EAST WIND

Politics and Culture of Asians in the U.S.

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SPECIAL FOCUS

ART AND CULTURE

Cover Design *by Leon Sun;* **Photograph** *by Leland Wong*

Moving Forward

EAST WIND is the product and completion of a collective process. For without the volunteer efforts of writers, artists and production crew and the generosity of Getting Together Publications, which loaned *EAST WIND* several thousand dollars in start-up funds, the magazine would still be just an idea rattling around in our heads. And without you, the reader,there wouldn't be a reason for publishing *EAST WIND*. So, we're happy to report that after just a few months of existence, *EAST WIND* is alive and well. *EAST WIND* has not only survived, but it is on the way to stabilizing a regular production and distribution schedule. This has only been possible because hundreds of people have donated money, sold the magazine to their friends, and participated in the fund raising efforts of newly formed Friends of *EAST WIND* chapters in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. We hope that more chapters and/or local fundraising efforts will be underway soon.

What has been most gratifying about the magazine are the letters and comments we have received from readers and contributors.

In New York City, cultural center of the U.S., where often times form and high professional standards are looked at over content, "truth speaking," and politics, favorable comments on the blend of progressive politics and professional quality have been gratifying and somewhat surprising. This positive response and the broad range of people who turned out for our initial reception show the potential of *EAST WIND* to help build unity between Asian peoples.

"*EAST WIND*'s appearance brings with it wisdom, courage and strength. This is an artistic journal created from the real life of progressive people," writes Happy Lim, a longtime San Francisco Chinatown organizer and cultural worker. "Buried within it is a strong will and high spirit. It is a magazine in pursuit of truth and justice. Not only does it have a simple style, but it also has beauty and grandeur."

"The personal reflections (in last issue's Focus section) brought a unique human touch to the publication," writes Yosh Kawahara, an *EAST WIND* advisor in San Diego, California. "The autobiographical approach brings home to the reader that important social-cultural-political activities in the Asian American community were initiated and maintained by individuals interacting together."

Finally there was some good advice from poet Lawson Inada: "(*EAST WIND*) is a good looking magazine, professional, which is very crucial . . . the main thing I would keep in mind . . . is quality — quality writing, quality scholarship, quality art. I'd like to see *EAST WIND* shoot for the best, set the highest standards, and challenge the hell out of Asian America."

These comments are but a portion of the initial response. Yet, they summarize the ideals which the magazine will continue to promote. Many readers also suggested article topics, such as this issue's focus on Asian immigration. Although this is our first effort in exploring the diversity of the new and old Asian immigrant communities, it certainly will not be our last for the topic is complex and far reaching. In our Spring/Summer 1983 issue we hope to address more reader suggestions: Asian Women in America, the Asian/Pacific student movement, Asian American mental health, more historical articles on workers and progressive organizations such as the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance, and more reviews of Asian American and Asian music, dance, theater, film and literature.

There's a real feeling of enthusiasm about the magazine, especially from readers in the far-away corners of the U.S.: White Bear Lake, Minnesota, Montpelier, Vermont, Bowling Green, Ohio, and Jeffersonville, Indiana. Even readers in the large urban concentrations of Asians have commented that the magazine is a way to keep an overview to the nationwide activities of Asian peoples. We want to encourage *EAST WIND* readers, no matter where you are, to write in to us, contribute ideas, articles, artwork and become part of the collective effort to build and improve *EAST WIND*.

To ensure that *EAST WIND* can grow, we need your help. Like any new publication, *EAST WIND* is subject to a certain amount of financial instability. While we have sufficient funds to publish, we need a stable financial base of subscribers in order to maintain, expand and improve the magazine. Since we don't have a large advertising and promotional budget, we need to rely on you, the reader, to spread the word about *EAST WIND*. Enclosed in this issue is a special subscription form. We are asking all of our readers to take out a one-year subscription (it's only $8.00) and to give a subscription to friends and relatives as a holiday gift. Each subscription will bring us that much closer to fulfilling our goal of 1,000 subscribers by Fall/Winter 1983. This is a modest goal when one considers that if every reader took out one subscription and bought just one gift subscription, we should more than double our goal.

Talk to your friends, co-workers, fellow students about *EAST WIND*. Encourage them to subscribe.

All of us who work on *EAST WIND* from the East Coast to the West Coast to Hawai'i feel optimistic about the magazine. We have made a good beginning. We have done something we can be proud of. It's up to all of us to keep the momentum moving forward. □

Sasha Hohri and Eddie Wong

Mouchette Films

Three women featured in Survivors, *a documentary about the current problems of Japanese American Hibakusha.*

HIBAKUSHA

Japanese American Atomic Bomb Survivors

By Dean Toji

Most people don't realize that there were Americans living in Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the two cities were bombed in 1945. But they were there. For example, Kanji Kuramoto, who was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, was visiting his ailing grandparents. "Because I made that one trip, the course of my life changed," says Kuramoto. "I was in Hiroshima two days after the bombing. I searched for my lost father for two weeks, digging up over twenty dead bodies in my search."

He was one of many American-born children of Japanese immigrants to the United States who were in Japan during the war. These Nisei had often been sent there for a Japanese education, or because of the expense and difficulty that working immigrants' parents had in raising children in America. When the war broke out, they were unable to return to the U.S. Hiroshima Prefecture was the birthplace of about one-third of the immigrants' parents, and as a consequence, had many Nisei living in the doomed city. About 4,800 Nisei were in Hiroshima City when the bomb fell. Most perished with the hundreds of thousands of other victims of the atomic blasts.

But many also survived, and some, along with other migrants, returned to the United States after the war. There are perhaps one thousand *hibakusha*, survivors of the atomic bombings, now living in the U.S. The majority are citizens, and nearly all the rest are permanent residents, usually married to Americans. A few of the *hibakusha* are of Korean descent. The *hibakusha* generally live in the areas with large Japanese American populations, the West Coast and Hawaii.

Kuramoto: "I have tried to forget this tragedy. It gave me great relief by returning to the United States, escaping that tragic experience. I enjoyed a very happy life with my wife and two children, erasing and ignoring the A-bomb event of the early years."

Most survivors, in Japan as well as those in the United States, went about rebuilding their lives and living as happily as possible. But they found they could not escape the weight of the bomb experience. It caused them physical, psychological and financial problems.

Tsuyako Munekane, who lives in

Kanji Kuramoto at Bay Area Asians for Nuclear Disarmament program.

Los Angeles and is also a Hawaiian-born *hibakusha*, found that she began to suffer from debilitating, undiagnosed symptoms. She was in such pain that she could not work. There was a ringing sound in her ears. Her face and body grew bloated, and she suffered from general tiredness. One doctor whom she visited accused her of "malingering."

The experience of individual *hibakusha* is confirmed by large-scale medical studies carried out in Japan.

The survivors of the atomic bombings who escaped or recovered from the immediate effects of the blasts — burns, cuts and other injuries as well as radiation-caused sicknesses — began to find in the years afterwards that they were plagued by other, more slowly developing diseases. They were especially vulnerable to various types of cancers.

Shortly after the bombing, the incidence of leukemia began to rise above the normal rate. In the late 1950's, it was thyroid and lung cancer, and in the 1960's and 1970's breast and salivary gland cancer. Recently, cancer of the colon and bone marrow have begun to increase. The authors of *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, a recent authoritative overview of the entire bomb experience commissioned by the two cities, said that "it is impossible to forecast when and what kind of disease will appear in the exposed . . ." Thirty-seven years after the atomic bomb, some survivors have said, with justification, that a "time bomb" is ticking away inside their bodies.

The *hibakusha* who came to the United States are probably more healthy, on the average, than those who remained in Japan. Even still, a team of Japanese physicians, who examined 166 American survivors in 1981, estimated that one-fifth of them had diseases which would qualify for treatment of bomb-related illnesses given in Japan.

Their concern about illness was compounded by the threat that insurance policies could be cancelled if it was discovered that they were survivors of the bomb. Insurance policies customarily include a fine-print "waiver" clause which exempts the company from responsibility for claims resulting from atomic war. The waivers are most likely directed toward atomic wars of the future (which would probably be a moot point in the case one should happen; there's no reason to believe insurance firms would be spared), but it is not hard to imagine a company slipping through that loophole to escape paying the large sums that serious medical problems can easily require. The survivors worry, too, that they may be dropped as high-risk prospects if their radiation exposure is revealed.

Some *hibakusha* are in the worse situation of having no insurance coverage to lose, either because they could not afford it, or because they work in businesses without insurance plans. (Three-quarters of the *hibakusha* are women, and many have the language and cultural handicaps of immigrants. Because of this, although there are no statistics, it seems that quite a few are in livelihoods without health coverage.) They have the terrible vulnerability of any person without health protection.

The *hibakusha* began to pull together to address the many problems they face in common. A group of survivors who lived in Los Angeles began to meet together in 1965, as an informal "friendship circle" of people who shared the same experience. The group grew and, in 1971, was organized as the Committee of Atomic Bomb Survivors (CABS) in the U.S.A. There are now chapters in southern California, northern California, Seattle/Pacific Northwest and Hawaii, as well as local support groups.

Since its inception, CABS has focused its efforts on securing health care for its members. The sort of program which survivors in Japan were able to win from their government is what is really needed: free regular examinations and therapy for illnesses which are related to the bombing. CABS' objectives have been more modest, but it has still been a difficult struggle, yet they have been able to win some partial assistance. American survivors who are able to travel to Japan now have quick access to the health care system there. They have been able to receive a series of free physical examinations, sponsored mostly by the Japanese government, sometimes linked with U.S. medical research projects, and often by the generosity of Japanese American medical and lay volunteers. However, as Kanji Kuramoto, president of CABS, told a congressional committee in 1978: "The issue is whether the American government can assist a small number of American survivors living today." The government has been unwilling.

In almost every year since 1972, legislation which would guarantee medical care for the American *hibakusha* has been introduced in Congress, and each time it has failed to pass. The bill, if enacted, would compensate survivors for medical ex-

penses related to the bomb exposure which were not covered by any other financial sources, such as insurance or health plans. Edward Roybal, the Los Angeles congressman who has sponsored the bill, says he will introduce survivors' health care legislation again in 1983.

Some obstacles to its passage are not hard to discern. In 1976, a California State version of the bill was attempted. Kaz Suyeishi, the southern California CABS Chapter President, explained what happened after all the explanations of the survivors' plight had been presented at a legislative hearing. One of the committee members asked, "Why should we help the former enemy?" One witness testified that there was no such thing as an "American atomic bomb survivor;" they were all "Japanese."

The outlook of the federal government may be reflected in another different, but related case. An estimated quarter million U.S. military personnel were exposed to aboveground nuclear tests in the 1950's and 1960's, and some are now experiencing illnesses which they feel are connected to their bomb exposure. They have attempted to pass legislation for health care and disability benefits, which has been opposed by the Department of Defense. The Department of Defense's lawyers wrote to Congress in 1981, saying that passage of the atomic veterans' bill would be "damaging to every aspect of the Department of Defense's nuclear weapons and nuclear propulsion programs. The legislation could adversely affect our relations with our European allies, (and) impact upon the civilian nuclear power industry . . ." In other words, aid given to the victims of earlier nuclear blasts would help confirm the dangers of nuclear technology and thus help fuel the disarmament and anti-nuke movements.

The prospects for the passage of the *hibakusha* health care legislation are mixed. It comes at a time when President Reagan and the Congress are cutting, rather than increasing, spending for human needs. This assures that it will be a continued uphill battle.

At the same time, however, the nuclear disarmament movement, after years of relative dormancy, has suddenly and dramatically revived. Perhaps it is because increasing numbers of people realize that they themselves are potential future victims of the bomb. The public pressure for disarmament has already been reflected in Congress, where attempts have been made to advocate a bilateral weapons freeze. The chances for passage of the *hibakusha* health care legislation depend to a great extent on how much this public pressure grows and how much of it can be focused in support of the survivors.

But the *hibakusha* have also had problems with the disarmament movement. They have complained about being treated as symbols, and of being lost in the shuffle of anti-nuke activities. These unfortunate incidents almost certainly reflect some not so subtle racist attitudes in the anti-nuke movement, which presently is predominantly white. Asians in the nukes movement will have to be ready to struggle with and educate our allies who are working for disarmament.

After the Hiroshima/Nagasaki Day commemorations organized by the Asian Americans for Nuclear Disarmament in Los Angeles this summer, Kaz Sueyishi said she was happy with the recent growth in support for the *hibakusha*; "It's my big dream for 10 years."

She also reflected on the changes in community attitude from a few years ago when, "People said don't say anything (about the *hibakusha* problem) because it's painful and troublesome to the Japanese American community. But now it's different. Japanese Americans are not afraid anymore." □

Yamahata Yosuke

Nagasaki — August 10, 1945

Dean Toji, *a Los Angeles sansei, is a researcher with the UCLA School of Medicine study of the* hibakusha. *He is co-editor of the* Nikkei-Sentinel.

No More Hiroshimas!

Mike Murase and family visiting Hiroshima.

By Mike Murase

For me, the issue of nuclear disarmament hits close to home in many ways. I was born 90 miles east of Hiroshima and grew up in post-war Japan where I often heard talk about the suffering caused by the atomic bomb. Just before I came to America, I visited Hiroshima for the first time. Although I was only eight or nine years old, the scenes of the hollowed-out atomic dome and the numerous statues and monuments throughout the city made a lasting impression on me.

After coming to this country with my family, I grew up in a section of Los Angeles which was mainly Black and Asian. All through school, our steady diet of U.S. history included George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and westward expansion. Very little was discussed about the history, experiences and contributions of Third World people in America. In our study of World War II, we were taught that America was fighting for democracy, but there was hardly a sentence about what happened in Hiroshima/Nagasaki, and no mention was made of America's concentration camps.

In the late 1960's, when I was going to college, the Viet Nam War was going on, and the country was engulfed in a tidal wave of struggles: the Black liberation and Third World people's movements; the student movement and ethnic studies struggles; and the anti-war movement.

When I got involved, at first, I was simply — and in retrospect, naively — just "for peace." I hoped for a world in which conflict could be resolved through peaceful means . . . without killing, without war. But, by going to "teach-ins," listening to speakers at rallies and demonstrations, and by reading, I learned that the Viet Nam War was not just a matter of two armies engaged in "conflict." The *source* of the war was the U.S. who was waging a war of aggression, an imperialist war, to maintain control of one of the richest areas in the world. Tin, tungsten, rubber and other raw materials in Southeast Asia, as well as its key strategic location, was what the war was all about.

Because the war was an Asian war, thousands of progressive and revolutionary-minded Asian youth became a part of the anti-war movement. We saw how racism towards Asians was used as an excuse for the mass killings of Asian people. When we marched in demonstrations, we chanted at the top of our voices, "No More Hiroshima! No More Viet Nam!"

In 1971, I got a chance to go to Hiroshima again, this time as one of six U.S. peace delegates to the World Conference Against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs. I met *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors) for the first time and listened to their stories. It's hard to explain, but hearing the tales of their suffering in Japanese made me get all choked up. Most of the *hibakusha* were noncombatant civilians in a war they did not want. They worried that Japan might re-militarize and that other countries would continue to build more bombs. They also conveyed their feelings of solidarity with the peoples of Indochina and with those of us in the peace/anti-war movement throughout the world. The *hibakusha's* unanimous plea was for Hiroshima and Nagasaki to be never repeated again to anyone.

UNITY Newspaper

Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemoration, Los Angeles — 1982

Today, in 1982, I am afraid that the danger of war and the risk of a nuclear holocaust are *very real*. Despite the fact that a worldwide movement in support of disarmament and peace is developing, the United States and the Soviet Union are engaged in an arms race of unprecedented proportions. Even though a comprehensive program for disarmament was supported by the majority of representatives to the Second Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General Assembly, in June 1982, it failed to be adopted because of the opposition of the two superpowers.

Ever since World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union have been adversaries in a "cold war," during which time both sides have poured in billions of dollars into military spending. Their combined nuclear arsenal already surpasses 50,000 nuclear warheads, which is equal to about one million Hiroshima bombs and more than enough to blow up the entire planet many times over. Such overkill sometimes lulls us into thinking that *no* one can be *that* crazy to actually use these weapons. But the hard, cold reality is that both superpowers are putting more and more emphasis on actual combat readiness, with more than three-fourths of their military budgets allocated for conventional weapons and units. It is frightening to think that they are not just engaging in idle

UNITY Newspaper

Asian Contingent in June 12 Rally, New York — 1982

threats when each side declares its readiness to fight *any* type of war. You know that we're in big trouble when the Pentagon develops a "strategic master plan for winning a protracted nuclear war" that could last for six months, and when a State Department adviser specifies that 20 million U.S. fatalities would represent an "acceptable cost" for winning.

In order to pay for it all, the Congress approved a military budget of over $200 billion for fiscal year 1983. In the next five years, $1.6 trillion will be wasted on war preparations. The recent "budget cuts" are not cuts at all, but a mere reallocation of funds from human services to military spending. In a time when Asian, other Third World and working people are struggling every day to survive — with high unemployment, outrageous food prices, deteriorating housing and inferior education — the government is sacrificing the most basic human needs of the people. What's more, it would be just a drop in the bucket for Congress to appropriate medical assistance payments to the 500 to 700 American *hibakusha* who haven't received a penny from the government in 37 years. It would only mean 15 fewer B-1 bombers to meet the demands of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations for compensation for the suffering of 120,000 Japanese Americans who were thrown into concentration camps during World War II. I get enraged just thinking about what $1.6 trillion can do to improve the overall quality of life for the people.

It's clear that something must be done to reorder the priorities of the government and to reduce the possibilities of a nuclear holocaust. I am happy to see that, day by day, thousands of people are becoming active in the disarmament movement, attracting people from all sectors of U.S. society: retired and unemployed workers, housewives, religious leaders, ecologists, physicians, public figures, students and minorities. Within the movement, most are solidly united in opposition to both the Soviet Union and the United States because they are the only two nuclear superpowers capable of starting a world war. But there is a range of political and philosophical viewpoints. A small segment of the movement is targeting only the U.S. government with the rationale that peoples of different countries should appeal to their "own" governments to end the nuclear arms race. Some even say that the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal doesn't present a danger to the world because theirs is "defensive" purposes. To say that the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal is for "defensive purposes" only actually glosses over the aggressive and expansionist course the Soviet Union has taken, e.g. its invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and its threats against Poland. We as oppressed peoples in the U.S. know only too well what imperialism means. I don't want us to target only the U.S. and leave the door open for Soviet imperialism.

The threat of nuclear war is a worldwide issue, not just confined to the U.S., and likewise, the peace movement is an international one. So we should unite with and support the demands of the international disarmament movement. We can see that nuclear war is an extension of conventional war and just one form of the superpowers' policies of aggression and expansion that have already become a menace to Europe, Japan and the peoples and countries of the third world. The gunfire that echos from Afghanistan, Kampuchea (Cambodia), Lebanon, the Persian Gulf, Central America and the Malvinas (Falkland Islands), as well as the missiles poised against Europe and Asia attest to the dangers of an escalating war by the two superpowers.

I think it will take a large mass movement of millions of people to achieve disarmament, and we have to fight for it in a way that really challenges the imperialist ambitions of the United States and the Soviet Union. In the long run, we really need a very basic and fundamental change in the whole system to eliminate the source of war.

I believe that Asian Americans, together with other Third World people in America, will play an important role within this movement by linking our struggles against racism and national oppression to the movements of third world peoples and countries internationally. Because Third World people in this country have always strived for justice, equality and self-determination, it is important for us to stand behind those throughout the world who are fighting for the same thing. The struggle of the people of the Philippines, Okinawa and other parts of Asia, who want no part in the storage of nuclear weapons in their countries, is our struggle.

Asian Americans can be proud of our very rich tradition both in the anti-war movement as well as in standing up for justice and equality. As we continue to participate in building the movement, I am confident that our contributions to the disarmament movement will be many.

Mike Murase *is a member of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L). He is active in Asian Americans for Nuclear Disarmament and in the Little Tokyo Peoples Rights Organization.*

Why I Support Nuclear Disarmament

By Karl Akiya

I have always tried to support the *hibakusha* and protest the atom bomb, so the recent activities around the *hibakusha* was a good opportunity for me to get involved.

I started to do support work for the *hibakusha* after the war ended. I was in a relief committee to support the Japanese people which did a lot of work collecting materials, like clothing and medical supplies from people in the Japanese community and sending them to Japan. But there was not that much aid directly for the *hibakusha*.

Forty years ago, there was not as much understanding about the danger of nuclear weapons. Now, one million people were mobilized to protest the arms buildup, but how many people think about the victims? Now with more weapons being produced, such a disaster could happen again. To prevent that from happening, we have to understand how such a thing could happen 40 years ago. *Hibakusha* support work and the weapons buildup must be linked up and brought out in the disarmament movement. Supporting the *hibakusha* is a way to show support for disarmament.

Sometimes I think that people in the Japanese community get cynical. I know one person in New York whose family is from Hiroshima. He is not a victim, but his family was living on the outskirts of Hiroshima, so he knows about the effects of the atomic bomb. So he says, "How can the American people fight against the atomic bomb? They don't know anything at all. We saw the whole thing." He talks about it all the time. I thought he was cynical about being able to do anything. But I saw him at the disarmament demonstration on June 12 with another friend, and we walked together all day long. I was surprised. It was a very good feeling. So sometimes you can't tell about people's reactions. They can say all kinds of things, but it is in the action they take that you really know where they stand. Like my friend — they support us. □

Karl Akiya

Karl Akiya *is a retired* Kibei *(born in the United States, but educated in Japan). He has been active in many issues fighting for justice since his college days in Japan in the 1930's. He is currently part of the East Coast Friends of the Atomic Bomb Survivors, based in New York City.*

A Community Fights Gentrification

New York Chinatown

UNITY Newspaper

By Kenneth R. Ong, M.D.

New York City is almost gentle in May. Subzero temperatures give way to warm weather. The trees in Central Park, if nowhere else, turn green. The city and its people blossom.

On one warm evening in May 1981, acrid smoke filled the lobby of 87 Madison Street. For the second time in as many weeks, parents woke their children, and those who were not yet asleep roused their neighbors. During the last winter, there was no heat or hot water. Now, there was arson.

The roar of fire engines shattered the night's silence. The fire fighters found a smoldering rag saturated with flammable liquid. In a subsequent investigation, Captain Herlihy testified, "The rag had apparently been positioned over the boiler to make it appear the boiler was the source of the fire."

Attempted arson and lack of heat, hot water and janitorial services eventually forced the tenants to leave 87 Madison Street and 36 Henry Street. Today, all that is left of 87 Madison Street is a vacant lot. Tommy Lee, their landlord, hopes to build a 143-unit condominium called East West Towers on the vacant lot. Each unit would cost at least $150,000, well beyond the means of the former tenants.

Down the block on Henry Street, the Henry Street Partners plan a $9 million, 21 story, 90 unit, luxury condominium. Each unit would cost $170,000 to $500,000.

