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# The "English-Only" Movement

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By Edward Chen  
and Wade Henderson

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On July 4th, 1986, our nation celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. It was a glorious day in celebration of uniquely American values of individual freedom and societal diversity. This summer, Americans will celebrate the bicentennial of our Constitution.

However, as our nation celebrates these important testaments to American freedom, we are also witnessing the emergence of a political movement which is antithetical to these constitutional guarantees. It is a movement which is anti-immigrant and xenophobic in character. It is fed by the perception that immigration to the United States is "out of control" and that large ethnic communities, particularly Hispanics and Asians, are not willing to assimilate in the traditional "melting pot" process.

The movement, which attacks virtually all forms of multilingual assistance provided by government and in private commerce to non-English speaking populations, stands logic on its head. It uses the importance of English-language proficiency in American life, which most Americans accept without question, and takes it to the extremist position of seeking to enshrine English

as the "official language" of the United States. And if it were not a serious threat to constitutionally protected rights, it would almost be funny.

## Development of the English-only movement

The English-only movement has, within the last three years, gained much national recognition. Organizations such as US English and English

First continue to develop support through various national activities and local English-only campaigns. US English is the most prominent of the national organizations. It was formed in 1983, "to defend the public interest in the growing debate on bilingualism and biculturalism." The organization itself claims over 120,000 members, with more than 50,000 in the state of California.

The board of directors includes Gerda Bikales, the national executive director of US English, S.I. Haya-kawa, John Tanton, M.D., Leo Sorenson, and Stanley Diamond. Haya-kawa is also the honorary chair of the California English Only Campaign, while Diamond is its chairperson.

US English has been involved in various legislative lobbying activities. These included efforts within Congress to have English declared the official language of the U.S., opposition to federal legislation for bilingual education and voting rights bills, and comments and opposition to FCC licensing applications for Spanish language broadcasts. On the state level, it has lobbied for "official language" legislation, assisting in the passage of English language legislation in Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, and Virginia. The organization has been involved in efforts to amend the Florida Constitution with an English-only provision, and played a supportive role in both the Proposition O and Proposition 38 campaigns within California.

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the rights of  
minority groups.*

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While trying to characterize itself, and the rest of the English-only movement, as a grassroots populist movement concerned only with language and culture, US English is in reality a well-financed political force with strong connections to conservative environmental and anti-immigrant organizations.

John Tanton, the chair of the board of US English, was the founder of the Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform, a key organization promoting the Simpson-Mazzoli bills and other repressive anti-immigration bills. He was also involved in the Environmental Fund, a conservative population control group.

The Environmental Fund is now called Population-Environment Balance, Inc. This organization ran ads in San Francisco newspapers blaming traffic jams, pollution, increased crime, and higher taxes on illegal immigration.

Although issues directly involving immigration are not explicitly on the agenda of US English, it is clear that the foundations of the English-only movement and the anti-immigrant movement are the same. The English-only movement blames the decay of the American fabric on immigration and the use of other languages.

#### A historical perspective

The current English-only movement is not unprecedented; it bears great similarity to the racist nativism movement which arose in response to the wave of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe between 1890 and 1914. The Federal Immigration Commission issued a report in 1911 contrasting the "old" and "new" immigrant, arguing that the former had mingled quickly with native-born Americans and became assimilated while "new" immigrants from Italy, Russia, Hungary, and other countries were less intelligent, less willing to learn English or had intentions of not settling permanently in the United States, arguments strikingly similar to those advanced by the current English-only movement. Consequently, English literacy requirements were

erected as conditions for public employment, naturalization, immigration, and suffrage, in order to exclude those perceived to be of lower classes and "ignorant of our laws and language." The New York Constitution was amended to disenfranchise over one million Yiddish-speaking citizens by a Republican administration fearful of Jewish votes.

World War I gave rise to intense anti-German sentiment. A number of states enacted extreme English-only

laws. For instance, Nebraska and Ohio passed laws in 1919 and 1923 prohibiting the teaching of any languages other than English until the student passed the eighth grade. The Supreme Court ultimately held the Nebraska statute unconstitutional as violative of due process.

#### Nativism revisited

It is not surprising that the current English-only movement comes at a time of rising resentment toward immigration from Mexico, Central America, and Asia. It appeals to our worst fears of social change, exploit-



"English-Only" proponents revive racist fears and stereotypes reminiscent of earlier hysteria, as exemplified by this turn-of-the-century cartoon from Wasp magazine, San Francisco, CA.

ing and perpetuating false stereotypes about Asians and Latinos.

English-only proponents argue that our "common bond" of English is being threatened by "language rivalries" and "ethnic separatism" and that today's immigrants are refusing to learn English. They contend that bilingual services and programs provide a disincentive to learn English and permit immigrants to live in "language ghettos" without assimilating into our society.

In fact, immigrants *want* to learn English. A recent study conducted by an independent marketing firm

showed that 98% of Latino parents surveyed, as compared to 94% of Anglo and Black parents, felt it was essential for their children to read and write English perfectly. Latinos, Asians, and other new immigrants regularly fill the long waiting lists for adult English classes, which in Los Angeles County alone exceeds 30,000.

The claim of English-only advocates that bilingual services threaten the unity of our nation is not only based on false premises, but ignores history and experience.

Bilingualism in government is not

new in America. At the birth of our nation, the Continental Congress printed a number of documents, including the Articles of Confederation, in German for the benefit of non-English speaking patriots. The experience of New Mexico, a state which officially has been bilingual since 1912, further demonstrates that political divisiveness need not result from cultural pluralism. New Mexico, which has long had bilingual ballots, enjoys the highest rate of Hispanic political participation in the country.

**W**hat English-only proponents fail to realize is that the real common bond of all Americans is our shared belief and commitment to democracy, freedom, and equality of opportunity. Many of today's immigrants from Latin America and Southeast Asia, just as the Germans, Italians, and Jews that preceded them, fled from political repression, war, and abject poverty. They all share a common heritage — the quest for freedom and opportunity. That common heritage is America's common bond, and it runs much deeper than the English language.

#### The English-only agenda

The English-only movement appears to have three principal goals:

(1) To ratify a constitutional amendment which would declare English the official language of the United States and outlaw all bilingual programs and services provided by federal, state, and local governments;

(2) To convince Congress to repeal bilingual ballot requirements under the Voting Rights Act; and

(3) To sharply reduce federal programs for bilingual education.

Several measures have been introduced in the 99th Congress to advance these objectives. Two California representatives have pushed forward a measure to repeal the provisions of the Voting Rights Act that mandate foreign-language ballots; a similar measure (S.337) is also pending in the Senate.

English-as-official-language legislation centers on the English Language Amendment to the Constitution, first

## California Initiative: Proposition 63

By Wilma Chan

Proposition 63, the English-as-the-Official-Language initiative, won by a 3-1 margin in California last November. Although many of the major Californian politicians, from San Francisco Mayor Diane Feinstein to Governor George Deukmejian, came out against the initiative, it still did not receive the level of publicity and public attention as other propositions. Many people who voted for the proposition thought it was an innocuous proposition, merely legalizing the obvious. Many did not understand the implications of such a bill.

However, a positive outcome of the English-only movement was the coming together of Asian American, Chicano/Latino, and civil rights advocates to form Californians United Against Proposition 63 in the summer of 1986.

Californians United organized a

statewide network to do education on and organize the vote against the English-only initiative. Although the proposition won by a wide margin statewide, in precincts where Californians United did active grassroots work, such as San Francisco, Proposition 63 barely passed by a 53 percent to 47 percent margin.

In the post-election period, Californians United has reincorporated as a statewide network which will monitor and fight attacks on bilingual rights. Californians United is emphasizing monitoring of legal actions, legislation regarding bilingual rights, and grassroots education, particularly in the Asian and Latino communities, toward fighting future attacks. The experience of the California initiative battle is also being offered to other areas, such as New York and Denver, which are currently fighting similarly racist initiatives.

**Wilma Chan**, executive officer, Californians United.



Getting out the vote: bilingual voter registration in San Francisco Chinatown, 1984.

introduced by then Senator Hayakawa in 1981. In addition to making English the official language, the House bill would prohibit federal and/or state governments from mandating that any language other than English be used, other than as a foreign language requirement at academic institutions.

However, it is at the state level where the most intense political battles are now being waged.

### California's Proposition 63

In California, the passage of the US English-sponsored ballot initiative "Proposition 63" has amended the state's constitution to prevent the Legislature from passing any law which "diminishes or ignores the role of English as our common language." What this actually means is unclear. However, it gives to any individual or business in California a private right to sue for any perceived violation of this sweeping mandate. As absurd as this may seem, citizen-sponsored "language police" are only one step away from political reality.

Several other states have laws de-

claring English the official state language, but none contain this broad operative mandate and private enforcement mechanism. Proposition 63 is also significant because it is the first of such laws submitted to the voters by initiative; with its passage, the English-only group will escalate their already existing campaigns in Florida, Texas, and other states.

### The implications

In one sense, it's hard to take the English-only movement seriously. The idea of zealous, "citizen-guardians" of the English language punishing those who fail to conform due to their inability to speak English is hard to imagine. But, by legally sanctioning the punishment of those who fail to conform because of their limited English-speaking ability, initiatives like Proposition 63 and the English-only movement breed intolerance and bigotry. The movement is contrary to our constitutional tradition which affords protection of individual differences and societal diversity; the English-only movement, in contrast, seeks to en-

shrine as a constitutional principle cultural and linguistic conformity by eliminating rather than protecting the rights of minority groups.

The stereotype of disloyal, anti-assimilationists now advanced by English-only advocates is not only baseless but disturbingly reminiscent of the same branding of disloyalty placed on Japanese-Americans to justify their internment in relocation camps during World War II. Today's English-only movement is cut from the same cloth. It is essential that the mean-spirited and ill-conceived English-only movement is stopped before it spreads. □

**Edward M. Chen** is staff counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Northern California and a member of the Californians United Against Proposition 63 Coalition; **Wade Henderson** is associate director of the ACLU, Washington, D.C., Legislative Office.

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By Bert Nakano

With racist violence in Georgia and New York City, spreading incidents of anti-Asian violence, the recent roundup of Palestinians in Los Angeles and deepening chauvinism against Latino immigrants — it would not seem to be a good time for Japanese Americans to win redress and reparations for being thrown into U.S. concentration camps during World War II.

Still, many of us are cautiously optimistic about making advances this year in our long campaign for redress, for measures finally rectifying the injustice of the camps.

The FBI began rounding up Japanese people in rapid succession soon after the Pearl Harbor attack. The media wasted no time in fanning racist hysteria with jingoism targeting the Japanese people as the "enemy alien." In the guise of military necessity, conscious and deliberate support from organized special interest groups — agribusiness, labor unions, the anti-immigration groups, prominent individuals and politicians — helped to oust the Japanese from the West Coast.

On February 19, 1942, ten weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which gave the Secretary of War and the military commanders the power to exclude any and all individuals from designated high-security areas. This resulted in the forcible eviction of 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of us U.S. citizens, from our homes, farms, and businesses to be shipped to concentration camps in remote desert and mountain areas of California, Arizona, Idaho, Colorado and as far south as Arkansas. To the U.S. government, anyone who was as much as one-sixteenth Japanese was a potential spy or saboteur, though U.S. citizens of German or Italian ancestry faced no such suspicions.

Coming after years of anti-Asian laws and bigotry, the camps were central in molding the contemporary character of Japanese Americans as

# REDRESS NOW!



# REPARATIONS NOW!

## Justice still sought for 120,000 Japanese Americans

an oppressed U.S. minority. Barbed wire and armed guards, mess halls and barracks, loss of lives, farms, businesses and property — all are seared into our consciousness. Vaunted U.S. ideals of constitutional rights and "justice for all" became meaningless in the face of racist hysteria.

This year, the House of Representatives is expected to vote on a redress bill providing for an official apology for the internment, payment of \$20,000 to each camp survivor and a fund for Nikkei community projects. Parallel efforts are taking place in the Senate. The bills are the result of efforts by forces such as the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR), Japanese American members of Congress and numerous supporters.

The optimism for the passage of the bill stems from the situation in Congress after the November elections. Jim Wright of Texas has assumed the house speaker position while Alan Cranston of California is now the majority whip of the Senate. Both have been strong supporters of redress, Wright having sponsored HR 442 in the 99th Session of Congress. HR 442 was reintroduced to Congress on January 6 by House Majority Leader Tom Foley of Washington. Supporters are hopeful the bill will get out of the subcommittee (which has never happened before) and reach the floor for a vote sometime this year.

As redress forces gear up for intensified lobbying, it is important to keep in mind that we have come this far due to a militant and spirited mass struggle.

This movement for justice has its beginnings in the late 1960s, which witnessed a new generation of progressives and revolutionaries in the Japanese national movement, borne out of the upsurge in the mass civil rights movement. Newly formed Asian American Studies classes, pilgrimages to the camps, and many educational projects brought out the stark reality of the camps, and out of this grew a sharp awareness of the camps' legacy and the need to reaffirm our pride, dignity and culture.

This awareness turned to action. In 1978, the JACL, at its annual convention, adopted demands for redress. In 1980, community activists, students, and grass-roots groups formed the NCRR to mount a concerted fight for redress. Then, President Carter, in 1980, appointed the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), which held hearings around the country on the camps.

In preparation for these hearings, community organizers worked with the testifiers to coordinate all phases and levels of the hearings, including translations, car pools and buses. To ensure full community participation, they initiated a direct line with the commissioners and the CWRIC office in Washington to discuss the day-by-day proceedings and push for additional evening hearings to accommodate working people.

Deep and long-suppressed bitterness and anger boiled over at the hearings as hundreds of internees, breaking 40 years of silence, told their moving stories. Standing-room only crowds filled the hearing halls from city to city with applause and cheers from the audience who united with angry testifiers. For many, the testimonies served as catalysts for the outrage they felt at the violation of their human and civil rights. While some warned at the time against making demands to the CWRIC, people's righteous rage poured out and the demand for a *minimum* of \$25,000 per person became a rallying cry.

Since the hearings, educational programs, such as the February 19th Day of Remembrance programs, have involved the community in ac-

tivities and actions which have raised the redress issue to a higher level of unity and have helped spur the movement's continued development.

Congress is now the main arena for monetary redress, but we must not lose sight of the fact that victory even in this arena, as restricted as it is, will depend on vigorously bringing into play the mass base of support for redress.

All this activity and outpouring of community sentiment had everything to do with the CWRIC recommendations, which were the basis of the present redress bills. Even so, some legislators were hesitant at first to introduce a redress bill, but were soon spurred to action by grass-roots initiatives and mounting community pressure.

In essence, the demand for redress is a cry for equality and justice. As long as the camps are not disavowed

***There is a Japanese word, gambaru . . . It means to fight, to have courage, to persevere. It is what enabled my parents' generation to survive . . . Gambaru is a legacy which my father and his peers . . . left to me and you . . . We shall gambaru.***

*CWRIC Testimony,  
San Francisco Hearings*



*Los Angeles, 1983.*

through an official apology coupled with substantial monetary compensation that makes the apology more than a token, we will never accept that the government has truly acknowledged its gross violation of our rights. Monetary compensation is still the most controversial part of the bills, and winning it at a time of visibly rising racism and chauvinism, and Gramm-Rudman budget limits will not be easy. But since well over half the former camp internees have already passed away, we feel a sense of real urgency. To prevent the individual payments from being dropped, it will be critical to both bring the mass support to bear on Congress and fight to maintain unity among redress forces on this provision.

If we succeed, we will not only be winning long-overdue justice for all Japanese Americans, but also contributing to the fight against all racist violence and oppression, and against the violation of basic civil liberties. □

*Bert Nakano is the national spokesperson for the NCRR, and the southern chair of the Asian Pacific Caucus, California Democratic Party.*





ROBERT GUMBERT, COURTESY LOCAL 23-25 ILGWU

most significant change in U.S. immigration policy in decades and, generally, is reflective of an increasing anti-immigrant climate existing in the country today.

Many organizations throughout the country have taken up work to respond to the impact of the new immigration law. Among these is Local 23-25 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in New York City, which has the the largest concentration of Asian workers (20,000) in one organization. In 1982, the local established an Immigration Project, a legal clinic on immigration law, to serve the local's members and families. In light of the recent change in the immigration law and its immediate impact on thousands of Asian immigrants, we talked with May Ying Chen, legal assistant of the ILGWU Immigration Project.

# Simpson-Rodino

## How the new law affects Asian immigrants



May Ying Chen

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Interview By Alex Hing

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**A** key issue affecting the Asian American communities is immigration. Beginning with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, discriminatory immigration laws have been used historically to restrict the development of Asian American communities, prevent family reunification and abridge the rights of a large sector of Asian Americans. Today, with over 65% of all Asians in the U.S. being recent immigrants, the impact of immigration policy has never been greater.

On November 6, 1986, President Reagan signed a new immigration law into effect. This law contains the

**EW:** What is the history of the ILGWU Immigration Project?

**MC:** The Immigration Project of the local began in 1982, but the concern with immigration goes way back before then. The ILGWU was founded in 1900, and, historically, especially in New York City, it's been an immigrant membership.

A large proportion of the Chinese garment workers today are new immigrants who haven't been in the country for too long. They are not familiar with their rights and labor practices in the United States. They become very isolated in Chinatown and have limited mobility and job opportunities. The immigration project helps address these problems as well as fulfill some of the needs of immigrant members, such as the desire to unite with their families, to learn English and understand new customs, laws and culture.

