Wither, Asian America?:
Asian Americans and the specter of immigration reform, 1968-1975

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Introduction

In 1971, community organizer Jim Matsuoka sat down for an interview with UCLA's Asian American Studies Center to talk about a war taking place in the streets of Little Tokyo. On one side stood Japanese corporate entities who wanted to redevelop the neighborhood for commercial purposes in order to appeal to Japanese tourists and businessmen. On the other stood local residents whose homes and livelihoods were threatened by redevelopment. Matsuoka was a participant in the Asian American movement, a radical social and political movement borne out of the same milieu of freedom struggles, student protests, and anti-Vietnam War activity that had helped birth the Black Power and Chicano movements. His nationalist and anti-capitalist politics had pit him and his fellow activists against the city of Los Angeles' plans to bulldoze low-income housing in Little Tokyo and turn the neighborhood into a tourist attraction with the help of Japanese corporate money. Matsuoka was not particularly optimistic about the future of their enterprise, however. The "Japanese from Japan" and the foreign commercial interests they represented were slowly pushing out Japanese American control in Little Tokyo. "There will be faces down there…" he warned, "that look Oriental, but we'll be pushed out to the hinterlands…. We may be on the outlying areas looking in, and we'll see a bunch of people and it won't be us."[1]

Matsuoka's fear of Asian Americans being replaced by a foreign born population belies a unique form of nativism arising from the movement's complex and deeply conflicted relationship with Asian immigrants—indeed, with the conceptual category of immigration itself. As the term "Asian American" has lost its political meaning in favor of its racial demographic one, we take

[1] Jim Matsuoka, "Little Tokyo, Searching the Past and Analyzing the Future," in *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971), 322–34.

for granted the conceptual overlap between Asian immigrants and Asian Americans.[2] During the late 1960s and early '70s, however, when the idea of Asian America was still new and not yet widely held, immigrants' inclusion within its political and cultural community was a contested issue. It was not enough to, as Matsuoka indicated, "look Oriental."

This thesis explores the historical moment between 1968 and 1975, when the Asian American movement's attempt to develop a rooted politics of cultural nationalism collided with new waves of Asian immigration and the ways in which those immigrants were represented. While both white and Asian liberals embraced Asian arrivals as "good immigrants" and ideal subjects, leftist Asian American activists had no such clear-cut relationship to the future new immigrants posed.[3] In some cases, as with Little Tokyo's redevelopment struggle, immigrants represented the invasion of destructive foreign capital. In others, immigrants were exploited workers in need of organizing or useful allies in an international struggle. The Asian American movement's struggle to define its relationship to Asian immigrants indicates that what being Asian American meant and who the community included was a perpetually unsettled issue, even during the presumed height of the movement's influence and internal coherence during the Long Sixties.

Hanging over the movement's encounters with immigrants was a powerful mainstream narrative painting Asians in America as "model minorities": hard-working, high-achieving, and

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[2] Synthetic histories of "Asian America" in particular tend to project the term back in time to make it applicable to the long history of Asians in the United States. This is in many ways a continuation of the project of the Asian American movement began, as such studies unite the trajectories of disparate Asian ethnic groups into a shared history. Notable examples include Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 1990), Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy 1850 - 1990* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001), and Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

[3] For a detailed study of how Asian immigrants became "good" during the postwar period, see Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015).

politically docile. The Asian American movement was developed as an explicit rejection of model minority status and the notion that minorities needed to be "quiet" in order to achieve integration within American society. The movement's most radical wing rejected the idea of integration to begin with, arguing instead for Asian America as a nation of its own trapped within the confines of an American empire. Integration under such terms was akin to dissolution. These conceptualizations rested on a radical view of historical time and Asian America's place within it. For the first decade of the movement's existence, its project was largely one of recognition and recuperation: recognizing the history of violence and exploitation wrought upon Asians in America, and recuperating meaning, strength, and a shared identity from that history. In acknowledging that present and past oppressions were of a piece with one another, the Asian American movement agitated against any attempt at progress or integration which did not acknowledge the injustices the community had historically suffered. In this light, immigration to the United States was historically the beginning of a tragic cycle of exclusion and exploitation which could only be broken through a radical act of historical reckoning.[4]

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[4] This view of history borrows from numerous intellectual strands in leftist thinking on the temporality of revolution and resistance. Most directly, it emerges from a Fanonian conceptualization of the dialectic between colonialism and decolonizing nationalism, as laid out in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Asian American writers made repeated reference to Asian passivity while citing Fanon, just as Fanon referenced the "immobility to which the native is condemned," which "can only be called into question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization—the history of pillage—and to bring into existence the history of the nation—the history of decolonization." National revolution was, in other words, the only true rupture which could bring an end to the timeline of colonial exploitation. More indirectly, but certainly no less present, there are borrowings from Walter Benjamin and Karl Marx's theories of revolutionary time; namely, that the true revolution of the present redeems the oppressions of the past. I read the Asian American movement as a version of Benjamin's "angel of history," "face…turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage… The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise… This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004) 51; Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (Schocken Books, 1968), 253–64; Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1990).

In contrast, mainstream portrayals of Asian immigration, particularly after the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, saw it as an extension of the model minority myth. Such representations suggested that the suffering of Asian immigrants and their descendants had been real, but was ultimately worth it—indeed, had formed a uniquely able and willing citizen-subject—and would be compensated for with versions of social and economic success in the future. Such forward-looking politics allowed centrist and conservative Asian Americans to rewrite the past to suit their own narrative of success, thus retroactively codifying their path to apparent acceptance and economic achievement in the language of the American dream. This success was made possible by the hard work, sacrifice, and faith in America of their immigrant ancestors; the arrival of a new generation of "good immigrants" not only proved the truth of their own assimilation, but promised to start the cycle anew.

In this contest between what was past and what was to come, the figure of the Asian immigrant was most successfully captured by the latter. White and mainstream representations of immigrants viewed them first as the future of Asian America and later, when the economic rise of nations such as Japan became seen as threatening rather than encouraging, as the future of America, too. State intervention in the form of immigration legislation would further tip the scale in favor of these "futurists" by purposefully selecting for middle- to upper-class families and individuals, painting them as essentially foreign yet desirable nevertheless. The Asian American movement's own political philosophy, paired with their rejection of integrationist narratives, made it difficult for activists to fold immigrants into their organizing communities. Rather, immigrants often became objects to either be acted upon or held at a distance. This practice gave rise to a tension between the movement's desire to stand with the most vulnerable of social and

economic classes, of which Asian immigrants—despite being characterized as "upwardly mobile"—remained largely a part, and the movement's need to maintain its own separate history of struggle.

This paper sits at the intersection of the history of the Asian American movement and the history of Asian immigration, as I attempt to demonstrate how these two stories were one and the same during the Long Sixties. By focusing on a relatively small cohort of activists and organizations in California, I depict some of the effects of federal immigration reform on native-born Asian communities and their local politics of neighborhood improvement, urban redevelopment, and labor organizing.[5] I also draw from a small but growing historiography on the development of the model minority. Historians have shown that the stereotype was bound up in the United States' desires for Asian "friendship" during the Cold War and white American desires for a more accommodating minority to counterbalance African American activism during the civil rights era.[6] This paper builds on this literature by demonstrating how discourses surrounding the model minority, particularly when it came to recent immigrants, influenced the direction of radical Asian American politics, ultimately working to constrain them.

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[5] For studies of national immigration and refugee policy reform and its effect on Asian immigration, see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Politics and Society in Modern America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), Hsu, *The Good Immigrants,* Meredith Oyen, *The Diplomacy of Migration: Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S. – Chinese Relations in the Cold War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[6] Hsu, *The Good Immigrants,* Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). For additional, non-historical perspectives on the model minority, see Stacey J. Lee, *Unraveling the "Model Minority" Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth*, 2nd ed (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), Jeanine Young Kim, "Are Asians Black?: The Asian-American Civil Rights Agenda and the Contemporary Significance of the Black/White Paradigm," *The Yale Law Ournal* 108, no. 8 (June 1999): 2385–2412, .

Part one of this paper follows the politics of liberal Asian American reformers during the mid- to late-1960s, using the experience of the Japanese American Citizens League to explore how organizations integrated future immigrants into a narrative of Asian Americans' model minority "success story." Part two covers the invention of a radical Asian America in 1968 and the movement's ideological response to liberal visions of progress while developing an alternative view of history and Americanization. Finally, in part three I discuss how liberals and radicals struggled over the meaning and significance of immigrants and immigration, first with one another in Little Tokyo during the early 1970s, and later between factions inside the Asian American movement during a San Francisco garment workers' strike in 1974. Throughout, I hope to show how the very definitions of "Asian" and "American" the movement had assumed were constructed not only along the dichotomies of the Cold War and U.S. foreign policy but along presumed stable geographies of East and West, self and other, that the consequences of immigration reform and globalization would soon begin to erode.

Part I: Quiet Americans

Looking back on his internment at Topaz, Utah, Richard Aoki recalled both violence and passivity at work in the desert. At the level of individual experience, internment was a bloody, uncertain, and tempestuous period in his childhood. Aoki, who would go on to join the Black Panther Party and help found the Asian American Political Alliance at UC Berkeley, told a biographer in the early 2000s that his "most searing memories" of camp "usually involved conflict": fistfights, his own father's "violent streak," warring factions of internees struggling in the yard with construction materials, and one internee shot dead for trying to escape.[7] Underlying

[7] Diane Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life*, Critical American Studies (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 12-15.

this seemingly unending cycle of conflict, however, was an institutional philosophy which stood for internment as the ultimate form of patriotism and self-defense. There was the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).

