

EAST WIND

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Production Director: El Lee

Art Director: Leon Sun

Layout Designers: Sonny Kim, Pam Matsuoka, Leon Sun

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SACRAMENTO: George Kagiwada, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California at Davis; David Tsue, Southside People's Art Collective; Jay Yoo, Korean community organizer, Chol Soo Lee Defense Committee

SAN DIEGO: Dr. Yosh Kawahara, Professor of Psychology at San Diego Mesa College and San Diego Chapter of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations; Virginia Hom Fung, editor of the *Pan Asian Express*; Lorna Moon, poet and teacher of Honors English, Kearny High School; Leilani Sauter, poet and instructor of Sociology, San Diego Community College

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SEATTLE: Bob Santos, Director of the International District Improvement Association

STOCKTON: Nelson Nagai, instructor at University of the Pacific, High School Equivalency Program



page 11



page 31



page 52

- 2 **Editorial: Turning the Tide in '85!** *by Jean Hibino*
- 4 **Affirmation and Resistance** *by Denise Imura*
- 5 **Poetry** *by Sasha Hohri*
- 6 **Unbroken** *by Sasha Hohri, Leon Sun and Eddie Wong*
- 8 **Poetry** *by Angel Island poets*
- 9 **Songs from Gold Mountain: Chinese American Folk Literature, A Fierce Tradition** *by Fred Wei-han Houn*
- 10 **Poetry** *by the Mad Mongolian*
- 11 **Asian American Art and Culture: A Melody of Resistance** *by Miya Iwataki*
- 16 **Poetry** *by Carlos Bulosan*
- 18 **Literature, Art, and Practical Struggle** *by Happy Lim*
- 20 **Dispelling the Darkness** *by Leon Sun*
- 22 **Nothing but our voices . . .** *by G. Haruko Hotta*
- 24 **Lights, Camera . . . Affirmative Action** *by Renee Tajima*
- 28 **Janice Mirikitani: Words from the Third World** *by Naomi Sodetani*
- 31 **Transformation — The challenge facing the Asian American artist in the '80's** *by Peter Kiang*
- 34 **88 Keys to Revolution** *by Jon Jang*
- 36 **Poetry** *by Patricia Justiniani McReynolds*
- 37 **Sayaw of Words, Kanta of Spirit** *by Lou Syquia and Ernestine Tayabas*
- 39 **Poetry** *by Orvy Jundis*
- 40 **Ang Lipi Ni Lapu Lapu** *by Antonio De Castro*
- 42 **Poetry** *by Mila Aguilar*
- 44 **Five Asian American Poets: A Response** *by Richard Oyama*
- 46 **Taiko** *by Susan Hayase*
- 48 **Poetry** *by G.T. Wong*
- 50 **R.A. Shiomi: The Awakening of Asian American Theater** *by Naomi Sodetani*
- 52 **No Teahouse Tonight** *by Gerri Igarashi Yoshida*
- 54 **confessions of an asian american comedian** *by Bob Matsueda*
- 56 **Telling it like it is in Seattle: interview** *by Tom Eng*
- 58 **Poetry and Film Reviews**
- 60 **Artists and Poets Credits**

Cover by Vicente Clemente



Turning the Tide in '85!

By Jean Hibino

Four more years. To many, these words do not evoke a lot of confidence. The glitter and glamour of the Inaugural Weekend, deliberately awash in Reagan's brand of patriotism and fervor, only temporarily masked the cold reality for millions of Americans. Four more years of Reagan's dangerous domestic and international policies, and the further consolidation of the Right. Four more years as 300 workers sewed on hundreds of thousands of beads to Nancy Reagan's Inaugural Ball gown. Four more years as an advertisement for performers stressed 200 non-union "attractive, clean-cut, all-American types" to perform without pay during the Inauguration. Four more years as Reagan tosses the Super Bowl coin in front of 100 million people, for God (his and the Right's), America and (pro)life.

A look back

Sure, Reagan won in November. But in no way was it a mandate from the people for him to jam his right-wing politics down our throats. On the local, state and

even federal levels of government, he did not get his hoped-for conservative sweep. Across the country, election results showed that the rising tide of Reaganism could at least be slowed down, and that in itself is positive.

For Asian Americans, 1984 proved to be the year for raising two key words — POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT. Beginning with the months before the June primaries, American politics saw Asians getting involved in record numbers. And not just through the "traditional" party channels either. We were drawn into the political arena by Reaganism and Reaganomics, by the death of Vincent Chin, by the rise of anti-Asian violence and racism, by massive federal cutbacks to services and programs in our communities, by the need to elect congresspeople who support redress and reparations for Japanese Americans, by the racist Simpson-Mazzoli bill, and by the attempts to eliminate the bilingual ballot. Indeed, in 1984 there was every reason to get involved.

This movement was also powered forward by Jesse Jackson's campaign and the Rainbow Coalition. That single event injected into the hearts and minds of millions across the country, a new hope and vision for the future. Political empowerment for the "locked out" was translated into unprecedented increases in voter registration, turnout and participation in the

electoral process. In the Black, Chicano/Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander communities, historically disenfranchised from the democratic process, the call to get involved struck a deep chord.

Asian Americans played a big role in the Jackson and the Mondale campaigns, as well as in the Dellums, Mineta, Waters and Dymally candidacies on the West Coast, and the S.B. Woo and Mel King candidacies on the East Coast. We also gave concrete support to other local campaigns such as for boards of education and city/state propositions and initiatives. In addition, Asian Pacific Democratic Clubs are forming to help ensure that our political presence and influence on issues affecting us are felt.

Lessons learned

There were also lessons learned in 1984. Just from the election day itself, it is clear that much voter education in the Asian community is needed. We must continue, and step up, our efforts to retain the bilingual ballot, or many thousands more will be prevented from voting. From the "get out the vote" effort across the country, we have seen that there is a deeply felt desire for greater access to the democratic process.

We need to continue to take stands and build broad support in the Asian community for progressive issues and candidates, even run our own. We must continue to educate our people to the realities of what four more years will mean. While it's true that nationally Reagan took the Asian vote by a margin of 53% to 47%, it must be made clear that there are still a significant number of Asians who are "locked out." Had the Jackson and Mondale campaigns been able to reach them, the statistics would, no doubt, have told a different story.

What's in store in 1985: Asian Americans and the issues

We are at a turning point in the growing movement of Asian Americans for political empowerment. More than ever, we must continue to be active, build unity with all sectors of the Asian community and beyond. We must step up our grass-roots work as well. In addition to increasing Asian voter education and participation, the months and years ahead will see other issues coming to the fore — some new, but many of the same old ones that we have to keep fighting back:

— *Simpson-Mazzoli*: Rep. Edward Roybal (D-Los Angeles) has introduced a new immigration bill that is worse than the original Simpson-Mazzoli bill that he opposed in 1984. Roybal's bill encourages U.S. citizens to turn in and report to the INS any workers they feel might be undocumented. Many Asian and Chicano/La-

tino community groups are already mobilizing to stop this new attack.

— *Redress and Reparations*: On January 3rd the "Civil Liberties Act of 1985" (HR 442, the bill for redress and reparations) was introduced in Congress with 200 sponsors. Slightly diluted from the 1984 version, a provision requiring that five of the nine Trustees to administer the Education Trust Fund be Japanese Americans, was dropped. In California, there are 23 co-sponsors, but *not one* is a Republican. Grass-roots and national organizations such as the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations and the Japanese American Citizens League are stepping up lobbying efforts.

— *Labor struggles*: Ronald Reagan has made it abundantly clear that he's anti-union, that he'd go out of his way to keep workers from earning a decent wage and benefits, from having a secure job, and from organizing for their rights. The next four years are going to see more attacks on working people's standard of living. In particular, the burden will fall on the shoulders of Third World workers. In the San Francisco Local 2 restaurant strike that began on September 1, 1984, and which is still going on, over one-half of the strikers who fought, and are continuing to fight, are Chinese. Their struggle is an inspiration to all working people.

— *Cutbacks in the communities*: Funding for community services has been steadily cut back over the past four years. This includes services to the elderly, youth, and handicapped, as well as for daycare/childcare, low-to-moderate income housing, legal aid, jobs training, and the arts. It is not difficult to see the tremendous toll this will take on the ability of Third World communities to exist, let alone *grow and thrive*.

Turn the Tide in '85!

If we want to avoid getting swept away by four more years, then as Asian/Pacific Islanders, we must reach out to as many people as possible. We must build broad multi-national unity, and see ourselves aligned in common struggle with other oppressed peoples who share a similar history of exploitation and racism. We are still "locked out"; none of us have "made it."

We need to learn our lessons well, to sum up and vow to move forward with greater strength and determination. Today, there is an increasing awareness and commitment of Asian Americans to get involved. We must tap that potential, unleash that creative energy if we are to win our struggle for political empowerment, justice and equality. At the very least, if we are going to stand united and strong and say to Reagan, "four more years, maybe, but it'll be a fight every step of the way!" □

Jean Hibino is active in the Japanese community and the San Francisco Rainbow Coalition.

Affirmation and Resistance

Asian American Art and Culture

Summer 1974. A relative newcomer to San Francisco Chinatown, I decided to photograph the International Hotel for a redevelopment project. I scanned the storefronts on Kearny, then turned onto Jackson in search of a good angle. Images stopped me cold. Before me stood a Chinese laundryman — body flexed, face contorted — lugging the weight of years of scorn and unrelenting labor. Poised next to him was a white-bearded sage from the pages of legend. At a glance, the Kearny Street Workshop mural held the essence of Every Asian's story in America.

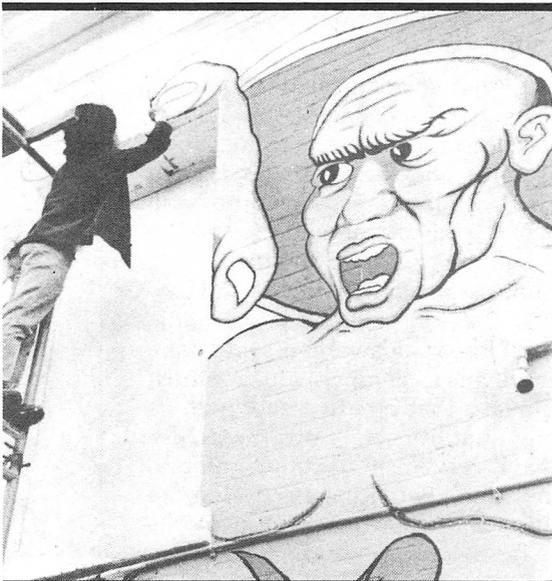
Drawn into the world of the mural, what I'd known perceptually about Asians was confirmed. We weren't two-dimensional enigmas. We had drama, imagination, sensitivity, boldness. Our art proved that fact. This mural, like the syncopated rhythms of Korean drumming, Japanese *mingei* crafts, half-told stories of the plantations, invigorated me. It beckoned me toward the Asian American, the revolutionary movement.

Today, as an editor of *EAST WIND*, I am proud that this magazine gives prominence to art that draws from our people's legacy of courage and protest. Art that consciously seeks to awaken our consciousness and organize us to action. In this edition, we pay tribute to those artists who have, throughout the years, created in this vein. "Melody of Resistance" by Miya Iwataki explores Asian American art as cultural resistance. The commentary, "Unbroken," links that historic current with the realities of the '80's and urges artists to continue to pursue the course of Asian American art in the tradition of the Angel Island poets, Carlos Bulosan, the concentration camp artists, and the revolution-inspired cultural workers of the 1960's.

EAST WIND realizes that as musicians, community artists, filmmakers, historians, ceramicists, poets, dancers have been giving texture and dimension to that territory known as Asian American art and culture, new questions and challenges have surfaced. How can I survive as an artist? Should I turn down stereotypical roles? What is my role and responsibility to the community? To contribute to the quest for answers and direction, *EAST WIND* has asked Peter Kiang of the Asian American Resource Workshop to present his views.

We realize that opinions vary and much more dialogue, debate and analysis is needed to further the proliferation and mastery of Asian American art and culture. In future issues, we will continue to include the art work of our people. We'd also like to publish letters and articles voicing contrasting opinions. As a start, we include in this issue, Richard Oyama's response to Fred Wei-han Houn's review published in the Fall/Winter 1983 issue.

Asian American art and culture — melodious/dissonant, polychromatic, humorous/damning — is intrinsically powerful. Like the Kearny Street mural, it has the potential to validate, arouse, inspire. In an age when we are often drawn away from our proud and militant roots, and when we can see the monster Racism rising once again, we need art that is life-affirming, evocative, truth-speaking to propel us forward. □

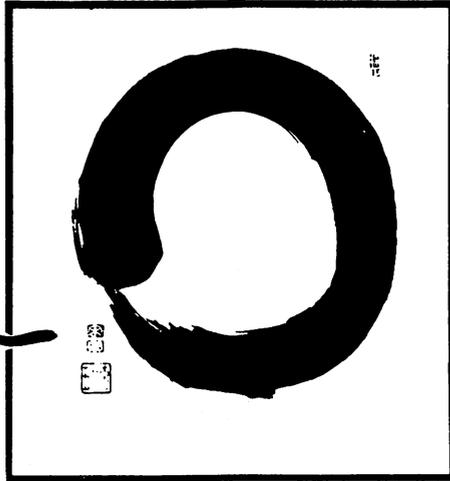


Crystal Hui

Artist Jim Dong painting Kearny St. Workshop mural on wall of the I-Hotel.

Denise Imura

Unbroken



(a prose poem)

Unbroken

unbroken spirit

continuum of oppression/resistance

sinew/cord through experience of

Asian-Americans

reflected in poets' poems

painters' paintings

musicians' songs

in languages of motherlands/adopted land

Unbroken

unbroken resistance

Immigration laws

Chinese Exclusion Law 1882

Simpson Mazzoli Bill 1984

Tule Lake Incarceration

Rock Springs WY Massacre 1885

Vincent Chin 1983

Angel Island poems

Camp poems

Unbroken

unbroken tradition

of exposing the truth

in song/music

dance

poems/stories - words

pictures

of our lives

of oppression

resistance

unbroken spirit

unbroken.

Sasha Hohri



Unbroken

By Sasha Hohri, Leon Sun and Eddie Wong

We are now in the middle of the 1980's, and it is becoming increasingly clear that Asian American artists are facing critical challenges, not just in the realm of survival but of growth as well.

Under Reaganism, most Asian American artists are having a hard time surviving. While we have to scratch and dig for a gig, exhibit space, publisher, etc., the symphonies and museums sit fat and sassy as ever. What little private support there was for Asian American artists from the established art world has shrunk even further, and we end up competing and fighting with each other instead of our common enemy. Reagan's takeover for the National Endowment of the Arts, along with his master plan for economic recovery, means

that now, working class and minority artists must turn directly to the "private sector," which is often controlled by the ruling circles, for their daily bread.

With Reagan's re-election and the ruling class' move to the right, Asians, other Third World people, and working people are facing an ideological and social climate which is becoming increasingly hostile to progressive politics and culture.

We all know what American Cultural Life is. It assaults and offends us daily with distorted values and denies our history and existence. For years now the right-wing has been pushing its degenerate nostalgia — a yearning for the "good old *white* days" — into our living rooms through the mass media. Now, under Reagan, American cultural life has become increasingly empty and egocentric. Violence, racism and sexism are now fashionable. At the same time, fewer and fewer minorities are seen in the mass media, and sympathetic portrayals of Asians, if we think hard, are less than a

handful. A few years ago, we protested the reemergence of Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu. Last summer, we found reincarnations in slicker productions such as *Sixteen Candles* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

Under capitalist society, art has always been a commodity. Esthetic values are secondary to monetary worth measured by arbitrary and superficial standards. And as seen in the previous examples, art is a powerful ideological weapon wielded by the ruling class to reinforce national and class oppression. No matter how much we do as individual artists or progressive activists, it is never enough to reverse the completely racist media which is blatantly dehumanizing and oppressive. The dominant art and mass media reflect the ruling class' ideological outlook, which is chauvinist and exploitative. How else could they maintain their power and profits?

While the ruling class owns controlling interest in the airwaves, publishing houses, film studios, etc., it cannot totally suppress the expression of minority and working class culture — the outgrowth and creative expression of our existence replete with its joys, sorrows, humiliations, triumphs, vacillations and resistance. Culture expresses peoples' existence, and for Third World people and working people, includes a howling, fierce condemnation of the discrimination and suffering brought about by capitalist society. It's a story that may not be televised on prime time but it's a message kept alive in the community through progressive theater, music, literature, storytelling. It's a flame that cannot die as long as people resist.

We don't need any more media junk to demoralize us or to poison our children's minds and distort our self-images. We need strong, truth-speaking art to provide hope, enlightenment and inspiration. Art can illuminate, can validate experience and break isolation and despair. Art can elicit the response, "Yes, that's what it is! Yes, we can make revolution! Yes, we, too, have culture!" in a deep, personal way. This is the unique contribution that artists can make to the collective struggle of Asian people, Third World people, and working people of all nationalities.

But in order for art to elicit such a response, it must be true to the lives of the people, the majority of whom are workers. It must show empathy, compassion, and optimism, not cynicism and rhetoric. People do not live abstractly; their lives are centered concretely on work, home, family, and community. Just being Asian in the U.S. today poses a host of contradictions. If this society is truly democratic, why are there so few of us in political office? Why don't we sit on the board of public broadcasting, let alone, ABC, NBC, and have a hand in programming? If this society is just, why are the majority of our people working in sweatshops and restaurants, underpaid, overworked and non-unionized? Why are Asian artists forced to choose between ideals and

Madison Avenue-dictated art? If this society is truly equal, why are there such large differentials in income and education between whites and minorities? Why is European-based art considered "universal" while Asian American and Third World art are relegated to the fringe and considered too "narrow" or catering to "special interests"? There is a wealth of themes, subjects and characters from which we can fashion powerful art that can unite people, forge their will to resist, crystallize their desire to overthrow this oppressive system, and educate them about socialism — a far more equitable and just social system.

The challenges facing Asian American artists are tough and will not be overcome in a year, a decade, or even a lifetime. We need revolutionary-minded artists who are tough, dedicated, enduring. We need artists who are filled with a passion for ending the misery of Asian and all oppressed peoples. Artists driven by a vision of a better future.

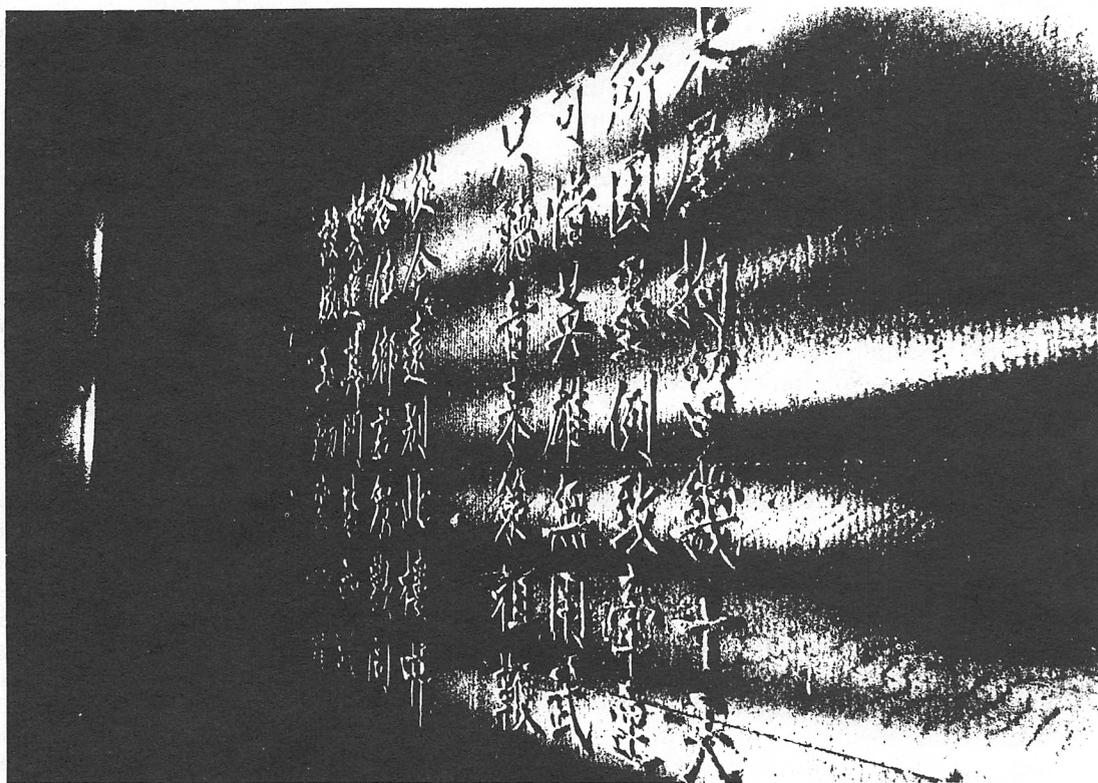
What is true is most powerful. The truth of our collective lives is that we built this country along with other peoples, and we continue to give of our sons and daughters. The artist who knows this and who has experienced this reality can create lasting works that touch peoples' lives and change the way they see the world. Our lives abound with examples of everyday heroism that go unrecorded and, therefore, unacknowledged. The tenacity of the San Francisco Chinese restaurant worker who walked a picket line for three months in the cold rain for a decent contract and the collective strength of New York Chinese garment workers who defied their bosses by staging a massive walkout are just a few examples of moments in history which need to be chronicled and heralded. This art can become a weapon that working people and all oppressed people can use against the system which exploits us.

We must all support this process of growth and development in the arts for it is our own voice that demands to be heard. For us in the communities, we must become an educated audience capable of appreciating what our artists are trying to do.

It is the eighties. We've got a lot of work ahead of us. The capitalist system, as powerful as it is, breeds its own destruction by the creation of an ever-growing and impoverished working class and the continued super-exploitation of national minorities. It cannot and will not last forever because the seeds of revolution are already implanted and must be nurtured. It's time, not for cynicism and retreat, but to move forward even more rigorously, and continue our proud tradition of cultural resistance — unbroken. □

Sasha Hohri is a Contributing Editor and was the Chair of the Asian Desk for the Mondale-Ferraro campaign in New York. **Leon Sun** is art director of EAST WIND. **Eddie Wong** is co-editor.

Voices from *Island**



Anonymous poems etched on the wall of a detention hall on Angel Island.

Untitled

Leaving behind my writing brush and
removing my sword, I came to America.
Who was to know two streams of tears would
flow upon arriving here?
If there comes a day when I will have
attained my ambition and become successful,
I will certainly behead the barbarians and
spare not a single blade of grass.

