms of urban and rural distribution, Korean Americans are again atypical among the Asian American groups. A much higher percentage (33 percent) of Koreans live in rural areas as opposed to the Chinese with 3.4 percent, the Japanese with 10.8 percent, and the Filipinos with 14.5 percent living in rural settings. Even though Koreans are less apt to dwell in urban areas and are more regionally dispersed than other Asian American groups, they nevertheless tend to be concentrated in such industrialized and urban States as Hawaii, California, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and the District of Columbia.

The median age of Korean Americans in 1970 was 26 years. This figure places the Korean group between that of white Americans, with a median age of 28, and black Americans, with a median age of 22.5 years. Nationally, the proportion of Koreans under age 18 was 34 percent or about the same as it is for the total population in the United States. Of the total number of Korean immigrants (121,807) arriving between 1970 and 1975, more than half were between 20 and 39 years of age. Nationally, only 3 percent of the Korean group is made up of older persons and this is less than one-third the

proportion of elderly in the U.S. population.

Unlike other Asian American groups, the sex ratio of Korean Americans has favored females during the last two and a half decades, primarily owing to the immigration of young female children adopted transracially by American parents and young intermarried Korean women. While a trend toward a more balanced sex ratio is evident among recent immigrants, still, twice as many females as males were admitted to the United States between 1970 to 1975. Sex imbalance is even more evident among the immigrants in two age groups. Of the children under age five, 63 percent are female, while women represent 82 percent of the 20-29 age group.

The fact that a large proportion of the 20-29 age group is married to non-Koreans is supported by the 1970 census data, which reported 12,000 Korean male family heads and 18,000 Korean wives of family heads. These figures indicate that fully a third of Korean women in the U.S. are married to non-Koreans. This trend is even more extreme among Korean Americans living in Hawaii, where 50 percent of the marriages reported in 1970 were mixed. The high intermarriage rate of Korean Americans in Hawaii is apparently based on different socioeconomic and population dynamics than is the intermarriage of Korean women with U.S. servicemen in Korea. Careful studies are needed in this area.

The educational achievements of the Korean population in the United States are quite high, especially among recent immigrants. Nationally, more than one-third (36.3 percent) of the Korean Americans have completed 4 or more years of college education, compared to 11.3 percent of the U.S. population. Seventy-one percent of the Koreans have completed high school and fewer than 20 percent of the adult population have less than an eighth-grade education. Aside from the immigration

policy, which favors the admission of educated persons by granting preferential status to professional and technical workers, high educational achievement has been a well-ingrained cultural value among Koreans for several centuries.

Such achievement is reflected in the occupational categories reported by incoming Korean immigrants. Between 1965 and 1974, roughly one-fourth of the Korean immigrants reported an occupational status in their home country, while the remaining three-quarters consisted of children and housewives who were unemployed. Of the previously employed Korean immigrants, 67 percent were engaged in professional, technical, and managerial categories, while only 10.4 percent were classified as unskilled workers.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine whether the high proportion of professional and kindred workers were able to continue in their respective occupations subsequent to emigration, because the 1970 census did not tabulate the occupational status of Korean Americans. Recent studies made available in Chicago and Los Angeles and public hearings conducted by the California and New York State Advisory Committees (SACs) of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights indicate an evident downward trend in the occupational mobility of Korean Americans, an issue discussed further below.

Labor force participation and unemployment rates of Korean Americans 16 years of age or older in 1970 were comparable to those of the total U.S. population; however, a CBS news report in July 1975 indicated a much higher unemployment rate of 20 percent among Koreans in Los Angeles.

While the 1970 data indicate that the income levels of Korean males and females were close to the national average, their earnings were actually much lower than those of the total

population in the United States in terms of the higher proportion (36.3 percent) of college graduates among them.

The foregoing sketch of Korean Americans presents a deceptively favorable picture of a community consisting of well-educated, young to middle-aged persons in their most productive years. A closer examination, however, reveals several areas of concern warranting public attention.

Underemployment of highly trained and educated Korean Americans represents a waste of valuable human resources as well as the deprivation of needed services from the Korean American community and society at large. Underemployment is severe among professionals in the fields of health, engineering, law, and education. Such professionals find that their credentials and work experiences in Korea as well as their education in the United States are often ignored by potential employers and licensing bodies. The complexity of these problems and recommendations to resolve some of them are contained in the aforementioned California SAC reports of February and May 1975.

Problems encountered by Korean women married to U.S. servicemen are less visible and consequently are poorly understood by both the Korean ethnic community and the majority population. Since 1950 nearly 30,000 Korean women emigrated to the United States as wives of American servicemen. An indeterminate number of them suffer from physical abuse, neglect, and desertion. Many more suffer from isolation and alienation. There is an urgent need to identify such women and develop programs to assist them.

English classes are needed for most foreign-born Korean Americans irrespective of age and level of education. The Korean language is structurally different from English and most Korean Americans find mastery of the English language to be a most difficult task. A lack of English

proficiency has far-reaching tangible and intangible consequences: English language deficiency affects the type of jobs available and the rate of promotion for Korean Americans; racist employers use language as an excuse not to hire or promote Koreans; Korean American children with a lack of English skills find that it affects academic learning and performance in school as well as relationships with teachers and peers. On the intangible side, English deficiency affects the self-esteem of Korean Americans; many speak of losing their self-confidence after repeated experiences of being misunderstood or mistreated by unsympathetic Americans. Several studies carried out within the Korean American community emphasize the need for several levels of English classes to be taught by bilingual and bicultural teachers to assure the most effective language learning.

A recent survey of Asian Americans in Chicago indicates that Korean Americans express a desire for legal services, English classes, child care facilities, and bilingually staffed medical care and referral services, in that order of priority. The findings of one such study can obviously not be generalized to all other areas. However, a few additional studies from other regions offer evidence in support of the Chicago conclusions.

This brief article highlights the major characteristics of the Korean American population and lists some of their most pressing problems and needs. Although the limited space did not permit the full discussion of the effects of discrimination on Korean Americans, the cost of unequal treatment, both tangible and intangible, is well appreciated by its victims. As members of a minority group that has suffered discrimination, Koreans recognize that the need to join in a common effort to eradicate the racism and discrimination poisoning our society is ever more urgent.

A struggle against anonymity

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN THE U.S.

In recent years, a rapid migration from the U.S. Pacific Territories for Guam and Samoa has greatly increased the concentration of Pacific Islanders in the continental U.S. No census data or statistics accurately describe the number, residency, or socio-economic conditions of Pacific Islanders in the U.S. Because of the political status of their islands, American Samoans and Guamanians are able to flow freely back and forth to the U.S. This back and forth travel is not monitored by migration agencies or government programs. One result is political and social

anonymity, a series of injustices affecting people whose problems are inappropriately handled and whose views are simply not known to those who shape policy in the United States.

In addition to Guamanians and Samoans (from American and Western Samoa), native Hawaiians, Tongans, and others from smaller islands of the Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian chains are also migrating to the U.S. in significant numbers. Since

the west coast presents the primary ports of entry, the greatest concentrations of Guamanians and Samoans are found along that coast from San Diego to Seattle. It is estimated that California alone now has more than 50,000 Samoans (from both Samoas) and 30,000 Guamanians, many of whom have found employment on military bases (especially naval) and with international airlines anxious to promote tourism in the islands.

Faye Untalan Muñoz, a native of Guam, is director of the Racial Minorities Mental Health Program at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education in Boulder, Colo. She also serves on the Advisory Committee for Asian and Pacific Islanders to the U.S. Bureau of Census.