Two specific reasons why the Project was formalized was to deal with INS raids — raids of unionized shops or shops where the union was trying to organize. The second problem came up where workers in organizing campaigns were fired, and the National Labor Relations Board would not give the undocumented workers equal treatment and representation.

**EW:** I understand the Project has begun to take up work around the new immigration law signed last November. What are the main aspects of the new law as it affects Asian immigrants?

**MC:** The new law has two main aspects: The first is a legalization program under which undocumented who entered the U.S. before January 1, 1982, and who can prove they have lived here continuously since then, can apply for temporary and, later, permanent resident status. The second aspect is the employer sanction provisions which make it illegal for employers to hire undocumented workers. The employer sanctions say that employers must check papers from all workers to show they are legally authorized to work. The ILGWU is taking up work around both main aspects of the new law.

**EW:** Are there many undocumented Asians in the U.S.?

**MC:** There are quite a lot of undocumented Asians in the U.S. from crewmen to overstayed visitors and students. The immigrant quotas for the Asian countries are very backlogged, especially for Hong Kong, India, the Philippines and China. The waiting list for legal immigration for some of these countries is a full nine to thirteen years. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that many Asian immigrants stay illegally because they cannot suffer the hardship of being separated from their families for so many years.

**EW:** Do you feel the legalization program will help a lot of Asian immigrant workers to gain legal status?

**MC:** The legalization program is by no means automatic. Some people call it "amnesty" but this is not correct because to qualify, you have to get over a lot of concrete obstacles. A lot depends on how much immigrant lobbying groups win in fighting for favorable final regulations on who exactly will qualify, because it's very difficult for people

who have been basically forced to hide their identity and status for so many years to suddenly come forth with rent receipts, pay stubs, etc. to prove they have been living here for the past five years.

In the union, we have already seen quite a few Chinese garment workers and their families who will qualify. Some have already applied for the "registry program" which allows undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. before 1972 to apply for permanent resident status. For union members, they are fortunate to have employment and tax records to support their cases.

On the other hand, many undocumented Asians came to the U.S. after January 1, 1982, and will not qualify for this program. For others, documentation will be the main problem since many undocumented workers are forced to work "off the books." This is true particularly for small business employers and for Asian restaurant workers.



COURTESY LOCAL 23-25 ILGWU

**EW:** Employer sanctions will require all persons looking for a new job to show employer documents to prove their authorization to work in the U.S. Have you seen any problems so far in the garment shops with this aspect of the new law?

**MC:** Yes. We have seen an increase of employers harassing and threatening to fire workers they suspect of being undocumented. As soon as the new law passed, the ILGWU sent letters to employers across the country advising them not to take any rash actions since the regulations and verification forms would not be published for months. We especially wanted to make sure that they knew the "grandfather clause" in the new law protects any worker hired before November 6, 1986. But some employers disregard the grandfather clause and act as if sanctions apply to all workers. They have used sanctions to mistreat undocumented workers in the shop.

**EW:** Will the new law mean more raids in Chinatown garment factories or other workplaces to enforce the law?

**MC:** It's still too early to tell. I've heard stories from the Chinatown old-timers about the 1950s when INS raids were a way of life in Chinatown. Many Chinese Americans who were citizens and legal residents would be picked up by the INS and would sit in jail for a few hours until their families would bring identifying documents to get them out. These things could happen again.

In New York Chinatown, we've seen one case so far where the INS visited a garment factory six times in one month to meet with the boss, requesting the alien registration numbers of his employees. This wasn't a raid, but part of the program INS calls "Operation Cooperation." The ILGWU has repeatedly told factory owners not to cooperate with the INS unless the INS has a valid search warrant naming a specific suspect. The Korean newspapers in New York have also reported on INS raids on Korean businesses.

**EW:** Many people fear that the new law will result in increasing job discrimination against Asian immigrants and other minorities. Can you comment on this?

**MC:** I am sure there will be cases of discrimination arising from employer sanctions. Employers are supposed to check the documents of *all* new employees hired after November 6, 1986. But it's almost inevitable that they will check Mr. Wong or Ms. Kim more carefully than John Doe or Jane Smith. They will prefer to hire Tom Jones over Jack Tom — why take the risk of being fined?

This will only increase the difficulties of most Asian immigrant workers. Newcomers are still overwhelmingly concentrated in garment shops, restaurants and small community businesses, regardless of their job experience from their home country. Even for the U.S.-educated children and Asian Americans, statistics show that their educational achievement far exceeds their job achievement because of discrimination.

**EW:** What should Asians do about discrimination under the new law?

**MC:** It is very important that Asians and all minorities who are discriminated against, because of employer sanctions under the new law, document their cases with community or immigrant advocacy groups. In the new law, the *only* formal mechanism to defeat employer sanctions is reports of increased discrimination. I can't emphasize this enough. Today's climate of increasing racism and discrimination cannot be tolerated in silence.

**EW:** How can the community link up with labor to fight for the rights of Asian immigrants under the new law?

**MC:** I think both in the city and on the national level there are different coalitions of pro-immigrant organizations and that does include community groups and agencies, although it could probably reach deeper into the Asian American

community. The union is involved in a lot of these coalitions, like with church groups, civil liberty groups, refugee organizations, and we do work with community organizations in Chinatown. I think it's very important because labor has its own angle and resources to put into this issue.

In the community the issue is examined more from the standpoint of how the law effects the general Asian population, not just workers, so there's a certain value for that perspective to be hooked up with labor.

Although we're hopeful that legalization will benefit some undocumented Asians, lurking in the background is the knowledge that this bill was passed mainly for enforcement purposes in an atmosphere of real anti-immigrant sentiment. People shouldn't have illusions that this bill is here to help immigrants. So for the union and community, we have our work cut out for us. □

**Alex Hing** is a longtime activist in the Asian community and labor movements.

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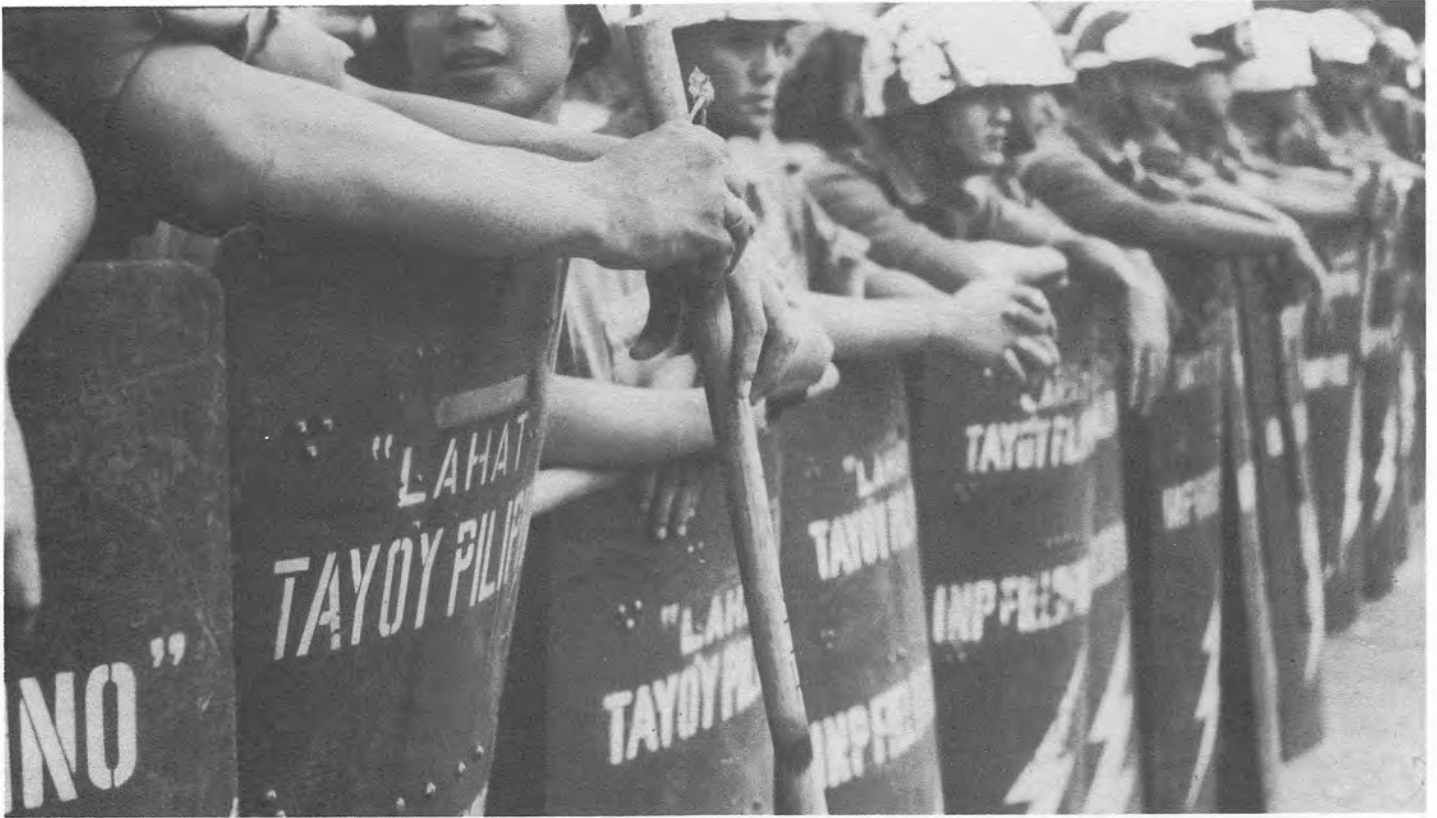
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with immigrants demanding rights

with students  
fighting for education

with workers organizing

with artists creating from  
and for our movements



*Military barricade at a land reform demonstration in Manila.*

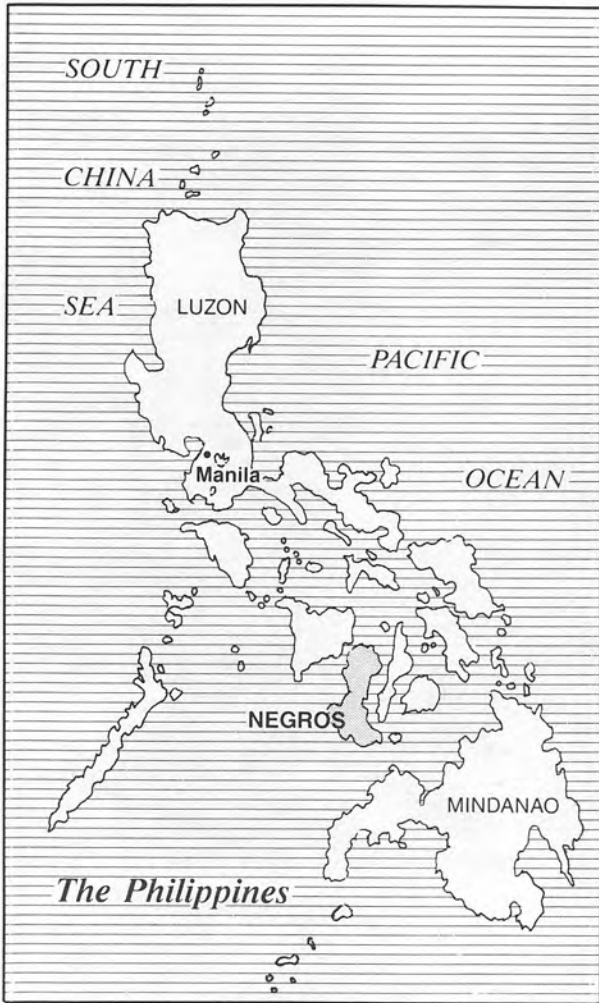
**Negros Island, the Philippines:**

# Land Reform — A Question of Survival



*The rural areas have suffered the most under Marcos' regime.*

*E*ast Wind Contributing Editor Antonio De Castro spent October to November 1986 in the Philippines. Working on "The Philippine Hunger Film Project," jointly sponsored by Visual Communications, he investigated and researched the situation in Negros, an island of the Philippines. His film will document the conditions of the Philippines, particularly the economics of the rural areas. He offers these photographs and comments on the situation there.



## NEGROS

**N**egros is a big part of the Philippines. It used to be the richest part of the Philippines. It had the reputation of being like a Texas. Big, wheeling, dealing kind of a country. Negros is vast, as far as you can see, fields of sugar. They used to say that Negros could feed all the children of the Philippines, and it could have. But now it can't even feed its own, because the bottom dropped out of sugar and the industry collapsed. So, now there's no work in Negros. These are the children who are suffering from it.

This is the malnutrition ward of the provincial hospital in Negros. They only accept kids with third degree malnutrition, the most severe. They take 60 new patients a month. Roughly 10 of them die a month. The ones who make it to the hospital are lucky. Most of them don't make it to the hospital. Five hundred children a month die in Negros of malnutrition. Or malnutrition is the cause of diseases, like dysentery or diarrhea.





The people who work on sugar are not farmers. They're considered laborers because their work is so specialized that they only know how to work sugar. So, they don't know how to plant crops and they don't own the plantations. They're owned by these big hacienda owners and the hacienda owners don't want to switch what they're growing. They still have a belief that sugar is going to come back. But very few people hold that view.

**T**he conflict between the military and the people is strongest in Negros, that's where NPA (New People's Army) activity is the highest. And because the people are organizing there because they are in such bad conditions, the military is much more repressive there too. The situation in Negros is really much more representative of the Philippine situation than what happened in Manila. The struggle between the military and the NPA, and the rich landowners and the workers, and how much the people are suffering is much more reflected in Negros.

NPA is always there. There are certain parts of Negros that the soldiers don't go into, because NPA is so strong there. Most of the people in Negros are very sympathetic to the NPA, very supportive of them. If the military suspects the villagers are feeding the NPA and supporting them, they separate them into little hamlets so that they're not able to provide resources to the NPA. At the same time, the people are away from their source of living and they become totally dependent on government handouts to survive. And government handouts are very small.

When a lot of the sugar mills closed, and people were out of jobs overnight, and the farm owners refused to let them plant other crops, the NFSW (National Federation of Sugar Workers) seized the land and started planting rice for consumption because they can't eat sugar. The NFSW provides training and resources for the workers to grow rice and vegetables so they can start feeding themselves.

This family is a very interesting family. They were locked out of the sugar mill. And what they did was they started seizing the land, and the military came and took all their husbands away, all the men and put them in jeeps, and the women, when they saw that, they jumped on the trucks and jeeps, because they knew if they left they'd never see the men again, and wouldn't let them go without them. Finally the military released them. These people, they were the ones that were raising the pigs and the ducks, living very minimally. They gave me an interview and told me the whole story and at the very end of it they started singing the "Internationale" in Tagalog.



The issue of land reform still needs to be addressed. There are a few rich owners that own almost everything while most of the people are poor. Most of the land is owned by big corporations, either Philippine or multi-national corporations. But land reform is not the interest of a lot of people there, they want to keep the multi-national corporations and the big businesses. For land reform to actually happen will take a real revolution. And that's because the people weren't really hurt when Marcos left. They still own the property, he just left. Or maybe a few were hurt, his cronies. But land reform, the distribution of land, that's going to hurt a lot of middle class people, and that's where the deep-rooted interests of the middle class, the upper middle class, and the rich are going to really be affected. So, land reform is going to be the issue. It's going to be the biggest cause of confrontation.





*Land reform demonstration: This was a protest by 20,000 farmers and peasants, led by the KMP (Peasant Movement of the Philippines). It was a show of their need, a demonstration of their need to Cory. They were met by this military display. The people in the crowd were very angry at coming up against the barbed wire, because barbed wire was typical of the Marcos regime.*



*People in the front link arms to hold the crowd back so that there wouldn't be any kind of confrontation.*

*A delegation met with Cory Aquino. However, she never came out and addressed the crowd.*

For more information on "The Philippine Hunger Film Project," contact Antonio De Castro, c/o Visual Communications, 244 S. San Pedro Street, Suite 309, Los Angeles, CA 90012. □

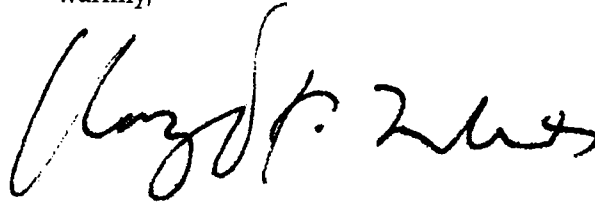


monday, november 11

dear friends at *eastwind* . . .  
here are some poems for your consideration.  
i was in the philippines last summer, and had  
the privilege of seeing for myself exactly what  
is going on in that ravaged country.

for the most part, the images were not pleasant,  
as i have recorded in the attached poems. i should  
note that as records, they are not nearly as adequate  
as i would have wanted them to be, in the sense that  
i really did not capture the essence of experience  
as i underwent it — the poems are mere literary  
reflections of that reality (which at times could  
be grotesque and horrifying); also, the mirror  
is definitely smudged by my bias in favor of the  
people's struggle for self-determination and justice.  
so the bottom line i would give is that these poems  
are just shadows.

in all fairness, all of life in the philippines today  
is not dreary — the innocence of children playing on  
pristine beaches was enough to transport me back  
to my own childhood.  
warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lloyd R. Nebres". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

lloyd r. nebres

**Lloyd Nebres** is a Humanities senior at the University of California, Berkeley. He has published poems in *Without Names*, *Anthology of Pilipino Poets in the Bay Area*, and was the winner of a Poet Laureate competition at U.C. in 1985.