Untitled

The west wind ruffles my thin gauze clothing.
On the hill sits a tall building with a room of
wooden planks.
I wish I could travel on a cloud far away,
reunite with my wife and son.
When the moonlight shines on me alone, the
nights seem even longer.
At the head of the bed there is wine and my
heart is constantly drunk.
There is no flower beneath my pillow and
my dreams are not sweet.
To whom can I confide my innermost
feelings?
I rely solely on close friends to relieve my
loneliness.

*These poems were selected from *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910-1940*.

Songs from Gold Mountain

*Chinese American Folk Literature,
A Fierce Tradition*

Men in the remote frontier, all terrified:
In autumn, north winds begin to blow.
Sojourners of faraway places share the same thought:
O, how can a little bit of clothing make do
in the deep frost and heavy snow?
Once winter comes —
All the more a fur coat is a must in the
freezing cold.
Although I can buy one at a clothing store,
No way is it better than the one dear wife
or mother has sewn.

Songs of Gold Mountain II. 15a

Right after we were wed, husband, you set
out for a journey.
How was I to tell you how I feel?
Wandering around a foreign country, when
will you ever come home?
You are wasting many joyous years of our
precious youth.
My spring heart becomes ashes.
Poverty allows me not the luxury of a choice.
But let it be known to all my sisters:
Don't ever marry a young man going overseas!

Songs of Gold Mountain I. 23b

By Fred Wei-han Houn

The poems of Angel Island and the folksongs by the early Chinese American immigrants belong to an important legacy of early Chinese American folk literature and culture. As a body of folk literature, these short poems and sonnets will remain largely anonymous, with no specific authors, passed on as a community document. These early writings collectively reflect and express an emerging Chinese American national consciousness.

The early Chinese immigrants were mostly laborers. A great majority of the writing is assumed to have been done by intellectuals. But an intellectual could mean anybody with any amount of schooling to have been able to minimally read and write Chinese. In any case, their lot was akin to that of the menial laborer. These poems and sonnets express a shared outcry much different from the highly stylized, self-glorifying

writings of the Lin Yutang and others of high scholar and merchant backgrounds.

One of the few written and published accounts of the early Chinese American folksongs is contained in two collections of 1,640 folksongs published in San Francisco Chinatown in 1911 and 1915 entitled *Songs From Gold Mountain (Gamsaan go jaap)*. As noted by Marlon Hom, who has translated these two collections, the folksongs utilized the vernacular language and the popular form of the 46-syllable Cantonese folk rhymes.

The journey to and subsequent life in America was tortuous and terrible for the young Chinese male worker. Life and labor in America was filled with bitter hardships, grueling exploitation and oppression, and constant threats of racist persecution and death. The following selected

folksongs express the particular difficulties and pains of marital and family relationships shared by the Chinese immigrant men and their lovers, wives and families. A number of the folksongs were written by women about their suffering, loneliness and anger.

The translations were graciously provided by Professor Marlon Hom of the University of California, Los Angeles, Asian American Studies Department. □

Fred Wei-han Houn is a musician, writer and activist from New York City.



HORIZONS CAN BE CLEAR

PAUL M ZAIMA / 8/24/03

Courtesy of Mrs. Tetsuko Zaima

"Horizons Can Be Clear": camp art by Paul Zaima, Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

THAT DAMNED FENCE by The Mad Mongolian

They've sunk in posts deep into the ground,
They've strung out wires all the way around,
With Machine gun nests just over there
And sentries and soldiers everywhere!

We're trapped like rats in a wired cage,
To fret and fume with impotent rage;
Yonder whispers the lure of the night,
But that DAMNED FENCE assails our sight.

We see the softness of the midnight air
But that DAMNED FENCE in the floodlight glare,
Awakens unrest in our nocturnal guest,
And mockingly laughs with vicious jest.

With nowhere to go and nothing to do,
We feel terrible, lonesome and blue;
That DAMNED FENCE is driving us crazy,
Destroying our youth and making us lazy:

Imprisoned in here for a long, long time,
We know we're punished though we committed no crime,
Our thoughts are gloomy and enthusiasm damp,
To be locked up in a concentration camp.

Loyalty we know and patriotism we feel,
To sacrifice our utmost was our ideal,
To fight for our country, and die, mayhap;
Yet we're here because we happen to be a Jap.

We all love life and our country best,
Our misfortune to be here in the West;
To keep us penned behind that DAMNED FENCE,
Is someone's notion of NATIONAL DEFENSE!!

Asian American Art and Culture:
A Melody of Resistance

By Miya Iwataki

<p><i>Gaman shite gaman shite iru hifu no iru.</i></p>	<p>Enduring and still enduring the color of my skin — Sanada Kikyo¹</p>
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"It is said in the days of the warlords and samurai, commoners and peasants were greatly suppressed and freedom of speech meant literally freedom from the head. Decapitation. There was a wise poet named Kerai Senryo who devised a way to convey his thoughts through the limited use of words and syllables, expressing only the germ of his feelings. Those that related to his experience understood the poetry. Those that didn't — the oppressors — went along with what they thought was a new form — a fad, perhaps."

— Wakako Yamauchi²

Even the roots of beautiful art forms such as *haiku* and *senryo* were based upon a desire to speak out against or resist the suppression of ideas, or efforts of people to free themselves of a restrictive situation. When we look back to the beginning of creative communication — be it written, sung, visual — we find carefully crafted satires pointing out weaknesses of the ruling class. In many cases, these works — plays, poetry — enjoyed great success with those who didn't have the faintest idea that it was their class being criticized/satirized.

Random House defines culture as "the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another." African national liberation leader and theoretician Amilcar Cabral puts it in a more pragmatic socio-politico context, seeing culture as an essential element of the history of a people: culture is the life of the people and all the conflicts, interrelationships, and external events that have shaped who they are. So, whereas, art for the

ruling classes is a means of keeping their subjects pacified and disoriented, the art of the people — Asian American art and culture — is vibrant, sardonic, moving. Our art is a melody against subjugation and empowers us to dare to stand on the same plane as the ruling class.

"Thus it is understood that imperialist domination, by denying us the historical development of the dominated people, necessarily also denies their cultural development . . . (and) for its own security, requires cultural oppression and . . . liquidation of the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people."

— Amilcar Cabral,
*"National Liberation and Culture"*³

Art, then, is a real battle for the minds and spirit of the people. In "Identity and Dignity," Cabral observes that ". . . independence movements are generally marked by an upsurge of cultural activity (and) (have) led to the view that such movements are preceded by a cultural renaissance of the subject people. Some go as far as to suggest that culture is one means of collecting together a group, even a weapon in the struggle for independence . . . But the people are only able to create and develop the liberation movement because they keep their culture alive despite continual and organized repression of their cultural life and because they continue to resist culturally even when their politico-military resistance is destroyed."⁴

China's struggle for her liberation was preceded by a cultural revolution, the May 4th Movement of 1919, which came about through the work and resistance of writers like Lu Xun and Kuo Mo-jo who fought to heighten the awareness and fighting spirit of the Chinese people through their writings and organizing. Fighting jail sentences and threats of death, these cultural workers helped politicize and mobilize thousands in their fight to make art and culture a mass medium, not an exclusive one for the ruling class. They realized the vast power of the pen, and used many art forms to give voice to the protest and anger felt by the downtrodden Chinese. This May 4th Movement motivated the people to take back their culture, national



In Our Own Image — A Celebration

identity and pride, and on October 1, 1949, a man who was politicized by this cultural revolution, Chairman Mao Zedong, proudly proclaimed to the world, "The Chinese people have stood up!!" at the founding of the People's Republic of China. The point here is that culture *belongs to* and *is* the people.

For people of color, the role of art and culture has been *national identity/survival as a people*, and *resistance to domination/empowerment as a people*.

As Asian Pacific Americans with rich cultural histories of traditional homelands, our history in America has been fraught with adversity and, correspondingly, telling works of art.

Asians were brought to this country to provide cheap "slave" labor after the so-called emancipation proclamation "freed" Black Americans. From the sheer precipices of the Sierras and Rockies where they tunneled out the railroads and panned for the "other man's" gold, Chinese laborers used their native dialects to recite stories of unfulfilled dreams.⁵ The Japanese who'd experienced years of peasant rebellions sang biting chants as they worked the Hawaiian plantations.⁶ On the West Coast, they turned land considered unwork-

able into farmlands yielding marketable crops (Owens Valley, Sacramento Delta, Pacific Palisades, etc.) and yet, found rewards were not forthcoming. Their hopes, tarnished by the American experience, found their ways into journals, sketches, poetry. Pilipino workers who came to work the fields and canneries brought with them their music and storytelling from their island homes. They, too, found they could not earn enough to return home. Miscegenation laws prohibiting intermarriage of whites with Asian "aliens" resulted in Little Tokyos, Chinatowns, Manilatowns populated, in many cases, with *predominantly single elderly men*. In these "towns," music — both traditional and new sounds of jazz and blues — became solace, sustenance.

The art and literature that emerges from this history reflects loneliness, frustration and disappointment, pain, anger, resistance — but never total defeatism.

* * *

In San Francisco Bay, across from Alcatraz Island, there was another prison, Angel Island, which served as the immigration Detention headquarters for Asian immigrants from 1910–1940. Chinese immigrants were de-



Graphic: Tomie Arai

tained, subjected to strenuous interrogation and medical exams, and arbitrarily held prisoner for months at a time.

Protests and other demonstrated forms of resistance could bring immediate deportation or even death, and so writing in one's traditional language was the main form of protest. The thoughts, wisdom and feelings of the Chinese were scratched into the walls of Angel Island reflecting the loneliness and rage.

*I abandoned the village well,
 bid father and mother goodbye,
 From afar, I watch
 the mountains and clouds,
 tears stream.
 The wanderer longs for
 the wealth of Taozhu
 Unexpectedly, imprisoned
 on Angel Island.
 I hurt for China and
 cry bitter tears for Ruan Ji
 My country's wealth and power,
 drained by foreigners,
 the nation in shame.*

*Countrymen, be wise,
 make plans
 be resolute
 Dare to conquer America
 and avenge past wrongs.*

— Poem 43, Island⁷

Of course, there were organized networks of self-help that were formed, as described in an excerpted interview with Mr. Leong, age 24, in 1936:

"There was a Chinese Self-Governing Organization that was formed to promote the welfare of newcomers. On arrival, newcomers were encouraged to join the organization for two or three dollars. Once a member, you could ask for help whenever you needed it . . . The organization helped us in this way: when someone made a mistake during the interrogation, coaching information was sneaked into Angel Island from San Francisco by Chinese kitchen helpers. The information was hidden in a newspaper and tossed to a particular officer assigned to receive the newspaper. If the guard should try to seize the message, we were all prepared to fight him. Returning upstairs, the message was given to the addressee,

who in turn paid \$5 to the officer who had picked up the newspaper. Once a guard did try to grab the newspaper at the upstairs gate. We cornered him and beat him until he could go nowhere. After that, he didn't dare pick on the Chinese again."⁸

This excerpt illustrates "where there is oppression, there is resistance" and that this resistance is made possible with maintenance of the national identity and culture of the people. Those who were imprisoned on Angel Island left their history on the walls and floors for those who came there after them to reflect upon and learn from.

"My daughter asked me, 'Ma, why didn't you protest?' I told her we couldn't protest like you can today. . . . If I protested, I might have stopped a bullet, and you wouldn't even be here today."

— Testimony of Dr. Mary Oda
Senate Hearings, August 17, 1984

The imprisonment of over 120,000 Nikkei in concentration camps during WWII was the first time the U.S. was so public about the fact that it could subject an entire nationality to genocide within its borders. And still, they could not liquidate the national culture and identity of the Nikkei. Subtle forms of protest and resistance were manifested through art and culture.

<i>Minzoku no</i>	As one
<i>hitori to shite</i>	of the Japanese
<i>ni o matome</i>	I gather my belongings.

— Soga Keiho⁹

"If I were not Japanese, I would not have to go. Only because, especially because I'm Japanese, I am selected to be imprisoned in camp. While packing my worldly goods, I think if that is the reason, I go proudly."

— interpreted by Wakako Yamauchi¹⁰

The imprisoned Japanese had no support beyond the barbed wire and armed guard towers. And yet, they maintained a strong cultural identity within their captive existence. Little *bonsai* gardens in desert wastelands, beautiful wood carvings, melancholy watercolor and oil paintings and written works of art — caught and preserved life in camp.

It is these words, this history, this life experience which has shaped our community, our national culture and identity as Asian Pacific Americans. And our art — oral, visual, written — reflects this experience and tells how we have dealt with and responded to the objective conditions.

Carlos Bulosan, Pilipino immigrant farm laborer/organizer, and one of the best Asian Pacific American writers, sums up our dreams in coming to this country and the harsh realities of early-1900 America in excerpts from *Be American*:

"It was not Consorcio's fault. My cousin was an illiterate peasant from the vast plains of Luzon. When he

came off the boat in San Francisco, he could neither read nor write English or Ilocano. I met him when he arrived, and right away he had bright ideas in his head.

'Cousin, I want to be American,' he told me. . . . he talked about his Americanization with great confidence. . . ."

The writer loses contact with his cousin for five years, then in Pershing Square:

"I found a new Consorcio. He had aged and the peasant naivete was gone from his face. In his eyes was now a hidden fear. His hands danced and flew when he was talking, and even when he was not talking, as though he were slapping the wind with both hands or clapping with one hand. . . . So I guided him out of the dark part to a lighted place, where we had coffee until the city awoke to give us another day of hope. Of course, I sat in silence for a long time because it was the year of deep silence."

They go separate ways, but keep in touch.

"I was in Oregon when I received a newspaper from Consorcio, postmarked Pismo Beach. It was the first issue of his publication for agricultural workers in California. . . . For five years it existed defending the workers and upholding the rights and liberties of all Americans, native or foreign born, so that, as he began to understand the nature of American society, he became more belligerent in his editorials and had to go to jail a few times for his ideas about freedom and peace.

"Yes, indeed, Consorcio: you have become an American, a real American. And this land that we have known too well is not yet denuded by the rapacity of men."¹¹

Again, we see through our best writers, our cultural historians, that Asian Pacific American art and culture is a *culture of protest*. Yes, the fears are put forward — but alongside them is our fighting spirit! The disappointments and humiliation, and yet the anger and determination to go on. The racist violence, the ugly stereotyping, and still the fierce national pride and the love and respect for our community. The ruler class can try all it can to crush us, mock our art, and still, Asian Pacific American art and culture remains our melody of resistance.

Hiroshima
Vietnam
Tule Lake

And yet we were not devoured.
And yet we were not humbled.
And yet we are not broken.

— Janice Mirikitani, "We, the Dangerous"¹²

□

Miya Iwataki is a Contributing Editor. She is a special assistant to Congressman Mervyn Dymally (D-Calif.) whose 31st district includes Gardena and Carson. She also produces KPFK's weekly Asian program, "East Wind."

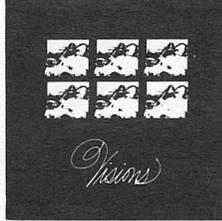
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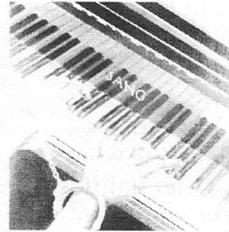
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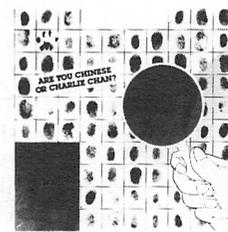
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Footnotes: Melody of Resistance

- (1) Constance Hayashi and Keiho Yamanaka, *Footprints: Poetry of the American Relocation Camp Experience*, p. 116.
- (2) Wakako Yamauchi, "The Poetry of the Issei on the American Relocation Experience," *Califia* (Berkeley: Ishmael Reed, 1979), pp. LXXI-LXXVII.
- (3) Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," *Return to the Source, Selected Speeches by Amilcar Cabral*, ed. Africa Information Service (New York: Monthly Press Review, 1973), pp. 42-43.
- (4) Amilcar Cabral, "Identity and Dignity," p. 59.
- (5) See *Songs From Gold Mountain (Gamsaan go jaap)* by Professor Marlon Hom of UCLA Asian American Studies for more information on the folksongs composed in the San Francisco Chinatown community (1911-1915).
- (6) Harry Urata and Franklin Odo, "Voices of the Issei Laborers," *The Hawaii Herald*, August 7, 1981, pp. 6-7.
- (7) Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910-1940* (San Francisco: Hoc Doi Publisher, 1980), p. 92.
- (8) *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- (9) Yamauchi, "The Poetry of the Issei on the American Relocation Experience," pp. LXXI-LXXVII.
- (10) *Ibid.*, pp. LXXI-LXXVII.
- (11) Carlos Bulosan, "Be American," *Selected Works and Letters*, ed. E. San Juan and Ninotchka Rosca (Honolulu: Friends of the Filipino People, 1982), pp. 24-30.
- (12) Janice Mirikitani, *Awake in the River*, (San Francisco: Isthmus Press, 1978), n.p.

If You Want To Know What We Are

I

If you want to know what we are who inhabit forest, mountain rivershore, who harness beast, living steel, martial music (that classless language of the heart), who celebrate labor, wisdom of the mind, peace of the blood;

If you want to know what we are who become animate at the rain's metallic ring, the stone's accumulated strength, who tremble in the wind's blossoming (that enervates earth's potentialities), who stir just as flowers unfold to the sun;

If you want to know what we are who grow powerful and deathless in countless counterparts, each part pregnant with hope, each hope supreme, each supremacy classless, each classlessness nourished by unlimited splendor of comradeship;

We are multitudes the world over, millions everywhere; in violent factories, sordid tenements, crowded cities, in skies and seas and rivers, in lands everywhere; our numbers increase as the wide world revolves and increases arrogance, hunger, disease and death.

We are the men and women reading books, searching in the pages of history for the lost word, the key to the mystery of living peace, imperishable joy; we are factory hands field hands mill hands everywhere, molding creating building structures, forging ahead,

Reaching for the future, nourished in the heart; we are doctors scientists chemists discovering, eliminating disease and hunger and antagonisms; we are soldiers navy-men citizens guarding the imperishable will of man to live in grandeur.

We are the living dream of dead men everywhere, the unquenchable truth that class-memories create to stagger the infamous world with prophecies of unlimited happiness — a deathless humanity; we are the living and the dead man everywhere . . .

II

If you want to know what we are, observe the bloody club smashing heads, the bayonet penetrating hollowed breasts, giving no mercy; watch the bullet crashing upon armorless citizens; look at the tear-gas choking the weakened lung.

If you want to know what we are, see the lynch trees blossoming, the hysterical mob rioting; remember the prisoner beaten by detectives to confess a crime he did not commit because he was honest, and who stood alone before a rabid jury of ten men,

And who was sentenced to hang by a judge whose bourgeois arrogance betrayed the office he claimed his own; name the marked man, the violator of secrets; observe the banker, the gangster, the mobster who kill and go free:

We are the sufferers who suffer for natural love of man for man, who commemorate the humanities of every man; we are the toilers who toil to make the starved earth a place of abundance, who transform abundance into deathless fragrance.

We are the desires of anonymous men everywhere, who impregnate the wide earth's lustrous wealth with a gleaming fluorescence; we are the new thoughts and the new foundations, the new verdure of the mind; we are the new hope new joy life everywhere.

We are the vision and the star, the quietus of pain; we are the terminals of inquisition, the hiatuses of a new crusade; we are the subterranean subways of suffering; we are the will of dignities; we are the living testament of a flowering race.

If you want to know what we are —

WE ARE REVOLUTION!

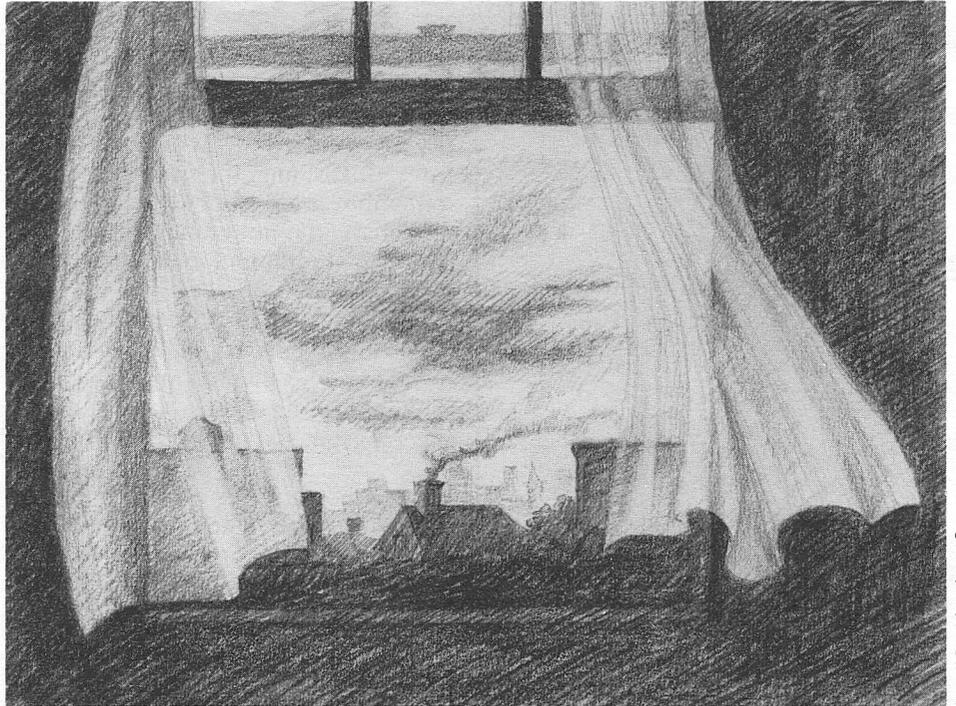
Carlos Bulosan
©1940



Block print: Political detainee, Camp Bicutan, Pintag (lifepulse in cold steel)

Literature, Art and Practical Struggle

Translated by Eunice Chen



Pencil Drawing: Leon Sun



The author in the 1930's

By Happy Lim

It was a beautiful evening when I quietly sat before the window and enjoyed the scenery, my writing paper spread on my desk. I gazed at the vast heaven of this foreign country where there was a white floating cloud and a wisp of light smoke. Watching the gradually deepening dusk, my heart grew serene and peaceful, just like the air surrounding me. But I realized that as gorgeous as the landscape might be, it did not touch off my nostalgia the way my motherland did. What it reminded me of was a poem by Wang Can, "Climbing the Tower":

"Beautiful though is not my land,
What is it worth my stay!"