The JACL had gotten its start at the peak of anti-Japanese sentiment during the 1920s as a conglomeration of numerous pre-existing ethnic associations, providing guidance and resources to Japanese communities in America towards the ultimate goal of peaceful co-existence with their white neighbors. During the 1930s, the JACL was primarily involved in expanding the rights of Japanese American citizens, and helping to support their business ventures during the Depression.[8] World War II and the debate over internment, however, heralded the JACL's true rise to national prominence, when their accommodating perspective granted them a significant platform from the federal government and situated them as the official voice of the Japanese American community. At a momentous meeting of the organization's National Committee in March of 1972, members decided to "cooperate 100%" with military commands to evacuate. "The greater our cooperation with the government," the JACL reasoned, "it can be expected that the greater will be their cooperation with us in the solution of our problems."[9]

The organization's primary goal during this period was to protect Japanese American *citizens* from evacuation, whether or not this came at the expense of first generation Japanese immigrants who were by law ineligible for citizenship. The JACL was ultimately betrayed on this point when the government announced that "all persons of Japanese ancestry" were to be affected; as National Secretary Mike Masaoka put it, "he was shocked that 'the Nisei [second

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[8] Bill Hosokawa, *JACL: In Quest of Justice* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1982), 87.

[9] Japanese American Citizens League, "1942 National Board Minutes" (San Francisco, reprint 1971), Japanese American National Museum, JACL Pacific Southwest papers, Box 5.

generation Japanese Americans] were being lumped together with enemy aliens.'"[10] While the JACL was by no means alone in advocating for cooperation—both the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Communist Party did the same, albeit for their own politically motivated reasons—and was inarguably short on alternatives, the organization's valorization of loyalty as a means of self-defense did not stop after evacuation. During internment, JACL leaders such as Masaoka continued to cultivate institutional links between the League and the War Relocation Authority, using these ties to call for the WRA to "develop Americanization programs the JACL saw as critical to the future assimilation and acceptance" of Japanese Americans.[11]

Such strategies were a natural outgrowth of the JACL's guiding mission of helping the Japanese American community integrate into American society via their upstanding civic and social behavior. In the decades following the war, when the JACL's most public association was with the movement for redress over the injuries of internment, the JACL continued to frame its activism in terms of the "loyalty and patriotism" of the formerly interned rather than their resistance. The organization also placed a great deal of public emphasis on Japanese American veterans as redeeming paragons of the community, holding up their sacrifice as representative of the collective sacrifice made by Japanese Americans towards the war effort.[12] Scholar Thy Phu describes this particular chapter in the history of Asians in America as an intensified stage in a decades old process of associating citizenship with civility, resisting the image of untamed

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[10] Alice Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress*, Asian America (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008), 105-110.

[11] Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment,* 111. These programs included "opposing he establishment of Japanese language schools" and eliminating "those mannerisms and thoughts which mark us [Japanese Americans] apart… We hope for a one hundred per cent American community."

[12] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 72-110.

Orientals and the "Yellow Peril" through a well-curated form of "super patriotism."[13] War and internment had revived the age-old tropes of alien Asians who still pledged allegiance to their own foreign kings and emperors, leaving little room for the nuanced or ambivalent attitudes that most Japanese Americans held towards both the United States and Japan.[14]

Critically, the JACL's version of success did not call for the full erasure of "Japaneseness" or certain Japanese cultural values. Rather, integrationists referred back to these values as a vital component of Japanese American success, in part because they reflected similar values held by Americans more generally. In a history of the Nisei commissioned by the JACL titled *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*, author Bill Hosokawa cited a white sociologist who described the Japanese as having sprung from "a culture in which 'diligence in work, combined with simple frugality, had an almost religious imperative, similar to what has been called '"the Protestant ethic" in Western culture.'"[15] Japanese Americans were by nature always-already suited to be ideal citizens of the United States, having only needed to slowly, over the course of decades, prove\ this essential fact to the nation through quiet hard work and sacrifice.

The JACL's selective appreciation of Japanese culture also fit neatly into the dominant cultural pluralist view of racial, religious, and ethnic difference in the United States during the early to mid twentieth century. Pluralism did not seek to efface cultural difference per se; rather,

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[13] Thy Phu, *Picturing Model Citizens: Civility in Asian American Visual Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 81.

[14] See Mae Ngai, "The World War II Internment of Japanese Americans and the Citizenship Renunciation Cases," in *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 175–201. The conflation of citizenship with loyalty and vice versa erased decades of Japanese Americans' lived experience as a community with strong material and social ties to both the United States and to Japan. For more on this history, see Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York & London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1988) and Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[15] Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1969), 495.

the fact that the United States had the capacity to contain so many different cultures and traditions was proof of the nation's generosity and exceptionalism. The presentation of the United States as a "nation of nations" was useful—perhaps even necessary—for the state to mobilize historically marginalized communities, first during the New Deal at home, and later during the war against fascism abroad.

Ironically, this cultural pluralism may only have been made possible by the broad exclusion of immigration from Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. As historian Gary Gerstle notes, because the "disciplinary project" of national quotas had succeeded in "reducing the number of immigrants and increasing the pressures on those already here to Americanize… one could embrace [newcomers], laud their achievements, and welcome them into the American family." While this conceptualization of the American nation was indeed "kindler and gentler" then the expressly exclusionary policies of the 1920s, it was by no means a radical departure.[16]

Federal immigration reform was one area in which postwar liberal pluralism would find its purist expression. Starting in the 1940s and culminating with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, lawmakers and activists chipped away at existing restrictions on immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa by ending the system of national origins quotas and replacing it with a global ceiling of 300,000 a year. Historian Mae Ngai has suggested that we view the 1965 act as of a piece with other civil rights legislation of the day, with significant support coming from "liberal white elites," who recognized that the United States' discriminatory policies were an obvious source of "moral embarrassment." Yet, as Ngai points out, while civil rights reform "targeted the legacies of racial slavery," immigration

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[16] Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 139.

reform targeted ethnic European Americans who had, since the implementation of national origins quotas in the 1920s, been largely racialized as white.[17]

Because of their assumption that reform would primarily benefit those "white ethnics" already in the United States by ensuring their legal equality in immigration law, legislators continued to valorize citizenship as the ultimate path towards full rights and equal status. These views of citizenship and pluralism were deeply linked to ideas of American nationalism within the emerging Cold War paradigm, solidifying ideas about ethnic participation in the American social and political project, "[recognizing] difference in order to efface it within the universality of liberal democratic politics."[18] Tied to these liberal democratic politics was a philosophy which, in essence, replaced the old racial quotas with "preference classes" based on professional skill and education, with "lawyers, physicians, surgeons, and teachers"—professions which were in short supply at the time within the United States—ranked as the most desirable.[19]

This instrumentalist and, as Ngai deems it, assimilationist attitude towards reform suffused liberal attitudes towards the potential for non-European immigration under the new system. While the racially restrictive quotas which had barred immigrants from the "Asiatic Exclusion Zone" would technically be lifted, activists and lawmakers alike went to great pains to emphasize the purely geopolitical function of such a change. A 1952 report commissioned by President Harry Truman shortly before he left office called "Whom We Shall Welcome" stressed helping Eastern European refugees of Communism over Asians, stating that in Asia, "the problem of refugees, where it exists, is predominantly internal and cannot be distinguished from

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[17] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Politics and Society in Modern America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 228.

[18] Ibid, 234.

[19] "Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965," Pub. L. No. 89–236, 2580 HR 911 (1965).

the problem of overpopulation," painting Asians as an insulated, sedentary population.[20] A State Department report ten years later similarly predicted that eliminating caps on Asian immigration would "not alter to any significant extent the present pattern of immigration," with only a projected 5,000 to 6,000 person increase for Chinese immigration.[21] By the time Senate hearings were underway for S.500—the bill which would become the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, or Hart-Celler—such reassurances had become par for the course. In one February 1965 session, Senator Hiram Fong, a Republican Chinese-American from Hawai'i, used his questioning of Secretary of State Dean Rusk to emphasize that immigration from Asia would be virtually unaffected as a result of the new legislation, and thus pose no risk to American "traditional patterns of cultural and social life." "With respect to [immigration from] Japan," Fong remarked, "we estimate that there will be a total for the first 5 years of some 5,391."[22]

Representatives from both the JACL and the National Chinese Welfare Council (NCWC) were also present at the hearings. Mike Masaoka, now the JACL's Washington, D.C. representative, cited Nisei military service, low delinquency rates of Japanese and Chinese American youth, and the high tendency of Asians to "move into the professions" to argue that immigration reform would primarily reflect the sacrifice and cultural assimilation of Japanese Americans, rather than unleashing "a 'flood' of immigration from the Orient." Jack Wong Sing

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[20] "Whom We Shall Welcome" (Washington, D.C.: The President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization, January 1, 1953), Archive.org., 63-65. When Congress was in the midst of considering ending Chinese exclusion in the early 1940s, similar reassurances had come from Chinese government officials, with one telling American lawmakers that "the Chinese as a whole were 'not a migratory race.'" See Oyen, *The Diplomacy of Migration: Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S. – Chinese Relations in the Cold War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[21] State Department Bureau of Consular and Security Affairs, "Principle Provisions of State Dept.'s Tentative Proposal for a Legislation," May 27, 1973. Quoted in Ngai, 246.