In 1973 the author did a pilot study on Guamanians and Samoans in Los Angeles, California. From that small study it appears that the Guamanian migration to the U.S. reached its peak during the 1960s. Earlier waves of immigration occurred as a result of the Korean War, military inductions, and the devastation caused by Typhoon Karen which hit Guam in 1962. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, left Guam after that storm and came to live with relatives on the mainland. Guamanians, who had only just begun to recover from the ravages of World War II, suffered additional acute economic deprivation. The desire to relocate became widespread.

The author's limited survey in Los Angeles indicates that similar migratory experiences occurred among Samoans, although they did not necessarily identify the same economic pressures. As a whole, however, the patterns of migration of the various groups of Pacific Islanders do not differ greatly from each other, but individual factors (motives, resources, and ability to cope in the U.S.) do.

Pacific islanders continue to migrate to the U.S. for various reasons: to join relatives who migrated earlier, to make a new life for themselves, to pursue better or higher education or career opportunities. The methods of migration are also varied. The easiest and most convenient way to leave the U.S. territories and protectorates (American Samoa, Guam, and the Pacific Islands) was originally through military induction during and after the Korean War. In the 1960s, a California fruit company recruited many young Guamanians to "pick fruit" in California. "Picking apples" sounded novel and exotic to islanders. When naval operations on Guam were shut down in the 1970s, many men accepted jobs on the mainland, particularly in Bremerton, Washington. The airline industry, promoting tourism, brought many islanders to the U.S.

The typical islander who arrives in the U.S. is ill-prepared to cope with a large, complex, industrial society. The islander's experience has been within a mutual-aid society that is nontechnical, non-industrial, and noncompetitive. In the island society, family and social groups provide support, maintaining a socioeconomic bond between the individual, his or her family, and the larger social group. Although mutual aid and support may be healthy and necessary for the individual upon arrival in the U.S., it can easily be a drain on the limited resources of mainland communities. The continuous exhaustion of family resources may lead ultimately to continued poverty. An impoverished group will be unable to benefit fully from educational and professional opportunities that foster and complete the social, economic, and political assimilation of minorities into the mainstream of American society.

In American society, the principal means by which a group gains public and government response to its needs is political pressure, which is partly a function of numbers. Pacific Islanders are particularly ill-equipped to use this method. Their numbers are small, and, having lived through a long period of colonization, they are limited in their ability to confront an insensitive system. They have not even begun, as other minorities have, to present their case, despite the fact that their educational level and job opportunities may be the lowest among U.S. minorities. None are found in the fields of medicine, psychology, and psychiatry; only recently have some Guamanians and Samoans entered schools of social work and medicine.

Isolation of islanders from mainland activities, poor educational programs on the islands, and lack of economic support have greatly limited talented islanders who aspire to higher and professional education. Linguistic and cultural barriers contribute to the slow progress in solving education, health, and welfare problems and hinder the ability of Pacific

Islanders to present their rights and needs to the Nation that is responsible for their well-being.

An accurate examination and documentation of Pacific islanders' educational, health, and socioeconomic status is overdue. Such data would enlighten the public, as well as islanders themselves, and place responsibility for meeting those needs where it belongs. Currently, no government agency is responsible for the American Samoan and Guamanian who left the islands. As a small minority group, they are not of any real concern to the State, county, or city in which they reside. Their residence in the U.S. bars them from participating in their island's political and economic programs.

To whom do they bring their burdens and problems and, more important, who has a vested interest in their welfare? Until Guamanians and Samoans are recognized as a legitimate responsibility of the United States and are provided government programs for educational, economic, and social development, this country is guilty of serious human neglect.

As Pacific islanders become more aware and gain both professional and political confidence—tools necessary for dealing with the realities of the American system—they will be able to achieve equality of education, health care, and welfare both on the U.S. mainland and in their territorial islands. But at present, meager economic support and token action by the U.S. Government bear testimony to this country's lack of concern regarding its colonial subjects and its negligent attitude toward the full social, economic and political development of a people for whom it has assumed territorial responsibility. It is high time that steps be taken to help Pacific islanders move into the mainstream of America. Not only have they a right to share fully in this country's wealth and opportunities, but given the chance, they would have much to contribute through their unique skills and cultural resources.

Give back
All the
Funds NOW

WE NEED
MORE
BILINGUAL
TEACHERS.

THE "OTHERS"

ASIAN AMERICANS AND EDUCATION
By Connie Young Yu

Asians have suffered racism in all forms in the long history of their immigration to America. One of their greatest trials has been getting an equal education, a struggle that persists to this day.

When the earliest Asian immigrants—the Chinese—petitioned to attend California's public schools in 1858, they were refused. The Superintendent of Public Instruction, Andrew J. Moulder, maintained that if nonwhites were admitted it, would lead to the "ruin" of the schools and that "the great mass of our citizens will not associate on terms of equality with these inferior races, nor will they consent that their children do so."

Although the Chinese were forced to pay discriminatory taxes that enriched many school districts in the West, they received none of the benefits. Laws and ordinances against Chinese were soon extended to the immigrating Japanese, Koreans, and Filipinos. Discriminated against in employment and housing, Asians were forced into ghettos, speaking only the languages of their ancestors, their

children learning in makeshift schools where they were often taught by well-meaning white missionaries.

In 1884 Joseph Tape tried to get his daughter into a white school in San Francisco, taking his case to the California Supreme Court. The judge ruled in favor of the Chinese, but the superintendent of schools asked the State assembly for an amendment providing for separate schools, which later became known as "oriental schools."

In the case of *Wong Him v. Callahan* in 1902, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that separate but equal schools were not forbidden by the 14th amendment to the Constitution.

In 1925 Chinese brought suit in the U.S. Supreme Court (*Gong Lum v. Rice*) to attend the white schools in Mississippi and lost. For years there were three sets of schools in Mississippi: white, black, and yellow.

The segregation of Asians in school caused an international incident in 1906, when the San Francisco Board of Education

ordered all Chinese, Korean, and Japanese children to attend the city's Oriental School. The Japanese Government protested angrily, and President Theodore Roosevelt, mindful of Japan's recent military victory over Russia, pressured the school board to amend its position. The Japanese were allowed to attend the white schools, although the other Asians were forced to remain in the school in Chinatown.

The "Neighborhood School"

Discrimination in housing kept Asians from moving out of ethnic ghettos. Not until the 1950s did Asians begin moving in significant numbers into white neighborhoods. Schools in major Chinatown remained "oriental schools." Many parents who could not afford to move their families into integrated areas spoke only Cantonese, and no effort was made by the schools to communicate with them. These neighborhood schools were completely uninvolved with the community. Parents who were non-English-speaking did not attend PTA meetings or understand the educational program of their youngsters. Children were defenseless in the classroom. The curricu-

Connie Young Yu writes about Asian American history and culture, and serves on a textbook evaluation committee of the California State Board of Education.



lum of the all-Chinese schools was totally unrelated to the lives of the students, and the teachers, usually white, imposed their own values on their classes.

One young man, recalling his years at Commodore Stockton, San Francisco Chinatown's grammar school, says:

There was completely no regard for where we were coming from. Every year our teachers would ask us to tell

the class what we got for Christmas, and of course, most of us would get up and lie about what we got. None of us even had fireplaces.

I can remember vividly an incident in my first grade class at Commodore Stockton. A new girl who spoke only Chinese had an "accident" in the classroom because she did not know how to ask for permission to go to the bathroom. The teacher, who was white and

had been at the school for years, made no effort to communicate with her, instead scolding and humiliating her in front of the class. Such cruelty from teachers adversely affected the children's learning, making them withdrawn and fearful. After sufficiently cowering their Asian pupils, some teachers praised them for being "so quiet and orderly."

"My brother and I didn't understand what the teacher was saying



in English," says Roger Tom. "But instead of trying to help us, she had us tested for mental retardation."

Roger Tom now heads the Chinese Bilingual Project in San Francisco, housed appropriately at Commodore Stockton.