## **kabankalan, negros occidental**

things are scrawny  
here in kabankalan . . .  
the dogs are scabrous fur  
and bones,  
their saliva thin,  
fangs brittle.

hectares of young sugar cane,  
growing.  
a distant stand of coconut trees  
a hut discernible near it.  
— a sunset vista i would have  
considered picturesque  
were it not for  
the ribs and bones  
in the foreground.  
ribs and angular skeletons  
thinly covered  
with childrens' skins.

even the cane seem listless  
and fallow  
in the scrawny wind.

for the land,  
the once rich and red earth,  
is now only red.  
and the thin blood  
has not been able  
to spur the cane to fatness . . .

**lloyd r. nebres**

## **Sunday, Hacienda Canla-on Tres**

"in the name of the Father . . . "  
a peasant is waiting by the window of his hut.  
heat and bullets rip so easy into flesh  
ricocheting off of bone  
gouging vivid paths through heart or lung  
white of the host is white of bone.

"in the name of the Son . . . "  
a sugar worker writes by a window, his hut.  
like flies to feces  
the sadists gravitate to guns  
the butts of guns to sadists hands  
red of the wine is rended lung.

"in the name of the Holy Ghost . . . "  
Pedring Maghanoy, union organizer, writes in his hut.  
the M-16 round pierces his back  
cleaves the spine ricochets through liver  
punctures the left lung  
buries its splinters in the heart.

it is Sunday in Hacienda Canla-on Tres,  
". . . Amen."

**lloyd r. nebres**

# Asian Americans and the Fight for Educational Rights

By Wilma Chan

**T**he Focus section of this issue of *East Wind* is on the educational rights of Asian Americans. As a mother of two school-aged children and a community activist for nearly 20 years, education is an issue close to my heart.

Reflected in the following pages are some of the key issues over which Asian American students, parents, teachers, administrators and the community in general are fighting the battle for an equal and meaningful education today. These articles show both the blossoming of a new wave of struggle around the issue of educational rights and give us a glimpse of how central this issue will be to the future of the Asian National Movements in the years to come.

Historically, the development of public education was part of the demand for a democratic society. The demand for social, political, and economic equality (for everyone) includes the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to function on an equal basis in society. But capitalists, too, recognized the liberating potential of education, and suppressed the educational rights of Third World people.

The first Asians in America faced severe discrimination. While they mined the mines, built the railroads and made the swamplands rich for generations to come, they were treated unfairly and unequally. In the legislative area alone, between 1880 and 1924, fourteen discriminatory laws were passed that

kept Chinese and other Asian nationalities in a second-class status. The restrictions imposed against Asian Americans as a people became a necessary part of superexploiting our labor. It is within this context that the first Asian immigrants fought for educational opportunities as one way to fight superexploitation and gain greater control over their lives.

Our early history in education was one of total exclusion. The first Asian immigrants were not even allowed to attend public schools. When the early Chinese protested, they were finally allowed to attend "separate but equal" schools just like the discriminatory treatment of Blacks in the South.

It was not until the 1950s that Asian Americans began to be more integrated into the public school system, but then only to be treated to a distorted and racist curriculum. We were never taught the real history of Blacks, Chicanos or working people in the schools. It was unheard of to be able to study Asian history or languages, and when courses were presented, they were usually limited and one-sided. Many of us remember not even knowing where China was on a map because the socialist revolution in China was considered unmentionable in public school curriculum.

During the same period, Chinese children were punished for speaking

*... the first Asian immigrants fought for educational opportunities as one way to fight super-exploitation and gain greater control over their lives.*



their native tongue, just like Chicano children in the Southwest were punished for speaking Spanish. Although we had a legacy of one hundred years in this country, our history had been written off as unimportant and our contributions were hidden to prevent a questioning of the racism and discrimination practiced against our people.

*I*t took the massive uprisings in the communities of the late 1960s and early 70s to win substantial gains in educational rights. During that period, Asian Americans joined with Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other minorities in standing up for equal rights and political power and

in calling for revolutionary change of the existing political system. Part of the struggle for revolutionary change was to challenge the racist educational system and its lack of relevance and accountability to minority peoples. For the Asian American communities there were many issues and demands. Parents stood up to oppose forced busing, defend com-

community schools and win greater control over decision-making. In San Francisco Chinatown, parents held a 90% effective boycott, protesting a busing program which would have sent elementary school children on 45-minute bus rides to schools no better than those in the community. In high schools across the country, students, for the first time, formed Asian Clubs, and fought for Asian American courses, funding for cultural programs and the right to take a holiday on Asian Lunar New Year.

It was a Chinese parent who won the 1974 landmark decision of *Lau vs. Nicols* in which the Supreme Court was forced to recognize that non-English speaking students were being denied their right to an equal education unless bilingual instruction was implemented.

In higher education, Asian Americans joined other minority students

***Our vision of education is one which empowers our people and our communities.***

to demand affirmative action (especially for working class Asian Americans) and other programs which not only opened the doors of higher education to those who otherwise would be denied, but also provided a meaningful education interpreting and drawing from our own history, culture and traditions.

**P**articularly important was the demand for ethnic studies programs which, for the first time, taught Asian Americans and other minorities the truth about the contributions and struggles of our people as well as exposed the racism and oppression of the capitalist system. The awareness of Asian American history and culture and the forging of a positive national identity was an important step in bringing many young Asian Americans into the communities to learn firsthand the conditions of national oppression and to make the commitment to fight for social change.

It was in this period that the first Asian student groups formed on campus. They joined the fight to demand equal rights and political empowerment, not only in education but in an overall way.

Beginning in the late 1970s and through the 80s, however, our rights have come under severe attack. The U.S. government, in the post-Viet Nam War era, has implemented a policy of increased militarization and repression of minority, poor and working people in order to shore up a weakened U.S. economy.

As part of the overall shift to the right, educational rights for minorities and working people have suffered a severe attack. In just six years since Reagan took office, he has cut federal spending for education by 25% and student aid programs by 21%. While one third of the federal budget is spent on more bombs and military buildup, our children get a mere 1.5% of the overall budget.

Educational reforms won in the 60s and early 70s are being under-

mined. Affirmative action for minorities was attacked in the courts as "reverse discrimination" against whites in the 1977 *Bakke* decision. Over half of the Afro-American Studies programs won in the 60s have been eliminated. Financial aid has been cut back as tuition costs have more than tripled in some cases, and many educational support programs in the community and on campus have been gutted.

On the ideological front, outright racist theories are being revived to "prove" the "inferiority" of Black and Chicano children and to shift the blame for the failings of the educational system onto them. Along with this has been a host of new studies on education to justify the drastic cutbacks and the practical exclusion of the majority of minority and working people from access to a quality education. Curriculum has become increasingly backward with the move by the right wing to restore prayers in the schools and use textbooks which openly promote chauvinism and racism.

Asian Americans have felt the impact of these attacks on educational rights. Community schools have closed. Children are forced to attend schools in deteriorating buildings with inadequate teaching staffs and counselors. Bilingual education and ethnic studies courses have been eliminated. At the college level, the lack of financial aid and support services has made it harder for working class Asian Americans to attend and graduate from college.

The most insidious attack on the educational rights of Asian Americans, however, has been the Model Minority Myth. Using distorted and selective statistics, the Model Minority Myth has been used to cover over the continuing discrimination against Asian Americans, fan up increased racial hatred against our people, and divide us from Blacks, Chicanos and other minorities who are our best allies in fighting for our rights.

Citing statistics such as a 25% Asian student enrollment at UC

Berkeley or a 10% Asian student enrollment at Harvard, the Model Minority Myth presents a picture of Asian Americans as the single non-white minority which has won the race for equal education and is in fact "overrepresented".

The truth of the matter is that Asian Americans are not "overrepresented" (which itself is a racist concept never imposed on white students), but rather, high Asian enrollment in some colleges reflects the geographical concentration of Asian Americans in particular regions of the country. For example, Asian Americans make up over 40% of San Francisco County; therefore it is not surprising that Asian enrollment at UC Berkeley is so high. On a national scale, Asian Americans constitute only a tiny percentage of college enrollment in most states.

**T**he Model Minority Myth focuses on only certain types of Asian American families. The examples used are almost always children of rich immigrants who had educational advantages in their home countries or who came with enough money to put their children in the best public or private schools. Also highlighted are the children of middle-class professionals who were able to stabilize their livelihoods during the economic prosperity of the 50s. These statistics do not reflect the situation of the sons and daughters of the 70% or more Asian Americans who continue to work in the garment shops, restaurants, as clerks or in other working class jobs and who have limited options as to where to live, work and send their children to school.

It is common knowledge among scientists that one outstanding statistic is enough to distort the average and present a totally false picture, yet the "social scientists" of "60 Minutes", *Newsweek* and *The New York Times Magazine* do exactly that in depicting the "success" of Asian Americans.

The Model Minority Myth is not

***The struggle for educational rights has always been tied to our future as Asian American peoples.***

only false, it is dangerous. Can it be an accident that the revival of the Model Minority Myth in the early 80s paralleled the sharp rise in racist violence against Asian Americans?

Today, just when we are being told we have made it, our actual experience tells us that our educational rights are being stripped away. Xenophobic "English-only" laws threaten to wipe out bilingual education at a time when the majority of Asian students are recent immigrants. The unprecedented cuts in the proposed federal and state educational budgets are having a devastating impact on inner city schools (resulting in teacher layoffs, firing of needed counselors, overcrowding, and an Asian dropout rate of 15-18%). Cuts in funding to community colleges, raising of college admissions standards at a time when public education is not able to keep pace, and racist quotas being set against admitting Asian American students to institutions of higher learning are beginning to close the doors of higher education to many

Asian American students.

At the same time our vision of education goes further than fighting around these particular issues. Our vision of education is one which empowers our people and our communities. This includes control of community schools, sweeping curriculum changes to reflect our true history and to keep students in pace with modern technology, expansion of the definition of bilingual education to include the teaching of minority languages and cultures, an end to racist tracking and the addition of enrichment courses in music and the arts. In higher education, we need to fight for open enrollment, expansion of financial aid and other support programs for minority and working class students, ethnic studies as a graduation requirement for all students and an end to racist violence on campus.

The struggle for educational rights has always been tied to our future as Asian American peoples. We want an education which serves our communities, fosters confidence, awareness and pride in our children as well as gives them the skills to keep up with the complexities of today and enables them to contribute to building a better society.

**O**ur children, as all children, have a right to learn and to recognize their full potential as human beings. Restrictions on our educational rights are only used to keep us down, limit our options, suppress our language and culture and ultimately, to keep us unequal. On the other hand, the education we want can empower us to fight for equality and a better future, not only for our children but for generations to come. □

*Wilma Chan is a contributing editor to East Wind and vice chairperson of the Chinese Progressive Association. She is also a parent representative to the Oakland Task Force Committee on Year-Round Schools.*

# Quality in Public Education

Interviews by Angela Chu,  
Ernestine Tayabas and Donna Wong

**A**s East Wind goes to press, the San Francisco Unified School District is considering major layoffs of over 500 administrators, counselors and teachers in an effort to balance the \$18 million budget deficit. This is due to proposed cuts by Governor George Deukmejian which will result in a \$600 million net loss for public education in California. This will have a devastating effect on K-12 education, which is already suffering from overcrowded classrooms, counselor case overload, teacher shortages and lack of funding for much-needed bilingual education programs.

To understand the conditions of K-12 in San Francisco and the Bay Area, East Wind held a discussion with Kathleen Wong, bilingual outreach counselor, Asian American Communities for Education (AACE); Amy Seto, immigrant parent; Lotus Fong, parent; Phu Vuong, high school senior; and Irene Collier, The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT).

**EW:** What are your main concerns about K-12?

**Kathleen:** Students' motivation to study. A lot of things are going on in their lives besides school, things that affect their performance in school. The schools tend to rely too much on outside agencies instead of developing their own programs to deal with students' problems. Many schools cannot provide the necessary programs because of lack of funding.

Schools need more funding to start new programs and to maintain programs on campus that outside agencies are providing. More money needs to come from the governor's office.

**Amy:** I am concerned about the friends my children make in school. Adolescents can be influenced easily by their peers. They could make a wrong turn, take drugs and alcohol, even if they're good kids.

**Lotus:** Within the public school systems, California ranks low in financing schools and dealing with class size. Most minority students are in the cities. The San Francisco district is made up of 83% Third World children and because of large class size, white and minority students who can afford it go to private or parochial schools.

**Irene:** Many teachers are retiring. The average age is 55 in the whole district. There are some new people,

but few minorities. This is my main concern — we need to recruit minority teachers. Those being hired are mostly white with no experience teaching language-minority children. Also, there is no requirement for new teachers to get sensitized to the needs of language-minority children. More than 50% of the students in California are minority, 70% are in this district alone. As a whole, teachers are dedicated, but the curriculum may not be appropriate. We don't learn our own histories — the Japanese camp experience, Chinese American history, etc.

**Phu:** The Berkeley district is going bankrupt. Last statistics showed that Berkeley was \$3 million in debt. The district is making cuts in order to repay the money. But who suffers? The immigrant students, because the classrooms are overcrowded and the teachers are not teaching to their full potential.

**EW:** What opportunities are there



Kathleen Wong



Amy Seto

## — Roundtable Discussion

for parent involvement?

**Kathleen:** The opportunities exist but there are some barriers such as 1) language — it's difficult to find bilingual translators for PTA meetings; 2) economic status of parents — many cannot afford to take time away from work to come to meetings; many hold two jobs or are looking for work; 3) lack of active recruitment of parents from lower economic status and disadvantaged backgrounds by school administration. More funding would help increase parent involvement. Extra staff and resources would free teachers to contact and recruit more parents and coordinate meetings, or a staffperson could be hired specifically to do PTA coordinating.

**Lotus:** If you have sensitive teachers or principals, then they can make parents feel welcome. Traditional PTA has been a middle class model — it has to be redefined. We need parent programs that can relate



Lotus Fong

to the background of each community, being sensitive to what they share in common. It should bring people together.

**Phu:** Unfortunately, immigrant parents do not generally get involved. The PTA is functioning but non-English-speaking parents don't go because it's difficult when there's no translations. When there are translations, the translations are slanted toward the administration which promotes the idea that there's no problems in the bilingual education program.

**Irene:** The level of parent involvement is not that high in K-12. In preschool, involvement is extremely high because the administration strongly encourages parents to come in and do volunteer work. We need bilingual translations at PTAs and other meetings. It's stated in the goals of the district, but nothing has been done about it yet. The other side of it, too, is that teachers are



Phu Vuong

overworked. There's no time to organize.

**Amy:** The only contact I had from the school was the notice for school open house. I do not know of other activities. I went only twice to Bryant's middle school, once to register with him, the other time was at his graduation. If my son's counselors were bilingual I would feel comfortable going to them and discussing Bryant's problems. If they were bilingual I would go to them even if there weren't any problems, just to discuss my child's education.

**EW:** What are some of the goals parents have for their children?

**Amy:** We hope that our children will have teachers who are well trained, responsible, and can help our children a lot. As new immigrant parents, we might be able to assist our children in their math but would not be able to teach them English. In this respect, we rely on teachers to



Irene Collier

EAST WIND PHOTOS





UNITY

San Francisco Chinatown parents express their anger at the cuts in public education funds.

teach our children. I hope my children will develop themselves fully, mentally and physically, and have good moral standards.

**Lotus:** Education should be more than a ticket to a job. Children should learn skills on how to resolve problems. The world is changing faster — we have to contend with high technology, conditions of the Third World, the existence of nuclear weaponry. We need to teach participation and contributing back to the community.

**Kathleen:** Parents want their children to go to college or acquire occupational skills in high school. Parents provide the pressure to perform but they don't realize the obstacles that students face in school. They often don't know what classes are required for college. They leave that responsibility to the high schools. Counselors and teachers are

understaffed and students sometimes do not get the information they need. Parents and teachers rarely meet about the student unless there is a crisis situation and by then it's usually too late.

**EW:** What is the current condition of bilingual education and what do you see as the future?

**Kathleen:** Bilingual education programs are important especially for acquiring the academic information. The problem is that there are not enough programs in the district to address the non-academic needs of the bilingual students in order to make the transition into mainstream schools smoother. The immigrant students have to adjust to a new culture, school, society. There needs to be ongoing needs assessment, concern and individualized attention as they enter mainstream schools. Proposition 63 set a bad precedent. It may

allow someone to sue for the elimination of bilingual education. It will make future funding difficult and especially increased funding difficult, and yet we need this increased funding to meet the growing demand.

**Amy:** I oppose the recent cuts in bilingual education. New immigrants need bilingual education to adjust to living in the U.S. When my kids started school they didn't do well, but bilingual education improved their schoolwork. And when they did better we felt better knowing our children are keeping up with schoolwork. Without the program, students would have to suffer and struggle a lot harder. When kids don't do well in school because of language problems it puts the burden on parents who also have to deal with money problems and problems of surviving.

I am also outraged at the proposal to cut back ESL (English as a Second Language —*ed.*) classes at the community colleges. If they require tuition, 70% of the students will not be able to afford classes and students will lose the chance to learn English, and with no English skills you can't make a living.