[22] "Hearings before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary on S. 500, Part I" § Committee on the Judiciary (1965), 70-75.

of the NCWC claimed along similar lines, "Let it not be said that Chinese immigration would be opened…. Chinese communities…are in favor of this proposal as a final step in proving to the world that all men are equal when it comes to selecting immigrants."[23]

In its intended form, Hart-Celler was very much the spiritual successor to earlier attempts at restricting or containing undesirable immigration, with categories altered to reflect both the genuine progress liberal attitudes towards race and national origin since the 1920s and the contemporary demands of the Cold War and economic nationalism. Hart-Celler was simultaneously a civil rights act for assimilated American ethnics and a tool for foreign policy, but very few legislators and activists anticipated that it would fundamentally remake the composition of the United States. Yet, as the coming decade would demonstrate, this is precisely what Hart-Celler did: between 1965 and 2000, the population of Asians in the United States grew from 1.2 million to 10.9 million.[24]

The unexpected rise in immigration from Asia and Africa was in large part due to the act's allowances for family reunification. Reformers "had not understood that each quota immigrant admitted into the country could open a path for non-quota family migration, as well as for additional family migration in other quota-preference categories." This domino-effect also meant that while many post-1965 Asian immigrants were indeed the desired professionals of Hart-Celler's "third preference" category, this transformation by no means took place immediately. In 1969, a year after the act went into effect, the majority of arrivals were either

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[23] "Hearings before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary on S. 500, Part II" § Committee on the Judiciary (1965), 619-630, 727.

[24] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 262. This increase in immigration from Asia and, eventually, Africa, came at the expense of unrestricted immigration from the Western Hemisphere. As Ngai points out, immigration from Mexico and the rest of Latin America was capped well below historic levels, essentially "illegalizing" long-standing patterns of migration.

unemployed at the time of emigration or considered "non-professional" workers coming to America under the auspices of family reunification, with third preference immigrants comprising no more than 45 percent of overall arrivals for any Asian nation.[25]

The mainstream American press and federal government kept the general public's focus on middle-class arrivals, emphasizing their potential contributions to the workforce. The Federal Reserve of San Francisco issued a study in 1971 indicating that "the newcomers… include a high percentage of professional and technical workers." "In many cases," the Fed reported, "highly skilled cerebral workers get their training in their native countries and then come to this country to apply their skills."[26] A year later, the Associated Press announced that a new type of immigrant had arrived from Asia — "young, scientifically trained, and hard working." One Professor Humbert S. Nelli was quoted as predicting that the immigration boom would "keep the ethnic communities alive in the big cities," while an employee at New York City's immigration service called the arrivals "a bonanza for this country" in terms of their economic desirability.[27]

Hart-Celler had been significant to the JACL and other Asian minority organizations not for who it brought to the United States, but for what it signified regarding US-Asia relations. Masaoka's 1968 end-of-the-year report in JACL's national newspaper *Pacific Citizen* stressed the political, economic, and social importance of the positive relationship with Japan Hart-Celler signaled, as "the acceptance of Japanese Americans… depends to a substantial degree on the

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[25] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 262.

[26] "Asian Immigration Rate to U.S. Rising, Bank Says," *Long Beach Independent* and "Immigration of Asians to U.S. Rises Sharply," *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 1971.

[27] Associated Press, "A New Type of Immigrant Is Coming to United States," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, September 28, 1972.

image enjoyed by the land of their ancestry." Mentions of actual immigrants by the newspaper that year were neutral and brief, noting their arrival but little else.[28]

In truth, certain Japanese and Japanese American institutions had become increasingly worried about what kind of individuals they would soon have to learn to accommodate. In 1968, a Japanese government entity called the Overseas Japanese Association began making preparations to help prepare potential émigrés for life in the United States, with an OJA spokesman fretting to *Pacific Citizen* that "the postwar Japanese immigrant might be considered 'undesirable' in the sense of the New World," and could reflect poorly on Japanese Americans. As a result, they needed to first study hard in order to "emulate the virtues of the Issei" when they arrived in America.[29] These efforts represented a joint effort by the OJA and the JACL to discipline and mold Japanese immigrants before they even touched American soil, demonstrating that the "virtues" of hard work and sacrifice, the foundation of the model minority stereotype, were not inherent, but needed to be taught. For the JACL, such concerns regarding new immigrants had less to do with the individuals themselves but with their specter, the potential threat they posed to the JACL's continuing project of protecting the Japanese American community's fragile acceptance into the American liberal order.

By the end of the 1960s, this project was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. Much as postwar liberal civil rights reform proved inadequate towards constraining the radical critique of racial, sexual, and economic inequalities in the United States, so too did the model

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[28] Mike Masaoka, "Washington JACL Office Activities Slow down in '67-'68," *Pacific Citizen*, December 20, 1968, sec. D and "U.S. Admits 4,000 Japanese Immigrants," *Pacific Citizen*, July 12, 1968, Densho Digital Archive.

[29] Murayama, Tamotsu. "Orientation of New Japanese Immigrants to U.S. Proposed." *Pacific Citizen*. January 5, 1968. Densho Digital Archive; Ayumi Takenaka, "How Diasporic Ties Emerge: Pan-American Nikkei Communities and the Japanese State," in *Diasporas, Cultures and Identities*, ed. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos, vol. 32, Routledge Ethnic and Racial Studies 8 (New York: Routledge 2012).

minority stereotype fail to hold back divisions internal to Asian communities in America. At the same time, organizations like the JACL were torn between the League's role as a mutual aid organization for Japanese Americans or a civil rights group with a more ambitious, wide-ranging agenda.

Throughout the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, the JACL had been involved in a number of legal and legislative battles regarding fair housing, schooling, and employment, many of them centered in California. The JACL's approach, much like other ethnic and racial civil rights groups such as the NAACP and the League of United Latin American Citizens, was to press for racial liberalism broadly while focusing on their own community's particular needs. This tension between universalism and particularism, as historian Mark Brilliant terms it, in addition to the JACL and similar groups' single-minded focus on litigation and legislation, "refracted the ostensibly singular phenomenon of racial discrimination into a spectrum of antidiscrimination cases and bills."[30] While the JACL did issue a wide range of amicus curiae briefs in cases with tangential relevance to Japanese Americans, the organization by and large stuck to its credo that there were "problems and adjustments which are peculiar to Americans of Japanese ancestry."[31]

Some within the JACL did, however, begin to pressure the organization to develop a broader conception of its mission. In 1968, the League's national civil rights committee added a "Freedom Budget" to its organizational agenda, written in the vein of A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King Jr, and Bayard Rustin's anti-poverty 1967 program. The original Freedom Budget articulated terms of both economic and racial justice and was aimed at addressing "our failure as

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[30] Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9.

[31] JACL Pacific Southwest District Council, *8th Annual PSWDC Chapter Clinic Handbook* (Los Angeles, 1961).

a nation to distribute democratically the fruits of our abundance."[32] The JACL's version included a number of identical positions, such as full employment and a guaranteed annual wage, as an indication that the organization was looking to embrace a new approach towards matters of equity and ethnic advancement.

The immediate response from local chapters and divisions ranged from mixed to openly critical. Californian members were particularly disapproving. Former vice president of the JACL Henry Kanegae wrote in *Pacific Citizen* that self-identified conservative southern Californian JACL board members strongly disagreed with "the ultra-liberal leanings of some of the National JACL leadership." Kanegae felt a private sector-oriented path forward was best, rather than a welfare model: what African Americans needed was "black power… not the fire and violence type, but… the political and economic kind."[33] Earlier that same year, the editor of the *Pacific Citizen* Henry Honda had recommended Nixon's "law and order" approach as another alternative, calling it "more sure-footed." Curiously, neither Honda nor Kanegae disagreed with the civil rights committee that economic issues were crucial to civic and social success, but they did imply that these successes needed to be earned, not handed out. "Whether the Negro will agree or continue their militant bid for equality remains to be seen," Honda wrote from Los Angeles, but what African Americans should prioritize getting "a meaningful job, a decent home and family life." "We're not trying to be racist about this—" he concluded, "just realists."[34]

The reluctance of certain JACL chapters and individual members to fully embrace a conception of civil rights as mass movement was not only a result of their particularist agenda.

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[32] *A "Freedom Budget" for All Americans* (New York: A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1967), 1.

[33] Henry Kanegae, "On Being Conservative," *Pacific Citizen*, August 2, 1968, Densho Digital Archive.

[34] Harry Honda, "Ye Editor's Desk: A Partisan View on Civil Rights," *Pacific Citizen*, January 26, 1968, Densho Digital Archive.

By the late ‘60s, the same conservative trends historians have identified in white suburban America, and Southern California especially, were also at work among middle-class East Asian communities.[35] As historian Ellen Wu has pointed out, the model minority’s individualistic, “bootstraps” approach to success was frequently predicated on anti-Blackness and the desire of Asian communities to prove themselves “definitively not black.” While full equality with white Americans remained elusive into the 1960s, whites and Asians alike were able to invoke the “burgeoning *conservative* fixation with ‘law and order’” to set themselves apart from African American struggles, which the state and the media were already painting as inherently more violent.[36]

Younger members of the JACL worried throughout 1967 and 1968 that the backlash to the Freedom Budget and the JACL’s broadly neutral track record on civil rights was a sign that the organization was unable to keep up with changing times. At a December 1967 meeting of the JACL’s Central California District Council, National Jr. JACL chairman Russell Obana “criticized JACL for its apathy and sluggish attitude” towards civil rights. The following July, Mo Nishida, who would go on to leave the JACL to become a prominent organizer in the Asian American movement, wrote to the *Pacific Citizen* remarking that Sansei—third generation Japanese Americans—were feeling increasingly pushed out of the organization: “If our youth can

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[35] For the New Right and suburbanization in the 1960s, see Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) and Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[36] Wu, *The Color of Success,* 151-152, 171-173. Wu cites perhaps the most prominent mainstream example of pathologizing both Asian American “success” and African American “failure,” the Moynihan Report, published in 1965. In addition to ascribing either community’s perceived faults and achievements to cultural values and social stability, Moynihan and other white observers felt “the Japanese American example could hep to fix the Negro problem,” a prescription which simultaneously disciplined both groups.

be shown that JACL members … and are still working and striving for 'a better America,' they may still turn to our organization."