The Growth of Bilingual Education

With the lifting of restrictions against Asian immigration in the mid-60s, newcomers from Hong Kong and Taiwan swelled the

population of Chinatowns in major American cities. More non-English-speaking children entered public schools, and in places such as New York, Boston, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, a critical need arose for bilingual educational programs.

The Chinese Bilingual Project began in 1969, several years before *Lau v. Nichols* established that non-English-speaking Chinese students in San Francisco were denied equal rights in education.

When I discussed with Roger Tom what Commodore used to be like, he sounded hopeful: "Things are a lot better now." At Commodore a huge, colorful mural showing all different races of children learning together is displayed where there once was a blank wall.

"There's no longer the stigma attached to speaking Chinese," he said. "White students and a few black students are also in the bilingual program. Parents see it as an enrichment program. We get lots of gifted children. White parents are the strongest defenders of the program. They are looking for some quality education in the school system and find it in the bilingual programs."

The Chinese Bilingual Project, funded by the Office of Education in the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, is working on a kindergarten through 12th grade model. Sixth-grade students speak Chinese fluently and are literate in the language. Bilingual classes are team-taught, with children learning subjects such as social studies, math, and music in two languages.

Increased numbers of immigrants from the Philippines, Korea, and Japan have created the need for more bilingual programs in different areas of the country. Vietnamese in some communities

receive special tutorial programs for all ages.

Some schools with large Asian populations use bilingual report cards, and bilingual community meetings enable non-English-speaking parents to participate in their children's education. Asian community groups have worked on materials and programs to supplement education in schools. For example, Chinese for Affirmative Action in San Francisco has produced bilingual educational programs for television and radio.

Despite dedicated efforts, bilingual programs in many school districts are on shaky ground. Bilingual education is a new idea in America that has challenged the established structure of education. There is a shortage of trained teachers and skilled administrators and often a lack of continuity in the programs. Nonbilingual teachers often feel threatened by the new programs, and personnel are fearful of losing their jobs. There is always that segment of the community which resents bilingual programs as "un-American and an added expenditure of tax dollars."

Don Wong, who heads the Chinese American Heritage Project of the San Francisco Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT), which is developing curriculum materials, comments, "The concept of bilingualism is greatly misunderstood. It's not an attempt to compete with the English language. It's a bridge for language minorities to gain equal access and participation in American society."

Integrating the Textbooks

Even after Asian children acquire English language skills, what they usually learn in the classroom is of limited perspective. Textbooks have been a major factor

in lowering the Asian child's self-esteem by either omitting portrayals of Asians or perpetuating misconceptions and stereotypes.

Eimi Okano, a concerned parent who is involved in reviewing textbooks for California State adoption, recalls the racist attitudes in her own education. She spent several formative years in a concentration camp during World War II, an experience of 110,000 Japanese Americans she feels has yet to be accurately portrayed in textbooks.

"We learned we didn't count. In textbooks we found no Asian role models or any positive mention of Asians," Eimi Okano says. "We were taught the 'melting pot' concept of America, but our reality did not fit the myth. We were taught to think white but were not treated white."

When schools were integrated, ideas remained segregationist. The values taught in school were Anglo-Saxon values; heroes and historical events portrayed the superiority of the white man and his culture. Children continued to be taught that Columbus "discovered" America, that pioneers "won the West," and that they should remember the Alamo. European fairy tales about beautiful blond princesses, white knights, and castles gave minority children feelings of inferiority and self-contempt. Generations of Asians and other minorities have grown up in America learning nothing about their own heritage or the role their people have played in U.S. history. Asian American achievements have been excluded from textbooks and references to Asians have been demeaning and patronizing.

Pilipinos have found portrayals of their native country insulting. Brought up in the Philippines believing in American ideals of

equality, many Pilipinos migrated to the United States only to face the same discrimination experienced by other Asian groups. In classrooms they have had to read statements about American colonization of the Philippines such as this one by distinguished historians Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager:

It (America) consciously became one of the tutors of backward peoples. . . . With races like the Igorot and Moros, Americans took up the training of what Kipling called "new-taught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child.

from *A Pocket History of the United States*
(rev. ed. 1969)

Commission and Omission

Because of continual pressure from community groups, textbook publishers have in recent years included portrayals of Asian American culture and history. Jeanette Arakawa, a member of the Tack Force for the Evaluation of Instructional Materials in Palo Alto, California, found that many books portrayed Asians as "strange and mysterious," and many, especially for elementary grades, illustrated Asians in a "lookalike" fashion with exaggerated yellow skin and slanted slits for eyes.

One newly published textbook for fifth graders had a story on the 1906 Oriental School incident in San Francisco. A Japanese girl is miserable because she must leave her neighborhood school and attend the Oriental School in Chinatown. President Roosevelt hears about the incident and rescues our heroine from the fate of attending school with Chinese and Koreans. This historical incident is distorted, portraying Roosevelt's action as a

move toward integration.

Other examples of textbook racism toward Asians include:

- A contemporary story of a Chinatown boy whose friend is a huge parade dragon. The child's grandfather is portrayed as old-fashioned, wearing a long skinny beard, a Mandarin-styled long gown, and a black tasseled beanie. (Out of five short stories about Asians in the elementary anthologies I reviewed, four involved some form of dragon.)

- A secondary history text which discusses citizenship during the 19th and 20th centuries as being available to all immigrants and immigration as if it were open to all peoples. The subject of Asian exclusion laws is omitted.

- A second-grade language skills book which shows a picture of an urban scene with Asians and other minority children playing in a tenement-lined street. Next to it is a picture of all-white children playing on a grassy hillside in a suburban setting.

Publishers often include the cultural history of the mother country, passing up the opportunity to involve American achievements and experience. Historic incidents such as Chinese building the western portion of the Transcontinental Railroad, Pilipinos organizing farm workers in the fields, and Japanese pioneering in industries are often completely ignored. Yet these facts are as much a part of American history and culture as the Boston Tea Party and the discovery of gold at Sutter's mill.

Often textbooks give token bits of history on Asian Americans, reflecting a patronizing attitude. One textbook glossed over the incarceration of Japanese Americans in World War II, distorted the truth, and focused on the life of Senator Daniel Inouye, describing



his bravery as a soldier in the 442d regiment. The impression given is that Asians have to be super-heroes to prove their loyalty.

The Chinese publisher Ng Poon Chew was described in one text as "the Mark Twain of his people." The great horticulturist Lue Gin Gong has been labeled "the Chinese Burbank." Children should learn about these people as original, individual achievers, not as imitators of American heroes, as these labels would lead children to believe.

Textbooks fail to deal with the historical realities of violence and racism toward Asians. Half-truths and euphemisms are used in describing the shameful chapters of American history. Publishers often feel that young children cannot handle classroom discussion and reading on racial conflict, yet many youngsters confront it daily in the schoolyard. Books continue to focus on fantasy stories about Asians. One new elementary language arts book uses references such as "digging for China." Racist expressions such as "you're yellow!" are used to denote cowardice in stories.

Cultural Education

In the past, many Asian American parents and even the children themselves have had to assume the burden of providing ethnic cultural activities in school. Dr. Albert H. Yee, professor of educational psychology at California State University, says that as a child many teachers used him to teach "a unit on China." "You cannot believe how many times I had to teach everyone in class how to use chopsticks."

With such experiences many Asian children have felt that they are oddities, singled out to "speak some Japanese," "write a Chinese word," or demonstrate some ethnic

custom. Often they wish to be "plain American" which they feel is to be white. Teachers' attempts at multicultural activities have encouraged this attitude.

"Every Chinese New Year I get asked by schools to do a demonstration or an activity," says Mari Seid, a member of Asian Americans for Community Involvement, Inc., an affirmative action organization. "The schools remember us only for annual holidays, and Asians are forgotten the rest of the year."