I thought of the time during the '30's when America encountered an unprecedented economic crisis and the people suffered from what they had never experienced before. Same as the numerous unknown poor, I had lived in

Courtesy of Happy Lim

hunger and cold and felt deeply depressed. There had been something that excited me, however: the knowledge of the vicissitude of human fate indicating that society moved forward amid savage and testing billows of life. And this awakening aligned me with those undaunted fighters who stood to parade the times of theirs.

I admired the ambitions and progressive thoughts of this great time, as well as the people of high character who lived then. I could not but believe and follow them to fight for the truth and a brighter future. I remember that on a silent night, I decided to dry my tears and start to write, epitomizing, in my poems, the rigor and bitterness of reality, as well as advocating that we must work with the suffering and progressive people of our time to strive for a better place to live. As for myself, I had to continue to write.

We could not return to the time of the "Seven Saints of Bamboo Grove," nor could we retire into the mysterious mountains of Alps. We are fated to live in a rigorous time and a society of misery. Since I had become a man with progressive thoughts and had been willing to learn with good people, I started to write for the *Vanguard* newspaper. I did not write about romance or champagne but the suffering and oppression of human beings. I criticized caustically the exploiters and oppressors, sympathized with the exploited and oppressed. I extolled revolutionary upheavals and the torches that led people towards the light. I remember the time when my first article was published; I felt as happy as the peaks of a mountain which had just received the first flake of the crystal-white snow.

Then, I grew braver and firmer. I arrived at the conclusion that the place where we lived had no wealth for us nor were there equal rights. Even the sunshine could not be truly ours. I felt insulted, desired to eliminate the misery and injustice of life. Often, I would stare into the rosy, sparkling morning clouds, yearning for a free and equal society to come true. I also took part in many of the practical struggles to resist the devastating exploitation and op-

pression. Thus, I let in the enthusiasm of revolution and filled up my poor and vapid life.

There have been enticing dreams in my memory; each of them pointed me in a new direction. In those days, I wrote for the *Unity*. I saw this newspaper trudge along arduously from the time when it was mimeographed to a time when it was typeset, and felt proud. For eight or nine years, I have



Courtesy of Happy Lim

been writing for it, never intermitted, neither on the fine summer days nor on the stormy winter nights. What else can I take pride in? My life has never been more meaningful.

In my memory, there have also been traces of wounds over the years. But I am determined not to fall in line with those of the declining class. I cherish the ideal of Marxism and Leninism, as well as my lofty character and values. I have long discarded the decadent romanticism and any imaginary hopes to console myself. Instead, I devoted myself to calling for help for the poor and the needy while living under the same conditions as they do, sharing their hardships and happiness. In return, I received love and confidence from those people and this has encouraged

me in my work. Now, when I look toward the horizon, I seem to see the east sea turning into glittering red under the morning sun.

Literature and art should be the bugle of the times, working in accord with the trend and need of the revolutionary struggles. One should not try to express his nostalgia by using today's literature and art to bring out the tune of the old times nor should one take a detached and self-protecting attitude, divorced from the practical struggles and hesitant in the face of the social current. An artist should associate himself with the oppressed people all over the world, seek freedom from the yoke. Let his works reflect the time, the society, the beauty of life and soul.

I believe the truth lies hidden in my heart. My works are as magnificent as the Chinese wisteria. My life is full and complex. Recently, I have written poems, essays and short stories, "Human Being Lives for the Search of a Meaning." I must take up my responsibility, lead a life in which I could love and hate as deeply and strongly as I like. I will do my best in speaking for the savaged, liberating the oppressed, hailing the light, and loving the life. I will not be unworthy of the society and the time.

I warmly love this world as well as humankind. I have the right to enjoy whatever was given by the creator. But when human rights and justice are impinged upon, I also have the courage and confidence to fight.

I have been involved in this struggle for a long time. I am still holding on to the sincere enthusiasm and sense of morality and justice that I have acquired from the past. Together with my long-standing companions, I am continuing to push forward, expel the evil, cultivate the good and honest, and strive for the early realization of a free and equal society. Whenever I think of all these things, a beautiful memory lingers in my heart. □

Happy Lim is a Contributing Editor to *EAST WIND*. A journalist and poet, he was a secretary of the Chinese Workers Mutual Aid Association during the 1940's.

Dispelling the Darkness

Lu Xun: the artist as revolutionary fighter



By Leon Sun

It always seems a little funny to me, the various ways in which society recognizes its heroes, such as naming public buildings or streets after them. While this may not be such a bad idea in itself, the original intent is often lost on subsequent generations. Who is left to remember whom? Who ever thinks of Ulysses S. Grant, for example, while walking (or cruising, as the case may be) down Grant Avenue in San Francisco's Chinatown? To me the real measure of greatness is how a person remains alive in the hearts and minds of everyday people.

During a recent visit to China, I saw both public recognition and private appreciation for the writer, Lu Xun. In Beijing's Lu Xun Museum, I saw a group of primary school students — rambunctious and hyperactive at any other time — looking intently at the pictures of Lu Xun and whispering respectfully among themselves. And in places as far away as Hangzhou, a scenic resort town south of Shanghai, our driver/tour guide had a copy of Lu Xun's collected letters on the seat next to him, which he read assiduously whenever he had a moment between tours.

I first discovered Lu Xun when I was an art student back in the early seventies, during the height of the anti-war movement. The movement had begun to take on an anti-imperialist character, which was a major advancement from its pacifistic beginnings. For me, as it was for many others, this was a time of political awakening. We were defining for ourselves

what it meant to be Asian. We began to identify with the Vietnamese people fighting for their liberation rather than with "our boys," who were over there fighting, supposedly, for democracy. We began to read Mao, Marx, and among many other progressive thinkers and writers, Lu Xun. Many left the campuses and went into the communities to organize, and were soon to prove their mettle through the fire of struggle.

As for myself, I took a slightly different route. I had always been involved in the arts, trying to understand our Asian reality through the personal, subjective experience. Thus, when I found Lu Xun, it was like discovering an old friend, an older brother, who was able to guide me through the darkness that had kept me from knowing myself, my people, and our history. As I read more about him, studied his works and Chinese history, the darkness began to recede, and I could see the silhouetted contours of our past take shape in the emerging light.

It was so inspiring to discover that half a century earlier in China, which seemed so far away, there had also been a mass movement — a movement that shook Chinese society to its foundations. Indeed, the movement had laid the ideological groundwork for the ensuing socialist revolution. What I had learned about, of course, was none other than the May Fourth Movement, with its call for a new culture and a new China. As a young artist "in search of the meaning of life" I was particularly inspired by the role played by students and intellectuals. Because of their love for their country and the nobleness of their cause, they dared to take up the struggle, to battle the twin-headed monster of foreign domination and China's own backwardness.

Among the various progressive artists and writers was Lu Xun, who, because of his daring and incisive political commentaries, stood out head and shoulders above the rest. Like the others, he attacked all the old reactionary ideas and their adherents who stultified China and gave it the reputation of being "the sick man of Asia," whom everyone could push around with impunity. Through works such as *Diary of a Madman* and his classic, *The True Story of Ah Q*, he raised the consciousness of his readers in a popular, lively and entertaining way.

Lu Xun was also the strongest voice among the advocates for the use of the vernacular in literature, which viewed politically, was nothing less than the expropriation of the Chinese language for the masses, to place in their hands what had historically been denied them. By writing in the language of the common people and breaking away from the elitism of classical writing, they took a stand and turned literature into arms with which to free the people. Such a concerted assault on tradition and the cultural monopoly of the ruling class was unprecedented in Chinese history. Through the May Fourth Movement, the people — students, intellectuals and workers — began to redefine what it meant to be Chinese.

In this battle, Lu Xun was known as a fearless, relentless fighter who was unwavering in his commitment to the cause: the realization of a strong and free China, a China that could take its rightful place among the great nations of the world. As a writer, Lu Xun was clearly a genius. But what gave fuel and form to his genius was his undying patriotism — not the crude, "macho," chauvinist flag-waving John Wayne/Ronald Reagan type which we know all too well, but the true patriotism that grows out of a profound love for one's homeland and people, a love that inspires courage, commitment, action and sacrifice.

If art is the crystallization and self-conscious expression of human experience, then Lu Xun had indeed placed China in its rightful place among nations, for his novels and short stories have won international acclaim and have been published in several languages. Even more importantly, his work revealed the historical truths of his country and its times. And as the truth set his countrymen free, so were they able to act, to struggle, and to win. In the end, China did become strong. China did become free.

To me, the greatest gift from Lu Xun, besides his work itself, was the example he set for others. He made into reality what we, in this society, have been taught to be impossible: the unity of art and politics. In understanding his life and work I gained a whole new dimension to art and what it meant to be an artist, i.e., an Asian American artist. Lu Xun will remain alive in my heart and mind for a long, long time. □

Leon Sun is a graphic artist, writer, former Director of Community Asian Art and Media Project (CAAMP) and currently Art Director of EAST WIND.

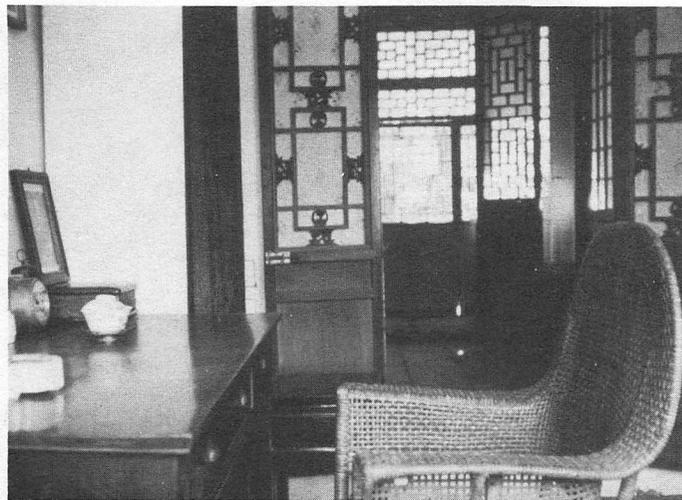
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 寫軒轅
 寫此詩時年未及二十歲時魯迅

One of Lu Xun's poems in his own handwriting.

The tower cannot avoid the god's sharp arrows;
 Dark is the ancient garden crushed beneath the storms.
 Unrecognized, I put my hope in an ice-cold star
 While offering my blood to the Yellow Emperor.*

Translated by W.J.F. Jenner

*"Yellow Emperor" is a metaphor for China.



Lu Xun's desk in his Beijing residence, now part of Lu Xun Museum.

Leon Sun

By G. Haruko Hotta

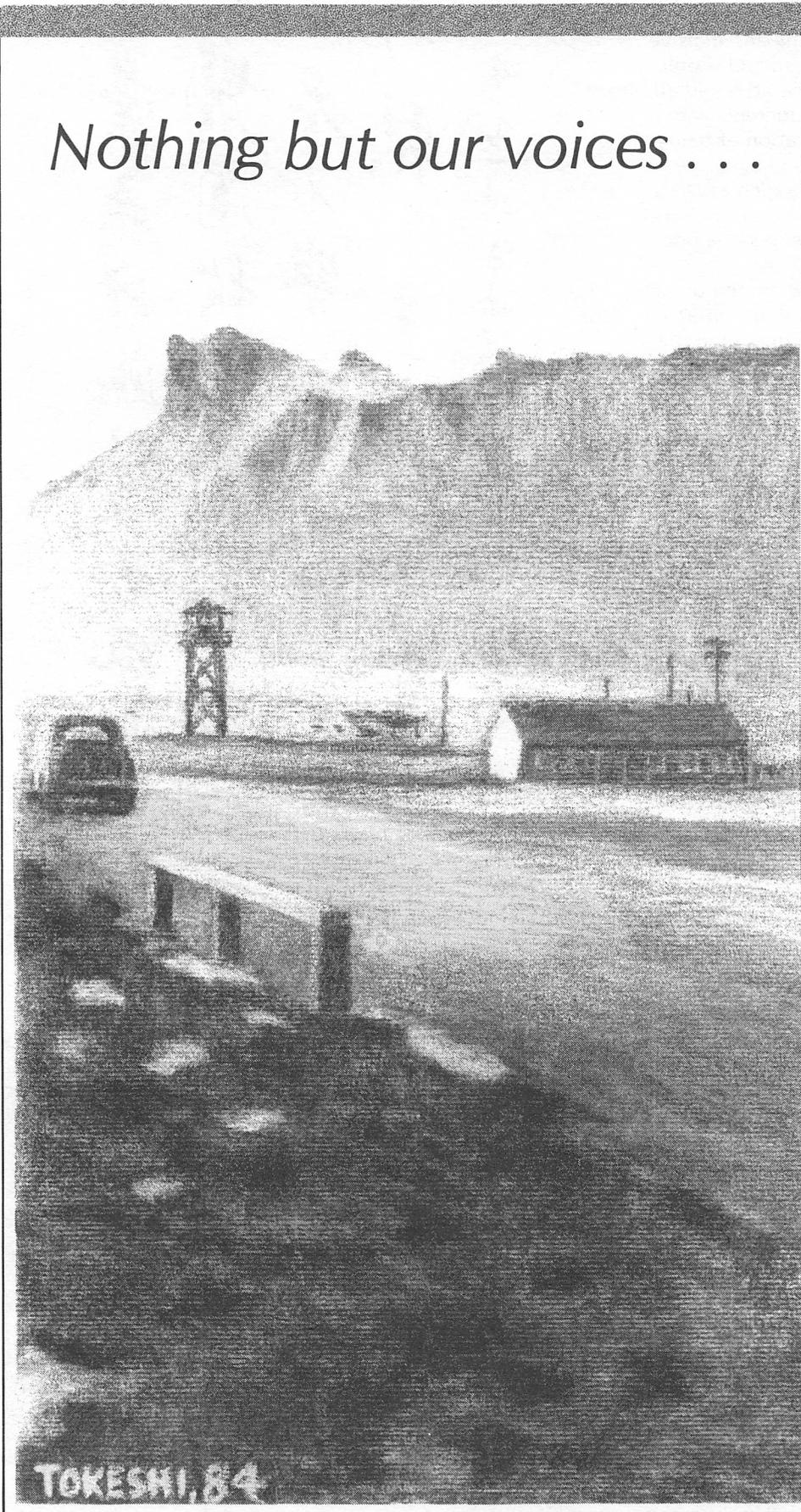
Nothing but our voices . . .

When Grandmother and Grandfather came to this country to begin a new life, they settled in West Oakland, which looked much as it does today — old, dilapidated Victorians with peeling paint and grey boards tacked over punctured windows. My grandfather was a farmworker, as were many of his friends. He died when a truck carrying him and fellow workers overturned on the way to the fields. My grandmother was a midwife delivering the babies of mothers that none of the “whites-only” hospitals would accept.

It was a hard life but the Issei had a firm sense of their worth as a people (as yet unfettered with the stigma of being non-white in America). And with this assurance came the knowledge that their culture and traditions were powerful forces that would strengthen and bind the fabric of community life. Thus, their songs, paintings, music and dances from the old country were to supply them with the strength of hope to carry them on in the new land. When they came home from the fields or when the crops were all picked, there were the drums and dances of celebration, of a job well-done, of a season changing. When a child was born, there were the ceremonies of life. When a loved one died, there were songs of sorrow and tears with the ceremonies of passage. In a hostile America, these were the traditions that provided affirmation to the Issei as to who they were and that uplifted their spirits when even the most basic rights were denied them.

But with the advent of World War II, the concentration camps struck a blow to the Japanese community that imprisoned more than just our physical freedom. The government and racists knew well the galvanizing powers of culture from which we could retain our dignity, survive, resist. And so, the first to go to prison were the artists,

Charcoal: Rich Tokeshi



scholars, and the political and religious figures of the community. Many of these people — the leaders and organizers of the Japanese — never returned after the war. With their deaths, both physical and spiritual, the Japanese in America suffered.

Within the camps, creation, for the Issei and Nisei, were acts of courage that acknowledged the beauty of our heritage in the face of the severest form of national oppression. Creativity in the camps abounded. Cacti, sand and rocks from the barren deserts became elements of flower arrangements. Ink, made from local resources, was used for painting. Nisei swing bands were common as were the traditional music styles from Japan.

Yet, to be caged like animals because of our culture and nationality — something that we were once so proud of, something that we based our pride and self-respect on — chained and crippled a part of us. And so, seeking a respite from the hatred they felt and feared might never go away, the Japanese in America scattered to many parts of the United States after the camps closed.

Still, the Issei and Nisei did fight for their rights and organized among the poor, Third World communities where many resettled. They did this because they could not and did not forget what happened to them and instilled in their children a strong commitment to seek justice when a wrong was done. And this was in evidence at the redress and reparations hearings that many of us organized. When the Issei and Nisei spoke of their experience, their words poured forth, opening old, festering wounds, reliving a history which we had once turned away from in hurt and shame. Their words now revealed a history characterized by courageous acts of defiance and resistance.

I only wish that my grandparents could have testified or talked to me. I think that this is what they might have said:

"From our experience and your experience, you have made gains in your determination to fight for justice and equality. And you have a better way of life, materially, and more opportunities than we did. But never turn your

backs on who and what you are and where you came from.

"My friends and I had no instruments, nothing but our voices. But from our voices we created songs. We had nothing but weeds in our yards, but from the weeds we created beautiful ikebana. In the fields and factories, our bodies were engaged in long hours of toil, yet, we created dances to keep us strong. . . .

"For you, the Sansei, you have to go back and look for that part of us that was left crippled and chained in the camps. It's the part of us that makes us

Within the camps, creation, for the Issei and Nisei, were acts of courage that acknowledged the beauty of our heritage in the face of the severest form of national oppression.

fulfilled as a people. It's the part that allows us to reach out in camaraderie and support if ever one of us loses our self-respect and dignity. It's the part that allows us to cry out in pain and sorrow to each other when we lose something we love and value deeply. It's the part that allows us to rise up in anger and mobilize if an injustice is done to us. . . .

"O*nce we are better able to do this, our art and culture will flourish. But we must first believe that the values, history and lessons of our people are worth transmitting. If you want to create, go among your people and give them a way to create. Give them a way to express hope when it seems that troubles will never end. Give them a way to dispel their*

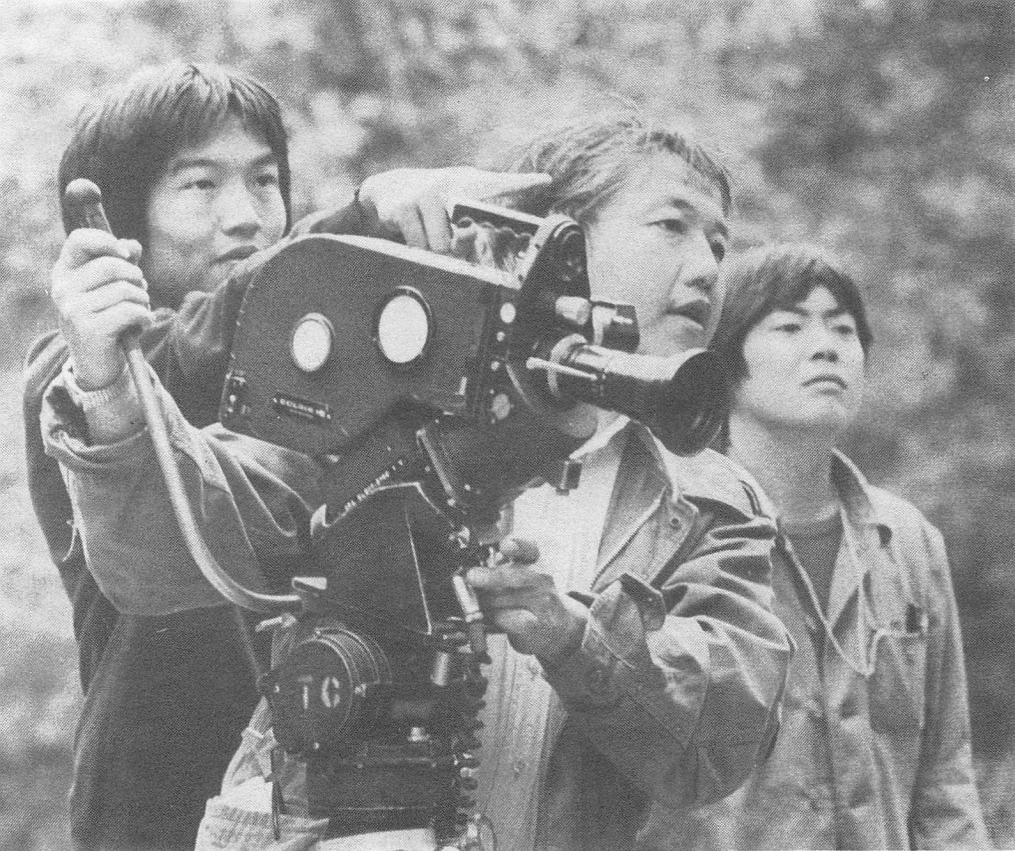
fears when strength is needed. Give them a way to dream when the future seems dim . . . Go into the workplaces, the social and political meeting places, and as a part of your day-to-day labor, socializing and organizing, make art become a reality for all people. Make it a living means of communication, a weapon, a tool, a galvanizing force among yourselves . . . Art and culture, along with community and politics, you can't have one without the other."

I believe that one day this shall be fully attainable. But first, we must be willing to hear the harmony along with the dissonance because, as in music, you need to hear the tension before you hear the resolution. Through struggle and unity, through maintaining a vision of a more just society, it is this progression, this outlook that gives everybody the ability to release the full creative forces of a people that will mobilize and organize the despised and disenfranchised for a brighter day.

We should remember, though, that the past is linked to the present as a guide to the future. Every so often, I meet somebody from West Oakland who still remembers the days when my father was growing up. Someone said, "Yeah, it was a real hip community — Japanese, Blacks, Chicanos — we all lived in the same neighborhood." It reminds me that these neighborhoods that our families came from — poor materially, yet rich in spirit — continue to supply the developing Asian American art its most positive influences and greatest inspirations.

There is an Afro-American song, and in it, it says, "Lift every voice and sing." And I want Asian Americans, also, to have a phrase that so aptly expresses so much. And we will. When we unchain and release the full potential and creative energy of our people, we will. □

G. Haruko Hotta is a member of Bay Area Asians for Nuclear Disarmament and Japanese Community Progressive Alliance and a saxophonist. She says, "J. Jangus, Saxman, W.I. Yasu, my music teachers, especially M. Wazu, contributed to this article in their own way."



Visual Communications

Eddie Wong, Robert Nakamura and Alan Kondo of Visual Communications — 1973.