**Phu:** In my district (Berkeley), the schools are working toward compliance with bilingual education requirements. Currently, there's no parent advisory committee, no masterplan for bilingual education. With no parent advisory committee, no one is overlooking how monies are being spent. The future looks bleak.

I'm worried because Deukmejian vetoed the bilingual bill. Parents are filing complaints and lawsuits, but lawsuits take forever. People in Sacramento don't care. □

*Angela Chu works for the Chinatown Youth Center in San Francisco Chinatown and is a member of the Chinese Progressive Association.*

*Ernestine Tayabas is the Bay Area representative for East Wind.*

*Donna Wong is a member of the Chinese Progressive Association and the Committee for Educational Access.*

# Educational Rights and the California State University

By Alan Nishio

The California State University system (CSU) represents the largest higher educational system in the world with over 320,000 students enrolled within its 19 campuses. Promoting itself as a "People's University," CSU graduates make up a significant portion of California's educated labor force. As an example, the CSU educates the largest number of public service professionals, engineers and technical workers, and the majority of all public school teachers in California are CSU graduates.

California higher education, and the CSU in particular, is now confronting a new challenge as we approach the year 2000. Within the next 20 years, California will become the first state in the continental United States where there will be no single ethnic majority. California will soon be joined by New Mexico, Texas, Colorado and Arizona as states in which the majority of residents will be "ethnic minorities."

The changing demographics of California is already evidenced within the public schools, where the majority of the state's elementary school students are Third World children. Within the next decade, the majority of all public school students will be Asians, Blacks, and Latinos.

Thus, California higher education is being asked to take up a significant challenge — to provide a meaningful educational experience for a growing

population of students for which it was never designed to serve in the first place. From its beginnings, higher education in the U.S. has been directed largely by notions that have been based upon white middle class assumptions and experiences. While the population of California has changed dramatically within the past 30 years, the assumptions and structure of higher education have remained relatively unchanged.

Within this context, what steps is the CSU taking to meet the needs of an increasing ethnically diverse pop-

ulation? Are steps being taken to increase the number of Third World students being admitted? Are financial aid and scholarship funds being made available to ensure that higher education can remain a reality for working class and poor families? Are actions being taken to incorporate a multicultural curriculum to ensure that what is being taught is reflective of the backgrounds and experiences of those students that are being taught? Unfortunately, it appears that the response to these questions must be in the negative.



*Changes in CSU admissions standards will not meet the needs of an increasingly Third World population.*

In the area of admissions, the CSU has adopted increased admissions standards that will exclude, rather than include, additional numbers of Third World students. Higher standards have been adopted to increase the number of college preparatory courses required for entering students. While this will improve the academic preparation of the few Third World students who will meet these requirements, it will likely lead to a significant reduction in the number of students being admitted unless there is a dramatic turnaround in the dropout rates and course preparation of Third World students in the public high schools — an unlikely scenario given the continued budgetary crisis confronting the public schools under the Deukmejian budget. The CSU is putting the demand for higher standards on the backs of students. The message being given is "If you don't meet our standards, we don't want you."

**I**n the area of financial aid, the impact of Reaganomics has seen a drastic reduction in the funds available to make college a realistic alternative for poor and working class students. An ever-increasing number of students are forced to compete for an ever-decreasing amount of financial aid available. Loan funds are taking the place of grant funds and students whose parents cannot afford to support their education are being forced to work full time while going to school, or take out large loans to support their education, but most likely, students drop out of schools in order to work and meet day-to-day survival needs.

Those students who manage to be admitted and can afford to continue their education are confronted with an educational program that often is not relevant to their own backgrounds and experiences. Ethnic studies programs have been reduced or eliminated at many CSU campuses. Those ethnic studies courses that have survived are viewed as marginal courses that are not given

general education credit. The majority of students enrolled in ethnic studies courses are Third World students and thus the majority of white students enrolled in CSU campuses are never exposed to the history and experience of people of color as a part of their educational program.

The educational future of Third World students is at risk during this critical time. While California is soon to become a Third World state, the enrollment of Third World students within the CSU continues to lag terribly, and, in the case of Black students, is actually declining!

**... those in positions to determine the educational future for CSU students are not reflecting the concerns of Third World and working class students.**

It is clear that those in positions to determine the educational future for CSU students are not reflecting the concerns of Third World and working class students. The educational agenda for California is being determined by those who wish to reinstitute elitist notions of higher education that are predicated not on who can benefit from higher education but rather on who can afford to go. For Third World communities, higher education has represented one of the few vehicles available for gaining a degree of social and economic mobility. During the 1960s and '70s, the doors to higher education were opened for many who

were traditionally excluded due to artificial racist and economic barriers. After more than a decade of student struggles joined with the civil rights movement, higher education came to be viewed as a right for the many rather than as a privilege for the few.

**F**or this decade, a new educational agenda is needed if we are to move forward as a Third World state. We must organize to ensure that the decisions being made about education reflect the interests and concerns of those being educated. Admissions policies should be adopted that ensure that the most talented individuals from all communities are admitted into the CSU. Financial aid and scholarship funds must be provided so that poor people are not excluded from educational opportunities. Courses reflecting the history and experiences of Third World people must become a part of the core of the general education of all students and ethnic studies courses must become a requirement for the graduation of all students from the CSU.

Third World students were at the vanguard in democratizing higher education and allowing a college education to become a reality for many Third World communities. Under the era of Reaganomics and Deukmejian education priorities, we have witnessed an unprecedented attack upon the gains made in the 1960s and '70s. We must again organize to regain the initiative in ensuring the educational future for all, especially Third World and working class students.

**OVERTURN THE '88 CSU ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS!**

**DEFEAT THE DEUKMEJIAN EDUCATION BUDGET!** □

*Alan Nishio is the assistant vice president of Student Services at the California State University, Long Beach. He is also the Southern California co-chair of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCR).*



A community workshop.



This year's conference was attended by over 500 Asian students.



Garment workers delivering a support statement.

HIEN TRAN PHOTOS

# ECASU: Education for Action

By Suzanne Pan and Ellen Lam

**T**he East Coast Asian Student Union (ECASU) is a network of college Asian organizations along the East Coast. Founded in 1978 in reaction to attacks made on many of the Third World and minority programs fought for and won in the 1960s, ECASU works in many activities on campuses and in the community, fighting for justice, respect, and equality for Asian people in this country. From holding conferences, college fairs for Asian high school students, cultural programs on campuses, and workshops on issues facing Asian students today, to its involvement in anti-Asian violence cases in Boston and the struggle of the P&L garment

workers, ECASU continues to play an important role in the Asian Student Movement.

Given the present atmosphere for Asian Americans, the theme for the Spring 1987 ECASU conference — Education for Action — is quite appropriate. The image of the model minority, which has been quite prevalent in the past few years, has threatened the right of Asian Americans to an education. Some elite colleges and universities have begun to limit the number of Asians allowed to enter. The rise in anti-Asian violence and the crisis of the American economy, which has manifested itself in the greater competition for this country's resources, have increased the need for Asians to mobilize into action.

So, what does "Education for Ac-

tion" mean? One example of "Education for Action" is the demand for Asian American Studies. The reason for the demand lies in providing Asian students an opportunity to study about their own people — for many their first opportunity. From such a class, a pride of their own people and history is forged. And through this, the Asian American is mobilized into action. This can be seen quite clearly out of an Asian American history class offered at Harvard this spring. Many of these students became active in the garment workers struggle in Boston Chinatown. It was a chance to extend the classroom into the community and learn about how struggle and pride worked in the real world. For many, this participation was their first. This phenomenon is not unique and can be observed

throughout the entire Asian American Movement. Many activists who are now participants in the Asian American Movement initially were mobilized through classes, workshops, and/or seminars about Asian Americans.

**A**nother example of "Education for Action" can be seen from the seminar offered at Wellesley, where students who attended the seminar were inspired enough to fight for an Asian American Studies course. They wrote proposals and grants and have talked to various faculty and administrators. The students have plans for a journal which hopefully will get them more support from among the Wellesley community. Yet another example is at Boston University, where workshops presented by the Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW) resulted in the students becoming more active in the Asian organizations on campus.

In 1984, after the Spring ECASU conference, a proposal was made to organize a Task Force on Asian American Studies. The goal of this task force was to investigate the possibility of Asian American Studies on the East Coast and identify the resources available to the students. Since then we have seen exciting developments in the area of Asian American Studies. Quite significant is the cooperation among the different groups — students, faculty and administrators, and community. This cooperation is important if we are ever to see effective Asian American Studies programs on our campuses. Each group has a unique and useful contribution to make to the struggle for Asian American Studies: the students organize the day-to-day activity and provide the future vision for the struggle; supportive faculty and administrators can institutionalize and develop the theory in Asian American Studies; and the community concretizes the need for Asian American Studies.

Making a link with the community has been very significant for many

Asian student organizations. Besides providing a real, concrete place to understand the practicality of Asian American Studies, it also has brought them into contact with community organizations such as the AARW. The AARW, a grass-roots, community-based, educational organization in Boston, has provided valuable resources in the form of books, materials, films/videos, and the experience and knowledge of its staff and volunteers. Throughout the past year, ECASU/New England worked with the AARW to develop educational workshops, to bring the workshops onto campuses, to strengthen Asian organizations by educating and activating its member-

*Many activists  
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Americans.*

ship, and to strategize to build Asian American Studies programs. In its second year, this student-community link now has more student involvement than ever, with students taking a greater role in developing and leading workshops.

Through these various strategies and through the efforts of Asian student organizations on various campuses and the work of the ECASU Task Force, important gains have been made. For the first time ever, a class in Asian American Studies will be held in Spring, 1987 at the

University of Massachusetts at Boston. The class came about because students at UMass/Boston proposed, fought for, and won an Asian American Center and were able to create an atmosphere such that the need for Asian American Studies was seen. Last year, Asian women students nationwide and the National Network of Asian Pacific Women coordinated a pilot project on Asian American Women's Studies, involving students from Brown, Duke, Harvard, Oberlin, Smith, Wellesley, Wesleyan, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford. Many of the women students who participated in this project later set up seminars at their respective colleges. At Cornell, students there passed a referendum to establish an Asian American Studies program. Classes have been held at Harvard University, Brown University, Yale University, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Additionally, faculty and administrators have mobilized around Asian American Studies. This past fall, a retreat was held at Cornell, which many leaders in Asian American Studies on the East Coast attended. Faculty and administrators at Brown, Tufts, UMass/Amherst and UMass/Boston have been interested in setting up Asian American Studies programs on their campuses.

This past year's efforts have laid a foundation for the implementation of Asian American Studies programs on the East Coast. This is only one step toward the fight for the total equality of Asian and all Third World people. For ECASU, a successful conference, via a renewed emphasis on Asian American Studies, will continue this progressive trend. A new generation of inspired Asian American student activists will emerge — carrying on the tradition of struggle and resistance. □

**Suzanne Pan** was formerly active in ECASU/New England as a student at MIT. She presently serves on the steering committee of the AARW. **Ellen Lam** is a Harvard student and an ECASU representative.

*Living in America*

# Land of Opportunity?

By Sophia Kwong

**T**his year, the Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union (APISU) will be marking its tenth year of contributions to building the Asian/Pacific Islander student movement on the West Coast.

APISU is dedicated to increasing pride and awareness among Asian/Pacific Islander students, fighting for equal educational opportunities and against discrimination, developing the unity of all minority students and building a bridge between the campuses and the communities.

For the past ten years, APISU has touched the lives of thousands of students who have fought for the rights of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on campus. Many have gone on to become organizers and leaders in the fight for political empowerment and equality in the Asian American communities.

Today, APISU represents close to 40 campuses and 70 Asian clubs stretching from San Diego to Eugene, Oregon, and has become known as a leading force in the West Coast Asian student movement.

"Living in America: Land of Opportunity?", the theme for the Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union's ninth annual statewide conference,

poses a very controversial question to all people of color in America. Are we really allowed to do what we want, be what we want to be? Or are there certain factors hindering us from our goals? These are some questions that were examined during the APISU conference hosted by the University of California, San Diego, on February 28, 1987.

For me, the first Asian-related conference I've ever attended, the day was filled with much excitement, fun, and learning. From the speakers, community panel, workshops, and even the cultural program and dance, I discovered a whole new side of Asians. In an all-time high of close to 600 attendees, the atmosphere we were enclosed in was full of pride and determination to let our voices be heard.

When I first learned of the APISU conference, the item on the agenda that attracted me the most was the intended speech by the first Chinese American woman mayor, Lily Chen. I had heard so much about her and I wanted so much to hear what she had to say. Lily Chen is from Monterey Park, California, which has been the site of increasing racial backlash and displays of overt resentment and hostility against Asians.



A new wave of Asian American student activists join the movement for educational rights.

For example, Lily Chen during her term as mayor saw a sign on display on a gas station window that stated, "Will the last American to leave Monterey Park please take the (American) flag" — a racist reference to the influx of Asian immigrants into Monterey Park. As a public servant she felt she had to speak up against such a symbol of bigotry and intolerance and sent a letter to the owner of the station. She raised an issue for all of us — the responsibility to speak up on controversial matters of public concern.

As Lily explained, we can't always make decisions on popularity or expediency, but on principles, like the dangerous implications of the English-only initiative that passed in California this past fall.

Hearing her speak against this initiative made me remember years ago when our family first arrived in the U.S. My parents' first concern was to obtain a stable job for their

children's well being. They couldn't afford to neglect the basic necessity of life in order to learn English. I realized that the English-only initiative would only hinder immigrants' lives because it could be used to eliminate bilingual services and education and translation services.

In addition to this issue, she shared with the audience her pleasure of seeing so many Asians working together for our common concerns; I had never felt such a sense of belonging, of pride. I was proud of what she had accomplished, and proud of that determined look on her face. She, as well as the panelists and other speakers, was an inspiration for me. Throughout the conference, I began questioning myself, my identity. The workshops I attended — political empowerment and art, culture, and identity — helped me to realize that discrimination remains a part of our lives. For example, when I heard that a DJ from a San Diego radio station invited listeners to tell Chinese racist jokes on the air I was shocked. When listeners demanded an apology, the DJ played Japanese koto music with someone singing, "Ah, so sahlee Chalee." It dawned on me then that we're really not as accepted as I had always thought. I had always thought that because we are in the '80s, we are free from such public mockery, but obviously we are not.

Looking back, I can see how I was affected by many things. I attended an all-girls Catholic high school where I was the only Chinese in my class. I used to hate being reminded that I was Chinese; my mom knew that and I can recall how much it hurt her to know that I felt that way. My identity crisis began to come to an end when I took an Asian American Studies class during my sophomore year in college, culminating with the APSU conference.

I remember my mom telling us stories, when I was younger, about discrimination in early Chinese American history. I used to brush off her stories, thinking, "That was then." The impact of her stories

***I feel very strongly about doing something to ensure that my brothers and others younger than I receive what is rightfully theirs, things like higher education, equality . . .***

didn't hit me until, during the Asian American Studies class, I was shown the complete picture of Asians' history in America. Now I've come to understand why my mom was so strict and why she felt doing well in school was so important. I've come to appreciate what my ancestors have done in American history, for us. And last but not least, I've come to appreciate my parents, my culture, who I am. Whereas I used to repress my Chinese identity, I now feel that I can hold my head high. Seeing "a sea of black heads" at the conference gave me the confidence I've lacked; until the conference, I had never seen so many Asians working for the same cause.

With the insight about my ancestors, and with the confidence gained from the conference, I feel very strongly about doing something to ensure that my brothers and others younger than I receive what is rightfully theirs, things like higher education, equality, and other such items our ancestors have paid for. We must break the stereotypes that Asians are passive, that we won't

fight back. Others might see our actions as anti-white, but we're not! All we want is a piece of the American pie; after all, our ancestors have earned it for us.

Nine years ago, the theme for the first working conference held at Sacramento State University was "Advance the Spirit of the Third World Strikes!!! Build the Asian/Pacific Student Movement!!!" From the themes, we can see how far Asians have come in fighting for programs, rights, equality. The first conference promoted the fight for ethnic studies departments on various campuses. Participants sought classes which corrected the wrong and distorted images of Asians, as well as classes which describe Asians' roles in American history. Since then, some campuses have established ethnic studies departments. The focus for the future (and the 1987 conference) is to push for a graduation requirement of ethnic studies and to demand educational rights for minority students.

The Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union not only tries to insure that Asian and Pacific Islander people have the right to an accessible and relevant education, but it also helps fulfill Asian/Pacific Islanders' social, cultural, and political needs. In order to continue to gain insights and to keep communication channels open, regional meetings are conducted along with community projects throughout the year. Moreover, member organizations such as the various Asian Student Unions hold their own meetings, potlucks, to learn and to share with one another, for it is through each other that we are reminded of our pride, our strength. As one person at the identity workshop said, "We need to support each other, realize that instead of fighting each other, we should look at what's going on — at the oppressors." □

*Sophia Kwong is a sophomore planning to major in social sciences at the University of California, Berkeley.*

# Through Strength and Struggle

*A Victory for Garment Workers in Boston*

By Therese Feng and  
Shirley Mark Yuen

**"E**ach day we faced only the sewing machines during the day, the kitchen in the evening and the pillow at night. We never knew we could do anything other than this grind. We learned that we are capable of organizing and fighting discrimination."