But this is not the first time the Henry Street residents have faced eviction. Prior to the current gentrification drive, the New York Telephone Company owned the land between Henry and Madison Streets in Chinatown. Ma Bell had tried unsuccessfully to construct a windowless computer switching station on this block. An alliance of community and tenant groups organized the We Won't Move Committee, which defeated New York Telephone after a protracted two year battle from 1969 to 1971. In 1976, New York Telephone sold 18 lots to Thomas Sung. Other parcels of land were sold to Tommy Lee, Helmsley-Spear, the largest private real estate corporation in New York, and Raymond Wu, a multi-millionaire. It is no accident that the Henry Street Partners, who seek to raze housing for more lucrative purposes, is composed of the top three officers of Helmsley-Spear, Inc.

and Raymond Wu.

Moves such as these to gentrify (i.e. replace working class, low cost housing with high income housing to attract middle and upper-class professionals and residents) Chinatown are reflective of a city-wide phenomenon. Luxury, high income condominiums are replacing low and middle income housing throughout New York City. This gentrification affects the West Side, Harlem, Brooklyn, and Chinatown. Once more profits are placed above people's livelihoods and homes.

The land developers' weapons are the law, arson, and tenant harassment. The City's own Arson Task Force found that buildings in New York City that benefit from subsidy and tax incentive programs for landlords are more likely to be targets of arson.

The legal vehicle for the gentrification of New York are the local "special districts." The special districts alter current zoning laws and can permit high income condos like Tommy Lee's East West Towers and Helmsley-Spear's Henry Street Towers. In 1981, the City held unpublicized hearings and set up a special district in Chinatown called the Special Manhattan Bridge District (SMBD).

"There have always been housing problems here," states Mary Scherbatskoy of the Manhattan Bridge Area Coalition. "But in the last few years, since the landlords began preparation (unknown to us all) for the SMBD, there has been a rapid and violent escalation in tenant harassment, the earmark of real estate speculation."

"Chinatown will be nothing but a facade if this kind of thing continues," said Joyce Moy, the lawyer for the former 87 Madison Street tenants and the tenants of 50 Bayard Street, who are fighting condo conversion. "You'll have the storefronts, the pagoda telephones, but you won't have the people that make Chinatown what it is."

The people who live and work in Chinatown are its soul and essence. In the tenement walkups, the length of residence is measured in decades and lifetimes. The building on 109 Madison Street is such a tenement.

UNITY Newspaper

Residents rely on small businesses for their daily needs.

I first visited the building after its tenants asked our organization, the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), to help them get running hot and cold water. While Shiree Teng and Virgo Lee from our Housing Committee explained tenant rights and the need to form a tenant association, I took photos of the basement. The water heater had been removed and icicles hung from frozen water pipes. In the dark, I blindly snapped pictures we would use to take to housing court and publicize in the local newspapers.

Later on, a local television crew tried to enter the same basement but was repulsed by rats. I remember chuckling when I heard the reporter's usual calm demeanor on the evening news break when she described the rat attack on the camera crew.

I walked upstairs to the tenant meeting. The biting New York winter followed me indoors. Cold wind and

History

New York Chinatown is both old and large. Chinatown is more than 120 years old. Since 1970, New York Chinatown has replaced San Francisco Chinatown as the largest Chinatown in America. The Chinese population has tripled to 100,000 in the last 20 years, but new housing has failed to keep pace. Eighty-five percent of the present tenements were built prior to 1901. Another 11% were built between 1901 and 1929.

The demand for housing is high. One part of Chinatown has a 0.7% vacancy rate, significantly lower than the city's average of 2.9%.

Chinatown is a port of entry and a haven of sorts of those who have not made it into the middle class. The average income for a Chinese family was $7,809 in 1970. Due to the language barrier and discrimination, Chinese workers occupy the lower strata of the working class as restaurant and garment factory workers. Chinatown is where they can use their native language, work, live, and send their children to school. For more than 100,000 American-born and immigrant Chinese, Chinatown is home.

snow blew through broken hallway windows. I headed for the apartment with the loud voices mixed with laughter. Mrs. Eng opened the door. The building had no central heating and a brick burned on the gas range to warm the apartment. The tenant meeting was in progress. A dozen tenants sat around the coffee table speaking in Toishan-wah, Cantonese, and English. Plans for a rent strike, press conference, and housing court hearing were made. Another vital tenant association had been born.

Mrs. Eng has lived in her Chinatown apartment for more than 30 of her 80 years. Her eyes sparkle as she speaks. "I see a lot of new faces in Chinatown, but a lot less social services," she said. "Many new immigrants don't know their rights." She and her late husband once owned a laundry in New Jersey. They spent weekends in Chinatown and eventually retired here. Her husband was active in the We Won't Move Committee. Whether speaking before a crowd of several hundred or confronting the developers and city bureaucrats, her voice never wavers. She has stood unbowed through the years against New York Telephone and now Helmsley-Spear and her landlord.

Chet Louie is a 25-year-old tenant representative of 52-54-56 Henry Street. Harlem-born and Chinatown-grown, he is the son of a cook and a garment factory worker. His family has lived in Chinatown for more than twenty years. Two winters ago the only way to take a hot bath in his building was to boil the water yourself. "If it wasn't for our tenant association, we'd still be in a jam," he said. Their seven month rent strike was the much publicized first victory against a slumlord who owns over twenty buildings.

The Tenant Associations, the Manhattan Bridge Area Coalition, and the Chinese Progressive Association unleashed an arsenal of press conferences, pickets, public hearings, and petitions. Articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Daily News*, and the *Village Voice*. The Chinese language press regularly covers current developments. Tenants and coalition members appeared on the evening news and talk radio shows. Cars ferried Chinatown residents to Community Board and City Planning Commission meetings which were filled to capacity.

As a result, the Chinese community has won several significant victories:

**Tenants and Lower East Side community groups recently won their lawsuit before the State Supreme Court against the City and its Special Manhattan Bridge District. In July, 1982, New York State Supreme Court Judge Gammerman ruled that the actions of the City in forming the SMBD were "illegal, contrary to the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution." The City gave inadequate notice of hearings and meeting concerning the SMBD. The court agreed that notice should have been given in "a newspaper of general circulation within the community."

**The building permit for Tommy Lee's East West Towers has been revoked.

**The tenants of 50 Bayard Street in the center of Chinatown and their attorney Joyce Moy have won their lawsuit to stop condo conversion.

Last Sunday afternoon, Mr. Lo and some friends from the 50 Bayard Street Tenant Association walked into the CPA storefront. Mr. Lo sports a crewcut shot with grey, is strong of build, and in his forties. He pumped my hand in a firm handshake as we congratulated each other for our recent success.

"What will your tenant association do now that you've won?" I asked him.

"It's not all over yet. Next winter they'll try another legal maneuver to evict us," he replied.

"But how will you stop them if they've got the law on their side?"

"We will. We beat them this time and we'll do it again. United, we can do almost anything!"

On that sunny August afternoon, I could not believe otherwise. □

Ken Ong *is a founding member of the Chinese Progressive Association of New York and a practicing family physician.*

UNITY Newspaper

1980 Henry St. tenants rent strike. New York.

Hawaiian Sovereignty

Poka Laenui (left) at rally on island of Maui.

By Poka Laenui

By virtue of my birth, I inherit the right to the human treasures of three sections of the world. My father and his forebearers descend from the Hawaii and European stock, my mother from the Chinese.

In childhood, bits of these treasures would be brought out by the languages in which I would be scolded or cuddled or in the children's rhymes I sung or the food I ate. It was not unfamiliar to wear a Chinese inscription pinned to my shirt while I hunted for the Hawaiian uhaloa herb to cure an ailment or to burn incense for my Chinese ancestors. Later, I would sit at the feet of elders who spoke of gods and goddesses, demigods and spirits of Hawaii, then walk up to the Holy-Roller church and recite bible verses.

But those youthful days were numbered. I was sent through the "educational" system and felt the heavy hand of cultural domination. No longer was I permitted to mix non-English words openly or to weave concepts of three cultures into my expressions. If I did so, I was disciplined with open ridicule from teachers and others who had themselves succumbed to such domination.

When I proudly spoke of noble Polynesians and their feats of courage in conquering the vast Pacific in their humble canoes, criss-crossing it and traveling from island group to island group, touching continents on both sides of the ocean, I was ridiculed and told they were heathens, unclothed and ignorant. I eventually became secretive in my speech and thoughts, retreating to the back of the class where I found other mix-breeds or mix-cultureds.

We were conditioned each morning to pledge our allegiance to the American flag and nation. The "pid-

gen" English we spoke was pried away through 12 years of standard English training. The religious practices of non-Christians were condemned. Christmas was celebrated with a vacation while the beginning of Makahiki in honor of Lono, a major deity of Hawaii, was never mentioned. We read that Captain James Cook discovered the Hawaiian islands rather than my ancestors. We were told in English that if the United States had not protected us from Japan in 1941, we would today be speaking a foreign language. Indeed, these Americans by now had classified even Hawaiian as a foreign language!

We were drilled to live as white men, coerced into adopting their moral concepts, language, ambitions and God. We were educated with their books and their version of history, trained to measure life by a financial standard and told that we were American citizens. I believed.

Inside of me I knew something was wrong.

College after high school merely meant four more years of recycling. I obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science still believing in the righteousness of the American system in Hawaii. It was not until after I volunteered in the U.S. Air Force that I began a major reconsideration of the ingrained values and allegiance I had formed to the United States. That spark came from words written by Liliuokalani, Queen of Hawaii, who in 1917 wrote *Hawaii's Story*, detailing her side of Hawaii's occupation by the United States. This book had been repressed in Hawaii since its original printing in 1898 and was finally reprinted in the mid-1960's.

From her writing, I discovered a secret kept from generations of our people. Hawaii once was fully recognized by the world community as an independent nation. While at peace with the U.S., we were invaded by heavily armed American marines in 1893. As had been planned, after the invasion, the marines turned the government over to American planters and other businessmen (annexationists) who then drafted a treaty of annexation with the United States. A bargain was struck which found Hawaii "ceded" to the U.S.; in return, the annexationists were given almost total reign over politics, business and education in Hawaii. All the while, my ancestors, citizens of Hawaii, were given no voice in these transactions. Liliuokalani raised her protest but to no avail. Without the consent of the Hawaiians, we were declared Americans.

Queen Liliuokalani

With the annexationists in charge, lucrative government contracts were passed out, monopolies in shipping, finance and communications blossomed. The Big Five, a coalition of five business entities, controlled every aspect of business, media and politics in Hawaii. When they teamed up with the Republican Party and the U.S. Navy, there was virtually nothing left unexploited in Hawaii.

A massive brainwashing program to convince Hawaiians that the U.S. was the legitimate ruler and that the Hawaiians were no longer Hawaiians but Americans was instituted. The term Hawaiian became a racial rather than a national term. Large numbers of citizens of Hawaii were identified no longer as Hawaiians but as Chinese, Koreans, English, Samoan, Japanese, Filipino, etc. Even among the Hawaii race, division was forged. Congress defined some as "native Hawaiians" (at least 50% of the aboriginal blood), entitled to special privileges and depriving the others.

Children were forced to attend school and there taught to pledge their allegiance to the United States, trained in the foreign laws, told to adopt foreign morality, to speak no language but the English and adopt the American lifestyle.

We were punished, ridiculed and coaxed into putting aside our customs and traditions and even our cultural names.

Hawaii, that melting pot of cultures, races, languages and lores changed from a reality to an advertisement slogan for politicians and business people.

Colonization took place. Thousands of Americans invaded Hawaii, taking choice jobs with government agencies or management positions with business interests. These Americans bought up or stole through the manipulation of laws familiar to them much of the lands and resources of Hawaii. They gained power in Hawaii, controlled greater chunks of the economy, controlled the public media, entrenched themselves in politics, and joined in the brainwashing of the Hawaiians to believe we were Americans.

The military turned Hawaii into their pacific fortress turning Pearl Harbor from a coaling and fueling station to a major naval port. They bombed valleys and took one of the eight major islands for their exclusive use as a target range. At will they tossed families out of homes, de-

stroying sacred Hawaii heirlooms and built instead naval communication towers emitting radiation and ammunition depots hiding nuclear weapons, thereby jeopardizing every life in Hawaii. They declared martial law at will and imposed military conscription over the Hawaiian citizens. They killed Hawaiians in open contempt of the very laws of the United States. When tried and found guilty, they managed through a territorial governor appointed by the U.S. president to obtain sentences as light as imprisonment for a few hours at the Queen's palace before sailing back to the U.S.

Freedom of trade was stopped. The Big 5 controlled all commerce. Congress took over foreign relations.

Every aspect of Hawaii was Americanized. Military show of strength was constant. Education and media was regulated. The secret ballot was a farce.

Finally, after three generations of brainwashing, we were told we had the chance to be equal Americans! The U.S. placed the following question to the "qualified" voters (Americans who were residents of Hawaii for at least one year): *Shall Hawaii immediately be admitted into the Union as a State?* A "yes" meant Statehood. A "no" meant continuing Territorial government.

The question , "*Should the United States recognize Hawaii's right to determine its own destiny?*" was never put to the Hawaiian citizens.

The *Americans* decided Hawaii should be a State.

Now Hawaii was opened in a free-for-all, "grab whatever you can get" attitude. New economic interests poured into Hawaii to play the American financial game. Land became the toy. Selling, trading, leasing, mortgaging and subdividing became the craze. Construction industries changed much of Hawaii from a lush green to a cancerous white concrete jungle lashed together by roadways of concrete and asphalt.

But saddest of all was the continuing recycling of our people, a process so complete that I too had volunteered to serve in that very military that occupied Hawaii. I only recently had discovered the facts of Hawaii's predicament.

I then considered what alternatives America's system offered to break this American suffocation of our liberties. I considered the possibilities of new social, economic or educational programs which the U.S. Congress might approve. But even if such programs were legislated, already we had many of those programs which were really used as a vehicle for greater propaganda and recycling of our people.

I considered the judicial system but was quickly convinced that even that branch was dedicated more to the preservation of the *status quo* rather than searching for and bringing about the justice belonging to us.

I was constantly returned to the fact that we never gave up our nation, we never chose to become Americans, and we never conceded absolute surrender to the United States. We were enslaved in a form different from the Africans but in essence the same. Our liberties as a free people were no longer practiced. Our harbors were blocked. Immigration and trade policies were determined by a foreign congress. Twenty-five percent of our lands were occupied by American military.

I eventually concluded that the United States' equation for justice was merely an economic and military one containing no consideration for the survival of the Hawaiian race and culture. The sooner they could eradicate the Hawaiian people and rewrite Hawaii's story, the safer these occupiers would be. Since then, I have been trying to rip this American mask branded upon me through these years of brainwashing.

The treasures that I and my children should inherit from all these cultures in Hawaii, indeed, which every child of any ancestry should inherit by the fact that they and their spirits have been ingrained in Hawaii, could not survive in this environment of repression.

We can no longer tolerate this situation for it is bringing certain death to our national life and our cultural birthrights.

The Sovereignty for Hawaii Committee is dedicated to fight with all our might for the survival of our nation, for our birthrights as a free and independent people, able to determine our own destiny. Nothing short of sovereignty is our only goal for to accept anything less is to succumb to their control over our destiny.

More and more often we hear the following prayer:

O Ke Akua,
Return to us our face,
Give us the strength to
  rip this American mask
    from our flesh,
Give us the strength to reclaim
  what is ours,
    our Sovereignty,
Let us be Hawaiians
  in our own lands.
      Amene

Poka Laenui
August 16, 1982

Poka Laenui (Hayden Burgess) *is an attorney and activist in the Sovereignty for Hawaii Committee.*

What Price

A commentary on the acquittal

By Ranko Yamada

A tremendous victory occurred on September 3, 1982 when the jury found Chol Soo Lee not guilty in the retrial of the Chinatown murder case. Daily, dozens of Asians came to the Hall of Justice. They came notwithstanding the sheriff at the courtroom door who searched all packages and purses and the high security courtroom with its bullet-proof glass walls isolating the audience.

For Asians, this case has been so compelling as to arouse an indignation and anger spanning generations and nationality. One elderly Korean told a defense committee member, "Some days I was tired and didn't want to take the bus to come to trial. But every minute I would get more restless, wondering what was happening. Finally, I wouldn't be able to stand it and had to come to see for myself what was going on." Others sat in the courtroom all day, not understanding one word of English but waiting for that moment when they could wave to Chol Soo or mouth words of support through the glass wall.

Chol Soo Lee, both the man and the case, spoke to that totality of humiliations, racist ignorance and suffering that Asians have in common.

Chol Soo's case stands for our own lives here taken to its harshest extreme. In 1973, a Korean immigrant youth, without money, known as the "Korean" in Chinatown and as Chinese to outsiders, could not have been a better more vulnerable target. He was easily caught in the political hysteria sounding from the Mayor's office through the police department to prove to the city that they could clear up the Chinatown violence.

Chol Soo was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment when his greatest crime was for being poor, minority and immigrant.

Nine years later and after five weeks of a vicious, hostile trial he has won a full acquittal.

Since the trial, I have heard people say, "Chol Soo was found innocent! He got a fair trial at last!" While we all share a great relief and joy at the acquittal, these particular words disturb me greatly. What illusion can be more dangerous than to believe that the criminal justice system is now vindicated by acquitting Chol Soo Lee?

Easy win? Fair trial? Here is one scenario:

The trial has been postponed four times, a year and a half down the road from when it should have occurred. One month before the next date set, the attorney says that he can no longer continue with the case. Further, there is only $2,000 left in the defense fund; the district attorney has asked for a search warrant to issue on the defense committee for "any possible criminal and civil violations;" supporters are beginning to feel that the trial may never happen; and it appears that someone is trying to kill Chol Soo in prison.

All of this happened this spring. To lose on any one situation would have lost the case. The committees had to find not just any answers, but answers that would keep Chol Soo alive, stand up to the district attorney's harassment, continue the support and still win the case.

During Chol Soo's trial, the testimonies presented to the jury were conclusions of difficult hours of prior work and consideration. This was not the case in 1974 at the first trial, nor would this have been the case today without the solid integration of strategy by the defense attorneys, investigation and supporters. For instance, the decision for Chol Soo not to testify was discussed and agreed upon together. The general rule is that a jury perceives guilt when a defendant does not take the stand on his own behalf. But to put Chol Soo on the stand would have also opened the door to the 1979 prison killing case and would have allowed the prosecution a direct assault on Chol Soo. That decision was too serious for any one party to make.

Again, when in the fourth week of trial a confidential source told a defense committee member that a woman juror had lied to us in *voir*

UNITY Newspaper

Justice?

of Chol Soo Lee

dire, the relationship between attorneys Serra, Hanlon, investigator Thompson and the committee had endured enough tests of trust to call for her immediate dismissal. Josie Mathes, who had intentionally withheld the fact of her marriage to a police officer and her friendship to prosecutors, could have hung the jury. Even with the perjury known, because of the vigorous opposition by the district attorney, the court did not dismiss her for three days.

She stayed on for three more days because the court has its own definition of fairness. Therefore, more weight and legitimacy is given to a doctored police document incriminating Chol Soo Lee, than to the fact that the police had threatened and told defense witnesses to "stay away." The prosecution is allowed to use eight of their peremptory challenges to remove all Asian prospective jurors because this is legal, not racist. This meant that Chol Soo's life was on trial and yet key Chinatown defense witnesses had to choose between risking their own lives or not testifying.

On the other hand, the prosecution had at their command a steady line of desperate prison snitches who were willing to say anything to stay alive and be paid for testifying. When the prosecution is allowed to put on someone as despicable as Arturo Serrado, the prison snitch who said he heard Chol Soo confess, what we have is lawfully endorsed treachery and malice. Because of the rules of evidence, Arturo Serrado was encouraged and rewarded to lie and frame a man, while Chol Soo Lee was prevented from speaking to his own innocence.

At trial it didn't matter that the police ballistics expert had set Chol Soo up for arrest in 1973 by his inaccurate and grossly false ballistics test. In trial it became balanced next to the fact that he was very sorry, he was an honorable man entitled to mistakes, and it did not make a difference anyway. And while this ludicrous equation was being played out, Chol Soo could only hope that maybe the jury could see through this smoke and know that no honorable mistake is worth nine years gone.

Real guilt and innocence is not fought and found at trial, only winning and losing. Notwithstanding a comprehensive defense, two persons on the jury held out for conviction for three days before finally changing their vote to not guilty. At those critical moments, removed from us, supporter presence followed the jurors into deliberations.

Scott Johnson, the foreman of the jury who has since joined the defense committee stated, "The audience had a great impact on me. When I first saw all the Asian people in the courtroom, I thought they must believe he's innocent. Then as I saw people continue to come, I thought, whether he is guilty or innocent, he's important to them. They really care about him."

This kind of acknowledgement is what encouraged some on the jury to win over the two guilty votes, rather than to let the jury hang — which would have been the easiest, shortest route. These are the turning points we can be proud of. The credit goes to the people, not the court. What we actually have is a system that does not work and a community that can.

Mass support for Chol Soo Lee proved to be a decisive factor in the victory, but such support did not just develop overnight or spontaneously. It took organization to get all the people together, to expand the support and follow through. Pivotal to the organizing effort were the committees that formed in Sacramento, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and Midwest — different compositions which joined Koreans with Asian Americans; revolutionaries with ministers; and businessmen with students. These committees played a major role in directing the movement for five years: financially, socially and politically carving out the conditions to win the case.

The committees had to constantly test their ideas and commitment, often through bitter struggle and periods of demoralization. It was important to determine that this case speaks to the particular national oppression faced by Koreans and other Asians. It was a more difficult task to bring this message to working and poor people and to have them identify with this case. This meant long years of trying to sink roots into the different Asian communities, with endless fund raisers, educationals and rallies.

Indeed there is a long way to go. We are faced with a prison murder conviction of horrible consequence. Chol Soo's 1979 murder conviction for the self-defense killing of a neo-Nazi gang member is currently on appeal before the Sacramento Third District Court of Appeals. The next deadline for a decision is October 30, 1982. The appellate court can either confirm the conviction, reverse the conviction and grant a new trial, or independently find him guilty of second degree murder. Whether we win or lose the appeal will depend upon how organized we are. □

Ranko Yamada *is an attorney. She is active in the Bay Area Committee to Free Chol Soo Lee and the Nihonmachi Legal Outreach in San Francisco.*

B E Y O N D

The Looking Glass

Trials and Tributes of Asian Americans in Film and Television

By Steve Tatsukawa

Asian Americans have been involved in film and television since the birth of these respective industries, both in front and behind the camera. Those who are remembered today tend to be on-camera figures: Anna Mae Wong, Sessue Hayakawa, and Keye Luke. Nevertheless, countless others have operated cameras, cut film, moved props and set lights throughout the entire history of the industry that is now referred to as "Hollywood."

However, it was not until the late 1960's and early 1970's that a new type of Asian American consciously stepped forward and became actively immersed in a world which had exploited and distorted the Asian image. These were Asian Americans who had gained their sensibilities in struggles for human rights, for ethnic studies, and against the war in Viet Nam.

Among them was a small group of Asian American students who were entering the venerable UCLA Department of Motion Pictures and Television in 1970. The handful at UCLA was joined by others across the nation who were enrolling in film school, taking entry positions at television stations and independently picking up cameras, writing scripts and editing works that were, noticeably, the product of their immediate history and condition.

Asian Cine Vision Film Festival.

The "UCLA Group" became notable because some of them formed the core of Visual Communications, the first community-based Asian American organization expressly committed to the development and production of Asian American images in films, books, and photographic displays.