LIGHTS, CAMERA . . . AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

By Renee Tajima

It is ironic that Hollywood has of late become enamored with the portrayal of '60's rebels now grown up — as if to prove the industry mill can swallow any social convulsion and spit it out pasteurized. But the media itself was not shielded from the times, as Third World and progressive peoples demanded — and won — not only a presence within it but a redefinition of its form and content.

The Ethno-Communications program, which began in 1968 at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), was one catalyst to that movement. As an affirmative action program Ethno-Communications opened the door to Asian American, Black, Chicano and Native American students in significant numbers for the first time. As a film training program it went far beyond the traditions of form-conscious but conscience-less preparation for the industry.

"The Ethno-Communications students were trying to find leaders in their community — like political leaders, or Chicano artists — and make films about them," explained Sylvia

Morales, who is currently the executive director of the Latino Program Consortium and the producer of *Los Lobos: A Time to Dance*. In her first year at UCLA prior to the Ethno Program, Morales was the only Chicana in the entire film department and, she recalls, "The non-color students were involved with films concerning relationships, personal films. But for us there was a sense of urgency, so we set aside our desire to make personal films in order to make ones which reflected our communities."

These students were not alone in their challenge to the status quo. The independent film movement was beginning to take shape at the time, and many Ethno alumni went on to join its ranks. The films produced since, with a strong commitment to the visual articulation of their people's history, have their moorings in the spirit which infused the Ethno program.

Prominent among the Ethno graduates are Asian American and Chicano independent producers who have remained in the Los Angeles area, home to both the nation's largest Asian and Chicano communities and the movie industry. The way in which the Ethno-Communications program changed the color of independent filmmaking, the success of its graduates and their ongoing work within their own communities are all antidote to present day attacks on affirmative action programs.

Before Ethno

1968 at the UCLA film department: Francis Ford Coppola had just completed his MFA. There were two Chicanos in the graduate and undergraduate programs combined with a handful of other minority students. If the media industry was a bastion of the status quo, then film schools trained its palace guard. In 1968, film studies at UCLA was as it had always been.

Elsewhere on campus and across the country, minority students were organizing with demands for affirmative action and ethnic studies and agitating against the Vietnam war. And in that same year the new political realities hit the film school full gale.

In 1968, Moctezuma Esparza, the executive director of *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez*, was a history student and organizer active in the founding of UCLA's Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA). He was asked by Elyseo Taylor, the only Black (and only minority) professor on the faculty of the film department, to join the newly-formed Media Urban Crisis Committee (MUCC). With a dozen other minority students as well as sympathetic faculty such as white professor John Young, the MUCC group, dubbed the "Mother Muccers," was organized.

The original 13 Muccers staged sit-ins and protests to successfully agitate for affirmative action in the film department, resulting in the formation of the pilot program for Ethno-Communications which established the program's basic structure.

"Ethno-Communications gave them (Black students) a sense of purpose," explained Black filmmaker Charles Burnett (*My Brother's Wedding*, *Killer of Sheep*) who was a teaching assistant in the program. "Ethno-Communications had a definite purpose — to demystify filmmaking and get it out to the Black community, to get stories about Black people on film."

Mother Muccers go forth and multiply

As Native American filmmaker Sandy Osawa recalls the heady times, "You could really feel the presence of minorities on campus; I became aware of minority and media issues."

The original 13 students made films together and agitated together. One of their key victories was pushing an admissions quota policy through the student-faculty senate. According to Esparza, who was appointed to the body, the new policy mandated that 25% of all entrants to the undergraduate and graduate film programs should be from minority groups. Said Burnett of the affirmative action policy, "I thought it was absolutely necessary to set up a quota system because no one (at UCLA) took the responsibility of getting minorities into the program. To be quite honest, no one gave a

damn." The "Mother Muccers" became active in recruiting succeeding classes, beginning with the 1970 entrants who constituted the first full Ethno program.

The Movement is the Message

Ethno students were recruited from within UCLA and other area colleges, as well as from local communities. The recruitment and involvement of Asian American students is a history in itself. Asian Americans in the original 13 group — such as Betty Chen, Danny Kwan and Brian Maeda, all of whom continued in filmmaking — cooperated with the UCLA Asian American Studies Center to find candidates from within the Asian American community. Recruits were found in interconnected movement organizations such as the anti-war community newspaper *Gidra*, the Asian American Student Alliance, and the "community college" which had been established during the summer of 1969 by future Ethno student Robert Nakamura, now a professor in the film department, and several other community professionals. Classmates Duane Kubo, Steven Tatsukawa and Eddie Wong would later join Nakamura to form the nucleus of Visual Communications, an Asian American production cooperative.

The Ethno program became the training ground for extending the movement work and social concerns of its students. Tatsukawa remembers a special production class which was put together to "hit the road for a few weeks in California" to study location work. The Black Panthers in San Francisco, agricultural workers in the central California Locke region, Chicano Studies at Berkeley, and the Bay Area Native American Center were subjects of the workshop projects. Tatsukawa says, "These visits stimulated films. The Locke footage became a Visual Communications film on Asian American farmworkers in the Delta entitled *Pieces of a Dream*."

Several early and significant Third World films came out of the program. *Requiem 29*, a documentary on the 1970 Chicano Moratorium and subsequent inquest that implicated Los



Visual Communication's premiere feature-length film, *HITO HATA*, raised the banner of Japanese Americans as it captured the resilience and struggles of the Issei.

Angeles police in the shooting of reporter Ruben Salazar, won a Bronze Medal at the Atlanta International Film Festival. Black filmmaker Larry Clark's *Passing Through* won the Grand Prize at the Moscow International Film Festival. Nakamura's *Manzanar* and Wong's *Wong Sin-saang* were widely distributed.

Ethno films generated a mixed reception from white faculty and students. "Luis Ruiz did a real nice film that angered the whole faculty," Nakamura remembers. "It started out in English but after the two kids went into the house the rest of it was in Spanish." Explained Kubo, "During screenings at the end of the quarter I remember pitched battles between Third World and white students over content, impact of the film, the way it was shot — almost everything. There were even a few fist fights in the middle of screenings."

The end of Ethno

Despite the fire of its first years, by 1973 Ethno began to fade. According to Burnett, "No one in the University really wanted it. With Elyseo Taylor it was just like the Jesse Jackson thing in Syria: everyone hoped it would fail." The thread of disapproval remained throughout the program's

lifetime, and it never received the concrete support necessary to make it last. Nakamura remembers that there was a lot of criticism, the beginning of the anti-affirmative action backlash which eventually hit many such programs. "UCLA didn't put any money out; the program was just a big recruiting effort."

But Ethno-Communications was something more than that. It was a direct challenge to the status quo and traditions of the industry's concept of film training. According to Kubo, "David Garcia and other advisors to Ethno were constantly un-

der fire from the rest of the faculty to produce competent filmmakers, as opposed to political activists."

Along with the lack of university support, internal problems and the increasingly conservative political climate were cited as contributing factors in Ethno's demise. John Rier (*Black Images from the Screen, There's a Mural I Know*), a Black filmmaker who entered the film department on the last leg of the program, echoes the sentiment of Ethno alumni that the students, too, had changed. "We had people who came in as individuals — students who came there to make it in Hollywood, unaware that there had

been a struggle and a battle to even have Third World students (in the UCLA film program)." According to Ruiz, post-Ethno students "didn't have to struggle like Ethno-Communications students did. So they didn't appreciate the struggle of Ethno-Communications."

The Ethno Impact

Since Ethno, the presence of Third World students in the film department has never been as extensive. But whereas Ethno students emerged in a relative vacuum, aspiring filmmakers since then enjoy the existence of a prolific, working Third World film community. Ethno alumni have been central to building that movement and forging that community.

Ethno alumni pioneered a minority presence in independent filmmaking and public television programming. Both Chicano and Asian American Ethno graduates have been active in founding and organizing the Latino Consortium and National Asian American Telecommunications Association. Most Asian Americans went on to become independents.

Visual Communications, the oldest and most prolific of Asian American production entities, has its roots in the Ethno program. Ten years after entering the program a number of Ethno alumni were key personnel in its landmark production *Hito Hata: Raise the Banner*, the first Asian American feature ever produced.

Thus the true measure of Ethno-Communications' impact goes beyond the number of filmmakers it trained, the hours of programming produced or awards won. Ethno challenged the basic premise of industry training, and many of its alumni have never lost that spirit. Whereas the media, in its racism and neglect, has traditionally been an anathema to Third World people, here, for once, Third World people had the skills and a voice. □

Renee Tajima is an advisor to EAST WIND.

Ed. This article was excerpted from its original publication in *The Independent* with the author's permission.

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Janice Mirikitani

words from the third world

By Naomi Sodetani

Posters line the walls: Asian American Dance Collective, Nihonmachi Street Fair; old poetry readings and benefits for Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador. Papers lie everywhere; so do styrofoam cups emptied of coffee, ashtrays full of pink-stained butts. Stacks of "call-back" slips line her desk.

Like her office, Janice Mirikitani's life is earmarked by seeming chaos. But under the cluttered surface, exists deep order and purpose. She is, in a word, *involved*.

The poet, dancer and teacher authored one book of poetry (*Awake in the River*) and edited several Asian American anthologies. Since 1967, she has worked at the Glide Church — a hub of tremendous social/political activism in San Francisco. Presently, Janice directs 22 community-gearred programs at Glide's Urban Center.

Mirikitani has long written of the Third World experience, passionately upholding its political and cultural issues. She also advocates the ethnic press as a means to balance often-racist biases of mainstream publishing; and actively encourages other Asian American women writers to lift up their voices to join hers.

The voice of Janice Mirikitani, at once highly personal and political, is an important one rising from the midst of Asian America.

* * *

"Third World writing, art and expression has been dealt with as not being universal. I defy, reject and fight that. If you breathe a breath, you are 'universal.' The experience of the human being is a universal experience — though we have unique experiences because our skin color is different and, therefore, the manner in which we have been treated by a powerful system, has been different."

Janice's face is very expressive. Her mobile mouth, eyes and gesturing arms are what you recall long after you've seen her. With dark hair cascading down her back, she's a beautiful woman.

What's more beautiful are the words, the ideas pouring out of her. That voice, deep, almost raspy (from cigarettes?) resonates with conviction — and at times, there's even a hard edge to her. Definitely no soft-shouldered *geisha* here. Janice never edits herself or apologizes for speaking her mind too loudly.

You don't lean forward to hear Janice. She reaches you.

"I don't think that Third World writers can really afford to separate themselves from the ongoing struggles of their people," she says. "Nor can we ever not embrace our history; that must be a constant reminder to us, whether it's prevalent in the piece we're working on or not. That history must never be lost, unless we lose something that's very much whetted of ourselves."

Mirikitani's work constantly reminds that injustices once perpetuated on people of color are not done with yet. In her poem, "August 6," she decries the wastage of human life ironically called "merciful" by some:



Bob Hsiang

Janice at Glide — still at the grassroots

Today
 a thousand cranes
 are flying
 and in expensive waiting rooms
 of Hiroshima, California
 are blood counts
 sucked by the white death
 and they said
 it might happen again
 tonight
 while everyone sleeps
 memoryless
 the night wind
 flutters like a thousand wings
 how many ears will hear
 the whisper
 "Hiroshima"
 from a child's armless shoulder
 puckered
 like a kiss?

Some of Mirikitani's most powerful work comes out of her relationships with the women in her life — her grandmother, mother and 15-year-old daughter, Tianne. In "The First Generation," she describes the sad but inevitable rift that forms between immigrant parents and succeeding generations:

*Bent and knotted as a wintered vine
 she watched her children grow from her
 in a hybrid land
 and the grandchildren thick around
 no longer her own.*

Yet something, she concludes, has been passed on:

*Her love wore long
 as my sorrow.
 The withered roots
 have given back beauty to the soil.*

While her poetry has a lyrical effect, Mirikitani is not concerned with weaving "pretty, ethereal images of clouds and trees and flowers." If blunt, jarring images are needed to get her meaning across, she'll create them: "I don't read or write poetry to escape. I want reality. That's what poetry should be. I want to hear about Third World problems from the people who can talk about it firsthand."

A Sansei born just before World War II, Janice and her family were locked in internment camps, along with 110,000 other Japanese Americans. She grew up, rebelled against white authority and narrow-mindedness at San Francisco State in the '60's — and was angered by her Nisei parents' silence when asked about their internment experience:

She wrote of her frustration:

*My mother merely shakes
 her head
 when we talk
 about the war,
 the camps,
 the bombs.*

*She won't discuss
 the dying/her own
 as she left her self
 with the stored belongings.*

*She wrapped her shell
 in kimono sleeves
 and stamped it third class
 delivery to Tule Lake.*

She also voiced expectations that one day the silence would be broken:

*My song:
 Watashi ga kodomo wa matte eru
 I am a child waiting
 waiting
 Watashi no haha ga umareta
 for the birth of my mother.*

Several years ago, Janice's mother spoke out. Hearings on the redress/reparations issue were held before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment, and she testified. When Janice received a mailed copy of her testimony, she recalls: "I stared at it for about 45 minutes, reading and weeping. It was like a death and resurrection to me.

"This period had been dead for so long for her, so deeply buried. She was a young, beautiful woman, who had dreams about going to school, about the kind of man she'd marry, of getting off the farm to escape a life of perpetual hard work and poverty. All those dreams were shattered by the war and, I'm sure, buried in those desert camps.

"It so deeply affected both my parents; how could it have helped but affect my own life?"

*He came over the ocean
 carrying Mt. Fuji
 on his back/Tule Lake on his chest
 hacked through the brush
 of deserts
 and made them grow
 strawberries
 we stole berries
 from the stem
 we could not afford them
 for breakfast
 his eyes held
 nothing*

as he whipped us
for stealing.

the desert had dried
his soul.

Soon after the war, Janice's father left them; her mother struggled to raise her family alone. Later, Janice would see that struggle mirrored in her own life when, as a young divorced mother, she cared for Tianne. Her experiences have welded a profound bonding with other women, and she writes of women freeing themselves: "I feel many women experience a tremendous pressure to be what everyone else wants or perceives them to be as opposed to asserting and discovering one's own self. For myself, all of that built up till I finally said, 'To hell with all these forms of authority!' Because, ultimately, one is never acceptable, as long as one attempts to be something somebody else wants."

For Mirikitani, coming to Glide in the mid '60's was a "real grounding, non-academic, very grassrootsy, real world to leap from the (S.F. State) Strike into." Real community problems were being addressed by the then-urban center in the form of alternative help programs for runaways, mental patients, pregnant unwed mothers, and homeless gay men.

"It helped crystallize connections about who I was and what I needed to write about. Before that, I kept trying to imitate William Carlos Williams and Dylan Thomas, you know? I thought none of my own or my race's experiences were good enough."

Janice's voice softens. "I was always, you know, feeling like I had to fight. To be heard, to be seen, to be part of the family. To write about what I felt. Now I speak out against those things I truly feel angry about — like the invasion of Grenada or racism, the murder of Vincent Chin."

In "Assaults and Invasions," Mirikitani tells of the personal struggles of an abused woman, a composite of women she has counseled at Glide:

*Linette was beaten daily.
He said she wasn't any good, dumb and
weak even for a woman.*

*Every time I'd see her, face swollen
like a bruised soft peach, lip hanging big
and purple over her chin, her eyes bled
hunger and helplessness. When he would
start in on her, she could only defend with
fingernails and sweat and a tongue fat with
broken veins and angry words. She is 105
lbs. powerless to his 200 lb. body, and she
opens her legs like murdered wheat. She
moved out several times, this time report-
ing him to the police, begged the courts to
restrain him. He found her, and when she*

*wouldn't whimper or cry or open her
thighs, this time, he with his razor began to
slice small slivers of flesh from her breasts,
her crotch, her belly, like scaling a fish, un-
til her body bubbled like a red carp. Her
mouth so thick with pain she could hardly
scream stop it. stop it. stop it.*

Juxtaposed with this are political events like the invasion of Grenada, the assassination of Benigno Aquino and the murder of civilians in Central America. As the two stories interweave, their hideous images make clear that they tell, in truth, the same tale of brutal exploitation. In its final stanza, the poem rallies hope:

*Each day the ism's like a boot
attempt to crush us: racism, capitalism,
imperialism, materialism, sexism,
colonialism, agism, classism, militarism.
We must breathe deeply.
Escape through the windows
We must gather, find each other.
Hear the heartbeats, the power in
our veins.
We must clear our voices,
take action to make ourselves
known.
We must stop it
stop it.
stop it.*

* * *

"Women are programmed to internalize their anger and take it on ourselves. And so are Asians. We're told to be very opaque about ourselves because it's too risky to put it all out there."

Janice grins broadly, "It's more unusual to find Asians willing to be 'yakamashii' (noisy), right? We'd rather destroy ourselves before we articulate our feelings. What I'm saying is, let's articulate them. Because we have a lot of power, and stories to contribute."

For in her own words:

*Words from the Third World, like food,
fortifying the act, universal, essential,
procreative, freeing, connective, satisfying.* □

Hawai'i-born writer, playwright, actress **Naomi Sode-tani** is now working on a magazine celebrating the centennial of Japanese immigration to Hawai'i (1885). "Research and writing for this project," she says, "shows me where all my power and inspiration comes from." Her play, *Obon*, was staged at the Asian American Theater Company.

Transformation

The challenge facing the Asian American artist in the '80's

By Peter Kiang

Today, there are more Asian American cultural works being produced than at any other time in our history. New dances and plays are being performed; new poetry is being published; new music, recorded, and new films, distributed. There is, in the words of Obie-award winning playwright, David Henry Hwang, a "proliferation of voices" currently on the Asian American arts scene.

The Asian American art and culture movement can, perhaps, best be described as the sum total of individual and collective efforts to express the traditions, struggles, historical experiences and daily lives of Asians in America through artistic forms and creative means. As such, the art and culture movement ranges broadly from the closet-poet who jots down a few lines after work to the national network of filmmakers lobbying for air-time.

Although the strength, urgency and purpose of today's Asian American cultural work are a generation removed from their revolutionary origins of the 1960's, the capacity of Asian American artists to produce new works of superior quality in many media is unsurpassed. Under these conditions, the art and culture movement must step forward to provide artists and arts organizations with leadership and direction by popularizing the historic role of art and cultural forms of Asia, and expressing them in new ways; raising the level of criticism and debate



Late 1960's/early 1970's poster that typified the revolutionary sentiment of the time.

within the movement; promoting and producing works that bring together artistic quality with progressive content; and encouraging support from the community audience.

Although the history of our art and culture begins with the first wave of Asian immigrants, the movement to consciously develop works that express the Asian American experience owes its awakening to the generation of artists and activists who came forward amidst Black Power, ethnic pride, and the massive upsurges of the 1960's. With revolution in the winds, Asian American artists found themselves confronting questions beyond those of style, technique and economic survival faced by mainstream artists. The Asian movement artists asked more difficult questions like *Whom is my art for? What message do I have? How can my art help to serve the people?*

In searching for answers, many young poets, artists, and musicians looked to the revolutionary culture of New China and the third world, the reclaiming of Asian American history, and the Asian community movements. Through discussion, study, and practice, Asian movement artists recognized the importance that cultural work played in the overall struggles of their people. In turn, the movement demanded the right to maintain and develop our language and culture.

At a Third World media conference held in 1983, the late filmmaker Steve Tatsukawa described the less-than-orthodox training of Visual Communications (VC) media workers. He and other VC members realized that their skills, cameras, and video port-a-paks could be used to shoot footage of the community's struggles against redevelopment — footage which was later used in the documentary, "Something's Rotten in Little Tokyo." But Steve went one step further. He and the crew dropped the cameras (or at least put them down carefully) and actually joined the picketers. In Steve's mind, artists could not function as outside observers.

Being part of the community and its struggles, artists were impelled to create, to define pro-

gressive, positive images, and to identify wholeheartedly with their people. At the same time, the militant struggles and rising consciousness gave artists substance and content for their work as well as an open, enthusiastic audience. On many levels, the mass movement made possible the growth and development of Asian American art and culture in its formative stages.

Within a decade's time, however, times changed. Conservatism, funding cuts, and the "me" generation became identified with the trends of the 1970's-80's. Not being immune from social reality, the revolutionary winds subsided and the progressive movement shifted into retreat. For Asian American artists, the recent period has been one of contradiction.

On the one hand, for individual artists, the "me" generation mentality combined with the need for economic security has led many to concentrate on developing their own skills and careers. As a result, many individual artists, including choreographers, composers, cinematographers have achieved unprecedented levels of expertise. Artists have also developed contacts with more mainstream institutions in search of support, resources, and recognition. In the process, Asian Americans have significantly increased their capacities to produce artistic work.

On the other hand, in spite of this tremendous advancement in the level of craft, the content and vision of much recent cultural work have not similarly advanced. The senses of urgency, purpose, and audience are no longer as sharp as in works from the earlier movement period.

Although many artists continue to retain their ties to the community, the driving force for artists more recently has been to break down stereotypes that limit self-expression. Themes of identity, cultural conflict and alienation have predominated, especially in theatrical and literary work. Although generally positive, the vision of recent works has been limited by their focus on the individual.

Diminishing funds alongside the conservative funding priorities of traditional sources such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have further influenced what artists are

trying to say and whom they are trying to reach. A media project on immigration, for example, would more likely be receptive to a film trying to convey the human aspects of immigrants leaving their homelands than one trying to document the organizing efforts of the Chinese and Latino communities to defeat the Simpson-Mazzoli bill.

For Asian American artists today, it is essential for us to look at the objective societal forces playing on us. We need to redefine and reassess our art as an expression and function of struggle and a contribution to the current period of resistance among our people.

In doing so, we need to learn from Asian traditional culture. The folk and classical traditions in each Asian culture offer unlimited sources of inspiration for artists to deepen their skills and aesthetic sensibilities as well as to continue a revolutionary continuum which began when the first Asian immigrants set foot on these shores. Jazz musician Mark Izu's "Sheng Illusion" shows how serious training in Asian forms and instrumentation can draw on tradition and can create new ways of appreciating that music.

There is also a great need for more debate and criticism of Asian American art. Perhaps because an uncritical atmosphere of unqualified support was perceived as necessary for the young art and culture movement to establish itself, a corresponding body of criticism and analysis has never grown alongside the proliferation of new work. However, without ongoing dialogue and sharp interchange between artists, scholars, and audience over questions of form, content, audience and intent, the development of Asian American art and culture, at best, would be rendered haphazard, and at worst forced into retreat by outside conservative social forces. Without a sophisticated body of analysis and criticism, artists are left with little encouragement and direction. We need more critiques such as Elaine Kim's *Asian American Literature*, which stands out as the first comprehensive, literary analysis of writings in English by Asian Americans. Similarly, musi-

cian/writer/activist Fred Houn deserves credit for establishing, at the very least, an unequivocal viewpoint in his reviews of Asian American poetry and music. Without rigorous, ongoing discussions within the art and culture movement, very little clarity and direction will emerge.