**Gok Ying Lee**  
laid-off garment worker

In a national atmosphere that is increasingly anti-women, anti-minority, and anti-worker in sentiment, Chinese women and other ethnic immigrant garment workers in Boston recently earned a victory that is significant for women and non-English speaking minorities. Setting a precedent for all workers affected by plant closings, they fought for their rights as displaced workers, including the right to decide how retraining programs and benefits will be designed, implemented and evaluated.

P&L Sportswear of East Boston, the largest garment shop in Boston, closed its doors in December 1985, laying off its 300 plus workers, 60 percent being Chinese immigrant women. The shutdown of a plant that once employed 1,000 workers is a reflection of the general decline of the garment industry in the Northeast.

Presently, 75 percent of Chinese immigrant women workers are employed by the garment industry. The seasonal and piecework nature of the work limits the average annual



income to only \$4,000. Yet, this employment contributes substantially to the household income and often-times provides the only source of health insurance for these families. The closing of the P&L Sportswear plant would gravely affect the entire Chinese community.

**"A**ll those government bureaucrats look down on us because we don't speak English and we are garment workers. But we can think. We know what we want. So we wrote them a letter in our language to show them if they want to know what we said, they have to get it translated."

**Hing Szeto**  
a former worker

From the beginning, racial discrimination and class oppression have been the major issues. Under Massachusetts state law, workers displaced by plant closings can obtain benefits which would retrain them in new job skills. The P&L workers, however, found out about these provisions only when their English-speaking children observed local news coverage of the closing of a local meatpacking plant. In that situation, the plant closing received both major press coverage as well as a strong organizing effort from the union. Three days after the shutdown of the Colonial Company meatpacking plant, a workers' assistance center had been established.

The government, however, had made no attempt to similarly contact or consider the P&L workers *even though their plant had shut down three months earlier*. It was in March 1986 when the workers approached the Chinese Progressive Association, which quickly organized both students and community activists to form the Garment Workers Support Committee.

After several requests for information and action were made to city and state agencies, the Workers Committee and the Support Committee organized a rally in front of the Massachusetts State House to apply public pressure. Over 200 workers and their supporters demanded 1) the immediate release of funds for retraining programs, 2) extension of health insurance benefits, and 3) decision-making power over choice and implementation of retraining programs.

The unity among the workers and



the staunchness of supporters from Chinatown and throughout the city was clearly evident that day. Representatives from the Asian American Resource Workshop, Chinese Progressive Association, the Colonial Company workers, the East Coast Asian Student Union, political leaders such as Mel King, and labor leaders such as Domenic Bozotto, president of Local 26, spoke in support of the P&L workers. More important, it forced the state Industrial Services Program (ISP) and the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS) to address the workers' demands. By late May, a workers' assistance center was established, \$350,000 was allocated for retraining programs, and health insurance coverage was extended for six months.

This initial victory won gains for other displaced garment workers, such as those of the Beverly Rose Company, which had also closed earlier that year. However, this victory, while significant, simply represented securing workers' rights provided for — at least in theory — by Massachusetts state law.

**“We’ve been garment workers for so long and received the worst treatment from anyone around us — from government officials to other non-Chinese workers — that sometimes we believe we are nothing! Now, most of us know that we are somebody. We will make them listen to us. We know what is best for us.”**

**Tom Lan,**  
garment worker

During the summer, the campaign focused on the demand for worker decision-making power over choice and implementation of language and occupational retraining programs. JCS and ISP, for the most part, ignored the workers, claiming to know “what is best” for them, and even tried to bar the workers from attending meetings. In fact, they and the ILGWU Local held an attitude throughout that the workers did not know their own needs. Not only did these agencies repeatedly avoid dis-

cussion of substantive issues, they also clearly indicated their intention to let the issue die by failing to present a sound plan for retraining.

In July, the city called a meeting to discuss a workers' and support committee's counterproposal to the city's retraining plan. They insisted that only support committee members attend. Instead, they were met by 50 workers and supporters. Worker Lan Ng demanded, “How could you call a meeting without us to discuss issues affecting us? Nobody should speak for us.”



HIEH TRAN

Stunned by the unity between workers and supporters, the city and state agreed to a series of meetings which led to an historic agreement. Under the agreement, workers will determine guidelines and funding for their retraining programs, monitor the programs' progress, and receive sufficient unemployment and health insurance during their retraining. The workers' representatives summed up the victory as “a victory for ourselves and for the Chinese people.”

**“Now I know the true strength of Asian women. They work long hours, take care of the children, and probably face chauvinism at home and in the workplace. Then to labor, and labor some more, and still persevere — how much stronger can you get?”**

**Man Chak Ng**  
MIT student and Garment Workers  
Support Committee member

Throughout the campaign, the workers fought for the future — they fought not just for themselves and their families, but for other garment workers who would be displaced. The victory, however, extends beyond the agreement. The women have developed their own leadership capabilities and assumed primary responsibility in dealing with government agencies. They formed new alliances with community activists, students, labor leaders, and political figures to present a strong, organized front. These women, faced with racism from the government, the unions, and in the workplace, have shown what it takes to demand what is rightfully theirs. By bringing the issue before the public's attention and demonstrating their determination and unity in fighting for equality, the workers are changing the public's perception of Chinese immigrant women, and Asian peoples as a whole.

The P&L Workers have also set a precedent for other workers in creating a mechanism to secure benefits, retraining, and now, direct decision-making power. This victory is especially significant at a time when workers' rights have frequently been compromised in the settlement of labor disputes.

More struggles lie ahead. The workers continue to monitor the implementation of retraining programs, as well as fight to secure 100 percent job placement, in order to obtain rights for future displaced workers. They have no illusions as to the interests of the city and state, who prefer to regard them as a case of unavoidable “structural unemployment,” even during a time of supposed economic growth in Massachusetts. But they are prepared. Lan Ng says, “We are not going to be silent anymore. We will fight to get what is our right!” □

*Therese Feng is a member of the Garment Workers Support Committee. Shirley Mark Yuen is the education director of the Asian American Resource Workshop.*

By Michael Liu

On May 1, 1985, Long Guang Huang, a slight 50-year-old restaurant cook, walked the streets of Boston's Chinatown on his day off. As he crossed Kneeland Street, dividing the Chinatown residential from business areas, a plainclothes police officer, Francis Kelly, called out to Huang and approached him. Kelly, a 185 lb. six-footer, then beat Long Guang Huang, who is 5'2" and weighs 125 lbs., in front of several mid-morning witnesses. Subsequently Long Guang Huang was charged with soliciting a prostitute and assaulting the officer and was booked even as he was being hospitalized for the next five days. Kelly's actions would set off a chain of events that would catalyze the restive, growing Asian community in Boston into mass political action.

The resulting four-month community campaign included organizing volunteers, petitioning, meeting, marching, packing courtrooms, and confronting police. It led to clearing Mr. Huang of all charges and the suspension of Kelly for one year for the use of excessive force and falsifying his police report.

#### THE BASIS OF THE VICTORY

The success of the Huang campaign was built on the mass char-



ASIAN AMERICAN RESOURCE WORKSHOP

Over 200 Chinatown residents and supporters from across the city marched to City Hall on June 19, 1985.

## Campaign for justice:

### The case of Long Guang Huang

acter that it maintained throughout. A number of facts had incensed the community. First, many community people identified with the recently immigrated restaurant worker. Many

saw that Mr. Huang was clearly a victim, not only because of his size, but because of his circumstances. He was illiterate in his native language and spoke no English. By being charged with a felony, not only was Mr. Huang subject to jail but also to threats of deportation. Second, he had been beaten in his own community, the only refuge for many Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. This is a city, which despite its liberal image nationally, has a history of intolerance and racism. Third, the conditions which produced and reproduced prostitutes, pimps, and vice cops in the Chinese community was a direct result of the city's concentration of pornography by zoning it into the adjacent neighborhood, now known as the Combat Zone.

Workers in the coffee shops followed the developments in the newspapers closely. Small crowds would



Students collected thousands of signatures for petitions demanding the charges against Mr. Huang be dropped.

ASIAN AMERICAN RESOURCE WORKSHOP

gather to read the daily information posters put up outside of the Chinese Progressive Association even as the signs were being put up. The weekend information tables in the community parks were very popular. Restaurants donated food for fundraisers cooked by kitchen workers wearing red "Justice for Long Guang Huang" buttons.

The Support Committee held numerous community meetings and open committee meetings. These gave the people of Chinatown an opportunity to voice their demands for justice and participate in developing strategy and tactics to exert pressure on City Hall and the Police Department. These tactics included city-wide demonstrations, marches to the police hearings on Kelly's conduct and to Mr. Huang's trial, and packing both courtrooms. The popular support gave the campaign a constant reserve of strength and steadfastness throughout the ups and downs of the events during the summer. The attitude of the working man and woman around this issue was determined and firm and

persevered until the end of the campaign.

**M**aintaining the campaign also meant being able to hold together the various sectors of the community around the issue. This was an issue that all sectors of the community should have been able to unite around, but building such unity has always been difficult and elusive work in the past. Key to the establishment of the Support Committee was bringing representatives of the traditional associations and grassroots organizations together. Perhaps this was best symbolized in co-chairpersons Suzanne Lee of the Chinese Progressive Association and David Wong of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The Support Committee also developed a cooperative relationship with Huang's pro bono lawyer, Virginia Lee. While the Support Committee coordinated with the legal strategy, it also made recommendations to Lee and initiated independent activities to maximize the community's im-

pact. Such unity was crucial in the ability to gain concessions from the city.

Groups from the Black community, civil rights organizations, neighborhood groups, gays, and even international support groups were equally outraged. They helped make the issue citywide and remained available for support throughout the campaign.

Perhaps the most crucial element was the presence of an experienced leadership, who had been trained in a decade of community organizing. Many of these activists, such as Suzanne Lee and Peter Kiang, had been through struggles on housing, tenants, media stereotypes, and civil rights issues. Their refusal to be intimidated and their direction in choosing appropriate tactics, mobilizing the community, developing broad support, and insisting on unity in the community was at the core of the organizing.

### THE IMPACT

The Huang incident, however, did not end with Kelly's suspension.

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Over a year and a half after the Huang incident, its aftereffects are still being felt in the community and the city.

City Hall now takes the Asian community more seriously as a political force. It has tried to undercut the grass-roots organizing through hiring a number of Asians with a history of community organizing. Despite these individuals on his staff, there is still very little community control or input into shaping the city's policies, such as on land development or city services.

The city's media began to rethink its attitude toward the Asian community. During the Huang struggle, Chinatown was the "darling" of the media. Afterwards, a greater concern about inciting Asians by reporting about their struggles began to surface. For example, the murder of Bun Vong and the historic struggle of the laid-off P&L and Beverly Rose garment workers received relatively little notice in the media, despite an intense media effort by organizers. Recently, the coverage has taken a more chauvinistic tone. The reportage of the appeal of Frank Kelly, such as in *Boston Magazine*, has centered on the problems of Frank Kelly. It related the impact on his family and how he cried watching TV, even as the article ignored the continuing impact on Mr. Huang, who still remains unable to work at strenuous jobs. The *Boston Globe* also wrote a major article on Southeast Asians, who won't work because of the "generous" welfare benefits in Massachusetts, and the *Boston Herald* has been running front page articles about Chinatown and Vietnamese gangs.

Among the people in the city, on the other hand, the attitude is more positive. Everywhere one goes, people still remember the Huang incident. Their lasting impressions of the Asian community from that have had two common threads. First, the realization and recognition that the Asian community has problems like other minority communities. Second, respect for the unity and militancy against injustices that the com-

munity demonstrated. The Asian community has impressed itself on the consciousness of the city such that politicians, community coalitions, organizing efforts have begun to seek out the Asian community.

More than other issues in recent years, the Huang incident has created an atmosphere of *struggle* in the community. The Huang incident captured the imagination and catalyzed the spirit of resistance of Asians on the street to say, "No more!" Soon afterwards, groups of garment workers in closed and runaway shops



"Police Accountability" — A major concern for minority communities.

began to approach the Chinese Progressive Association about organizing to fight for their unemployment and retraining rights. Such activity wasn't possible before the Huang incident. The Huang organizing campaign taught the whole community that you achieve justice through struggle. People participated and saw that such struggle was possible and, properly organized, could win!

The Huang campaign was an inspiration for the working people of this community and has generated a swell of interest among younger peo-

ple in the community and political activism. They brought an intense new energy, creativity, and determination to the community and contributed significantly to the power of the organizing.

Thus, while the Huang resistance has brought some negative consequences from the city, police, and media, it has mobilized and strengthened the community as never before. Awareness of the interests of Asians is more acute, and mutual support with other communities, particularly the Black and Latino communities, is being built. In terms of obtaining the political power to determine their own fates, this heightened organization, willingness to struggle, and unity with other people will be decisive.

And events have demonstrated that we in the community must continually mobilize and organize. Kelly has finished his year suspension and is back on the streets. His appeal to the Civil Service Board brought Mr. Huang back into the hearing room, forcing him to take time off from work and face more racial harassment from Kelly's lawyer — as if Mr. Huang had never been cleared of the charges.

Long Guang Huang still suffers from dizzy spells and still needs the attention of a psychiatrist and medical doctor. He has taken a less strenuous and lower paying job in the kitchen because of his injuries. Mayor Ray Flynn's promises to take care of Mr. Huang's medical bills are still unfulfilled. And the streets continue to be patrolled by cop cars with bumper stickers saying, "Remember Frank Kelly." Mr. Huang is pursuing a suit against the city. The community should continue to support his pursuit of justice — it has been this pursuit that has given the community a new-found dignity. □

**Michael Liu** is a teacher and long-time Boston Chinatown activist. A founder of Boston's Chinese Progressive Association and the Asian American Resource Workshop, he is currently the chair of the Garment Workers' Support Committee.

# P E T A

## People's Theater with A Vision



MARK DOBRZYCKI

An ailing Marcos, "propped up" by his supporters.

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By Greg S. Castilla

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The litany of sufferings which Filipinos experienced under the Marcos dictatorship, the parody of Ferdinand and Imelda, the cry of "gutom, gutom, gutom pa rin" (Tagalog word for hunger) which filled the theater, the scene of People's Power and the primordial "life-sustaining" bird — these set the theme of the play, an indictment of the Marcos regime.

This was the message aesthetically portrayed in songs, rituals, dances and drama by the 26 members of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) during its tour of various American and Canadian cities last fall and winter.

The tour was part of PETA's efforts "to celebrate and share with the foreign communities its pride in the Filipino people's triumph against tyranny and dictatorship that shackled the nation for 20 years."

It seemed strange, then, that PETA ended its play, *Panata Sa Kalayaan (An Oath to Freedom)*, a people's theater dramatization of contemporary Philippines, with a song that calls for the continued defense of freedom, sovereignty, and democracy.

Here was a play about the common oppression of Filipinos under the Marcos regime and how the people delivered the final blows to the dying dictatorship. The emergence of Corazon Aquino was met with optimism. To give a sense of realism to the play, people from the audience were invited to go up to the stage and participate in the enactment of the now famous February Uprising: They barricaded the camp. They prayed. They blocked the military tanks. They protected the "rebel" soldiers. For a few moments they listened to Marcos' last telephone call with Senator Paul Laxalt closing, "I am very disappointed." As the flight of Marcos and his cohorts was announced, the people broke into unbelievable cries of victory, joy, catharsis and hope.

Yet to cap off these momentous political events, the PETA cultural workers reached back to an Oath that was recited by more than half a million Filipinos on September 21, 1983, hours before 11 Filipinos were killed by the military as they celebrated National Day of Mourning. Sung in blended voices, as the actors and actresses symbolically weave the various political threads in the Philippines, the last lines state:

Sa abot ng aking tapang  
*So long as my courage can bear it*  
 Anuman ang pagpapakasakit  
*Whatever the cost*  
 Ipagtatanggol ko ang kalayaan  
*I will defend freedom*  
 Ititinding ang kapangyarihan  
*Uphold the power*  
 At kasarinlan ng bayan  
*and independence of the people*  
 At ibabalik ang demokrasya sa aking bansa  
*And fight for my country's democracy*  
 Patnubayan nawa ako ng Diyos.  
*So help me God.*

Granted that it was more sentimentalism on PETA's part to sing the Oath that was personally led by Corazon Aquino, then simply known as Cory. Still it is curious that one would end a play about a popular, politically charged event with a note that the struggle and the liberation of the people from exploitation continues. It did not take long before the play shifted gears. While the audience was still in a state of euphoria because of the victory of the People's Power, the narrator drove home the point brilliantly by asking: It's a happy feeling to gain back our freedom, but why are people still crying? The joyful days of victory are over. The painful task of freedom has just started and we are still waiting.

As a theater group dedicated to the promotion of a national culture, PETA has never avoided social and political issues that affect the majority of the people. This is one of the hallmarks of the group. Through a series of monologues, the play was able to convey in a straightforward manner its political analysis. A family man talked of leaving his family to look for a job abroad. A socialite talked of going back to the streets again. A Constitutional Commissioner walked out of the assembly in protest of the assembly's bias in favor of foreign interests. A representative of the National Democratic Front assailed the military's effort to undermine the ceasefire agreement. A plump but agile prostitute in a stand-up burlesque number jazzed up her "Philippine American Friendships." A news headline carried the brutal murder of KMU Chairman Rolando Olalia.

Reactions were varied to PETA's indigenous approach to what a people's theater should be. Some Filipinos have criticized *Panata Sa Kalayaan* as an anti-Marcos propaganda, resulting in a few walkouts among diehard loyalists in the middle of the play.