Soon, the people at Visual Communications became aware of other Asians who were working with film and video in San Francisco and on the East Coast. Still others were scattered throughout the country, working independently yet sharing the same objective of creating an accurate Asian image. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Chinese Media Committee of Chinese for Affirmative Action and several independent producers were producing programming with local television stations. In New York City, the independent scene was further stimulated by a strong Asian American presence in Third World Newsreel, a multi-ethnic media collective. Thus, only a few years into the 1970's, the players and parts were firmly in place.

It was in the early 1970's that the direct link to government funded film and video and lobbying directed at public television was set in motion. Several overlapping events triggered the federal support of Asian American media. First, along with the producers and production groups, several outspoken advocacy groups were also in action. Asian Americans for Fair Media, formed in several cities, was the most active of these organizations. The advocacy groups sought to bring fresh media dollars into the Asian American communities. Second, under a constant stream of pressure, the rapidly growing "public telecommunications" bureaucracy launched the first of what has become several "Minority Task Force Reports" which clearly displayed the lack of a true presence by Asian Americans in public media. Third, Asian Americans themselves realized that "Hollywood" was far too slow in responding to their needs. New targets had to be developed.

With the solidification of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Public Broadcasting Service, and two National Endowments (for the Arts and for the Humanities), a new style of federally funded media production became a reality. Grantsmanship became a key element in the critical planning and development phase of Asian American film and television projects. A then-liberal Congress passed legislation assuring "minorities" of a good chunk of the funding pie.

By the mid-1970's, a flurry of Asian American film and television productions were created through the successful winning of grants and government contracts. Asian media activists found themselves battling alongside Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans for "parity in funding." Asians were seen actively lobbying for more dollars, more programming, more media employment, and more decision-making power, as well as debating the issues of the day as members of esteemed "funding panels" created by the Federal infrastructure.

As a result of the ongoing struggle during the 1970's, more Asian American film and television productions were created than the total sum of Asian American production in all the decades before that. Many of these films were documentaries aimed at the educational film market. For the first time, Asian American schoolchildren and their classmates could see multidimensional portrayals of Asian people and their communities. Over a ten year period, Asian Americans produced many films through series such as *Pearls, Bean Sprouts*, Visual Communications productions, and many others.

Despite the dollars provided by various government agencies, it was still the case that the vast proportion of film and television work was carried out by private industry (in reality huge national and multinational corporations). And furthermore, it is Hollywood which has the power to influence millions of people around the world. Beginning in the 1970's, Hollywood itself had to reckon with Asian Americans.

The actual number of Asians within the gigantic film and television industry was and still is extremely small. But an important trend was becoming apparent: Asians were penetrating, slowly and surely, into the mainstream of Hollywood. By the late 1970's, it has been estimated that, in Los Angeles alone, nearly 400 Asian Americans were holding steady programming and production related positions in the studios, stations, and production centers. In other urban media centers, the numbers of Asian Americans were, proportionally, just as high.

Again, as with the fight for government funding, the penetration of Asian Americans into the mainstream industry has not been without strong moves by the Asian community directed at "Hollywood." The studio doors were opened because Asian Americans themselves forced them open. It has required endless negotiations, pressure campaigns, picket lines and boycotts.

Despite the influx of Asian Americans into the industry, the majority of Asian Americans there are still isolated into non-decision making positions. They work as generic "assistants," secretaries, and technicians — all important positions but none with creative decision-making power. Thus, the objective for Asian Americans in the industry is clear. Asian Americans who have fought to gain entry into the industry must not stop at the doorway. Real power is held by those who write, direct, produce and, most of all, the behind-the-scenes "executives" who run the business and make the creative decisions.

At the turn of the decade into the 1980's, several noteworthy Asian American media organizations had joined the ranks originally started by Visual Communications. In New York City, Asian Cine Vision (ACV) has created a new model for independent community-based media groups. ACV initiated its own development in the highly important area of "media training" and direct media services to their community. ACV currently produces a one-hour news program in Chinese on a Manhattan cable station, five nights a week. In the Boston area, the Asian American Resource Workshop has taken initial steps toward highly mobile and compact video production as well as film and video distribution. The Seattle area

Ed Ikuta/V.C.

A scene from Hito Hata: Raise the Banner *produced by Visual Communications*

has seen the emergence of The King Street Media Works which, again, is building its strength upon small-scale video production and media training.

Being highly mobile, maintaining compact, fast-moving production teams and providing training and media services seems to be the pattern for the present-day Asian American media organization. However, that type of organization is not merely due to evolution and higher sophistication. It is also due to the fact that in the early 1980's, the bottom dropped out of the Federal funding basket.

Today, in the early 1980's, it is more difficult than ever for Asian Americans to produce Asian American media product. While the Hollywood industry is "still coming around," the government funds have become only a skeleton of what they were. However, Asian Americans have not turned away in defeat. With all-important track records and national "grapevines," Asian American presence in film and television has become stronger than ever.

The 1980's began with the release of Visual Communications' pioneering *Hito Hata: Raise the Banner,* the first feature length drama by Asian Americans. In 1982, the public has witnessed the release of *Chan is Missing,* without a doubt the most successful Asian American produced feature to date. In addition, Asian American production continues at a steady pace.

But the real sign of insuring survival was given birth at a National Asian-Pacific Producers Conference at U.C. Berkeley in 1980. At that conference, the seeds were planted for the establishment of a national network of Asian Americans in film, televison, and radio. This national network of Asian American media professionals is now a reality under the name, the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA).

The vital importance of NAATA has become rapidly apparent. Never before has there been a formal mechanism by which Asian Americans could coordinate their media activities across the nation. From a conference attended by 80 people, NAATA has become a full-fledged national media organization with regional headquarters in Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C. (and soon to add Seattle, Honolulu, and other media centers). A national office has been established in San Francisco. Nearly 500 people, most of whom are veterans of the Asian American media wars with Washington, D.C. and Hollywood, have joined NAATA. Already NAATA has received a considerable amount of now-scarce media programming dollars from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. A major NAATA coordinated project is, for the first time, packaging Asian American films, video and radio productions for national release under the working project name of the Asian American Public Broadcasting Consortium.

At its regional levels, NAATA has also provided a much needed stimulus which will carry Asian American media work through the decade. The Los Angeles regional arm of NAATA is called the Southern California Asian Media Society (SCAMS). SCAMS has been able to organize over 200 Los Angeles area Asian media professionals. SCAMS has received recognition and cooperation from the established Hollywood guilds and unions as well as carrying out a program based on direct services to its membership and the larger community. A similar scenario is being repeated by other regional arms of NAATA. The San Francisco Bay Area has managed to move forward in a bold and dynamic fashion. The Eastern regional chapters of NAATA (from Boston to New York to Washington, D.C.) have created strong inter-city networking systems and have attracted numbers never before realized in terms of membership.

During the process of its rapid organization NAATA has been able to firmly link independents with those Asians inside the industry. NAATA has been able to gain widespread community support and much needed recognition as a national organization from the federal government.

The true future of Asian American involvement in film and television is a complex picture. As mentioned, the once sustaining government funds have been severely reduced and the Hollywood-based industry is still not responding as quickly as it should to Asian Americans.

Yet as the Asian American film and television community moves into the 1980's, it is stronger than ever, larger than ever, more cohesive and more sophisticated. Independent productions are achieving critical acclaim and financial success on a national scope. The Asian American working presence in the industry is higher than ever. Film schools are still producing soon-to-be media professionals and the veterans in the field are better skilled and more experienced than ever. Those Asian Americans who have chosen the film and television field to dedicate their energies and talents are not only creating images; they are creating history. It is no longer the case that the only accurate and viable Asian American image is in our own mirrors. Asian Americans are finally, and firmly, moving beyond the looking glass. □

Steve Tatsukawa *is Manager of Program Development at KCET-TV and former Director of Visual Communications.*

Have Asians made it?

By Don Mar

The income statistics released by the U.S. Census Bureau in March 1982 require critical examination by Asian and Pacific Islanders. In 1980, the median income of Asian and Pacific Islander families was $22,075 as opposed to $20,840 for white families. On this basis, some have argued that Asian and Pacific Islanders should no longer be considered a minority under affirmative-action policies. In fact, it is even argued that Asian and Pacific Islanders are getting a larger piece of the American economic pie than whites. (See, for example, an article in the May 17, 1982 issue of *Fortune*). However, this argument is based on both the inappropriate use of national income statistics as a yardstick for the economic status of Asian and Pacific Islanders in America and the desire to portray Asian and Pacific Islanders as a successful elite who are taking advantage of their minority status.

The aggregate race and income statistics hide several factors that are of critical importance in determining who should be considered disadvantaged with respect to affirmative action. The first factor is that the use of *national* median income statistics severely biases the Asian and Pacific Islander income upwards with respect to the white family median incomes. Most Asian and Pacific Islanders reside in urban areas where the incomes and the costs of living are significantly higher than the national norm. Thus, their national median income will also be higher, even though their standard of living may be the same as persons who reside in the lower cost-of-living areas. For example, the median income of families who live in the San Francisco-Oakland SMSA (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) was $25,321 in 1980 as oposed to the national mean of $20,196. A better comparison of median family incomes is a comparison of Asian and Pacific Islander incomes and white incomes in a given region rather than on a national level. If we compare the median family incomes of Asian and Pacific Islanders with the median white family incomes by SMSA, a dramatically different story emerges. In 14 out of the 18 SMSA's where significant numbers of Asian and Pacific Islanders reside, their median family incomes are

lower than that of white families. In the San Francisco-Oakland SMSA the white family income was $26,932; the Asian and Pacific Islanders income was $24,960. In New York, the respective figures are $23,208 for white families and $18,024 for Asian and Pacific Islander families.

The second factor neglected by the national income comparison is the number of wage earners in the family. Asian and Pacific Islanders have a significantly higher percentage of dual wage earner families. This means that it takes more wage earners in an Asian and Pacific Islander family to make an income equivalent to a white family income. This is reflected in the higher labor force participation rates of Asian and Pacific Islander women. 57% of Asian and Pacific Islander women over 16 years of age are either working or looking for work as opposed to 50% of white women. Thus, if the national income statistics were adjusted for the number of wage earners per family, the family income of Asian and Pacific Islanders would be less than white families.

National family income statistics also fail to show that Asian and Pacific Islanders have lower *personal* incomes for a given level of education. Numerous studies have shown that given a white worker and an Asian/Pacific Islander worker of equal educational attainment, the Asian/Pacific Islander has a lower income. For example, the percentage of male college graduates earning more than $10,000 was 60% in 1969 for whites and only 38% for Chinese. The use of unadjusted family incomes hides this inequality in personal incomes.

Even after making all the correct adjustments to the income statistics, and if it is still found that Asian and Pacific Islander incomes are close to whites, it would still be a mistake not to consider them a disadvantaged minority. Affirmative action programs are necessary if Asian and Pacific Islander peoples are to have equal access to occupations which they have been historically denied: management, craft jobs, media jobs, etc. In addition, many Asian and Pacific Islanders continue to be severely disadvantaged economically. The 1980 Census reveals that one out of every seven Asian or Pacific Islanders lives below the poverty line, as compared to one out of ten whites. To deny the disadvantage of this low income group certainly contradicts the intent of affirmative-action policies. □

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UNITY Newspaper

Redress: One Year Later

By Lillian Nakano

The concept of a nationwide coalition for redress/reparations materialized from a resolve on the part of organizations and individuals who came together in July 1980 from the cities in the West Coast, Mid-West and East Coast. A conference followed in Los Angeles attended by over 400 people. Five broad principles adopted at the founding National Coalition for Redress/Reparations conference basically addressed the following: reparations to victims of the concentration camps, a community fund for the destruction of our communities, efforts to overturn the legal decisions on the camps, education of the issue, and support of others facing similar injustices. From its beginning, chapters of the NCRR have worked vigorously to expand support of the issue.

Last summer, the historical Commission Hearings took place in major cities around the country. Highlighting the hearings was the "coming together" of Japanese Americans. Testifiers by the hundreds stood up condemning the camps for constitutional rights denied, and hardships, losses and anguish suffered by this racist act. The Commission's request for additional funding to expand its report will likely be granted. In that event, the final Commission Report is estimated to be completed around June 1983.

Since the beginning of the year, the NCRR began working on a draft of a bill for introduction in Congress. It basically adheres to the principles adopted at the conference in addition to incorporating subsequent survey findings and hearings testimonies. While this bill will probably die in this year's Congress, it will nevertheless 1) serve as a reminder of the sentiments and demands put forth by the Japanese American community at the hearings; 2) serve as a basis by which other redress groups can exchange ideas for further development of this legislation; 3) be a vehicle with which we can concretely seek support from legislatures and organizations within and outside of our communities, and 4) pave the way for a reintroduction of a similar bill at the next (1983–84) 98th Congress. The main demands of the bill are: 1) $25,000 direct individual payment to the victims and/or their heirs

and 2) a community fund of $3 billion.

The NCRR legislative committee has just completed its 26-page supplementary document to the bill. This document contains brief historical data as well as personal testimonies from the hearings. A draft of the bill, the supplementary document and a newly designed brochure will comprise our legislative or informational packet.

In August 1982, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Convention convened in Los Angeles. Suggested guidelines were laid out as a basis for discussion and development of their legislation or redress. It was acknowledged that the camps were wrong, that appropriate redress shall be made; monetary compensation provided, and federally chartered corporations shall be created to administer the funds appropriated by Congress. A formula is being sought to delineate the amounts and methods of payment. The JACL Redress Committee shared that the direct payment route does not seem feasible in light of Congress' reluctance to appropriate monies directly to individuals. Min Yasui, Chairperson of the Redress Committee, stated that they have no intention of putting out a bill prior to the Commission's recommendation/report to Congress.

The National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR) will file a class action suit on behalf of the concentration camp victims. In their newsletter (July 17, 1982) it was explained that the document, or complaint, comprises of over 100 paragraphs of allegations covering all the points of deprivation, suffering and losses incurred by the internees. This is followed by 20 causes of action, mainly citing constitutional violations such as due process, equal protection, freedom of speech, assembly, religion and violation of law. Each count or cause is valued at $10,000.00, totalling to $200,000.00 per victim. As with any court claim, there are risks involved, notes William Hohri, national chairman of NCJAR. All of the 20 causes may or may not stand in court, and other legal obstacles such as the statute of limitations, "sovereign immunity" or others will probably be used by the U.S. government. But NCJAR's efforts are exemplified by William Hohri's statement that "win or lose, the issue will be brought to the bar of justice." This process requires funding to maintain a law firm to pursue its court claim, and NCJAR encourages the contribution and support from all in this effort.

The thread that binds us is our common history and our common objective in winning just reparations for all Japanese Americans. The specific perspective, strategy and approach may differ among the various redress groups, but in the interest of the entire Japanese American community, we must forge and strengthen the aspect of unity. NCRR and JACL having met earlier this year, mutually acknowledged the importance of continued dialogue in an effort to seek a common approach to redress/reparations. The process has begun and the outcome will hinge upon principled efforts by all the redress groups to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, flexibility and cooperation.

Be it through Congress or the courts, the fight for redress/reparations will be an arduous process. The goal is for justice long overdue. Winning redress/reparations will not only be a major victory for Japanese Americans, it will strengthen our ability and resolve to confront numerous other struggles pertinent to our Nikkei community. □

Lillian Nakano *is a member of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations and the Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization. She is a Contributing Editor of* EAST WIND.

F·O·C·U·S

Asian Immigration

by

Tom Surh, Wilma Chan, Evelyn Yoshimura, Aurora Fernandez, Jay Yoo and Wayne Luk

Our special FOCUS section tells the stories of the coming of the newest waves of Asian immigrants to the United States.

Since 1970, immigration has doubled the Chinese and Pilipino populations in the U.S. Korean immigration has been at an even faster rate. The additional Japanese, Southeast Asian and other Asian immigrants has changed and enriched our communities and peoples as well.

What are the new immigrants like? Why did they come? What conditions do they face as newcomers? What have they inherited and what do they share in common with older immigrants and American born in their respective communities?

Through a variety of viewpoints and approaches, our FOCUS section addresses some of these questions in relation to Chinese, Japanese, Pilipino, Korean and Southeast Asian immigrants.

Progressive and revolutionary minded Asians must take the lead in educating ourselves and our communities about the new immigrants at a time of increasing right-wing attacks upon our peoples and the fanning up of racism and chauvinism against immigrant working people. This past year has seen the introduction and probable passage of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill by the U.S. Congress which effectively cuts by one-quarter the number of Asian and other immigrants who can apply to come to the United States, and imposes an identification system and other repressive measures against immigrant workers.

This year has also seen an escalation of brutal violence against Chinese and Southeast Asian immigrants in Sacramento, Los Angeles and Houston by white racists.

These are not isolated incidents. The mood of the times, as in other times of economic recession, is increasingly one of racist hysteria and scapegoating of immigrant workers for ills that should be rightfully blamed on an inequitable, irrational social system run for the profit of a small minority.

The target of attack is often "illegal aliens" or undocumented workers as if these terms were part of an immutable status quo. In reality, throughout U.S. history, immigration laws have been developed and changed to fit the needs of the times and to fill the pockets of the capitalists with gold. What is legal one day can be made illegal the next. So we must look beyond the government defined status quo to a new definition of our rights based on actual U.S. and world history, including the true contributions and rights of immigrant working people.

As Asian peoples, we are immigrant peoples continually growing and being enriched by new waves of immigrants as well as American born within each Asian nationality. Our contributions as distinct Asian peoples are united efforts of immigrant pioneers, middle wave immigrants, recent immigrants hand in hand with four to five generations of American born as is the debt which society owes us carved in the walls of Angel Island, the concentration camps, the prison cell of Chol Soo Lee and the poverty stricken hotels of the manongs.

This is clearly a time to stand together, immigrants and American born, to oppose any and all attacks upon Asian immigrants, especially working people, and to defend and fight for the rights of Mexicano, Haitian, Dominican and other immigrant peoples as well.

It is in this spirit which we contribute our FOCUS section and document some of the hardships, contributions and awakening struggles of the new Asian immigrants.

Wilma Chan□

U.S. Policy on Asian Immigration

By Tom Surh

In 1971, for the first time in U.S. history, the number of immigrants from Asia was greater than the number from Europe. This was the result of the changes in the U.S. immigration laws in 1965 which began to eliminate the most racist features of these laws and, for the first time since the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, permitted an equal number (20,000) of immigrants to enter from each independent country. This trend has continued until today, when China, India, the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong have all oversubscribed their annual quotas. Add to this the several hundred thousand people who have come from Southeast Asia since the mid-1970's, and we see that the 1970's were indeed the decade of unprecedented growth in our Asian/Pacific communities.

Travel overland across the country from coast to coast and you will see that Asian/Pacific people are no longer confined to the two coasts. They are visable in some numbers in nearly every hamlet throughout the South and Midwest, usually in the form of at least a Chinese restaurant or an "Oriental food store." The urban centers on the coasts have witnessed the birth of entirely new communities of Koreans and Southeast Asians, and the great expansion and revitalization of existing communities.

A recent analysis of immigration patterns and fertility rates by the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy in Los Angeles projects the Asian population in the U.S. at 10.6 million, or four percent of the total by the year 2000. Such projections are, of course, highly speculative — particularly when based upon assumptions as to future immigration patterns, which are subject to changing federal policy. Indeed, we begin to realize that immigration policy is the very key to the future of Asian/Pacific and other Third World communities in this country when we note several factors:

1) The current fertility rate of the U.S. population stands at about 1.8 births per woman — a rate which results in a declining population. If it were not for in-migration from other countries, the U.S. population would stand at about 201 million in 2080, or 88% of the 1980 figure. Despite the popular perception of a current baby boom, demographers have little reason to expect the birth rate to climb as women continue to enter the labor force in greater numbers out of necessity as well as out of choice.

"The 1970's were the decade of unprecedented growth . . ."

2) If we assume that the native birth rate holds steady and that the current level of in-migration continues at about 750,000 per year (this is roughly the total "legal" in-migration consisting of immigrants and refugees for the past few years), the population of the U.S. in 2080 will be about 301 million.

3) These factors suggest that fully one-third of the U.S. population in 2080 will consist of migrants entering the U.S. after 1980 and their descendants. Given current patterns, only a small proportion of these new migrants will be European.

All of this has not been lost on those who formulate immigration policy in Washington, D.C., where pressure has been growing for many years to revamp immigration law and policy. The latest impetus began with Jimmy Carter's effort in 1977 which focused upon the "problem" of undocumented or "illegal aliens" in the U.S. work force by proposing sanctions against employers who knowingly hire such workers. To be sure, this was not the first such proposal: The House of Representatives had voted for such legislation several times, but it never made it through the Senate. The sweetener in the Carter package was a proposed "amnesty" for those undocumented people already in the U.S. as of a certain date, which was designed to make it easier for liberals and Hispanics to accept the employer sanctions proposal. They did not, but instead joined forces with employer interests to defeat the Carter package by calling for more study of this very knotty and complex situation. What we got, then, was the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. This commission did draw a lot of attention from immigrant communities as well as from many other constituencies and interest groups, and it also took the heat off of Congress for a couple of years. Its recommendations incorporated the Carter proposals with an added kicker of a "secure" national identity system to ease the burden on employers of identifying who is and who isn't entitled to work.

Debate has raged over the years of just what the impact will be upon communities whose members look foreign and sound foreign when they speak, should an employers sanction provision be enacted. Few have seriously opposed the argument that the impact on Hispanics and Asian/Pacifics will be great — that employers will tend to shy away from hiring or will at least

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A program on the Chinese Exclusion Act and 5th preference issue — Boston, Mass.

more closely scrutinize brown and yellow applicants for work. What defenders of the national identity system argue is that such a system will reduce the negative impact on Asian/Pacifics and Hispanics by giving us a positive means of establishing our legitimacy, thus removing any ambiguity. Taken in isolation, this argument is persuasive. Given the current situation, where particularly Mexican and Latino workers, including U.S. citizens, are subjected to surprise raids and daily hassles by police and immigration officers, the attraction of the identity system is understandable. What proponents of the employer sanction/national identity system ignore, however, are several realities: 1) regardless of assurances in the law, any identity system can and will be abused to the detriment of the rights to privacy and civil liberties of all people. The Social Security numbers will be used only for purposes of the Social Security Administration — yet we all know that these numbers have become a nearly universal identifier in the United States. 2) The promise of employer sanctions is sham, since it cannot and will not be enforced. The federal government has numerous laws and regulations on the books regarding wages, working conditions and other factors relating to the working environment. They are not enforced. 3) No identity system can be immune from forgeries, and any sophisticated, relatively secure system will be very expensive. 4) There are substantially less intrusive methods of achieving the same ends that the employer sanctions tries to address. These include removing the incentive for hiring exploitable undocumented workers by seriously enforcing the existing laws relating to wages and working conditions — something which has never been attempted.

So it seems that the employers sanction proposals cannot be expected to deal effectively with the undocumented workers situation, but is merely a political response giving the appearance that Congress is "doing" something about what is perceived as a problem. On the other hand, several little-noticed but deadly serious proposals to shift immigration policy will have immediate and widespread impact on our Asian/Pacific communities. In August, the Senate passed the Simpson-Mazzoli bill which will ultimately result in a cap on the total number of preference immigrants and (heretofore unlimited) immediate relatives of U.S. citizens who may legally enter the U.S. each year. It will also remove adult children of permanent residents from the second preference, and completely eliminate the fifth preference which currently permits brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens to immigrate.