Experience has shown that a proliferation of voices without a cogent message has little resonance. At the same time, works which lack artistic quality, no matter how politically progressive, also fail to leave lasting impressions. Progressive-minded art-

ists need to be much bolder in producing new work. Their efforts should be considered as significant, viable alternatives within the total range of approaches open to Asian American artists. The writings of Genny Lim and Janice Mirikitani, for example, are exceptionally powerful because they bring together artistic quality and lucid political content. Pianist Jon Jang, in producing *Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan?* with its dedication to Vincent Chin, is also an example of a successful integration of technical expertise, high creative

standards, and clear progressive consciousness.

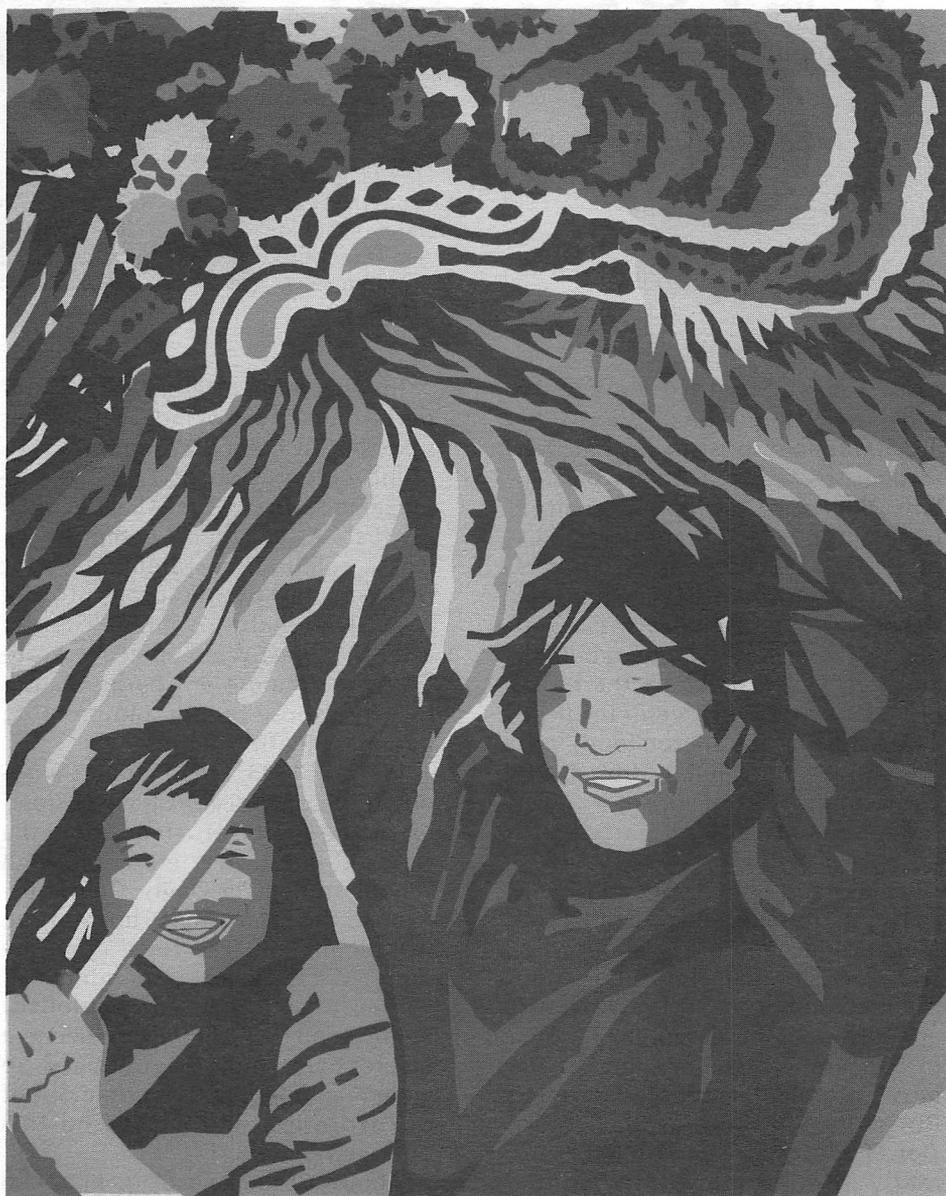
To become an accomplished, mature, and penetrating artist requires a lifelong process of training, study and practice. It takes years to develop a strong, identifiable style, not to mention technical mastery of one's materials. In this respect, Asian Americans are no different than any other artists, and therefore, must pay their dues in practice, discipline, and experimentation in order to gain fluency in their chosen medium.

For Asian American artists, however, there is an additional, though often neglected area of training, that is critical to their development. Asian American artists need training among working people of the community. A serious artist needs to be grounded in the rhythms, language and aesthetics of the actual lives of Asian people in order to distill and crystallize images that are both recognizable and inspirational to the audience.

This is a difficult transformation for many artists to make. The consciousness and ties with Asian workers, who constitute the majority of our people, are often lacking, and sometimes even rejected. Nevertheless, where else can Asian American artists have ready access to the rich traditions and cultures of their Asian homelands? Where else can they find compelling images for their content? Where else can their contributions as artists have such significance?

There are indications that struggle and consciousness in the Asian communities are once again on the rise. The Asian American art and culture movement has an important role to play in bringing about this new chapter of resistance. With clear leadership and direction, the Asian American art and culture movement will generate positive, dynamic images that will inspire, unite and move us forward as a people. □

Peter Kiang is Program Director of the Asian American Resource Workshop and a contributing editor to EAST WIND. He is currently doing research on Asian American art and culture in the Community Fellows Program at MIT.



Barbara Jee Burgess

This silkscreen print by Barbara Jee Burgess is from the 1985 Japantown Art & Media Workshop Calendar, containing twelve original prints by twelve contemporary Asian American artists from the San Francisco Bay Area.

Jon Jang, jazz pianist/composer's work includes collaborations with Mark Izu, Francis Wong and Fred Weihan Houn in the *Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan?* record project, the Asian American Jazz Festival and C-JAM (*Chinese-Japanese Asian-American Musicians*). . . . Charlie Chan has been honored as one of the top albums of the year by *Bebop* and *Beyond* magazine, and the editor of *Cadence* has selected it as one of the top releases of 1984. Besides that album, Jang has recorded *Jang* (1982) on RPM Records. The Charlie Chan album is dedicated to the memory of Vincent Chin and the Asian American National Movement.

* * *

By Jon Jang

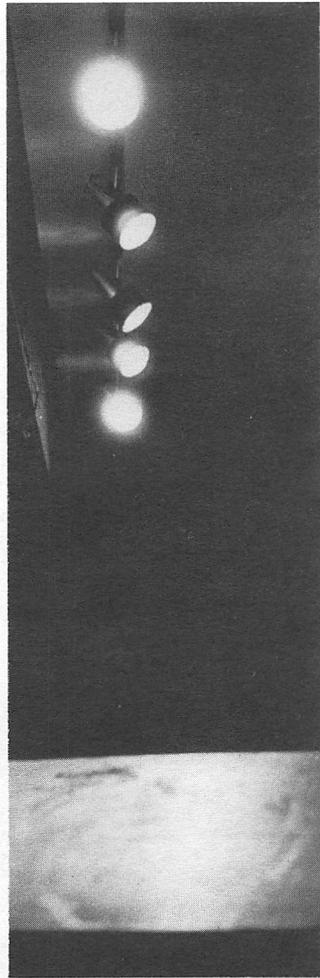
Aspiring to become a jazz musician under capitalism has been a struggle for me. Looking back at my own experiences, I can understand more clearly than before why this system uses music to divide people and, objectively speaking, forces the art-for-art's sake artist to forsake his people. Studying piano at the Oberlin Conservatory of Western European Classical Music introduced these contradictions to me. On the one hand, mostly white students who had parents who could afford the finest teachers and instruments studied at the Conservatory. On the other, the Conservatory was surrounded by a town of Black working class people whose yearly incomes could barely match the yearly cost of an Oberlin education. And although Oberlin gave me a "full" scholarship, I had to work as a dishwasher, security guard and dance accompanist to support my education.

After I graduated from Oberlin, I found that music did not mean much to me. Phasing it out, I took a working

class job at Stanford University. When I became a union shop steward, it was no surprise to me that Stanford mistreated the workers, particularly Black and Chicanos. After all, its benefactor, Leland Stanford, had exploited the Chinese railroad workers.

Just as the white slaveowner took the drum away from the African people for fear it would incite rebellion, Stanford University took the radios out of our delivery vehicles ("because the niggahs are too loud!"). To the University, KSOL radio's Black contemporary soul music — even though mainly about "partying-to-keep-from-crying" — was too subversive. Like the Black work songs and spirituals, it suggested resistance, defiance. Unacceptable to Stanford.

But music again returned to my life. In October, 1981, I saw the first annual Asian American Jazz Festival in San Francisco. Listening to the music of Asian artists Mark Izu and Russel Baba, as well as Black musicians Eddie Moore and United Front, really inspired me. A few months after the festival, Mark Izu and United Front helped record my first album.



Jon Jang at an EAST WIND cultural program in San Francisco, March 1984.

88 KEYS TO REVOLUTION

In December, 1982, I wrote and performed "East Wind" with tenor saxophonist Francis Wong for a welcome celebration of *EAST WIND* magazine's first issue. "East Wind," my first "Asian" theme composition, was a celebrative statement about being Asian, my initiation into the Asian National Movement. Shortly after the "East Wind" piece, I wrote "Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan?" to help expose racism and promote national identity.

In April, 1983, I read about the exoneration of Vincent Chin's murderers by the court. I also read about the racist killing of a Vietnamese high school student in Davis, California. Around the same time, Chol Soo Lee was finally set free for a crime he didn't commit, after spending ten years in prison. The contradictions of being Asian living in the U.S. became clearer to me, and I was outraged. So were many people. We broke out of our isolation and expressed this outrage.

About a thousand of us marched and chanted in the streets of Chinatown to protest Vincent Chin's murder. I remember Pam Tau, a Local 2



Mike Fong

“front” of the music, as well as the Movement.

*East WIND!
Equality for Asian People
East WIND!
Justice for Vincent CHIN!*

The Asian Pacific Student Union audience at San Francisco State felt the energy of the music, and they responded by participating in the chant, cheering and clapping loudly.

One year later, whenever a group of us performed Victor Jara’s “El Pueblo Unido Jamás Será Vencido” (The People United Will Never Be Defeated) in front of a multinational group of anti-Reagan people, we received the same kind of spirited reception. Victor Jara was a Chilean cultural worker who was tortured and killed by the fascist government of dictator Pinochet about ten years ago. Although Jara’s life ended, his inspiring song of the People continues and will never be defeated!

As revolutionary and progressive musicians, I feel we offer a fresh and new meaning and a different perspective to Jara’s song. I feel we open people’s vision and feelings for revolution more broadly with our dialectical approach to music.

When tenor saxophonist Francis Wong opens the song with his passionate statement of the theme, the feelings/truths are exposed. The theme later becomes actively involved in a march for liberation. The activity grows further when I start to play a Latin *montuno* (a repeated accompanying figure) inspired by *salsa* pianist Eddie Palmieri. As solos follow, the piece continues to increase its activity. Finally, people in the audience mobilize to chant the title of Jara’s song to close the piece with unifying strength, joy and optimism.

These experiences have shown me how music can play an important role in building unity, not only for Asians, but for all oppressed nationalities and working class people. Particularly during these outRight and Right Reagan times when the media continues to spread Reaganism and demoralize us, we need to use music, as well as all of our creative resources, to help build an anti-Reagan front, to unite people to struggle to transform the right-wing

cynicism into revolutionary optimism. That was the powerful message that Black revolutionary poet, Amiri Baraka, expressed in his “How to Stop Reagan” poetry. As for me, I want to make music part of my whole life to help stop Reagan, to make revolution, to build socialism.

Why socialism? It is more than difficult for jazz musicians to work under the conditions of capitalist society. The availability of this folk/art form is limited to mostly small clubs where people have to buy drinks to support the music. Most of these small clubs are also not made available to Black people. The level of respect and support for jazz is by no means equal to Western European classical music because of the national oppression of Black people in this country. Capitalism only allows Blacks to “dance their oppression away” with Michael Jackson while profiting big on Mike’s work.

From my own experience as an Asian jazz pianist working under the conditions of capitalism, most of the time I don’t get to work with a full-operating piano. In fact, sometimes, I have to look for a piano bench! When Black pianist Roland Hanna and the all-Black New York Jazz Quartet performed at Oberlin College seven years ago, the college denied Hanna the use of their 12-foot grand because the piano was reserved for concert pianists Alicia de la Rocca and Pollini. It didn’t matter that Hanna had studied at the prestigious Eastman School and Juilliard. It was the mere fact that he was playing jazz. If he was a Black concert pianist like Andre Watts, it would have been cool.

Under capitalism, multinational corporations like Exxon support only Western European bourgeois culture for the white bourgeoisie. Under socialism, cultural institutions will be set up and will be accessible to all oppressed nationalities and working class people. I remember when Wendell Logan, Oberlin professor of African American Music, mused to me: “You know, there isn’t one institution in this country which deals exclusively with Native American Music.” Under socialism, I think there will be. □

restaurant worker organizer, leading an inspirational chant in Chinese. I really felt a part of the Movement then. That feeling of high spirit became a source of inspiration for my music. It turned me around.

Feeling the thrust of the Movement helped reshape “East Wind” and “Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan?” on a higher political and artistic level. The “Charlie Chan” piece was no longer a “light” sarcastic blues rap, but also expressed “heavier” elements revealed in the anti-Asian violence theme of Vincent Chin.

*Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan?
Charlie was a white man
With his two buck teeth
and his eyes pulled back
Vincent Chin lies dead
from his racist attack*

“**E**ast Wind” grew out of its “feel-goodism” into an *Asian Liberation Anthem*, with an introductory chant which was inspired by the Chinatown march and which symbolizes the people leading the

A TWENTIETH CENTURY TALE

The woman uttered a guttural moan under the cloth woven with patterns of guardian crocodiles and frogs. Her body formed the contour of mountains as the midwife pulled forth a baby blue from the cord's grip, the hue of a translucent lake at dawn. A slap from the midwife and he glowed red as the giant crab. Then his flesh assumed its genuine color — brown, like the succulent earth.

"What will you name him?" they asked.
 "Young Nation," replied the proud father.
 "Will he be a warrior?"
 "He will be a warrior and wear red."
 "Will he revere the spirits?"
 "He will honor the spirits of all things."
 "Will he be good to the people?"
 "He will lead the people as a loving father."

Young Nation grew. He was a warrior; he carried his bolo through wet, green jungles. He had courage and earned a red jacket and turban. He revered the spirits and offered libations to his mother's sweet-scented idols. His woman had gleaming black hair that fell heavily on both sides of her ears; agate and glass beads hung between her breasts.

The long nosed men who came to change their lives sent Young Nation to their church and school. He was a student and he read. He was a speaker and he stood on a platform and waved a paper. Now his woman had straight blond hair swirled over the top of her head and curls

that decorated the nape of her neck; yellow lace concealed her thighs and she spoke in cultured tones. Young Nation also spoke in cultured tones. He carried a book, a pen and a declaration. Laughing, he knotted his red scarf around his bolo and tossed them into the surging stream.

The long nosed men placed their white skin against his brown skin and told him he was too small, too stupid, too brown. Nevertheless, he carried a book, a pen and a declaration. Dreaming, he saw the power in his death and laid down the pistol. When they shot him, he bore a look of compassion and a torn declaration.

A woman's low cries echoed across his body. She covered him with a cloth woven with darting snakes, broad shields and pointed arrows.

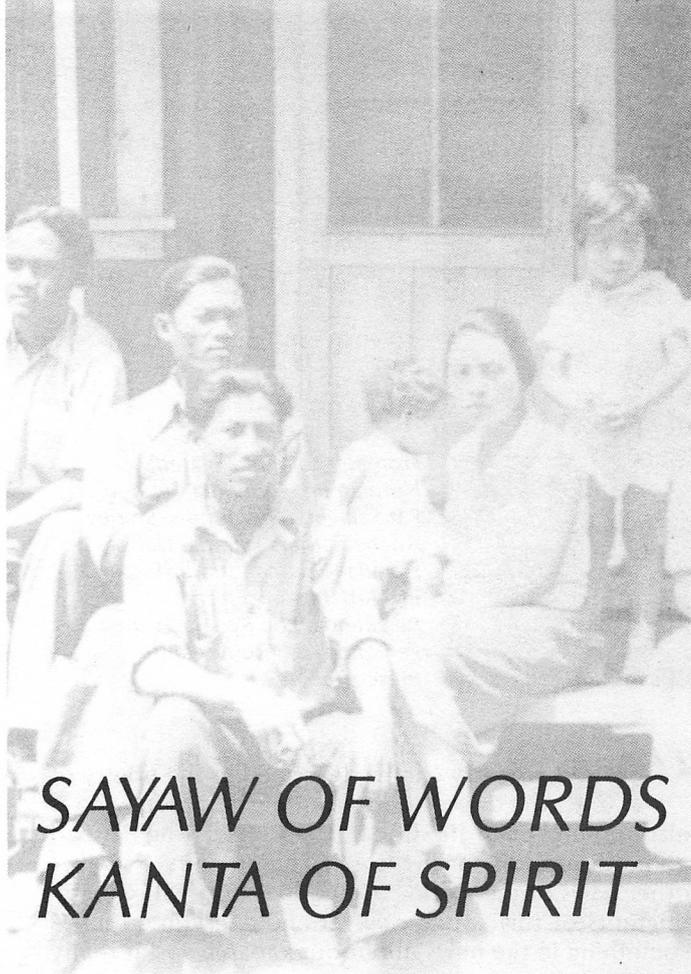
"Was he a good warrior?" they asked.
 "Yes, but he lost his power," replied the midwife.
 "Did he honor God?"
 "Yes, but God turned away."
 "Did he love the people?"
 "Yes, but they wouldn't respond."
 "What will we do?" they cried in despair.
 "Rejoice!" screamed the midwife, twirling and chanting. "Young Nation's son was born today."

Patricia Justiniani McReynolds

©1984



Block print: Political detainee, Camp Bicutan



Frank Mancao

SAYAW OF WORDS KANTA OF SPIRIT

By Lou Syquia and Ernestine Tayabas

Presco brings fresh squid he cleans and cooks on the spot. Virginia's baked spare ribs complement Jeff and Shirley's Chinese chicken salad. Al's shopping bag full of fresh fruit rounds out the Saturday afternoon feast. And there's always an ample supply of snacks, desserts, and lots to drink.

"Time to blow!" signals Norman. "Has anyone written anything lately?" As usual, Virginia delivers.

*in the tropical paradise on E. 14th street
al robles sings every love song
a manong knows in his heart
and shows us the proper way to eat fishheads
with your hands
always with your hands.
jayo calls the spirit of bulosan
to walk among us/his incantations
make even the revolutionaries pause and cry
mars reads passions and dignity
into every line from carlos' letter
and lou falls in love with aurora
with every quarter turn of the
moon in manilatown
again and again, the bright blue and
yellow of his vinta
sailing the bay from kearny st. to south of market.*

*all of us reach deep into the well of stories
we know like the taste of rice and bagoong
creating myth and legend
out of simple men
looking for that heaven in america
a tropic night sky, a woman to match
with the song of mandolins in her kisses
a place to sing only.
how many dreams have died searching
for this pilipino island in america.
the 7,101st island is here with us, in our hearts
in every song we sing in memory of the manongs.*

*let us declare our discovery, give our
island a name
proclaim a national holiday, the new manongs
have arrived . . .*

v. r. cerenio

Is this a party? Perhaps. It is also the regular monthly meeting of a group of Pilipino American writers, journalists, and creative artists who come together to share their work, but not before everyone's had enough to eat. It is a group that only recently decided to give itself a name. A name that aptly describes what they're all about: *Salita*, which in Tagalog means words.

For over a year now this group of Pilipino writers has been getting together "to blow" their poems, short stories, and essays in an atmosphere of respect and abiding interest in each other's work. The formation of the group was inevitable. "Some of us have known each other since juvenile days," explains Orvy Jundis, who is an artist as well as a writer. "We used to rap, like oral history, not knowing we would eventually become writers."

Seen as a support group for each other's work, members agree that it was important to have a group of writers who inspire and encourage each other to write about the Pilipino American experience. "At first I thought I didn't need a group in order to write," recalls Jeff Tagami whose poetry focuses on the experiences of a second generation Pilipino growing up in Watsonville. "But there are so few Pilipino American writers in California, much less the U.S.; it's better to be together."

Most of the members were influenced and inspired to write during the height of political activism and student involvement in the Bay Area in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Many of them came out of the International Hotel struggle and the Third World student strikes at San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley. The strike which was aimed at giving oppressed Third World people access to higher education, brought Pilipino students in alliance with Blacks, Chicanos, and other Asians to demand more relevant education. The strike gave rise to political and cultural consciousness and students demanded the right to



Pat Salaver

From left to right: (Seated) Norman Jayo, Virginia Cerenio, Pat Salaver, Orvy Jundis, Shirley Ancheta, Mars Estrada, Dalisay Estrada, Thelma Estrada. (Standing) Jeff Tagami, Oscar Penaranda, Lou Syquia, Aurora Fernandez, Al Robles and Presco Tabios.

ethnic studies classes that promoted the history and culture of Third World people.

Many were also active during the days when the Far West Conventions (which focused on Pilipino and Pilipino American issues) took place up and down the West Coast, and when the Agbayani Village Retirement Center was conceived and built for the retired *manong* farmworkers at Delano, California. Today, the writers are still grounded in the community and active in other artistic and political organizations such as the Philippine Education Support Committee (PESCom), Kearny Street Workshop, and the newly-formed Philippine Arts in the Community (PILAC). Inspiration comes from the struggles of the Pilipino community as well as from the lives and works of writers such as Joaquin Legaspi, Carlos Bulosan, Bienvenido Santos, Serf Syquia, Bayani Mariano, and more recently, Ed Badajos.

Contributions during the monthly meetings range from the political situation in the Philippines and Pilipinos in the U.S. to very personal poems about love and childhood.

The Distance

October

dark sister
 From the apple orchards
 Your odor is rising
 The farmworkers
 Are leaving their songs
 in the branches
 Every bruise is an ache
 rocking
 This long month
 The black fields open
 And the swollen nights
 Carry the shoes of the dead.