Mari Seid stresses the history of Asian Americans when she speaks to classes, deemphasizing festivals and "tourist culture." "It's time white people learn that we won't be exploited as 'exotic' diversions in classrooms anymore. Our history and culture must be part of the curriculum."

The inclusion of Asian American history and culture is not only for the benefit of minority children, but also to enrich the learning of all children equally. White children and their parents should be freed of prejudiced notions about Asian Americans and enlightened by discovery of the historic struggles and achievements of yellow peoples. What must be realized is that Asian Americans are descendants of immigrants just as white Americans, and that their heritage is an integral, dynamic part of American history.

New Asian American writers are emerging with novels, plays, and short stories. Some of these works should be anthologized in textbooks and discussed in the classroom. Children should be exposed to the perspectives and experiences of yellow writers. They will learn the uniqueness of each Asian group as well as some of the similarities of their experiences. Materials for younger children are being developed that introduce pupils to a multicultural outlook from



This ridiculous outfit above is apparently the illustrator's idea of typical Chinese American attire.

kindergarten. Teachers must make an effort to locate materials on Asian Americans.

"I don't accept the excuse that there're no Chinese American materials available," says Joe Huang, director of the Project for Cross-Cultural Understanding: The Chinese Americans. "Incorporation of Chinese American experience in education is stalled not because nothing is available, but (because) teachers have not even used what is available."

Joe Huang is on the staff of TACT, which received a \$56,668 continuing grant from the Office of Education, under the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA), to develop secondary level curriculum materials. TACT has produced a filmstrip series for the elementary level, "Understanding Chinese Americans," that is available to any school or community group.

The Japanese American Curriculum Project in San Mateo, California, has been providing curriculum materials, adult books, periodicals, and information on Asian Americans since 1969. The newly formed Filipino Far West Task Force on Education has been investigating discrimination against Filipinos in textbooks and curricula.

It has been the effort and agitation of such community groups that have forced the educational system to implement multicultural programs. Children's consciousnesses are not changed by short-term ethnic studies projects that are apart from the educational program.

"Multicultural education can be integrated into the regular studies," says Don Wong. "Certain elements of Asian history, culture, and achievement can be tied into study subjects such as science or math. Textbooks must begin to reflect a truly multicultural per-

spective to be effective and relevant to a multiracial, multicultural class." Children must feel that there is equal opportunity to learn, grow, and participate.

Counseling by Stereotype

Many factors influence a minority child's self-esteem and aspirations. In reviewing career and guidance books, I found few portrayals of Asian Americans, and the few that I did see were in the area of the laboratory sciences. Asian Americans have long been directed toward technical fields. Teachers and counselors have maintained that Asians are better in nonverbal skills and poor in self-expression.

Paul Sakamoto, superintendent of schools in California's Los Altos-Mountain View High School District, believes that such attitudes toward Asians are still prevalent:

When an Asian American comes in for counseling, the counselor has preconceived notions as to what to say to the kid. Number one—there's no doubt that the kid should go to college because he's a high achiever. The student is encouraged to go to college although he may want to stay out for awhile or work, and he's counseled toward those areas Asians have been successful at—science, mathematics, medicine, nursing, engineering. Rarely is the student talked to about performing arts, fine arts, law—anything having to do with projecting oneself. Counselors have a feeling that Asians are too passive and too quiet to be successful in any kind of profession that involves articulation and verbal skills. This is really limiting for students.

Mr. Sakamoto feels that he can do his part in changing stereotypes by employing Asian Americans in the school system. In the past few years, his office has employed Asians in various positions, from teachers to gardeners, and students have sought out these individuals for supplementary counseling. He feels strongly about the prejudices against Asians at the administrative level. In the field of educational administration, Asians have been refused positions on the premise that they are poor at supervising, unaggressive, and unable to give constructive criticism, "There's this image of the educational administrator as a big jock," he says.

Paul Sakamoto had always wanted to be a teacher.

"In the early '50s I told my counselor I wanted to be a teacher and he said, 'you won't find a job around here.' He told me I'd have to go to San Francisco because they were hiring a few Orientals and said I'd be better off doing something else. Fortunately, I didn't take his advice."

The tragedy is that a great many Asian Americans have had their aspirations and dreams crushed in counseling offices, in classrooms, and in the libraries. Generations of Asians have been affected by the hostility, prejudice, and oppression of the educational system in America. While traditionally most Asian parents have encouraged their children to succeed in school and go to college, and have sacrificed to pay tuition, their offspring have been cheated of and denied an equal education.

"Get a good education, because you can be robbed and lose everything, but education is something no one can take away from you," we were told. But while we were getting that education, a great deal was being taken from us.

ALOHA AINA

NATIVE HAWAIIANS FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

By Gard Kealoha

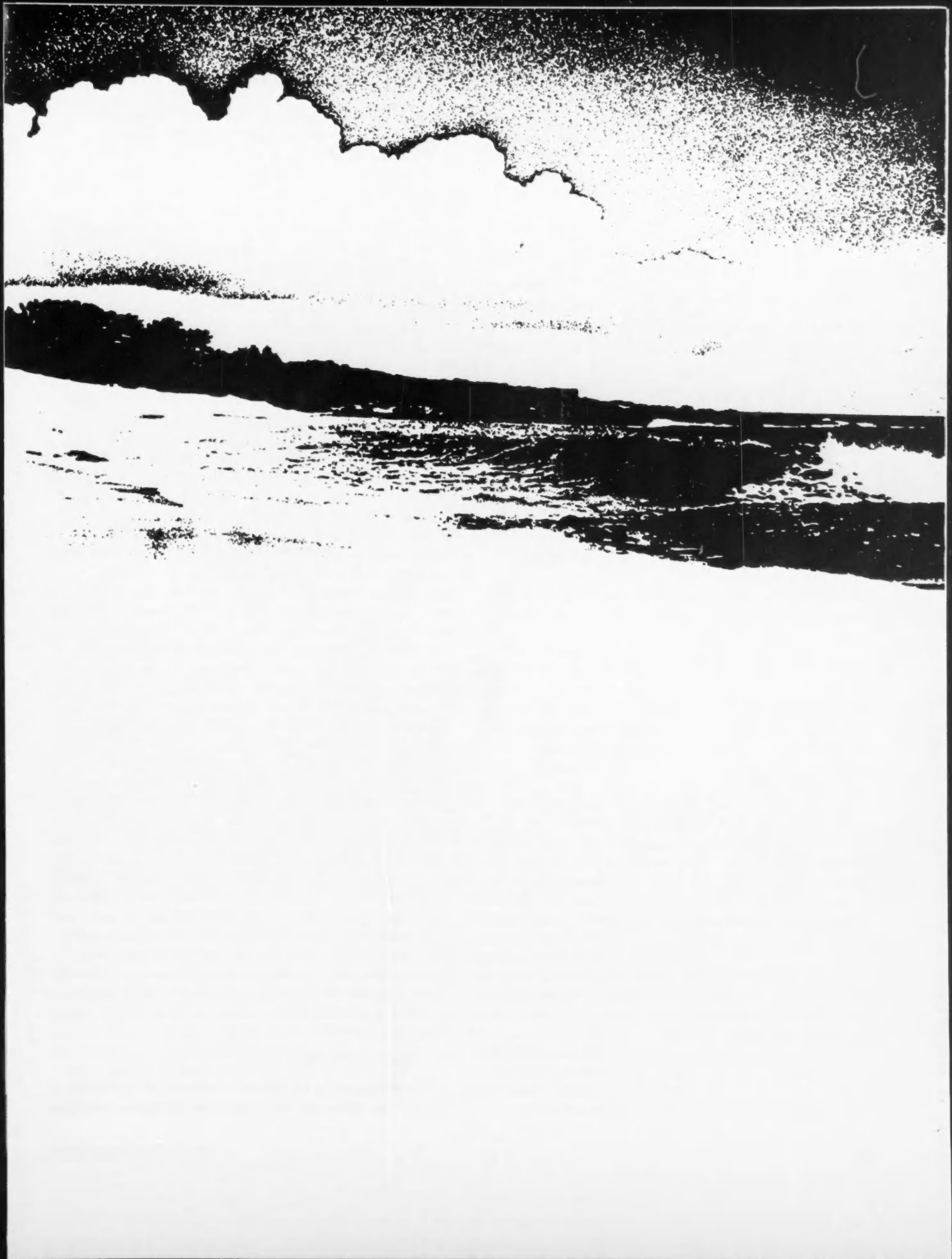
E Hawaii makou. We are Hawaiians. You can find us just about everywhere in our beautiful islands, from the precious few leaders in industry, education, medicine, tourism, government service, and private enterprise, to a great many in trouble with our courts, in disputes over land cases with our native rights ignored and shunted aside, and in resignation over the highly competitive rat race that rewards the individual over the total needs of the group. In our mediocre public schools on all levels, in the predominantly Hawaiian communities like our homestead areas, in the urban ghettos, our people are becoming increasingly alienated from the land we call *Hawaii Nei*, Hawaii here. We are strangers in our own land.