The real impact of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, then, will not be in the area of employers sanctions, but in the very real limitations on who can enter the U.S. as legal immigrants. Employer sanctions will result in increased hassles for minority workers, but its effects are survivable. The limitations, however, particularly if they signal a coming trend, will result in permanent separation of family members and in a restriction on the growth of our communities in the U.S. It would appear that the real agenda in the current legislation is to stem the flow of third world people into American society. In fact, Senator Simpson practically announced as much in remarks on the Senate floor when he introduced the bill on March 17, 1982. After duly noting the demographic projections referred to earlier, he went on to state: "If immigration is continued at a high(meaning the current) level, but a substantial portion of these new persons and their descendents do not integrate fully into the society, they may well create in America some of the same social, political, and economic problems which exist in the countries from which they have chosen to depart. Furthermore, if language and cultural separatism rise above a certain level, the unity and political stability of the Nation

will — in time — be seriously eroded. Pluralism within a united American nation has been our greatest strength. The unity comes from a common language and a core public culture of certain shared values, beliefs, and customs, which make us distinctly 'Americans.'"

What else can the Senator mean by "a common language" than English? And what is suggested by "core public culture" other than European? Just what is the language and cultural separatism that he fears will erode the unity and political stability of the Nation? Isn't the Senator not only blaming the victims of prejudice for its consequences, but taking it even further and using these consequences as an excuse for limiting the right of these victims to have their families join them in America? The Senator appears to be smitten by a classic case of xenophobia and racism, despite his protestations to the contrary in his March 17 speech. But he has done us the favor of explicitly announcing the real agenda in the Simpson-Mazzoli bill.

It is not enough simply to identify the racist motivations in the formulation of immigration policy. This is but another reminder to us of an ever-present factor in American society and politics — a reminder that many of our white liberal friends would even decry as a product of our own paranoia. What we must do is to proceed with grim and steadfast determination to fight these kinds of changes in the federal law and policy at every turn, brooking no compromise and sparing no effort, because we can be secure in the knowledge that such changes are motivated by racism and are aimed at strangling the growth, vitality and the very future of our communities. We must fight these changes in the places where it will count — among our elected Congressional representatives, in the Republican and Democratic parties, in the bureaucracies of the State, Justice and Labor Departments, and in the electoral process. By directing the tremendous energy and resourcefulness within our communities at the bastions of real political power, we shall, in time, be able to defend ourselves when the backlash strikes. □

Tom Surh *is an attorney in practice in Oakland, California. He was on the Staff of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy in 1980 and has been long associated with the Korean Community Service Center, San Francisco.*

Corky Lee

Chinese Immigrants

By Wilma Chan

Like many Chinese Americans, whether conscious or not, a large part of my life has been spent coming to terms with the immigrant question. Part of coping with life as a Chinese American in this country is dealing with the fact that more than half of our people are immigrants and that most of these immigrants are working people; many in the restaurants and garment shops of our communities. Unless we plan to go through life wearing blinders, being Chinese Americans means coming to terms with the immigrant question. If we despise immigrants, we can have no real self-respect, respect for our families, our rich roots and traditions, or Chinese Americans as a people.

This was brought home to me constantly in my childhood growing up as a second generation Chinese American in a suburban community on the East Coast. Although I couldn't speak but a few words of Chinese, while I could speak English like the best of them, and was at the top of my class all during my school years, I was constantly singled out and brought back to my identity with Chinese immigrants. "Don't you identify with the hoardes of poor refugees from Hong Kong?," asked my best friend's brother one day as I was helping her family prepare for Hanukkah. "How would you like to play the Chinese refugee

in the church Christmas play?" And along with this identification came discrimination in the form of racial taunts and restrictions on my family's mobility such as when we tried to move into a white middle-class neighborhood.

While my first reaction was to disclaim my Chinese heritage and any links I had to Chinese immigrants — how often have I thought I'm American, not Chinese — something truthful and sane inside of me stopped me. Maybe it was the love for my mother and father, immigrants from Hong Kong and China. Maybe it was the fact that I really enjoyed Chinese food, Chinese holidays, like New Years, or didn't feel quite comfortable disowning Chinatown when I knew that thousands of Chinese worked and lived there. At the same time, however, I could not totally resolve this conflict and felt torn in two.

It was not until I was in college in the late 1960's that, through learning more about Chinese American history and doing actual organizing work among immigrants in the Chinese communities of Boston and San Francisco, I came to have a deep respect for Chinese immigrants, particularly immigrant working people.

In this regard, many inspiring individual immigrants impacted my thinking.

One such person was a middle aged man from Toishan, China, later Hong Kong, who came to the U.S. in the early 1960's and worked in kitchens and dining rooms in New York City and San Francisco. He told me of the hardships of leaving his wife and son in Hong Kong because there was simply no work available for him. He said that his intention had always been to send for his family, but that dream was shattered when he, along with about 600 other Chinese immigrants, were tricked by the Kennedy Administration into "confessing" to having come under paper names in return for promised citizenship status. Instead, he lost his permanent residency and lost his legal right to sponsor his family and even to return to his home in Hong Kong. The picture which he had once shown me of his son was soon discarded and he told me several years later that his wife and son were dead, for they might as well have been as far as he was concerned.

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90 Warrenton St. tenants. Boston, Mass.

But despite his personal sorrows, this man tenaciously fought for the rights of Chinese people. He opened a vendor's stand to sell books from China for the first time in the San Francisco community at a time when Chinese books were officially stamped as "communist propaganda" by the U.S. government. He participated in the formation of the Chinese Progressive Association, a new community mass organization for Chinese workers and progressive people which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

Another immigrant was an elderly restaurant worker in his 60's, a *Loh Wah Que* from China, who had lived in the Bay Area Chinese communities since the 1930's. I first noticed this man standing moist-eyed at a festive International Workers Day program in Chinatown in 1973. I approached him to ask him if anything was wrong and if he needed any help. He told me that to the contrary, he was crying with happiness because he was witnessing a new beginning in the struggle of Chinese people for justice and our rights. I sat with him in the corner, and he opened up a whole history of Chinese immigrants that I had never known about before. He talked about the sad and painful experience of leaving a China ravaged and torn by U.S. and other foreign powers, and of the extreme discrimination and hardships in the U.S. during the Depression.

In response, a group of Chinese had gotten together to form the Chinese Workers Mutual Aid Association, a community mass organization of over 600 members, to organize Chinese workers into the U.S. trade unions and to support the liberation struggle in China. He told me about how many Chinese immigrants had joined left movements, many becoming Marxist-Leninists, to fight to change the fundamental inequalities that Chinese in the U.S. face.

And, there was the beautiful young garment worker who had left Macao in 1968 with her young husband and two children hoping to "find a better life" here. Her husband was a waiter and she a seamstress. She asked, "What dignity was there to this life; what was there to look ahead to in the next 40 years of eking out a living?" Her tensions and family conflicts grew.

She sewed in a Chinatown shop part-time for about $1.50 an hour. She loved to go downtown with us to get out of the house and look at "pretty things." One day we saw the dress she had sewn for $1.50 in wages selling at Macy's for $30.00 She wanted to fight too. She had an

indomitable attitude and spirit of women's liberation which contributed greatly to my thinking about Chinese immigrant women.

There were many others, and I learned even more having left my law studies at UC's Boalt Hall to get a job working among Pilipino and Chinese immigrant women in the typing pool of a large San Francisco corporation.

All together, what I learned was that my uneasiness with Chinese immigrants was based on many misconceptions and prejudices instilled in me by society. First, I understood more the actual reasons why Chinese immigrants come to this country, the pains and hardships of leaving home, and the relationship of immigration to the impoverishment of Asian countries by the U.S. and other exploiting world powers. Secondly, I understood for the first time that while we should be credited with the contributions of those who have made it in white eyes such as An Wang, I.M. Pei, etc., the contributions of Chinese immigrants are predominantly a contribution of a working people. I learned that the actual material richness of society comes from the hands, minds and toil of thousands of Chinese and other working people — whether in the form of the clothes on our backs or the food we eat.

Thirdly, I understood that it is not Chinese immigrants who keep U.S. society down but that it is this society that keeps Chinese immigrants down and exploited by its deeply embedded fabric of economic, social, political and cultural discrimination.

Lastly I learned of the pride and dignity of Chinese immigrants in fighting injustice and standing up for what is rightfully theirs and that this pride and dignity could be my own as a Chinese American.

This understanding, taking place over several years, helped me to reorient my life toward Chinese people, to become a Marxist-Leninist and to deal with the complex questions of uniting immigrant and American-born Chinese and to build a powerful Chinese National Movement which, together with the movements of Blacks, Chicanos and all oppressed peoples in the U.S. and U.S. workers, would fight for fundamental change in society.

After almost 14 years of this work, the question of Chinese immigrants has never been more important than it is today. For myself as well as other American-born Chinese, whether workers, students or professionals, it is a time to affirm our unity with Chinese immigrants and to fight even harder together for equality as Chinese.

" . . . as Chinese people united together we are moving forward . . ."

Since the 1970 census, over 300,000 new Chinese immigrants have immigrated to the U.S. — predominantly from Hong Kong, China and Southeast Asia. Well over 150,000 Chinese have entered in the past five years making Chinese officially the largest Asian national grouping in the U.S. today.

Coming at a time of severe economic recession in the U.S., Chinese immigrants have become a fast and easy target of racist scapegoating and violence. This is in addition to the increasing hardships that all Chinese people face in the realm of jobs, education, services and housing.

The media is jam packed with articles about Chinese immigrants, and we are assaulted almost daily with new stereotypical images. First, that Chinese immigrants are rich, greedy and enterprising capitalists making quick bucks off of U.S. society. Secondly, that hoards of working class Chinese immigrants are descending on this country stealing "American" jobs and simply taking up too much room.

While these two images appear contradictory on the surface, they are both saying the same thing — that Chinese immigrants, no matter whether rich or poor, aren't "American" and that they are "ripping off" something that isn't theirs.

Both images are false and are arrived at by stating half truths and altering facts. For instance, while the number of Chinese immigrant businessmen in the U.S. has swelled in recent years, wealthy Chinese immigrant businessmen account for less than 10% of all Chinese, while the vast majority of Chinese immigrants are workers. As of 1970, 24% of all Chinese males were still workers in the restaurant trade and 27% of Chinese women in garment and light industries — not much change after 150 years and certainly not much of an economic rip-off considering the depressed wages and working conditions in those industries. Furthermore, the media presents these statistics in a racist, alarmist way: "And at the Berkeley campus," quotes the *New York Times*, "more than 20% of the undergraduates these days are Asians even though they make up only 5.3% of the State's population." The article omits to state that Asians make up over 21% of the population of San Francisco County from which much of the Berkeley student body is drawn.

In similar fashion, a recent article in the *S.F. Examiner* stated how Chinese immigrants are flocking to the engineering and computer fields in an "alarming rate." The article fails to point out that engineering and computer jobs are among the few available to *any* skilled worker or professional in today's highly technical and militarily geared economy, or the fact that Chinese immigrants face discrimination in pay scale and job rank in these professions.

Even with all of the recent immigration, taken as a whole, Chinese comprise only .4% of the total U.S. population. How can this be taking up too much room unless we actually believe the myth that this country was made by and for rich white people. If so, give us back the mines and railroads, give us back the reclaimed lands and fisheries, the food we have cooked and served, the garments we have sewn and the cultural, and academic and professional contributions we have made.

Although the particular circum-

stances, stories and numbers of the recent immigrants may vary, like previous waves of Chinese immigrants, the newer immigrants come from the Asian countries of the Third World seeking a better life that is rightfully theirs. They are more than willing to pay for it and invariably do — ten times over.

A young immigrant food processing worker, a lively personality who headed a cultural team in his Chinese Village before coming here in 1979, explained, "Living in the U.S. doubtless the material life is more rich. But you will never forget the word 'suffer hard work.' If you slow down a little those 'dogs' who only know how to interpret the master's face will come out to bite you."

Or, in the words of a New York Chinatown *dim sum* cook who came from Hong Kong in 1977: "I came to the U.S. to make *dim sum* too. At that time, I thought the U.S. would be better, but it's worse than Hong Kong. I'm out of work now. When there is work, the working hours are long. Work is harder than in Hong Kong. Housing is poor — it's terrible rundown houses with high rent."

Likewise, the spirit to fight is still there. In recent years, American-born Chinese, like myself, and old-time immigrants have stood side by side with the new immigrants in unionization and other worker's struggles, and rent strikes. They have worked together to develop and build progressive organizations to unite our people.

But, at the same time there is the real possibility of a counter-trend. This is a time of rapidly increasing conservatism and anti-immigrant climate. We American-born have to really dig deeply and with an open mind to seek out the truth in a situation where the conscious strategy of those who rule is to divide and conquer.

It is the American-born who must take the extra step forward to unite with Chinese immigrants, understand their particular hardships and what shapes their thinking, and to support their demands. To do this, we must deeply question our own prejudices of what is "American" what is "valuable" and what is "cool, *baad* or acceptable" in our cultural views and lifestyles.

We must make a real personal commitment to build a single unified Chinese National Movement or else shut our eyes and shun our responsibility to half of our people.

Furthermore, this cannot be done in a missionary or deprecating way, but out of a genuine feeling of unity and mutual respect. These are very real and difficult questions in each and every one of our lives at this point in time.

For myself, I feel that my life has been enriched in working with Chinese immigrants and in the Chinese community over the past years — from the personal satisfaction of seeing my young daughter grow up bilingually with a self-respect and national pride which I missed out on for almost 20 years, to the opening of new realms in language and culture to me and my family.

There is also the broader satisfaction of knowing that as Chinese people united together we are moving forward and one day we will win full equality and political power.

As a new immigrant friend in the Chinese Progressive Association pointed out, "If we all unite and form a fist, we will have the strength. We and our children will have to come together, into a giant wheel, to smash all kinds of obstacles that come across our rights, then we will win." □

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Corky Lee

Chinese garment workers demonstrated for a union contract. June, 1982. New York City

Japanese Immigrants

By Evelyn Yoshimura

The stereotype of the Japanese newcomer is the *shosha-man*, a businessman in a dark suit who works for a large Japanese corporation; his wife plays golf during the week and shops in Beverly Hills. These *shosha* families exist, but comprise a small minority among the Japanese newcomers. Many live in suburban homes and drive late-model cars, both provided by their companies. But the lives of a majority of Japanese newcomers is quite different.

In the Japanese community, anyone who has come to the U.S. from Japan since World War II is considered an immigrant. These people can be broken down into two main categories: those people who came during the first twenty years, through the early 1960's are one group. There was a rapid urbanization taking place during this time and many poor farmers' families, and poor and working class people in the cities came to the U.S. to escape the extreme economic hardships of post-war Japan. During this period, families came, as well as many women who had married American servicemen.

Hiroko met her G.I. husband when he was stationed in Japan. She liked his dark good looks and his relaxed charm. Her family shook their heads and called him *mekshikojin*, but she knew he was actually Puerto Rican. She became pregnant, they married, and came to the U.S. in 1960.

She always wanted to come to America, to be free of the obligations and traditions that bound her strong spirit. Her head spun in excitement upon arriving. But when her husband left the service, civilian life was hard on him. He couldn't find steady work, and they fought a lot. He became bitter, and soon the fights began to end in violence.

Before her daughter was two years old, she gave birth to her second baby. Things got even worse. She decided to leave with the babies. Her English was poor, but she would find a way to get by.

Hiroko has been a waitress for over 15 years. She now speaks English very well, but prefers to work in Japanese restaurants because she can be herself, and because the feeling among the workers is more cooperative. Some of the younger, newer waitresses are afraid of her because she always says what's on her mind. Hiroko says this helps clear the air and improves working relationships. She's so strong, all the workers — men, women, Japanese, Mexican — call her "Mama."

More recently in the last fifteen years a different kind of immigrant has been coming: younger, usually single, many are from working class families, some from lower middle class families; many have plans of going to school, learning English, or seeing America. Some come on special work visas as *sushi* chefs, etc. From 1970 to 1979, 123,671 Japanese immigrated to the U.S. In addition, more than 10,000 are in the U.S. without legal status.

" . . . immigrants from Japan provide a link for American-born Japanese to cultural traditions"

Shigeo got a job at Toyama Restaurant in Century City to get a green card. He began as a kitchen helper, but learned quickly.

When Shigeo became a chef, the restaurant manager introduced him to an attorney friend of the owner whom the workers were encouraged to hire to process their green card applications. Shigeo paid the attorney $2,000, as did six or seven other workers. The attorney was supposed to submit their applications to the Immigration Office, but neglected to do so for six months because he was "busy." In the meantime, Shigeo received a letter in English from the attorney asking him to sign a very formal document, also in English. At first he thought it had to do with his application, but later found out it was an agreement to continue working at Toyama for the next two years at the same rate of pay and not complain about working conditions. At the end of the two years, he would receive his green card. All six or seven workers applying received the same letter. Some signed it without understanding. He refused, and was harassed continually from the manager. When he finally received his green card, he quit. He got a job at a Japanese food warehouse under the Teamsters Union. He hoped such harassment and treatment would end with union protection.

Kunio came to the U.S. six years ago to go to school. His family was not rich, so he got a job in a restaurant to get by. He went to school full time during the day, and went to work, first as a kitchen helper, then as a waiter, every night. He met other young students like himself who had to work, even though it was not legal to do so. He got to know Americans — white Americans, Black Americans, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans. He liked it here because he was free to do what he wished; he was not confined by tradition or status as in Japan. But he also found that when he complained about the bad conditions at work, his boss would threaten him with his illegal immigration status. He became involved in an attempt to unionize the restaurant where he worked. Although the workers lost the election by just a few votes due to the tremendous harassment and threats and violence by management, he learned about injustice and racism and he got involved in the Japanese American community activities to do something about them. He learned about how Japanese were put into concentration camps during World

War II, and how other minorities also suffer racism. And he learned how newcomers have a place in the Japanese community.

Now that he's been here over six years, he doubts if he will even return to Japan. He feels he is too old (he's 30 years old this year) to return because in Japan, by age 30, you have to be set in your career with a company, or it's too late, and the jobs available are scarce, menial and insecure.

Many newcomers begin working in restaurants or other ethnic food related business, like food processing, food warehouse and distribution companies, or other businesses within the ethnic industry, like travel agencies, import/export companies, retail gift shops; many turn to gardening, carrying on a long tradition in the Nikkei community, where language, immigration status or education is no barrier. Some work along side other immigrants in industries like garment, canneries and others. Some are able to eventually open their own small businesses or to rise within the ethnic industries to become managers at restaurants or small companies.

Noriko came to the U.S. during the early 1960's with her husband and his family, who decided to return after twenty years in Japan. His family chose to go to Japan rather than go into an American concentration camp during World War II, although his father was a U.S. citizen born and raised here.

When they first returned to America, Noriko, her husband and father-in-law did gardening together for a living. She continued to go every day, up through her sixth month of pregnancy.

After the baby came, her husband got a job as a clerk in a Japanese trading company. They moved into a small apartment in Boyle Heights, leaving her in-laws' house. She began working as a waitress when her baby was two. They scrimped and saved and bought a tiny restaurant in Little Tokyo. He cooked and she waited the three tables and the six-seated counter. They were open six days a week, working from dawn, preparing for the day, to finally leave for home after 10 p.m.

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San Francisco Japantown

After five years, they just began to break even, but were forced to sell because the City's urban renewal project threatened to take over the block. They were left with barely enough to pay off their debts. She went to work in a big restaurant in Little Tokyo, and he went back to the trading company. Her husband, a quiet man, became even more withdrawn, feeling he was somehow responsible for the "failure" of their business.

The only time he would speak was when his friends would come over to play mah-jong and drink. She gets very frustrated at the long, tiring hours of work, only to come home to a house full of noisy, gambling men after whom she must clean up. She dreams of someday working in an office.

There have been some contradictions in the past between American-born and Japan-born. Some American-born Japanese who have learned to be self-conscious about not being white Americans, feel uncomfortable about associating with someone who is too Japanese-ey. Terms like "F.O.B. (Fresh off the boat)", etc. have been used to refer to immigrants. And on the part of some immigrants, there's a tendency to look down on Nikkei for losing their culture and language so quickly and trying so hard to assimilate, not understanding the injustice and pressures of this racist society.

A lot of resentment has been building toward Japanese corporations. With the economic crisis in the U.S., the government is seeking someone else to blame: minorities, women, workers, immigrants. And another easy target is Japanese business, because they are racially visible and very aggressive. They have caused antagonism among various sectors of the American people. Even in the Nikkei community, many people who had built up places like Little Tokyo, have been driven out of business and out of longtime homes by Japanese corporations using urban renewal projects to gain prime downtown land.

Many of the *shosha* people seem to consider themselves superior to

Nikkei, whom some call *mizu-kusai* (smelly, lowly). Thus, when Gardena Councilman Mas Fukai recently stated his somewhat blunt resentment to this kind of attitude, many in the Nikkei community backed him up. But Fukai and other Nikkei must make a clear distinction between the arrogance of the *shosha* mentality, and the majority of Japanese immigrants, who are setting down roots here as the Issei did, and should therefore be considered a part of the community.

The continual wave of immigrants from Japan provides a link for American-born Japanese to cultural traditions, traditional language and history. The ethnic food industry provides food, an important part of the culture.

There is some intermarriage taking place between newcomers and Nisei and Sansei. We share the desire to maintain our heritage, and often take our children to the same Japanese cultural classes. But most importantly, we must stand together to withstand the rising tide of racism and reaction in this country that is threatening to bubble over. □

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Pilipino Immigrants

By Aurora Fernandez

Historically, Pilipino immigration to the U.S. can be traced back to the Treaty of Paris in 1898 when the U.S. purchased the Philippines from Spain for $20 million in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. The subsequent systematic introduction of Western ideas of government paved the way for economic exploitation and impoverishment of the country. Beyond this, a colonial mentality has persisted as a part of a corrosive legacy from nearly five centuries of Spanish and American occupation. This manifests itself in undue fascination with advanced technology which is highly inappropriate in a struggling agrarian nation and has led to an overproduction of technocrats who are unable to find gainful employment in their chosen professions. It also manifests itself in a compelling psychological need to have one's self-worth validated by external, colonial standards. These factors have combined to push large numbers of Pilipinos out of their country. On the other hand, an important "pull" factor in Philippine immigration to the U.S. is the periodic fluctuation in the U.S. labor supply. In response to this manpower shortage, the Immigration and Naturalization Service relaxes entry rules and allows more foreign workers into the labor market.

In 1965 the old quota system for immigration which limited Pilipino immigration to 100 per year was changed to 20,000. Since 1965, over 400,000 Pilipinos have left their homeland to come to the U.S. with almost 40,000 more coming each year. Almost 60% of them are women, and many are professionals.

I came here in 1966 because my former husband came for his residency in medicine. The United States was having a shortage of medical personnel, so it was encouraging graduates of medical schools in the Philippines to train here. Everyone was coming here for their residency. Again, there was this colonial mentality that if you have training in the United States, you're better than the ones who just stay in the Philippines. I had distant relatives and friends who wrote to my husband. Their letters would always talk about materialistic things. They would also talk about how difficult it was for them to adjust, but also how good it was to be here (in the U.S.) compared with the Philippines in terms of the economic conditions.