MARK DOBRZYCKI



*Representing various social classes and sectors of Philippine society, actors and audience reweave the fabric of national unity.*

Other drama critics, schooled in the West, view PETA as an illegitimate theater group because there are no conflicts that result from the confrontation of individuals. Many, however, have hailed the group as a natural consequence of a new consciousness among Filipino artists that derives its relevance from dramatically portraying concrete conditions of the people.

Apropos to this understanding is what Nicanor Tiongson, a known Filipino playwright, wrote: "Drama is drama, not because of stage, costume, script, characterization, internal conflict, or even dialogue, but because of the principal elements of MIMESIS, that is, the imitation by an actor of actions that happen in real life . . . A play may be called truly Filipino, not only if it reflects Filipino culture, not only if it answers the needs of entertainment, exposure, and exhortation, but most especially if what it exhorts to is the final liberation of the masses."

PETA's main contribution to the Third World cultural movement is its ability to combine theater and politics. An ordinary actor, just like a politician, always speaks with a sense of urgency. When either speaks his mind, he is like a prophet, always ready to take advantage of the situation in order to spread his message. But PETA's actors transcend the empty talks and promises of a politician. They go beyond self-expression and delve into social realism not only to inform the audience but also to awaken them.

Theater people create their own vision. PETA's vision appears to be embodied in Tiongson's definition of a national theater: "When the theater shall have also succeeded in advancing the interests of Filipino economic and political independence, then shall it have grown a little closer to the ideal of a Filipino National Theater."

Because of PETA's popular orientation, it became the target of government censorship during the martial law years. Some of its members were harassed and even incarcerated by the military. Under the Aquino government, PETA continues to bring to the

**A play may be  
called truly  
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final liberation of  
the masses.**

stage issues that even newspapers dare not touch. *Panata Sa Kalayaan* fulfills this role when a disgruntled and disillusioned Constitutional Commissioner resigns from the Aquino-appointed committee that drafted the Aquino constitution. Before he resigns, he delivers a stinging rebuke of the drafters of the constitution, saying, "Who do we want to serve? We have been consistently attentive and sensitive to the interests of multinational corporations and we have ignored the demands of our people. The real Con-Com (Constitutional Commission) is out there in the streets, in the

rural areas, in the midst of the strikes of the ordinary laborers, in the poverty-stricken slum areas, in the hills, in the mountains, in the hearts and minds of our people. Only there shall the charter of our people be truly created and forged as the truest embodiment of their hopes, dreams, struggles, and destiny."

**T**he power of an indigenous theater group like PETA has its being deeply rooted in the masses. It will outlive its own limitations because its aesthetics and philosophy are grounded in reality that reflects the needs and aspirations of the poor and the oppressed. That vision of reality that is incorporated by a playwright in his *magnum opus* is what people fear the most about theater groups. This is the reason why *Panata Sa Kalayaan* has made a few enemies. But it has also touched some people and opened the eyes of many.

Indeed, the joyful days of People's Power are gone. The journey to freedom continues. And PETA is determined more than ever to fulfill the Oath wherever they may be. □

**Greg S. Castilla**, a writer based in Seattle, Washington, is co-coordinator of the Filipino Association for Community Education (FACE), and coordinator of the Pacific Asian Elderly Project.

# The Revolutionary Writings of H.T. TSIANG

By Fred Wei-han Houn

Not much is known about Hsi-Tseng Chiang, or H.T. Tsiang to English readers. Yet, he may have well been one of the most prolific Chinese American writers who wrote in English during the early 20th century. Despite the fact that few Asian American writers were being published by the white American publishing industry in the 1930s, Tsiang aggressively self-published three books: *Poems of the Chinese Revolution* (1929), *China Red* (a novel) (1931), and *The Hanging on Union Square* (1935). His novel, *And China Has Hands*, was published in 1937

by Robert Speller Books of New York.

In these self-published works, he even was so bold as to include his rejection letters from several major white publishers that indicate the common problem to progressive Asian American writers (and artists), denied because of their nationality and their politics.

Tsiang belongs to a generation of left-wing American writers who were part of the increased activity and influence of socialist political and labor movements in the U.S., including the then-revolutionary Communist Party, U.S.A. (CPUSA). Tsiang's poems, letters and short stories were often published in such CP-led publications as *The New Masses* and the *Daily Worker* during the late 20s and through the 1930s. Tsiang was in the company of other American progressive and revolutionary writers as Jack Conroy, Theodore Dreiser, Michael Gold, Upton Sinclair, Langston Hughes and Richard Wright.

Tsiang's first book, *Poems of the Chinese Revolution*, is a collection of poetry with themes opposing Japanese militarism and imperialism and KMT capitulation, praising the uprising of the Chinese worker. A few poems deal with American issues (e.g., the Sacco-Vanzetti case), and one in particular concerns the struggles of Chinese American workers: "Chinaman, Laundryman."

*China Red* is a novel written as a series of love letters between a Chinese woman student in China writing to her male lover, an overseas student in the U.S. The letters chart their tragic relationship, symbolizing the plight of the small Chinese petty bourgeoisie. He is finally deported for his left-wing activism and upon returning to China, executed by the KMT. She represents the educated Chinese aristocracy in decline. Though sympathetic to the May 4th Movement and progressive politics, she is confused and unable to take a firm stand against the forces of reaction. She, too, is a victim. Seduced and raped by a KMT official, she dies from a self-induced abortion.

*And China Has Hands* stands out among Chinese American literature



New York Chinatown.



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as one of the few English-written novels about the lives and struggles of Chinese immigrants in the Chinatown community. The novel is a love story between Wong Wan-lee, an immigrant who opens his own laundry business, and Pearl Chang, whose father is Chinese American and whose mother is Black. Tsiang captures the everyday experiences of a complex Chinese American community, including a sensitive and humorous treatment of the immigrant-American-born conflicts. Wong regards Pearl as "Mo No," or "no brain" in Chinese, for being too Westernized, not able to speak Chinese and for her unfamiliarity with Chinese culture. On the other hand, Pearl thinks that Wong is socially inept and crude.

Writes William F. Wu:

"Tsiang displays the concerns and observations of Chinese immigrants as only an immigrant could do. The details of Chinese culture can be learned, but not the emotional responses of the immigrant or the misunderstandings with people born in the United States, such as Pearl.

The events of Wan-Lee's daily life have the mundane detail of truth, as do Pearl's interest in her Chinese heritage and the misunderstandings she has with Wan-Lee. The gamblers and tong members are presented as real people with whole lives, functioning as a part of the ghetto community, rather than constituting the major portion of it. While they are not developed as characters, the touch of an author writing about his own people is unmistakable. . . . Wan-Lee and Pearl Chang are seriously developed characters who must operate within the ghetto society, aware that they are part of the Yellow Peril."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to being a genuine portrait of Chinese American life, *And China Has Hands* is also important for its political understanding of the plight of the Chinese small businessman under national oppression. Laundryman Wong is typically persecuted by corrupt white city officials, plagued by racist ordinances and regulations, preyed upon by taxi dance hall prostitutes, gangsters, crooked salesmen, etc. It is a bril-

liant treatment of the hardships of both immigrant and American-born Chinese in America, with Pearl's aspirations to become a Hollywood actress and Wong's desire to own his own business, they are both pushed down to the ranks of the working class. In the end, both are together and active in the growing working class movement of the day.

**T**siang's most daring and experimental work is *The Hanging on Union Square*, which also displays his sort-of-hipster sense of humor and allegory. An almost-surreal experience during an evening set in the Depression of the 1930s in New York City, the story is an encounter with the destitution, degradation, and decadence of monopoly capitalist society. Through the course of the evening's adventures, the narrator meets an array of characters: prostitutes, socialist poseurs, bankrupt intellectuals, gangsters and goons, unctuous politicians, capitalists, cops, self-indulgent Bohemian poets and artists, sex perverts, communists, and workers.

## Chinaman, Laundryman

"Chinaman"!  
"Laundryman"!  
Don't call me "man"!  
I am worse than a slave.

Wash! wash!  
Why can I wash away  
The dirt of others' clothes  
But not the hatred of my heart?  
My skin is yellow,  
Does my yellow skin color the  
clothes?  
Why do you pay me less  
For the same work?  
Clever boss!  
You know  
How to scatter the seeds of hatred  
Among your ignorant slaves.

Iron! iron!  
Why can I smooth away  
The wrinkles of others' dresses  
But not the miseries of my heart?  
Why should I come to America  
To wash clothes?  
Do you think "Chinamen" in China  
Wear no dresses?  
I came to America  
Three days after my marriage.  
When can I see her again?  
Only the almighty "Dollar" knows!

Dry! dry!  
Why do clothes dry,  
But not my tears?  
I work  
Twelve hours a day,  
He pays  
Fifteen dollars a week.  
My boss says,  
"Chinaman,  
Go back to China  
if you don't feel satisfied!  
There,  
Unlimited hours of toil:  
Two silver dollars a week,  
If  
You can find a job."  
"Thank you, Boss!  
For you remind me.  
I know  
Bosses are robbers  
Everywhere!"  
Chinese boss says:  
"You Chinaman,  
Me Chinaman  
Come work for me —  
Work for your fellow countryman!  
By the way,  
You 'Wong', me 'Wong' —  
Do we not belong to same family?  
Ha! ha!  
We are cousins!  
O yes!  
You 'Hai Shan', me 'Hai Shan',  
Do we not come from same district?  
O, come work for me;  
I will treat you better!"  
"GET away from here,  
What is the difference  
When you come to exploit me?"

"Chinaman"!  
"Laundryman"!  
Don't call me "Chinaman"!  
Yes, I am a "Laundryman"!  
The workingman!  
Don't call me "Chinaman",  
I am the Worldman  
"The International Soviet  
shall be his human race"!

"Chinaman"!  
"Laundryman"!  
All the workingmen!  
Here is the brush  
Made of Marxism.  
Here is the soap  
Made of Leninism.  
Let us all  
Wash with the blood!  
Let us all  
Press with the iron!  
Wash!  
Brush!  
Dry!  
Iron!  
Then we shall have  
A clean world.

**H.T. Tsiang**

August 15, 1928

From Poems of the Chinese Revolution

It is not clear what ever happened to Tsiang, though it is presumed that after the 1949 Chinese Revolution he returned to China. A preface page in one of his later books seemed to indicate that he was preparing a fifth novel entitled *Shanghai New York Moscow (An Odyssey of a Chinese Coolie)*.

Common to all of Tsiang's work is a fighting spirit against class exploitation, racism, and national oppression. Tsiang is a major revolutionary Asian American writer, along with a number of Chinese, Japanese, and Pilipino contemporaries of that era. Writers/activists such as Carlos

Bulosan, Ben Fee, Happy Lim and others, who, for the most part, wrote in their native Asian languages and were published in community newspapers, journals, and workers' broadsides. With this recognition, it should become apparent to us that there has been a revolutionary, even Marxist, current in Asian American literature!

H. T. Tsiang and the other great early Asian American writers will remain in anonymity until this current generation of Asian American cultural workers begins to research and resurrect these powerful writings and the equally strong stories of these

writers' own hard-struggle lives. □

<sup>1</sup>Wu, William F., *The Yellow Peril: Chinese American in American Fiction, 1850-1940*. Archon Books, 1982, p. 155.

*This essay has been revised from an earlier one published in Unity newspaper, May 3, 1985, p. 10.*

**Fred Wei-han Houn**, a contributing editor to *East Wind*, is a New York-based jazz musician, literature/music historian, critic, writer and political activist as well as the leader of the *Asian American Art Ensemble* and the *Afro-Asian Music Ensemble*.

**L**eon Sun is a San Francisco-based artist who came originally from Shanghai, China by way of Hong Kong. He works in photography, graphic design, and silkscreen printing. He also does some occasional writing, having specialized in Modern Chinese history and politics for his master's degree at the University of Washington.

From 1979-81, he was the director of the Community Asian Art & Media Project (CAAMP) in Oakland, California. Since 1982 he has worked on East Wind magazine and became its art director in 1984. He currently works at the Japantown Art & Media (JAM) Workshop as an advertising accounts manager and graphic artist. He also freelances and works on his own "personal" projects.

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Interview By Julian M. Low

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**EW:** How did you get from growing up in Shanghai to being the art director for a rag like *East Wind*?

**LS:** I first came here in the mid-sixties to a small Catholic school in Michigan, where my uncle lived. I hated it over there. It was awful. Because even in Hong Kong, a colony, I never experienced that kind of racism. Whereas here, it's like all the time. You walk down the street and someone will yell something at you or you're actually physically threatened, sometimes. I was totally unprepared for that. I went through a whole period of searching, not really understanding why there was this racism. Being confronted with so much racism here, the identity thing became real important.

**EW:** How'd you deal with it?

**LS:** Not very well. I wanted so badly to be accepted, to simply be treated as normal. I withdrew a lot, read a lot about China. I read all about the history of China that was denied me under British colonial education. I moved out here to San

# Conversations with Leon Sun

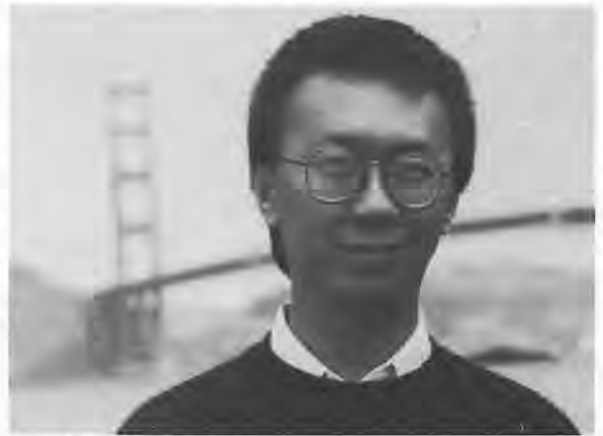
## East Wind art director

Francisco to go to art school. During that time, the hippies, the counter-culture stuff was going on, too. So, I found some kind of acceptance among hippies because they were a little more open. But, also, things like the BLM (Black Liberation Movement) — I was reading a lot of Black Panther literature and books like *Soul on Ice*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *Wretched of the Earth*. The anti-war movement, these books, really opened up my eyes to what was really happening, about my own condition and experiences, and about racism.

**EW:** How did you get turned on to the Black Panther literature?

**LS:** At that time there was a lot of it around. I mean it was real hip then . . . Black Panthers were the baddest, the hippest, everybody wanted to be around them. I was really attracted to all of that, because somehow, without understanding it too much, I sort of just felt it was the right thing. Because it seemed like they were the only people who were really standing up for things and taking the right attitude and not coping out.

**EW:** How'd you participate in all this?



Leon Sun.

**LS:** Not that actively. I went to a lot of peace rallies and demonstrations, mainly to take pictures as part of training and going to school in photojournalism, and partly because I had anti-war sentiments, peace, things like that. You know, I saw Asian contingents at the march, saw people from the I Wor Kuen, people like that, and thought Wow! this is bad, I never saw Asians like that. Just being bad and bold.

But I never got involved in it either, because my own background, I'm always kind of conservative and reserved.

**EW:** Do you think it was a conscious thing, trying to merge your art with your politics?

**LS:** Yeah, but it went through fits and starts. At that time I wanted to do something political and artistic

with my photography, too, but I had very little guidance as to how to do it. When I tried it in art school in my class, these teachers and the white students would just laugh at me, they didn't take it that seriously. They thought that it wasn't hip, or it was corny. And I didn't know other artists who were political, so I didn't get that kind of support or guidance. I mean I wasn't even aware of Kearny Street Workshop even though all that was going on. So then, I was kind of discouraged, I kind of stumbled along, did a little bit of photography, a little bit of painting . . . There was no clear direction, but I was looking for something.

**EW:** You weren't getting any direction at art school.

**LS:** Certainly not. Art school was trying to prepare me for the commercial world. I wasn't looking for a career, I was looking for my life. But my life was kind of aimless. Kind of an existential existence. Even tried religion, because that was around. A lot of people got into things like Buddhism . . . all kinds of things. I got married, though not for long.

I guess my divorce kind of woke me up, kind of cold shock. So then I went back to school (in Los Angeles). I took political science and history, concentrating mainly on Chinese history and Third World history. And, through learning about Chinese history and the Chinese Revolution, at least from an intellectual level, I learned a lot more about Marxism and the revolution and also the importance of working in the community, that is, mass work.

**EW:** You had probably heard a lot of those ideas before, right? Because Marxism was all around back then.

**LS:** Yeah, I guess that whole Panther thing about serve the people, breakfast programs, and how racism is part of capitalism. I heard about all those things.

But I didn't really get involved in it that much, because I also had a lot of anti-communist ideas, I didn't like some of the things the organizations did, I thought it was too far left or rhetorical. Maybe some of those people *were* (laughs). So it was kind of on and off, on and off, checking different things out.

**EW:** Was it taking Chinese history that . . .

**LS:** That jelled it, yeah. And then starting to get involved in the community, that was a real big push forward. This was down in LA I hung out with mostly Asian students at school, formed an Asian student association, went to LA Chinatown for summer jobs, like working with youth. I got more and more into people who were active. Seeing on a day-to-day level, from the point of view of working people's lives and struggles, how Marxism or Marxism-Leninism is the way to go. All during that period I dropped art completely.

Because I was so into this political thing. I guess I was finding my new identity, not so much my cultural identity, but my political identity, I just dropped the art.