Our people, *keiki hanau o ka aina, na pua, na opio o Hawaii*, children born of this land, the flowers of proud Polynesian roots, the sons and daughters of Wakea and Papa, sky father and earth mother, the descendants of generations of superb Polynesian navigators and first-rate tillers of the soil, at home on the land and on the sea, are now named Native Americans. The rubric is a late inclusion in an act of Congress—an ironic term encompassing our past and present situations.

Why do we still find pockets of our *Ohana*, the great extended Hawaiian family, still resisting complete acculturation? Is there hope for the preservation of recognizable differences between native Hawaiians and the dominant culture? What are our own intrinsic strengths? Are they compatible with the American dream? Can they survive the assaults of technology and materialism?

How have we Hawaiians built the walls that have enabled us to maintain an equilibrium—albeit a tottering one—that is comfortable with our Polynesian heritage in a plasticized and ruthless technocracy? What are some of our major problems? How can we relate these to

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our past and find the resolutions that will allow us to fix our futures with the same ennobling sense of place that kept our ancestors alive and can give meaning to our lives today?

We are survivors of a people who were close to the *aina*, the land, and as the land and the people grew farther apart, something happened to the Hawaiian spirit. Where do we come from? Where are we now? Where do we go from here?

Hawaii Before "Discovery"

Once, long ago, we Hawaiians lived in rather splendid isolation, developing a unique culture based on the resources of the land and the surrounding sea. We preserved the knowledge of millenia in a remarkable oral tradition—mystical, honored, and cherished through countless generations,

Somehow after the heroic voyages crossing the wide Pacific ended and became dim memory, romantic legend, and incredible feat, our people settled down. They established a system of status relationships based on a mutually interdependent *Ohana*, an extended family in which hospitality and generosity, cooperation and working together, were the central and guiding principles.

The *aina*, the land, was a lei of adornment for the ancient Hawaiian. From his wreath of mountains, valleys, plains, and surf-washed shores he drew physical sustenance, named every star seen by his naked eye, labeled the gods that manifested themselves to him in his very surroundings, and gave unceasing thanksgiving for these gifts. Indeed, the land belonged to the gods. Its control and management was the responsibility of the *alii*, or hereditary royalty, in a stratified society where each depended upon the other to prosper and survive.

The *alii* held the land in trust for the gods. They were the executors of the gods' estates. The *makaainana* or general populace provided the labor of the *mahiai* or farmer, the tradesman, the artisan—all doing the various jobs that were necessary for the production of goods from the soil and the sea. The oral tradition and anthropological records indicate that great respect and loyalty flowed in both directions between the social classes. A ruler was beloved as long as he did right, but when he became despotic, recourses for the common people that permitted them to shift their loyalties to another leader were well integrated into the larger code of living.

The *haole*, or foreigner, called the Hawaiian social structure feudal because of his own familiarity with the European tradition. However, the European framework was rigid and did not provide escape

hatches for those suffering under totalitarian rule or wishing to make another choice in vocations.

Hawaiians loved the land. They named generations of their children and significant events in their lives after its physical features. You can learn the genealogy of the Oahu chiefs by going to a historic valley and finding the names assigned to the ravines, the ridges, and the other physical peculiarities within. (Today, this same valley is threatened with destruction in order to accommodate a superhighway.)

You can still listen to the *oli* or chants and the *mele* or songs that never cease to praise the beauty of the lay of the land. The music of Hawaii uses the metaphors of nature to describe the daily emotions of life. The frequent use of triple meanings in a phrase of poetry indicate a sophistication of the highest order or creativity. The ancient Hawaiians were master poets.

They also could lay out an entire village utilizing both the mountain and sea resources to create a self-sufficient entity called the *ahupua'a* and develop a system of irrigation to support it. They wove beautiful mats, beat the finest cloths from wooden bark as soft as silk, and shaped wooden implements of great beauty, form, and function. They made nets of natural materials that proved exceedingly strong. They constructed comfortable houses without benefit of nails. They developed a collection of natural medicines and a simple diet of wholesome foods from the land and the sea that nourished healthy bodies until the arrival of the white man. They created stunning feather capes that took great skill and patience for the brilliant pageantry of the rituals of their *alii*. They reveled in athletic sport, surfed the waves with abandon, rode the carefully constructed and breathtaking wooden sleds down steep mountain passes, climbed deep into the forests to haul down the great timber for canoes. They kept a remarkably detailed account of their history and recorded their genealogy in an oral tradition held sacred since time immemorial.

Ancient Hawaiians developed an ecosystem that showed respectful use of the land with an understanding of its limitations, taking only what was needed and replenishing what was taken. They abided by a system of *kapu* or tabus that disallowed the use of depleted land, based on a realistic assessment of the environment's capabilities. Indeed, it was when the *kapu* were abused by the *alii* that the people were able to leave an area for another that was better managed by an *alii* more respectful of the land.

The Assault on Values

The introduction of foreign attitudes fostered the ultimate breakdown of Hawaiian values. The demands



for goods from the foreign ships seriously depleted the supply of food and labor. The unfortunate assumption by Hawaiians that a major god in the spiritual hierarchy, Lono, had returned as predicted in oral tradition in the form of an English explorer was the beginning of the end. The resources of the people became subject to the duplicity of foreigners and the new desires of the *alii* for foreign goods.

Prior to the unification of the Hawaiian kingdom, each island was ruled separately with the land division sublet to subchiefs, who, in turn, depended upon an

administrator designated to oversee the production of goods and the settlement of disputes arising within the smaller *ahupua'a* divisions.

An island was divided into districts. Districts were separated into *ahupua'a*. There were smaller divisions within the *ahupua'a*, but the *ahupua'a* generally meant a portion of land that ran from the mountain into the sea. It was designed to be a self-contained unit enabling its residents to maintain a harmonious economic self-sufficiency.

To maintain this self-sufficiency, the inhabitants

developed a system of mutual interdependence, fostering the values of both the primary and extended *ohana* unit. This was the core of existence for Hawaiians and gave them their sense of place and belonging. From the *ahupua'a*, Hawaiians also perceived their role as family members and realized that the constraints of the group were far more important than their own personal goals and achievements.

This traditional relationship to the *aina* grew further estranged for several reasons.

- Prior to the introduction of Western thought, the land as a whole was more important than the concept of its private ownership. Land was for everyone to use. It was a gift from the gods.