Sansei critiques came at a time of declining membership numbers in Jr. JACL, which senior members failed to connect to the organization's growing irrelevance as the war in Vietnam escalated, the civil rights movement emerged from the "Long, Hot Summer" of 1967 and faced another year of violent resistance, and student protests erupted across the country. Instead, "the dilemma that seems to arise… is the college student is too old to stay in Jr. JACL and the high schooler won't join because the collegiates… are too old for him," one commentator supposed.[37]

As Ellen Wu writes, the JACL's decline "mirrored the unraveling of liberal orthodoxy in American political culture as the civil rights movement evolved to emphasize black power and the federal government laughed the War on Poverty."[38] As young Japanese Americans increasingly turned their backs on the JACL towards alternative visions of multiracial solidarity and justice, however, the liberal causes the organization had championed would retain their relevance for decades to come. How the radical alternatives to assimilation and the grip of the "model minority" responded to the long-term consequences of liberal immigration reform remained to be seen.

Part II: Bad cats and caterpillars

In February of 1969, while student strikes raged on at Berkeley and San Francisco State College, five students at UCLA quietly approached the administration "to discuss the possibility of starting a community-oriented publication," one which would speak directly to the political

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[37] Jiro Kataoka, "JACL Can Take on Part of Negro Problem, Marutani Tells CCDC," *Pacific Citizen*, January 12, 1968; Mo Nishida, "Sansei in JACL," *Pacific Citizen*, July 12, 1968, sec. Letters to the Editor; Alan Kumamoto, "Declining Figures," *Pacific Citizen*, January 12, 1968, sec. Accent on Youth, Densho Digital Archive

[38] Wu, *The Color of Success,* 152.

needs and concerns of the new Asian American community and serve as an "urgently needed" avenue for poetry and art. According to Mike Murase, one of the original five, "the administration didn't buy it, but stood firm on its own proposal to publish a scholarly sociological journal to insure [*sic*] that a university-sponsored publication would not mar the delicate image of the university."[39] Recognizing the impossibility of the academy subsidizing its own detractors, the students decided to take matters into their own hands. Each of the five original petitioners contributed $100 of their own money, and two months later, *Gidra: A Monthly for Asians in America'*s first issue was available for purchase, twenty-five cents a copy. The students named the paper after King Ghidorah, fearsome, extraterrestrial three-headed dragon of the Godzilla franchise, but they also made the paper's mascot a humble cartoon caterpillar wearing a rice hat—a combination of both the alien and the ubiquitous, "fierceness and humor."[40]

Gidra's purposeful eclecticism was broadly reflective of the Asian American movement it served and the lively student environment from which both emerged. The term "Asian American" was coined by Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee, both students at UC Berkeley during the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) strike. Students at Berkeley and San Francisco State College across the bay called for the establishment of ethnic studies programs, the hiring of more diverse faculty, and open admissions for students of color. Ichioka "had noticed that Asian were participating in new left activities as individuals but wanted to establish a group 'behind an Asian American banner' to radicalize other Asians," leading him to establish the first Asian American

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[39] Mike Murase, "Toward Barefoot Journalism," *Gidra*, April 1974, Densho Digital Archive.

[40] Haivan V. Hoang, *Writing against Racial Injury: The Politics of Asian American Student Rhetoric*, Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy and Culture (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 65.

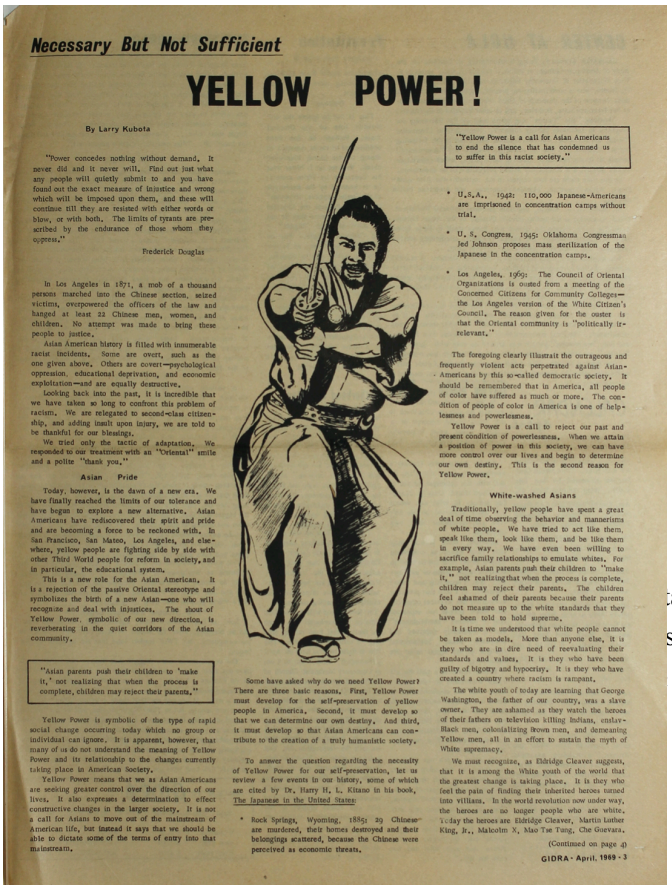
Political Alliance.[41] The same cheeky and aggressive rhetoric which emerged from the TWLF's protest material, and the New Left more broadly, would also find its way into *Gidra*'s densely illustrated pages. Students drew connections between their university administrations' violent crackdowns to the United States' authoritarian behavior to minorities and marshaled the radical imagery of North Vietnam and the People's Republic of China to show where their international allegiances lay.

Figure 1: Robert Bechtle, *Back to Skool Week*, 1968, Serigraph, San Francisco State University Digital Repository.

Asian American participation in the strikes was guided by the TWLF's leftist internationalism and opposition to the war in Vietnam, as well as a growing awareness among Asian youth of their community's historic silence on these issues. Early issues of *Gidra* in particular focused on identifying and calling out false consciousness and self hatred among Asian

[41]Daryl Maeda, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 52.

Americans. A poem in the paper's first issue titled "My Sad People" called upon the writer's "Yellow family" to "be strong and join the marching/ we all are fighting… / Just to BE… just to have our way/… just to be proud of our heritage."[42] A more aggressive article by "a brother" appeared in the next issue spoke directly to the liberal Asian establishment and its "success" narrative, with the author observing, "You're a second-class citizen just like me and all the other minorities… So don't make a fool of yourself trying to be white."[43] In her retrospective of the movement, activist Karen Ishizuka described the period as a time of collective awakening, as young Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans suddenly gained a lexicon with which to describe their experiences. "More than just a descriptor," she writes, the term Asian American "subverted the Orientalist tradition of lumping all Asians together—this time as an oppositional political identity imbued with self-definition and empowerment…"[44] Activists leaned into negative stereotypes of Asians to counteract the passivity of the model minority stereotype, casting themselves as fierce warriors, the "Yellow Peril" turned "Yellow Power."



Necessary But Not Sufficient

YELLOW POWER!

By Larry Kubota

"Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and those will continue till they are resisted with either words or blow, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."

Frederick Douglas

In Los Angeles in 1871, a mob of a thousand persons marched into the Chinese section, seized victims, overpowered the officers of the law and hanged at least 22 Chinese men, women, and children. No attempt was made to bring these people to justice.

Asian American history is filled with innumerable racist incidents. Some are overt, such as the one given above. Others are covert—psychological oppression, educational deprivation, and economic exploitation—and are equally destructive.

Looking back into the past, it is incredible that we have taken so long to confront this problem of racism. We are relegated to second-class citizenship, and adding insult upon injury, we are told to be thankful for our blessings.

We tried only the tactic of adaptation. We responded to our treatment with an "Oriental" smile and a polite "thank you."

Asian Pride

Today, however, is the dawn of a new era. We have finally reached the limits of our tolerance and have begun to explore a new alternative. Asian Americans have rediscovered their spirit and pride and are becoming a force to be reckoned with. In San Francisco, San Mateo, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, yellow people are fighting side by side with other Third World people for reform in society, and in particular, the educational system.

This is a new role for the Asian American. It is a rejection of the passive Oriental stereotype and symbolizes the birth of a new Asian—one who will recognize and deal with injustices. The shout of Yellow Power, symbolic of our new direction, is reverberating in the quiet corridors of the Asian community.

"Asian parents push their children to 'make it,' not realizing that when the process is complete, children may reject their parents."

Yellow Power is symbolic of the type of rapid social change occurring today which no group or individual can ignore. It is apparent, however, that many of us do not understand the meaning of Yellow Power and its relationship to the changes currently taking place in American Society.

Yellow Power means that we as Asian Americans are seeking greater control over the direction of our lives. It also expresses a determination to effect constructive changes in the larger society. It is not a call for Asians to move out of the mainstream of American life, but instead it says that we should be able to dictate some of the terms of entry into that mainstream.