My political awakening happened gradually. The catalyst was Dee Brown's book, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. This powerful account of the betrayal and slaughter of American Indians in the westward expansion of the U.S. enraged me; it made me cry, but most of all it made me think. A course in U.S. history taught from a nontraditional perspective was another eye-opener and reading feminist literature was an important part of the whole process. I started to question the things I had always taken for granted, including my own role in this society as a Pilipino, a woman, and as a wife and mother. The dissonance between the ideal and the real was too painful. Eventually, it led me to the San Francisco Bay Area where my life and work are more relevant to my goals.

I knew that I would find Pilipinos in the Bay Area. I wanted to facilitate the entry of minorities into the health care system, since they are usually forgotten or underserved. This was the primary reason that I went into nursing.

The Foreign Nurse Graduate (FNG) licensure issue came to a head in my last year of nursing school at University of California at San Francisco. Pilipino nurses have immigrated here since the 1950's to fill the nursing shortage. They had been allowed to practice through reciprocity until the 1970's when passing the State Board Test Pool Examination became a condition for licensure and employment.

Between 1,000 and 1,500 FNGs are admitted from the Philippines each year under H or employment visas. Failure on the exam meant immediate deportation for these FNGs.

The Board of Registered Nurses proposal was to extend the temporary license to 24 months and to

change the test. A study by a UCSF graduate nursing student had shown that it takes at least 18 months for FNGs to acculturate and perform well on the exam. An independent test expert found that the exam was not job-related and was therefore illegal.

We went to Sacramento and testified before the BRN in support of their actions. On the other side was the California Nurses Association, the most powerful nurses union in California. It is very conservative. Questions of safe nursing practice and competence were repeatedly brought up notwithstanding the fact that many of these FNGs had been practicing in the state for years through reciprocity, and none of them had ever been found guilty of malpractice.

It got really ugly when we were testifying. Some of the things that the nursing administrators were saying were really racist; they were very open about it.

The test has been changed, but the proposal to lengthen the temporary permit didn't go through.

This experience further sensitized me to the struggle minorities must continue to wage in order to achieve parity with their white counterparts in virtually every field of endeavor.

What I really wanted to do from the outset was to work in the community with Pilipinos. There is an Asian program at UCSF which had speakers from the community who talked about health care problems among minorities. To meet course requirements, we had to write a paper on a local ethnic health care agency. So I went to Manilatown to interview people.

The Manilatown Senior Center is a facility for elderly Pilipinos in the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown. These *manongs* are members of a bachelor society which has been isolated from mainstream American society by racist laws passed in the early 1900's, such as the anti-miscegenation act and restrictions on property ownership in California. Many of them have worked as farmhands in California's fruit and vegetable fields, as doormen in city hotels, as cooks on board navy and merchant marine ships, and in a host of other low-paying jobs.

Mike Fong

Aurora Fernandez at the Manilatown Senior Citizen Center.

Every other week I now take blood pressure of clients there. I also do diet, drug and lifestyle counseling in relation to hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Underlying the limited nursing services I provide to the *manongs* is the communication and consistent contact which may appear incidental but is actually a significant part of each visit. Some of them are very set in their ways and will rationalize their condition. There is also the Pilipino mentality, a crisis oriented mentality — you don't see a doctor unless you need to. I like to think that I understand some of their values and even some of their foibles for we speak the same language and share the same culture. Like them I came here, however reluctantly, with my spouse to seek a better way of life. But there the similarity ends, because the disparity in our lives has been dictated by different historical periods and different prevailing attitudes in the U.S. toward aliens.

There are a lot of problems that recent Pilipino immigrants face. One is social anomie. When they come over here, both parents usually have to work in order to survive. There is no network of personal and social support, unlike the old country. So the family structure disintegrates. I know of one family in Daly City, California. The husband and wife are really hardworking. The man has a full-time job and is also reviewing for an engineering board exam. He has migraines all the time, and he has problems with his wife because he expects his wife to have the house spic and span, his dinner ready when he comes home, etc. But she's also working full-time. The way the children talked back to her was really something. In the Philippines you're supposed to defer to your parents; here kids talking back to their parents seems to be the norm. And they have their own peer groups which in time can become more powerful than the authority of the parents. We're seeing more and more problems with these kids now.

There is also discrimination. The National Semiconductor Corporation (a large electronics firm in the Bay Area's "Silicon Valley" which employs many Pilipinos) has just been sued for this. In institutions of higher learning such as UCSF there are really not that many Pilipina nurses or administrators. You see the hierarchy in the workplace: white on top, some Asians in middle management, and mostly Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in the lowest levels.

When my husband and I came to the U.S., I think that our biggest mistake was that we did not teach our children our language and traditions. We were so eager for them to be accepted here. And we thought that the only way for them to be accepted was to be completely acculturated. That earlier misguided effort has resulted in a smooth transition into American culture for our children, but it has also deprived them of a significant part or their heritage and identity.

It took me ten years to get to this level of cultural and political awareness; for my children, I hope it will happen much more quickly. □

Aurora Fernandez *lives in Richmond, California and works as a registered nurse in the East Bay.*

UNITY Newspaper

Korean Immigrants

By Jay Yoo

Today, there are an estimated 600,000 Koreans in the U.S. Most of us are non-English speaking newcomers and have entered the U.S. since 1965. Before then, a restrictive immigration quota allowed just 3.5 people to immigrate each year — part of the anti-Asian exclusion laws on the books for several decades!

But in 1965, the exclusionary quota system was revised. From 1970 on, about 30,000 Koreans come to this country every year. In Sacramento, there are about 4,000 Koreans, and 95% are newcomers. In the San Francisco Bay Area, we have about 80,000. Nearly 200,000 Koreans reside in Los Angeles.

Looking at the history of Korean immigration, I can categorize about five categories of Koreans living in the U.S.

1. Pioneer Koreans: Our original pioneers came to the U.S. in 1902-05, via the Hawaiian sugar plantations. About 9,000 people immigrated during this period.

2. Intellectuals: This group came to the U.S. after 1910, the year the Japanese came to Korea and turned it into a colony. As a result, many Korean intellectuals fled Korea, and came to the U.S. to study and as part of an independence movement.

3. New student group: This sector came to the U.S. after Korean independence. They came here to study and, for various reasons, decided to stay as professional people.

4. Newcomer Immigrants: Out of the whole Korean population, 90% are newcomers who came after 1970. They are having problems with learning English and are facing cultural shock and discrimination in employment, language, all areas. Most of them are engaged in janitorial service or other manual labor, cleaning, working in nurseries; some own small businesses. The newcomers are the majority of the Korean people here, and face the most problems.

5. Interracially married Korean women/"warbrides": This is the commonly used term, but that has a narrow connotation. Nowadays, we say Asian-born wives of American persons. There are more than 700 Korean wives near McClellan Air Force and Mather Air Force Base and the Army Depot in Sacramento who are married to American men. More than half of those families have broken down because of the cultural problems.

6. Student: The fifth sector are Korean foreign students. Most Koreans come here to study and plan to return home and compared to other groups, they are a very low percentage.

There are many reasons why Koreans have immigrated to the U.S. First, many come to the U.S. to better their economic situation. Many people in Korea hear that the U.S. is still the land of opportunity

— if you work hard, you will get something back. This myth is spread through American missionaries and American movies in Korea. So our people come here with false assumptions, expecting to live like Elizabeth Taylor in Beverly Hills. They never imagine that there is crime and murder, that they will face discrimination and racism. It's similar to 150 years ago when the Chinese came to the U.S. for the Gold Mountain. They found out right away that this was not true.

But life is hard in Korea. It is a war-torn country, a poverty ridden country which was divided into north and south Korea after the war. There is a lack of natural resources and the population density is very high. North and south Korea together is only the size of Utah, but has *fifty million people* to Utah's one million!

Korea is also a very socially unstable society and very class oriented. If you want to be a "good person," you have to go to a certain school, compete severely and *win*. Some "losers" are hopeless; they have to look for some other outlet and some immigrate to the U.S. to better their economic situation.

Other Koreans come here for political reasons. I put myself in that category. There is a lack of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, lack of all human rights in Korea.

Faced with this kind of political situation, one can choose the path of active participation in Korean society to correct the wrong, or, like myself, to withdraw to a foreign country, build up more of our own ability and some day go back to Korea to participate in the democratic nation-building.

I've found that some Koreans immigrate to the U.S. for religious reasons. In Korea, religious practices are restricted. Those seeking religious freedom turn to the U.S. where all religions are permissible.

Another factor for immigration is the Korean family system. Many young women like to be "liberated," to live as a private person. The Korean family system is in a transitional period, but it is still an extended family system. If you

Jay Yoo

marry the first son, or the only son, you will have to live with your in-law's family. Some young women do not like that idea. They prefer to live in a nuclear family system, just the husband and wife, not with the grandparents and family.

Since America is a nuclear family society, some Korean women come here and choose this lifestyle. In Korea, separating from the extended family is frowned upon, and women may be labelled "unfaithful." They want to get away from this situation. In other cases, Korean women who come to the U.S. as students and marry sometimes choose to stay in the U.S.

The last factor is the quest for better education. The Korean educational system is similar to the Japanese system. The entrance exams are very severe, and each year only a certain amount of students are admitted into high school or college. Even some people who have money cannot get into school. Under these circumstances, families may send their children to the U.S. to get an education.

The influx of Korean immigration to the U.S. began in 1970, but is gradually declining. The U.S. government is consciously trying to reduce immigration from Korea and other Asian countries. Recently, the Senate passed a new immigration bill that would eliminate the fifth preference immigration category which allows brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens to immigrate. Over 70,000 Koreans have obtained legal permission to immigrate under the fifth preference, but are on a waiting list of up to five and six years. If Congress abolishes the fifth preference, future Korean immigration to the U.S. will be cut drastically.

But there are many problems that come with Korean immigration to the U.S. One aspect is family breakdown. In Korea, the role of the "husband and wife" is clear-cut. The husband has to earn the bread, and the wife is supposed to stay home for child rearing and housekeeping. Here, it is easier for Korean women to find jobs than for men, and the roles change. This leads to a lot of divorce.

Another problem is the "generation gap." For the 16-year old to go to the disco Saturday night is taboo for the Korean family. "No way, you have to stay home," the parents will tell their children. But this is frustrating for the teenagers who see their friends out having fun. They are treated differently and lose their motivation. They lose their direction and begin developing mistrust in their parents.

There are rumors that there is a Korean youth gang in Los Angeles. They are not bad kids, but the environment forces them to hang together — it's a way of being recognized and accepted. This is just an outgrowth of the overall situation of the family breakdown, alienation and search for identity. It's a problem, but something that can be handled effectively if parents are aware of the problems and if the community provides alternatives for involving the youth. Developing new leaders among the youth is especially important.

The church plays a positive and negative role in working with the immigrants. On the one hand, the church serves as a community center — where immigrants turn to for assistance in finding an apartment, a job, social and cultural activities. On the other hand, because many churches have monolingual pastors, they do not fully serve the first generation nor do they have the ability to fulfill the needs of the youth. The church has a central

function of serving the community and meeting its needs, but lacks the ability to do so effectively.

In the face of the many problems facing Korean immigrants and the changes taking place in our community, we need to develop more political orientation and more political power. My concern is organizing greater Korean voting power — whether it be on the city, county or state level. I'm particularly interested in voter education, starting here in Sacramento and speaking out. Chol Soo Lee started here and spread out, and maybe that can be an example. There are many Koreans living here, and many good resource people.

There is a sense of powerlessness, a sense of not knowing what's happening or where and how to participate in social change. On the other hand, there is potential. I'm very comfortable working with various community leaders and organizations. I feel we must all work together — all Asian nationalities — we have to get together for the common goal. □

Jay Yoo *is an attorney. He is active in the Sacramento Asian community and is the National Coordinator of the Chol Soo Lee defense.*

Southeast Asian Immigrants

By Wayne Luk

At this time we are probably approaching 600,000 to 700,000 Southeast Asian refugees residing in the U.S. Eighty per cent of these Vietnamese happen to be Vietnamese-Chinese. The other 20% of the refugees are Lao and Cambodians. There are probably more Lao than Cambodians.

Each group is very, very distinct. Each culture developed far apart from each other; at times they are unrecognizable. If you get three people together from each background, each speaking their native language, they won't understand each other.

The refugees came to the U.S. in various stages. The first stage was in 1975, which is known as the first wave. The first wave refugee was composed mainly of individuals who were well-educated. Many of the first wave refugees were associated with the American government or were in the military. Most of them came when the government of Viet Nam fell. About 100,000 refugees came in the first wave.

Leland Wong

Southeast Asian Family. San Francisco, Calif.

The second wave of refugees began around 1978 and was composed of what is known as boat people. Many are ethnic Chinese who escaped by boat to Thailand, Malaysia, or Hong Kong. This group has had a very different experience than the first group. They are more composed of the lay farmer or soldiers in the South Vietnamese army who were sent to re-education camps. After they were released, they decided to escape.

The conditions by which these people came over were pretty bad. Approximately 50% of all boat people drowned. It's not uncommon for boats to swamp as they go out to sea.

These people are survivors. They have physically faced very large perils in their lives. Emotionally, they have not only had to endure the hardship of experiencing a war, but they also have to endure the hardship of recognizing that they are literally leaving family behind. In doing so, they have potentially

really lost all contact with their family in the future.

Almost all refugees must go through the Refugee Processing Center (RPC). In the RPC, people attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and American orientation courses for a period of 14 weeks. During this time they are given intensive English, approximately six hours a day. But one of the contradictions is that some of the people hired to orient refugees to American life have never lived in the U.S.

The RPC located in Thailand is exclusively for the hill tribespeople — the Hmong, Mien and Yao people. Their level of orientation to American life is very low. They have probably not encountered a three-story building in their life. Many of these people have little contact with a large urban city in Laos. A large urban city in Laos would be 4–5,000 people; that would be a huge city for them. Or they have probably never had to work with electricity. They ask questions like, "How does this stove work?" It's something new and beyond them.

The hills people have their distinct culture and language from the lowland Lao. Up until 30 years ago, the hill people did not have a written language. There was no high school system until 1963. So these things that we take for granted are very new in their culture. As a result, when they come to the U.S. they face many more problems than the people of Cambodia or Viet Nam. The Lao people tend to have fewer skills because it is not an industrialized society. Their skills are really not readily transferable. They are in a very strange land in America and there are very few people who are like them to help them.

The third group which is coming out right now is composed of people who are being sent out as anchor relatives in the U.S. This concept of the anchor relative would be to send one or two members of the family with the hope that after they get to the U.S., they can sponsor other members of the family.

Leland Wong

Schoolchildren. San Francisco, Calif.

However, the federal government has clamped down on refugees quite a bit in the last two years. For example, a year ago the ceiling for allowing refugees into the U.S. was set at 120,000; this year it has been set at 100,000; this fiscal year we will not actually be admitting more than 80,000 refugees. One of the concerns of the American government has been that originally there had been an effort to disperse the refugees among all the states so that to a degree all states could share the burden. But what has happened is that people migrate and people have the right to migrate in the U.S. People have come to certain states, for example, California. In California, we have 1/3 of all the refugees who live in the U.S. We have approximately 1/2 of all the refugee money available from the federal government, but we still do not have enough money to adequately provide for these refugees. There have been both federal and state cuts in services to refugees. Originally an individual could receive 36 months of refugee cash assistance, which is not welfare but a special fund authorized by the Refugee Act of 1975. This cash assistance has now been cut to 18 months.

The primary reason for secondary migration is family reunification. Even when the refugee is in camp, they are already trying to join someone in California or the U.S. The concept of the extended family vs. nuclear family is not clearly understood by the federal government. They are not sensitive to the concept of extended family which is very vital to Asian people. The response of the Dept. of State to the large numbers of refugees going to California has been to limit primary resettlement of people to California to those individuals who can clearly demonstrate that they have immediate family who will take care of them.

Community organizations are fighting very hard to counteract the trends of the American government. An example is the Simpson-Mazzoli bill. With the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, there has been a change in the fifth preference, the allowance of brothers and sisters to immigrate to America. Prior to this time, not many refugees could apply for brothers and sisters overseas. You have to have a green card (permanent residency). The sponsors of the bill have felt that the refugees have now been in the U.S. long enough to change their status and now we will have a new horde from Southeast Asia. This is something that we have to fight very, very hard. It's a direct threat to the Asian method of immigration.

As people come into the U.S., they face problems with employment and learning English.

There are very few jobs available. For example, I know one man who had a job in Viet Nam sewing mattresses, a skilled job. His ESL level is very low, but he wanted to be employed. It took him over one year to find a job, but his job is in San Jose. He leaves his family in San Francisco, lives in San Jose five days a week, and shares an apartment with other refugees in San Jose. That was the only place where he could find a job. And this is a person with a skill that is transferable from Viet Nam to the U.S.

Other individuals who have more skills have become landscape architects, clerical workers, etc. but the majority of people do not have skills that are transferable.

Coming to the U.S., one of the changes is that in order to survive in this society, both the father and mother have to work. This may become a very big issue for the family. Sometimes it is the mother who is the first to find employment. When the mother finds employment first, then there is all of a sudden feelings of inadequacy by the father, i.e. "I can no longer be the head of the household; I can't support my family; I have already left half my family in Viet Nam and now I can't even support the three people living with me; what do my children think of me?"

The children have most likely gone to American school. Their English level picks up while their father's English level may stay constant. All of a sudden the children assume a different role in society. They act as interpreters. They go out and run certain errands. Once again the father feels inadequate. So we have these problems which are tied to the economics.

An issue coming up is mental health. When a person is overseas during the war or even now, they are under a great deal of stress. And we have within ourselves coping mechanisms to deal with things. For the refugee their need to cope does not end with their escape from Laos or Viet Nam. They are not necessarily safe in their country of first asylum. They don't necessarily feel safe when they get to the U.S. because the culture here is so strange. At a certain point after a person has been established in the U.S., he eventually might begin to relax and upon relaxing all of a sudden, these feelings that they have suppressed about separation from their families and about leaving the tragedies that they have experienced, will emerge. We have seen some depression among the refugees. There are lots of guilt feelings about why they are survivors. People come to this center and fill out orderly departure program affidavits (a form sent to the Vietnamese government) knowing that there is very little chance that the family will ever get out through the program because there are so many people trying to get out. Only 180 people per month get out. Just the act of filling out the form gives them some relief which is important for them.

Many people wish to return to their homelands for various reasons, but only if the time is right and there is stability in their homelands. But one of the things about Southeast Asian refugees, among all the refugees in the U.S., has been that they are percentage wise the fastest group to move from refugee status to alien status to American citizenship. In doing so, they are making a different commitment to this society. We have the beginnings of businesses here. We have the beginnings of a voting bloc for refugees. Whether they have visualized it or not, they are truly establishing a life here not as refugees but moving more toward being immigrants.

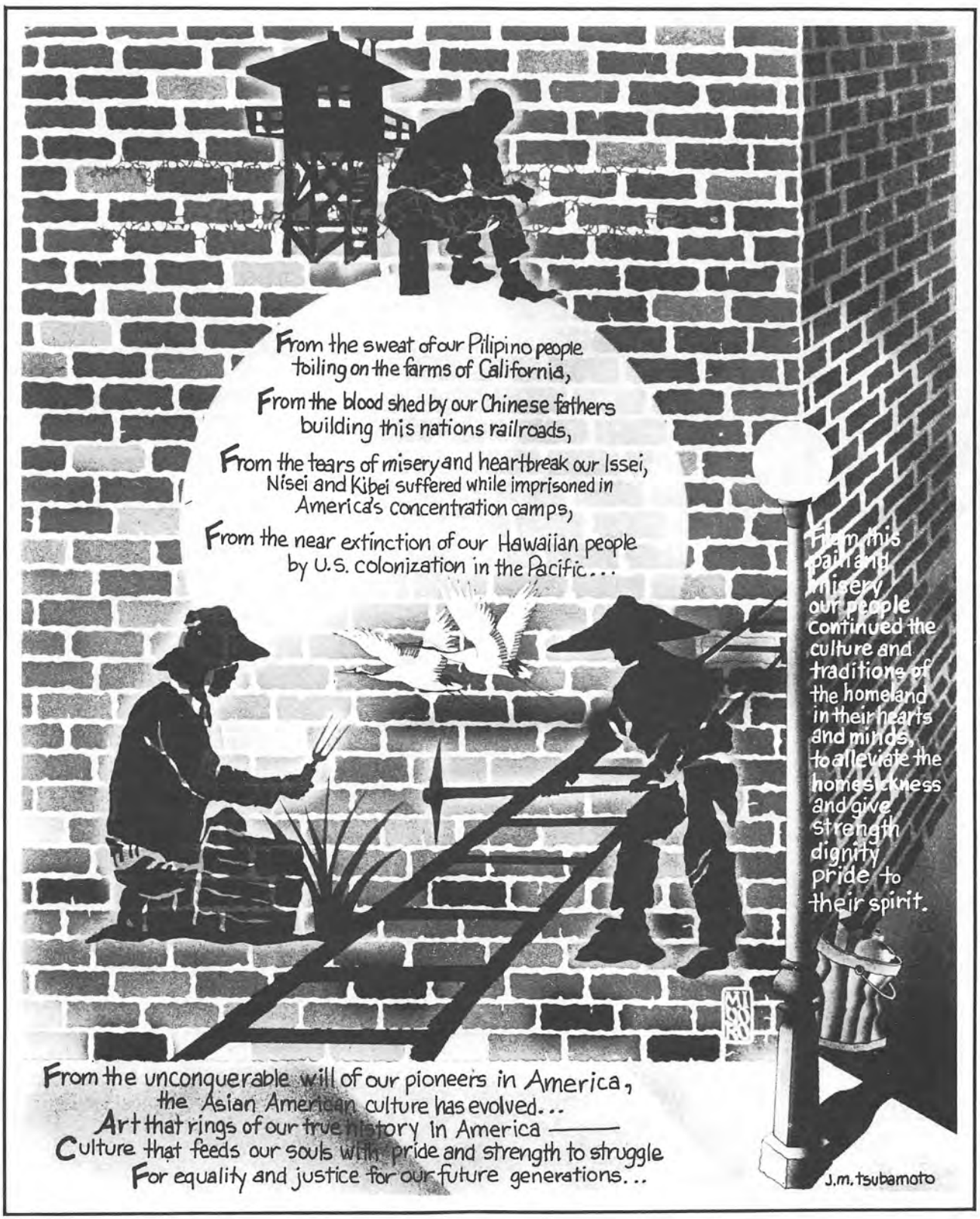
One of the problems has been that there has been some cultural things which have happened that refugees don't understand. Essentially, whether they like it or not, they're going to have to adapt. An example would be fishing and understanding local fishing customs. It's a concern that I have too because here we have a limited resource which exists on earth. We think in terms of developing the ecology so that we may reap from it at some future date. Whereas for the refugee, it's more at a survival level — "I have to do this to survive, therefore I'm going to fish in a certain way." It's something that they have to understand and deal with a little bit more effectively so they don't get bad press. Because what happens is that a few people get bad press and the whole community hurts. People are really looking for excuses to target refugees. There is a lot of racial violence that people have to deal with.