- The China trade, the sandalwood trade, and the whaling industry all depleted both natural and human resources. Many Hawaiians took to the ships, already bereft of the traditional Hawaiian overseer and already realizing that their *Ohana* was deteriorating

- There was tragic decimation of the population due to venereal disease and other communicable illness. A very large proportion of the native population was simply wiped out.

- The Hawaiians' lingering dependence upon the traditional gods was ruthlessly stamped out by insistent Calvinist missionaries.

- The *alii's* desires for consumer goods increased his debts and overshadowed the traditional *alii* concern for the general welfare of the Hawaiian people and the land.

Land Reform

When Kamehameha III came into power, he was faced with strong pressure from the fur and sandalwood traders and the whaling industry merchants. They along with the missionaries were accustomed to owning lands with clear title that they could sell or rent as they wished. They wasted no time in challenging the King to dispose of "his" land. Often their actions were supported by visiting gunships. Kamehameha III created a bill of rights in 1839 which defined sufficient cause for a landlord to dispossess a tenant. He also changed the Hawaiian Government from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one by granting the constitution of October 8, 1840. It contained the first formal acknowledgment by the king that the common people could claim some form of ownership of the land, aside from an interest in the products of the soil.

The most significant reformation of the land system in Hawaii resulted in the Great Mahele of 1848. A series of *mahele* or divisions of the lands of Hawaii

began on January 27, 1848, and ended on March 7, 1848. Cloaked in the disguise of Western democratic concern, it was the first legal step toward the alienation of the Hawaiian people from the land. The *makaainana* were unable to understand the Western concept of land ownership. Along with many chiefs, they fell prey to the greed of people out of step with the traditional Hawaiian relationship and regard for the *aina*.

Confusion reigned; somehow a valued and time-honored trust relationship between the *alii*, the chiefs and the *makaainana* was completely gone. The ownership concept as perceived by Westerners had no parallel in Hawaii. A deed, a simple piece of paper could not instill such an idea. Future shock for the Hawaiian began in the 1820s.

Clearly, the *mahele* not only alienated the *makaainana* from the land, but went further; it cemented the demise of the cultural practices and lifestyles cherished since time immemorial.

Some of the chiefs themselves did not respond to the mandates of the *mahele*. They too could not see how a piece of paper issued by a newly created land commission could change their relationship with the *makaainana* involving their responsibilities and customary direction of land use. Others understood the implication of the deed but did not support it.

Hoa aina or tenants of the land were given ownership rights, and they too, were confused by the implications. Native Hawaiians naively thought that certain land rights were to endure forever. Once again, western ideas influenced the *alii's* decisions. The ramifications were strange, reinforcing a tragic alienation.

To this day, for example, the concept of adverse possession—ownership based on takeover—has done irreparable harm to the Hawaiian. This concept of squatters' rights had already been used extensively by American expansionists and was historically sanctioned by the American Government. The practice was expanded beyond the continental United States when the American Government sanctimoniously proclaimed its Manifest Destiny.

In light of this story, one can easily understand why native Hawaiians continue to distrust today's "Westerners." An act of Congress creating the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, ostensibly to promote homesteads for the rehabilitation of Hawaiians in 1920, was poorly funded, badly administered by inexperienced administrators, and given very poor lands with little water for development. Native Hawaiian rights are callously ignored by the courts of Hawaii.

The United States Navy bombs an island for target practice in an age when weaponry is so constructed that such tests are unnecessary, according to the bombing's opponents. (Hawaiians have protested the continued use of lands for military purposes.) In another instance, Hawaiians are protesting the destruction of an untouched valley in order to build another superhighway that will add to the glut of highway congestion. They are angry at the destruction of ancient religious shrines and sites. They will no longer be kept from enjoying the beaches and mountains cut off from them by large landholders.

They are unhappy at the attacks on the Bishop Estate, a very large landholding legacy of the last of the Kamehameha dynasty, the Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, whose revenues support an educational program and institution for Hawaiian children. They see unplanned development ruining the beauty of the islands and skyscrapers marring the once lovely mountain skyline.

And they see their children ignored in the educational system. They wonder why there is still no department of Hawaiian studies at their own University of Hawaii which boasts an East-West Center and funds Asian and Pacific studies. They want their children to be able to elect Hawaiian as a language in a system that offers Spanish, Greek, French, Russian, Mandarin, Latin, etc.

The New Struggle

Last fall, a new project began under the auspices of the Office of Native American Programs in Washington, D.C., Alu Like, Inc., was a result of careful planning by Hawaiians, who had a major say in the entire program's design. A registry of Hawaiians was started. A needs assessment survey was undertaken on all of the islands, and concerns were listed in order of importance at regional meetings held in predominantly Hawaiian populated areas. One unique aspect found Hawaiians implementing the program themselves. It has raised a lot of hope among Hawaiians.

Hawaiians want to recapture and reaffirm the native rights guaranteed by the constitution of Hawaii in 1846. Native rights were granted by the gods. The *alii* were empowered to administer these rights. The kings and nobles pronounced these rights in a written constitution; the present State of Hawaii constitution ostensibly guarantees these very same rights.

Today, the values of our ancestors are being reaffirmed, giving us a solid base on which our *Ohana* can thrive, prosper, and grow. We call it *Aloha Aina*. We call it love for our *Hawaii Nei*, our *aina*, our land.



By Tran Tuong Nhu

THE TRAUMA OF EXILE **VIET-NAM REFUGEES**



On April 30, 1975, after 30 years of involvement, the United States pulled out of Indochina, thereby ending a long and tragic war. In the course of withdrawal, more than 130,000 Vietnamese, Khmer, and Lao, along with some tribal minorities, were brought to this country in a dramatic exodus which seemed to eclipse even the end of the war. The refugees arrived in a daze and were processed through four resettlement camps around the country as they waited for Americans to "sponsor" them.

Unlike previous migrants, these people were deliberately separated from the very ethnic unity they needed. Previous immigrants—Eastern Europeans, Italians, Irish, Jews, Chinese—lived together, albeit in ghettos, but from such concentration drew strength through mutual self-help to 'make it' in American society. The enforced diaspora resulted in widespread depression in the camps that was reflected in a reluctance to leave the safety of the group for the unknown of American society.

While in camp, refugees were briefed on aspects of American life by people from voluntary agencies and the U.S. State Department who told them, among other things, that they should not attempt to communicate with their families and friends in Vietnam lest the Communists harm them. Many reported being told to stay away from blacks, reinforcing fear and prejudice. They were also told that accepting welfare would have an adverse effect on later employment.

Naturally, these warnings depressed the refugees all the more. The admonition not to communicate with their families made them feel lost, without roots or soul. The intimation that another ethnic group was already hostile frightened them. Thus people were in shock, confused, and deeply despondent after they first arrived.

During the first year, refugees I met would blurt out the story of their departure whenever they had the chance. Each time I met a Vietnamese, our conversations became a catharsis, accompanied often by bitter tears and regret. Had they done the right thing? What had they left behind? There were so many unknowns about the U.S., and the knowledge that they would never quite be at home again weighed heavily.

Most refugees were ill-equipped to leave Viet-nam, as many spoke no English and had no motive to leave except fear. From eyewitness accounts by two American brothers who stayed in Saigon beyond the end of the war, Richard and Joseph Hughes, the people of Saigon watched while the rich scrambled for a way out. Or, as one student put it: "You had to be privileged to riot at the airport." People who left by sea, however—fishermen, airforce and navy personnel and their families (army members who did not have

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access to planes and boats stayed behind)—were not so well-to-do.

Those who were able to leave by plane did so under the auspices of the American Government and American companies where they had been employed. They were the only one guaranteed a way out. Most of the Saigon bourgeoisie—the merchants, civil servants, professionals, teachers—had no direct American connections and could not go. An apparent exception were physicians; of 2,500 physicians in South Viet-nam, 660 came to the U.S.