**EW:** How'd you get back into art?

**LS:** Well, I got my master's in East Asian Studies in Seattle, then moved down here (to San Francisco). I got even more into the community stuff — went to CPA (Chinese Progressive Association), hung around a lot of other people. I also got a job as director of CAAMP. That's when I learned silkscreen printing and more about how to relate art to politics and community issues. Then I guess through doing community and political stuff, people realized I had certain artistic skills, so I ended up doing all the flyers and helping work on newspapers and different publications. From then on it kind of snowballed.

**EW:** Going back earlier . . . how come you never kept at art as a career? Was it because of all your other personal questions that you had to deal with?

**LS:** Yeah. That and just . . . it was difficult to think of making money with art. I mean that's a whole different game in itself. I didn't know how to play it. As a freelance photographer you really have to hustle, do a lot of things that have nothing to do with art. Running a business, basically. I was turned off to that.

**EW:** You didn't really have the motivation to go for it.

**LS:** Nope. Finally, I just said, "Look, forget it, I don't want this commercial stuff, and I'm going to do what I want." And as it turned out, I was very happy to do all the flyers, or work for *East Wind*, which was to me the crowning moment of what I want to do, what I like to do. Because it's everything, it's Asian movement stuff, it involves my own personal identity and it's art and



Leon Sun: *Five-run silkscreened poster, 1980.*  
14" x 20"

politics. I felt finally what I did had an actual impact out there. So I really loved it. As long as I'm doing something in art I'm happy. Better still that the content, the subject matter is something that I can really feel for, because you can't really do anything unless you really feel for it. Because you can say art and politics are important and you can take a political theme, but if you don't have a feeling for it you can't create on tap, on demand.

**EW:** Are you frustrated at all, because ten years ago or 15 years ago there was so much happening both in the Asian community but also Asian American artists really tried to make their artwork more relevant by photographing the community or doing artwork for the community. Nowadays it seems like a low period.

**LS:** I don't feel frustrated so much as saddened by it. Well I guess it is frustrating sometimes when I talk with other people and they don't want to do anything. Especially people who used to do that awhile ago and now they're doing something else, either being more introspective or just getting away from politics, they don't want to struggle. It's too bad, really. 'Cause you don't need to pit your personal life against art or political activism. You *can* do all of it if you structure your time right and be realistic in your expectations. But I try to be objective and take a long-term view, and really try to understand people's reasons for not being more active. I see it more as a general condition, it's just the times.

**EW:** The movement itself is in a different place.

**LS:** I was telling you earlier, when I go down to the Mission, I find a lot more artists doing political art or injecting politics into their art. I think because they're from different Central or South American countries where lot of political struggles are going on. People from Nicaragua and El Salvador, Chile and places like that. And their art is very lively, very

political, very inspiring. And I think, within the Asian movement, I find the writers and people who are most active and inject the most politics into their writing are the Filipino writers. People who are more in touch with the struggle over there.

**EW:** Do you do much of your own personal artwork? Or is most of your artwork for an event or a publication?

**LS:** Most of it is geared towards publication, events. In my own work, I'm searching for some kind of way to express the struggles here, in this country. Because I don't want to just take up international struggles, something that's far away. I mean it's kind of easy to romanticize it. But, you know, there's a lot of struggles going on here. I don't know how to do it right now, I'm still searching for it, some way to have my art reflect the struggles here, and to contribute to the movement here to make revolutionary changes. But I think that would mean being more involved in the struggles here. I'm not able to do as much of that as I'd like at this point.

**EW:** How do you think Marxism-Leninism has influenced your artwork?

**LS:** Well, art isn't all I do. I'm into other things, too, which in turn, influences and inspires my art. Marxism-Leninism helps me define what's real, and what's bullshit. It determines my basic attitude towards art and how it fits into my life.

**EW:** And how is that?

**LS:** Well, just that as an artist I have a social responsibility, and in my art and life I'm accountable to the people. What I do is not just one individual's personal trip but part of a whole people's movement. In that respect, to be willing to struggle I think is very important, to be open to other people's ideas. Not to take yourself too seriously. On the other hand I think it also forces you to be a lot more well-versed and articulate about your art because a lot of times

people struggle with you and they could be wrong. Then you have to be strong enough and well-versed enough to stand up to that, but also not to get "weirded out" over it, because that's just part of struggling and hashing it out, and not holding grudges against people. Because a lot of times, criticism will come from people who are not artists, who don't have that language, but you have to respect them, be open to them. So that took a while for me to be comfortable with. I mean, intellectually, I accepted that very early on, but when it actually came down to it, it was very difficult. I went through a lot of struggle, a lot of emotional ups and downs.

**EW:** Did this openness to other people's ideas help improve your art?

**LS:** Yeah, it helped in making it a lot more powerful. It helped the art in that the final product was qualitatively better. It had more substance and impact and people could relate to it more. Because otherwise it's such an individual thing that other people might not understand what you're trying to say. Many times I've fought and tried to hang on to this or that and later on, when I did change it, I was glad that I did. And if it hadn't been for that struggle, I would still have been churning out the same old thing.

And, I guess this whole thing of putting art in the context of struggle, of real people's lives and concerns, of the political and moral issues of our times — I think that's how Marxism-Leninism helped me. . . . Because art deals with truth, and Marxism-Leninism gives me the best means to get at the truth. And, if the content has truth, it adds weight and power to your art. □

**Julian Low** is the managing editor of *East Wind*, as well as a videographer and some-time musician. He was formerly the administrative director of the *Asian American Resource Workshop* in Boston.

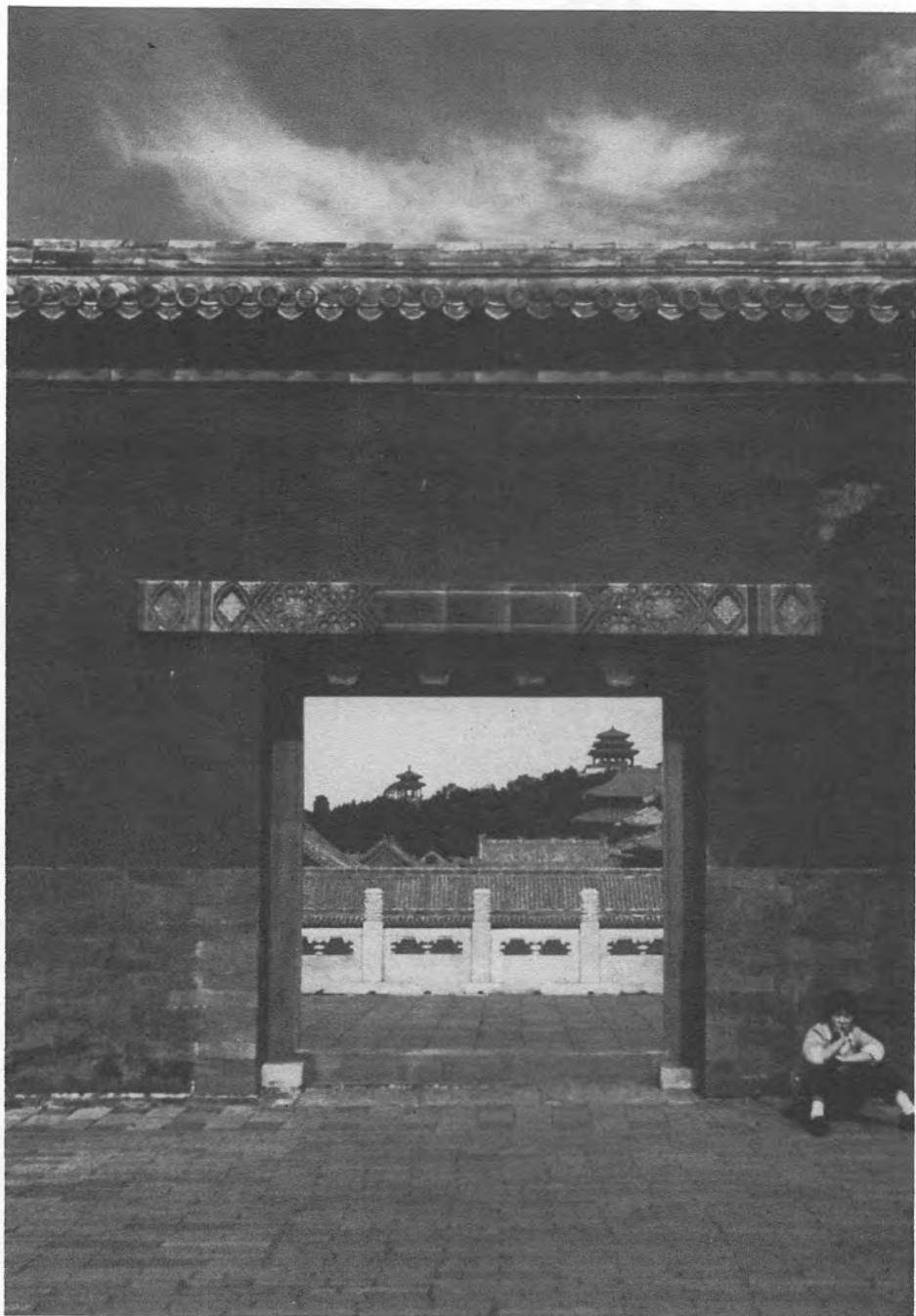
# China Revisited

Photography by  
Leon Sun

These photographs were taken in 1984 when Leon Sun visited Beijing, Hangzhou and his home city of Shanghai. It was his first time back since leaving the country in 1957, when he was eight years old.



*Some people say that's wonderful, you know, you capture these people in a candid moment. Or people say, what'd you take that for that's so undignified. But I don't feel that way because I feel I always approach people with a lot of respect. I wanted to show what people are really like, to show the common, everyday life in China. To me, that picture says a lot, politically and everything. One, is the conditions in the country are peaceful enough where people can do this sort of thing. Because in the old days, people, especially women, weren't even able to do something like that, not in public. So this says something about the status of women, too. And they're sleeping away in the middle of the day so they must be retired. So people in China don't have to work all their lives any more, they can relax, they can retire at a relatively early age. They look old, but not that old. I think just for people to be able to relax like that is a great triumph for the country.*



*In the old Imperial Palace, every time you turn and look through a gateway or a window or something it looks like a perfect frame of a picture of a scene. And I'm sure it's all planned out because a lot of these mountains are even manmade. It's amazing, it's huge, this palace is almost as big as two Golden Gate Parks. The Emperor just lived there by himself and his family lived there.*

*In the old days it was forbidden for commoners to go in there. Nobody could use the color yellow because yellow was an imperial color. Because the word 'yellow' in Chinese is 'huang,' but also 'huang' means 'king.' So only the Emperor could use yellow. Anybody else gets their head cut off. So nobody could go inside the palace, only high officials and royal family. But now it's a park so you have people just sitting around here. And I think that's great. She's just sitting there, resting, like it's a perfectly normal thing to do.*



*There were a lot of domestic tourists. For the first time, Chinese have been able to travel within their own country as tourists, in great numbers. It's also good they can afford to. A lot of them are either soldiers on leave or peasants from the rural areas. I liked this scene because it speaks of friendship, and a certain way of life that's very Chinese . . . yet it's universal 'cause we can all relate to what's happening in the picture.*



*This is one of my favorite pictures. I really like the kid. This is inside a supermarket or a general store. Where it was really packed with people. But he was just sitting on the sill here reading, totally oblivious to everything, so absorbed in his book. He reminded me of all my childhood buddies, my little school buddies . . . they looked just like that . . .*



## KAPAHULU GIRL

KAPAHULU GIRL  
JUST MAKE SIXTEEN

SHE RAPPIN'

MONKU MONKU  
YEAH YEAH  
MONKU MONKU  
YEAH YEAH

DA MUDDA LUV  
HER BOI FREN

DA FADDA HE  
FAVOR HER BOI FREN

BUT DA FADDA  
HE NO SAY NOTTIN  
EVEN THOUGH  
DA BOI  
ONE JAPANEE

## GUITAR MAN

Heard a man's soul  
in communication with the living  
watched him stride upon a ridge so narrow  
life to one side, decay almost upon him

Felt his music  
in the dark  
in the amp lights  
saw no silhouettes  
heard a bass, the drums, a growling Hammond

But the man on the guitar  
held within him his spirit  
which he then withdrew  
and played upon a rainbow stratocaster

Howling with loss,  
with hunger and affection,  
his fingers reached every key  
and left him trembling,  
twitching,  
humming, like a tuning fork

Heard a man's soul  
in communication with the living  
watched him stride upon a ridge so narrow  
life to one side, decay almost upon him

**Richard Hamasaki**

*Richard Hamasaki, a poet,  
teaches an ethnic studies  
course on Hawai'i's  
literature at the University  
of Hawai'i, Manoa.*

# Yukio Shimoda:

## Asian American Actor

Yukio Shimoda: Asian American Actor, John Esaki and Amy Kato, producers; Visual Communications, executive producer. Visual Communications is an Asian/Pacific media resource center in Los Angeles which provides the Asian American community with a full range of media arts service. For rental information for this film and others, contact: Visual Communications, 244 S. San Pedro St., Suite 309, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

Reviewed by  
Wm. Satake Blauvelt

There is a very poignant and illuminating moment in Visual Communications' new film about veteran Nisei actor Yuki Shimoda that clearly conveys the essence of this talented and dedicated artist. Shimoda, age 60 and in the final stages of a terminal cancer, jokes with his interviewers about his emaciated state. Recalling the beginning of his career after release from the Tule Lake concentration camp, he tells them he was twice as thin in his days as a young starving artist where every spare moment was spent in dance rehearsal when he wasn't scrubbing floors as a janitor. "I wanted to be the greatest dancer ever," he enthusiastically states. This combination of humor, dignity, and tenacity sustained Shimoda throughout his



A lifelong commitment to performance: from dancing in the '40s to his role in Visual Communications' Hito Hata: Raise the Banner.

obstacle-ridden career. It indicates why this relatively little-known artist inspired the kind of loyalty and respect that resulted in this documentary tribute. As we come to learn, Yuki Shimoda's story illustrates the struggle of all Asian American actors.

The film interweaves Shimoda's last interview with photos and film clips from the actor's life and career. His story is punctuated by comments and anecdotes from friends and colleagues.

Since his childhood days in Sacra-



mento as the son of immigrant parents, Shimoda knew for certain he wanted to be an actor. In high school he emulated his idol Fred Astaire and developed a dance team with a Nisei girlfriend. After graduation he began to seriously prepare for his career, but World War II intervened and Shimoda was interned with thousands of other Japanese Americans. After an early release from Tule Lake, he moved east where he danced with the Chicago Opera Company part-time. Another move, this time to New York, brought him to Broadway where he landed "oriental" roles in hit shows like *The King and I*, and *Auntie Mame*. Shimoda came west again when he was brought to Hollywood to recreate his role for the film version of *Mame*. His career would include 25 films and numerous appearances in television series and commercials.

Although Shimoda found work, he very rarely had an opportunity to perform fully dimensional, non-stereotyped roles. This is a situation Asian American actors continue to face today. In mainstream media, when a decent role does appear, it is almost always compromised by the

vehicle that contains it. It's important to note that Shimoda's finest leading performance was in the 1976 television movie *Farewell to Manzanar*. The film itself is a sympathetic but whitewashed account of the World War II Japanese American evacuation and internment experience. In spite of this, Shimoda transcended his material to give a fine and moving performance as an Issei family man driven to bitterness by the U.S. government's harassment.

Even after landing major roles that won him acclaim he was still a minority actor with limited opportunities. There were flashes of recognition, but as several colleagues observe, Shimoda's career never gained the momentum that a white actor in similar circumstances could achieve. However, rather than languish or become bitter, Shimoda involved himself in community-based artistic activity with groups like Visual Communications (appearing in *Hito Hata*) and East/West Players, where he acted in numerous productions and taught workshops to aspiring young performers.

In addition to the obstacles put up by the entertainment industry, Shimoda had to deal with his own limitations and personal demons. Like many artists, he had his bouts with insecurity, which were no doubt enflamed by his unstable career. Perhaps part of his insecurity can also be attributed to what could be termed peer pressure. There are very few Nisei who have made lifetime careers in show business, especially in something as different and chancy as acting. For someone who publicly announced his acting ambition at age seven and then enthusiastically pursued that dream, Shimoda must have seemed at the least, a bit odd. At one point in the film, several childhood friends reminisce and embarrassedly recalled Shimoda being tagged a "sissy" for wanting to be a performer. Since Shimoda didn't become a "star" it must have been difficult to explain his situation to others, let alone himself. Perhaps an indication of this can be conveyed by something that appeared in one of the Japanese American community newspapers a

couple of years ago. It was a typical column item in which the writer was trying to find out what had happened to a fellow Nisei he hadn't seen since the war. The writer remembered a young man who enthusiastically danced up a storm in camp talent shows. This performer had helped make life in camp a little easier to endure. There was nothing unusual about the request for information except for one detail — that performer was Yukio Shimoda.