Refugees will survive and evolve in the U.S. The refugees have been very positive for the U.S. Some people see refugees and say, "You draw my tax money away. What have you given us?" Well, the refugees have probably paid back as much in taxes as they have ever drawn out in public assistance. So they must be benefitting somebody. In San Francisco's Tenderloin District, life has become much more stable because the refugees are here. They have put a uniqueness to the area. They have put families back in an area which has had many transients and drug addicts. There's a revitalization of the community which would not have happened if the refugees were not here.

One concern that refugees have to face is how to survive life in the U.S. because it does involve part of a cycle. Already we have individuals who have passed away. They will be buried in the U.S., never to return to their homeland. But we also have a life which is given by the families which are beginning here. It's a cycle we all go through in our individual life. And it is something which the community is facing because they are seeing both a beginning and an ending. □

Wayne Luk *is the Resettlement Unit Coordinator at the Center for Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement. He is a Chinese American, born in Hong Kong and raised in Berkeley, California. A graduate of the master's program in social work at San Francisco State, Mr. Luk has been working with refugees for nearly two years.*

ART AND CULTURE



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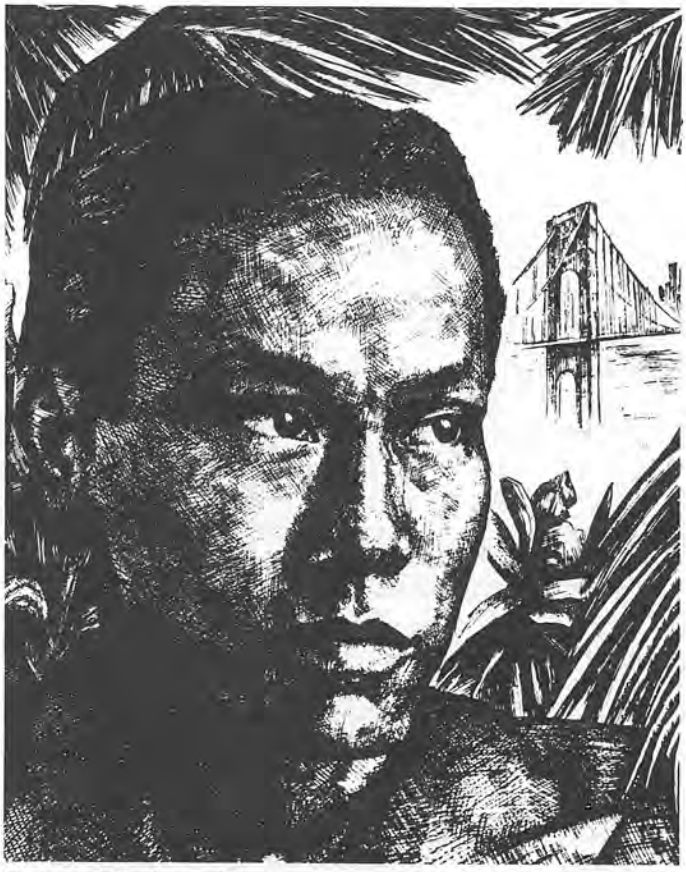


Portrait of Carlos Bulosan

I FIRST SAW death when I was a small boy in the little village where I was born. It was a cool summer night and the sky was as clear as day and the ripening rice fields were golden in the moonlight. I remember that I was looking out the window and listening to the sweet mating calls of wild birds in the tall trees nearby when I heard my mother scream from the dark corner of the room where she had been lying for several days because she was big with child. I ran to her to see what was going on, but my grandmother darted from somewhere in the faint candlelight and held me close to the warm folds of her cotton shirt.

My mother was writhing and kicking frantically at the old woman who was attending her, but when the child was finally delivered and cleaned I saw that my mother was frothing at the mouth and slowly becoming still. She opened her eyes and tried to look for me in the semi-darkness, as though she had something important to tell me. Then she closed her eyes and lay very still.

My grandmother took me to the field at the back of our house and we sat silently under the bending stalks of rice for hours and once, when I looked up to push away the heavy grain that was tickling my neck, I saw the fleeting shadow of a small bird across the sky followed by a big bat. The small bird disappeared in the periphery of moonlight and darkness, shrieking fiercely when the bat caught up with it somewhere there beyond the range of my vision. Then I thought of my mother who had just died and my little brother who was born to take her place, but my thoughts of him created a terror inside me and when my grandmother urged me to go back to the house I burst into tears and clutched desperately at two huge stalks of rice so that she could not pull me away. My father came to the field then and carried me gently in his arms, and I clung tightly to him as though he alone could assuage my grief and protect me from all the world.

I could not understand why my mother had to die. I could not understand why my brother had to live. I was fearful of the motives of the living and the meaning of their presence on the earth. And I felt that my little brother, because he had brought upon my life a terrorizing grief, would be a stranger to me forever and ever. It was my first encounter with death; so great was its impress on my thinking that for years I could not forget my mother's pitiful cries as she lay dying.

My second encounter with death happened when I was ten years old. My father and I were plowing in the month of May. It was raining hard that day and our only working carabao was tired and balked at moving. This animal and I grew up together like brothers; he was my constant companion in the fields and on the hillsides at the edge of our village when the rice was growing.

My father, who was a kind and gentle man, started beating him with sudden fury. I remember that there was a frightening thunderclap somewhere in the world, and I looked up suddenly toward the eastern sky and saw a wide arc of vanishing rainbow. It was then that my father started beating our carabao mercilessly. The animal jumped from the mud and ran furiously across the field, leaving the wooden plow stuck into the trunk of a large dead tree. My father unsheathed his sharp bolo and raced after him, the thin blade of the steel weapon gleaming in the slanting rain. At the edge of a deep pit where we burned felled trees and huge roots, the carabao stopped and

Death of a Filipino the U.S.A.

Carlos Bulosan

looked back; but sensing the anger of my father, he plunged headlong into the pit. I could not move for a moment, then I started running madly toward the pit.

My father climbed down the hole and looked at the carabao with tears in his eyes. I do not know if they were tears of madness or of repressed fury. But when I had climbed down after him, I saw big beads of sweat rolling down his forehead, mingling with his tears and soaking his already wet ragged farmer's clothes. The carabao had broken all his legs and he was trembling and twisting in the bottom of the pit. When my father raised the bolo in his hands to strike at the animal, I turned away and pressed my face in the soft embankment. Then I heard his hacking at the animal, grunting and cursing in the heavy rain.

When I looked again the animal's head was completely severed from the body, and warm blood was flowing from the trunk and making a red pool under our feet. I wanted to strike my father, but instead, fearing and loving him I climbed out of the pit quickly and ran through the blinding rain to our house.

TWICE NOW I had witnessed violent deaths. I came across death again some years afterward on a boat when, on my way to America, I befriended a fellow passenger of my age named Marco.

He was an uneducated peasant boy from the northern part of our island who wanted to earn a little money in the new land and return to his village. It seemed there was a girl waiting for him when he came back, and although she was also poor and uneducated Marco found happiness in her small brown face and simple ways. He showed me a faded picture of her and ten dollars he had saved up to have it enlarged when we arrived in the new land.

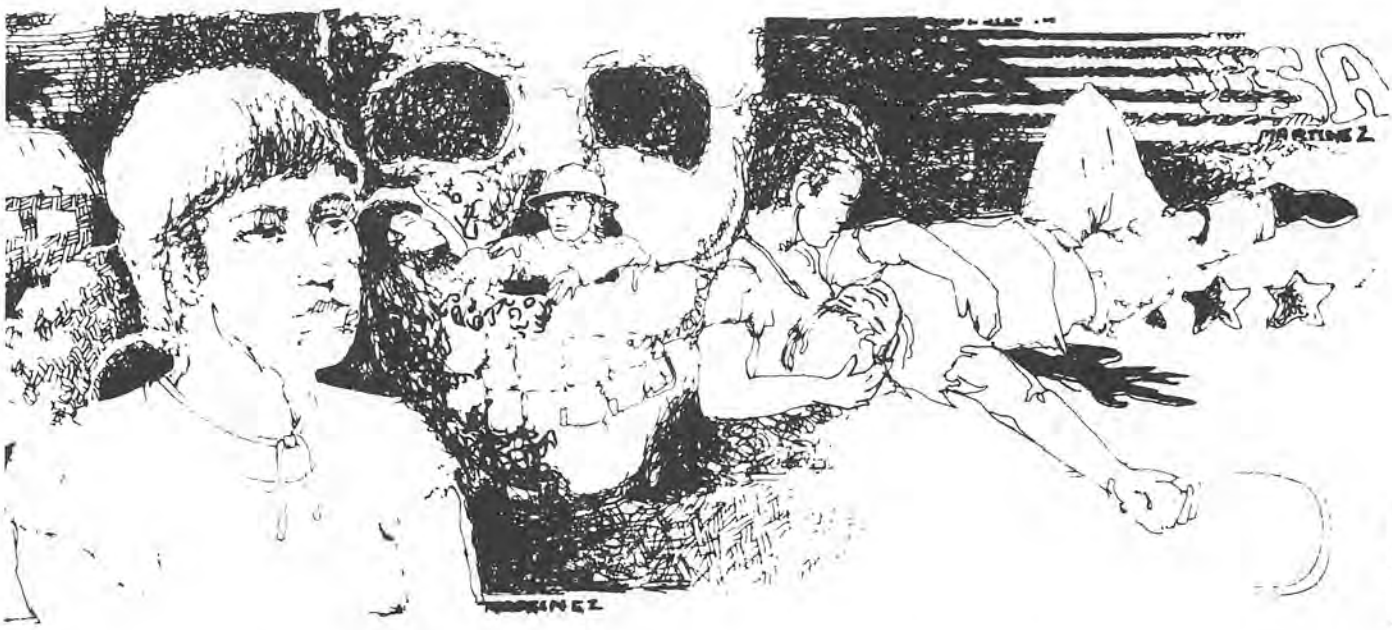
Marco had a way of throwing back his head and laughing loudly, the way peasants do in that part of the island. But he was quick and sensitive; anger would suddenly appear in his dark face, then fear, and then laughter again; and sometimes all these emotions would simultaneously appear in his eyes, his mouth, his whole face. Yet he was sincere and honest in whatever he did or said to me.

I got seasick the moment we left Manila, and Marco started hiding oranges and apples in his suitcase for me. Fruits were the only things I could eat, so in the dead of night when the other passengers were stirring in their bunks and peering through the dark to see what was going on, I sat up. Suddenly there was a scream and someone shouted for the light. I ran to the corner and clicked the switch and when the room was flooded with light, I saw Marco lying on the floor and bleeding from several knife wounds on his body. I knelt beside him, but for a moment only, because he held my hands tightly and died. I looked at the people around me and then asked them to help me carry the body to a more comfortable place. When the steward came down to make an inventory of Marco's suitcase, the ten dollars was gone. We shipped back the suitcase, but I kept the picture of the girl.

I arrived in America when thousands of people were waiting in line for a piece of bread. I kept on moving from town to town, from one filthy job to another, and then many years were gone. I even lost the girl's picture and for a while forgot Marco and my village.

I met Crispin in Seattle in the coldest winter of my life. He had just arrived in the city from somewhere in the east and he had no place to stay. I took him to my room and for days we slept together, eating what we could buy with the few cents that we begged in the gambling houses from night to night. Crispin had drifted most of his life and he could tell me about other cities. He was very gentle and there was something luminous about him, like the strange light that flashes in my mind when I sometimes think of the hills of home. He had been educated and he recited poetry with a sad voice that made me cry. He always spoke of goodness and beauty in the world.

It was a new experience and the years of loneliness and fear were shadowed by the grace of his hands and the deep melancholy of his eyes. But the gam-



Steve Martinez

bling houses were closed toward the end of that winter and we could not beg any more from the gamblers because they were also starving. Crispin and I used to walk in the snow for hours looking for nothing, waiting for the cold night to fall, hoping for the warm sun to come out of the dark sky. And then one night when we had not eaten for five days, I got out of bed and ate several pages of an old newspaper by soaking them in a can of water from the faucet in our room. Choking tears came out of my eyes, but the deep pain in my head burst wide open and blood came out of my nose. I finally went to sleep from utter exhaustion, but when I woke up again, Crispin was dead.

Yes it was true. He was dead. He had not even contemplated death. Men like Crispin who had poetry in their soul come silently into the world and live quietly down the years, and yet when they are gone no moon in the sky is lucid enough to compare with the light they shed when they are among the living.

AFTER NEARLY A DECADE of wandering and rootlessness, I lost another good friend who had guided me in times of helplessness. I was in California in a small agricultural community. I lived in a big bunkhouse of thirty farm workers with Leroy, who was a stranger to me in many ways because he was always talking about unions and unity. But he had a way of explaining the meanings of words in utter simplicity, like "work" which he translated into "power," and "power" into "security". I was drawn to him because I felt that he had lived in many places where the courage of men was tested with the cruelest weapons conceivable.

One evening I was eating with the others when several men came into our bunkhouse and grabbed Leroy from the table and dragged him outside. He had been just about to swallow a ball of rice when the men burst into the place and struck Leroy viciously on the neck with thick leather thongs. He fell on the floor and coughed up the ball of rice. Before Leroy realized what was happening to him, a big man came toward him from the darkness with a rope in his left hand and a shining shotgun in the other. He tied the rope around Leroy's neck while the other men pointed their guns at us, and when they had taken him outside, where he began screaming like a pig about to be butchered, two men stayed at the door with their aimed guns. There was some scuffling outside, then silence, and then the two men slowly withdrew with their guns, and there was a whispering sound of running feet on the newly cut grass in the yard and then the smooth purring of cars speeding away toward the highway and then there was silence again.

We rushed outside all at once, stumbling against each other. And there hanging on a tall eucalyptus tree, naked and shining in the pale light of the April moon, Leroy was swinging like a toy balloon. We cut him down and put him on the grass, but he died the moment we reached him. His genitals were cut and there was a deep knife wound in his chest. His left eye was gone and his tongue was sliced into tiny shreds. There was a wide gash across his belly and his entrails plopped out and spread on the cool grass.

That is how they killed Leroy. When I saw his cruelly tortured body, I thought of my father and the decapitated carabao and the warm blood flowing under our bare feet. And I knew that all my life I would remember Leroy and all the things he taught me about living.

The Filipino Worker in the U.S.

An Introduction to Carlos Bulosan

By E. San Juan Jr.

After more than thirty years since the publication of his epic chronicle *America Is In The Heart* (1943), Carlos Bulosan, a Filipino immigrant who was born in the Philippines in 1913 and who died in Seattle in 1956, is now beginning to be recognized as one of the first Third World revolutionary workers who successfully articulated the sufferings and struggles of national minorities against U.S. monopoly capitalism.

With militant candor, Bulosan expressed the principal contradiction within the core of the migrant worker's existence in America. In December 1937, he wrote in a letter: "Western peoples were brought up to regard orientals or colored peoples as inferior, but the mockery of it all is that Filipinos are taught to regard Americans as our equals. Adhering to American ideals, living American life, these are contributory to our feeling of equality. The terrible truth in America shatters the Filipino's dream of fraternity." This shattering of the "dream of fraternity" connotes the birth pangs of national and class consciousness in the Filipino.

After landing in Seattle in 1931, Bulosan had to sell himself for five dollars to a labor contractor. He was relentlessly exploited in the salmon canneries. One Filipino worker described in subdued and understated tone the infernal setting of Bulosan's initiation:

> The men toil like slaves from morning till night and are often called upon to work overtime . . . They are miserably housed in crowded quarters and the feed is of the poorest — salted fish or meat and rice supplied by the labor contractor. Only when the contractor's supplies run low is salmon eaten . . . (Emeterio Cruz, "Filipino Life in the Alaskan Fish Canneries," *Philippine Magazine*, June 1933)

Between 1931 and Pearl Harbor Day, Bulosan immersed himself in the rapidly expanding labor movement of fruitpickers and farmhands, engaged in teaching and organizing. By 1933 the Filipinos had formed the first unions and led several massive strikes.

Because of his involvement, Bulosan became a target of insults, prejudice, various harassments and attempted lynchings. But to his last days, Bulosan heeded and obeyed the imperative for an organized and broad united front of all the oppressed. Rallying workers to fight for the fundamental democratic right of self-determination, coupled with the just and equal distribution of social wealth (the major means of production), Bulosan uncompromisingly sought to overthrow the vicious property-relations of this decadent system.

Toward the end of 1935, Bulosan entered a transitional phase: his support for the republican and democratic forces during the Spanish Civil War "gave coherence to the turmoil and confusion of his life." More important, the militant actions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) provided direction and reinvigorated his creative impulses. Denouncing "the false values of capitalism and the insidiousness of bourgeois prejudices," Bulosan formulated the singular lesson of his sojourn in the U.S. from 1930 to 1941. He finally confronted his enemy, capitalism gone beserk: "Suddenly I began to see the dark forces that had uprooted me from my native land, and had driven me to a narrow corner of life in America. At last the full significance of my search for roots came to me, because the war with Japan and against Fascism revealed the whole meaning of the fear that had driven me as a young writer into hunger and disease and despair." In this fidelity to truth lies the progressive and procreative thrust of Bulosan's writings.

In the crucible of arduous struggle with farmhands, stevedores, workers of all oppressed groups, Bulosan forged his dialectical materialist conception of society. His fiction and poetry evince a comprehension of the basic contradiction between the productive forces and the property relations underlying any society, a knowledge obscured by reactionary propaganda about abstract liberties.

Freedom for Bulosan was not just a

formal legal concept nor a chimera, as dictated by the subjectivist relativism of the academic intellectual. It meant something as down-to-earth as bread or rice, clothing, shelter — how people actually live on earth as concrete social beings with developing needs and aspirations. He resolutely upheld his conviction that "we are not really free unless we use what we produce. So long as the fruit of our labor is denied us, so long will want manifest itself in a world of slaves."

Bulosan predicates the full flowering of humanist culture and the complete all-round development of man's spiritual powers on the satisfaction of basic wants and immediate needs. This is a primary requirement — the survival of humans as practical-sensuous beings — which is fulfilled in accomplishing the decisive tasks of a thorough-going social transformation, through revolutionary change and the establishment of socialism.

There are times when Bulosan fails to make a lucid analysis of the internal contradictions of the capitalist system and ignores the conflict between the exploiter and the exploited; then he inevitably regresses to the sphere of vacuous wish-fulfillment.

As Bulosan attested in a letter written on the eve of World War II: "I was a part of it all: starving in large cities, sleeping in foul toilets . . . crying at night and in the morning, . . . shouting for something that was not in America, demanding for tenderness and love . . . " Such confessional, even mawkish naivete must be assessed in the context of such episodes in his life as extreme privations, insults, attempted lynchings, etc., all of which taught Bulosan the urgent need to be critical not only of his social and physical environment but also of himself as a product of circumstances as well as being their creative agent. He acquired from what Gorki called "the university of life" a visionary but also realistic mode of interpreting the world from a dialectical materialist perspective.

Consequently, when Bulosan confronts state troopers protecting armed thugs, scabs and strikebreakers paid by agri-business (Gulf and Western, Bank of America, Standard Oil, etc. which own 80% of California's productive land), or deals with corrupt labor contractors, then he elevates our consciousness to the stage of scientific social practice.

Pilipino farm workers

In 1948 Bulosan said: "I felt that I would be ineffectual if I did not return to my own people. I believed that my work would be more vital and useful if I dedicated it to the cause of my own people." In 1950 he wrote: "What I am trying to do . . . is to utilize our common folklore, tradition and history in line with my socialist thinking."

Bulosan saw how many of his compatriots, controlled by feudal or bourgeois habits of thought and feeling, accommodated themselves on the surface to wage-slavery but revolted deep within themselves against the outrageously humiliating conditions to which they were condemned. Bulosan also saw how Filipino immigrants, with their minds deformed by cynical or individualist notions, pursued the rat-race to accumulate obsolescent commodities.

Bulosan sought to fulfill his responsibility to the Filipinos here and at home by combatting U.S. impe-

rialism — a responsibility stemming from his role and function as an intellectual in the ranks of the working class and of an oppressed nationality.

What essentially informs the technique, style, in effect the organizing premises and assumptions of Bulosan's finest works is the cardinal principle emphasized by Mao Tsetung in *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*: "In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines." All art is inherently political, promoting the interests of one class or the other. As Bulosan counseled the revolutionary poet Amado V. Hernandez, imprisoned by the puppet regime for supporting the Hukbalahap rebellion in the early Fifties: "Every word is a weapon for freedom" (July 1949).

Bulosan's writings indisputably belong to the body of world proletarian literature used today as a cultural weapon by the revolutionary Filipino masses in their fight against U.S. imperialism and the hated Marcos dictatorship, for national democracy and liberation.

Bulosan acknowledged the catalyzing influences of socialist writers and progressive democrats: Gorki, Jack London, Nicolas Buillen, Nazim Hikmet, Pablo Neruda, Lu Hsun, and numerous Marxist literary critics. Of the highly eulogized modernists like Faulkner and Hemingway, he believed "they were merely describing the disease" and "bestowing form on decay, not eliminating it."

"It was the duty of the artist," Bulosan asserted, "to trace the origin of the disease that was festering American life," to probe the malaise that drove Whitman to utopian extrapolations and blighted the profligate imagination of Melville and Poe. For Bulosan, the origin of the disease which he diagnosed acutely was "the powerful chains and combines that strangled human life and made the world a horrible place to live in."

In this context, we can grasp the full import of Bulosan's surmise of "revolution" as "the desires of anonymous men everywhere" vigorously elaborated in his well-known poem "If You Want To Know What We Are."

In his allegorical and mimetic synthesis of contradictions, in his representation of how Filipino workers united with the progressive sections of U.S. society in their fight against rapacious capital and how the masses of working people here and worldwide truly constitute the principal motive force in the making of world history, Bulosan rendered people's movement a many-faceted and self-conscious reflection of its power and potential. For this reason, today, Bulosan's name has come to symbolize the implacable revolutionary spirit of Third World peoples everywhere and of the multi-national U.S. working class fighting against racism and exploitation, for the attainment of full democratic rights, proletarian justice and authentic human dignity. □

E. San Juan, Jr. *is a Professor of English at the University of Connecticut and member of the Philippine Research Center.*

Writer, poet and playwright Genny Lim has won nationwide acclaim for her intense and moving drama, Paper Angels. *The play, which realistically depicts the story of Chinese immigrants on Angel Island, was greeted enthusiastically by theater goers at productions mounted this year at New York City's New Federal Theater and San Francisco's Chinese Culture Center.*

Her children's book, Wings for Lai Ho, *the fictional account of a six-year-old Chinese girl detained on Angel Island, was published this summer by East/West Publishing.*

In this interview, Ms. Lim tells us about her background and development as a writer. The interview was conducted by Eddie Wong in July 1982 in San Francisco.

* * *

Mike Fong

An Interview With Genny Lim

EAST WIND: Could you tell us about your background and why you chose to go into the arts?

Genny Lim: I'm second generation Chinese American and grew up in San Francisco Chinatown. My mother has always been a sewing factory woman, and she just recently retired. My father came over as a merchant's son. When times were hard, he became a janitor at the Fairmont Hotel. He and my mother went into partnership and bought a sewing factory on Powell and Vallejo which they had for many years. We all grew up working in the sewing factory.