A woman I knew in Saigon, whose husband was a businessman, told me that to her surprise she hardly knew anyone at the camp where she was processed. Her friends, she said, had not realized that the war was ending, and even if they had, they would have been unable to leave since they knew few Americans.

The exit from Saigon was conducted in utmost secrecy. People dared not tell their siblings or neighbors and would steal away without saying good-bye. Saigon was fraught with fear and paranoia. Another Phnom Penh situation where the city might be under siege for months was feared.

Catholics who fled the North in 1954 were particularly susceptible as rumors swept the city that they would be special objects of retaliation. Thus many of the new refugees are northerners and Catholics. In 1954, nearly one million people left North Viet-nam at the urging of Catholic clergy. Entire villages were uprooted. But the anticipated reprisals did not take place then. Earlier, before the end of the first Indochina War, Catholics who collaborated with the French did suffer reprisals. However, more than a million Catholics now live in North Viet-nam with the blessing of a much more enlightened Vatican.

Recently, Viet-nam's first cardinal was appointed. In fact, the Vatican, recognizing the importance of maintaining relations with a growing Catholic populace, condemned the 1975 evacuation. The Archbishop of Saigon, Nguyen van Binh, exhorted Catholics to stay and ordered nuns and priests to remain at their posts. In a bizarre development, entire villages arrived in this country, having been encouraged to leave by priests who then stayed behind to obey the Archbishop's orders!

In a recent letter from Saigon, the Archbishop wrote:

... the Catholics here wish to testify that while fully being Christians, we are equally Vietnamese citizens and that we respect the legitimate authorities and we desire, in union with our

compatriots of all religious or ideological persuasions, to carry our share in the construction of a free Viet-nam. . . .

(from a letter of May 20, 1976)

Reprisals against Catholics have not occurred.

Vietnamese are extremely sentimental by nature, with a deep attachment to Viet-nam. It is not just the beauty of the land which has been ruined by the war, but a profound appreciation of family relationships, friends, society, and all the ramifications of that closeness. The American family is nuclear and therefore impersonal from a Vietnamese perspective. The Vietnamese have always lived in an extended family system, in a tight network of solicitude and awareness of others. This is why Vietnamese are always considerate, polite, ever alert to the need of others.

When they arrived in this country, the refugees were scattered throughout the 50 States in an attempt to absorb them quietly into the mythical melting pot. Between 40,000 to 50,000 were sponsored privately without adequate safeguards, and many sponsorships have not worked out. Besides the limited resources of most sponsors, unfamiliarity and anxiety made these arrangements untenable. Most refugees are on their own now, according to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW).

Although in most cases sponsors were well-meaning, some were abusive, and some Vietnamese found themselves indentured servants on isolated farms, especially in Southern States. The sponsors frequently reinforced the refugees' uneasiness by their ignorance of Vietnamese culture.

Some Vietnamese complained to me that although Americans are well-intentioned, they are impersonal. Because Vietnamese are meticulous in regard for detail, American casualness seems barbaric. Thus it is in relationships too. For Vietnamese, friendship is never casual, yet it is not very formal, so the American concept of friendship, seeing each other occasionally (especially family) and calling before visiting, seems cold and distant. Vietnamese love to visit and just drop in. Vietnamese talk about "tình cảm" and "thông cảm"—love and sympathy—as the two missing notions in American society that they cannot live without. So they are regrouping, despite government efforts to separate them, joining each other in California, Washington, D.C., Texas, and Florida to find comfort.

California has the largest Vietnamese population and nearly 80,000 are expected there by the end of this year. The State already has a large Asian population, the climate is temperate, and, one suspects, many come



because it is the closest shore to home. In general they are doing well, considering that they have been here just over a year. Vietnamese children are scoring in the 90th percentile in math and doing well in verbal tests.

It is important to remember that 45 percent of the refugees are under the age of 18 and it is for their children that parents are willing to make sacrifices—not unlike immigrants before them. Education is the main reason people cite for remaining in the U.S. As long as they are here, they reason, they might as well take advantage of the opportunity to receive an education—which is paramount in Vietnamese culture.

As a rule, Vietnamese are not goal- or success-oriented, which makes them particularly unsuited for the rhythm of American life. Most are not pushy, most do not know what it means to “get ahead,” and most are not aggressive (although it was their com-

patriots who won the war). This lack of aggression has been interpreted as a lack of drive by the Americans who used to work in Vietnam, but it is merely an expression of a different approach and outlook, as well as a reaction at times to their treatment by Americans. Americans like to see tangibles and the immediate consequence of their actions. Vietnamese know that everything takes time and they are used to waiting. They are also used to hardship and used to not having their own way, at least not right away. This is what has enabled them to endure and made them patient.

Almost every Vietnamese dreams secretly of going home some day. People tell me that when their children obtain their education, and when all have their American passports, they will return home—for a visit.

During the early part of 1976, I traveled in the Southwest United States with the Indochina Mobile Education Project, meeting many transplanted Vietnamese to discuss events taking place in Viet-nam. The reaction to any good news would invariably be met by cynicism and disbelief. I shared letters which I had received directly from my family postmarked “Ho Chi Minh City” (formerly Saigon) and from central Viet-nam. People eagerly read the letters, which were long, nonpolitical, and gossipy, as if they were reading their own family correspondence. Most of them dared not write home after the warnings they received in the camps.

Former military men would argue with me about the Communist takeover of Viet-nam. They believed it was corrupt leadership which resulted in the “loss” of Viet-nam. My argument was that, irrespective of the nature of the government, the people in Viet-nam would always be their family and friends and nothing could change that. After a long altercation, a paraplegic Vietnamese veteran turned to his friends and said: “She’s right. They are our family. It’s still our que-huong (country).”

They would then ask me how they could “earn” their way back, as if they could work off demerits. I would tell them that it is necessary to reconcile themselves to Viet-nam, not to regard it as an ideological foe, but simply as one’s country where one’s family and ancestors still are. For most, this is a difficult proposition, as it negates the very reason for being here.

This is a period of retrenchment for the refugees, during which they are rationalizing their reasons for fleeing. Even if they were not entirely convinced when they first came, they must believe that the government in Viet-nam is repressive and that they had good

reason to leave. Whatever good news they hear they dismiss, and bad news, such as economic hardship, is exaggerated.

Although relatively few Vietnamese lived in the U.S. before the end of the war (most were students, then later, the Vietnamese wives of former GIs), a good number of these were against the war. Some formed branches of Overseas Student Unions similar to groups of Vietnamese in Europe who had long been sympathetic to the cause of an independent Viet-nam. When the refugees first arrived in this country, the students attempted to proselytize them, without much success, as the refugees were uninterested in hearing the merits of the "liberation" of Viet-nam which they viewed as a "collapse." This rhetorical gap seems to be widening. The students, now known as the Association of Vietnamese Patriots, celebrate the anniversary of liberation (April 30th). Some refugees politely attend it to hear recent news of Vietnam, while others demonstrate outside and provoke fights. After many years of anticommunist propaganda it is hard to be receptive to other perspectives. The Association of Patriots publishes a lively and interesting paper called *Thai Binh* that reprints articles from current Vietnamese newspapers from Viet-nam and is widely read. Publications with opposite points of view are also developing.

This is only the beginning of another struggle for many refugees who have started over again several times. According to HEW statistics, nearly one-third of the 30,000 breadwinners have "professional, technical, or managerial" backgrounds. The effects of the tight economic market are complicated by their lack of English and their unclear immigrant status which does not guarantee them citizenship, thus precluding many government jobs and military positions. More than a half billion dollars has been spent for refugee resettlement and an HEW task force, along with several voluntary agencies, devote themselves to refugee problems.