Shirley Ancheta

¹ Kababayan means fellow countryman

“My poetry can be described as the poetry of the oppressed,” says Mars Estrada, who is also a member of PESCom. “I get upset when I read about the oppression in the Asian community as well as other parts of the world.” He added, “The Pilipino immigrants of this country suffer and everytime there’s something in the news about our *kababayan*,¹ it really affects me.”

“Most of the things I write are usually based on a true experience,” says Virginia Cerenio, a member of Kearny Street Workshop. “My allusions come from our history. I think that other role models that have helped me are other Pilipino, Asian and Third World writers that I have read for the last 10 years. They have all come from the perspective of art for the sake of politics, not art for art’s sake.”

Art for the sake of politics, for some of these writers, means that their art, their language, is a transmission of the culture and ways of thinking. The written word, like the spoken words of oral history, is the lifeline to what is meaningful in the Pilipino culture and speaks to the Pilipino struggles and the oppression of that culture. When we look at the contributions of Bulosan, Santos, and others, we find that their words served to unite and organize the Pilipino people. Words become organizing tools and the use of the language helped to retain the Pilipino cultural identity and validated who they were. That tradition lives on today.

“We have a statement to say,” continues Virginia. “We are talking about important issues from a personal perspective that a common person can understand, that which crosses all common experiences. What we’re trying to do is a very difficult thing. As Pilipino writers we’re trying to find those images unique to us but which other people can understand. We’re documenting the fact that, yes, this is what we are.” □

Lou Syquia is a Bay Area poet and writer. Ernestine Tayabas is the San Francisco EAST WIND representative.

SAYAW OF WORDS KANTA OF SPIRIT*

Painting the immense panorama
Of our heritage and culture
With the symbols of language

Using colors of our visions
 our dreams
 our hopes

Who are we?

We are the tribe of now
A fusion of the continents of the world
The children of Mindanao, Luzon, and Visayas
With images of wide mountain provinces
And vinta hued Badjao seas

Listen to our Salita — our talk
Cebuano, Waray-Waray, Pampango, Ilocano,
Tagalog, Cavitenos, and so many others —
From the tribes: Ifugao, Kalinga,
Apayao, Igorot, Tasaday, Aeta, Tausug
And so on and on . . .

We are — Al Robles
Pinoy zen monk
With the cossack/Mongol headgear
Chanting new ancestral Malayan visions
Walking in Amerindian woods
With Bushido awareness

We are — Lou Syquia
Looking for chico brown
And golden mango sweetness
Forever searching
For emerald island dreams

We are — Oscar Penaranda
The wanderer
From Alaska canneries to Delano grapefields
College professor, a father
And always the storyteller

We are — Virginia Cerenio
From the halls of academia
And the paper jungles of bureaucracy
Whose art brings forth the beauty
 of the common and
 the overlooked

We are — Presco Tabios
Boxer, Vietnam veteran
A man with a family
A throwback from the 20's
A very heavy eater

We are — Norman Jayo
Irish-Pilipino
The smile
The charm
The many talents
The voice, yes, the voice

We are — Jeff Tagami
A poet from the orchards of Watsonville
Descendant from the first wave
Bringing the greenness of the fields
A voice we cannot afford to lose

We are — Shirley Ancheta
Dancer
Cooks authentic hometown delicacies
Toy collector
A writer beginning to flex her thoughts

We are — Jaime Jacinto
Chinese-Pilipino Latino translator
Student disguised as a custodian
Family man
A jock that got loose in the
Ivory tower of books

We are — Mars Estrada
The Balagtas of the group
Husband and father
Political motivator and instigator
The newest member of the band

And who am I?
I am your friendly neighborhood mailman
Who brings you the junk mail, the bills,
And letters from your loved ones
Today I bring you this poem, especially delivered.

*SAYAW means dance
KANTA means song

Ang Lipi Ni Lapu Lapu



Left, above: details from the mural.

By Antonio De Castro

The tallest outdoor mural in San Francisco was recently completed and unveiled in November of 1984 in San Francisco's South of Market community. Of even greater significance is that the mural's theme is Filipino and Filipino-American history. The significance lies in the fact that the mural was done at a time when conservative sentiments dominate all aspects of American life. Along with the poor, elderly, and ethnic minority groups, artists and artistic expression have felt the oppressiveness of the times. This has been particularly true for the art that deals with social and minority themes. But this mural entitled *Ang Lipi Ni Lapu Lapu* includes both.

The principal artist, Johanna Poethig, feels very strongly that content and aesthetics are of equal importance in her works. *Ang Lipi Ni Lapu Lapu* is a perfect example of the blend of the two. As a result, the mural has been well-received by a wide cross section of the Filipino and American communities even with its depiction of the struggles that Filipinos faced at the hands of Spain and the United States.

Ang *Lipi Ni Lapu Lapu*, which means "the descendants of Lapu Lapu," tells the story of the Filipino's struggle for freedom beginning with the Muslim chieftain Lapu Lapu who successfully repelled colonial domination by Spain. It was in these battles that Magellan was killed. The period of the revolution against 400 years of Spanish colonialism is represented by the figures of Jose Rizal, Apolinario Mabini, Tandang Sora and Andres Bonifacio, founder of the *Katipunan*. The mural also depicts the little-known but devastating war between the U.S. and the Philippines which resulted in the Philippines becoming the first colony of the U.S.

The story then shifts to the U.S. with scenes of the first Filipinos to set foot on North America in the 1500's after having jumped from the Spanish galleons. The immigration of Filipinos to work Hawai'i and California's agricultural fields at the turn of the 20th century and some of its prominent figures, such as Carlos Bulosan and Larry Itliong are represented.

The mural contains images of those Filipinos who came to the U.S. after having enlisted in the U.S. armed forces during World War II and those who came after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 which resulted in the largest influx of Filipinos to the U.S. The historic struggle of the I-Hotel is also shown.

The story of how *Ang Lipi Ni Lapu Lapu* was conceived and produced is an interesting one.

In 1983, Johanna started looking at the walls of South of Market in search of space for a mural. She found the Dimasalang House, a senior citizens residence that housed a large number of Filipinos. The streets surrounding the Dimasalang are named after Filipino figures: Lapu Lapu, Tandang Sora, Rizal, Mabini — heroes included in the mural. Dimasalang House had a blank nine-story wall. It was the perfect location. Tony Garcia, the manager of the residence house, enthusiastically embraced the idea and suggested the theme that was eventually used. A grant of \$14,800 was obtained from the city's Jobs Bill Funding and the project was on its way.

Two Filipino artists, Vicente Clemente and Presco Tabios helped paint the mural. Clemente arrived in the United States two years ago. He had received his artistic training in the Philippine prisons as a political detainee. Tabios, on the other hand, is a South of Market local who is intimately familiar with the residents and folklore of the community. Together, the three rendered a vivid work of art.

But the mural has not been free of controversy. First of all, Johanna is not a Filipina. She is Caucasian. But she lived in the Philippines from the time she was an in-

fant until she was 15 years old while her missionary father organized laborers and dealt with housing issues. Today, she speaks comfortably in Tagalog or English and her political perspectives have been influenced by her experiences in the Philippines and her parent's work. Almost all of her previous works reflect her Philippine-developed sensibilities.

Another controversy involved a proposed portrait of Benigno Aquino. The original drawing, which was subject to approval by the Dimasalang Board, included a portrait of him. The Board vetoed the portrait. The artists then decided to substitute the portrait with a figure of a man lying down on the ground, shot in the heart and head, representing *all* those who had died in the struggle.

The response to the mural has been phenomenal. Over 400 people attended the unveiling including some of whom were portrayed in the mural. Johanna points out that the response indicates the importance of such projects. She is quick to point out that the work would not have been as significant if it were not also good. "We speak of history and culture in aesthetically profound ways," she says.



Artist Johanna Poethig

Janice Sakamoto

The outcome of the project was the formation of a Filipino arts organization called *Pilipino Arts in the Community (PILAC)* which currently is conducting two projects. One is the production of a television documentary on the history of Filipino Americans planned for distribution on public television and the other is based on a commitment made at the unveiling ceremonies. The San Francisco city department that funded the mural, the Mayor's Office of Community Development, was so impressed by the work and the response it received that it committed funds for the production of another mural.

The theme of the next mural, says Johanna, is the Filipino concept of *alay* or offering. □

Antonio De Castro is a video producer and writer. He is currently working on a television documentary of Filipino American history.

Poem From Sierra Madre

*"Nature is on the side of the fighting masses.
Command every inch of it with genius."*

— Jose Ma. Sison

The rains have come,
Warriors beloved of the masses,
It is time to avenge Crispin Tagamolila.

The forest, swathed now by the dark of the sky,
Has become even more impervious
To the frantic roar of helicopters;
If they come we shall in any case
Shoot panic into their dragonfly wings.
Let the enemy commandos
Trudge up the Sierra Madre
With their six-pound packs.
The mud that will gather on their boots
Shall add to the weight on their backs.
We for our part
Shall slide nimbly down
The mountain trails,
Lightly up the giant boulders:
We serve the masses,
The masses are with us.

Today, as our comrades below
Help plant the season's new seedlings,
We shall run the enemy down: for now
Will the flash floods take them.

**The flash floods of our anger
Will bloodily take them.**

Mila Aguilar
© 1973



Mila D. Aguilar gives depth to the meaning of poetry by conveying the Pilipino people's yearnings for liberation. On August 6, 1984, her principles became the object of the Marcos regime's repression. Charged with conspiracy and subversion to commit rebellion — charges quickly dismissed by the civilian courts — she was placed in solitary confinement by a presidential decree that allows the government to hold detainees without charges. Although she is no longer in solitary, she continues to be imprisoned. Recently, Mila appeared before the Supreme Court of the Philippines to contest military jurisdiction over her case.

EAST WIND urges you to demand that Marcos unconditionally release Mila. Address correspondence to: Solicitor General Estelito Mendoza, 134 Amorsolo Street, Legaspi Village, Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines. □



September 21,
1983. Manila rises
up to protest the
anniversary of mar-
tial law.

Five Asian American Poets: A Response

In hopes of strengthening Asian American art and culture, EAST WIND welcomes varying opinions regarding articles published herein. In the Fall/Winter 1983 issue, Fred Wei-han Houn reviewed the works of Mei-Mei Bersenbrugge, Fay Chiang, Garrett Kaoru Hongo, Janice Mirikitani and Ronald Tanaka. Poet Richard Oyama responds with the following statement.

* * *

By Richard Oyama

Fred Wei-han Houn's review of five books of poetry in *EAST WIND* (Vol. 2, No. 2) exhibits the tendency toward ideological pronouncement that has flawed some Asian American poetry and literary criticism.

In his discussion of Mei-Mei Bersenbrugge's *Summits Move With the Tide*, which is not her most recent book, Houn claims that "her Chinese images and references are . . . ornaments to add color" and quotes from her poem "Chronicle." The following is a stanza from that poem: "Each day/my Chinese grandmother bathes me/with elaboration in an iron tub;/amahs waiting in lines/with sterilized water and towels/clucked and smiled/and rushed about the tall stone room/in tiny slippers." There is nothing "ornamental" about this stanza. In this reminiscence, the poet's fondness for her childhood in China is evident (although she indirectly alludes to the tradition of binding women's feet in the image, "tiny slippers"). Houn asserts that Bersenbrugge doesn't deal with "the lives of the majority of Asian Americans in

Chinatown" and other Asian American communities. Much of the time, Bersenbrugge makes her home in New Mexico and images of that southwestern landscape reverberate in her poems. Hopefully, a writer instills a sense of place in her work, and Bersenbrugge does that with uncommon vividness. Her poetry shows an affinity for the spirit of non-Western cultures, particularly Native American cultures.

For a constellation of reasons — immigration patterns, the Japanese American internment, forced resettlement, school or career relocation, urban flight — Asian Americans reside not only in their own geographic communities, but in other towns and cities with smaller Asian American populations as well. Regional differences give rise to writers whose voices may be as diverse as their backgrounds and geographies. Are we to condemn our writers because they write about the places where they live, or because the sources of their work don't fit Houn's dogmatic prescription?

Houn criticizes poet Fay Chiang for being overly concerned with the personal in her second book, *Miwa's Song* (Sunbury Press). The women's movement has been credited with the phrase, "the personal is political," meaning that the seemingly trivial details of daily life, the single acts and choices we make and do during the day, are imbued with a political dimension. In Chiang's book, *Autumn Dusk*, the long, moving elegy for her father, the poet shows her compassion for those close to her and her receptivity to Mexican culture by her use of sensual details: "by the *zocalo* / the cornwoman husks ears of maize / worn, strong fingers / toss them into small buckets / of boiling water." Chiang's poetry is concerned with

dailiness: her work, her family, friends, those she loves, her travels. Those qualities of caring and sensitivity in Chiang's work are intimations of what is best in ourselves and in our connection with others.

Ronald Tanaka's *The Shino Suite* (Greenfield Review Press) is a book-length sequence of poems which incorporates a variety of voices and languages, and reflects the poet's moods and concerns. I believe that *The Shino Suite* is precise and finely-crafted, and expresses beauty, irony, estrangement, calm and tenderness, the last especially in those affectionate poems to the poet's daughter. The volume is anything but "tepid and self-complacent" as Houn claims. Tanaka distills emotion in his verse: "i left you one last / persimmon. a black crow came to / receive it. now here are the leaves / i have brought for you, / and these, / and these, / and these." Houn points out that other Asian American writers have shown pride in Asian heritage in their work. Tanaka proves to be almost reverential toward traditional Japanese arts and culture.

Houn defines Asian American poetry as a "collective body of folk and art traditions that reflects a . . . common experience shared by Asian and Pacific Islander nationalities in America." A folk or naturalistic current exists in Asian American literature represented by the work of prose writers such as Carlos Bulosan, Louis Chu, John Okada, Toshio Mori, and others, but in general, Houn ignores the *imaginative* aspect of writing. The contemporary Asian American writer must also be free to explore non-naturalistic forms and techniques as well, e.g., use of Asian myth, folklore and belief, imagism, surrealism, "magic realism," fantasy and dream logic, performance art, multimedia presentations, film and collage

techniques, etc.

Houn's implications that poetry cannot be political if personal, intellectual, or ambiguous is a dangerous oversimplification. In the recent *Bridge Poetry Issue* (Vol. 8, No. 4), editor Walter Lew asserts that the "movement" style of Asian American poetry "had few rich models and worked itself into a corner by rejecting in simplistic, 'politically correct' moves the whole achievement of previous U.S. and European verse as being mainstream and imperialist." We need those "rich models"; to deny ourselves the experience of reading other writers is to deny the possibilities of growth in our own work.

The poetry of Denise Levertov is intimate, sensuous and political, treating subjects such as the Vietnam War or the threat of nuclear annihilation. Ernesto Cardenal, a Marxist poet-priest and current Minister of Culture of Nicaragua, is nothing if not an intellectual — the range of his allusions is astonishing — while his commitment to the Nicaraguan Revolution is a fierce passion in his poetry (see *Zero Hour*, published by New Directions). African poets such as Aimé Césaire borrowed from French Surrealism, with all its obscurity, to "explode language" and give birth to the Negritude Movement in Africa, foreshadowing the Black Arts Movement in this country. Afro-American poet Jayne Cortez writes poems that are dense with jagged surreal imagery and passionately committed to change.

Houn's assertion that Asian American writing should be "reflective of . . . the lives of the majority of Asian Americans" endangers the writer's essential freedom to write whatever he or she chooses, and that to impose "appropriate forms or content" on a writer is to exercise a form of mind control. His viewpoint would allow little room for a poet to experiment with form, content or voice, unless the work suited his narrow party line or class outlook. I'm not suggesting that class analysis of poetry has no value whatsoever, but that it can be a limited vision unless the critic takes other aspects of poetry into consideration. But despite attempts by critics such as Houn to lock Asian American

writers into an ideological mindset, I believe that they will continue to explore the whole range of voices, forms, themes, subjects, and experiences available to them. □

Richard Oyama was coordinator of the Basement Writers Workshop from 1974-78. His poetry and prose have

appeared in *Breaking Silence*, *American Born and Foreign*, *Ayumi* and other publications, and he co-edited *American Born and Foreign*, an Asian American poetry anthology published by Sunbury Press in 1979. Oyama has a B.A. in English from the City College of New York and an M.A. in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University.

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EAST WEST 報西東

By Susan Hayase

People often remark about how much we smile and how happy we look when we're performing. Of course, some of that has to do with how we try to project our energy into the audience and the kind of stage presence we're trying to develop. For me, it's also a reflection of an excitement and exhilaration which is hard to describe. Just playing music with other people is fun. Playing the taiko, "striking through" the drum, using your whole body, making such loud and dynamic music, hearing and feeling the audience's excitement, even working up a sweat and getting tired while still continuing to play — it all feels even better than it looks!

When I play, I am thinking about the audience and playing for them,

hoping that we are making more than just a visceral impact. After the performance, we usually get a lot of feedback from the audience; people come up and tell us what they thought and it's always very positive, which is nice. But, typical of the kind of comments that I *really* like to hear are those from a young, isolated Asian person who has never seen taiko before, or from a surprised Nisei or Issei who has seen only assimilated, Yuppie Sanseis.

For these people, American taiko is something very powerful and

significant. In a society in which Nikkei people, and Asians in general, are politically and culturally oppressed, American taiko is exciting, inspiring, and uplifting because it is a loud and strong symbol against that political and cultural oppression. For Nikkei and other Asian American national-



Graphic: Leon Sun Photo: Mike Fong

ties, cultural oppression has meant assimilation that is enforced by the threat of ostracism, ridicule, and a violent anti-Asian backlash. Played by Japanese Americans in a society which says we are a "model minority" and better than anyone at losing our identity, American taiko is a visual and musical statement against assimilation.

Unfortunately, some relatively enthusiastic sectors of our audience don't understand this. Because of the media hype of the recent successes of Japanese multinational corporations, there has been a lot of fetishization of Japanese culture. There are "sashimi experts," calendars with twelve months worth of pictures of sushi, *ninja* classes, ad nauseum. Some of these people — I call them Japanophiliacs — think that the San Jose Taiko Group and other American taiko groups are a part of this trend. But they couldn't be more wrong; that's not where American taiko comes from.

The San Jose Taiko Group was formed in 1973 and subsequently developed by people who were growing up during and participated in many of the political struggles of the late 1960's and early 1970's. These were things such as the mass movement against the war in Viet Nam and the struggle to establish and maintain Asian American Studies on the college campuses. During this time period, which is frequently trivialized by Hollywood and those who sat on the sidelines, Asian American activists became strongly influenced (everyone was influenced) by the exploding Afro-American cultural movement.

This new cultural movement rejected and criticized the bland, commercialized, and consistently racist popular culture blaring at us over the airwaves. It also criticized those white chauvinists who promoted the cultural entertainment of western European aristocracy, such as opera and ballet, as the only "legitimate" American forms. The Black Liberation Movement, and the movements in the Asian communities and in the Chicano and Latino communities that drew inspiration from it, realized that for the people to be empowered

they had to be not only organized, but inspired and delivered from "Amos and Andy," "Charlie Chan," and the "Frito Bandito." Hand in hand with the movements for political power and democratic rights, Afro-American, Asian American, and Chicano artists, writers, and musicians began to assert themselves and to ferociously battle for the minds and the spirits of their people, to win them over to a new vision, a new identity based on pride and struggle and a hatred of oppression.

For me, as a musician and an aspiring writer, this understanding of the origins of Asian American art and culture is extremely important. If you can understand these origins, then you can understand that Asian American (and Japanese American) art and culture is not just an "interesting, ethnic alternative" to baroque music or punk rock. If you can understand the World War II concentration camp experience of Japanese people in the United States and the effects that that has had in real, human terms on the Nikkei community to this day, then you can understand the great significance of the upsurge of the American taiko movement.

Musically, American taiko reflects its history. In the San Jose Taiko Group, most of the pieces that we play have been composed by members of the group, who are predominantly Sansei, and therefore, reflect not *merely* traditional Japanese musical influences, but also the jazz, soul, pop, rock, and latin musical influences that form our cultural experience. We are also influenced by the traditional music of other Asian Pacific nationalities. One of our most prolific and most talented composers is a Pilipino American. Some of us have musical backgrounds: we have several pianists, some guitar players, an ex-flautist, an ex-trombonist. Some have no musical background at all, just a drive to play and create taiko music.

This creative drive is surfacing in many places in the United States and also in Canada, in any place where there is a concentration of Nikkei. Along with the San Jose Taiko Group, there is the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, Denver Taiko, Soh Daiko (New York), Katari Taiko (Vancouver), the Seattle

Taiko Group, Kinnara Taiko (Los Angeles), Matsuri Daiko Aiko Kai (Los Angeles), Osuwa Taiko (Toronto), Hinode Taiko (Winnipeg). There are also groups in Ogden, Utah, Orange County, California, Venice, California, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. All of these groups are struggling to develop their musical technique, their style, their composing, their audiences, and their organization.

This struggling development is one of the most exciting things about American taiko. We know that we are breaking new ground, and we are continually confronted with many questions with no easy answers. We want to communicate with the audience and educate them, but what are we saying, what *should* we be saying to the audience? What is Asian American music? There is no dictionary definition that is beyond debate. How can we best sustain our group financially so that we can free ourselves to compose? Can we afford to play for free, even though many of our most consistent and enthusiastic audiences within the Nikkei community frequently cannot afford to pay us? How can we develop American taiko beyond what it is today into a high quality, respected musical form? What does that mean anyway since we are not the New York Philharmonic or the San Francisco Ballet?

Personally, I believe that the movements that gave American taiko its birth will ultimately be the forces that carry American taiko forward into its next phase, whatever that may be. For one thing, the movements for justice and equality for all people, against assimilation and racist violence, for pride and a new Nikkei identity and culture, are what give American taiko its strong appeal, its power to inspire. And the exciting dynamic sounds of taiko can inspire us to struggle harder and look to the future. Can you see why playing taiko means so much to me? □

Susan Hayase is a third generation Japanese American. She has been a member of the San Jose Taiko Group since 1980 and is Chairperson of the San Jose Nihonmachi Outreach Committee.

A Thesis on Black and Asian Unity: How We Was, What Changed the Way We Was, and the Origin of the Rainbow as Told by Two Thick-Skulled Individuals Known as GT Wong and Willie Jones

Willie used to say: "Hey Chungking! Chop Suey Charlie! You rike fly lice?"
 GT said: "Shut up, Sambo! *shoe-shine!* Go hump a watermelon!"
 "Washy-clothesy! Washy-clothesy! Y'all go back to Japan!"
 "I'm Chinese, Tarbaby! Ain't no Buddhahead!"
 "Chink, y'all the same!"