I think I was always interested in art. I was very intrigued by television and radio. I always fantasized about being a singer or dancer or famous movie star. But it was like a secret life that I would never dare tell anyone, particularly my parents.

When I got to college, I was pretty much set that I would study English and probably become a teacher. But I got sidetracked into taking some theater classes which I really liked. However, I never felt comfortable in the drama department because I was only one of two Asians in the whole department. I was very lonely. It was hard when you didn't have that mobility to try out for parts. You're always at a disadvantage because psychologically you already think that you're not quite right for the role.

EAST WIND: When did you start writing?

Genny Lim: I got into journalism. My bout with journalism was formative to my creative writing. Although after a while, writing reportage isn't very satisfactory. Once you know the format, it's a matter of perfecting your technique and doing it well. And I was told by my assignment editor that I was much more of a creative writer.

EAST WIND: How did you go about writing the play *Paper Angels*?

Genny Lim: We were researching the book *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910–1940*. Judy Yung, Him Mark Lai and I were doing the interviews and translating the poetry initially just to disseminate it among the community. During that time, it was always questionable in my mind whether the outreach of the book would be that effective. Who would be interested, who would buy it, and who would read it? Maybe it would be just a very exclusive audience: historians and students. But it's really a story that Americans should know. They need to be educated about the conditions in which Chinese immigrated to America. They need to know the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

I was wondering what was the most effective way to reach the most amount of people. And since I always did like theater and it was much more accessible to me, I could develop a script. It really began as a writing exercise in a beginning class in playwriting that I took as a continuing student at S.F. State.

I was staying in this basement apartment in the Richmond District, and I would stay there all day and pretend I was imprisoned in there while I was writing. I stayed there day in and day out until I would get real stir crazy just to write from that perspective.

EAST WIND: What were you trying to say through the play?

Genny Lim: I guess overall I'm trying to say that the human spirit cannot be suppressed. The Chinese persevered and worked very hard to overcome practically insurmountable obstacles in order to achieve their goals and to fight for freedom. They endured the hardship of imprisonment, it may seem to us, without a fight. But during that time, they did organize and present a list of demands to the immigration department.

I wanted to set the record straight because of all the stereotypes that have been presented about Chinese Americans. People feel generally that Chinese Americans have made it and they shouldn't have a bitch, that they weren't treated differently than any other immigrant group, which is not the case. The Chinese had to undergo a lot more intensive interrogations and hearings than the Europeans did because of the Chinese Exclusion law. I think it's important for Americans to realize that because it is key to a lot of problems the Chinese Americans had to undergo in society.

I think the incarceration had a lot to do with the fear and dread of authority our mothers and fathers have to this day. It extends to the point that they will not involve themselves in social situations where they must interact with other cultural groups. Many of them feel that they're not part of this country. They're not part of the legal process so they don't participate. My mother has lived in this country for over 40 years going on 50 years, and to this day she doesn't vote. She has a lot of political opinions, but she won't vote because she is still not a citizen. She has been on the periphery of society all these years. And I attribute a lot of this to their treatment beginning with Angel Island. Discrimination and racism followed them everywhere they went.

I don't want people to go away from the play thinking something like Angel Island could never happen today. You have only to look at the plight of the Haitians. There is an alarming parallel between the detention of the Chinese on Angel Island and the illegal imprisonment of Haitians in America. There are twelve detention camps filled with Haitian refugees. In much the same way that the Chinese were excluded and expelled from this country by virtue of race, the Haitians are being excluded and confined in a similar inhumane manner. They are being regarded as slaves, just as the Chinese were regarded as coolies. The Haitian experience shows there is still a double standard operating in this country. One for whites and another for non-whites. The distinction is subtle; nonetheless, it still exists.

EAST WIND: Out of all the research that you did, how did you choose your characters?

Genny Lim: I wanted to get a cross section of people who represented different types of immigrants. There's an old man and old woman who have been separated for over 40 years. He represents to me a choice that a lot of first generation immigrants made and that was to become American and settle in this country permanently. And there were those who represented the sojourner mentality. One of the younger guys, Lum, expresses that he's just here to make his bundle and return to live in wealth and luxury. Then, there is the student/scholar who comes here with an intense desire to learn about this country which he obviously admires. And there's Fong who is the old survivor. In many ways, he's like my father and a lot of old-timers who lived their youth in America and realized that it wasn't the land of golden opportunity for them. They knew that they were never going to achieve the amount of success their white counterparts would for the same amount of brains and skill. They pretty much accept their lot.

A lot of the women we interviewed said that they didn't do much except weep or knit on Angel Island. A lot of them were not here of their own choice. The young girl has very mixed feelings about coming, which I'm sure the slave girls did in those days. And then, there's the wife who is coming over to raise a family and to plant the seed for the future of Chinese America. The old woman represents the past. She's my only spiritual and physical link with what China is and represents in my Chinese American culture.

EAST WIND: I really liked the title of the play. Could you explain how you arrived at the title?

Genny Lim: Angels being, of course, Angel Island — the irony being that Angel Island became a metaphor for a prison. I see the Chinese who immigrated here as angels — pure and innocent. They were pioneers here to establish themselves and to create a new life. They were paper sons and daughters because they were forbidden to immigrate and had to circumvent all the laws to get here. In that sense they were not totally innocent. But they saw the Chinese Exclusion law as an unjust law, so

Bert Andrews

New York production of Paper Angels

Thomas Wing Wo

San Francisco cast photo of Paper Angels *— 1982*

why adhere to such a law. The laws that really governed them were the laws of heaven. So I do see them as being angels, pure in every sense of the word.

EAST WIND: The play has gone through several productions. Are you happy with the play?

Genny Lim: I think as a writer I'll probably never be totally happy with the work itself. Although I'm pleased with the success of the play and the impact of the overall community response, I think I could have developed it even more and given it an even stronger impact.

EAST WIND: What are you working on now?

Genny Lim: I'm working on the Chinese Women of America project and compiling oral histories. We're accumulating the history from the first generation to the fourth generation as well as miscegenated women and new wave immigrants from the '30s, '40s to the present. We are preparing a travelling pictorial exhibit and a catalog for the fall of 1983.

I'm going to be working on a new play this summer. Right now, I'm still trying to outline it in my mind. I would like to deal with the subject of minority cultures that interface each other. In this case, it will be a Black and Asian mixed couple and how they deal with the cultural baggage they bring to the relationship, whether they can succeed or fail, and how society treats them.

EAST WIND: What advice do you have for people who are trying to write?

Genny Lim: My advice is to forget about who they like or anything that is coming from someone else. Filter out all those influences and assumptions and stop intellectualizing. The most direct and clear path to writing something that is effective and honest is to just come from the gut. It's really a Zen exercise. I think the Eastern approach is really the right track to approach writing. I don't relate to the premise of a lot of Western writing, especially the so-called academic poetry. I find it obscure and elitist because it's not trying to communicate on a mass level. I tried to write poetry like that when I first wrote. You might as well lock yourself up in a closet if you are the only one who can appreciate it, because the whole object of writing and poetry is to convey and express what everybody feels anyway. You're no different. It's just that you express it through language.

I think you have to find your own voice. Forget about how John Steinbeck grew up in *Cannery Row* and forget about Eugene O'Neill's *Long Days Journey Into Night* and his symbols unless you grew up in the same space. You have to use your own language and the things you relate to. I grew up in Chinatown so those are a lot of my images and memories. You will see recurring themes and a certain language that evolves anytime I write something and I think that accounts for style in writing. Each person has his or her own style. It's really a matter of creating your own instrument and perfecting it. □

Poetry

This fictional prose/poem is inspired by the plight of a Japanese American Hibakusha (A-Bomb Survivor)

I know I am dying soon. In and out I float like a boat lifted on the shoulders of the sea, pain cresting high like white capped waves.

On the shore,
cranes are dancing, necks beckoning,
feathers whispering
soft as their mating . . .

My son, who has nursed me, how strange his smooth fingered touch, how strange he shows no anger with the smell of death clinging onto his youthful fingers, permeating this house, full with his children, these scattered years of tears enough to fill a poisoned sea, of ashes from Hiroshima.

Cranes opening wingspans
to sunlight, dusting off darkness,
call to the sea.

I want to give you something before I die, my son, that is whole and fresh like the trees outside my window — not this waste of body, this moan I can't suppress, this smell of slow decay. I want to leave you with the memory of me, full chested in the early days of your youth, the sun rippling on waves of our fields as we worked side by side. I want to leave you with the memory of me lifting your childbody, carrying you joyfully like a sack of ripe peaches from our orchard, blossoms swirling like songs, trees swaying like women in love.

White feathered rush
lifts like sails in the wind . . .

The tongue of death has licked this wasted body, gutted by memories of dead fish, falling flesh, hair floating in flame. This cruel death wrapping me in rasping breath, negating all else. Nothing else matters — only the reality of this pain. Those things which you feel so strongly about, my son, like peace and justice are nothing. Where was justice that day when my visit to Hiroshima marked the beginning of my suffering, this solitary journey to my grave? Where was justice that hot day in August when death dropped like giant broken wings, sweeping all within its broken flight. A thousand suns burned into our palms. Memory followed as endless rivers black with bodies, soaked with weeping. Water turned to vinegar, disbelief, mercilessness.

White wings of foam
drenching the air
first cresting one on another,
pulling the sea in its swell.

The throat of death sucking without comfort. For thirty years I would not touch you nor my grandchildren for fear you would catch this then unknown disease. I would weep those endless nights with loneliness and fury because I could not cradle my grandchildren, nor laugh with them on my lap, nor kiss their plump faces. Yes, I regret those years of not touching, not knowing; those endless tests, those endless costs. My body ravaged slowly by the cancer of that bombing, they say so now. All those years I could have been comforted by holding your face in my hands, my son.

Cranes cresting one on another . . .
then thousand upon
thousand, then circling
the world, into waves of
white wings of peace
relentlessly to remind them . . .

I am wrong, my son, forgive me but pain makes me so selfish. Peace and justice do matter. If my wasted body speaks of nothing else, my son, remember it when there is talk again of war. Add your single voice to remind them of my grandchildren who have lived with the smell of death. When there is talk again of war, remind them of the blackened mouths of sad dead women; remind them of the hands in flames reaching to a mute heaven; remind them of the cemeteries, the headstones of all our friends; the water filled with dead belliedup fish, the poisoned rains. When there is talk again of war, remind them of the absent ones, remind them of our wasted flesh. Not out of bitterness, my son, but out of compassion. Not for me, my son, but for my grandchildren.

a thousand cranes
white wings of peace.

The sleep comes now like no other. I cannot mend my past and my present, now as thin as a wing's membrane. Perhaps you can my son. I will touch the smile that hides in the corners of your mouth this last time. I will not cry for those years we spent at distance. I will only smell the waves of freshly turned fields. I will only hear the peach trees swaying like women in love. My body is bellowing in the great white swell of wings carrying me into this, my final flight.

Like Wings of foam, cresting one on another
add your single voice
one on another
then thousand upon thousand, then circling
the world, into waves of voices
relentlessly, to remind them . . .

Janice Mirikitani

The Bath, August 6, 1945

Bathing the summer night
off my arms and breasts
I heard a plane
overhead *I heard*
the front door rattle
froze
then relaxed
in the cool water
one more moment
one private moment
before waking the children
and mother-in-law,
before the heat
before the midday heat
drenched my spirits again.
I had wanted
to also relax
in thoughts of my husband —
how we were children
when he was drafted
imprisoned — but didn't dare
and rose from the tub,
dried off lightly
and slipped on cotton work pants.
Caution drew me to the window
and there
an enormous blossom of fire
a hand changed my life
and made the world shiver —
a light that tore flesh
so it slipped off limbs,
swelled so
no one could recognize
a mother or child
a hand that tore the door open
pushed me on the floor
ripped me up —
I will never have children again
so even today
my hair has not grown back
my teeth still shards
and one eye blind
and it would be easy,
satisfying somehow
to write it off as history
those men are there
each time I close
my one good eye
each time or lay blame
on men or militarists
the children cry out
in my sleep
where they still live
for the sake of a night's rest.
But it's not air raids
simply
that we survive
but *diamonds worth their weight*
in blood the coal,
oil, uranium we mine
and drill
yet cannot call our own.
And it would be gratifying
to be called a survivor
I am a survivor
since I live if I didn't wonder
about survival today —
at 55, widowed at 18 —
if I didn't feel
the same oppressive August heat,
auto parts in South Africa,
Mexico, Alabama,
and shiver not from memory
or terror
but anger that this wounded body
must stand *take a stand*
and cry out
as only a new born baby can cry —
I live, I will live
I will to live
in spite of history
to make history
in my vision of peace —
that morning in the bath
so calm
so much my right
though I cannot return to that moment
I bring these words to you
hoping to hold you
to hold you
and to take hold.

Kimiko Hahn

Written on the occasion of the special UN Session for Disarmament, dedicated to the *hibakusha*.

Reprinted from "Jes' Grew" the Newsletter of the National Association of Third World Writers (Vol. 2, No. 2).

For the 37th Anniversary of Hiroshima/Nagasaki Bombings

I

Rain.
Lightning.
Wet sounds,
a different smell.

We snatch flashes
of a tail,
claws,
glistening scales
as clouds shatter
like angry glass,

and if we have suffered,
if we are good,
if we are worthy,
and perhaps if we are lucky

We see the head,
The eyes fierce,
and fangs shimmering fearsome
in wet light,

hear its welcome rumble and fury,
see the Dragon entire,
see it righteous in its power and glory,
see, feel, become one
with the dragon THUNDER

as the rain falls,
as the cleansing rain falls.

II

I was told that in a time before I was born
That there were two sisters of the fire
Named Hiroshima/Nagasaki
in an island called Old Japan.

There was a war already lost
and the vanquished were searching
for white flags to air
When the sky *raged* cataclysmic murder
and the earth below it burned, bubbled, bled,
and a thousand cranes were scorched,
and upon the melting screams
a different, a different, rain, rain fell.

The war ended quickly, but *wars* do not,
and iron maidens, napalm, cruxifiction
and other tortures
pale beside the spectre of obliteration.
the gleam of multi-megaton warheads,
the threat of the end of all life on earth.

It takes but one hand to kill millions
and *madmen* control the buttons.
The matter is out of God's hands
and we who have created the Monster
must now *act*

to *destroy* it.

III

"NO NUKES! NO NUKES!"
"END THE ARMS RACE NOW!"

"Aw, that's justabuncha hippy-shit.
Besides, they're all white."

That's what I used to think.
That's what I used to think.

But millions of voices
Make one *listen*.

Voices in Europe.
Voices in America.
Voices in Japan.
Voices throughout the world.

Voices of ghosts.
Voices of the living.
Voices of Hibakusha.
Voices of children, youth, and innocence.
Voices of earthworms, birds, crickets.
Voices of the wind, water, sun and moon.
Voices of April dawns and December nights.
Voices of conscience, compassion, and mercy.
Voices of beautiful things and voices of beauty.
Voices of life and voices of the dead.
Voices of the gods whose very existence
is threatened.
Voices of loved ones and yet unborn descendents.

VOICES —
making us listen
making us act
making us organize
making us unite
until TOGETHER with
BILLIONS

we raise ONE VOICE
and SHOUT IT LOUD
SHOUT IT FIERCE
SHOUT IT UNTIL THE WAR GODS
TREMBLE!
SHOUT IT WITH FURY LIKE THE DRAGON
THUNDER!
SHOUT IT SO THAT
EVEN THE DEAF CAN
HEAR!!!

and so that the dead will know
they died not in vain.

GT Wong

Images of Community

Pilipino Far West Convention — 1977

Excerpt from a family portrait — 1978

Photos by Herb Tuyay

The photographs on these pages are the work of Herb S. Tuyay, a Pilipino American born and raised in San Diego.

Herb calls his camera a propaganda tool. He sees using it to combat the negative images of Pilipinos propagated by the dominant society. Herb describes himself and his goals, "As an artist/photographer involved with the Pilipino community, I see my major task as creating an image that speaks to the direction my community is taking to impact America, and to define an image that speaks to who we are and what we represent as a growing community in this nation."

Some of Herb's works were recently exhibited at the "Pilipino Arts Exhibition" in San Diego. This was the first exhibition of its kind in San Diego. The exhibition was organized by Herb through the Graduate School for Community Development. The exhibition included works from local Pilipino working artists in oil, pencil, acrylic, sculpture and clothings, as well as photography. There were also ink drawings, photographs and other works by local Pilipino students.

By the time the one-month exhibit had ended, hundreds of people had come to view it and had gained a deeper appreciation for the art and cultural contributions of Pilipinos in America.

Herb is interested in any feedback to his work that *EAST WIND* readers might have. Send your letters to Herb S. Tuyay, 5615 Roanoke St., San Diego, CA 92139.

Dennis Kobata□

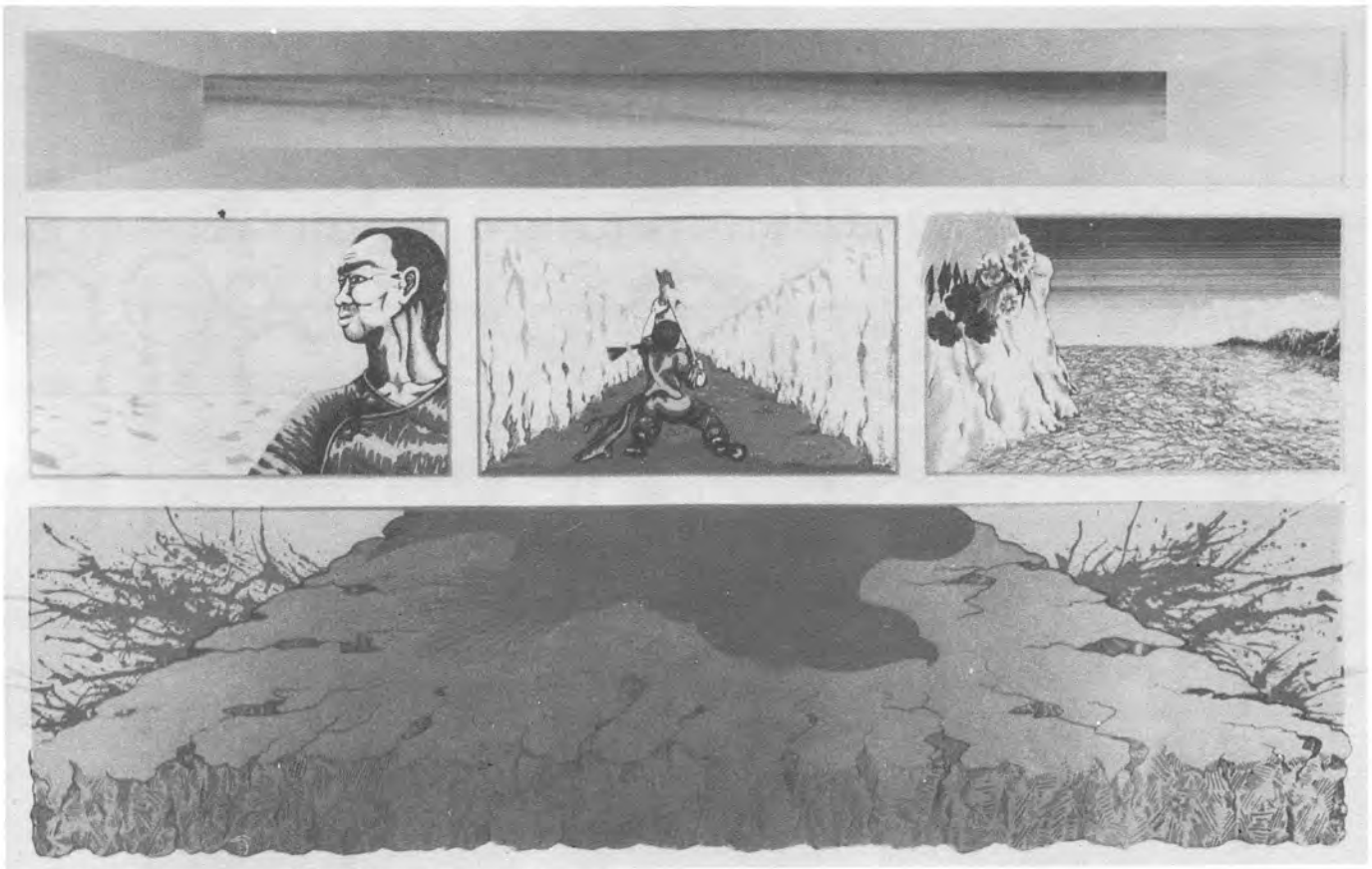
Manongs at Manila Cafe — 1977

Boy on Tiger

Untitled — 1972

Jim Dong: Community Artist

Kim chee, beer and . . . butter mints? I know only one man who can eat all three together: Jim Dong, Chinese American photographer, print maker and muralist who grew up in the streets of San Francisco Chinatown. While he grew up in Chinatown, Jim Dong, by his own reckoning, grew out of the Sixties. He had, for his backdrop, events such as the Third World Students' Strike at San Francisco State, where he was enrolled at the time in meaningless art classes. The stuff that was being passed off as art in the classrooms was depressing and oppressive. It didn't relate to Asians. Things were happenin' in the



Myths & Realities/Past, Present & Future of Earth, Heaven & Hell. (1981)

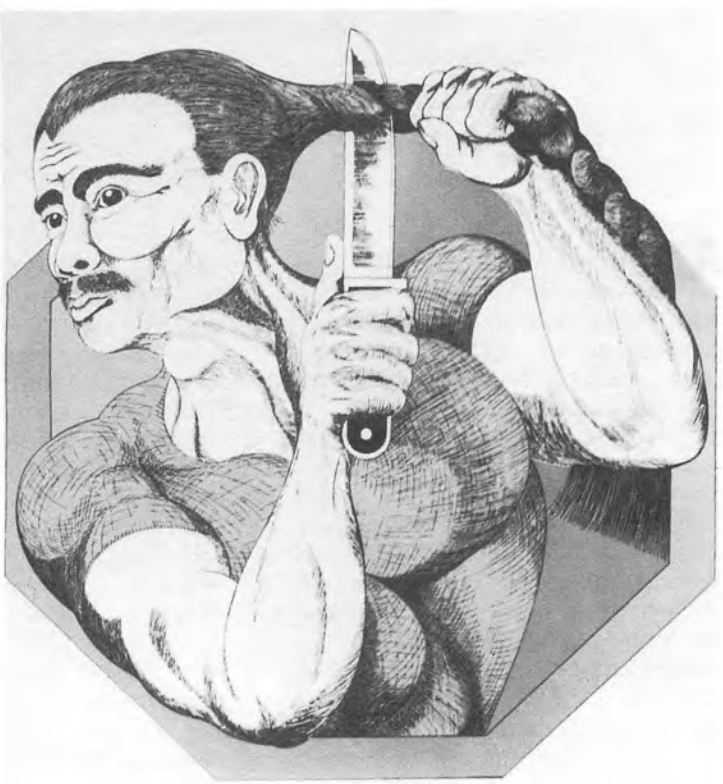
streets.

Many progressive-minded artists took a stand and dedicated their talent to the cause. If you weren't part of the solution, you were part of the problem. Jim Dong's solution was in his art and the formation of the Kearny Street Workshop in 1972. There, he and other Asian American artists produced art that told the world who we are and what we are. The Kearny Street Workshop is still in existence today, promoting Asian American art.