"Yellow Power is a call for Asian Americans to end the silence that has condemned us to suffer in this racist society."

- U.S.A., 1942: 110,000 Japanese-Americans are imprisoned in concentration camps without trial.
- U. S. Congress, 1945: Oklahoma Congressman Jed Johnson proposes mass sterilization of the Japanese in the concentration camps.
- Los Angeles, 1969: The Council of Oriental Organizations is ousted from a meeting of the Concerned Citizens for Community Colleges—the Los Angeles version of the White Citizen's Council. The reason given for the ouster is that the Oriental community is "politically irrelevant."

The foregoing clearly illustrait the outrageous and frequently violent acts perpetrated against Asian-Americans by this so-called democratic society. It should be remembered that in America, all people of color have suffered as much or more. The condition of people of color in America is one of helplessness and powerlessness.

Yellow Power is a call to reject our past and present condition of powerlessness. When we attain a position of power in this society, we can have more control over our lives and begin to determine our own destiny. This is the second reason for Yellow Power.

White-washed Asians

Traditionally, yellow people have spent a great deal of time observing the behavior and mannerisms of white people. We have tried to act like them, speak like them, look like them, and be like them in every way. We have even been willing to sacrifice family relationships to emulate whites. For example, Asian parents push their children to "make it," not realizing that when the process is complete, children may reject their parents. The children feel ashamed of their parents because their parents do not measure up to the white standards that they have been told to hold supreme.

It is time we understood that white people cannot be taken as models. More than anyone else, it is they who are in dire need of reevaluating their standards and values. It is they who have been guilty of bigotry and hypocrisy. It is they who have created a country where racism is rampant.

The white youth of today are learning that George Washington, the father of our country, was a slave owner. They are ashamed as they watch the heroes of their fathers on television killing Indians, enslaving Black men, colonializing Brown men, and demeaning Yellow men, all in an effort to sustain the myth of white supremacy.

We must recognize, as Eldridge Cleaver suggests, that it is among the White youth of the world that the greatest change is taking place. It is they who feel the pain of finding their inherited heroes turned into villians. In the world revolution now under way, the heroes are no longer people who are white. Today the heroes are Eldridge Cleaver, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara,

(Continued on page 4)

Some have asked why do we need Yellow Power? There are three basic reasons. First, Yellow Power must develop for the self-preservation of yellow people in America. Second, it must develop so that we can determine our own destiny. And third, it must develop so that Asian Americans can contribute to the creation of a truly humanistic society.

To answer the question regarding the necessity of Yellow Power for our self-preservation, let us review a few events in our history, some of which are cited by Dr. Harry H. L. Kitano in his book, The Japanese in the United States:

- Rock Springs, Wyoming, 1885: 29 Chinese are murdered, their homes destroyed and their belongings scattered, because the Chinese were perceived as economic threats.

Figure 2: A page from *Gidra*'s first issue in April 1969. Source: Densho Digital Repository.

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the Long Sixties (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2016), 139.

The JACL, with its controversial war-time record and aggressive pursuit of assimilation made for an easy target of criticism. Young activist-minded Japanese Americans, and the movement more broadly, were particularly focused on the JACL's unquestioning support of progress and development, seemingly at any cost. In opposition, Asian Americans' early rhetoric centered around themes of loss and preservation within traditional neighborhoods and their residents' lack of awareness of the destructive processes at work around them. *Gidra'*s August 1969 issue featured two articles which served as both histories and obituaries for Los Angeles' Chinatown and Little Tokyo, with authors Dave Chan and Jim Matsuoka noting that as anti-Asian racism in the broader American population declined, so did the need for ethnic enclaves and cultural organizations. A distinct and "cohesive community" was being replaced with "blocks of steel and glass buildings" which gave "little hint of any discontinuity with contemporary American society."[45] Spaces forged by shared trauma and affliction in which activists had grown up were being eroded by the forces of assimilation and economic development, incentivized and enabled by the domestic Asian "elite" and the recent arrival of overseas wealth.

Writers in *Gidra* also made occasional note of new Asian immigrant populations in cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles. A contributor named Joyce described "the new Korean immigrant" as financially secure, highly educated, and, "although… fiercely loyal to Korea, often prefers the high standards of living found in America to the comforts of his native country." With the recent disaggregation the United States' small Korean American population and the disappearance of "Korea-towns," "the new Korean immigrants as well as the descendants of

[45] Jim Matsuoka, "From Japan to L.A.," *Gidra*, August 1969, Densho Digital Archive.

older immigrants have no assimilation problems, and no longer feel the urgency to unite as a minority community." Dave Chan wrote in his piece on disappearing Chinatowns of how "very few Los Angeles Chinese have roots that go back past the turn of the century," and "[with] so many transplants in relation to native born Chinese of Los Angeles, the values of the former seemingly prevail in the community."[46] Activists did not see these attributes as inherent to overseas Asians, instead correctly contextualizing recent waves of privileged immigrants in the United States' long history of selective immigration policy towards Asia. Nevertheless, they saw the arrival of these new populations as symptomatic of their own communities' slow erosion.

This attitude towards ethic enclaves and mistrust of what wealthy or professionalized Asian immigrants represented arose from the Asian American movement's particular historical consciousness. The movement's very unity hung upon decades of shared exploitation and marginalization between Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Korean minorities in the United States. Ethnic enclaves were ideal capsules for this history: built out of necessity, they had come to incubate a unique set of cultures and experiences which liberal pluralists sought to either co-opt or water down. For this reason, the people Asian American activists hoped to organize and assist were those with a history of exploitation and exclusion in the United States could be rallied around these experiences. Rather than perpetuating the lie of assimilation and so-called "white washing," activists hoped that by pointing out Asian peoples' oppressed status, they could spread their particular brand of racial and political awareness, replace white meekness with Yellow Power and, as one *Gidra* contributor put it, "search our souls for the flame of the Asian warriors who fought for their people and their pride without fear of death."[47]

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[46] Joyce, "The Korean Americans," *Gidra*, August 1969, Densho Digital Archive.

[47] Larry Kubota, "Yellow Power!" *Gidra*, April 1969, Densho Digital Archive.

If integration into the American nation produced quiet Asians, then the solution posed by Asian Americans was a nation of their own, based on the projects of communist and anti-imperialist revolutionaries in Vietnam, China, and North Korea. The same countries the United States had labeled as "bad Asia" through foreign policy and whose citizens were deemed undesirable through immigration law the Asian American movement looked to as sources of ethnic and national pride.

Many of these beliefs were influenced by the overlap between the Asian American and anti-war movements. Asian Americans saw the war in Vietnam as an imperialist conflict which functioned along the same racial logics that produced their own oppression at home and, in some cases, even reproduced it in the form of violence against Asians committed by returning veterans. Historian Daryl Maeda writes that "because Asian Americans understood the war and domestic anti-Asian racism as ineluctably intertwined, they took exception to others who, while adoring the Vietnamese, 'refuse[d] to take seriously the Asian struggle in Babylon.'"[48] Indeed, many Asian Americans themselves spoke of being unaware of their own oppression until they saw the indiscriminate killing of Vietnamese citizens and soldiers alike, all molded together under the epithet of "gook."[49] This understanding that Asian and Asian American revolutionaries saw American oppression in similar and compatible ways such that their struggles could ultimately be bound under the same global fight for non-white liberation, gave rise to Asian Americans' broader internationalist agenda. Such radical politics of revolutionary solidarity had the potential

[48] Maeda, *Chains of Babylon,* 124.

[49] Ishizuka, *Serve the People*, 215-216.

to un-do the silencing effects of immigration and assimilation and shift Asian American history back onto the paths which migrating ancestors had left behind.

Figure 3. *Source:* Densho Digital Archives

Activists expressed their solidarity with red Asia through reproductions of images and performances of what they understood to be Asian revolutionary politics and culture. Beginning in 1968, when striking Asian American students at Berkeley and SFSC hoisted posters proclaiming "China shall be powerful!" and depicted a sword-wielding Chinese warrior alongside the character for "East," the trend was picked up and continued by *Gidra.* Activists also began to deploy pictures of and references to contemporary Chinese and Vietnamese soldiers, in an open display of support for, if not full identification with, communism in East Asia. Here was how Asians in Asia—that is, Asian militants who were either already free from the harmful influence of white racism and imperialism, or aggressively fighting to eradicate it—appeared and behaved: armed, poised, and powerful, in direct opposition to the "quiet" and apathetic Asian in America.

Asian American identification with Asian revolutionaries was not solely grounded in commonalities of race, however. It was also a reflection of the movement's Third World internationalism, shared by those within the Chicano and Black Power movements, which saw oppressed minorities in the West as colonies trapped within the metropole, or "Babylon." Disparities of wealth, unequal treatment before the law, over-policing, economic exploitation, and the physical segregation imposed by ghettoes and enclaves marked the "otherness" of poor people of color in the United States. The internally colonized would not be liberated through further integration; rather, they needed a "revolutionary nationalism," a recognition that their interests were fundamentally incompatible with the interests of empire.[50]

As a "nation within a nation," Asian America hoped to preserve its own coherence and protect its spaces and communities from outsiders who sought to exploit them for labor and profit. The categories they would use to describe where they began and the United States ended were not entirely their own, however; rather, they were inversions of the new logic of citizenship that the United States government had articulated through post-war liberal immigration reform, a logic deeply informed by capitalist desire and Cold War anticommunism. Being neither preferred immigrants nor wanting to become well-integrated citizens, Asian Americans occupied an unstable middle ground in the eyes of American society, a position they sought to weaponize and turn into a criticism of the United States' imperialism. Yet by their very nature, a nation's borders necessitated decisions regarding who was to be welcomed and who was to be turned away. Like the United States in which they were trapped, Asian Americans had made their border permeable but by no means open.