That's how it used to be. The dialogue would degenerate into mothers and the two would get into thumpin' n' duke-ing it out. Some people are still there today, but that ain't what this story is all about.

This poem's about the Rainbow. It's about unity and struggle and friendship and change. It's about GT Wong and Willie Jones and a lot of folks like them. This poem's about the Rainbow.

With GT, realization first started setting in with Huntley-Brinkley or some other faceless geeks on the six o'clock news. Black Nationtime blew up in his living room. He found Freedom Riders clinging onto his walls, exploded faces of four little innocent church-going *murdered* Black girls mooning ghostly in his windows, Medgar Evers bleeding on his rug, and cracker cops beefing up against the door. GT still didn't like Blacks, but what's fair is fair, and he began to understand that they were getting a raw deal. Just like Chinese.

With Willie, his thinking started to change when he found out that a Chink was the first *outlaw* killed in the Watts Riot of '65, when he heard Muhammed Ali say, "Ain't no Viet Cong ever called me nigger," and seeing Asians in handcuffs 'cause they demonstrated with Blacks. Willie still didn't necessarily *like* Asians, but he told a Soul Brother: "Them Chinks are niggers too."

Before thick-skulled Willie and GT had time to half-way absorb and sift out what was going on around them the whole Viet Nam mess was in full swing. GT saw Blacks alongside him marching against the war hollering "Ho! Ho! Ho Chi Minh!" and Black Panthers holding a gun in one hand and the Red Book in the other. He turned and told his little brother, "Hey, these Spooks are *cool*, man." More importantly, he started to change his outlook.

Willie picked up on Mao after King got killed when the red commie came out with a statement supporting *Black Power*, supporting "*The Storm*," supporting *revolutionary struggle* on behalf of all the Chinese. Next thing Willie found out, Kwame Nkrumah and Robert F. Williams had both gone to see the Chairman and Chinese and Tanzanians were side-by-side building railroads in Africa. He thought about the freedom fighters Down South, freedom fighters in Southeast Asia, freedom fighters in South Africa, and made a connection. He began to think: "Them Vietnamese and Latinos *baaddd*."

In the meantime, the Rainbow had already started and been created, what with Viet Nam and Black, Chicano, Asian, Native American and other kinds of Power. GT and Willie was unconscious about it, but they were already part of the spectrum. Though they wore shades to mask bloodshot eyes, new colors flamed in their visions.

Willie got married and had a son. GT got married and had a daughter. Neither one of them saw hair nor shadow of each other until they both hooked up at a meatplant near Oakland many years later.

“Hey Tarbaby! Long time no see!”

“Chungking! Good to see you, baby!”

They worked and worked and worked *together*. They sweated and sweated and sweated *together*. They got hurt *together*. They cussed *together* and spitted *together*. They went to the same tavern *together* with all the other workers *together*. They *united together* and went out on strike *together* shoulder-to-shoulder with men and women of all nations and backgrounds against the superconglomerate/multi-national/capitalistic/monopolistic/superprofit-istic/superficialistic/son of an octopus/vulture/whore empire known as *Safeway Stores* and took on a sell-out union, scabs, kiss-asses, rednecks, police, dogs and guards and other mutations.

GT picked up a book and read about how the coolies were dragged here on the same slave ships that dragged Africans.

Willie’s grandpa told him about how he once saw a whole town of Chinese lynched.

To make a long story short, the two gradually grew to respect each other and each other’s cultures, experiences, histories, and traditions. And those of other folks too. They became so much richer, stronger, freer. They traded hard heads for hard hats and became a *conscious* part of the Rainbow, Rainbow, Rainbow fighting against the hard darkness of night.

These days, when GT and Willie see each other, they both call each other the *same* names.

No, not Sambo.
Not Chungking.
Not Tarbaby.
Not Coolie Boy.
Not Nigger.
Not Chink.
Not Jungle Bunny.
Not Jap.
No slave names, *No! No slave names!*
Eye-to-eye they say:
“HEY BRO! WHAT’S HAPPENING, BROTHER?”

by GT Wong
© 1984

Excerpted with the poet’s permission.
(Written for and read at a New York Asians for Jesse Jackson program,
March 9, 1984, Washington Square Church.)

By Naomi Sodetani

"The Sansei (third) generation is now just the beginning. The awakening of the fact that we do have artists of importance; we do have talents that are significant; we have a message of substance that's important to America. These can be expressed in a viable, commercial fashion."

— R.A. Shiomi, San Francisco, 8/84

All the time Rick spent out in the wilderness is paying off now.

Just four years ago, he'd been traveling for over a decade, doing odd jobs, community work, writing short stories. His folks quit urging him to get a "good job and settle down."

Then, in 1982, the Toronto-born wanderer got "Yellow Fever."

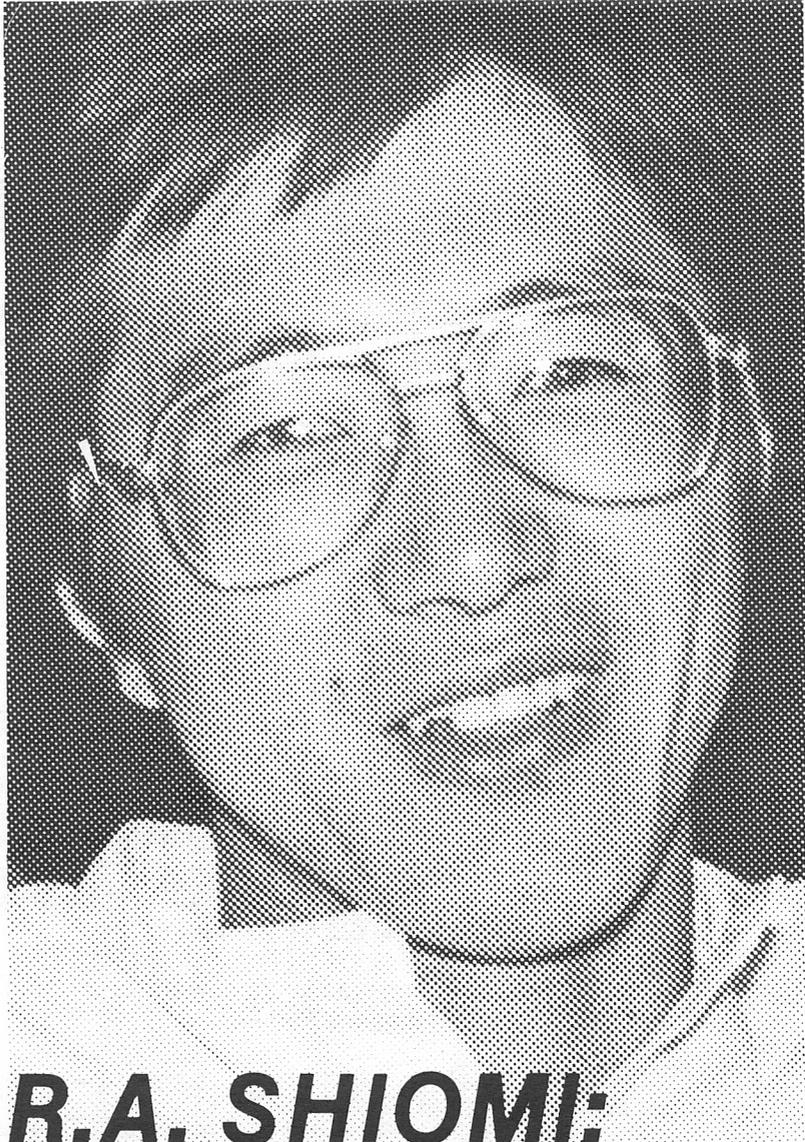
His first play, a Sam Spade parody set in J-Town with a Japanese Canadian detective hero, premiered at San Francisco's Asian American Theater Company. It was an immediate hit, and picked up awards galore, including a Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Award and several Bernies.

Later in New York, Los Angeles, Toronto and Seattle, "Yellow" gained more solid critical praise. A personal triumph for Rick, the play's success is a boon for Asian America, as well. Japanese and British troupes have expressed interest in producing "Yellow Fever" abroad next year.

Theater embodies the desires, fears and struggles of a people in change as few other art forms can. So, Asian American theater, in particular, is vital to helping us connect with and affirm our own bi-cultural experiences.

Shiomi's "Once Is Never Enough," written with actor Marc Hayashi ("Chan is Missing") and actor/writer Lane Nishikawa ("Life in the Fast Lane"), opened in August at the Asian American Theater Company. It's a sequel to "Yellow Fever."

While certain style elements derive from "Fever" — the entertaining detective *genre*, comic relief and multiple levels of meaning which interweave love, violence and social commentary — "Once" doesn't just copy an old hit formula.



Thomas Wing Wo

R.A. SHIOMI: *The Awakening of Asian American Theater*

It's "far more intense," says Shiomi, and hinges on a murder involving cocaine committed in J-Town. It also delves into the relatively unexplored areas of Asian American love relationships and interracial marriage.

Rick just finished the script for a musical, "Prime Time," which will be produced this season in New York. He's now working on a screenplay for a feature film about a family's experience in the WWII detention camps.

Considered one of today's foremost Asian American dramatists, he feels "the whole discovery of Asian American theater is just beginning to happen now. And I feel lucky to be, in some ways, right on the cutting edge of that."

* * *

Sodetani: Rick, how did your active

involvement in the Japanese community in Vancouver feed your writing?

Shiomi: To begin with, "Yellow Fever" is *about* community. On the surface, it's a parody, it's got romance, adventure and all that. But it's really about how Japanese or Chinese Canadians view themselves — and their role in society. Sam's a detective on Powell Street, down on skid row, where all the Japanese Canadians used to be and nobody wants to be anymore. So he's like the keeper of the flame of an older, more traditional perception. Everybody else has gone to the suburbs, trying to "make it," trying not to be Asian — which is what I was part of for a long time.

Sodetani: You've said before that

"Yellow Fever"'s characters reflect various parts of your own personality.

Shiomi: Yes. Nancy Wing is a hip, successful professional who has the attitude of looking at the community from the outside; thinking it full of cripples and retarded people — those who couldn't make it in the mainstream. When I came to the community I said, "Well, I'll help you. I know what's going on." But really, I didn't. Then I got to be more like Chuck Chan — someone upwardly mobile, in touch with the community — yet not always there.

Sodetani: What's the central conflict in "Yellow Fever"?

Shiomi: It's basically between one who wants to be Asian Canadian and one who doesn't. Those elements are at war in all of us: a kind of love-hate within us about ourselves. Ultimately, I found the process of assimilation demands us to be not who we are — and that's a no-win game. I saw the community as the buried treasure I spoke of, for me as a writer.

Sodetani: How does "Once Is Never Enough" differ from "Yellow Fever"?

Shiomi: While "Yellow Fever" dealt with some community, romantic issues — "Once" is far deeper. Sam's much more vulnerable in his involvement with Yoko. Whereas Sam ran the whole show in "Yellow Fever," he's not as in control here. It also has contemporary elements that are more intense, such as cocaine, the redevelopment of J-Town.

Sodetani: A theme you said you'd explore more is the issue, or importance of Asian American relationships.

Shiomi: Yes, that's a relatively unexplored area. A lot think as long as you're both Asian American, things will be o.k. That's not the case by any means. A very complex set of variables and dynamics is involved. On the flip side is the issue of interracial dating and marriages. At first, in the whole assimilation trip, that was what everybody did. Lately, though, people have started to question why such a high percentage — 60, 70, 80,

90% — is marrying out.

Sodetani: How do you view that phenomenon?

Shiomi: I think it's probably due to unreal, negative stereotypical expectations Asian American men and women have towards each other. The "new Asian American woman" wants to be the minority feminist personality, but may be treated very differently. And the guy is still struggling for his male identity in a white-dominated society. It's a double bind in many ways.

Sodetani: Where is Asian American theater today?

Shiomi: It's really been going great guns for the last two, three years — since 1980, when David Hwang's plays hit New York. Phil Gotanda's work is doing well. Obviously, a new wave of Asian American playwrights is coming to the fore. With that, our actors can take on larger roles than just house-boy stuff. They'll get a chance to flex their muscles, show their skill. With any luck, over the next decade we'll see reviewers in major cities with a strong sense of what "Asian American theater" really is. We need to break into the commercial, popular appeal kind of thing where our plays can run six months or a year somewhere. It's more difficult, you have to move away from material that's intrinsically of interest just to Asian Americans.

Sodetani: You mean "crossover material."

Shiomi: Right. I think "Yellow Fever" worked with its whole detective *genre* appeal, romance, adventure, etc. to draw mainstream people into Asian community issues which perhaps, a lot didn't understand: "What are these people talking about?" But by the time they left the theater, they learned something about who "these people" and their struggles were.

Sodetani: You're not afraid of being called "commercial"?

Shiomi: No. Because in the same way that I want to be commercial, I need to be educational. That's tough, be-

cause I could have nothing to say and make money — but I wouldn't be happy doing that. So in a sense, the mark I'm shooting for is much higher. I'd also like to explore film or t.v. because theater is a relatively limited medium in terms of total popular exposure. The impact of features and t.v. is much greater. But at the same time, those are much more difficult and expensive to develop. I'm glad to see inroads are being made in the last few years — "Chan Is Missing" was a major shot in that direction, sort of saying, "Yeah, we can produce material that features Asian Americans and hit up a large market."

Sodetani: A highly-respected white director I know didn't like the distinction made between "Asian American" or "Black" theater as unique forms. "Theater is theater," he said. How do you feel about this?

Shiomi: That's a real classic mistake. It presupposes that if a person doesn't have different ways of understanding, *his* view is the universal, right? Nineteenth century British used to ask: "What is this 'American literature'?" Nothing. Real literature exists only on this side of the ocean." Americans struggled for legitimacy, right? Now, John Wayne and Sir Laurence Olivier are the "universals," and we must say, "No, there are *other* ways of looking at things."

Great writers have always written from a specific context to express the larger. Same for Asian Americans. We deal with unrequited love, with revenge, jealousy — all those universals of human nature. But we put them in the context of Asian America — its values, strengths, weaknesses. The problem is that often mainstream theaters, directors, writers, think minority theater is "just community groups who don't have anything substantial to say. Bad news." Separate but not equal, right? Fact is, in some ways, the story of America may be much more interestingly told through the eyes of minorities. Because they've understood something about America that America can't — or won't — understand about itself. And that, I think, is much closer to the truth of what it is to be American than not. □

No Teahouse Tonight

Asian
American
Arts and
Culture in N.Y.C.



Kenn Duncan

Hector Tello in "Sparrows." Saeko Ichinohe & Company, Inc.

By Gerri Igarashi Yoshida

Hyun Ja Kim Dance Company



Johan Elbers

Asian American arts and culture is experiencing an unprecedented renaissance in New York City. Nowhere else can you find such a high concentration of dedicated actors and actresses, dancers, musicians, poets, playwrights and directors from Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines and the Pacific Islands. This creative excitement and ferment reflects much about the emerging new identity of Asian Americans in the Eighties.

First of all, there is a great deal of interest in traditional Asian arts as evidenced by performances of the Nomura Kyogen Theatre at the Japan House, the Hyun Ja Kim Korean Dance Company at the Asia Society and the Grand Kabuki at the Metropolitan Opera House. Of equal importance are grassroots groups such as Soh Daiko, a Japanese drum corps based at the New York Buddhist Church or Tahavika, a Pilipino Ameri-

can music ensemble. Sahomi Tachibana has been instrumental in preserving the Obon Festival of folk dances for the Japanese community.

These community cultural activities culminate in the annual Asian Pacific Heritage Festival at Lincoln Center. Many companies gather together to salute our common cultural background. This diversity is represented by groups ranging from Pencak Silak, Indonesian martial arts, to Margaret Yuen's Young Dancers, high school students performing indigenous Chinese dances, to Nekron 99, a Chinese American rock 'n roll band.

In theatre and dance there are many individuals and organizations devoted to exploring the unique experience of being Asian in America. In his plays, *F.O.B.*, *Dance and the Railroad*, and *Family Devotions*, (all produced at Joseph Papp's Public Theatre), David Henry Hwang has written with humor, sensitivity and affection

of the Asian American lifestyle: its trials, tribulations and triumphs, both past and present.

The Pan Asian Repertory Theatre has consistently provided high quality employment for Asian American performers, writers, directors and tech people. Director Tisa Chang has demonstrated her commitment to re-defining the Asian American image in her selection of plays which includes a bilingual version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Trilogy* of plays about Japanese internment camps and *Sunrise* and *Teahouse* by Chinese playwrights Cao Yu and Lao She, respectively.

Several dance companies integrate East and West in their work. The Asian American Dance Theatre has a repertoire of both traditional dances and modern dances inspired by Asian themes and techniques. In her synthesis of Japanese dance, folklore and tradition with the energy and bold movements of American modern dance, Saeko Ichinohe reveals her fascination and respect for both cultures.

Some Asian American artists, such as Ping Chong or Yoshiko Chuma, are avant garde and experimental in their theatrical events. Although *A Race* by Mr. Chong and *The Eager Witness* by Ms. Chuma show an overt Asian influence, they both present a satiric, tongue-in-cheek parody of contemporary American life. Their Asian-ness is revealed more in their attitude and values rather than in stylistic approach.

Due to increasing intermarriages, a new voice is emerging from those of mixed parentage. Playwright Velina Houston identifies herself as Black, Japanese and Blackfoot Indian. Her play, *American Dreams*, produced by the Negro Ensemble Company, concerns a Black soldier who brings his Japanese warbride back to Brooklyn.

Shakti's mother is a Japanese dancer and her father is an East Indian professor of philosophy and English. Her dance drama, *Himiko: The Sun Goddess*, is based on an ancient Japanese myth and uses traditional and modern Indian dance, a troupe of dancers from the Vasanta-

mala Dance Institute and a corps of Japanese *taiko* drummers.

Many non-Asian artists are being impacted by the growing presence of Asians in America. Most visible is Stephen Sondheim whose *Pacific Overtures* is enjoying an Off-Broadway revival at the Promenade Theatre after a highly successful showcase at the York Theatre. Although its 1976 Broadway debut met with mixed reviews, audiences are now more receptive to its central themes: the East-West culture clash introduced by Commodore Perry's gunboat diplomacy and the price Japan has had to pay for accelerated technology and modernization.

Spectra Arts and the Asia Society co-produced *Dancing Ink*, an innovative collaboration that brought together Chinese calligraphy, western and Chinese instruments, modern dance and traditional Chinese chanting. This unusual exploration validates the belief that art can transcend national differences when a mutual respect and admiration is established.

Art and politics make strange bedfellows, but the *Asian American Artists for Jesse Jackson* benefit was a testament to a growing political, cross-cultural movement. A diverse Third World audience responded enthusiastically to the poetry of G.T. Wong, the music of "Charlie" Chin and Fred Houn's Afro-Asian Music Ensemble and Sharon Hom's choreopoem, "We, the Dangerous" by Janice Mirikitani. This presentation proved that the concerns of Asian Americans are universal and shared by the other disenfranchised minorities of the Rainbow Coalition.

Filipino Artists in Exile, a forum given by Basement Workshop is another example of artists actively involved in political issues. Alberto Florentino, Luis Cabalquinto, Linda Kalayaan Faigao, Ninotchka Rosca and Luis Francia spoke out against U.S. imperialism in their native land and dealt with the problems that the American lifestyle has imposed on Filipino society.

The struggles and accomplishments of all these Asian American performing artists in the Big Apple point to a positive self-image for all Asian Americans. It is an affirmation of the richness of our past, a celebra-



Shakti in "Himiko: the Sun Goddess"

tion of our similarities and differences and a tribute to our courage and creativeness as a people of color. □

Gerri Igarashi Yoshida is an actress currently performing Off-Broadway in *Pacific Overtures*. Her theatre and dance reviews appear in the *New York Nichibei*. She has written two one act plays, *Momotaro: The Peach Boy* and *The Rehearsal*. In her spare time, she is married to actor/director Peter Yoshida.

Forewarning: This piece is completely uncensored so if there are any small children in the room, you'll have to please excuse them, or excuse yourself, whatever the case may be.

"You're disgusting." "You're offensive." "You're sexist." "You're too political." "You're obsessed with sex."

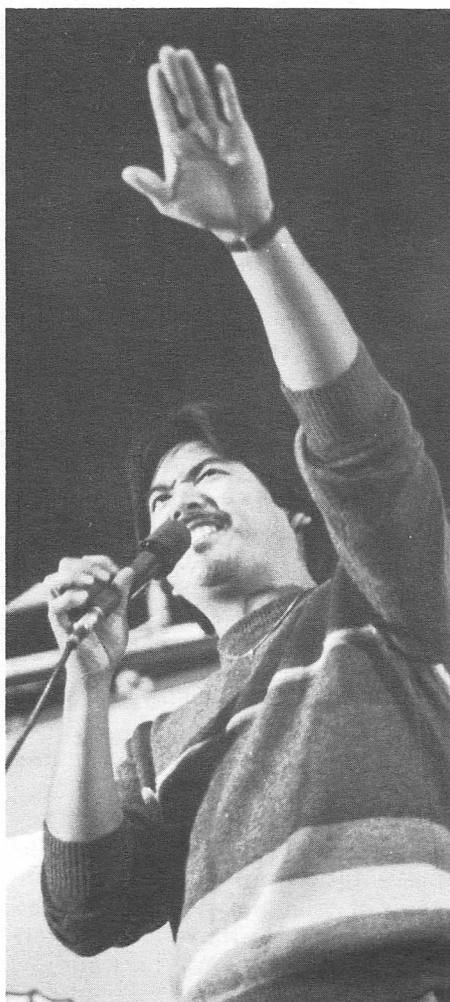
These are some of the things I hear all the time. Are they true? They are to the people who made the remarks. In fact, you ask a hundred different people and they'll give you a hundred different interpretations of my comedy routines. I can't comment on what others think, but I can comment on what these routines mean to me.

I've always favored reality over fantasy in looking at things. Taking things as they are, rather than ignoring or overlooking things. What does that mean? Well, for instance, comedians like Steve Martin or Robin Williams are fantastic entertainers. However, their humor has nothing to do with reality. And consequently, are great vehicles for "escape" from our daily problems. I simply cannot relate to such humor centered on beings from another planet or arrow through the head. However, I will laugh. But after I laugh, it will leave me with nothing and I can't remember what I laughed about. On the other hand, I prefer the humor of Richard Pryor, Lenny Bruce and Dick Gregory because of their adherence to reality. In other words, after the laughs subside I'm left with something whether it's sadness, anger, pain, pride, joy or just awareness.