Refugees who come from Cambodia are primarily former employees of the U.S. Government. Their numbers are small since the evacuation took place by air and was limited. Helicopters left Phnom Penh half empty since few were notified of the evacuation. Lao refugees have been filtering across the Mekong River since the end of the war, causing some embarrassment to the Thai Government. Their reason for leaving Laos do not appear ideological so much as economic; the new government in Laos is attempting to follow a policy of economic self-sufficiency. These refugees are even more isolated than the Vietnamese, not to mention the hapless tribal refugees. Some of the latter were recently found in Lassen County, California, in a

condemned ranch building without food or clothing. If the Vietnamese are not considered aggressive by American standards, the Khmer and Lao are even less so. It is hard to imagine what they will gain by coming here. The Vietnamese at least have the comfort of numbers.

Eventually, the Vietnamese will probably do well in the U.S. To have made it to these shores, often with large families, already proves the fitness of these survivors. Vietnamese children—keenly intelligent, disciplined, with boundless enthusiasm—will no doubt succeed in coming generations, although the "babylift" children may be especially troubled when they realize the circumstances of their departure and not know whether they were wrongly separated from their real families here or in Viet-nam.

For their parents, however, the future is not so cheerful. It is very difficult to be happy when one cannot reconcile oneself with the past. There will always be doubts, and the anxiety of not knowing about those one has left behind, in addition to the realization that one may never fit in an alien society, will haunt the refugees for a long time. Many older people (35 and over) are having problems learning English. It is not a question of ability so much as low morale. Middle-aged refugees feel it is too late for them to start over again and have sunk into deeper depression. This melancholia seems to be the prevailing obstacle in the lives of many.

There is no doubt, however, that the coming generations of Vietnamese will eagerly take the opportunities offered them in the U.S. To grow up without the threat of war, the draft, and the uncertainty that governed their lives in the past will enable these youngsters to soar. One hopes they will try to learn about their former country and not forget about it. American culture is so overwhelming in its newness, bigness, and shininess that it tends to obscure the values of one's own culture. There is integrity and beauty in traditions of the old country and new immigrants sometimes forget this in attempts to assimilate.

The Vietnamese are resilient and will somehow turn this temporary misfortune into opportunity. Like recent Korean immigrants who are prospering in various parts of this country through dint of hard work and perseverance, they will also make it. Although many have experienced the sting of racism and the desolation of loneliness, most are determined to make the best of the situation. The worst part is knowing that they may never go home again, may never feel truly a part of this society, and thus may exist in a social and emotional limbo for the remainder of their lives.

READING & VIEWING

BOOKS ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AMERICANS

Note: The books listed below can be ordered through your local bookstore except where other purchase information is specified. They are not available through the Commission.

CHINESE AMERICANS

The Challenge of the American Dream: The Chinese in the United States by Francis L. K. Hsu (Be'mont, Calif., Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1971). A study of relations between Chinese and white Americans in the context of relations between ethnic minorities and a dominant group. *160 pp.*

The Chinese in America, 1820-1973 ed. by William L. Tung (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., Oceana Publications, 1974). A chronology of Chinese American history with selected documents. *150 pp.*

Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown by Victor Nee and Brett de Bar Nee (New York, Pantheon Books, 1973). Analyzes San Francisco's Chinatown—its historical development, the clash among traditional leaders, "liberal" social workers, and "radical" students over control of poverty programs—and recounts socioeconomic conditions based on interviews. *410 pp.*

Mountain of Gold: The Story of the Chinese in America by Betty Lee Sung (New York, MacMillan,

1967). Although a few conclusions have caused controversy in some quarters, this remains an important book. *341 pp.*

KOREAN AMERICANS

The Koreans in America, 1882-1974 eds. Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., Oceana Publications, 1974). A chronology of the experience of Korean Americans in the United States with relevant documents. *417 pp.*

JAPANESE AMERICANS

The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese Americans by Frank F. Chuman (Del Mar, Calif., Publishers Inc., 1976). A legal history of the residents of the United States of Japanese descent, beginning with the first immigrants in 1869 and extending to the present. *386 pp.*

The Japanese in America, 1943-1973 compiled by Masako Herman (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., Oceana Publishers, 1974). Provides a chronology of important events, a selection of important documents, and a list

of people and organizations. 152 pp.

Nisei: The Quiet Americans by Bill Hosokawa (New York, Morrow, 1969). A history of second generation Japanese Americans and their struggle against prejudice. Includes short biographies of prominent Niseis. 552 pp.

Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps by Michi Nishiura Weglyn (New York, Morrow, 1976). An examination of the Federal Government's internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans during World War II.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Hawaii: The Sugar-Coated Fortress by Francine du Plessix Gray (New York, Vintage, 1972). A personal chronicle detailing the history and present situation of native Hawaiians. 145 pp.

Politics and Prejudice in Contemporary Hawaii eds. Michael Haas and Peter P. Resurrection (Honolulu, Coventry Press, 1976). A collection of articles from Hawaii's major newspapers grouped by theme; includes all major ethnic groups.

PILIPINO AMERICANS

America Is in the Heart, by Carlos Bulosan (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1973). Autobiography of Pilipino writer that conveys many of the feelings shared by Pilipino Americans. 327 pp.

Diwang Pilipino, Pilipino Consciousness ed. by Jovina Navarro (Davis, Calif., Asian American Studies Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences, University of California, 1974). The experience of Pilipinos in the United States as viewed by Pilipino Americans; subjects include new immigrants, education, women's role, community organization, politics, and farmworkers. 120 pp. (For copies, write to Asian American Studies, University of Calif., Davis, Calif. 95616. \$3.00 incl. postage.)

The Filipinos in America, 1898-1974 eds. Hyung-chan Kim and Cynthia C. Mejia (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., Oceana Publications, 1976). A chronology of the Filipino experience in the United States and a selection of relevant historical documents. 143 pp.

Letters in Exile: An Introductory Reader on the History of Pilipinos in America ed. by Jesse Quinsaat, et al. (Los Angeles, UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1976). Essays on the Pilipino experience in the United States, many with a strong point of view. (For copies, write to Publications Unit, Asian American Studies Dept., Univ. of Calif., Los Angeles, Calif. 90025. \$5.50 incl. postage.)

GENERAL

Asian Americans: Psychological Perspectives ed. by Stanley Sue (Ben Lomond, Calif., Science and Behavior Books, 1973). Readings on racism and acculturation, juvenile delinquency and mental illness as they affect Chinese and Japanese Americans.

Asians in America: A Selected Annotated Bibliography Comp. by Asian American Research Project (Davis, Calif., University of California at Davis, 1971. 295 pp. (Out of print; new edition expected next spring. Write Asian American Studies Dept., Univ. of Calif., Davis, Calif. 95616 for information.)

Journal of Social Issues (Volume 29, Number 2, 1973). Issue devoted to "Asian Americans: A Success Story?" eds. Stanley Sue and Harry H. L. Kitano. Concentrates on Chinese and Japanese—are they "model minorities" or not? If not, what is their real situation today?

To Serve the Devil, Vol. II by Paul Jacobs et al. (New York, Vintage, 1971) Collection of documents on Hawaiian, Chinese, and Japanese Americans. 379 pp.

PERIODICALS

Bridge, Basement Workshop, 22 Catherine Street, New York, N.Y. 10038; \$5.00 for 6 issues/yr.

Amerasia Journal, Asian American Studies Center Publications, University of Calif., Los Angeles, Calif. 90024; \$4.00 for 2 issues/yr.

East West, 838 Grant Ave., Suite 307, San Francisco, Calif. 94108; \$12.00 yr., pub. weekly.

Pacific Citizen, 125 Welles Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90012; \$9.00 yr., pub. weekly.

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