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[50] For a detailed intellectual history of the theory of internal colonialism, see Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," *Du Bois Review* 1, no. 2 (2004): 281–95.

Part III: Whom shall we welcome?

Gidra reporter Evelyn Yoshimura would refer to it as "the rape of Little Tokyo," but the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) of Los Angeles had always simply called it the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Project. The organization's plans for the neighborhood were ostensibly targeted at improving living conditions for current residents and business owners, with a focus on "the removal of structurally substandard buildings to permit the return of the Project area land to economic use and new construction." The CRA's project plan solicited "maximum participation" from the neighborhood, an agenda which on paper spoke to some of the key concerns of Asian American activists regarding the decay and preservation of their ethnic communities.[51] In practice however, the Project had invited the participation of larger invading forces, both from home and afar, the most pressing of which was the unprecedented involvement of Japanese capital.

Asian American activists had seen this coming. Japanese imperialism had been a recurring issue in the movement's politics, with activists having sided with the struggle of indigenous Okinawans against joint Japanese and American control. Writers at *Gidra* had also called out the JACL for its support of the Japanese government under Prime Minister Eisaku Satō for its violations of Okinawa's sovereignty and excessive deference to the United States. Activists like Yuji Ichioka, now teaching at UCLA, saw the national JACL as "supporting the fearful collaboration between Japan and America designed to maintain and expand American power in Asia at the expense of popular, indigenous nationalist movements."[52]

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[51] The Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles, California, "Little Tokyo Redevelopment Project: The Redevelopment Plan," February 24, 1970.

[52] CRA/LA, "Little Tokyo Redevelopment Project," 17.

Now the citizens of Little Tokyo were themselves becoming an indigenous nationalist movement of sorts, as Japanese corporations insisted on building ever more skyscrapers and shopping centers in the place of low-income housing and cheap hotels. "If they redevelop Little Tokyo anymore," a *Gidra* article cautioned, "you won't be able to find it." A project that citizens of Little Tokyo had initially hoped would be "by and for the people" had been, in effect, colonized by Japanese corporate interests. Organizers such as George Umezawa made clear links between development in Little Tokyo and the war in Vietnam, proclaiming at a 1973 anti-war rally that "as we are gathered here to show our solidarity with the Vietnamese people and their struggle for self-determination against the U.S. and Japanese imperialists, it is ironic that here in our own country, our own community, we, too, stand in the midst of a battlefield."[53]

Activists' understanding of postwar Japanese capitalism generally considered it a feature of Japan's return to a subordinate status under the United States. "Just as in past decades, the U.S. is giving massive military and financial aid to Japan to build it into a new capitalist ally in the far east," Pat Sumi wrote for *Gidra* in anticipation of the 30th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. "Now, with the reconstruction of Japanese monopoly capital and military power, it seems as though we are witnessing the replay of an old horror movie."[54] Whether the relationship between the U.S. and Japan was one of cooperation or competition, Sumi pointed out that the victims were always innocent "Japanese and American Peoples" caught in between militarism and capitalist imperialism.

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[53] Evelyn Yoshimura, "Redevelopment... or the Rape of Little Tokyo," and Tom Okabe, "On the Home Front," *Gidra*, February 1973, Densho Digital Archive.

[54] Pat Sumi, "Japan Militarism Rising: December 7, 1971...," *Gidra*, December 1970, Densho Digital Archive.

Little Tokyo's steady erosion by outside interests was a sign that the war was not going well for Asian Americans. Organizers blamed the city government, and certainly they blamed Kajima and Japanese capitalism, but by the time they got to organizing in the streets, they also blamed the lack of interest within the neighborhood itself. Umezawa complained of "a weakness" among residents and their lack of involvement in the Little Tokyo Community Advisory Committee, which was meant to represent their interests in front of the CRA. "I see a lot of businessmen in there, a lot of professional people," he remarked to the newspaper *Roots*, "but few residents." His fellow interviewee Jim Matsuoka's explanation: "I think one of the problems with the residents is that a large number are transients." Adversarial forces were identified in "the Japanese from Japan" as well as "the commercial element," the two intimately bound together in the organizers' analysis:

> *Matsuoka.* … Did you ever see a list of Japanese corporation representatives in southern California? It's fantastic.
> *Wong*. It's like a cycle going back to the 30s and the prewar days again, where the Japanese community is conservative and imperialist because the very structures in the community such as banking and all the businesses are being run and controlled by the Japanese in Japan.
> *Matsuoka.* Our control may well be gone. There will be faces down there… that look Oriental, but we'll be pushed out to the hinterlands of Crenshaw. We may be on the outlying areas looking in, and we'll see a bunch of people and it won't be us…[55]

Not only would the people living in Little Tokyo change if redevelopment was successful, the landscape would as well. One *Gidra* cover from later that year re-imagined a dystopian Little Tokyo in 1984, with Japanese brand names on every building and steel high rises

[55] Evelyn Yoshimura, "Higher Rises Lower Depths: Redevelopment and Little Tokyo," March 1973, Densho Digital Archive.

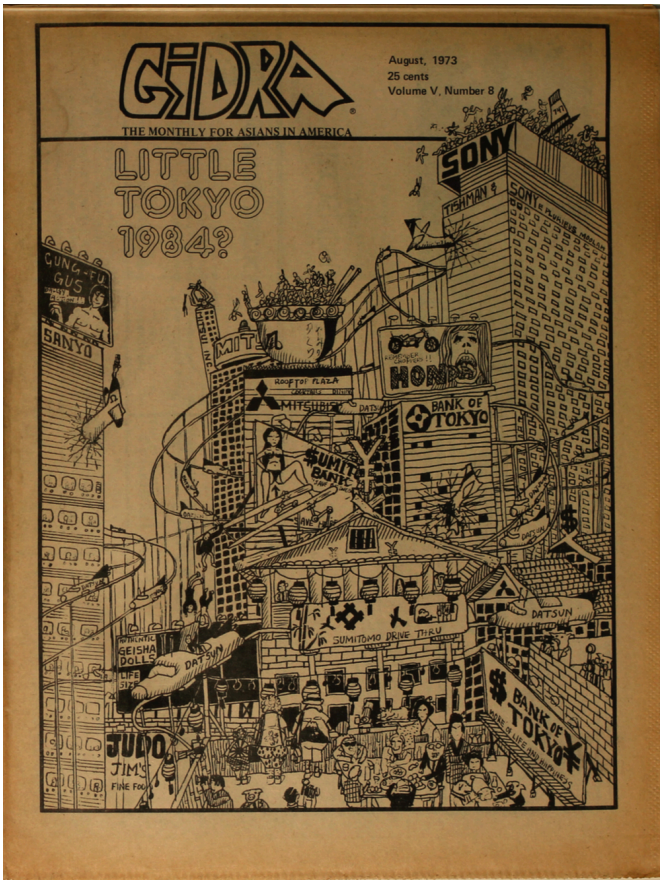

Figure 4. *Source:* Densho Digital Archives

dominating the skyline. A large yen sign sits in the center of the frame, as below, women in traditional Japanese dress serve food and drinks to a mixture of American tourists and Japanese businessmen. The critique is levied at a specific combination of modern capitalism and Japanese nationalism, in which the cultural symbols of the latter come to represent the arrival and dominance of the former. Activists' fear and dislike of Kajima and other corporations led them to essentially collapse individual Japanese newcomers in Little Tokyo with the abstract idea of Japanese capital.[56]

[56] Scholar Iyko Day has written about the long history of Asian immigrant workers becoming racialized as human embodiments of abstract capital. Here, national difference and conflicting class interests serve the same purpose which race and xenophobia did in Day's analysis. See Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

Meanwhile, Little Tokyo's successful local businessmen and developers had no worries of being "replaced" or supplanted, primarily because they identified with the goals of Japanese corporations and saw the linkages of shared ethnicity as having created a transnational community of Japanese helping other Japanese. George Doizaki, president of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center — a right-leaning, Japan-friendly organization which was in the process of raising money to build its own facilities — wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that "a center like the one we hope to build will have a difficult time raising enough funds without Japanese help." Furthermore, such assistance was only natural given that "after all, we have the same ancestry…. [Kajima] did not force their way into Little Tokyo but were welcomed, by and large, for their contributions to the community."[57] If any element of the conflict was alien or unwanted, it was activists who had picked up outside radical sentiments and weren't properly appreciative of their country and community. An anonymous letter writer to *Gidra* who called themselves "Japanese-American First, Asian-American Second" complained that "Sanseis are really mouthing the words of the Chinese radical youths…. Look around and you will find many Korean and Chinese (Taiwan) students and Filipino workers who don't give a damn about their homeland and who would just as soon settle here because the 'livin' is easy.'"[58] Successful communities were not made from asking for handouts, resisting aid from countries whose politics one happened to disagree with, or yelling in the street. Communities were made out of hard-working and productive individuals.

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[57] George Doizaki, "Prime Minister Miki's Interest in Little Tokyo," *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 1975, Letters to the Editor.

[58] Anonymous, "Dear Mr. Iwasaki," *Gidra*, September 1972, Densho Digital Archive.