So, comedy for me is a way to express my own feelings, perceptions, views, and yes, realities of being an Asian in America. I have always said that I do not pretend to speak for anybody but myself. But what does this have to do with my comedy? For example, one of the recurring themes of my routines is the portrayal of Asians in the media. To me, the way whites who are in control of the media portray Asians is a perfect example of something that is fantasy (negative stereotyping) rather than reality. Someone once said that in every stereotype there is a seed of truth, to

confessions of an asian american comedian

By Bob Matsueda



Mike Fong

which my reply is, "It depends on who is doing the stereotyping." To get back to the point, Asians are mainly presented as one-dimensional caricatures. Women are subservient, docile, fragile china dolls. And the men are asexual, wimpy, devious, etc. etc. (I know you've heard this before.) So with this backdrop in mind came my inspiration for routines like "Star Trek" which is on my first album, *Breaking It Down*, as well as other routines. The following is an excerpt from "Star Trek":

Did you all see Star Trek II? Well, everybody got a promotion. You know, it was Captain Spock, Admiral Kirk, First Officer Chekhov. But the minorities didn't get a promotion. See, you know, Uhura (the Black woman character) is still operating the phone and Sulu (the Asian man) is still driving. Right, he's the spaced-time kid. But the one thing that really pissed me off is that in 15 years of watching Star Trek Sulu never did no fucking. I mean, everybody got a love scene; everybody got it, even the pointy-eared motherfucker got it and he didn't even want the shit.

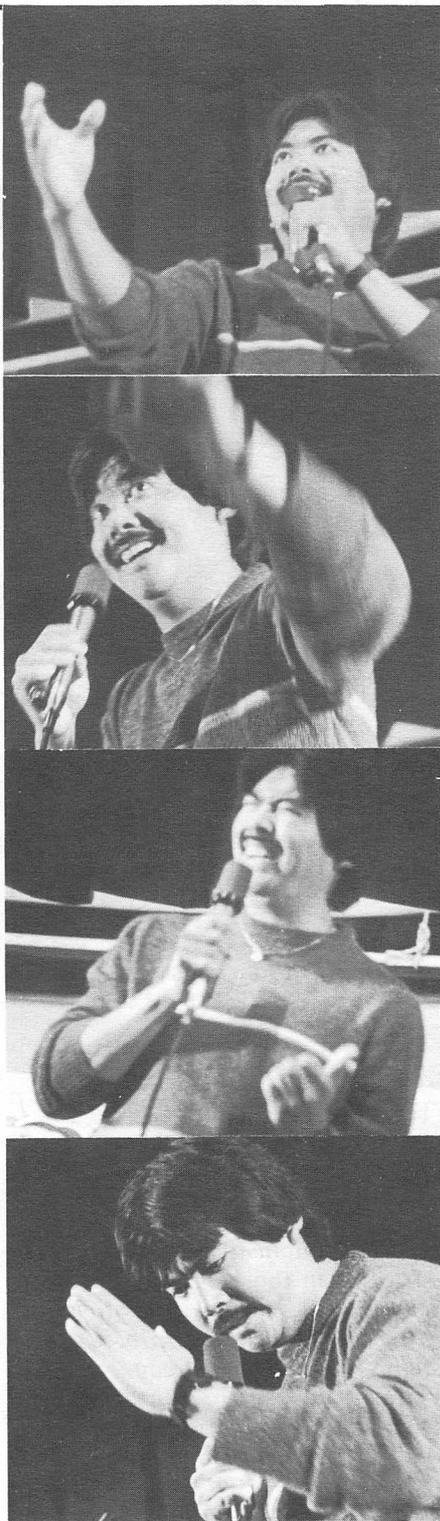
But these stereotypes have a way of fucking with you when you're young because you know, I was six and my sister was four, and we'd watch TV right? And you identify with people who look like you on TV, and I used to go around the house saying, "Mommy, you have laundry? You have laundry for Bobby to do?" My mom would say, "What the fuck are you doing?" I would say, "Well, I want to grow up like Hop Sing on Bonanza." And my sister would be going, "Hello Mr. Bobby's father." My mother would say, "Who are you now?" She goes, "I want to grow up to be like Mrs. Livingston on Courtship of Eddie's Father." And my mom would say, "Why can't you pick a better Asian role model on TV? Bob, why couldn't you pick Sulu?" And then I would say, "Well, Mom, then I wouldn't do no fucking."

In writing this I wanted to express my anger at how these false images really dehumanize all Asians and have a negative effect on our self-

image, especially when you're young. But why always talk about sex? Well, I think sex is part of what makes people human and to continuously see Asian men as asexual is a perfect example of one of these fantasies that are prevalent in our society, these false stereotypes. Because in reality, Asian men and women have sex like everybody else, some more than others, I'll concede. Therefore, I don't think it's unnatural to talk about sex. Maybe those who think it's inappropriate are victims of believing the stereotypes imposed on them.

There are a lot of things that anger me in our daily lives that have to do with Asians. In one of the routines on my second album, *Live in J-Town*, I talk about redress and reparations. Here's an excerpt:

Did you all hear about the Commission's recommendation of paying monetary compensation to those interned in the concentration camps? I'm glad we're beginning to talk about redress and reparations for those who were in camps because you know, it's been a real trip in the media. You know, they're trying to justify the incarceration of the Japanese in the camps and they say stuff like our parents, our grandparents, the Issei and Nisei, were the ones who bombed Pearl Harbor. And, if you think about it, that's ridiculous. Our parents and grandparents bombed Pearl Harbor! I mean, you know, my grandmother couldn't afford a bicycle, let alone a plane to go fly over there and bomb Pearl Harbor. And even if she could, the white people she worked for wouldn't give her the day off to go over there and bomb. But they're trying to really justify incarceration, right? Because for example, on the San Francisco Examiner's front page last summer, it said, "Found cable, 1942 — Japanese tried to enlist Blacks as spies." I mean, if you think about it, that's really ridiculous. Can you imagine the Japanese in World War II going over to East Oakland and saying, "Chotto. Sumimasen. Spy, ni natte kurenai, ka?" You know, the brothers be going, "Say what, motherfucker?" But I'm glad we're talking about mon-



Mike Fong

etary compensation because I don't think we should settle for no mere apologies and watching reruns of Shogun on television because that shit was fake, right? . . . (Routine continues.)

So, I think social issues which affect Asians in America are of equal concern to me. On my album I also talk about the rise of anti-Asian violence. And in my upcoming record I hope to talk more about things like alcohol abuse and religion as well.

Really, I don't consider myself to be a social commentator. It would be pretentious of me . . . who am I to say that I'm a social commentator? I'm just an average guy who has ideas and thoughts about things just like anybody else. A lot of things hit us as Asians in America, and different people have different ways of bringing them out. I just go up and say them.

But why comedy? Anti-Asian violence isn't funny. The concentration camps were anything but funny. A Black comedian once said that Black people are among the funniest in the world because they had to deal with so much pain and suffering. A sense of humor when we're under adverse conditions can make that adversity look just a little less formidable. Can bring us up when everything appears dismal. It's a natural drug. But, for me, the laughter can't numb us into submission. We can't just laugh ourselves into escape or oblivion. Laughter has to stir us into action. Make us more bold to face the troubles of this society.

So getting back to the very beginning of the article when I quoted what different people said about me — "You're disgusting." "You're offensive." "You're sexist." "You're too political." "You're too obsessed with sex." — well, I should have added that sometimes people come up to me and say, "Well, Bob, you're pretty funny." □

Bob Matsueda is a third year law student as well as a comedian. His recent tours have taken him to Boston, Rhode Island, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento. In Spring, 1985, he will release *Live in J-Town*, his second album.

International Examiner

Telling it like it is in Seattle



International Examiner

The International Examiner staff from left to right: Mayumi Tsutakawa, Dean Wong, Ann Fujii, Ron Chew, Sumi Hayashi and Serena Louie

that there was renewed interest in the International District. There were groups that were providing for some of the social service needs of the elderly. There was also a lot of interest in redeveloping the area. The *Examiner* was started up by a group of merchants who were involved in initiating the International District Economic Association, and they wanted a publication that would cover the developments, particularly the business developments in the International District. Then, in 1975, the Alaskan Cannery Workers Association, a group of young Asian American cannery workers who were working to eliminate discrimination from the Alaskan canneries, purchased the publication. From that point on, there started to be a lot more community involvement, young people, students. From there, it took on more issues of providing adequate low income housing, adequate health care, bilingual services.

EAST WIND interviews International Examiner editor Ron Chew and staff

Interview by Tom Eng

In the early days of the Asian American communities, people set up presses to transmit news about the old country and disseminate information about what was going on here. The newspapers helped pull the communities together. They were part of the evolving Asian American culture.

Today, these newspapers continue to be lifelines. They continue to

chronicle our history — as well as our struggles in the areas of education, job, politics. They give play to issues, not to mention, people, usually slighted by the mainstream press.

Based in Seattle's International District, the International Examiner is one of these vernaculars. EAST WIND representative Tom Eng asks Editor Ron Chew, reporter Sumi Hayashi and photographer Dean Wong their views on the purposes of the Examiner. He opens with a question about its origins.

* * *

Chew: The *International Examiner* started in 1974 about the same time

EAST WIND: Why is there a need for a newspaper like the *International Examiner*?

Chew: I think there are several reasons. One is that it provides a source of news that is not provided by the mainstream media — the major metropolitan newspapers, the television news. The only time they cover news in the International District is when they center on some crime like the Wah Mee murders or carry restaurant reviews. Another reason is that in terms of a lot of issues that are covered, the mainstream media generally tends to take a more conservative and cautious attitude. Oftentimes, there are other viewpoints that are not really represented because they simply don't know who in the community to talk to to get a sense of how people feel. So, in a lot of ways, we provide

that kind of alternative viewpoint even on issues that the mainstream media covers.

I think the other thing is there tends to be a certain elitism built into the mainstream media. They tend to focus most of their energy and resources on getting "official" opinions from these official-type people, who, because of certain titles, seem important or significant. There's a lot going on beyond that official level. I think part of our purpose is to do particularly historical interviews and interviews with people who are just average people, whose lives are just as significant, whose viewpoints are just as significant, but who would never be interviewed otherwise because they're not considered important. So, I think in that way, we serve to break down some of the attitudes that people have about who's important and what's important.

Wong: I think it boils down to not being able to depend on the mainstream media to cover our news. I don't think they know what's going on. If the mayor happens to come through here on a press story, they will follow him, but beyond that, speaking in terms of television, they don't have the time or the resources to do any research and really find out the interesting things that are happening in our community. And KIRO (television station), and I would imagine it's the same at other stations, they're really dependent on newspapers for research materials. The assignment editor will go through the morning newspaper and will cut out the articles that look like the major stories. They'll hand them to the reporter, have them read it and then go do the story. So, they are depending on the newspaper people to provide some sort of background. And then, they'll go out there and ask their two or three questions, get their sound, go back to the station and edit the story in an hour.

Hayashi: I think the problem with the major media is that there are very few minorities in it, and because they are so few, they don't have access to the information. I think we need to have a way for the news to get out there. I mean, if it's not in the major media,

then, you're not going to be able to hit a whole lot of people. But information gets through in trickles and streams, and by getting it into our paper, we get calls from TV stations. People in TV stations who read the paper call us. Actually, usually we don't get phone calls. We just see it and go, "Boy, that looks familiar." But that's the way information is distributed; if it doesn't originate from somewhere, it doesn't have a chance to get out.

Chew: There's one other point. Most of the people who have worked with us over the years are not trained journalists and oftentimes, they are not necessarily writers. I think there's generally still an attitude that somehow, journalism and writing are professions beyond the capability of the average person. I think part of what we've been able to do is demystify that by providing training and opportunity for people to express themselves through the print.

EAST WIND: Do you think one of the roles of the *Examiner* is to change the stereotypes people have of Asians by promoting awareness, pride, heritage?

Hayashi: I think we present a broader picture of Asian Americans and people see more depth to the community. I think because we're covering persons whom people otherwise wouldn't come into contact with, we create new role models.

Chew: The *Examiner* helps to bridge some of the differences between the various Asian communities. There's a tendency to see the Asian community as this homogeneous thing. And it's not. In covering the community as we do, we realize that there's a whole lot of generations; you have different language groups, subgroups, different animosities between different groups which I won't get into. But those things exist and I think the fact that we've been able to establish a multi-ethnic, multi-generational staff to cover a variety of different topics has served to break down some of those barriers.

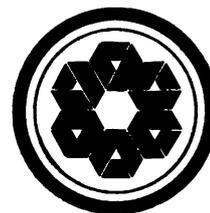
EAST WIND: Why should folks support the *Examiner*?

Wong: Because if they didn't support us, we wouldn't be here and they wouldn't get the information we provide which is Asian American news, art and culture. I think that's an important supplement to their lives. They spend every day of their lives working, making a living, supporting their families. As each generation goes on, I think they lose a little more of their Asian American awareness. And if their only link to that is by coming down to Uwajimaya every weekend and picking up the paper, then the *Examiner* should always be there.

Hayashi: And I think we provide a forum for information that comes from different sources — from somebody who's involved in an issue and who has something that they feel is important. Who is willing to put something together or who wants to come and talk to us about it. That forum wouldn't be there if it weren't for the *Examiner*.

EAST WIND: How do you see the *Examiner* giving leadership to the different things going on in the community?

Wong: I think we provide leadership



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Poets Behind Barbed Wire

in the sense that there are other community people out there doing a lot of things and we write stories about them. That in itself is a form of leadership in that every two weeks, you can pick up the paper and find out that there are people in this community doing active things, important things, and really contributing, and not just living a "9-5" life.

Hayashi: A lot of people wouldn't have known about Vincent Chin if they didn't read about him in the *Examiner*. And I think there are a lot of local issues like the Wah Mee trials. There wouldn't have been an Asian voice telling about how that affected the community if the *Examiner* wasn't publishing.

EAST WIND: Do you see a drastic change in your role since Reagan's reelection?

Chew: The media hasn't been very good in terms of affirmative action hiring, in terms of the Asian community, in terms of sensitivity, of not presenting stereotypes and providing a broad cross-section of issues, people. That type of situation will continue. I mean, there certainly won't be any leadership from the top as far as trying to push for greater access to the major media institutions.

I think what it also means is that there's obviously importance to the work we do on this paper. There's importance to the type of alternatives people chose to invest their energies in whether it's Visual Communications, *EAST WIND*, Kingstreet Media. I think all those kinds of things are needed.

Wong: My concern about the mood of the next four years, and even the last four or five years, is that it's important to draw more young people into the area of media. I think they have to appreciate doing a really good story that changes society's view of Asian Americans, not just going into it for the glamour or for the money. We need to go into it because it's an extremely powerful tool that we have to learn to use and use for the benefit of the community. I think that's what the *International Examiner* has done well. □

Poets Behind Barbed Wire, edited and translated by Jiro Nakano and Kay Nakano, illustrations by George Hoshida, published by Bamboo Ridge Press, 990 Hahaione Street, Honolulu, Hawaii, \$5.00.

Reviewed by Fred Wei-han Houn

Great American cultural forms have emerged from some of the most bitter and difficult oppression: the African American slave narratives and slavesongs (so-called Spirituals) are filled with cries of freedom and resistance; the Chicano *folklorico* dances, ballads and *teatros*; and for Japanese Americans, the profusion of sculpture, drawings, crafts and writings from the concentration camps.

Poets Behind Barbed Wire is an immensely important collection by the local Hawaiian movement for indigenous Hawaiian literature, Bamboo Ridge Press. The publication and distribution of this vital and major collection of powerful and poignant poetry by four Japanese American writers (Keiho Soga, Taisanboku Mori, Sojin Takei, and Muin Ozaki) interned in America's concentration camps needs much greater support and attention from all of us.

The poems in this collection were first published in magazines started in the camps and later republished in anthologies and Japanese newspapers in Hawai'i. Here is an example of the powerful, realist tradition in Asian American literature. Such horrendous oppression as the concentration camp experience did not dampen or diminish the creative ex-

pression of the Japanese American people. Rather, cultural expression became the only means of survival, resistance and unity. Poetry, and its baring of the mind and soul, was a spiritual force against the barbed wire, the isolation, the wastelands, and the ubiquitous machine gun towers.

Furthermore, *Poets Behind Barbed Wire* demonstrates the nature of Japanese American writing, and Asian American culture for that matter, as a *continuum*. The Japanese in America had formed numerous local poetry clubs that wrote in the traditional syllabic forms of *haiku* and *tanka*. Traditionally, *haiku* and *tanka* have been excellent forms to comment on nature, the human soul and emotions. *Haiku*, with 17 syllables in line patterns of 5-7-5 and the longer *tanka*, with 31 syllables organized in lines of 5-7-5-7-7. Simple, yet profound.

With the camp experience, Japanese American poetry continued to utilize these traditional forms, but, as so clearly evidenced in this excellent collection, communicated a completely Japanese American ethos and experience. The camps have singularly affected the entire historical development of the Japanese American community, its consciousness and culture.

This collection includes translations as well as phoneticization and some very fine line drawings that capture and complement the simplicity of the *tanka* poetry and its concentrated impact.

Poets Behind Barbed Wire is an essential must for any serious account of Asian American art and culture as well as a deeply moving revelation of a Japanese American ethos. □



Crystal Huie

The Fall of the I-Hotel

The Fall of the I-Hotel, produced and directed by Curtis Choy, 1983, 57 minutes, color 16 mm.

Reviewed by Nelson Nagai

The *Fall of the I-Hotel* is many things for many people. It is a documentary on Pilipinos in America, an epic on political struggle with a cast of thousands, a tearjerker of a movie, and a work of art. Curtis Choy worked on this film during the entire 10-year struggle to save the International Hotel in San Francisco from the wrecker's ball. The result is a powerful visual record of the beginning and end of the I-Hotel Tenants Association.

From 1968 to 1977, the International Hotel on Kearny Street was the heart of the Asian Movement in San Francisco. Those people who are unfamiliar with this part of Asian American history will be introduced to the sense of community that existed on the 800-block of Kearny Street in the 1970's. They will be surprised by the determination of the old Pilipino *manongs* to keep the last remnant of Manilatown alive. They will also be shocked by the brutality that finally destroyed Manilatown in San Francisco.

One strength of the film is that it lacks the polish of a sterile studio documentary. The early footage of the International Hotel was shot in black and white, and has the quality of everyone's home movies. As Curtis Choy developed his skill as a soundman and filmmaker, the images of Kearny St. become sharper and more meaningful. The final scene in which Jim Dong's mural on the struggle of Asians in America falls down is surreal. By combining the black and white and color footage, stills, and newsreel videos, Choy weaves a drama that the audience can feel.

The main strength of *The Fall of the I-Hotel* is its soundtrack. The audience hears the story of the International Hotel struggle through the actual voices of the heroes and villains. The effect is stunning. The sounds of the community, the pain of the tenants, and the coldness of the Redevelopment Agency are too clear. A strumming banjo, a mournful violin build tension into a film that begins slowly and rapidly accelerates to a violent conclusion. The tenants become more than flat images on a wall, and suddenly, halfway through the film, the audience is drawn into the struggle.

People will cry after seeing *The Fall of the I-Hotel*. The ability to affect this emotional response is a qual-

ity that comes when the filmmaker is also an active participant in the subject. Curtis Choy did night watches in the I-Hotel. He knew the tenants and had their trust. He came back daily to watch the wreckers take apart the hotel brick by brick. The feelings and emotions portrayed come to life because the filmmaker and subject feel the same thing.

Those people who lived and worked on Kearny St., in the 1970's may feel that *The Fall of the I-Hotel* should have made a broader statement. The key role played by the many political groups and small businesses renting space in the International Hotel is not portrayed in Choy's film. Nor does Choy make a strong political statement about racism and capitalist exploitation. This is where the relationship between art and politics is least understood. The impact of the film is so great that the audience can arrive at its own conclusion. But is this enough, or should the artist make the conclusion for the audience?

Thirty years from now, when people will be studying the removal of ethnic communities and their replacement by tourist camps, *The Fall of the I-Hotel* will be an invaluable document. We are fortunate to have such a living record today, and this is why it should be seen. □

Nelson Nagai is an advisor for EAST WIND.

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Artists and Poets Credits

Among the many galleries and shows that exhibited **Tomie Arai's** works are Kearny Street Workshop, Basement Workshop, "Art for Zimbabwe," and "50 Women Choose 50 Women." *Village Voice*, *New York Magazine* and other publications have recognized her. As Cityarts Workshop (NY) mural project director, she has helped create murals like "Wall of Respect for the Working People of Chinatown."

Carlos Bulosan, a pioneer of Asian American literature, came to the U.S. with the first wave of Pilipinos. He found a life filled with back-breaking stoop labor, racism, and an itinerant life. To resist, he became a labor leader and author of the masterpiece, *America is in the Heart*.

"I learned my skill while I was a political detainee (1979-'81) doing sketches of co-detainees for their families," says **Vicente Clemente**. "Before that, I was in the underground with other student leaders protesting the Marcos regime and imperialist control. During those ten years, the government posted 50,000 pesos for my capture dead or alive."

Orvy Jundis, Bay Area poet/writer/artist, published his tribute to Ed Badajos in the Fall/Winter 1983 *EAST WIND*.

Poets like the **Mad Mongolian** composed condemning works

on the concentration camps even though criticizing them was considered "subversive" and dangerous. Fortunately for succeeding generations, camp historian **Eiichi Sakaue** has preserved these poems, photos and artifacts from Heart Mountain, Wyo. Mr. Sakaue now lives in San Jose, CA.

Patricia Justiniani McReynolds, a Pilipina-Mestiza, teaches history at the National University in San Diego. She writes for *Arts of Asia*.

Rich Tokeshi is a Japanese American artist who has devoted years to the community working at the Japantown Art and Media Workshop.

G.T. Wong, now living in New York, is a poet whose wit and perception capture the realities of the working people's lives. He has been published in *Sampan* and *EAST WIND*.

Nisei artist **Paul Zaima's** "Horizons Can Be Clear" is a drawing of the Heart Mountain concentration camp. Mr. Zaima (1921-'79) was a professional artist who found his career and life interrupted by the evacuation. After internment at Santa Anita Assembly Center and Heart Mountain, he served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. His drawing is included courtesy of his wife, Mrs. Tetsuko Zaima.

A film written and directed by Curtis Choy

The Fall of the I-Hotel



There is dramatic & historic punch in Choy's outstanding film...a powerful & moving account of the Filipino immigrants...
SF Chronicle

...meticulously charts the ultimate destruction of SF's Manilatown...
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