Jim Dong's art work reflects and informs us of the struggles of the times: the fight to save the I-Hotel and the constant fight to defend and define our history and culture.

For the '80s, Jim Dong is delving deeper into that history and culture. "I want to broaden the scope of my work, to explore and portray different aspects of the human condition. I don't want to stick to tired old formulas. Times change, and I change."

Leon Sun□



1911

The Critics:

Knowledgeable or Culture Vultures?

By Forrest Gok

Wayne Wang's film, *Chan is Missing*, has garnered overwhelming praise from critics throughout the country, from Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* and David Ansen of *Newsweek* to Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel of PBS' syndicated "Sneak Previews." If you pick up any recent national publication, there is some mention of *Chan is Missing*. Even "Entertainment Tonight," the video version of *People* magazine featured a Wang interview and a blurb about the film. I can't recall the last time a "small" film (*Chan is Missing* was made for about $20,000) had so captured the collective fancy of celluloid scribes from coast to coast.

It is indeed a phenomenon because low-budgeted films are seldom given recognition to this degree, let alone ones about Chinese Americans. Occasionally, a personal film will be embraced by certain critics as an artistic success, although the mass market entertainment media would not find it noteworthy or newsworthy.

The case of *Chan is Missing*, however, is quite different. Because the film was conceived, written, and directed by Wayne Wang, a Chinese American, and involved Asian Americans both in front of and behind the camera, it posed a more fascinating angle for media. Critics are hailing Wang as a new, undiscovered wunderkind, a sort of an Asian American Steven Spielberg, and delight in seeing "what really goes on in Chinatown."

I am very pleased that Wang has received some notoriety and attention as a film maker and as a Chinese American creative artist. But I also hope that Wang's rocket-like ascendance to critical acclaim is not an isolated occurrence — that there will be room in the critics' and public's minds for other purveyors of the Chinese American experience.

I wonder if the critics have embraced *Chan . . .* because it seems so esoteric, so filled with iconoclastic cultural humor. Because it is actually filmed by a Chinese American film maker, they think that it has to be a valid portrait of Chinatown. To those who know nothing about Chinatown and Chinese Americans except an occasional fling at moo goo gai pan or egg foo yung, *Chan is Missing* is an absolute revelation — Chinese Americans actually are an American subculture, not just transplanted, unassimilable Chinese from China.

John Stark of the *San Francisco Examiner* said *Chan is Missing* "is a remarkable film." The *New York Times* critic Canby praised it as "a small miracle." *Newsweek's* Ansen wrote,

"It is delightfully unique . . . a treasure trove of cultural illuminations." "Sneak Previews" co-host Siskel said, "It presents a very vivid portrait of Chinese Americans of whom I know very little about."

Siskel's comment is the most revealing. It is also the crux of my criticism. What do most white film critics know about Chinese or Chinese American cultural sensibilities? — Nothing, if their education consisted of re-running a few reels of "Flower Drum Song," brunching at a dim sum palace, getting their collars starched at the local Chinese laundry, and buying brush paintings at a Union Street or Soho gallery. Consequently, any film with the hint of an "authentic" sensibility will naturally seem "culturally illuminating."

I found *Chan is Missing* to be an occasionally funny, often tedious comedy-mystery which attempted to dispell some of the usual Chinese stereotypes and myths by putting together an eclectic group of characters and showing them in a cinema verite style. It's a sociological look at Chinese Americans through the eyes of two Chinese American cab drivers who are searching for their missing partner, a third Chinese American businessman.

I didn't think the film particularly worked as a cultural collage, and the satirical elements could have been carried out perhaps one step further. The underlying element of mystery and Chinese American philosophy, which is intended to be a play on the image of Chinatown as a den of exoticism and Confucian ideals, backfires and serves only to establish old stereotypes in a new context. This, of course, is not Wang's fault. He did not intend for his film to be interpreted as the quintessential film about Chinese America. But, the critics write about *Chan* . . . as though they have discovered the wheel. In their own ignorance, they write about all the new aspects of orientalia *Chan is Missing* reveals.

This trendy sycophancy does not surprise me considering many of these same critics loved David Henry Hwang's play, "FOB" and Maxine Hong Kingston's book, *The Woman Warrior*, two works which I thought reinforced cultural eccentricities and appealed to Sino-culture vultures.

In a recent column by Bernard Weiner, the *San Francisco Chronicle's* drama critic, he discusses the ability of white critics to review and discuss works by other ethnic groups. Weiner's column was based in part by a letter playwright Frank Chin had written to him which, among other things, said:

> Weiner has gone to the trouble of learning a little about white European and English language theater history, tradition, techniques, forms, and works to qualify himself as a reviewer and critic of white theater. He has no such qualifications of knowledge or learning for his opinions on Asian American theater . . . (yet) presumes to teach Asian American history.

" . . . white critics prefer Asian American plays which are entertaining and apolitical . . ."

All of Chin's to-do was in reference to Weiner's comparison of Genny Lim's play, "Paper Angels," to another Hwang play, "The Dance and the Railroad," in which the critic prefers Hwang's approach to Chinese American historical themes. Chin has often been piqued by white critics of Asian American plays who, he said, praised his own plays for the wrong reasons or condemned them because they didn't understand the cultural or ethnic nuances in them.

Chin is absolutely right. For example, I recall that former *San Francisco Examiner* drama critic Stanley Eichelbaum once remarked in a review that a character in Adrian Kinoshita-Myers' play, "A Play by Bill Yamasaki," seemed incongruous because he was a Black-acting Japanese. Eichelbaum said it was inconceivable that a Japanese would act like that. Well, Stanley, if you had ever gone cruising in J-Town, maybe you'd get the picture.

Weiner himself admits that "we (critics) simply don't know enough about Asian American (or gay, or feminist, or Black) history — certainly not as much as we know about, say, English and European theater history techniques — and must try to learn, through reading, research, talking, plays, movies, and letters."

I have observed over the years that white critics prefer Asian American plays which are entertaining and apolitical and don't reveal issue-oriented perspectives. They praise works which are safe to praise, works which don't dredge up any racist guilt. They use their own Euro-American cultural values to judge works about experiences they cannot even begin to understand.

I don't have any reservations about regarding *Chan is Missing*, "FOB," or "The Woman Warrior" among a larger body of work which together makes up the Chinese American experience. These works are not invalid; they simply must be placed in their proper context. I don't want my history and culture interpreted to me by critics who haven't the least bit of insights into the psychology of Chinese America and Asian America.

We must be careful not to embrace works by Asian Americans solely because they are works by Asian Americans or because white critics have told us that they are culturally relevant. In the late 1950's, "Flower Drum Song" was a cultural revelation, too. So you see, everything must be taken in its proper context. The next time the *New York Times* declares something inscrutably illuminating, be prepared to be discerning or you may wind up being an aesthetic lemming. □

Forrest Gok, *a Contributing Editor of* EAST WIND, *is a free lance writer/editor. He was a former editor of the English edition of the* San Francisco Journal.

Chinese Pioneer Woman

Thousand Pieces of Gold by Ruthanne Lum McCunn. Design Enterprises of San Francisco (P.O. Box 14695, S. F., CA 94114), 1981. $5.95 paperback.

Reviewed by Judy Yung

*Thousand Pieces of Gold** should be read by everyone for at least three reasons. It is a well-researched, well-written and long-overdue novel about a Chinese American heroine; it is a perceptive and sensitive rendition of Chinese American history through the eyes of a Chinese American researcher/writer; and it is a major contribution to Chinese American historical literature in the same vein as Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings*.

The novel begins in Northern China in 1865, when famine and drought force Lalu Nathoy's father to sell her to bandits for two bags of seeds. She is then taken by the bandits to Shanghai and sold to a house of ill-repute. Soon after, she sails to America where she is auctioned off for $2,500 and taken to Warrens, Idaho as the property of Hong King, an old Chinese saloon-keeper. She is later won by Charlie Bemis, another saloon-keeper, in a poker game and freed. She spends the remaining days of her life as Polly Bemis, homesteading with Charlie in the beautiful Salmon Canyon.

Such is the true story of Polly Bemis, a pioneer Chinese woman who lived in Idaho at the turn of the century. She came to America unwillingly as a prostitute, but persevered and died a free woman well-loved and well-respected by those who knew her.

Her story would have remained buried in the memories of those few who knew of her if it were not for the interest she sparked in Ruthanne Lum McCunn, who came across her story while doing research for her first book, *Ilustrated History of the Chinese in America*. Because of the many glaring gaps and inconsistencies in the articles and interviews McCunn found, she decided that *Thousand Pieces of Gold* would have to be written as a novel and not a straight biography. For although McCunn was able to fill in some of the gaps in Polly's life through her research, there were surmises she had to make based on what she thought was the logical sequence of events. For example, it was known that Polly brought jewelry with her from China. How could this have been possible considering her family's poor background? So McCunn guessed that she might have stolen the jewelry from the bandit's loot, planning to buy her freedom with it later.

But McCunn has written more than a logical story about a Chinese pioneer woman's life. Because of her own background — an Amerasian woman raised in Hong Kong, lived in Idaho, and now married to a Caucasian, McCunn has a sensitive understanding of what a woman like Polly Bemis must have felt. As a result, she is able to bring Polly Bemis to life in *Thousand Pieces of Gold*. For the first time, the deep feelings and private thoughts of a Chinese woman (contrary to prevailng stereotypes of the exotic or stoical Chinese woman) are proudly exposed for all to share and empathize with. We come to understand how worthless women are made to feel in China, and in America, where they face a double burden of racism and sexism. We struggle with Polly every step of the way as she courageously faces one tribulation after another, and we come to love and admire her for her spunk, tenacity, generosity and sense of humor.

As a work of literature, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, is a tight, interwoven tapestry of plot, character development and poetic descriptions. Polly's life unfolds smoothly in rich hues of action. Every scene of *Thousand Pieces of Gold* is painted with a careful choice of words and imageries: " . . . For the Gold Mountains they had described was not the America she would know. This: the dingy basement room, the blank faces of women and girls stripped of hope, the splintered boards beneath her feet, the auction block. This was her America."

At the same time, all of the senses are employed in the description of settings and situations. As we read, we see, smell, hear and feel along with Polly — whether it be a first look at the garbage-strewn streets of a mining camp, the desperate search for the missing bullet embedded in Charlie's neck, or the simple joys of fishing and cooking at Polly's Place.

Once started, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* will be difficult to put down; now immortalized, Polly Bemis will be impossible to forget. □

* A reference to the worth of a Chinese daughter.

Judy Yung *is Project Director of the Chinese Women of American 1848-1982 Research Project.*

Issei Woman's Life in America

Through Harsh Winters — The Life of a Japanese Immigrant Woman by Akemi Kikumura. Chandler & Sharp Publishers, Inc., Novato, CA, 1981. $6.95 paperback.

Reviewed by Denise Imura

Through Harsh Winters takes its title from the Japanese proverb,. *Ku Areba* (Through harsh winters) *Raku Ari* (follow springs). In this oral history and sociological study, anthropologist Akemi Kikumura hails the Issei women's resiliency and *gaman* (endurance) which gave them the courage to persevere through the winters of life in America. In the preface, Kikumura poses these questions: Why did her mother and others like her leave the security of home to brave life in an unwelcome land? Why did she not flee the hardships to return home? In the conclusion and appendices, she discusses the Japanese American family and delves into questions of acculturation and socialization.

But the heart of the book is her mother's oral history, an account of her 57 years in the U.S. interwoven with philosophical and religious views that sustained her.

Michiko Tanaka describes herself as a daughter of an affluent merchant class family in Meiji (1868-1912) Japan. America represents adventure despite reports that keep filtering back telling of hard times. She marries a man she hardly knows to fulfill her dreams. Dreams are quickly dashed when she finds herself living in a contract labor camp in Liberty, California. No gilded life is this!

She describes her married life as just working and having babies — 13 of them. Tenderness and support were not forthcoming from her husband, Saburo. He demanded unquestioning obedience and propriety.

Tanaka's narrative also unveils the difficult life that stared all Japanese women in the face. Japanese women never enjoyed equality. Being in a strange and alienating America, far from family, women became even more dependent on and subordinate to dominating men.

Tanaka describes a life where spring never arrives. Winter is perennial. Life is so impoverished that it is a grace when Saburo is sent to San Quentin on a racially motivated sentence. Even the concentration camps provide some relief from the worry, oppressive labor and poverty.

Why didn't she return to Japan? Why did she endure the winter of backbreaking labor, loneliness and destitution? Why would she refuse to revisit the land of her birth and accept the love and comfort of her family's home, 57 years later? These are thematic questions which thread through the biography. Answers are not limited to money or pride, though poverty and despair did shatter most sojourners' plans of returning home rich or returning home at all.

Through her mother's testimony, Kikumura derives reasons rooted in traditional religious and cultural values which included *on*, the fusion of bestowed benefit and incurred debt, and filial piety. According to this value system, it is the inability to fulfill those obligations that results in misfortune. *Haji* (shame) binds them to America.

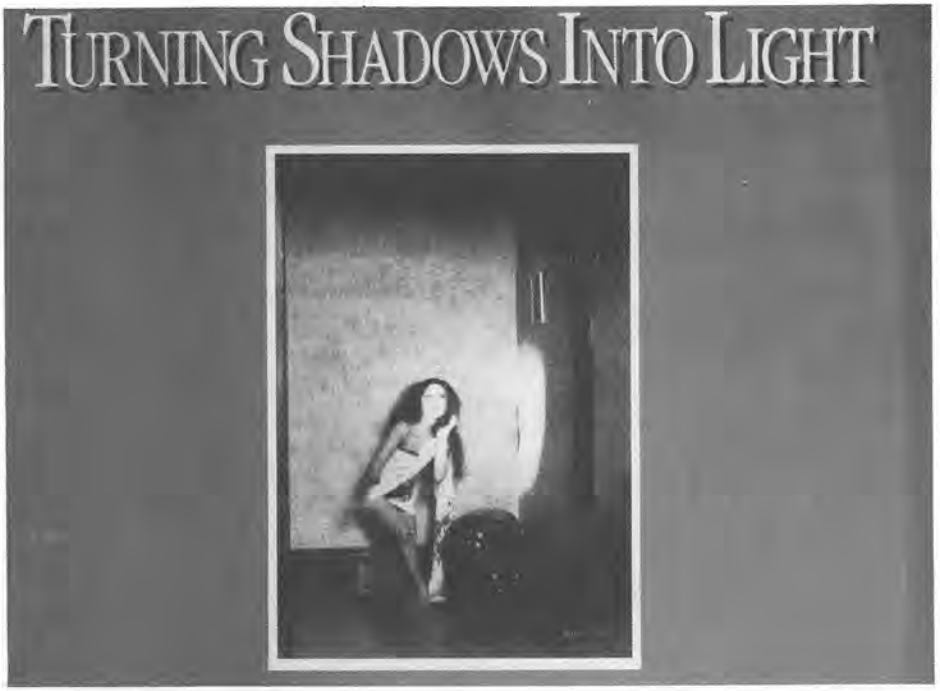
These revelations expose the depth of the scars inflicted upon the Issei's harsh life in a racist America.

The appendices touch on the persistence and discontinuity of cultural traits in the Japanese American family. In this section, though, Kikumura tends to reinforce the idea that Japanese Americans have overcome discrimination and have successfully assimilated into the society. After reading Tanaka's history, what really needs to be asked is, have the Nikkei truly "made it?" Can assimilation and acculturation be the gauges of success? Aren't they instead a denial of the experience and values of our forebearers?

Despite this shortcoming, the book is well worth reading. The book's strength lies in the straightforward account of this Issei pioneer woman. But it could be the story of *every* Issei woman's life in America. It builds a bridge of understanding. *Through Harsh Winters* gives Japanese Americans the ammunition to assert that Nikkei deserve a place in the sun, defined on our own terms. That would be the true meaning of spring. □

Denise Imura *is an* EAST WIND *magazine representative. She is active in the Committee to Free Chol Soo Lee.*

Asian American Art



Turning Shadows Into Light: Art and Culture of Northwests's Early Asian/Pacific Community. Mayumi Tsutakawa, Alan Chong Lau (Eds.) Seattle, Washington: Young Pine Press, 1982. Design by Victor Kubo.

Reviewed by Esther Sugai

A group of Seattle artists and writers have published a landmark Asian American anthology which, according to the book's introduction, presents "a gathering of the creative responses of individuals to their environment."

Turning Shadows Into Light is a collection of essays, photographs, art work and literature on Asian/Pacific artists of the Northwest before the Second World War. Contemporary poetry is interspersed throughout, voices reflecting on and responding to these early artists.

Robert Monroe's article on the Seattle Camera Club impressively depicts the artists' wide-ranging success and the ultimate loss of the group's art. The Club (1920–1929) was organized by Issei photographers, most of whom followed the current Pictorial Movement. Many of the members' prints were shown throughout the United States, Europe and Asia, but after World War II, few of the photographers' prints and negatives survived.

The works of two members, Dr. Kyo Koike and Frank Kunishige, are featured and illustrate two divergent paths: the traditional, Asian-inspired and the individualistic, modern style. Koike's prints of Northwest landscapes combine the pictorialist concern with a Japanese sensibility. Kunishige's work is more modern, concentrating on the human form, clothed or nude, and abstract shapes, lines and shades.

Equally impressive in scope but dryer in tone is Mayumi Tsutakawa's essay on Northwest painters before World War II. Short sketches are presented on a great many artists, including George Tsutakawa, Fay Chong and Frank Okada.

Two essays on Pilipino American life are given. Peter Bacho's "A Manong's Heart" tells of young Pilipino boxers in whom the dreams of all Pinoys were manifest. "Sweet Music" by Robert Park Antolin recounts the music and night life of Pilipino jazz musicians and their big bands.

Three works of Carlos Bulosan, the noted Pilipino writer, are included in this edition. "My First Day in America" humorously describes his arrival in Seattle from the Philippines. "My Father Was a Working Man" is a very good, conventional poem, but probably the best piece in the whole book is the poem "What Would You Do?"

Another account of the early immigrants' experience is sketched in a *tanka* cycle by Shizue Iwatsuki, an Issei woman from the Hood River Valley of Oregon. The cycle describes her family's internment in Pinedale, Tule Lake and Minidoka relocation camps and their sad return home after the war.

The modern poets featured are Alan Chong Lau, Laureen Mar, Garrett Kaoru Hongo, Lonny Kaneko, James Masao Mitsui and Lawson Fusao Inada. Some of the poems are inspired by ancient Asian traditions or Asian American history. Garrett Hongo's haunting poem, "On the Last Performance of Musume Dojoji at the Nippon Kan of the Astor Hotel, Seattle, Washington," has a beautiful surrealistic ending.

While this volume is commendable in its undertaking, its impressive appearance sets up expectations of quality that are not always fulfilled. The writing is uneven; some of the essays are dry and thin. Nevertheless, *Turning Shadows Into Light* is a landmark book both for Asian/Pacific Americans and for art in the Northwest. It illuminates the rich, diverse artistic and cultural heritage we share which heretofore has remained obscure. □

Esther Sugai *is a musician and poet. She is a frequent contributer to the* International Examiner.

Announcements

UCLA Graduate Fellowships

UCLA's Institute of American Cultures is offering graduate and postdoctoral fellowships in Asian American Studies. The stipend for the two-year graduate fellowships is $4,200 per year plus registration fees, while the range for postdoctoral fellowships is $19,000 to $21,500.

The deadline for applications is December 31, 1982. Applications and information may be obtained from Professor Lucie Cheng, Director, Asian American Studies Center, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

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Poetry Anthology

Calling all poets! The Greenfield Review Press is soliciting material from Asian American writers for a 240-page anthology of Asian American poetry. The anthology will be published in 1983. Each poet will be given eight pages (including photo, a page of either biography or poetics statement and about six pages of poetry). Send a selection of your best work to: Asian American Poetry Anthology, The Greenfield Review Press, R.D. 1, Box 80, Greenfield Center, N.Y. 12833.

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Asian American Films on Tour

The 1982 Asian American International Film Festival recently completed a nationwide tour. The festival, sponsored by Asian Cine-Vision, began in New York City in June. Standing room only audiences viewed Asian American films such as *Chan Is Missing* by Wayne Wang, *Taiko* by David Kimura, and *Bittersweet Survival* by Christine Choy as well as *Regret for the Past* by Shui Hua from the Peoples Republic of China. Also included in the New York festival was *Akriet* Indian film maker Amol Paleker and *Return from Silence: China's Revolutionary Writers* by Shih Chung-wen. One evening was also devoted to a retrospective of films by Asian film pioneer Sessue Hayakawa.

The core of the festival traveled to Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and San Francisco.

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Japanese American Quilt Project

Thousand Cranes, a New York City Asian art group, is seeking contributions for "Nikkei Legacy: Quilted in Remembrance," a quilt of nine or more 24" by 24" squares. The quilt will be in a fan motif depicting the concentration camp experience of Japanese Americans.

"We see this project as our effort to use art to help build support for the Japanese American redress and reparations movement. We hope to see this quilt displayed nationwide in museums, community centers, schools, churches . . ." said Sasha Hohri, a member of Thousand Cranes.

Send contributions and inquiries to Thousand Cranes, c/o Asian Cine Vision, 32 East Broadway, 4th Fl., New York, N.Y. 10002.

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China Film Festival

Boston's Asian American Resource Workshop and the Coolidge Corner Theater in association with the American Film Institute will sponsor the China Film Festival from October 1–7 at the Coolidge Corner Theater in Brookline, Massachusetts.

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ECASU Conference

From up and down the East Coast, from Ivy-League schools and city campuses, immigrant and American-born students will be attending the East Coast Asian Student Union/Mid-Atlantic's first conference on Saturday, October 16, 1982 at Columbia University in New York City. The conference is entitled: "Asian Students in Action: Forces of the '80s." Workshop topics will include Asian women, American-born/foreign-born Asians, Asian student organizing, and community issues. For further information, call Steve (212) 280-6663 or Lynn (212) 923-3412 or Mae (212) 568-3818.

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College Day — Boston

The East Coast Asian Student Union and Inter-Collegiate Chinese Student Social Committee will hold a College Day on October 24 at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Downtown Campus, 250 Stuart. All college-bound Asian students are invited to come and learn about various colleges and universities in the New England area. For more information, contact the ECASU, P.O. Box 497, Boston, MA 02112.

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Asian Awareness Month

Asian Awareness Month will be celebrated in November in the Five College Area in western Massachusetts with a Fall arts Festival which will feature "Breaking Out," a performance by Nobuko Miyamoto and Benny Yee, other performances, an art exhibit and Chinese brunch. For more information, contact Eleanor Wong, Sessions House, Smith College, Northampton, MA 01063.

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"Hito Hata"

Visual Communications and the Social and Public Art Resource Center will hold a joint fund raiser/film showing of *Hito Hata* and *The Great Wall* on November 7 at 6 p.m. at the Robert Frost Auditorium in Culver City, California.

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CPA Anniversary

The Chinese Progressive Association in San Francisco will celebrate its 10th anniversary on December 18 with a program at the Chinese Culture center and a dinner. The program will feature a slide show on the organization's work among Chinese workers, residents and newcomers. There will also be speakers and cultural performances. For more information, call (415) 956-9055.