Asian Americans' desire to shield and protect neighborhoods from the joint dangers of empire and capital was an understandable response to the terms previously set by ethnic organizations such as the JACL, which emphasized mutual aid within Asian immigrant communities and prided themselves on their lack of federal government assistance. Japanese American organizations such as Doizaki's Cultural and Community Center not only desired an assimilated future for their people, they felt the only way to do so was to rely on resources and support from their respective US-friendly countries of origin, such as the ROC and post-war Japan. Conversely, radical Asian Americans drew their own political authenticity and ideological grounding from the words of the "enemy" in the PRC and North Vietnam.

Both groups played into a form of Cold War ideology of "good" and "bad" alignments, but only one side stood to reap real material benefits in exchange for its cooperation and support. Asian American activists fundamentally misunderstood the nature of liberal Japanese American internationalism, seeing it as a cultural connection which facilitated economic aid rather than the other way around. Asian America's reading of Japanese culture and capitalism's entwinement, paired with the importance they gave to preserving their neighborhood, placed early limitations on the scope of their activism. Removal and replacement from specific spaces, such Little Tokyo, by specific people, such as Japanese professionals, was tantamount to destroying the movement itself. Asian American power could not exist in "the hinterlands of Crenshaw."

Even by their own accounts, activists' efforts at saving Little Tokyo's working-class and distinctively Japanese American cultural character had failed by the end of the 1970s. "Eventually," Jim Matsuoka said in 2010, "we lost out on everything… It was hard to beat big

money, really hard."[59] Kajima kept building, eventually installing an $8.5 million dollar commercial shopping center in 1980 next to their $30 million dollar Otani Hotel and Garden. The *Los Angeles Times* remarked positively on two life-sized sculptures of a samurai and a geisha at the opening luncheon, both carved from butter, and described the new shopping center as a delightful "blending of old and new."[60]

While Asian American community organizers struggled to fulfill the material needs of poor and aging neighborhoods, increasingly radical branches of the movement were beginning to turn their attention towards the possibilities of organized labor. While small groups such as San Francisco Chinatown's Red Guard Party had been Marxist-Leninist from their inception in the late 1960s, mergers with other like-minded Asian American organizations such as I Wor Kuen in the early 1970s gave them a larger network in which to practice their politics, and not simply perform them through costumed rallies. Formed in 1969, the Red Guard party was a group of mostly Chinese American youth activists, many of whom had come to the organization from local street gangs. While the Guards had briefly partnered with Taiwanese international students to protest Chinatown's Kuomintang-affiliated elite, the majority of the group's efforts focused on Chinatown's long-term residents. The Guards distributed free brunch on Sundays, helped feed the elderly, saved a tuberculosis testing clinic from being shut down, and protested the paving over of a playground in the neighborhood.[61] They also attempted to awaken residents' political

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[59] Jim Matsuoka Interview, http://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-281-37/.

[60] Ruth Ryon, "Something Is Cooking in Little Tokyo," *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1980, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

[61] Ho and Yip, "Alex Hing: Former Minister of Information for the Red Guard Party and Founding Member of I Wor Kuen," in *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (San Francisco: AK Press, 2000), 288-289.

consciousnesses, with the most prominent example being screenings of the Chinese ballet-musical film *The East is Red*.[62]

By 1971, a combination of police repression and community ambivalence had pushed the Guards out of their Chinatown headquarters. Their subsequent merger with I Wor Kuen that year was thus as much an act of survival as it was of expansion. IWK had been formed in New York City's Chinatown and got its start much the same way the Red Guards had in San Francisco, with "Serve the People" programs aimed at improving the immediate conditions of their community. IWK was an attempt to bridge a Chinese anti-imperialist nationalist tradition with a Marxist approach towards workers. The name "I Wor Kuen" was the Cantonese rendering of "The Fists of Harmony and Justice," better known in the West as the Boxers of Qing Dynasty China, who had met European colonial enterprises during the end of the 19th century with massive resistance. The IWK of 20th century United States, however, was dedicated to combating imperialism and capitalism of a fundamentally different nature. By the time it had merged with the Red Guards in 1971 to become a national organization, IWK was dedicated to the cause of building a unified Communist party in the United States, and in the years to come would begin reaching out to non-Asian American Communist groups in the pursuit of this goal.

Though the prevalence of Marxism-Leninism in the early to mid 1970s created as many problems as it ultimately resolved, it was nevertheless an important bond between the Asian American movement and the contemporary struggles of Asian, African, and Latin American revolutionaries, further grounding day-to-day political organizing in the movement's

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[62] For more on the Red Guard Party, see Daryl J. Maeda, "Black Panthers, Red Guards, and Chinamen: Constructing Asian American Identity through Performing Blackness, 1969-1972," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2005): 1079–1103.

internationalism. A Marxist-Leninist perspective may also help explain why both the Red Guard Party and I Wor Kuen had targeted recent Asian immigrants as a particularly vulnerable population as early as 1969. IWK's Twelve Point Program made an explicit demand for "an end to the geographic boundaries of Amerika," arguing that "the people of the world have built Amerika, and they must now determine its destiny." The Program went on to point out the exclusionary nature of American immigration legislation, arguing that "Amerika has also tried to blind those who live here as to the realities of socialism by restricting information from and travel to the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Albania, North Korea, and North Vietnam. We want open boundaries and an end to immigration and emigration harassment."[63]

This representation of immigration and its role in Asian American politics stands in stark contrast to Little Tokyo organizers' perception of the Japanese bankers and businessmen who were invading and disassembling their neighborhood at the same time. IWK had struck upon a more top-down critique of immigration reform that explicitly targeted legislation and federal immigration policy as the source of Asian American discontent. However, their recognition of most Asian immigrants' role under American capitalism as vulnerable and exploited labor by no means translated into an effective organizing strategy. Rather, IWK's revolutionary nationalism drove them to organize immigrant workers through their particular nationality, a stance which would border on essentialism and put the group at odds with other Marxist-Leninist Asian American organizations who favored a class-first approach.

IWK's political line was tested for the first time during a 1974 garment factory strike in San Francisco. In its particulars, Jung Sai was a perfect storm of immigrant, class, gender, and

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[63] I Wor Kuen, "12 Point Platform and Program" (I Wor Kuen, 1969), Marxists.org.

generational politics. The factory was owned and operated by the clothing company "Esprit du Corps" under Doug Tompkins, whom IWK described as "a young (31) 'hip' capitalist" who "[fancied] himself a liberal" but was, in fact, "a shrewd and successful capitalist."[64] IWK reported that the workers made minimum wage with no benefits, were often asked to work unofficial overtime for no extra pay, and were closely watched by "floor ladies" who monitored their bathroom and lunch breaks down to the minute.

The majority of the 135 workers at the Jung Sai factory were middle-aged immigrant women from China, and IWK noted in its postmortem of the action that for most of them, this was their first experience engaging in union politics.[65] However, the workers were independently aware of the fact that their factory conditions were far from ideal. Two years earlier, the employees had made two attempts at unionizing which both failed — the first for a lack of signed pledge cards, the second when management found out and fired the main organizer. Their renewed effort in 1974 drew the attention of numerous organizing groups: IWK, the Revolutionary Union and its Asian American subsidiary Wei Min She, and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

IWK categorized both of its competitors as "opportunist forces," with the ILGWU as a particularly reactionary trade union. ILGWU was one of the more well known unions of the mid-1970s, with extensive nationwide campaigning around the halting of garment imports.[66] I Wor Kuen considered the ILGWU's "Buy American" campaigning an "imperialist response to

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[64] "12 Point Platform and Program."

[65] I Wor Kuen, "Political Summation of the Jung Sai Strike" (I Wor Kuen | Getting Together. Vol 2, May 1975), Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/iwk-journal/jung-sai.htm.

[66] Dick Adler, "Garment Workers Wear Well: TV Report on State of the Union," *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1976, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; harry Bernstein, "450,000 Garment Workers Halt Work to Protest Imports," *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1972, Newspapers.com.

jobs moving to the Third World," however, and wrote off the ILGWU's involvement in Jung Sai as unwanted, outside intervention. The ILGWU's approach was deemed too vacillating and conciliatory, with union leadership eventually "looking for an easy way out" when it became clear the strike would last longer than a few days.[67]

Despite being fellow Marxist-Leninists, the Revolutionary Union and Wei Min She were also accused by IWK of "militant trade unionism," relying too much as they did on "petit-bourgeois contacts" and liberal politicians to do the heavy lifting instead of "[training] communist fighters," as IWK had hoped they all would. Yet the disagreement went beyond practice, back to what both groups considered the correct Marxist-Leninist line to take. IWK accused Wei Min She of subordinating concerns of nationality or race to class politics, thereby ignoring the specific intersection of oppressions faced by the Jung Sai workers. Wei Min She pamphlets supposedly made no mention of the specific struggle of Chinese workers, speaking instead to a "common economic basis" rather than what IWK saw as the specifically racialized oppression of immigrant workers. One particularly egregious example occurred when the striking workers picketed outside another Esprit du Corp plant which also made use of Chinese workers. According to IWK,

> the Jung Sai workers wanted to win the support of the Chinese workers in the plant. They felt that the common bond of national oppression … was important to win their sympathy and support for the strike. Thus the Jung Sai workers began to chant in Chinese (the only language most of them knew) to the Chinese workers inside the plant: "Chinese people unite!" …The RU, however, began to immediately counter-chant "Workers unite!"…. Obviously there is nothing wrong with the slogan "Workers unite!", but to pit that slogan against the slogan "Chinese people unite!" is a reflection of the RU's general error of pitting

[67] I Wor Kuen, "Political Summation of the Jung Sai Strike."