**T**he effort to make *Yukio Shimoda: Asian American Actor*, was a case of art imitating life. The film's story of an Asian American actor struggling against overwhelming odds was mirrored by the filmmaker's own struggle to produce an independent film with no major funding. This modestly budgeted 30-minute documentary took more than five years of diligent and frustrating work on the part of producers John Esaki and Amy Kato. Coming on to the project by a combination of circumstances, the two took it over when a group of Shimoda's friends, realizing that he was dying, raised just enough money to film an interview to preserve his story. Most of that footage was not useable as Shimoda was in much pain and was not always coherent. Esaki and Kato pieced together his story by interviewing friends and colleagues from around the country. Film clips of Shimoda at work were absolutely necessary to do justice to his career. Obtaining the rights and securing permission for the clips proved to be a monumental task. Making a non-profit film with no money, Esaki and Kato had to ask for a waiver from studios, actors, musicians, and unions involved with each clip they wanted. The negotiations in many cases lasted years, and while they were able to obtain a number of clips, there were many more they could not. In addition, the budget for the film was raised entirely through community donations that came in sporadically and forced the production into a similar pattern.

In spite of these obstacles, Esaki, Kato, and company succeeded admirably. While rough in some as-

pects, the film is notable for its unblinking look at its subject. There is an inner tension evident here that is often missing in many Asian American documentaries. Shimoda's insecurities, limitations, and compromises are discussed as well as his strength and triumphs. The film is also a very sobering look at what Asian American actors in general must endure, and coming at a time when the division between actors and community activists over racist Hollywood productions seems at its worst, this is a film that needs to be seen and discussed.

The film's ultimate triumph however, is in giving Yukio Shimoda the recognition he deserved but never really received during his career. His perseverance and determination is immortalized by the filmmakers' juxtaposition of the final sequence of *Farewell to Manzanar*. The scene is set at the war's end when the last few families are leaving the internment camp. Shimoda, as the elderly father, forces his family to take a joy ride in a dilapidated car he has somehow acquired. As they careen through the near empty camp and out its gate, Shimoda purposely runs over a sign restricting Japanese Americans to the confines of the camp. In its original context the scene seemed phony and little more than a tacked on "happy ending," but after coming to know and care about Shimoda, the scene takes on a new meaning and resonance.

As the final image freezes on screen, it lingers in the memory as a very bittersweet experience. *Yukio Shimoda: Asian American Actor*, may well be Visual Communications' most heartfelt and complex film to date, and that is a fitting tribute to a man who gave so much of himself to develop as an Asian American artist. □

**Wm. Satake Blauvelt**, a Seattle-based filmmaker and writer, works with *Kingstreet Media* and the *International Examiner* newspaper. A co-director of the film *Beacon Hill Boys*, he is currently in pre-production on *Long Grain/Short Grain*, a dramatic feature film about the relationship of an Asian American couple.

# Nothing Left in My Hands

Nothing Left in My Hands by Kazuko Nakane, Young Pine Press, 1985, 103 pages. Available by direct mail only. Contact: Kazuko Nakane, PO Box 45286, Seattle, WA 98145-0286. Cost: \$9.95 each plus \$2.00 postage per copy. Washington state residents add \$.79 sales tax per copy.

Reviewed by  
Sally Yamasaki and Jill Chan

*"Some pioneer Issei survive like withered trees washed clean by the waves of hardship that followed one after another."*

I remember reciting the Gettysburg Address in fourth grade. "Four-score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Every time I got to the part, "our fathers," I felt distanced from the other students. Somehow the "our fathers" we talked about at school in no way resembled the "my father" that was at home.

Nakane's book, the result of an Issei Oral History Project, records the early development of what the Issei, or in other words, the Japanese Americans' "fathers and mothers," brought forth to this nation, or more specifically, to the Pajaro Valley in California.

## An Early Japanese American Community In California's Pajaro Valley

The book begins with a detailed account of the Pajaro Valley before the first generation arrived and follows them through the ups and downs of their lives until World War II.

Nakane, going to great lengths, has compiled many facts and figures as she documents the changes of the valley's agriculture and population during the time of the early Issei settlement. For example, one can find

figures on the population growth of the Pajaro Valley and its neighboring areas, or even specific information on the emergence of fruit in that area. For those who are in need of detailed information, the statistics Nakane has collected are a gold mine. However, for those who aren't number-oriented, the reading of all those facts becomes a bit cumbersome.

As the book progresses past the facts and figures and presents the Issei's personal stories, the strength of Nakane's work comes forth. Nakane has preserved the Issei's experiences, and in doing so, has added a personal dimension to history. For example, in the early 1900s, as women came to the U.S. from Japan as brides, their new life didn't always match up to their expectations.

Masa Kobayashi recounted:

"When I saw people with work clothes coming out of their huts, I was surprised. I mean I saw it when I just arrived. The houses looked like huts from a Japanese standard. They were houses made by their own hands."

As time progressed, life for the Issei seemed to continue at the pace of one step forward and two steps back. Very few Issei owned land, and for the few who did, the first Alien Land Law in California, which prohibited Japanese from owning or leasing land for more than three years, made the chances of buying land or keeping the land they had even slimmer. Strawberries, according to



Torigoe store from Torigoe collection, 1913 reproduced by Media Services, U.C.S.C.

Nakane, "... were not productive during the first years and could not bring enough profit within the limit of three years." To show the impact the Alien Land Law of 1913 had on the Issei, Nakane notes the fact that in 1911 there were 107 farms, whereas in 1914, this figure dropped to 45.

Even though the Issei endured hardship after hardship — anti-Japanese immigration laws to segregated schools, poverty, violence, racist land laws, and finally incarceration — not one seemed to complain or speak bitterly. One woman talks of violence in a labor camp without anger:

"Cowboys came to shoot Japanese in the camp. Papa was just so surprised to see this, his eyes popped open. (Laughter) They did such crazy things."

This casual attitude may seem disturbing at first, until one realizes that this is just a form of the Issei's resilience they needed in order to withstand their, at times, unbearable circumstances.

The Issei, being the first genera-

tion of Japanese in America, were filled with innumerable experiences in their life. Yet, many times due to a language barrier, in the case of the Sansei (third generation Japanese American), or just due to taking all the anecdotes for granted meant that as the Isseis disappeared, many of their personal stories went with them without being recorded. If not for Nakane's efforts in interviewing the Issei and translating their recollections, an important dimension of the Japanese American community in the Pajaro Valley would have been lost.

**N**akane's style of writing, departing from the traditional linear format, is difficult to follow, but at last works to bring about a very emotional ending. Unlike a dot to dot picture, one cannot draw straight lines or connections from one topic to another in order to form a whole picture. Instead, Nakane has given us images which at first seem to be self-contained vignettes with no logical connection. However, as history

takes the reader close to April 30, 1942, with the evacuation of the Japanese Americans, the topics and images, which at first seemed like unrelated connections, come together to give you a moment of perhaps what an Issei might have felt with, once again, nothing left in their hands.

Times have changed since the time when I was in fourth grade. More material on various ethnic-racial communities in the United States is being recorded. Through the preservation and recognition of all the people in this country we begin to see another side of history, as Nakane has shown us. The importance of such literature is invaluable because out of this, not only do minorities no longer remain invisible, but also certain issues begin to be questioned, such as, how a nation "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" could allow such contradictions to occur. □

**Sally Yamasaki and Jill Chan**  
are both writers for the International Examiner in Seattle, Washington.



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## Book Reviews

Review by Fred Wei-han Houn

### A Pictorial History of the Japanese in Hawaii, 1885-1924

A Pictorial History of the Japanese in Hawai'i, 1885-1924, by Franklin Odo and Kazuko Sinoto, Bishop Museum Press, P.O. Box 19000-A, Honolulu, HI 96817, attn: Pat Sabatino. Price: inquire.

Replete with historical photographs, demographic tables, documents (including an inserted facsimile of a labor contract circa 1900), this is one of the most comprehensive documentary visual presentations of Japanese America.

The book relies on its visual strength, since its historical text, as writing, is somewhat dry and boring in its academic mode. Many of the photos of people are posed group shots, with some valuable photos of artifacts and memorabilia. The best, most revealing photos are of the working conditions of the Japanese immigrant workers, and of them at work.

Unlike *The Japanese in Hawai'i* by Roland Kotani (reviewed here), missing in the text and photos is the dynamism of the struggle of the Japanese community: the historic strikes, confrontations with racist injustice, i.e., a sense of history as living motion, and not merely a sequence of who, what, when, and where, but most importantly, why.

However, these weaknesses are more than adequately compensated with the accompaniment of Kotani's book.

\* \* \*



### The Japanese in Hawai'i: A Century of Struggle

The Japanese in Hawai'i: A Century of Struggle, by Roland Kotani, available from *The Hawaii Herald*, 917 Kokea Street/PO Box 17429, Honolulu, HI 96817, (808) 845-2255, attn: Arnold T. Hiura. Price: inquire.

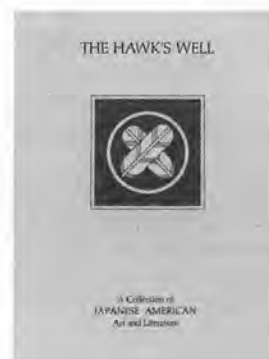
Along with *A Pictorial History of the Japanese in Hawai'i*, this is probably one of the most thorough and analytic presentations of a segment of Japanese American history.

Transition, struggle, and political economy are wonderfully interwoven in the highly readable, captivating text. We come to understand the struggle of the Japanese Americans as a permanent part of the labor and social history of Hawai'i. The vibrant writing conveys history almost as storytelling, evoking the rich oral tradition and skill of the pioneering immigrants. Indeed, the dynamic historical narrative is a source of inspiration, with its rich detail for today's Asian American creative talents to draw from and render these stories in song, drama, poetry, dance, visual art, and literature.

The particular historical episodes that I found personally moving were

the fierce labor struggles, the infamous Fukunaga and Massie cases (an explosive story of racist frame-up of four Japanese and Hawaiian boys for raping a white woman in the late 1920s, which was horribly exploited and distorted in the gaudy TV movie, *Blood and Orchids*), and radical labor organizing during the 1940s and early 1950s. Kotani must be commended for his ability to capture and convey the development and dynamic role of social class and political struggle within the Hawaiian Japanese American community, and vis-a-vis the *haole* Island ruling elite.

\* \* \*



### The Hawk's Well: A Collection of Japanese American Art and Literature, Volume One

The Hawk's Well: A Collection of Japanese American Art and Literature, Volume One, *Asian American Art Projects*, 131 East Taylor Street, San Jose, CA 95112, (408) 294-5536. Price: inquire.

This is a magnificent anthology of Japanese American art featuring poetry (of Janice Mirikitani, James Masao Mitsui, Jerrold Asao Hiura, Zukin Hirasu), a short story by

## Book Reviews

Yoshiko Uchida, calligraphy (Shioh Kato), serigraphs/poetry (Richard Hamasaki and Mark Hamasaki), pen and ink illustrations (Sharyn Nagako Yoshida), and prints (Tom Kamifuji). The montage of historical photos (most of the Japanese American community, with some of other Asian American nationalities) with expressionist Japanese American art, and with poetry and literature dropped in, is an emotional and intellectual stream of Japanese American sensibility.

*Hawk's Well* seeks to raise the highest standard of layout and design work of any Asian American published work to date. The book is beautiful.

While this collection is not meant to be "representative" of any region or sector of the Japanese American population, it serves as a veritable display of Japanese American aesthetic and talent.

The introduction also happens to be one of the more intelligent discussions of contemporary Asian American literature. Due to the richness of this collection, a table of contents is sorely needed.

\* \* \*

### Chinese Women of America: A Pictorial History

*Chinese Women of America: A Pictorial History*, by Judy Yung, University of Washington Press, PO Box C-50096, Seattle, WA 98145-0096. Price: \$24.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

**T**hough highly important and valuable as the first historical pictorial collection on Chinese American women, the book has several weaknesses that call upon historians and archivists to supplement.

Many of the stories and accounts of the lives of the early Chinese

American women — as slave girl prostitutes, entertainers, spirited pioneers, seamstresses, professionals, etc. — are strongly moving. But in portraying the history of Chinese American women there is a preponderance of individual achievers and "firsts" in various fields. The contemporary section is also overly preoccupied with "success story" figures and personalities, in the vein of Elaine Kim's portraits of Asian



American women (c.f. *Silkwings*, et al.). Unfortunately, we don't get profiles of Chinese American women labor activists (e.g., the 20,000 garment factory workers who walked out of their shops in New York Chinatown a few years ago), community organizers, and even revolutionaries.

Also, the author seems to view the main obstacle to equality and dignity for Chinese American women to be stereotypes, rather than the overall, systematic oppression of the Chinese American national minority. Stereotyping and the lack of role models, while aspects of national oppression, are mostly the problems confronting upscale-aspiring women. Issues of childcare, feudal ideology and customs, discrimination in basic employment questions, etc., are not really addressed.

Many of the photos have appeared in other Chinese American history books. While collected together for the first time to focus on Chinese American women, I feel greater archival research still needs to be done. The presence of this collection is an important beginning and stimulus for further study and presentations.

\* \* \*

### Liang Mingyue, Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Classical Culture

Liang Mingyue, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, International Institute for Comparative Music Studies, Berlin, Heinrichshofen Edition, distributed in the U.S.A. and Canada by C.F. Peters Corp., 373 Park Avenue So., New York, NY 10016. Price: \$12.95 paperback.

**T**here are so few English-language materials on the vast 5,000 year history of Chinese musical culture that this work simply stands head and shoulders above the field. The book is well-organized, clear and direct, and meets the considerably awesome task of capsulating several millenium of legend, archaeological and literary documentation, and the diversity of China's population and her numerous subcultural groups.

Two approaches are utilized in the discussion of Chinese music: first, the music is placed in its socio-historical context. Second, the music is analyzed in a musical context and analyzed as an evolving musical continuum. The topics discussed are on aesthetics, notation-transmission, instrumental music (high art and regional styles), operatic (theatrical) music, and the major musical instruments.

With its dense, detailed discussion, Liang's presentation serves as a fine, introductory textbook addressed, as he notes, to the "general, cultivated lover-of-arts as well as to the serious musician." This book, however, is not recommended for the lay reader. Included are a few photos of musical instruments and Western-notated musical examples for closer study.

## Too Late for Review

### Books

#### **Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima**

by **Keiji Nakazawa**

*New Society Publishers, 4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143. Hardcover: \$29.95, paperback: \$9.95.*

Story of the bombing of Hiroshima, seen through the eyes of the artist as a young boy. Keiji Nakazawa is one of Japan's leading animation artists and in 1973 first published *Barefoot Gen* in magazine form.



#### **This Bittersweet Soil, The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910**

by **Sucheng Chan**

*University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720. \$40.00 cloth.*

Chronicles the activities of the thousands of Chinese agricultural pioneers who worked as truck gardeners, tenant farmers, commission merchants, labor contractors, farm laborers, and farm cooks to make California into the premiere agricultural state.

#### **Songs of Gold Mountain, Cantonese Rhymes From San Francisco Chinatown**

by **Marlon K. Hom**

*University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720. \$14.95 cloth.*

Translations of 220 rhymes from two anthologies first printed in 1911

and 1915. In these writings, the Chinese revealed their thoughts, values, concerns, and emotions as they settled in America. Themes range from sex, frustration with the American bureaucracy, poverty and alienation, the loneliness of life, and the loose morals of the younger generation in America.

#### **The Story of Yamada Waka, From Prostitute to Feminist Pioneer**

by **Tomoko Yamazaki**

*Kodansha International, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022. Hardcover: \$16.95.*

Story of a young Japanese girl who was sent to America for white slavery. Escaping from the Seattle brothel, she returns to Tokyo in 1906, became active in the progressive circles that were modernizing Japan, and became a leading member of the feminist movement in the 1910s and 1920s.

### Records

#### **Bamboo That Snaps Back, a Jazz Odyssey**

by **Fred Houn and the Asian American Art Ensemble**

*Finnadar/Atlantic Records. For information, contact: Fred Houn, 22 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10010.*

The first album by the Asian American Art Ensemble, a jazz and



performance art group. Features Jodi Long, vocals; Jon Jang, piano; Francis Wong, tenor sax, flute; Allen Won, alto sax, flute; Kiyoto Fujiwara, bass; Taru Alexander, percussion; Susan Hayase, Japanese taiko drums; and, of course, Fred Houn, leader, baritone sax, flute. Liner notes by Genny Lim.

#### **Live in J-Town**

by comedian **Bob Matsueda**

*For information: Nihonmachi Legal Outreach, 1840 Sutter Street, Suite 204, San Francisco, CA 94115. Price: \$8.00 plus \$1.50 postage and handling.*

Bob's second album captures him live at two events for NLO in San Francisco and a fundraiser for the Southside People's Art Collective in Sacramento.

### Films



#### **Lotus**

directed by **Arthur Dong**, produced by **Arthur Dong and Rebecca Soladay**.

*For information, contact: Arthur Dong or Rebecca Soldaday, The "Lotus" Project, 1737 N. Orange Grove Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90046.*

Film about a boundfoot woman in 1914 China and her struggle to decide whether to bind her daughter's feet. 30 minutes.





**O**N SATURDAY, APRIL 25th, the San Jose Taiko Group performs its **Spring Concert** at the Louis B. Mayer Theatre, University of Santa Clara, at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Other appearances during the year will be: **April:** LA Hanamatsuri at JACCC; **May:** San Jose Nikkei Matsuri, Tulare County Japanese Festival, International Examiner Benefit in Seattle; **July:** Montreaux Jazz Festival, Obon festivals in No. California; **September:** Japan Tour.


**J**OIN US AT THESE EVENTS and others. Become a Friend of SJTG and receive our newsletter! Call or write for more information. (408) 293-9344.

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