> the national struggle against the labor struggle, which liquidates the national question as an extremely important part of the class struggle of the proletariat.[68]

Where IWK claimed to see "Chinese workers," the RU-WMS contingent apparently sought only to see "workers." Neither group, according to IWK's summation of the strike, was particularly concerned in addressing issues of gender or age amongst the strikers. On the matter of seeing the union as "immigrant workers," IWK and RU-WMS once more parted ways. The label "immigrant worker," IWK argued, created "splits among the Chinese national minority between immigrant and American-born to fight for full political unity."[69] IWK took the position that a victory for Jung Sai was a victory "for the entire Chinese national minority," an unusually generous interpretation of Chinese American belonging but one which still emphasized the primacy of national identity over class or gender.

IWK believed in a global Chinese identity which transcended acts of immigration or generations spent in a foreign country, but their program left the status of Chinese American capitalists or capitalist "lackeys" unclear. Were they simply "bananas"—yellow outside, white inside? Fred Ho, who joined the IWK in 1976, certainly thought of himself as a "banana" before he came to revolutionary politics. "Two significant factors worked to rid me of the white/banana syndrome," he wrote in an autobiographical essay: a continuous inability to escape racism, and an introduction to militant black pride movements, which brought him "into Marxism."[70] Ho felt Marxism was an improvement on simplistic "identity politics" and "Third World consciousness,"

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[68] "Political Summation."

[69] Ibid.

[70] Fred Wei-han Ho and Diane Carol Fujino, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=445627, 44.

but disagreed with Marxists such as Wei Min She who argued that race and nationality ought to be subordinated to class struggle.

Ho's views were reflections of IWK's own particular middle-ground between the Marxist orthodoxy of working class internationalism and anti-immigration radicals' more exclusive understanding of Asian American spaces. Against WMS's insistence that "the only way for Asian Americans to combat racism and national oppression is to link our struggle with the struggle of the American working class," IWK responded that, although organizing along national lines could be "divisive and a bad thing if the struggle is led by narrow nationalists," it could also be "a progressive thing… when the struggle is led by class conscious Marxist-Leninists." Once again, the opposition of narrow and revolutionary nationalisms re-emerged, with IWK certain that so long as the Asian "nation" defined its boundaries in a class-conscious and progressive manner, the existence of the nation itself could be inherently revolutionary.[71] For both non-unionized Chinese workers and the Chinese businessmen who were as yet unaware of their role as oppressors and oppressed, IWK felt that national solidarity was the best and only path into class consciousness.

Yet when faced with the human consequences of the immigration and exploitation, IWK's genuine and concerted attempt at organizing workers by appealing to their Chinese-ness failed to question how the meaning of "Asian" or "Chinese" might have differed between themselves and the very people they hoped to reach. Whether their nationalism was revolutionary or reactionary, it nevertheless constituted a border between those with proper

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[71] Wei Min She, "Asian Contingent Solidarity Statement" and I Wor Kuen, "Reply to the 'Asian Contingent Solidarity Statement,'" (I Wor Kuen | Getting Together. Vol 1, May 1974), Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/iwk-journal/nat-question.htm

consciousness and those without it. IWK's belief that nationality conferred a kind of revolutionary awareness not only drove infighting with relatively like-minded organizations who could have been allies, but led them to presume solidarity between themselves and immigrant workers before they had done the work of building it. Even as they stood next to the women on the picket line, it was a fantasy of "Chinese being" that they saw, a specter rather than flesh and blood.

Conclusion

In 1976, Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa was elected to the U.S. Senate. Hayakawa defeated three veteran Californian Republicans to secure the nomination, before narrowly eking out a victory over the Democratic incumbent. Voters liked his "breezy irreverence," the *Los Angeles Times* concluded.

Born in Canada, Hayakawa had become an American citizen sometime around 1956 but had been living in the United States since well before then, first as a student and later as a professor of English. He made a name for himself in academia with his book on semantics, *Language in Thought and Action*, which was written as "a response to the rise of Hitler and the success of his propaganda," demonstrating to his young students the power of language to institute political change.[72] In 1969, Hayakawa, then teaching at San Francisco State College, was tapped by Governor Ronald Reagan to take over as interim college president during the Third World Liberation Front strikes. Hayakawa took up the job with enthusiasm, becoming the student protestors' willing foil and antagonist. Hayakawa chastised young Asian American

[72] "Ex-Sen. Hayakawa Dies; Unpredictable Iconoclast : Professor: Semanticist First Caught Public's Attention with His Opposition to Student Radicals at S.F. State.," *Los Angeles Times*, February 28, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-02-28/news/mn-2960_1_state-college/3. Nearly thirty years later, speaking at a JACL dinner party, Hayakawa would call the young Asian Americans protesting the event "neo-Nazis."

activists in particular, calling out the Sansei among them as "imitating the Negro" instead of their parents, who were, in his opinion, "one of the greatest stories in the history of immigration."[73]

As Senator, Hayakawa lasted only a single term, during which he became best known by the public for his prolonged nap sessions on the floor. His most famous legislative move came in 1982, when he introduced an amendment making English the official language of the United States to a proposed immigration reform bill. "Mr. President," Hayakawa announced, "when you think there are 20,000 Japanese businessmen in New York speaking English and about 2,000 American businessmen in Tokyo not able to speak Japanese, you can see why there is a trade imbalance between Japan and the United States." The beauty of American society, Hayakawa believed, was how it transformed disparate immigrants "from every corner of the world" into a unified national body as each arriving individual sacrificed their native language for English. Ironically enough, it was making English universal that would preserve America's multicultural identity.[74]

As a reaction to an increasingly diversifying country and a seemingly ever-expanding new global reality, Hayakawa's amendment speaks to his lifelong desire, and that of many Asian liberals in the United States, to constantly affirm his own terms of entry into American society; to in a sense codify the steps he himself had taken to "become American" and ensure those who came after him would have to do as he did. Hayakawa never had too far to travel, but the journey was never just a physical one—rather, it hinged on transcending the box of the "perpetual

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[73] "S. I. Rips Gidra!," *Gidra*, May 1969, Densho Digital Archive. Hayakawa was, it should be said, viciously chastised in turn. A range of Japanese Americans sympathetic to the protestors were adamant that Hayakawa was not representative of their community's interests, though certain chapters of the JACL were supportive of his efforts. Students for their part frequently called him a "banana" and a lackey of Reagan and the college.

[74] "Sen. Hayakawa's Speech," *U.S. English* (blog), October 18, 2016, https://www.usenglish.org/legislation/hayakawa-speech/.

foreigner" and acceptance into the halls of power and influence. Because of success stories like S. I. Hayakawa, immigration to America was still a risk worth taking, so long as immigrants themselves followed the rules set by the vanguard.

A similar process of affirmation occurred in Asian America during the 1960s and 70s, though it happened along very different lines. For the first decade of their movement's existence, radical Asian American activists operated in a space between their ancestors' immigrant success and the spectral success of new waves of Asian migrants who began to arrive in the wake of legal reforms. Seeing these "new elements" as embodiments of an assimilationist philosophy, the movement instead emphasized their own longer histories in the United States and the unique conditions for both marginalization and liberation which that history had produced. Indeed, the movement began as a seemingly tidy field of inversions: loud instead of quiet; defiant instead of sacrificing; "bad Asia" becoming good. Along the way, Asian Americans formed serious critiques of capitalist development, globalization, and the exploitation of immigrant labor, but these criticisms largely remained captured within a model of community whose primary aim was to protect and preserve first, and transcend later. Within this framework, the new Asian immigrant could only be excluded or be organized, but rarely could they be integrated.

Asian Americans' political prerogatives were also constructed in response to perceived demographic change and new global realities. Their movement's coeval development with the earliest effects of mid-century immigration reform meant that activists lived underneath the shadow of new categories and imperatives for Asians in America as expressed by both the state and their own community leaders. Useful aliens became desirable citizens, while the unproductive and unnecessary populations of pre-existing Asian communities—the elderly, the

poor, the undereducated youth—were asked to make way for promised "new elements." Yet even as they resisted this process of erasure, the Asian American movement found itself inadvertently reproducing aspects of the underlying logic of immigration legislation: namely, its approach towards peoples and nations as desirable insofar as they were "correct," and its potential to reduce immigrants to the economic categories they occupied.

As with the legislators who wrote and passed Hart-Celler in 1965, Asian Americans' expectations of post-war immigration would also be upended by the true consequences of reform. Even when activists attempted to organize groups of working class immigrants in the 1970s and instill them with the political consciousness needed to be "Asian American," their approach was impeded by increasingly contradictory associations of economic class with racial identity. Radical groups such as I Wor Kuen and Wei Min She ultimately descended into parodies of the movement's original intentions as they allowed pre-defined notions of correct thought and desirable behavior to govern their activism.

The history described in this paper reveals how uneven and contentious entry into Asian America once was, and that the movement's response to immigration reform ultimately served to constrain the impact of its politics. The Asian America of the Long Sixties no longer exists not simply because it was chased into the hinterlands by a slow process of replacement as Jim Matsuoka once feared, but because the original movement was defined by impossibly static concepts of nation and community, Asia and America; indeed, of history itself. Activists' un-movability, their rooted Third World nationalism and source of communal pride, became their greatest liability. Asian America was indeed left out in the cold, looking down into their

neighborhoods and seeing a people that was not them, but only because they had first decided their inclusion was impossible.

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